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The purpose of this study was to interview and observe the principals selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of the North Carolina Distinguished Leadership in Practice (NCDLP) program to understand what leadership practices they applied within their schools that positively impacted teaching and learning. The major research question for this study was, “*How does a principal’s leadership support high quality teaching and learning?*” From this major research question, five guiding questions emerged to serve as integral components of this study:

1. What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?
2. What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of *NC DLP* principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
3. What are *NC DLP* principals doing to develop “leadership capacity” that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
4. What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?
5. What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?

Qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews, leadership surveys, and site visit observations with six principals. Member-checking, document analysis, and field observations of principals during regular and staff development days

were conducted to collect data on the principals' leadership practice. The focus of both the interviews and site visits centered on descriptive questions which revealed information about the "hows" and "whys" of changes in principal leadership behavior following participation in the *NC DLP* program as well as the impact of the leader's practice on teaching and learning and organizational structures.

Key findings revealed that principals are expected to play an active role in leadership, consider the processes, activities, and relationships within their school and use those factors to positively affect teaching and learning (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). Overall, the findings from this study suggest that principals who center their attention on developing the culture of the school and creating synergy of individual skills of teachers, learning relationships among teachers, a relentless focus on instruction, and ongoing mobilization of resources will make significant contributions to teaching and learning in a school.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN NORTH CAROLINA THROUGH THE EYES OF
DISTINGUISHED LEADERS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

by

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Approved by

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To my loving and supportive parents,
Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Long Stewart,
who inspired me to be the motivated student I have become.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Yvette A. Stewart, 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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pen and sending me back to the drawing board at times, you letting me borrow literature and even your own dissertations to give me a guide and footing for the research I conducted; I would not have made it through. To Dr. Lynne Johnson, “Boss Lady,” a mentor and dear friend who continuously encouraged me to stay focused, did everything in her power to help me finish my dissertation, and took a chance on me by promoting me to Assistant Director—you have no idea what that meant to me. I feel very lucky to have worked for a leader who is dedicated to the professional growth of your employees and a leader who allowed me to be “me” at all times. I sincerely appreciate your support.

“News at 11 . . .”

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To conclude, two of my favorite quotes are “*You must be the change you wish to see in the world*” by Mohandas Ghandi and “*Take advantage of every opportunity; where there is none, make one for yourself*” by Marcus Garvey. My message to those who pursue their doctoral degree or have a lifelong goal you wish to complete is to persevere and keep your eye on the prize. “Greater is he who is in you than he that is in the world” . . . John 1:4. You can do anything you set your mind to and work hard at—

take it from me, this was one of the hardest things I have ever done and I did it! I am not only proud of myself, I am proud of the people around me. We earned this together. I am a stronger person having done this work and I can now encourage someone else and use my experience as an example. Again, I stand on the shoulders of everyone before me and I pave the way for others after me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Leadership Perspective

Although the discourse over school reform is hardly new, never before has the effectiveness of schools been so closely monitored and measured by quantifiable standards across schools, districts, and states. Due to the current reforms in schools all over the globe, principals are held more accountable for student-level success, making school leadership even more critical (Levine, 2005). According to Omar, Khuan, Kamaruzaman, Marinah, and Jamal (2011), the role of teachers and school leaders will continue to develop in tandem with the current developments in the world of education, because education is a social phenomenon that is dynamic and often subjected to changes and innovations in the larger society. These global changes and innovations are occurring in curriculum diversifications and pedagogical practices, and, for the educational system to survive and be equally current, it too needs to align with the paradigm shift that is occurring. Change in leadership and learning has become more prominent in a world that has become borderless through information and communication, bringing about new needs in knowledge, science, and technology. It has furthermore changed the trend and profile of students and modified the role and function of schools making them more challenging than before.

School leaders in North Carolina are expected to be equipped with certain qualities and skills that “develop systems for change and build relationships with and across staff that not only tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess but create powerful relationships that also stir their passions for their work with children” (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013a, p. 1). Papa and English (2011) describe these key leadership characteristics as the “accoutrements” of leadership (see Appendix A). Accoutrements are the perspectives and outlooks concerning leadership developed through application and practice that are descriptively sewn into one’s persona as s/he develops into a full-fledged leader (Papa & English, 2011). These are the aspects of leadership that are innate and go beyond the basic requirements of a leader. The accoutrements of leadership require a leader to possess skills beyond basic skill and content acquisition. Today’s principal must possess characteristics such as this and be prepared to focus time, attention, and effort on changing what students are taught, how they are taught, and what they are learning. Inevitably, that means developing a staff that can create an environment for this to occur. This formidable challenge demands a new breed of school leaders, with skills and knowledge far greater than those expected of “school managers” in the past (Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001).

The stakes for effective school leaders are high in today’s climate of system-wide accountability where American public schools are charged with the tasks of improving student achievement and closing performance gaps among the subgroups of an increasingly diverse student population (Catano & Stronge, 2006; Portin, Feldman, & Knapp, 2006; Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000). There is increasing attention on

improving the leadership of school principals and a renewed emphasis on training and preparation programs, because the effect of leadership on student learning is becoming more transparent and clear. Research suggests that the total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a quarter of total school effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Additionally, the difference between an average and an above-average principal can impact student achievement by as much as 20 percentage points (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

If principal leadership impacts teaching and learning that significantly, it is imperative for school districts, schools, and states to focus on best practices that will maintain this constant level of achievement. North Carolina has taken bold steps to provide a reliable, statewide framework for principals to be successful within their schools. With a statewide performance system in place, principals have the opportunity to develop their own leadership skills and learn how to successfully influence the learning environment they lead as a result. Those significant aspects of a leader's style that blend acquired habits learned through the sum of life's experiences and habits of the mind that come from knowledge of self and the collective energy of others are grounded in the North Carolina Standards for principals, also known as school executives (State Board of Education, 2006). The NC Standards for School Executives are the guiding foundational principles for every school leader in North Carolina and define the most critical skills needed for an effective leader.

North Carolina has invested a great deal of time and money in determining an appropriate measure of the effectiveness of teachers and leaders over the past three years.

The state has moreover invested a great deal of effort in aligning performance standards with statewide evaluation tools, partnering with higher education institutions to improve teacher and leader preparatory programs, and developing statewide support structures from a professional development perspective. The state's intent was to create a continuum of learning and wrap-around services to educators, both undergraduate and graduate, from the matriculation of a degree in higher education into the classroom or a school and through a professional career span beyond the classroom with this tightly aligned approach.

North Carolina's educator effectiveness framework correspondingly includes educator performance evaluation and student growth performance for teachers and principals. The 2013-14 school year will be the fourth year of implementation of the statewide evaluation tool for North Carolina principals and data has been collected for the past three years in the form of summary evaluation ratings. The student growth measure was added to the teacher and principal evaluation model in 2011, known commonly as the sixth and eighth standards. The 2012–13 school year will be the first operational year of the educator effectiveness model in North Carolina.

Standard 6 measures the extent to which the teacher affects student growth. Standard 8 measures the extent to which the principal contributes to the success of student achievement. Currently, educator effectiveness data in North Carolina for principals is reported as aggregate ratings for Standards 1–7. Public reporting of Standard 6 and 8 (student growth data for teachers and administrators) from 2012–13 will be reported in the fall of the 2013–14 school year.

In 2013–14, summary performance ratings will translate into an overall “effective,” “highly effective,” or “needs improvement,” status for teachers and principals. Standard 6 ratings will be used as the first of three years of data required for an overall effectiveness status for a teacher; provided the teacher’s rating was based on his or her own growth value in 2012–13. Standard 8 for principals will reflect an aggregate of the student growth scores for the school.

In addition to analyzing educator effectiveness ratings and ramping up district-level support around the NC Standards for School Executives, North Carolina has supported the development of accoutrements in their school leaders through several statewide leadership development programs. In particular, the NC Distinguished Leadership in Practice (*NC DLP*) Program began in the spring of 2010. This program selected more than 30 distinguished principals who participated in yearlong professional learning and capacity-building activities using a cohort-based approach. Following this experience, those leaders were given the opportunity to lead future principal cohorts and share their expertise with other colleagues. With the NC Standards for School Executives as the foundation, the *NC DLP* program format was developed with the expressed intention that the sessions be engaging, customizable, practical, sustainable, and fluid to ensure continuous improvement of the leader. The sessions were designed to be interactive and to model the types of engaging experiences that leaders are expected to implement and sustain with teachers and students in their schools. Principals who have gone through this program have been recognized as role models throughout the state and

have proven to demonstrate effective leadership through the NC Standards for School Executives for North Carolina's leaders.

Background of the Study

North Carolina accepts as true that identifying and preparing a diverse group of school leaders who can change curriculum and instruction and build higher performing schools will improve achievement (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). As high-stakes accountability for schools increase in the 21st Century, the focus on the development of school leaders must equally increase (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). Unless districts recruit and train school leaders who have a deep knowledge about how to improve the core functions of a school, they will do little to resolve spotty leadership, low-achieving schools, and under-served students (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). This accounts for selecting the right leader for the right school and improving the individual skills of that school leader. But what about the development of the total school community? What makes an effective school and allows the school to maintain a high level of success? Simply put, the effectiveness of the building leader to provide direction and the function of its teachers to achieve the goals of the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Building the effectiveness of the school leader and the teachers means building leadership capacity. Building leadership capacity within a school has to do with both the teaching and learning of the students and the adults in the school. Lambert (2003) states that "student achievement can be now be directly and unmistakably traced to the presence or lack of conditions that create high leadership capacity in schools, including teaching and instructional excellence" (p. 55). Thus,

building leadership capacity is essential to the success of a school and is an important concept investigated throughout this study.

Statement of the Problem

The success or failure of a school is often attributed to the leadership of the principal. The irony of the situation is that leadership is not a position or a person. It is a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of the school. Studies on school change indicate that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership within the organization (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Sustainable improvement depends on successful leadership. But making leadership sustainable is extremely difficult. The roles and responsibilities that involve all staff and nurture collaboration are processes that will transform a school. In North Carolina, this resolve is embedded in all seven functions of leadership outlined in the NC Standards for School Executives (State Board of Education, 2006).

Other research suggests that good leadership improves both teacher motivation and work settings. This, in turn, can fortify classroom instruction. Compared with lower-achieving schools, higher-achieving schools provided all stakeholders with greater influence on decisions, the researchers write compellingly, and the higher performance of these schools might be explained as a consequence of the greater access they have to collective knowledge and wisdom embedded within their communities (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

The problem is ascertaining how a principal effectively supports high quality teaching and learning. While there is research demonstrating how principals influence

school effectiveness; there is a gap in the research that informs how such capacity is developed and how principal leadership influences teacher practice and what students learn (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Through a thematic analysis, this research presented an understanding of successful principal's experiences with supporting high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. This study investigated a school leader's behaviors and connected them to student achievement through their impact on their teachers' and students' work.

The North Carolina Distinguished Leadership in Practice (*NC DLP*) Program

The professional learning of school principals and teachers is a pivotal factor in shaping the quality of teaching and learning within a school (Sparks, 2002). Before principals become leaders of leaders, they must invest time in reflecting on their personal beliefs about leadership and the empowerment of others. Leaders preparing students for life and work in the 21st Century requires them to move past the "I" in leadership and embrace the collaborative "we." Effective principals learn alongside their teachers or step aside to let others lead (Sparks, 2002). Others may cultivate an environment that is handicapped by autonomy and does not embrace the power of collective knowledge. The *NC DLP* Program equipped principals with tools and strategies to develop learning environments that positively impact those 21st Century learners in a school. The *NC DLP* Program is a statewide model of professional development that allowed principals to further develop their leadership skills and improve teaching and learning in their schools through individual reflection and networking.

The NC State Board of Education approved the *NC DLP* Program as part of the Race to the Top (RttT) grant awarded to the state in 2010 in partnership with the North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA; State Board of Education, 2010). RttT was the competitive federal grant available to all states as of 2010 that promoted educational reform through ambitious and innovative state initiative plans. *NC DLP* was one of the innovative initiatives in the North Carolina RttT plan that satisfied the goal of recruiting, retaining, and developing effective teachers and principals (State Board of Education, 2010). NCASA was the educational organization primarily responsible for development of the program curriculum, the core training team, and the organizational structure of the principal cohorts. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction was staffed with a Program Coordinator who worked with NCASA to process the budget, manage the deliverables, and report the progress of the program to the United States Department of Education (USED). USED was the federal department that oversaw the implementation and progress of the reform initiatives presented in each state's RttT plan. Each grant-funded state's plan included specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel, and annual targets for key performance measures.

The *NC DLP* program was designed to focus a yearlong cohort of principals and expose them to models of exemplary school leadership. This structure would allow participants to study the behaviors, attitudes, and competencies that define a “distinguished” school leader (North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association [NCPAPA], n.d.). Highly effective or “distinguished” school leaders, are highly skilled at creating systems for change and building strong communities and

relationships while improving student performance (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013a).

As individual school leaders, they agreed to be transparent about the operational framework they developed in their schools to allow the revelation of theory to unfold around their leadership. Following their experience, the *NC DLP* principals were solicited to engage other principals in a professional learning community to foster school improvement and leader development in their regions or geographical areas. Three of the 34 principals who graduated from the program in 2010 are currently serving in the formal capacity of cohort facilitators within the present *NC DLP* program as of 2012.

To participate in the program, NCASA required each participant to complete an application process. All applications were thoroughly reviewed by the committee. Participants were practicing school leaders with a proven track record for achieving strong student results. The committee reviewed the data from the principal's most recent NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey data and their school's student achievement scores. In addition, participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- Demonstrated ability and desire to lead and coach peers
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Demonstrated commitment to being a team player in a Professional Learning Community
- Willingness to learn how to work in an e-learning environment
- Support of the superintendent

Through the yearlong *NC DLP* program, principals critically examined the meaning of "distinguished" school leadership through a problem-based, real-world application approach. As illustrated in Figure 1, this approach to professional development was aligned to the new performance evaluation standards adopted by the State Board of Education for North Carolina's School Executives in 2006.

Component Focus Area	Corresponding NC Standard for School Executives
Component 1: Strategic Leadership for High-Performing Schools	Standard 1: Strategic Leadership
Component 2: Maximizing Human Resources for Goal Accomplishment	Standard 2: Instructional Leadership Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership
Component 3: Building a Collaborative Culture with Distributed Leadership	Standard 3: Cultural Leadership Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership
Component 4: Improving Teaching and Learning for High-Performing Schools	Standard 2: Instructional Leadership Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership
Component 5: Creating a Strong Student and External Stakeholder Focus	Standard 3: Cultural Leadership Standard 6: External Development Leadership
Component 6: Leading Change to Drive Continuous Improvement	Standard 1: Strategic Leadership Standard 2: Instructional Leadership Standard 5: Managerial Leadership Standard 7: Micro-Political Leadership

Figure 1. *NC DLP* Program Components and Corresponding School Executives Standards. (Maxfield et al., 2012)

Using a blended learning model, Figure 2 demonstrates how principals in the program methodically engaged in a series of authentic activities, including face-to-face sharing sessions, individual research, and dialogue in an online coaching setting, and guided small group sessions all using their own school data as the foundation for growth and development throughout the program (NCPAPA, n.d.).

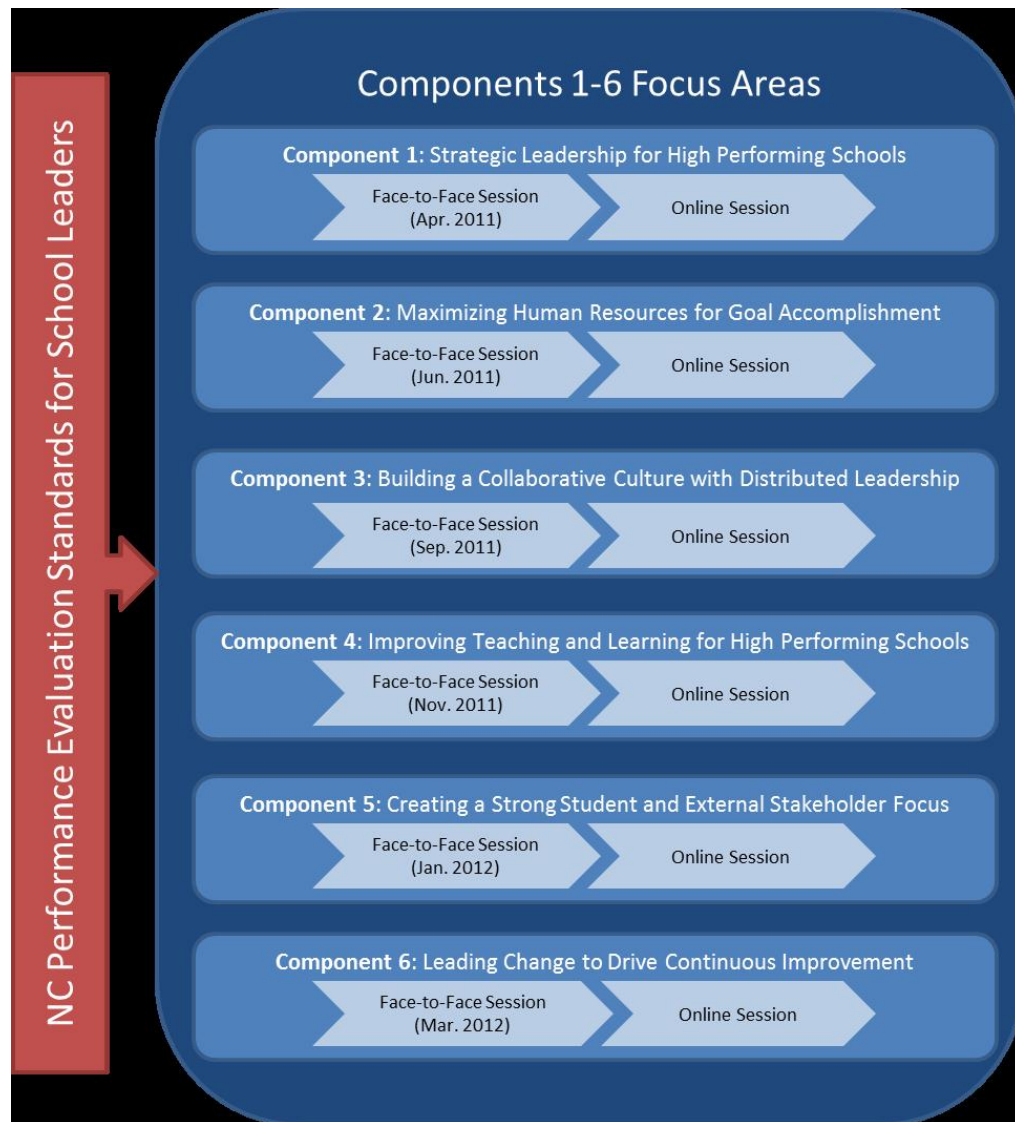


Figure 2. The *NC DLP* Program's Blended Approach to Professional Learning. (Maxfield et al., 2012)

At the conclusion of each year, an evaluation was completed with both the program coordinators and participants to assess the program's effectiveness as well as the impact on the school leader. Participants reported in the first report of the *NC DLP* Program as having implemented a wide range of strategies they learned in *NC DLP* once

back in their schools and districts. Some themes emerged from the examples they provided:

creating, assessing, and revising their school's mission and vision statements; improving walk-through observations, focusing on their role as instructional leaders; collecting input from students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders; effectively using data to inform decisions (especially from the Teacher Working Conditions survey); creating or improving Professional Learning Communities within their schools; spending more time being reflective about their professional practice; and collaborating and networking more with administrators in other schools and districts. Many of the principals also mentioned doing some of the activities they learned in *NC DLP* with their school staff, as well as sharing resources. (Maxfield et al., 2012, p. 42)

The State Board and the General Assembly of North Carolina had channeled energy toward leadership development for principals as a state in the past. The Principals' Executive Program (PEP) was created in 1984 under the leadership of Board Chairman C. D. Spangler to specifically establish a management training program for school principals and was until 2010 the only statewide leadership development program for principals in North Carolina. Spangler saw the critical need to develop school leaders and transform our schools. Research supports the need to develop a leader's key governance skills and confirms the impact, albeit indirectly, a principal has on student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005; Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003).

PEP did not receive state funding after 2007. A review of the program provided by the General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division found that the program did not provide a measurable impact on conditions for teaching and learning in schools (North Carolina General Assembly, 2007). After the termination of the PEP program, Former

Chairmen of the State Board of Education Howard Lee and Bill Harrison both were instrumental in the continued support of principals who lead NC schools in the 21st Century; hence, the *NC DLP* Program. The State Board proposed the *NC DLP* program to help the participants internalize the new principal evaluation standards and translate those into effective practice. As participants were led and coached through capacity-building activities for their own schools, they simultaneously built their personal capacities as school leaders to lead and manage change; used data to identify needs and establish priorities; maximized teaching and learning; created a student-focused culture; and connected with the external community (NCPAPA, n.d.). Through evaluation and survey data, participants found the *NC DLP* Program to be highly relevant to their professional development needs, as well as to the specific needs of their schools (Maxfield et al., 2012).

Observation results provided evidence that the *NC DLP* Program was relevant to principals' professional practice. Observers indicated that appropriate connections were made to other disciplines and/or real-world contexts in all of the face-to-face segments observed, and most of the segments observed (87%) also provided opportunities for participants to consider classroom applications of resources, strategies, and techniques. Likewise, nearly all of the participants surveyed (97%) agreed or strongly agreed that the face-to-face sessions included adequate opportunities for participants to consider applications to their own professional practice. In addition, the activities provided in each online session were consistently linked to participants' roles within their schools and

provided frequent opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in the participants' professional settings (Maxfield et al., 2012).

Purpose of the Study

There has been little research on the leadership behaviors and practices demonstrated by North Carolina's school leaders that have a significant impact on teaching and learning since the adoption of the state's School Executive Standards in 2006 (see standards in Appendix C). A "State of the Principalship" survey was conducted by the Principals' Executive Program (PEP) in 2008. The survey was sent electronically to over 2,300 principals. In 2008, 651 principals (56%) completed the survey (McLean, 2009). Major findings concluded that principals feel the job has become more demanding and the need for professional development in curriculum, instruction, and student achievement is warranted (McLean, 2009). This survey was used by PEP to focus its leadership development program for principals after 2006 following the adoption of the new state professional standards.

The purpose of this study was to interview and observe the principals selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of the present leadership development program in North Carolina to understand what leadership practices are currently being applied within their schools that positively impact teaching and learning. The particular principals chosen for this study have remained at the school level as a school principal following their participation in the *NC DLP* program and their students have shown consistent academic progress for the past two years. It is noted that a significant number of the principals in the inaugural cohort left the helm of the school to pursue other leadership

roles within school districts across the state or positions at the state level. More significantly, the principals in the study stand out as exemplary leaders in the profession and have influenced their colleagues by serving as a role model for successful leadership in their positions and in the leadership development program they participated in. Through this study, I explored how these leaders have continued to lead successful teaching and learning over time.

Research and Guiding Questions

The major research question for this study was how does a principal's leadership support high quality teaching and learning? This study aimed to investigate the behaviors and practices of effective school leaders in North Carolina that influenced teaching and learning in North Carolina. From this major research question, five guiding questions emerged to serve as integral components of this study:

1. What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?
2. What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of *NC DLP* principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
3. What are *NC DLP* principals doing to develop "leadership capacity" that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
4. What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?
5. What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?

Significance of the Study

There is much literature that states a high quality teacher in the classroom is the key element to high student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2005; Learning Point Associates, 2007; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Miller, 2003). What is not so clear is the influence of the school leader on student performance. There is some research (Burns, 1978; Leithwood et al., 2008; Sergiovanni, 1992; The Wallace Foundation, 2003) that presents a substantive argument that strong school leaders have certain qualities and leadership styles that lend themselves to creating an environment that breeds high performance. The understanding of leadership is still incomplete without a rich understanding of how and why they lead. Knowing what leaders do is one thing, but, the practical application of these leadership experiences in this study adds to the empirical research on measuring the effectiveness of a principal, particularly related to teaching and learning and the effectiveness of the school principal and the performance of the students in their schools.

The thematic analysis presented in this study investigated the significant leadership behaviors and practices or accoutrements demonstrated by exemplary principals in North Carolina that have impacted teaching and learning in their schools after 2010. This was significant for this study because deeply studying the effective practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina following the adoption of the new NC School Executive Standards illuminated the important characteristics principals need to continue to build successful schools and improve student achievement across the state now and in the future. The study also underscores the importance of

school leadership and the influence principals have on student achievement relative to the standards presented in the evaluation instrument in North Carolina.

This study makes a contribution to the current body of knowledge around school leadership in various ways. This study connects leadership behaviors with the leadership practices that principals consistently utilize to impact teaching and learning and highlights the corresponding standards in the evaluation instrument for school principals in North Carolina. This study may bring some clarity to these issues across this state and some support to principals and teacher leaders by providing a framework to build a coherent, collaborative system that supports powerful, equitable learning for all students.

Lastly, this study contributes to the current body of knowledge around effective school leadership that will inform future professional development for principals in North Carolina. This framework may provide clarity for policy makers and provide them with valuable information that would inform how programs are funded at the federal and the state level. The research may inform the area of effective school leadership practice and inform ways programs might be sustained and improved. Policymakers could use the data gathered in this study to begin to create infrastructures that identify effective leadership preparation programs by designing data collection structures that could track program improvement and evaluation efforts (Young, Fuller, Brewer, Carpenter, & Mansfield, 2007).

Limitations of the Study

As with any research study, there were limitations. In this study, the following limitations were noted:

1. This study only focused on the leadership of school principals. There are other notable school leaders in North Carolina (assistant principals, assistant superintendents, superintendents, teacher leaders) not investigated in this study.
2. Only principals selected from the *NC DLP* cohort were studied.
3. The study exclusively investigated the North Carolina standards and evaluation instrument for School Executives.
4. Participants' responses to the interview questions were self-report.
5. Length of the Study: Time for collecting qualitative data from fieldwork for this study was limited to nine months.

Definition of Terms

Accoutrements—the perspectives and outlooks concerning leadership developed through application and practice that are descriptively sewn into one's persona as s/he develops into a full-fledged leader

AMOs—Annual Measurable Objectives. Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) is defined as a series of performance targets that states, school districts, and specific subgroups within their schools must achieve each year to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002).

ARRA—American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. North Carolina receives \$1.4 billion in ARRA federal funds and provides funding to North Carolina schools through existing federal formula and competitive grant programs including Title

I, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance programs.

“Distinguished”—the highest rating on the performance continuum for the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System. It means consistently and significantly exceeding basic competence on the standards of performance.

Educator Effectiveness Data—The aggregate data on the evaluation ratings of teachers and principals during the previous school year. These data provide greater transparency into the quality of educators in public schools in North Carolina.

ESEA—Elementary and Secondary Act. The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act (see NCLB).

LEA—Local Education Agency, also known as school districts.

Leadership Capacity—creating conditions within the school for growth, self-renewal, and the development and distribution of leadership throughout the school organization.

NCASA—North Carolina Association of School Administrators. NCASA is an umbrella organization under which North Carolina school administrator groups are unified. Specifically, the NC Principals and Assistant Principals’ Association (NCPAPA).

NC DLP Program—NC Distinguished Leadership in Practice Program. *NC DLP* is a year-long leadership development program for practicing school principals designed and provided by the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principal’s Association in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and Learn NC.

NCDPI—North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. NCDPI is the state agency charged with implementing the state's public school laws and the State Board of Education's policies and procedures governing pre-kindergarten through 12th grade public education.

NCEES—North Carolina Educator Evaluation System. NCEES is the standards for professionals working in public schools, as well as instruments and processes used for evaluation in North Carolina.

NCLB—No Child Left Behind Act (2002) is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It was a federal bill that provided money to schools who received Title I funds prior to 2010.

NCTWCS—NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The NCTWCS is a biennial opportunity for all licensed, school-based educators (principals and teachers) to provide input to their school and local school district to inform local improvements and state level policy.

McREL—Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning. McREL is a private Education Research and Development Corporation and an instrumental partner in the development of the evaluation standards for principals and assistant principals for North Carolina.

PEP—Principals' Executive Program. A program created in 1984 under the leadership of Board Chairman C. D. Spangler specifically establishing a statewide management training program for school principals in North Carolina.

Ratings—individual scores of teachers and principals on the state evaluation system (ranging from not demonstrated to distinguished) that supports their growth and development as an educator each year.

North Carolina Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI)—North Carolina Responsiveness to Instruction (NCRtI) is a multi-tiered framework which promotes school improvement through engaging, high quality instruction. NCRtI employs a team approach to guide educational practices, using a problem-solving model based on data, to address student needs and maximize growth for all (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2012c).

RttT—Race to the Top program. North Carolina received approximately \$400M in educational state stabilization funds. The Race to the Top competitive grants were awarded to encourage and reward states that “creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; implementing ambitious plans in four education reform areas and achieving significant improvement in student outcomes” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

SBE—State Board of Education of North Carolina. The State Board of Education is charged with supervising and administering “the free public school system and the educational funds provided for its support” (Article IX Education, 2006).

School Executives—another term for principals in North Carolina.

Status—a single overall mark that is determined once a principal or teacher has *three years* of growth data to populate their Standard 6 or 8 in the evaluation system.

USED—United States Department of Education. USED was the federal department that oversaw the implementation and progress of the reform initiatives presented in each state's RttT plan.

Organization of Study

This study focused on how successful principals actively lead their schools to exemplify the North Carolina School Executive Standards and excellence in teaching and learning, and is organized into five chapters. Chapter I is an overview, in which the problem of the study is defined. Chapter II will present a review of the extant literature related to the importance of school leadership, leadership capacity building constructs, leadership standards and notable behaviors, and assessing effective leadership in practice. Chapter III describes the methodology, intent of the researcher, population and sample selection process, instrumentation, and data analysis process of the study. Chapter IV presents the finding and an analysis for each research question explored and Chapter V closes with a discussion of the findings, possible impact on policy and practice, and implications for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is predicated on the leadership behaviors of effective school principals. The principals in this study were considered “distinguished” leaders, which meant they were highly skilled at creating systems for change and building strong communities and relationships while improving student performance (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013a). This study described the skills of those distinguished principals in North Carolina through a thematic analysis of the NC Standards for School Executives and the leadership themes that evolved from the analysis. The study examined six distinguished principals on the characteristics of their leadership styles and followed those themes through to a culminating school visit to investigate the school’s environment and document those themes in action.

Through the performance evaluation in North Carolina, the foundation for assessing effectiveness is through the eight leadership standards. In order to positively influence student achievement, which is the core business of school, those standards must permeate the leader and illuminate through the behaviors and practices exemplified by that leader. As shown in Figure 3, as the eight leadership standards influence the leader and his/her leadership behaviors, and the impact is perceptible through the actions of the teachers thus allowing students to learn and thrive in the instructional environment.

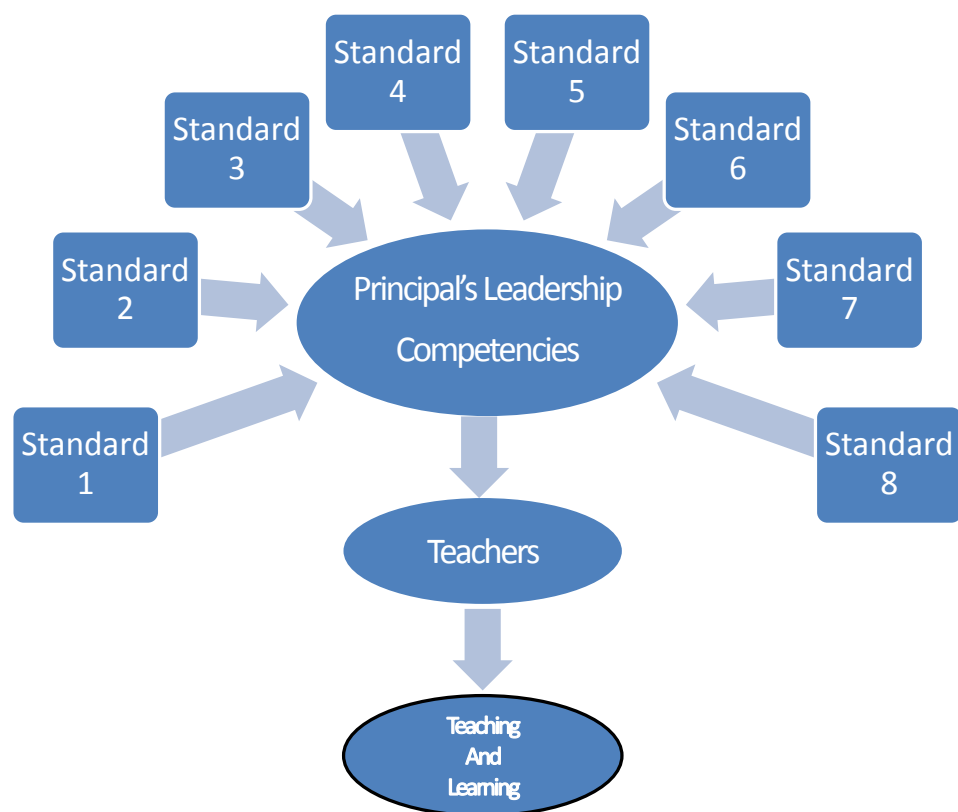


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework.

The Importance of School Leadership

Researchers have empirical evidence that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). Without an effective principal, a school is unlikely to have a culture of high expectations or strive for continuous improvement. High performing school systems leverage their knowledge of effective school leadership to develop their principals into drivers of improvements in instruction (“Ahead of the Curve,” n.d.).

This literature is framed by the assumption that a school leader's leadership style significantly impacts high quality teaching and learning. The concept of leadership is often juxtaposed with management. Kotter (1990) says that management "produces order and consistency" and leadership "produces change and movement" (p. 3). Bolman and Deal (1997) describe the balance between leadership and management. These authors explain that over-managed organizations lose a sense of spirit and purpose. Poorly managed organizations with strong charismatic leaders may soar temporarily only to crash shortly thereafter (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Organizations that are well managed and poorly led are not successful because they address routine problems while ignoring or slighting important matters (Bennis, 1989b). The challenges of modern organizations require the objective perspective of the manager as well as the brilliant flashes of vision and commitment that wise leadership provides (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Because schools have become very complex organizations, principals must move beyond occasional brilliant flashes of success to systems of continuous improvement. In the end, both leadership and management are required if schools are to be successful.

Leadership provides the basic rhythm of an organization. It gives pace and energy to the work and empowers the work force (Bennis, 1989b). Principals are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. Therefore, according to Lambert (1998), school leadership needs to be a broad concept that is

embedded in the school community as a whole and facilitated by all of the learners within the organization. North Carolina's School Executive Standards define the main responsibility of the school executive as creating aligned systems of leadership throughout the school and its community (State Board of Education, 2006). Stronge (1993) similarly called for a more unified view of the principalship as requiring both managerial and instructional leadership skills that reinforced rather than competed with one another. More recently, Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton's (2010) book on school improvement highlighted how instructional leadership effectiveness depends on successful orchestration of programs, people, and resources. Principals are expected to play an active role in leadership, consider the processes, activities, and relationships within their school and use those factors to positively affect teaching and learning (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). They must know academic content and pedagogical techniques (Knowles, 1984). They must work with teachers to strengthen skills. They must collect, analyze, and use data in ways that fuel excellence. They must rally students, teachers, parents, local health, and social service agencies, youth development groups, local businesses, and other community residents and partners around the common goal of raising student performance (Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2000). And they must have the leadership skills and knowledge to exercise the autonomy and authority to pursue these strategies (Lashway, 2003).

A Definition of Leadership

The traditional definition of school leadership consists of a person, such as a school principal, who possesses formal authority in a school. Broadening this definition

of school leadership is critical for sustainable school reform in the 21st Century (Mulford, 2003). Principals must see leadership as a shared entity within the school and not designated to only one person. Fullan (2004) says that in order to change organizations and systems it will require leaders who get experience in linking to other parts of the system. These leaders in turn must help develop other leaders with similar characteristics. In this sense the main mark of a school head, for example, is not the impact he or she has on the bottom line of student achievement at the end of their tenure but rather how many good leaders they leave behind who can go even further. Furthermore, school districts risk losing substantial gains when they invest in one leader but fail to develop leadership within a building and across the system given high principal turnover rates, increased troubled and low-performing schools, and a low interest in young people who aspire to become teachers (Elmore, 2000). The central priority of strengthening student learning, shared widely by public school systems nationwide, provides the guiding principle for refocusing the preparation, entry standards, recruitment, professional development, assessment and accountability of principals (IEL, 2000).

In the last decade, there have been significant shifts in the conceptualization and definition of leadership. The evolving definition and practice of leadership in schools has expanded notably by several researchers (Ackerman, Donaldson, & van der Bogert, 1996; Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001; Spillane et al., 2001). The working definition of school leadership for this study was the "reciprocal learning process that enables participants in a community to construct meaning toward a shared purpose" (Lambert, 1998). Through

this definition, this research investigated how school leadership improved teaching and learning in schools with identified successful leaders in North Carolina. Research explains that school leaders today should seek greater engagement among building stakeholders, including teachers, parents and students in the development of school goals and objectives. In a 2005 school leadership study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation and conducted by researchers from Stanford University's Educational Leadership Institute and the Finance project, it was proffered that:

As a result, many scholars and practitioners argue that the job requirements far exceed reasonable capacities of any one person. The demands of the job have changed so that the traditional methods of preparing administrators are no longer adequate to meet the leadership challenges posed by public schools. (Davis et al., 2005, p. 3)

The *Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning* research from the Wallace Foundation's Learning from Leadership project (2010) found that high student achievement is linked to the combined influence of educators, parents, and others. Effective principals encourage others, according to the research results, to join in the decision-making process in their schools (Seashore Louis et al., 2010). Successful leaders have a targeted mission to improve student achievement. They have a vision of the school as a place that makes a difference in the lives of students, and they value every student in their present and future world.

In this study, successful principals were interviewed and observed to investigate how they actively lead their schools to exemplify the North Carolina School Executive Standards and excellence in teaching and learning. Through a thematic analysis of the

behaviors and practices of effective school leaders in North Carolina, this study highlighted a set of exemplary principals and weaved together their stories to form a comprehensive picture of their leadership experiences. This analysis shows how the NC School Executive Standards are interrelated and do not stand alone. Furthermore, a principal does not lead alone. The research of Gronn (2002) explicates the notion that in order for a school leader to be successful, they must build a strong community of learners and expand their thinking of leadership beyond the narrow scope of an individual phenomenon to a broader context of openness of the boundaries of leadership.

Building Leadership Capacity

Building leadership capacity was a core construct of effective leadership explored in this study. Capacity is defined as the collective power of the full staff to work together to improve student learning school wide. The capacity-building principal focuses on developing the culture of the school and creating synergy of individual skills of teachers, learning relationships among teachers, a relentless focus on instruction, and ongoing mobilization of resources. Research shows that principals who have the ability to empower and encourage others to lead will have the potential to make a significant difference in teaching and learning and positively impact school improvement (Huber, 2004; Leithwood et al., 1999; Murphy, 2002; Yukl, 2006). Newmann, King, and Young (2000) found that successful schools have a certain “capacity” that enables them to focus on teaching and learning and is linked closely to student achievement. This is achieved by examining student learning and identifying actions needed in the classroom and the school for improvement (Fullan, 2006).

Knowing what leaders do is one thing, but without a rich understanding of how and why they do it, the understanding of leadership is incomplete (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). An in-depth analysis of the practice of school leaders is necessary to render an account of how school leadership works. Observing from within a theoretical framework will be important. Educators and policymakers alike seek a framework for effective leadership that will produce sustainable school improvement. Developing leadership capacity can provide such a framework.

The Evolution of Leadership Culpability

The variables associated with improved student achievement have been a focus of researchers for many years. There is an assumption that the school leader's effects on students are almost entirely indirect (Day et al., 2009; Witziers et al., 2003). What is known from the long line of school effectiveness research is that instruction and classroom environments have the greatest impact on student learning, although there are still debates about what kinds of instruction are most efficacious in increasing student learning (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003). Teacher characteristics, such as type of degree or certification, also have limited effects (Wayne & Youngs, 2003), and those characteristics are largely indirect through their impact on instruction (Smith, Desimone, & Ueno, 2005). In other words, an examination of instruction must be at the heart of the question of how leadership contributes to student learning (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

The 1980s began an era of increased demands and raised standards for schools (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; NCLB, 2002). This emerged into the critical observation on the accountability of schools to improve student

performance. Following the movement towards greater school accountability is countless research attempting to measure the impact of school leadership on student performance citation. The emergence of models such as shared leadership, teacher leadership, distributed leadership and transformational leadership have surfaced as viable ways to understand how leadership impacts teaching and learning (Printy & Marks, 2006; Sagnak, 2009; Stewart, 2006).

Today, the competitive Race to the Top (RttT) grant, the imminent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and the advocacy of several educational organizations, including the National Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (NAESP), have significantly increased the pressure to improve student achievement (Samuels, 2011). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and *A Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a) present the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders as a primary topic of conversation within the education system. In the literature on the RttT grant, education leaders are called upon to strategize ways for “recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010b, p. 1).

The literature does show that effective school leadership leads to significant increases in student achievement. As early as 1992, Ubben and Hughes stated that principals can create a school climate that improves the productivity of both staff and students and that the leadership style of the principal can foster or restrict teacher effectiveness. Hallinger and Heck (1998) found that principals indirectly influence

student achievement through several key “avenues of influence”: people, purposes, and goals of the school, structure of the school and social networks, and organizational culture (p. 171). Schools successful in sustaining school improvement and positively impact student learning, build capacity for leadership with the organization. Leadership capacity is about creating conditions within the school for growth, self-renewal, and the development and distribution of leadership throughout the school organization. School then becomes a place where learning and teaching are expected from all.

Cultivating Leadership

The job of school leaders is to determine the leadership capacity within their schools and use that knowledge to cultivate high quality teaching and learning (American Institutes for Research, 2010; Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Lambert, 2003; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Schools successful in sustaining school improvement and positively impacting student learning build capacity for leadership within the organization.

Leithwood (2003) says that leadership at the core serves two functions: providing direction and exercising influence. If a principal has sharp skills in organizational management and the power of influence, then there is a greater chance of increased student performance at the school and district level (Leithwood et al., 2008). These functions involve the ability to assess and evaluate the impact and perceptions of their leadership styles in order to create systemic change and influence the teacher leaders within. One of the most consistent research findings of effective leadership in schools is that authority to lead is not located in the person of the leader but can be diffused within

the school in-between and among staff (Carter & Klotz, 1990; Day et al., 2000; Duze, 2012; Mulford, 2003). Therefore, in order to impact significant change within the school, leaders must understand procedures and processes that create the conditions necessary to develop internal leadership capacity for organizational improvement.

Leadership is the guidance and direction of instructional improvement (Elmore, 2000). Fullan (2002) points out that “only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement” (p. 16). Thus, the successful work of a principal can be realized in the creation of a culture in which the relationships among all stakeholders build a trusting, transparent environment and reduces the sense of vulnerability as they address the challenges of transformational change. Both organizational coherence and collective learning support the success of instructional improvement by valuing the learning for the individual and the whole. Improvement requires fundamental changes in the way public schools and school systems are designed and in the ways they are led. Schools must fundamentally be redesigned as places where adults and young people learn (Elmore, 2000).

Building the skills and opportunities for learners in a learning environment such as this demand a strong and dynamic leadership skill set, one that is quite different from what may have worked for leaders in the past. While it is necessary that schools prepare students for an unforeseen and seemingly unpredictable future, it is analogously very important that the educational leadership capacity that challenges today’s orthodoxy to envision what the future educational and societal framework will be is cultivated.

Effective leadership adds value to the impact of classroom and teacher practices and ensures that lasting change flourishes. Therefore, the theory of effective leadership, that of teachers and principals, must be further explored.

Characteristics of Distinguished Leaders

The professional leadership standards for educators of today present the school leader with learned skills that are the “floor for the leader” (Papa, English, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012). Leaders who successfully take the foundation of the leadership standards and their demonstrative knowledge of self to transform a complex and dynamic environment such as a school into a thriving learning organization are considered “distinguished” leaders in North Carolina. Distinguished is the highest rating a principal can receive on the performance evaluation instrument for NC school leaders according to Figure 4.

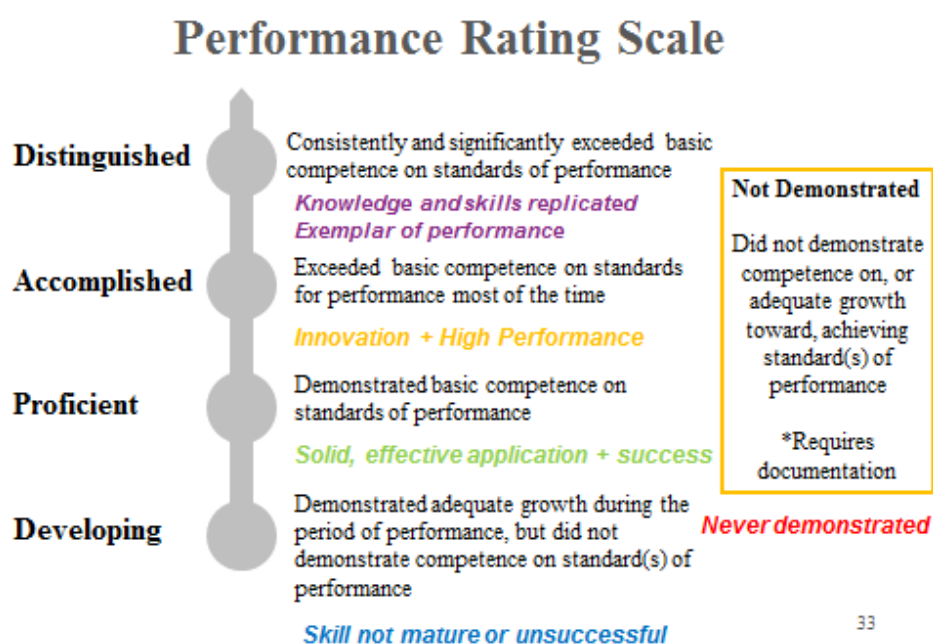


Figure 4. Performance Continuum for NC Educator Evaluation System.

Highly effective or “distinguished” school leaders, are highly skilled at creating systems for change and building strong communities and relationships while improving student performance (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013a). Highly effective principals are considered successful leaders and evidence from their environments would support this notion. Whether the evidence is tangible artifacts such as school-wide achievement data or the results of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) or intangible artifacts such as the look and feel of the school or the anecdotal comments taken of the students; there is a sense of structure and intentionality present at the school with a highly effective leader. In order to be rated as distinguished, the standards and evaluation instrument present a specific set of characteristics that leaders display regardless of the context of their school or larger school community. Distinguished, according to the standards and state evaluation system, is consistently and significantly exceeding basic competence on the standards of performance. The distinguished principal enhances the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creates a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holds the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holds individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result.

These behaviors are consistent and significant among school leaders; however, they manifest themselves sometimes quite differently from school to school. Every distinguished principal is acute at navigating their complex environment and has the ability to identify and diagnose remedies to issues surfacing within their school. All the

while, these contemporary leaders are visionaries, instructional leaders, managers, budget analysts, and both community and relationship builders. Each of the seven critical areas of leadership shine through as the highly skilled principal makes the tough day-to-day decisions.

Competencies in the NC Standards for School Executives affirm the concept of accoutrements described in Papa and English's research. In Figure 5, the eight standards represent the leadership expectations of leaders in North Carolina. The research of Papa and English (2011) on 13 high-achieving urban public schools in California sought to more clearly define and differentiate practices as they apply specifically to school leaders. In their research, accoutrements involve six core areas (adult learners, human agency, ignored but intended skills, intellectual curiosity, futurity, and imaginativeness) of leadership that are developed in leaders over time. Within the NC Standards for School Executives, competencies include those similar characteristics (see Appendix C). Appendix C outlines the core competencies in the standards that connect the key accoutrements in Papa and English's research. The standards and competencies are predicated on the notion that skills bring structure to experiential knowledge. "Leadership is more than the technical acquisition of discrete skill sets; it is a value defined and driven enterprise enacted with and through followers" (Papa & English, 2011, p. 77).

When a leader can put their accumulated knowledge into a series of steps, it will lead to practice if followed. The acquisition of these competencies enables leaders to grow and become more effective over time. The authors believe truly effective

leadership goes beyond personal characteristics tied to basic management job tasks (Papa et al., 2012). As example, communication would be a basic management job task but a competency is when the leader specifically promotes a culture of learning by emphasizing communication in meetings through sharing, using and analyzing data to talk about achievement, student issues, or perhaps parent issues. It would be understood that the basics of management are “givens” rather than purely administrative priorities that are their only tasks. It is the work on self and the outward evidence of that growth that becomes transparent in successful leaders which leads to effective schools.

Principal Evaluation Standards:

Standard One	• Strategic Leadership
Standard Two	• Instructional Leadership
Standard Three	• Cultural Leadership
Standard Four	• Human Resource Leadership
Standard Five	• Managerial Leadership
Standard Six	• External Development Leadership
Standard Seven	• Micropolitical Leadership
Standard Eight	• Academic Achievement Leadership

Figure 5. The Eight Standards for NC School Executives.

The Development of Leadership Standards for NC School Executives (Principals)

The focus of public schools has changed drastically in the last 30 years from sorting and selecting students to determine who goes to college in the early 1980s to educating all students to be college ready in the 2000s. Leadership in schools has also evolved. In the early history of American schooling, principals were nonexistent. Teachers performed the necessary tasks associated with schooling. As schools grew, the complexity of these tasks grew, requiring a single person to assume the responsibility for coordinating such tasks. This person was designated as “principal teacher” with the dual function of serving in the classroom and the head of school (Beck & Murphy, 1993). School leaders in the 1950s espoused the administrative theory movement and were interested in those who could handle “on minute” details of school operations (Beck & Murphy, 1993). In the 1950s, being an effective building manager used to be good enough. Through the 1980s, principals who prided themselves as ‘administrators’ were too preoccupied in dealing with strictly administrative duties compared to principals who are instructional leaders (Flath, 1989). Today, the role of a school leader has changed even more drastically. School leadership in the 21st Century has forced a demand for instructional leadership, systems thinking, and the expansion of leadership beyond one person.

Principals play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools, but existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified candidates is sparse (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). In February 2007, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) contracted with the Mid-Continent Research

for Education and Learning (McREL) to develop an instrument to evaluate the state's principals based on the newly approved Standards for School Executives and provide a roadmap for growth and development for the state's school-level leadership workforce. The instrument is based on the state-approved standards and as a foundation a rubric that describes the state's definition of proficiency for each standard as well as descriptions of what less-than-proficient, accomplished, and distinguished educators look like in their daily practice. The seven executive standards, based on The Wallace Foundation (2003) study, are predicated on the notion that supports the distribution of leadership rather than the "hero" leader (p. 5).

North Carolina adopted new professional standards for its school principals in 2008. In 2009, the SBE approved a new statewide evaluation process aligned to those standards. The North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES), the first of its kind in the country, aligns the state's evaluation processes with educator preparation standards and impacts 115 districts, 9,000 schools, 100,000 teachers, and 1.5 million students across North Carolina (McREL, n.d.). North Carolina's Educator Evaluation System is a system predicated on the growth of the individual. It identifies the knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of teachers and leaders, and measures the level at which they meet the standard as they move from ratings of "developing" to "distinguished" (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013b). North Carolina has embraced the notion that leadership development will make the difference in leadership for its school leaders. The language the state is promoting the term *distinguished* leadership. Distinguished leadership support the acuity that leadership involves setting direction (Smith, 2004;

Southworth, 2005; Zaleznik, 1995), making change (Kotter, 1990; Smith, 2004) and developing people (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Communicating Educator Effectiveness in North Carolina

The Standards for School Executives in North Carolina offer a leadership construct in the form of Strategic Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Cultural Leadership, Human Resource Leadership, Managerial Leadership, External Development Leadership, Micro-Political Leadership and most recently an eighth standard, Academic Achievement Leadership. The adoption of the eighth standard (student growth component) occurred in 2010 and was added to the evaluation process in 2011. As a collective, the eight standards interpret a full depiction of what the performance of a principal looks like and is ultimately defined as “effective” or “highly effective” as illustrated in Figure 6.

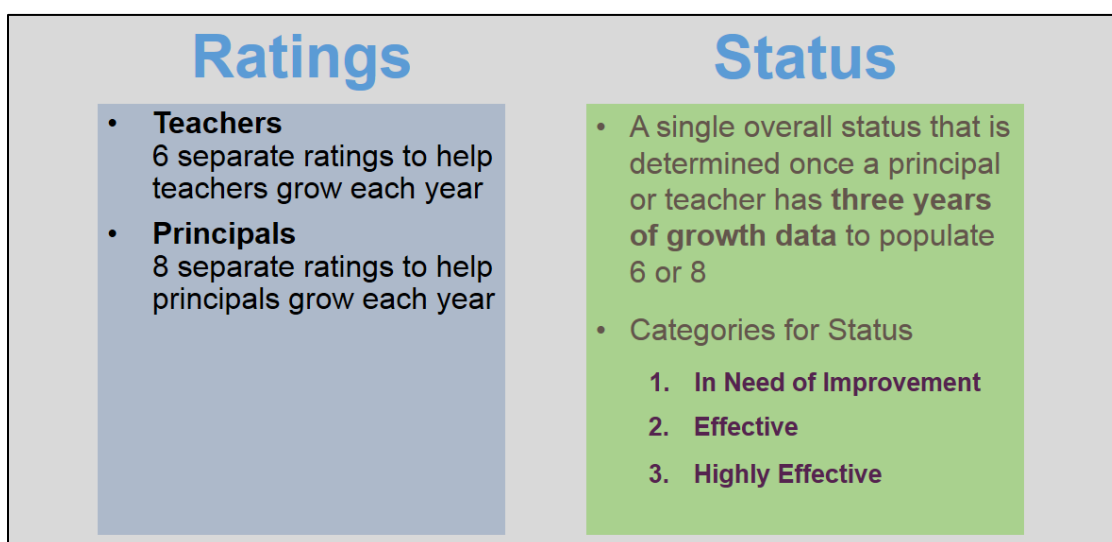


Figure 6. Status Ratings for Standard 8. (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013c)

As depicted in Figure 7, the definition of an effective principal is a leader whose total school student growth (in the aggregate) meets expectations (one year of expected growth) and whose ratings on the other standards that comprise the NCEES are at the level of proficient or higher. The definition of a highly effective principal is an educator whose total school student growth (in the aggregate) significantly exceeds expectations (more than one year of expected growth) and whose ratings on all other standards that comprise the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System are at the level of accomplished or higher (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013b).



Figure 7. Principal Rating Categories for Standard 8. (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013c)

The Eight Leadership Standards for NC School Executives (Principals)

These standards call attention to the prevailing demands of a 21st Century leader. By identifying leadership standards, the context of an effective principal is defined. Leadership standards address the key expectations of leaders as it relates to student outcomes and define the valid forms of evidence to assess the performance of effective school leaders. They also serve as a framework for what principals actually do and they are responsible for ensuring that leadership happens in all seven critical areas, although they may not do it all themselves.

As exemplified in the NC School Executive Standards, the job of a principal is uniquely complex and interrelated and combines both practice and competence. Understanding both the needs of the school and the skills and qualities of the leaders is embedded in the expectations of the principals and in the evaluation process. School systems must “reinvent the principalship” to meet the needs of schools in the 21st century (IEL, 2000).

Within the standards for school leaders in North Carolina, there are significant assertions to point out in addition to the standards themselves. For one, the terms ‘principal’ and ‘school executives’ are used interchangeably. The term ‘School Executive’ is intentional. The recommendation came from the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on School Leadership to the State Board of Education (2005):

Public education’s changed mission dictates the need for a new type of school leader—an executive instead of an administrator. No longer are school leaders just maintaining the status quo by managing complex operations but just like their colleagues in business, they must be able to create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. Schools need

executives who are adept at creating systems for change and at building relationships with and across staff that not only tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess but powerful relationships that also stir their passions for their work with children. Out of these relationships the executive must create among staff a common shared understanding for the purpose of the work of the school, its values that direct its action, and commitment and ownership of a set of beliefs and goals that focus everyone's decision making. This change in focus is directly linked to the development of a global economy and our country's need for workers who are able to think, problem solve, use technology, work in teams, and communicate effectively. (p. 1)

Secondly, the new standards include described practices, or competencies, that all school executives should possess or develop in their leaders. Even if the principal does not personally possess them all, he or she is still responsible for their effective exhibition of those leadership practices within the school. A competency is a combination of knowledge (factual and experiential) and skills that one needs to effectively implement the practices (State Board of Education, 2006). The practices are statements of what one would see an effective executive doing within each standard (State Board of Education, 2006). An example of a competency under the Instructional Leadership standard would be Change Management, described as effectively engaging staff and community in the change process in a manner that ensures their support of the change and its successful implementation. An example of a practice under the Instructional Leadership standard is when a principal focuses his or her own and others' attention persistently and publicly on learning and teaching by initiating and guiding conversations about instruction and student learning that are oriented towards high expectations and concrete goals. Together, this describes effective principal behaviors under Instructional Leadership that improves teaching and learning in their school.

Although there are many influences on a school leader's development, these standards would serve as an important assessment tool for principals and assistant principals as they consider their growth and development as executives leading schools in the 21st century. North Carolina's Standards for School Executives are interrelated and connect in executives' practice. They are not intended to isolate competencies or practices, rather express the executives' ability in one standard to perform effectively in other standard areas. For example, the ability of an executive to evaluate and develop staff (Human Resource Leadership) will directly impact the school's ability to reach its goals (Instructional Leadership) and will also impact the norms of the culture of the school (Cultural Leadership; State Board of Education, 2006).

There are other conscious themes that emerge within each leadership standard related to teaching and learning. This section presents an abridged review of the literature around one or more of the prominent themes acknowledged within each of the standards that surfaced in the analysis of a principal's leadership style on teaching and learning. The full description of each standard can be found in Appendix C of this study.

Standard I: Strategic Leadership

Cultivating teacher leaders emerges as a critical component of effective leadership in the literature under the Strategic Leadership standard. Distributive leadership, otherwise called teacher leadership, can improve teacher retention, strengthen the teaching profession, build the capacity of school leaders, and facilitate innovative advances to the structure of school staffing (National Comprehensive Center for Teaching Quality, 2010). Today, teachers are encouraged more often to go beyond the

old transmission model of instruction and encouraged to participate more actively in school management. Consequently, today's classroom environment and student and teacher behaviors are very different from what they used to be. The effect of rapid and continuous accessibility to technology and innovation has changed the learning needs of students the world over. This is further aggravated by various demands from parents and stakeholders who are seeking education excellence. This phenomenon demands that teachers are always alert and involved in the continuous development process to master the latest knowledge, skills and competencies required to match the emerging changes and innovations. It therefore becomes necessary that teachers must possess the ability and capability to handle these changes to ensure their roles and functions remain relevant in schools (Duze, 2009; Omar et al., 2011; Stoll & Fink, 1996). With the innovations and sophistications in information and communication in education, the need to continuously build and rebuild teacher capacity in teaching and learning becomes very pertinent.

Teacher leadership. Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively; formally influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the goal of increased student learning and achievement (National Comprehensive Center for Teaching Quality, 2010). Teacher leadership has a place in innovative schools where transformation occurs. Teacher leaders contribute to important decisions and actively initiate advances in school policy and practice. They may lead projects or reforms or serve to advance the instructional practices of their peers. It is the collective community of teachers, led by the principal that is one key to promoting school-wide learning. By

clearly and regularly communicating with and engaging fellow teachers in dialogue about improving teaching and learning, teacher leaders build a school culture of trust, which leads to improvement in instructional practice and ultimately positively affects student achievement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The role of teachers in leadership positions has yet to gain a concrete and authentic stronghold as part of the larger school reform initiative. And although teachers often self-report performing leadership-like duties within their schools, the term leader is still often reserved for administrative personnel only (Cherubini, 2008). However, principals who understand the power of teacher leadership increases the influence their leadership has on student performance. The most recent review of the impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes concluded as follows: “The size of the effects that principals indirectly contribute toward student learning, though statistically significant is also quite small” (Hallinger, 2005, p. 229). This conclusion was reached as part of a literature review and discussion of research on instructional leadership rather than as a result of the calculation of the effect size statistic for each relevant study.

While teachers are ultimately responsible for improving student learning in schools, changing the organizational conditions for improvement across schools is the central task of school leaders (Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, & Thomas, 2005). The heart of the new instructional leadership is the ability of leaders to shift schools from cultures of internal to external accountability (Halverson et al., 2005). In short, instructional leadership includes those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning (Flath, 1989). Leadership, conceptually, is conversely

complex and does not always point nicely to one particular entity or individual. The principal must provide the leadership essential for student learning, the roles of the principal and of other school staff can be restructured to reinforce that leadership and manage the implementation of the school program effectively. Responsibilities for getting the work done can be distributed among a leadership team or given to others as specific functions. Ultimately, the research on effective leadership speaks to leadership being a function rather than a role. It is a combined synergy in a school that makes the difference. No matter how apparent it may seem on the surface, leadership does matter in successful schools.

Teacher leadership is illustrated in the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) as a primary condition for successful teaching and learning in effective schools. The NCTWCS is a biennial opportunity for all licensed, school-based educators (principals and teachers) to provide input to their school and local school district to inform local improvements and state level policy. The survey uses the following eight constructs to disaggregate the results: time; facilities and resources; community support and involvement; managing student conduct; teacher leadership; school leadership; professional development; and instructional practices and support; and one additional area, new teacher support.

This measure has been integral in annual school improvement plans in North Carolina since 2002, and most recently included in the educator evaluation process for principals. Summary results from the 2012 iteration of the NCTWCS revealed that 86% of educators responded to the survey, and under the teacher leadership standard 68.8% of

teachers agree that teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision-making in the school and 82.6% of teachers agree that they are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues (NC Teacher Working Conditions Initiative, 2012).

There are many good reasons an effective school leader involves teachers at the onset of developing a vision and decision-making within the school, since they are the ones who must ultimately translate abstract ideas into practical classroom applications. They can do this better when they are actively involved in the process.

Above all, principals with teacher empowerment in mind must create a climate and a culture for change. They do this by speaking about the vision often and enthusiastically; by encouraging experiments; by celebrating successes and forgiving failures; and by remaining steadfast in the face of the inevitable problems and missteps. This is the sign of a visionary leader. Visionary leaders anticipate what trend may come next (Papa et al., 2012). Schools with a clear vision have a standard by which teachers can gauge their own efforts. Thomas Sergiovanni (1994) characterizes vision as an “educational platform” that incorporates the school's beliefs about the preferred aims, methods, and climate, thereby creating a “community of mind” that establishes behavioral norms. While a visionary leader is generally a great communicator, both talk and action are necessary. By marrying perception with symbols, a visionary leader creates a vision, and the vision, by evoking an emotional response, forms a bridge between leader and follower as well as between idea and action.

Standard II: Instructional Leadership

In this standard, the instructional leader creates an environment in which the staff is accountable for the performance of their students. The school executive (or principal) leads the staff in the use of the best instructional practices and spurs collaboration between teachers. Principals are the instructional leaders, coaches, and practitioners who model good teaching and believe that “the fundamental role of a principal is to be a teacher of teachers” (Ouchi, 2009, p. 87). At the heart of this standard is the understanding that leadership is about working with, for and through people. It is a social act. Whether we are discussing instructional leadership, change leadership or leadership as learning, people are always the medium for the leader (The Wallace Foundation, 2003). This leadership role involves setting clear goals, allocating resources to instruction, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers.

“Instructional leadership” is an idea that has served many schools well throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s. The role of ‘instructional leader’ called for a shift of emphasis from principals being managers or administrators to instructional or academic leaders (Phillips, 1996). In the first half of the 1990s, instructional leadership seemed to be displaced by school-based management and facilitative leadership (Lashway, 2002). As the increased importance of academic standards and school accountability has heightened, instructional leadership has become again an emphasized practice.

The term instructional leadership focuses administrators’ attention on “first-order” changes—improving the technical, instructional activities of the school through the close monitoring of teachers’ and students’ classroom work (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1991). Yet

instructional leaders often make such important “second-order changes” as building a shared vision, improving communication, and developing collaborative decision-making processes (Duke, 1987; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Smith & Andrews, 1989). It is a stark difference in the role of an instructional leader and that of a school administrator.

Focus on instruction. The instructional leader makes instructional quality the top priority of the school and attempts to bring that vision to realization. This dramatically different role is

one that requires focusing on instruction; building a community of learners; sharing decision-making; sustaining the basics; leveraging time; supporting ongoing professional development for all staff members; redirecting resources to support a multifaceted school plan; and creating a climate of integrity, inquiry, and continuous improvement. (Brewer, 2001, p. 30)

Improving teacher perceptions of the principal as instructional leader is essential to the reading and mathematics achievement of students, particularly among historically low-achieving students (Andrews, Soder, & Jacoby, 1986). Andrews and Soder (1987) point out that if we are to improve the quality of schools, we must improve the professional practice of school principals. In the study conducted by Smith and Andrews (1989), schools operated by principals who were perceived by their teachers to be strong instructional leaders exhibited significantly greater gain scores in achievement in reading and mathematics than did schools operated by average and weak instructional leaders. The general descriptors used in their analyses was (a) principal as resource provider, (b) the principal as instructional resource, (c) the principal as communicator, and (d) the principal as visible presence (Smith & Andrews, 1989). This research is still relevant

today as the study of distributive leadership continues to be investigated. Recently, instructional leadership has made a comeback with increasing importance placed on academic standards and the need for schools to be accountable.

Today, an instructional leader lead schools as complex systems made up of parts with greater interdependencies than we earlier believed (Leithwood, 1992). The most important obligation of an instructional leader is to build a structure of relationships within schools so that all children learn and grow to their full potential. Shifting from a culture of internal accountability to meet the demands of external accountability is also a focus for an instructional leader. Data-driven decision making can produce its intended effects only if supported by organizational capacity that allows school teachers and leaders to intentionally change instructional practices in the face of new information (Halverson et al., 2005).

Standard III: Cultural Leadership

A school leader fosters a positive school culture focused on student achievement within the Cultural Leadership standard. He or she understands school traditions and values and uses them to create a sense of pride. When necessary, the administrator leads the school community to shape its culture into a more positive one. Effective cultural leaders deal not only with the explicit decisions of the day: approving a budget, announcing a policy, disciplining a subordinate; but also with that partly conscious, partly buried world of needs and hopes, ideals and symbols. They serve as models; they symbolize the group's unit and identity; they retell the stories that carry shared meanings. These leaders enhances the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creates a

common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holds the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holds individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result.

Creating a positive culture. Scholars (Maher, Lucas, & Valentine, 2001; Saphier & King, 1985) state a school's culture is the foundation for successful school improvement. The net effect of the cultural force of leadership is to bond together students, teachers, and others as believers of the work of the school (Sergiovanni, 2007). The "Cultural Change Principal," according to Fullan (2001), must be attuned to the big picture, a sophisticated conceptual thinker who transforms the organization through people and teams. Every school has a unique culture (Marzano et al., 2005). Effective leaders understand the culture so they are able to push for the necessary changes without destroying the school culture (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). However, principals can only impact the school culture if they understand it (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Given school culture is one aspect of a school which a leader can influence (Leithwood et al., 2005); principals want to positively affect the culture of the school because it is a major factor in the school improvement process (Gruenert, 2005).

Communication is one important life skill that successful principals may use to develop a positive school culture. The ability to communicate well is not only important for leaders, but in all life's roles. One researcher asked the question of thousands of managers over a fifteen year period, "what percentage of your job activities involves communicating and/or communication of some sort?" The findings concluded that only rarely does anyone report that less than the majority of their time is spent in

communication activities. This proves to be a strong testimony to its importance to managers and leaders (Axley, 1996).

This skill considers that leaders must be adept at mentoring, showing compassion, and listening. The Greek philosopher Epictetus once said, “We have been given two ears but one single mouth, in order that we may listen more and talk less” (King, 2008, p. 2718). Listening involves hearing a speaker's words, understanding the message and the importance to the speaker, and communicating that understanding to the speaker. Of all the communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), listening is the earliest learned and the most frequently used, yet it seems to be the least mastered. The research of Papa and English realizes that this is an ignored but intended skill for effective leaders to possess.

Listening must be a two-way street for an effective leader. Listening is a skill that underlies all leadership skills. It is the key to developing and maintaining relationships, decision making and problem solving. Listening requires a leader to understand that their staff is important. Therefore, listening serves as a platform to take action if necessary. These actions will become the practices that promote a sense of culture in a school. How then do we measure a good listener? What training is involved in this practice? We know it is vital for the socially just activist leader to be caring and fair. Vision building requires it. Strong personnel relations demand it and have the understanding that it is okay and normal to wrestle with these complex issues (Papa et al., 2012). The concept of listening in leadership is not without many challenges. Listening is an important behavior; however, it should equally be considered a leadership quality. Leadership

heavily depends on interactions and the use of effective communication. Since meaning is generated through communication, developing relationships with others and leading others requires a strong knowledge of listening.

Effective leaders communicate clearly, in a timely fashion, keep people they lead informed, and have the ability to listen empathically. An example of this would be at district meetings where the superintendent listens and observes the communication emphasized with each administrative team member sharing assessments of his/her school, using data to talk about achievement, student issues and parent issues (Papa et al., 2012). Facilitating this type of environment requires a leader to value two-way communication and be keenly attentive to the needs of the group. These skills are beyond managerial tasks and standards measured. The intentional development of characteristics such as this does separate the great from the good leader (Papa et al., 2012).

Standard IV: Human Resource Leadership

Human Resource Leadership is the standard that focuses on the school as a professional learning community. The administrator creates a professional learning community through recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development, and retention of high-performing staff. Effective leaders help the school to become a professional learning community to support the performance of all key workers, including teachers and students (Leithwood, 2003). In David Nasaw's (1979) book *Schooled to Order*, he says Dewey reminds us:

. . . the schoolroom was the natural place to begin the task of preparing the new generation for the modern world. The school was, after all, a community in microcosm; after the family, it was the first the children would inhabit. If this

children's community were structured properly by the adults who controlled it, it could provide the experiential foundation for future personality development. (p. 103)

Recruiting, inducting, supporting, evaluating, developing, and retaining high-performing staff is undoubtedly the most important actions of the school leader. A high-quality teacher is the most important factor of student learning (Goldhaber, 2002; Hanushek, 2005). If a student moves from the classroom of an effective teacher to that of an ineffective one, their achievement gains are typically negated (Kane & Staiger, 2008; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Conversely, if a student is placed in the classrooms of effective teachers in consecutive academic years, their achievement is far more likely to accelerate. Further, teachers are more effective when their peers are more effective; indeed, teachers consistently report that peers have the greatest impact on their practice. Consequently, it is the collective community of teachers, led by the principal, which is the key to promoting school-wide learning. Principals influence learning by creating working conditions in which motivated teachers are provided the opportunity to work as professionals (Seashore Louis et al., 2010). In effective schools, adult learning is a high priority along with student learning. If teachers are going to continually hone their craft, they need access to new ideas and sources of expertise, including high-quality professional development that is informed by student data and linked to continuing growth spanning a career. Putting teachers who wish to learn in contact with other innovative teachers, support organizational processes for discussion and consideration of curricular issues, and provide feedback based on student learning outcomes (Marks &

Printy, 2003) is a role of the school leader. In essence, effective leadership means creation of an effective, high-functioning professional community.

Professional learning communities. In order for school leaders to be successful, they must attend to aspects of the school as both an organization and as a community, considering internal processes and external relationships as a whole. Schools that function as a professional learning community supports and sustains the performance of all key workers, including teachers as well as students (AERA, 2003). Sergiovanni proffered that “the more that leadership is cultivated in a school, the more likely it is that everyone will get a chance to use their talents fully and the more committed everyone is likely to be” (2006, p. 173). Principals who want to see results in student learning invest energy to build leadership capacity around key issues regarding student achievement, rather than micromanaging the staff (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

Educators are typically taught the elements of pedagogy (the art of teaching children). The pedagogy style is more instructor led, which is useful for young students. This style, then, is not as useful in an adult learning environment because it does not utilize the learner’s capabilities. Compared to school-age children, the major differences in adult learners are in the degree of motivation, the amount of previous experience, the level of engagement in the learning process, and how the learning is applied. Each adult brings to the learning experience preconceived thoughts and feelings that will be influenced by each of these factors. Assessing the level of these traits and the readiness to learn should be included each time a teaching experience is being planned.

Because the many aspects of teaching adults are fundamentally different than those employed in teaching children, a new word gained currency in the late 20th century: andragogy. Andragogy is geared for the adult learner who knows how to learn and is motivated to learn. The participants needs are accounted for, not what the instructor determines. The education has objective and the learner is participating in achieving those objectives.

Understanding the effective behaviors of a successful principal is an awareness of how the principle leader engages the other leaders in a school. An awareness of how those learners approach the acquisition of knowledge will drive how strategies are arranged that will enhance learning for those individuals. Utilizing the power of andragogy (adult learning theory) is to apply the principles of adult learning to develop instruction that focuses on what the learner needs and how the learner learns. Andragogy makes the following assumptions about the design of learning: (a) Adults need to know why they need to learn something; (b) Adults need to learn experientially; (3) Adults approach learning as problem-solving; and (d) Adults learn best when the topic is of immediate value (Knowles, 1984). The Instructional (Standard 2), Cultural (Standard 3), Human Resource (Standard 4), and the Micro-political (Standard 7) Leadership standards for North Carolina School Executives expect school leaders to internalize the principles of andragogy to cultivate leadership capacity within a school building (State Board of Education, 2006).

Principals who expressly espouse the theory of andragogy understand that the environment for adult learners in the school building needs to include self-directed

inquiry and opportunities to collaborate. Adult learners plan their learning and engage in self-evaluation as they learn how to learn. Effective principals approach adult learning through problem-based, collaborative, and experiential opportunities to allow adult learners to plan their own learning. Adults learn best through case studies, role-playing, simulations and self-evaluation so that they can focus on the process of learning (Kearsley, 2009). In Knowles's research (1984), he advocated for creating a climate of mutual trust and clarification of mutual expectations with the learner. That is, a cooperative learning climate is fostered.

Standard V: Managerial Leadership

Within the Managerial Leadership standard, the school leader organizes the school and its systems in a manner that ensures efficiency and effectiveness in practices. The debate over leadership versus management began over 30 years ago and is still a continued point of interpretation.

Leadership and management. There are two distinct schools of thought in the literature about the difference between the two: one advocates a substantially coherent distinction and the other submits that they significantly overlap, are interrelated, and are difficult to differentiate. Kotter (1990), Bennis (1989a), Maccoby (2000), and Perloff (2004) distinguish leadership from management. As example, Maccoby believes leadership is a relationship (selecting talent, motivating, coaching, and building trust) between the leader and the led that can energize an organization; and management is a function (planning, budgeting, evaluating, and facilitating) that must be exercised in any business. Yukl (2006), in contrast, believe both leadership and management can be

explained using the same processes and models, as both leaders and managers use a mix of leadership and management behaviors. Yukl (2006) and Bass (1990) would also argue that the two functions are blended and complementary because sometimes leaders manage and sometimes managers lead. Managerial Leadership for North Carolina principals, then, is concerned with good leaders having the basics of management in order for the effective leadership qualities to be exhibited (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

The job of a school leader is complex and it requires a leader who possesses a special set of skills and qualities to sustain this type of diverse environment. Grissom and Loeb (2011) report that unfortunately, existing research does not tell us enough about the skills principals need to promote school improvement, making the design of policies geared towards recruiting and preparing effective school leaders challenging.

Waters et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of 70 studies on education leadership and established 21 leadership responsibilities that are significantly related to higher levels of student achievement. Major findings from this research purported that principals who improved their practice around those 21 characteristics by one standard deviation, student achievement rose by 10 percentile points. This Balanced Leadership framework guided the development of the North Carolina evaluation system for its School Executives (Principals). The 21 characteristics presented in this research surface as competencies in the evaluation instrument and although the principal may not personally possess them all, he or she is still responsible for their effective use in the various leadership practices.

New Leaders (2012) recently conducted an in-depth analysis of data sets from two studies they were involved in from 2007 to 2011: the Urban Excellence Framework (UEF) and the Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) case studies. The researchers focused on the connection between principals and teacher effectiveness, capitalizing on the recent research finding that principals have a substantial effect on student achievement by structuring how teachers work together to promote each other's learning (Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Supovitz, Sirinidis, & May, 2010). New Leaders chose the UEF and EPIC data sets because they identify and analyze principals (referred to as “highly effective” or “great” principals) whose schools made better than average gains in student achievement. These schools attributed their gains at least in part to strong leadership from the principal. As example, dramatic gains in the UEF case study were defined as combined gains in percent proficient in math and English language arts of 20 points or more. Incremental gains were defined as combined gains in percent proficient in math and English language arts of 3 to 10 points. The study's findings concluded that great principals amplified great teaching by working in three intersecting areas: developing teachers, managing talent, and creating a great place to work (New Leaders, 2012). The principals in those schools were actively committed to pursuing great teaching and demonstrated leadership actions that developed their teachers in all three areas within the context of their schools.

A growing consensus on the attributes of effective school principals shows that successful school leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways—the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of

effective organizational processes (Davis et al., 2005). Even with clearly defined expectations and leadership standards in place within a school district or statewide, successful principals do not develop these astute practices overnight. Research indicates that leaders need to be supported through comprehensive evaluations and continuous professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Without a solid support system, the best-laid plans for strengthening the principalship are jeopardized. Support for the principalship must revolve around leadership for learning. To sustain a new breed of leaders for greater student learning, school systems must take a fresh approach to professional development, mentoring, coaching, and peer support networks as well as principal compensation (IEL, 2000).

Standard VI: External Development Leadership

Productive partnerships between school districts and external supports are underutilized resources for instructional improvement in education today. To support instruction, districts must provide a wide array of assistance to schools. Largely, districts are responsible for holding schools accountable for their activities and performance, providing support in assisting school faculties to build their capacity to better instruct students, and sometimes brokering between schools and outside providers of service and materials. Principals are responsible for developing and maintaining the connections to external partners within their school building and leading all constituents towards the same goal.

Encouraging external support. Building-level school principals interact with district supervisors, teachers, parents, and students within the school and tie those

relationships together. Principals work to balance the competing needs of each of these constituencies by responding to problems and needs that are unpredictable. A principal's effectiveness is indirectly influenced by the perception that these stakeholders hold regarding his or her job performance (Blasé & Blasé, 1998). External Development Leadership engages the community in the support and ownership of its schools.

In many communities, partnerships between schools and other community organizations and agencies are helping to create supports that enable children and youth to learn and succeed and help families and communities to thrive. These partnerships bring together diverse individuals and groups, including principals, teachers, school superintendents, school boards, community-based organizations, youth development organizations, health and human service agencies, parents and other community leaders, to expand opportunities for children, families, and communities.

Creating a successful community school partnership is a complex, challenging, and time-consuming task. To be effective, partnerships need to engage in a thoughtful process to define a vision and clear goals. Partnerships need to have effective governance and management structures to ensure that programs operate efficiently and the partnership is responsive to community needs. Community school partnerships also need to draw from a broad range of perspectives and expertise—from inside the school as well as from other organizations and individuals within the community. Finally, community school partnerships need to connect, coordinate, and leverage resources from a variety of sources to support and continue their work.

Standard VII: Micro-political Leadership

According to Blasé (1991),

Micropolitics refer to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations . . . Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. Moreover, macro- and micropolitical factors frequently interact. (p. 11)

Blasé and Blasé (1997) maintain that most of the literature on the micropolitics of schools in the professional literature focuses on how individuals and groups influence others to further their objectives. Acknowledging political dynamics and intentionally pursuing them requires articulating the values that drive and organize leadership decisions. This very fact may distinguish micro-political leadership from distributed leadership. Distributive leadership in the literature is far more likely to take up technical issues of school organization than to examine what significance or relevance those issues have as micro-political leadership would do (Noguera, 2006).

Transformational leadership as an exemplar of micro-political leadership.

Micropolitical conflicts provide information. Sometimes the information tells us that people are shortsighted or selfish or irrationally stubborn. Sometimes the information shows us what adults in schools value in their professional practice and what families aspire to for their children. As a leader, understanding those values and attempting to serve them would inform leadership practice.

The concepts within the theory of transformational leadership align to micro-political leadership. The result of this leadership is a mutual relationship that converts followers to leaders and leaders into moral agents. The concept of moral leadership is

proposed as a means for leaders to take responsibility for their leadership and to aspire to satisfy the needs of the followers. Burns's position is that leaders are neither born nor made; instead, leaders evolve from a structure of motivation, values, and goals. Ethical behavior is directly related to leadership in organizations. Research indicates that employees take leader's behaviors as model in organizations. If leaders have ethical conduct, employees also have ethical conduct (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001; Treviño et al., 1998).

Leaders also have the responsibility of guiding the behaviors of the followers and institutionalizing the moral values and ethical conduct standards as well as increasing the effectiveness of the organization (Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004). Until recent years, ethical aspects of the management were largely abandoned and managers were considered as people who are responsible of ensuring effectiveness merely (Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart, 2001). The researchers of transformational leadership have generally tried to find its effect on employees' attitude, efforts and performance. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) have examined the influence of transformational leader's behaviors on organizational citizenship. In addition, Pillai, Schriesheim, and Williams (1999) have studied the influence of transformational leadership on organizational citizenship through operational justice and trust.

A transformative leader, simply defined, is a person who can guide, direct, and influence others to bring about a fundamental change, change not only of the external world, but also of internal processes (Jahan, 2000). Gunter (2001) says that

transformational leadership is about building a unified common interest between leaders and followers. Sergiovanni (1991) describes transformative leadership as:

leaders and followers are united in pursuit of higher-level goals that are common to both. Both want to become the best. Both want to shape the school in a new direction. When transformative leadership is practiced successfully, purposes that might have started out being separate become fused. (pp. 125–126)

According to Burns (1978), leadership must be aligned with a collective purpose and effective leaders must be judged by their ability to make social changes. He suggests that the role of the leader and follower be united conceptually and that the process of leadership is the interplay of conflict and power. Burns insists that for leaders to have the greatest impact on the “led,” they must motivate followers to action by appealing to shared values and by satisfying the higher order needs of the led, such as their aspirations and expectations. Burns (1978) is quoted to have said that “transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and the led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both” (p. 306). The leader is not merely wielding power, but appealing to the values of the follower.

The human aspect of the leader cannot be ignored when discussing leadership. Rather than focus on themselves, a transformational leader inspires and motivates followers and fosters a desire to improve and achieve and demonstrating qualities such as optimism, excitement about goals, a belief in a future vision, a commitment to develop and mentor followers and an intention to attend to their individual needs. As a transformational leader, the influence of the principal embodies the mission and vision of

the school. What is important to the principal is communicated throughout the organization and reflected in performance. English, Hoyle, and Steffy (1998) say the job of all educational leaders is to develop a highly reliable organization in which all children can be successful. Leading then, in my opinion, really has little to do with title, status, or even location; although primarily in school settings, we consider the leader to be the principal. Unfortunately, with traditional thinking, leaders are those in authority and those who have the title of responsibility. The principal is the primary person of authority and ensures students have access to high quality instruction and that they are learning. They have the enormous task of making certain that everyone in the building is also focused on the students and their learning. A shared leadership approach is more effective. Rusch (1995) quotes Follett who said “a true democratic approach is based on mutual influence rather than equal opportunity to gain power over others” (p. 4).

Similar to Burns’s (2003) investigation of reputable leaders, Jim Collins (2001) shared a similar orientation to leadership when he attempted to uncover how companies transformed from good to great. Collins describes a Level 5 leader. A Level 5 leader bears a striking resemblance to a transformational leader; both a transformational leader and Level 5 leader guide their organizations through change. Both make adjustments to organizational systems and structure; both go above and beyond, and create fundamental changes in the organization’s basic political and cultural systems. However, Level 5 leaders are humble and unpretentious; they often credit luck or others for their accomplishments and transformational leaders are seen to create their own luck (Collins, 2001). Combining personal humility and professional will, level 5 leaders push

themselves to do whatever it takes to produce great results for their organization and they pursue successors that will continue on in their success. They possess many of the same qualities as a transformational leader, without the over-inflated ego that causes an organization to falter when the charismatic transformational leader is gone and the leadership vacuum remains.

Burns and Collins both look at what unique personal values that exceptional and committed leaders possess that empower others to transform the organization. Thomas Sergiovanni (1992) also describes a transformational leader through the lens of servant leadership. Sergiovanni believes servant leadership is critical to the positive change that will take place in schools. Sergiovanni believes in the inner self and focuses on core values that are represented in every good leader. He speaks about leveraging the skills and expertise of those around you, because he believes a good leader does not always have everything necessary to be a good leader at all times. Sergiovanni's work relies much on values and how these values can be transmitted to students through leadership. He particularly chooses four core values: hope, trust, piety and civility. By modeling these values and showing them in school leadership, teachers can become more effective at transmitting knowledge and skills to their students. Sergiovanni's (1992) book, *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement*, gives insight on these core values and how moral leadership shows how creating a new leadership practice—one with a moral dimension built around purpose, values, and beliefs—can transform a school from an organization to a community and inspire the kinds of commitment, devotion, and service that can make our schools great. Sergiovanni (1992) explains in this book the

importance of legitimizing emotion and the need to get in touch with the basic values and connections of others. He reveals how true collegiality, based on shared work and common goals, leads to a natural interdependence among teachers and shows how a public declaration of values and purpose can help turn schools into virtuous communities where teachers are self-managers and professionalism is considered an ideal.

Intellectual curiosity is another critical skill for successful leaders. In leaders, it gives the freedom to be curious and ask “why” without assigning blame. Curious leaders are continuously searching for answers. An environment that values rational inquisitiveness and openly discusses student learning outcomes and demands high expectations for learning is highly encouraged. The psychological research of Judge, Bono, Illies, and Gerhardt (2002) and Judge and Bono (2004) found that openness to experience was associated with transformational leadership. Because they are creative, individuals high in openness to experience are likely to score high in intellectual stimulation. Additionally, individuals high in openness to experience may also exhibit inspirational leadership behaviors. Because they are imaginative and insightful, they are likely to be able to see a vision for the organization’s future (Judge & Bono, 2004).

Traditional conceptualizations of openness to experience include culture (an appreciation for the arts and sciences and a liberal and critical attitude toward societal values) and intellect (the ability to learn and reason; McCrae & Costa, 1997). Openness to experience also represents individuals’ tendencies to be creative, introspective, imaginative, resourceful, and insightful (John & Srivastava, 1999). Individuals high in

this trait are emotionally responsive and intellectually curious (McCrae, 1996). They tend to have flexible attitudes and engage in divergent thinking (McCrae, 1994).

Creative thinking, dialogue/inquiry, and visionary are all competencies within the competencies for NC school leaders. These leadership behaviors manifest themselves in many different ways—from the hiring practices of school leaders, the organization of their professional learning communities, to the inquisitive interactions the learners engage in within the school. Leaders who use asking questions in a variety of ways and as the teaching tool helps adult learners and students to learn and think critically. Learning to ask the right questions, at the right time, is a function of higher levels of human thinking behavior and an art in itself. Curiosity is truly the hallmark of all achievement and success. Fostering curiosity and the ability to appropriately questions things that don't make sense or feel right are important personal leadership skills and in some cases, a life-saving skill.

Standard VIII: Academic Achievement Leadership

For students, much psychological research has focused on identifying predictors of academic performance, with intelligence and effort emerging as core determinants for entrance into higher institutions (von Stumm, Hell, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011). Their results highlight that a “hungry mind” is a core determinant of individual differences in academic achievement. In particular, students with higher cognitive ability (quicker learners) and those who are more hard-working and well-organized (higher conscientiousness) tend to perform better in educational settings. That is, ability and effort are important determinants of academic achievement and applying those behaviors

is driven by their intellectual curiosity. Schools are expected to stimulate intellectual curiosity among their student populations and this has recently become an implicit part of the measure of effectiveness for schools in the sense of considering student growth.

Bringing all students up to an ambitious standard of academic learning in basic subjects has become the cornerstone of nearly two decades of state reform policy, including the federal NCLB Act. More recently, the federal Race to the Top grant also set high expectations for student learning through comprehensive reform. In the NC Race to the Top (RttT) proposal, NC committed to the explicit inclusion of student growth as part of the teacher and school leader evaluation instruments (State Board of Education, 2010).

Considering student growth. In July 2011, the SBE added a sixth standard to the teacher evaluation instrument called Teachers Contribute to the Academic Success of Students. The SBE also added an eighth standard called Academic Achievement Leadership to the school administrator instrument. For school leaders, the rating on the eighth standard will be based on the school-wide growth value. During the 2011–12 school year, the SBE established definitions of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013b). These definitions will eventually be infused into new policies on career status (tenure), licensure, teacher retention and dismissal, incentives and policies for equitable teacher and leader distribution, and evaluation of teacher and leader preparation programs in North Carolina.

While “effective” teaching and school leadership will become a part of the policies mentioned above, the actual force of those policies hinges on the rigorous

implementation of an evaluation system that identifies effective teachers and leaders. This shift in thinking supports the notion that North Carolina believes a teacher's ability to make significant growth with his or her students is critical to the future of education and children in North Carolina. Given its importance, student growth will continue to be an integral component of the teacher and principal evaluation process. Teaching and learning will be most improved when the teacher evaluation system is used honestly, with fidelity, and in a way that demands excellence from educators (Danielson, 2007).

North Carolina used this rationale as part of the state's ESEA Waiver request (NCDPI, 2012a). Student growth will now become one of the state's measures that support effective teaching and leadership. North Carolina is one of eight states receiving flexibility waivers from key provisions of NCLB in exchange for state-developed plans to prepare all students for college and career, focus aid on the neediest students, and support effective teaching and leadership (NCDPI, 2012b). North Carolina's waivers allow the state to move away from the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measure, which is an "all or nothing" measure. Many felt the AYP process unfairly labeled schools for missing one or two targets among many and provided disincentives to states that wanted to implement new accountability models, more rigorous standards and other improvements. North Carolina's schools may see the impact of these waivers as early as the summer of 2013. Rather than reporting on AYP, NCDPI will report on Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). AMOs is defined as a series of performance targets that states, school districts, and specific subgroups within their schools must achieve each year to meet the requirements of NCLB. AMOs include more specific achievement targets for

each student group, high school graduation rate targets for each student group, attendance rate targets for students in grades K–8 and guarantees that at least 95% of students participate in testing. In 2012, North Carolina’s graduation rate was 80.2%, the highest in state history and the annual dropout rate was 3.43%, the lowest in its history (NCDPI, 2012a). To maintain and exceed this level of success in schools, leadership must be examined and documented to replicate those effective leadership practices that have the greatest impact on teaching and learning among school leaders.

Evaluating Effective Leadership in North Carolina

Principal leadership assessment and evaluation can be an integral part of a standards-based accountability system and school improvement. When designed appropriately, executed in a proactive manner, and properly implemented, they have the power to enhance leadership quality and improve organizational performance at three levels (Goldring, Cravens, Murphy, Elliott, & Carson, 2008). At the individual level, assessment can be used as a benchmarking tool for essential personnel functions, such as documentation for annual reviews and compensation. At the level of continuous learning and development, leadership assessment can serve as a powerful communication tool, providing both formative and summative feedback to a school leader, where incumbent school principals may make informed decisions regarding development and improvement by identifying gaps between existing practices and desired outcomes. At the level of collective accountability for school-wide improvement, leadership assessment can set the organizational goals and objectives for the school leader. When the domains of school leadership that impact student achievement are included as the assessed targets (Heck,

Larsen & Marcoulides, 1990; Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Goldring et al., 2008), leadership assessments help school leadership focus on those behaviors that are associated with student learning. It is concluded in the literature there are leadership characteristics that are timeless; however, how they are evaluated may change.

In recent years, educators and policymakers have agreed that principals are critical to school success and have repeatedly pointed out the need to aggressively recruit and select highly qualified candidates (Fuller, Young, & Baker, 2011). Surprisingly, however, the evaluation of principals has not drastically changed. The empirical base seems very thin when it comes to changes in policy documents on school leadership. Moreover, discussions of typical principal evaluation practices have often been highly critical. Reeves (2009) characterizes most leadership assessments as “infrequent, late, unhelpful, and largely a source of administrative bother” (p. x). However, growing pressure to increase student achievement, particularly the passage of NCLB, has generated new thinking about the role of principal evaluation in boosting individual and organizational performance. While still unstudied and unproven, North Carolina has accepted the challenge to offer promising avenues for improvement with the recent changes in performance evaluation. The SBE is deeply committed to implementing a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation system for teachers and principals that combines measures of student growth with other research-based indicators to help ensure that every student has effective teachers and that every school has an effective principal (State Board of Education, 2013).

Developing State Standards Aligned to Performance

The new standards for School Executives in North Carolina were developed as a guide for principals and assistant principals as they reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout all of the stages of their careers (State Board of Education, 2006). The standards serve as a foundation for the evaluation process used for all school executives. The intended purpose of the evaluation process is to assess the principal's or assistant principal's performance in relation to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives in a collegial and non-threatening manner (State Board of Education, 2006). Behaviors in the evaluation process are rated at the end of the year by the principal's immediate supervisor, usually the Superintendent. As shown previously in Figure 4, the continuum of performance ranges from developing to distinguished. Principals and their supervisor communicate throughout the school year and data is collected and shared around what the principal is actually doing day-to-day to improve student performance at the school. Combined with the artifacts collected and the knowledge the supervisor has about the principal, this information is documented on the rubric and the final rating on the continuum is determined. The behaviors described in the evaluation instrument correspond with the levels of performance and are cumulative across the continuum. The Developing principal or assistant principal may exemplify the skills expected of a principal or assistant principal who is new to the position or an experienced principal or assistant principal who is working in a new school, or who needs a new skill in order to meet the standard. Likewise, a "distinguished" principal or

assistant principal exhibits all of the skills and knowledge described across the entire continuum.

North Carolina has invested a great deal of time and money on designing a system to measure the effectiveness of teachers and leaders and to provide formative professional development that improves performance. The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century (State Board of Education, 2013). This mission requires a new vision of school leadership and dictates the need for a new type of school leader—an executive instead of an administrator (State Board of Education, 2013). Schools in the 21st Century demand principals who are adept at creating systems for change and building relationships with and across staff. Leaders are expected to fully utilize everything that affects the school to provide direction and vision in order to make the school function successfully. As exemplified in the North Carolina School Executive standards, the job of a principal is uniquely complex, interrelated and combines both practice and competence. Understanding both the needs of the school and the skills and qualities of the leader is embedded in the expectations of the principals and in the evaluation process. School systems must “reinvent the principalship” to meet the needs of schools in the 21st century (IEL, 2000).

North Carolina also invested a great deal of effort on aligning performance standards with evaluation tools, with teacher and leader preparatory programs and with comprehensive statewide support structures. The North Carolina Educator Evaluation

System, the first of its kind in the country, aligns the state's evaluation system with educator standards and is impacting 116 districts, 9,000 schools, 100,000 teachers and 1.4 million students across North Carolina (McREL, 2010). Prior to 2008, there were consistent measures and practices for classroom teachers but not for school leaders. A paradigm shift has now occurred in North Carolina that provides a uniform system of evaluation for school leaders. The uniform system expects evidence and credible research to establish what the elements of effective leadership are.

Every school principal in North Carolina as of August 2010 was required to be evaluated using this uniform system of performance. A validity study was conducted in 2009 to present evidence supporting (or refuting) a test use for the set of proposed uses addressed in the study. It was concluded that there is strong validity in the implementation of the evaluation process to address the purposes for which they are intended (McREL, 2010). The instrument works in such a way that there is room for growth on the part of all of the principals and assistant principals, regardless of the demographic characteristics of the school (McREL, 2010). Those factors did not seem to have a strong effect on the ratings principals were given, with inter-rater reliability, and correlations among the components of the evaluation instrument. Data indicated that each of the performance standards measures a different aspect of the same construct and are equally weighted (McREL, 2010). Currently in North Carolina, there are aligned and validated systems for superintendents, central office administrators, teachers, principals, and assistant principals.

Summary

There is increasing attention and an abundance of literature that declares school leadership has a significant impact on teaching and learning. Chapter Two presented a review of the extant literature related to the importance of school leadership, leadership capacity building constructs, leadership standards and notable behaviors, and assessing effective leadership in practice.

The problem is ascertaining how a principal effectively supports high quality teaching and learning. Knowing what leaders do is one thing, but, practical application of these experiences adds to the research on measuring the effectiveness of a principal, particularly on teaching and learning. While there is research demonstrating how principals influence school effectiveness; there is a gap in the research that informs how such capability is developed and how principal leadership influences teacher practice and what students learn (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005).

Next, Chapter Three describes the methodology, intent of the researcher, population and sample selection process, instrumentation, and data analysis process of this study. This study presented several strategies employed by successful principals in North Carolina utilized to develop this competence.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Leadership makes a difference in schools. A few scholars have made sustained contributions to the question of how formal leadership from principals affects a variety of school outcomes (Cohen, Darling-Hammond, & LaPointe, 2006; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, 2005), but many others have contributed to the accumulation of evidence that principals do, in fact, make a difference (Andrews et al., 1986; Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001; Fuller et al., 2011). Therefore, the study of the behaviors and practices of successful school leaders will provide insight on how to create more effective schools in the future. This thematic analysis presented the leadership perspectives of a set of principals who were identified as distinguished leaders in North Carolina and their view of effective teaching and learning. The NC Standards for School Executives, the description given to principals in North Carolina, serves as a guide for what behaviors are critical for this to occur.

Role of the Researcher

My current line of work is designing and implementing statewide training, brokering resources, and creating a comprehensive system of professional development and support that aligns to all of the new standards for North Carolina Teachers, School Executives (Principals and Assistant Principals), Superintendents, Central Office Staff,

and Support Staff (School Counselors, School Social Workers, School Library Media Coordinators, Information and Technology Facilitators, School Psychologists, and Speech-Language Pathologists). These standards are not only embedded in North Carolina's statewide initiatives such as the implementation of the new Standard Course of Study (which includes Common Core State Standards and North Carolina's Essential Standards), they incorporate the State Board of Education's guiding mission statement. The guiding mission statement expects schools to graduate students who are globally competitive and prepared for work and life in the unforeseen and unpredictable 21st Century (State Board of Education, 2013). This role has allowed me the opportunity to interact with many principals across North Carolina and understand the competencies and practices expected of principals, especially those illuminated in the Standards for School Executives.

Before 2009, North Carolina did not have a standardized measure of performance for all principals in North Carolina. Prior to 2008, every local education agency (LEA), or school district, individualized its local performance measures based on criteria it determined. Moreover, professional development for school leaders was also primarily localized with the exception of the state-supported Principals' Executive Program (PEP), which dissolved in 2007. Implementing a new statewide model of expectations exposed the need for a strong support system for leaders in North Carolina.

As of 2010, a new state-supported leadership program, the North Carolina Distinguished Leadership in Practice Program (also known as *NC DLP*), was established and the North Carolina Standards for School Executives was strongly emphasized in its

core curriculum. This program combined the research-based approaches of collegiality and the practical application of knowledge through the concepts of leadership within the professional standards. As the role of the principal changes, so does the way they learn and influence the total school. Research shows that leaders need continuous feedback and opportunities to practice their skill. Therefore, opportunities for leaders to share and put their knowledge to work day-to-day is essential (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). The cohorts from the program spent valuable time learning and sharing their knowledge and principals took what they learned back to their schools to apply with their staff. This program evidenced to attract the best and brightest leaders in the state of North Carolina. Not only did the principals in the program prove to have high performing students, they proved to have strong leadership backgrounds and experience with developing strong leadership within their schools.

I sought to develop an understanding of how a principal's leadership style and their leadership behaviors impacted teaching and learning in a school building. Research shows that it is vital that the principal's interactions with teachers enable the school to focus purposefully on student learning (Lambert, 2003). The indirect nature of the principalship relies heavily on building the capacity of that adult community, the teachers, in the school (Lambert, 2003). As a result, building capacity was another underlying aspect of this research that I explored.

Justification of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to present a thematic analysis of school leadership in North Carolina through the perspective of a cohort of successful school leaders. The

study combined a narrative outlook of the principal's leadership style, coupled with an exploration of the principal's evaluation and student performance values of the school. Although the study used a population of principals who participated in extensive leadership development training, results from this study will show the relationship between school leadership practices and student performance for any school leader.

Research Design

The guiding question throughout the study was, "*How does a principal's leadership support high quality teaching and learning?*" This study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?
2. What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of NC *DLP* principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
3. What are NC *DLP* principals doing to develop "leadership capacity" that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
4. What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?
5. What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?

This study used a qualitative research methodology referred to as a thematic analysis. Data from semi-structured face to face interviews (see Appendix C), a

leadership survey (Appendix D), formative observations and site visits including follow-up interview questions (see Appendix E) with the principals were analyzed thematically.

A thematic analysis was chosen as the most appropriate data analysis strategy for this study. This is a strategy for identifying, describing, analyzing, and reporting themes and patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was chosen because it is a flexible technique that can be used to analyze data obtained under a number of qualitative theoretical frameworks, including grounded theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and because it is relatively easy and quick for new qualitative researchers to learn (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A drawback to using thematic analysis is that its methodology is not well-described and thus is open to interpretation especially at higher levels of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, it was judged that the benefits to using thematic analysis for this study outweighed this drawback as deriving the leadership patterns and themes of effective school principals was the purpose of this research.

Thematic analysis allows for either a rich description of the data set related to a broad research question or a detailed description of a particular theme within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the former option, typically the researcher is interested in gaining a cross-section of experiences related to their research question, and he or she uses an inductive approach in which patterns and themes are linked to the data and are not fundamentally driven by the researcher's prior theories or preconceptions (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the latter, researchers are typically interested in a very specific idea derived from reading the literature, from their prior research studies, or from a clinical experience. These researchers tend to take a theoretical or deductive approach

to their thematic analysis that derives from their pre-existing ideas (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). All thematic analyses include not only a description of the themes identified but also an interpretation of these themes, often in relation to previous reports in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Although there is no single, accepted approach to analyzing qualitative data, several guidelines exist (Creswell, 2005). To protect the integrity each interview, each interview was fully analyzed (i.e., coding, pattern matching, organization by themes, and formative data analysis). Once the data for the interviews were individually analyzed, data from the interviews and observation notes were analyzed again in search of patterns and themes that helped to make inferences regarding the leadership themes that emerged.

The formative data analysis of this study was completed utilizing Creswell's (2005) generic six-step process:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis which involved transcribing interviews and member-checking, field notes, and reviewing documents.
2. Read through all the data in order to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning.
3. Began detailed analysis with a coding process—organize the material into chunks or categories.
4. Use the coding process from Step 3 to organize the categories into themes for analysis and looked for connections between the themes.
5. Define how the themes were represented in the qualitative narrative.
6. Formulate an interpretation or meaning of the data (Creswell, 2005).

Study Participants

Participants in this study were principals from the NC Distinguished Leadership in Practice (*NC DLP*) program. The *NC DLP* program is a cohort-based leadership development program for school leaders sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Association of Administrators. Cohorts were provided with the opportunity of yearlong professional learning that included capacity-building activities. Through the yearlong *NC DLP* program, principals critically examined the meaning of “distinguished” school leadership through a problem-based, real-world application approach. Highly effective or “distinguished” school leaders, are leaders who are highly skilled at creating systems for change and building strong communities and relationships while improving student performance (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013b). For this learning to occur, participants agreed to be transparent about the operational framework they developed in their schools to allow the revelation of theory to unfold around their leadership.

The program began in 2010 with 34 principals from all across the state of North Carolina who were selected to lead the state’s initiative. As North Carolina is divided into eight regions, there were at least three principals from each of the eight regions of the state represented in this inaugural cohort. Eleven were males and 23 of them were females. As of this writing, 18 of the 34 principals were currently serving as principal in the same school since 2010. Six of the 34 had moved and were currently serving as principal at a different school since 2010. Six of the 34 principals had accepted promotions and were currently serving in district or state leadership roles. Three of the

34 retired from the profession. The whereabouts of one principal was unknown at the time.

Six of the 34 principals who graduated from the program in 2011 were included in this study as the purposeful sample group (Patton, 2002). There were three Elementary principals, two middle school¹ principals, and one high school principal, all at the same school since 2010. There are two females and four males. Between them, over 120 years of experience was represented. The minimum years of educational experience were 11. The minimum years either principal has served as a principal was six years. All but one principal began his/her career through a traditional educational track. One principal was a former textile worker who lost his job and returned to school and completed his degree in education.

Mrs. Carrie Smith

Mrs. Carrie Smith is currently the principal of an elementary school in the Triad area of North Carolina. Her career as a school leader was instigated by an Assistant Principal vacancy at the school where she taught. Shortly after completing the degree, she returned to the school as Assistant Principal for three years. Mrs. Smith has served as a principal for a total of seven years. Six of those seven years were at the same school. She has a Bachelor's in Education, Masters of School Administration, and currently pursuing a Doctor of Education. This is her 18th year in education.

Mrs. Smith has been recognized as a leader who achieves results. The Superintendent moved her to a new elementary school in January 2013 as part of the

¹ One middle school principal moved to the high school mid-year.

district's strategic staffing plan. Carrie's new school is a Race to the Top school, which means the school has not made the expected five points of growth since 2010 and needs to improve swiftly. The school most recently led by Carrie had a school-wide performance composite score of 51%, with 58% of students scoring above Level III in reading and 74% of students in math in 2011. The school was recognized as a School of Progress, which means 60–80% of students are at grade level (NCDPI, n.d.).

Dr. John Camp

Dr. John Camp is the principal of an elementary school in western North Carolina. Dr. Camp has 28 years of experience in education. He has a Bachelor's in Education, Masters in School Administration, and Doctor of Education. John began his career as a Social Studies teacher at a junior high school. He served as an Assistant Principal for eight years before becoming a principal. Throughout his administrative career, Dr. Camp served nine years as a middle school principal and has currently served this elementary school for six years. In addition to being a principal, John teaches graduate education courses at a local university and has hosted administrative interns at their school every year for the past ten years.

Dr. Camp leads a school who had a performance composite score of 76.3% in 2011. Students at this school performed at 82.7% in reading and 93.5% in math. This school was designated as a School of Distinction and High Growth status, which means 80–90% of students are at grade level and student growth was measured as exceptional within one school year (NCDPI, n.d.).

Mrs. Lisa Mackey

Mrs. Lisa Mackey is beginning her 24th year in education. She is the principal of an elementary school in southwest North Carolina. Lisa began her career as a high school Biology teacher. Her interest in leadership started with an involvement with Standards and Accountability Commission with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as a classroom teacher. Following this experience, Mrs. Mackey began work on a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction and later switched to pursue a Masters of School Administration. Lisa served two years as an Assistant Principal at a high school, two years as a middle school principal; and three years at one elementary (intermediate) school, two short years at two other elementary schools, and has been principal at this elementary school for five years.

The school that Mrs. Mackey leads had a performance composite score of 85.2% in 2011. Students scored at 86.8% proficient in reading and 91.9% in math. In the three year trend data, this school has maintained a high percentage of students at or above grade level. The school was designated as a School of Distinction with Expected Growth status in 2011 (NCDPI, n.d.). Lisa has decided to retire in December of 2013.

Dr. Mark Amos

Dr. Mark Amos did not begin his educational career through a traditional path. Before becoming an educator, Dr. Amos was the Superintendent of a local textile plant and the president of manufacturing (Jacquard weaving) in a company of about 35,000 employees. Realizing in the early 1990s that the textile industry would likely not continue to thrive in a hostile labor market, he returned to school and pursued a Master's

in Business Administration. As a result of a layoff, Mark began taking education classes at the local university and was soon hired first as a high school Special Education teacher for students with autism. His next teaching position was teaching Cisco networking at another high school under the leadership of a very motivating and successful principal. This inspired Mark to pursue a Masters in School Administration and he promptly became Assistant Principal at a high school in the district. In addition to a Masters of Teaching, Dr. Amos has obtained an Educational Specialist degree and a Doctor of Education. He served three years as Assistant Principal and six years as principal at the middle school in northwest North Carolina. As of this date, Dr. Amos has been promoted to Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction in another school district in North Carolina.

Since his leadership at the middle school, student achievement has soared. In 2008, the performance composite score of the school was meagerly at 64%. Today, the school has a performance composite of 68.1%, with 77% of students scoring at Level III or above in reading and 86% of students in math in 2011. This school was designated as a School of Distinction and achieved High Growth (NCDPI, n.d.).

Mr. Carl Brown

Mr. Carl Brown has 16 years of educational experience. Carl has a Bachelors in Education, Masters in School Administration, and currently pursuing a Doctor of Education. His career began as a middle school Business Education teacher. Mr. Brown taught briefly and was an Assistant Principal for three years. Following, Mr. Brown served as a middle school principal in a neighboring urban district for two years and six

years at the helm of this middle school. Carl worked briefly for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as a District Transformation Coach prior to accepting the principalship at the current high school. Accepting the position allowed him to return to his former school district, however, under new district-level leadership. The superintendent was new to the district. The data collected on Mr. Brown primarily reflects the time spent in the middle school, as this is his first year at the high school. Mr. Brown was moved to the high school in January of 2013.

Prior to leaving the middle school, Mr. Brown kept students consistently growing academically. The middle school was designated as a School of Progress and Expected Growth status at the end of 2011. The performance composite score for the school was 66.8%. Students at or above Level III was at 72.9% in reading and 78.7% in math (NCDPI, n.d.). Many of the students he had at the middle school are now attending the high school he currently leads.

Mr. Greg Carter

Mr. Greg Carter is a high school principal in eastern central North Carolina. Mr. Carter was a classroom teacher and athletic coach for ten years. Drawn to administration by making the comparison of coaching and influencing a small team versus a total school community, he pursued a Masters in School Administration. Greg served as an Assistant Principal for three years before becoming a principal. He has been a principal for 16 years; nine years in middle school and seven years at this same high school. This year begins Mr. Carter's 27th year in education.

In 2011, students at Mr. Carter's high school performed at 94.6% proficient on their overall performance composite scores on their End-of-Course (EOC) testing. More than 95% of students scored proficient in English I, 89.4% proficient in Algebra I, and 91.9% proficient in Biology. The school received a No Recognition and No Expected Growth status in 2011, which means 60 to 100% of students are performing on grade level; however, students did not show significant growth within one year. Whereas proficiency is not a challenge for this school, growth is a major focus for Mr. Carter and his staff this school year (NCDPI, n.d.).

Approach to Data Collection

While this research was primarily qualitative, quantitative data was presented throughout this study. School achievement data for each principal was reported to further support the chosen sample population of principals as a perspective of the context for *NC DLP* Program participants (see Appendix F). Appendix F shows the school composite scores for each principal in this study in reading and math for 2009-10 and 2010-11, which illustrate the years of achievement for these principals and their schools during the time spent in the *NC DLP* program.

This study used a sample population of principals that participated in an extensive leadership development training program to focus on school leaders with a common knowledge background and principals with a proven record of leadership ability, measurable high student achievement, and an endorsement from their Superintendent. These principals led schools in both rural and suburban communities, their schools were located throughout the eight geographical regions of the NC, and their schools

maintained consistent academic growth with their student populations over the past two years. Table 1 shows the number of participants in this study and the distribution of the sample by state geographical region and school level.

Although participants represented different regions of the state, the *NC DLP* program structure was the same for all participants. The cohorts participated in the yearlong program in a blended environment of both face to face and online learning activities. The topics of discussion were built around the NC Standards for principals, also known as School Executives in North Carolina.

Table 1. Number of *NC DLP* Participants by Region and School Level

Cohort	Number Participating	Geographical Region	School Level
1 (2010–2011)	1	Triad	Elementary
	1	Southwest	Elementary
	1	Northwest	Middle
	1	Central	Middle/High*
	1	Eastern Central	High
	1	Western	Elementary

*Middle school principal moved to high school in 2012

The aggregate final summary evaluation ratings for all principals evaluated in North Carolina in 2011 was reported to describe the initial findings and conclusions of the educator effectiveness data by means of the seven leadership standards for NC School Executives discussed in Chapter 4. This was publicly reported data and helped to describe the perceived relationship between school leadership practices and student

performance across North Carolina. Chapter IV will present those summative findings as awareness into the educator effectiveness data collected by the state.

The qualitative data for this study were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, a leadership survey, formative observations, and site visits including follow-up interview questions. The focus of both the interviews and site visits centered on descriptive questions which revealed information about the “hows” and “whys” of changes in principal leadership behavior following participation in the *NC DLP* program as well as the impact of the leader’s practice on teaching and learning and organizational structures. The semi-structured interview responses and the leadership survey were made sense of by coding and categorizing the data into themes. Each of the questions in the semi-structured interview was based on the seven NC Standards for School Executives. The leadership survey was administered following the interviews. The leadership survey took approximately 10 minutes for each principal to take. Each principal was asked 17 questions in the survey that centered on statements that further interpreted the themes uncovered during the interviews. The initial themes were Leadership as a Skill, Leadership as a Process, Leadership as a Trait/Behavior, Leadership as an Influence, and Leadership through Relationships.

Both question sets were coded according to the frequency of responses collected throughout the interviews and the survey of each principal. As shown in Table 2, a strength value and frequency score was used to correlate the responses to both the face-to-face interviews and the leadership survey questions. A weak, moderate, and strong response code protocol was used to determine the score for each question based on the

themes that the question aligned to. For the interviews, 1 to 2 ticks was considered a weak response with a score less than 1.99, 3-4 ticks was considered moderate with a score below 2.99, and 5 or more ticks was considered a strong response code with a score up to 4.0 for the interviews and leadership survey responses. Neutral responses, or no ticks, were given a score of 0. For the survey, the researcher used a Likert agreement scale from 0 to 4 with neutral indicated by a 0, strongly disagree indicated by a 1, disagree indicated by a 2, agree indicated by a 3, and strongly agree indicated by a 4. Likert agreement scales are frequently used in surveys to measure respondents' attitudes by asking how strongly they agree or disagree with a set of questions or statements (Kumar, 2005). This type of evaluation method consists of using numbers which correlate with a person's view (Kumar, 2005).

Table 2. Strength Codes and Frequencies with Scores—Interviews

Strength Code	Frequency	Score
Strong	Occurrences of 5 or more times	3.0-4.0
Moderate	Occurrences of 3 to 4 times	2.0-2.99
Weak	Occurrences of 1 to 2 times	1.0-1.99
Neutral	No occurrences	0

Using the final frequency score, the strength codes were analyzed to identify the trends of the emerging leadership themes identified from the first face-to-face interviews. The analysis showed a strong correlation with the responses to the themes from the face-to-face interviews and the leadership survey. The initial leadership themes (skill,

process, behaviors, influence, and relationships) reoccurred and “skill” ranked the highest theme represented; followed by “relationships,” “process,” “influence,” and “trait/behaviors.”

Next, the survey questions using the Likert scale were analyzed to compare the trends of the leadership themes from the face-to-face interviews. Each question was developed with the initial leadership themes as the foundation. According to the frequency of the response, the score was calculated.

Data Collection Procedures

This study concentrated on six principals. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select the six participants. Every third name was randomly selected from the list of 18 NC *DLP* completers who were still at the same school since 2010. The random purposeful sample group of *NC DLP* principals represented approximately a third of those principals who were currently serving as the principal of a school in North Carolina. The decision to recruit a total of six cohort participants was based on the following reasons. First, all six principals in this study were practicing principals. Out of the 34 participants in the inaugural cohort, 24 were still serving as a school principal. Six of the 24 were new to their current school, therefore, this study concentrated on the 18 principals who were at the same school this year. Second, every third principal was chosen from the list of participants that were currently serving as a principal gave a manageable sample set in terms of scheduling interviews and transcribing their responses. Lastly, member-checking was used with the interview protocol. Each principal received

the transcription by email to verify the quality and content of the information compiled from the interview.

Each principal was contacted first by email to participate in this study (see Approved IRB consent in Appendix G). The e-mail contact described the study, outlined the expectations of the research, assured confidentiality, and asked for their commitment. Permission to tape-record each interview was sought from each principal. Once the principal agreed to participate, a face-to-face interview time was established. The semi-structured interview included 15 open-ended questions (one being a demographic question and one summary question at the end) that would measure the principal's perceptions of the eight School Executive standards (see interview questions in Appendix C). All semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face at each principal's workplace and time to observe throughout the school was incorporated. Each face-to-face interview lasted between 55 minutes to one hour per principal and a short observation time followed the interview that lasted about 30 minutes. These data were used to describe how and what these principals do to support high quality teaching and learning through their individual perspectives.

Interviews allow the researcher access to an individual's constructed reality and interpretation of his or her own experience through words (Creswell, 1998; Lichtman, 2010). In-depth interviews enable the researcher to seek an understanding of participants' perspectives of their experiences or situations through face-to-face encounters (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). In this study, the primary source of data collected was through the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Every question was asked to

every principal; however, depending on their response, the questions were posed out of number order. This enabled flexibility for me to respond immediately to issues raised by participants, to ask a probing question, and allowed principals to discuss issues considered to be important to them.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Measures of confidentiality were maintained throughout this process. No names or school districts were reported or disclosed and each participant had a chosen pseudonym for extra security. Personal identifiers were removed in accordance with the original IRB application and approved IRB modification (see Appendixes G and H) and participants were given pseudonyms. The face-to-face semi-structured interviews were transcribed from an audio recorder to Microsoft Word by Dragon Dictation software. Transcripts preserved the participant's and the interviewer's grammar, unfinished sentences, pauses, and placeholders as best as possible. Interview passages included in this report were subject to minor revisions; only when it was judged that the revision would not take away from the meaning of the passage but would facilitate easier understanding of the passage by the reader. Examples of revisions included correcting spelling and grammar mistakes and removing some of my minor contributions to the interview transcripts.

A leadership survey was conducted following the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The leadership survey (see Appendix D) was administered online by Qualtrics, an electronic survey-generator software program. The data was stored in the program behind a password. Participation was solicited by email according to the approved IRB application.

Observational data were necessary to strengthen data obtained through the semi-structured interviews. The interviews and leadership survey data were based solely on individual perceptions. The site visits were considered observational data for the study which included follow-up leadership questions for each principal. Site visits followed an observation protocol (see Appendix I) and responses were coded based on the initial leadership themes. The same strength code as previously used for the face-to-face interviews and leadership survey for the site visit observations. The researcher spent a full school day at each principal's school as an observer and interviewing the principal. These observational data added to the strength of the study as they provided another source of data for triangulation (see Table 3).

Table 3. Triangulation Table

Research Question	Semi-structured Interviews (see Appendix C)	Observation Notes	Leadership Survey Questions (see Appendix D)	Site Visits (see Appendix I)
1. What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?	x	x		x
2. What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of <i>NC DLP</i> principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?	x	x	x	x
3. What are <i>NC DLP</i> principals doing to develop "leadership capacity" that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?	x	x		x

Table 3. (Cont.)

Research Question	Semi-structured Interviews (see Appendix C)	Observation Notes	Leadership Survey Questions (see Appendix D)	Site Visits (see Appendix I)
4. What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?	x		x	
5. What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?	x	x		x

Observations included the following:

1. Principal interactions during day-to-day responsibilities.
2. Principal during non-instructional times and opportunities for teacher interaction.
3. Principal and teacher interactions in both individual and group settings (professional learning communities' time, planning time, hallways).

In total, 18 days were devoted to collecting qualitative data in the field in the spring and in the early fall. Reflective field notes from these observations were recorded using an observation protocol designed for each interview. The notes were transcribed for analysis using this protocol to facilitate further organization of the data for analysis.

Summary

The overall intent of this research was to highlight exemplars of performance from principals across North Carolina and share how the expectations of the state

standards can be demonstrated in daily practice and supported by focused professional development. Because these principals were considered distinguished by North Carolina standards, they were studied to understand what behaviors and practices were most important to them as leaders. Capitalizing on the word “distinguished,” the research was framed around what qualities and routines were demonstrated by those principals that could be replicated in others. Based on the tenets of the NC School Executive Standards, which is the foundation of the leadership program, the researcher engaged in an in-depth conversation with these individuals through on-on-one interviews and the initial findings were interpreted based on the group’s shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and practices.

Chapter IV presents the findings and an analysis for each research question explored.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to present a thematic analysis of school leadership in North Carolina through the perspective of a cohort of successful school leaders. The NC Distinguished Leadership in Practice (*NC DLP*) Program was designed to focus a yearlong cohort of principals and expose them to models of exemplary school leadership. This structure allowed participants to study the behaviors, attitudes, and competencies that define a “distinguished” school leader (NCPAPA, n.d.). This study described the skills of those distinguished principals in North and the leadership themes that evolved from the analysis. The qualitative data used in this study were collected through observations, in-depth semi-structured interviews, a leadership survey, and site visits including follow-up interview questions. Other data examined in this study was the aggregate final summary evaluation ratings for all principals evaluated in North Carolina in 2011. This publicly reported data were reported to describe the initial findings of the educator effectiveness data by means of the seven leadership standards for NC School Executives. This data helped to describe the perceived relationship between school leadership practices and student performance across North Carolina to be used for future research.

This chapter presents the findings of the thematic analysis describing the significant leadership strategies and behaviors that positively impacted teaching and learning for those school leaders. The analyses in this chapter will answer the following research questions:

1. What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?
2. What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of *NC DLP* principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
3. What are *NC DLP* principals doing to develop “leadership capacity” that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
4. What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?
5. What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?

Purposeful Sample Demographics

There were three Elementary principals, two Middle School² principals, and one High School principal from six school districts in North Carolina in this study. Table 4 identifies the background of each individual principal. There is over 120 years of educational experience represented between these principals.

Participants in this study were principals from the NC Distinguished Leadership in Practice (*NC DLP*) program in 2010. The *NC DLP* program is a cohort-based

² One middle school principal moved to the high school mid-year.

leadership development program for school leaders sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Association of Administrators. The program began with 34 principals from all across the state of North Carolina who were selected to lead the state with the opportunity of yearlong professional learning that included capacity-building activities.

Table 4. Principal Background

Cohort Year	Principal	School Level	Years of Experience	Race/Sex
2010-2011	Smith	Elementary	18	White Female
	Camp	Elementary	28	White Male
	Mackey	Elementary	24	White Female
	Amos	Middle	11	White Male
	Brown	Middle/High*	16	Black Male
	Carter	High	26	White Male

*Middle school principal moved to high school in 2012

As a cohort, eleven were males and 23 were females. As of this writing, 18 of the 34 principals were currently serving as principals at the same school since 2011. Six of the 34 were currently serving as principals at different schools since 2011. Six of the 34 principals had accepted promotions and were currently serving in district or state leadership roles. Three of the 34 retired from the profession. The whereabouts of one principal was unknown at the time. As a result, six of the 34 principals who graduated from the program in 2011 were included in this study as the purposeful sample group (Patton, 2002). The six principals represented six of the eight regions of the state, as

North Carolina is divided into eight regions. There were three Elementary principals, two middle school³ principals, and one high school principal. Two of the six were females and four males. Each principal in this study had been at their current school for at least five years.

Leadership Themes, Accoutrements, Competencies, and Standards

School leaders today are expected to be equipped with certain qualities and skills that develop systems for change and build relationships with and across staff that not only tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess but create powerful relationships that also stir their passions for their work with children (State Board of Education, 2006). While teachers are ultimately responsible for improving student learning in schools, changing the organizational conditions for improvement across schools is the central task of school leaders (Halverson et al., 2005).

The following section of this chapter is organized with an overview of the leadership themes, behaviors, and significant leadership standards that surfaced through the formative data collected from the interviews, a leadership survey, observations, and site visits of each principal's school. This will be followed by a discussion and analysis of the findings in relation to each of the five research questions that guided the study. Lastly, for each question, the chapter will present a summary of findings.

First, in order to analyze the connections to the themes revealed through the formative data collection of this study, a crosswalk was developed. Table 5 shows how the NC Standards for School Executives, the NC leadership competencies, Papa and

³ One middle school principal moved to the high school mid-year.

English's accoutrements (2011), and this study's exposed leadership themes associate with each other.

Table 5. Standards, Accoutrements, Themes, and Competencies Crosswalk

Leadership Theme	NC Executive Standards	NC Competencies	Papa and English's (2011) Accoutrements
SKILL	4 Human Resource Leadership	Communication Change Management	The understanding of the adult learner
PROCESS	1 Strategic Leadership 3 Cultural Leadership	Dialogue/Inquiry Sensitivity Conflict Management Emotional Intelligence Delegation	Ignored but intended skills
INFLUENCE	5 Managerial Leadership	Creative Thinking Global Perspective Time Management	Intellectual curiosity
TRAIT/ BEHAVIOR	7 Micro-political Leadership	Organizational Ability Customer Focus Personal Ethics and Values Visionary Environmental Awareness	Futurity Imaginativeness
RELATIONSHIPS	2 Instructional Leadership	Personal Responsibility for Performance Results Orientation Responsiveness Technology Judgment	Sense of human agency
	6 External Development Leadership	Systems Thinking	

Five significant leadership themes emerged among the principals. These themes included Leadership as a Skill, Leadership as a Process, Leadership as a Trait/Behavior, Leadership as Influence, and Leadership through Relationships. Table 6 shows the seven leadership standards and the themes that corresponded to the questions posed in both rounds of interviews. These were also the themes examined during the school site visits. These themes will be discussed throughout as evidence of the findings presented. At

times, the leadership themes and behaviors overlapped; however, these principals were very consistent with the behaviors they demonstrated throughout the study and this contributed to the connections made to their practice.

Table 6. Leadership Themes from *NC DLP* Principals

Standard	Corresponding Questions from Semi-Structured Interviews	Key Themes
1 Strategic Leadership	4, 2	Process
3 Cultural Leadership	9	
5 Managerial Leadership	6, 7	Influence
4 Human Resource Leadership	3, 8	Skill
2 Instructional Leadership	5, 12, 14	Relationships
7 Micro-political Leadership	11, 13	Traits
6 External Development Leadership	10	

*Question 1 and 15 were background and summary questions.

Research Question 1

What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?

The following is an awareness of the preliminary findings of the aggregate principal summary evaluation data using the NC School Executive Evaluation System for 2010–11 and 2011–12. This section also includes a discussion of the significant leadership standards, themes, and behaviors evolving from the thematic analysis of the purposeful sample in this study.

Key Finding: There is no significant correlation of a principal's summary evaluation ratings and their student growth scores for NC principals at this time. However, there is

evidence that professional development communities, innovation, and regularly engaging teachers in discussions about student achievement has made a difference in the schools of the NC DLP principals.

Every school principal in North Carolina as of August 2010 was required to be evaluated using the state's uniform system of performance, currently known as the educator effectiveness model. An eighth standard (student growth component) was added to the evaluation process in 2011–2012. As a collective, the eight standards interpret a full depiction of what the performance of a principal looks like and is ultimately defined as “effective” or “highly effective.” North Carolina has not fully implemented the educator effectiveness model at this time. Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, the state will report broadly on the quality of teachers and school leaders throughout the state using the five evaluation ratings. The continuum of yearly performance ranged from a score of 1 for not demonstrated to a score of 5 for distinguished, which is the highest rating one can receive. The report shows the percentage of principals rated on this continuum for each standard.

Year 2011–2012 serves as the baseline year for the State's educator effectiveness model and only aggregate summary evaluation ratings have been reported for all NC principals evaluated during the 2011-12 school year. This is due to the state statute deeming a principal's evaluation (or any state employee's evaluation) is part of the employee's personnel file therefore not subject to inspection and examination except at the will of the employee. As this effectiveness data continues to unfold at the end of 2013, North Carolina will consider publicly reporting the individual data of its principals and teachers. The 2012–13 school year will be the first true operational year for the

system. At that time, summary evaluation ratings will include student growth scores (school growth scores for principals) and will be translated into an “effective” or “highly effective” educator effectiveness status for educators who have three years of data to report.

According to the statewide data currently available, 19.4% of NC principals evaluated in 2011 were rated lower than proficient on all seven leadership standards. The leadership standards that are specifically related to teaching and learning are Standard Two, Three, and Four. Respectively, 96.5% of NC Principals were rated proficient or higher on Leadership Standard Two (Instructional Leadership), 97.1% on Leadership Standard Three (Cultural Leadership), and 97.8% on Leadership Standard Four (Human Resource Leadership).

As a comparison, 23.3% of administrators across the state were rated lower than proficient on all seven leadership standards. This shows a slight increase in the overall ratings of the principals. In regards to the standards that are specifically related to teaching and learning, 95% of NC Principals were rated proficient or higher on Leadership Standard Two (Instructional Leadership), 96.8% on Leadership Standard Three (Cultural Leadership), and 96.9% on Leadership Standard Four (Human Resource Leadership). It is noted that these distributions remained statistically consistent and there was no significant change between the ratings of each standard from year to year. The overall percentages did decrease slightly; however, there was less than a 2% difference of the ratings for each standard. Most principals were rated accomplished across the state. Less than 5% of principals were rated lower than proficient on any leadership standard.

Interactions with Staff around Instruction and Data

What has really made the difference in the schools of the *NC DLP* principals?

First, regularly engaging teachers in discussions about student achievement has made a difference in these schools. These principals constantly interacted with their teachers and discussed teaching and learning in this study. Mrs. Smith said: “We talk about student data, what we are doing to improve instruction . . . starting to create a culture of urgency not anxiousness, but urgency that we have to improve.” A data team meeting was observed at Mrs. Smith’s school with the fifth-grade team and Mrs. Smith participated in the discussion. Mrs. Smith has incorporated a regular opportunity for teachers to talk about student performance and make adjustments to their instruction daily. The fifth grade team has intentionally grouped their students according to skill level and the students move from teacher to teacher, depending on the day, to receive targeted instruction in that area. The teachers were discussing their recent progress monitoring data and working on new skill groups for the next week.

Dr. Camp used faculty meetings to talk about teaching and learning or “work on the work.” “Everybody has input,” he says. “I try to guide those conversations, but I also try to stay out of the way.” Another principal, Mr. Brown, who is new to his current school, said about improving instruction:

My staff understands that all I am doing this first year is collecting data. I am collecting data and I am pointing them in the right direction according to that data. Something that has already emerged is we really have to start doing something for our freshman class. That will be our real big focus going into next year. At the same time, it has to be my staff’s vision so I am collecting data and taking it back to them. Out of 400 freshmen, 200 got an F. They need to see that.

After visiting each of their schools, it was apparent that these principals continually engaged their staffs directly and expected staffs to problem-solve with their colleagues too.

Professional Learning Communities

Secondly, Mrs. Mackey believes professional learning communities (PLCs) have been instrumental in improving instruction at their school. She described the PLCs at her school this year as evolving into more about planning and studying the curriculum together. They were about formative and summative data last year, but this year,

it's been more about surviving the Common Core, a lot of work with just finding materials, helping each other, putting formative assessments together whether we really have data to compare or not, because we don't know what we are doing—we are just trying to get some data—that, well how did you teach this and this is how I taught that.

Mr. Carter said:

I think that I have been very strongly influenced by the whole PLC movement and that is that teachers collaborating especially good teachers collaborating has a way of challenging teachers, and sometimes a little competition among teachers is good especially if it is healthy competition. But I think master teachers can even learn from each other. I think that veteran teachers can definitely learn from young teachers and I think that collaboration is key.

Other evidence of discussions about teaching and learning among the principals was in their efforts to organize collaborative planning. The principals all made planning a priority. Dr. Amos even credited the Facilitators Guide to PLCs he received from the *NC DLP* program as a valuable document to use with teachers to guide productive discussions about teaching and learning.

Mrs. Mackey said they used the School Improvement team members in the summers to plan for the year. Throughout the year, the grade levels do the work. Mr. Carter expects teacher teams to make those decisions. He said, “they know who’s going to fit best with their PLCs.” Dr. Camp talked at length about the vision of the school and the impact of their PLCs. He has scheduled forty minutes of planning through PLCs each week for every grade level, during the day. Mr. Brown articulated that their school’s vision “really evolved through the PLCs model. To the point that the vision extended out to the families at this school. Teachers really bought into the collaboration piece. They also brought the parents into the conversation when dealing with their kids.” Dr. Camp also said that PLCs was a concept that the teachers took on. He proclaims that he just “planted the seed” and teachers have taken responsibility for them and own their communities. As a result of the urging of the teachers, they now have a school-wide literacy committee and the literacy team has representation from every grade in their PLCs. I observed three different PLC meetings (Kindergarten, First, and Fourth Grade) during the school visit. Each group had approximately forty minutes together and the teachers brought student formative assessment data to the table and discussions about adjusting instruction occurred.

Leadership as an influence was one of the major leadership themes uncovered in this study when leadership and student achievement was mentioned. Defining leadership as an influence means that leadership is an interactive event that occurs between the leader and the followers. Influence is central to the process of leadership because leaders affect followers. Leaders direct their energies toward influencing individuals to achieve

something together. Stressing common goals gives leadership an ethical dimension because it lessens the possibility that leaders might act toward followers in ways that use coercion or are unethical (Northouse, 2011). This was a theme copiously illuminated through these school's professional learning communities.

All of the principals in this study organized their instructional discussions through PLCs. They all supported their PLCs by attending and expecting teachers to be responsible for learning. Mrs. Smith mentioned in her interview that the teachers expected her to make all of the decisions regarding instruction when she first arrived at this school. She told the staff, "I'm not going to tell you what to do unless you have a problem with teaching your students." One of those same teachers who asked for direction was given a leadership role on their PLCs. From Mrs. Smith: "But before I got here, she never would have done that," said the Assistant Principal. Dr. Camp was presented with an idea of teaming in fourth grade. Admittedly he communicated to me that he was a bit apprehensive given the new accountability model being implemented in North Carolina, he nonetheless asked their PLC to research and present the idea to him and the rest of the staff. His leadership influence on the teachers on that team as well as the structure it is built upon encourages the collective decision to be made grounded in research and with stakeholder buy-in.

Innovative Thinking

Furthermore, what appeared to have made a difference in leadership and student achievement in these schools was innovative thinking. Principals in these schools were not always traditional thinkers and in-the-box problem solvers in their schools. They first

identified an area of need within the school and worked with their school leaders to solve those problems. For example, Dr. Amos said:

What we did at our school was there was no homeroom. And after about two years of analyzing data, doing groups with counselors, listening to the needs of our students, and looking at high achievement, we found that relationships with students had a great impact on achievement in the building. So the idea of homeroom was to provide a mentor to students with high needs and made sure we assigned them to people who could build relationships, so that gave them an initial time in the morning to get students started off positively in the morning so they wouldn't get derailed throughout the day.

The other principals challenged their staffs to look at their current practices and make cultural changes if necessary to benefit the students. Mr. Brown said:

I look at where most Fs come from. I might be unorthodox. I calculate Fs. If 45% of your students have Fs, what can we do about that? I don't believe in a lot of programs. I think AVID is great, but I don't think we need to pay money to help students with taking notes a certain way, notebooks are organized, visiting colleges, or algebraic thinking or hands-on instruction, when it's just the right thing to do. We should be doing that anyway. We have a group here called Socrates, which tries to support minority kids in AP courses. I told my staff we need to look at our culture to see why we need to have a something like this to do what's right for kids. Kinda like the Black History Month thing, shouldn't it be all year round?

Dr. Amos had this story to share:

Best story I tell was that two of my better teachers were sitting at lunch talking and I dropped into the conversation. They said I had a student who was a behavior issue and I put them in my advanced class and they were no longer a behavior issue. So I didn't say anything, but a couple of days later, I said you mentioned the other day that you moved students into an advanced class when their scores would not typically have been placed there, so my question to you is, "Did the behavior subside because the change of the mix of students or do you think it was because your expectations for that class was different and the students recognize that?" That got them thinking and they said they never thought about

that. They asked me what I thought and I told them that the research says that although your thoughts are not formally posted, they are informally communicated in a class that is advanced versus a class that is not. My challenge to you would be to teach every class as an advanced class and you won't have to move students. So we actually made all of our eighth-grade LA classes advanced about a year or two ago. Changing the expectations of students.

Lastly, Mr. Carter shared:

This school has good scores, a good school. Good athletics. Good arts. And so people didn't have a compelling reason to change. It wasn't until we drilled down a little bit and looked at kinda the dirty under belly of some kids who were not doing as well, and also growth. And that's the biggest issue I have fought against here and that is the difference between proficiency and growth. Our proficiency every year that I have been here has been above 90%. But our growth-- especially in some teaching areas—has not been up to the county average. So that's been a challenge, because when a teacher sees that 94% of their kids made 4s, it's awfully tough to get them to change. But we are . . .

Sometimes teachers just need a voice. Mrs. Mackey used her innovative thinking to adopt a Faculty Council. Faculty Council consists of the grade level chairs and the group meets with Lisa once a month, on things that don't necessarily focus on teaching and learning but may impact teaching and learning. They discuss functional issues like “there is not enough soap in the bathroom, not enough toilet paper, or duty schedules” or professional issues such as “things that need to be worked on or ideas that they want to change . . . that gives them an opportunity to serve the school community,” says Mrs. Mackey.

It was obvious from the site visits with these principals that they were not afraid to take risks with their staffs and were willing to take non-traditional routes to success. As I walked around with several of the principals, the teachers appeared very comfortable

with their leaders. One principal entertained a conversation with a teacher during lunch about adjusting the lunch transition and the principal invited the teacher to work on making that productive change. The teacher seemed excited to move forward with a plan.

Furthermore, Mrs. Smith led one of the first schools in North Carolina to implement the NC Responsiveness to Instruction (NCRTI) model. This principal reflected in our interview on how the idea came about:

Our team, Student Assistance Team, at the time said our kids need this and we may as well go ahead and do this. My AP and I went to all the meetings, all the trainings. The same “I don’t ask them to do anything I wouldn’t do” is true; but at the same time, if they are better at something I will let them do that. Just because I am the principal, doesn’t mean I think I’m better at something than them.

Mrs. Smith explained that she believed RtI proved to be a successful implementation for the school and that they implemented Positive Behavior and Instructional Support (PBIS) in their school the same way. The staff came to the leadership team [Principal and Assistant Principal] and said discipline was not where it needed to be and that they wanted additional training to improve. The entire staff went through the training again, and “we trained staff members and changed our homemade tricks . . . allowing them to make decisions and take risks. Building that trust level again, or if I said no—which was rare—but if I did, there was a reason or I would say go do some research and bring it back and let’s discuss it,” Mrs. Smith replied.

Another example of innovative problem-solving was how Dr. Amos addressed high discipline referrals at the middle school. Mark shared this story:

In 2007-2008 when I arrived at this school, we had about 800-900 write-ups (which averaged about two write-ups per student) and we were able to get that down below 300 consistently. It appeared that everything that could be was out of control. I believe that most things have relationships that tie together. Student Behavior does impact learning. I just went in and was able to coalesce different groups of people together and form committees. Like, we had a Healthy, Safe, and Orderly committee that looked at student discipline data; the school was doing some remnant of PBIS, so getting that team up and running and getting PBIS back into effect with fidelity and getting a team engaged in looking at data and celebrating once our data began to improve made a difference (personal communication, August, 29, 2013).

Utilizing Assistant Principals

Lastly, emerging from the conversations and site visits was the awareness of utilizing Assistant Principals in the teaching and learning process. There were differing ways Assistant Principals were utilized in their schools. The division of labor among the middle and high school principals was similar with regard to having multiple administrators available to lead the school and they all had evaluation responsibilities. Mr. Brown (who had three Assistant Principals) stated he struggles with involving all of his Assistant Principals in teaching and learning because the district hires a designated “Assistant Principal of Instruction” and this position makes it difficult to incorporate the others. It gives the impression that the other Assistant Principals have little to do with instruction. However, he admits that it is important for Assistant Principals to be intimately involved in instruction because they evaluate teacher performance.

The Assistant Principals at both the middle and high school were new to the level or new to the position. One Assistant Principal was previously an Instructional Facilitator and one moved from high school to the elementary school. They both were adjusting to an administrative role and the principal concentrated on transitioning them

in. The 10/2 method that had been implemented throughout one of the districts was recounted by Dr. Amos as a strong strategy that engaged their Assistant Principal in the teaching and learning process. The 10/2 process expects teachers to allow students to engage in discussion for two minutes for every ten minutes of instruction and then assess their learning. Mr. Carter changed the structure of their administrative team this year. The administrators are now responsible for a specific department; meaning they sit in on their planning meetings, observe the teachers, and handle all parent issues through that department. “Our goal is that we will develop a relationship with those kids, and this is the first year we’ve done this; last year we would have had one administrator for ninth grade, one for tenth grade and so forth . . .”

In Dr. Camp’s district, principals readily asked Central Office Administrators to include their Assistant Principals in the trainings and meetings being held for the Instructional Facilitators. It was apparent to this principal that the leadership models being taught in the colleges and universities as well as the expectations of the Assistant Principals serving the schools seemed heavily focused on the operational side of leadership rather than the curricular side. This was an area where the Assistant Principals needed to strengthen and acknowledging this through professional development was a step the district was taking this year.

Summary of Findings

Although the final summary ratings and student growth scores of the principals in NC do not yet show a significant correlation, these principals provide evidence that building strong Professional Learning Communities, engaging in frequent discussions

about teaching and learning, and problem-solving through innovation have proven to be effective practices that influence teaching and learning in the schools in this study.

The *NC DLP* Principals spent time engineering opportunities for teachers to focus on instructional practices and develop ways for students to learn. The findings in relationship to effective practices that influence teaching and learning shows that this behavior was embedded into their leadership styles and was showing evidence of success with student achievement. The analysis also revealed that this support structure has been sustained over time. There were only two principals in this study who recently moved to a new school at the beginning of this year. The principals with tenure at their schools reported that this strategy has been in place for several years. Teachers reported during the site visits that their leaders understand what is going on in their classrooms because they are intimately involved in the learning of both the students and the staff at the school. This is important because the literature supports the notion that “sustainable improvement requires investment in building long term capacity for improvement, such as the development of teachers’ skills, which will stay with them forever, long after the project money has gone” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 3).

Schools that function as a professional learning community supports and sustains the performance of all key workers, including teachers as well as students (AERA, 2003). Research also says that teacher social capital, or sharing of information, vision, and trust, positively impacted observed instructional quality and school achievement in reading and mathematics (Leana & Pil, 2006). As gleaned from the school performance highlights of each principal’s school in Chapter III, principals in this study have maintained consistent

progress in reading and mathematics. Professional Learning Communities in the schools of these *NC DLP* principals is the engine that drives instructional improvement. Whether it be data teams, grade level teams, or cross-pollinated teams, each principal had evidence of working PLCs and evidence of a focus on instruction through collaboration.

Through the skill of futurity, leaders must be exposed to learning frames that go against the grain of current wisdom (Papa & English, 2010). Thinking outside of the box and leading with creativity and imaginativeness is a skill that was evidenced with the *NC DLP* principals. Findings of innovative thinking like the creation of homeroom to connect students with a mentor teacher and converting all 8th grade Language Arts classes into advanced classes suggest this accoutrement kicked in and made making those changes acceptable and successful among the staff. Futurity is in action in these schools. Principals reported that teachers are central to the development of the school's mission and vision, their communication systems and processes, and the implementation of school-wide programs such as RtI. The principals have developed ways to give teachers an active voice in their schools and address issues through teacher leadership.

Research Question 2

What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of NC DLP principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?

The research of Papa and English (2011) on 13 high-achieving urban public schools in California sought to more clearly define and differentiate practices as they apply specifically to school leaders. In their compelling research, accoutrements are the significant aspects of a leader's style that blend acquired habits learned through the sum of life's experiences and habits of the mind that come from knowledge of self and the

collective energy of others (Papa, English, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012). In North Carolina, these perspectives and outlooks define effective leadership called competencies. The acquisition of certain competencies enables leaders to grow and become more effective over time (Papa et al., 2012). When a competency is exhibited, the understanding of the adult learner; sense of human agency; ignored intended skills; intellectual curiosity; futurity; and imaginativeness kicks in. It is the work on self and the outward evidence of that growth that becomes transparent in successful leaders which leads to effective schools. These behaviors shown through working PLCs, restructured administrative teams, and their transparency of communication among staff.

Key Finding: NC DLP principals have acquired strong leadership perspectives and outlooks over time and they bring structure to their experiential knowledge through the evidence of visibility, advocacy, and charisma.

Northouse (2011) says leadership as a “behavior” is what leaders do when they are in a leadership role. This behavioral dimension is concerned with how leaders act toward others in various situations. Unlike traits, abilities, and skills, leadership behaviors are observable. When someone leads, we see that person’s leadership behavior. Visibility, advocacy, and charisma are individual leadership behaviors that have positively influenced teaching and learning in these schools.

Visibility

Leadership as a Trait was the evident theme recurring with these principals. Micro-political Leadership was one of the executive standards that exemplified the transformational and servant leadership behaviors of the principals throughout this study. As described in Chapter II, within the Micro-political Leadership standard, a school

leader uses diversity and constructive differences among staff members to push the school toward its goals. The principal uses his or her awareness of staff needs, issues, and interests to build cohesion. The parallel accoutrements exemplified by these principals were futurity and imaginativeness. According to the attributes of the transformational and servant leadership theories combined, this leader would be the person who, by his/her charismatic attitude and behavior, transformed and changed behavior and the life of his followers developing a commitment to their personal and organizational objectives. They, moreover, are encouraged to transform their thinking about problems, situations, and are encouraged to have a new vision in line with personal and organizational goals. Both transformational leaders (charismatic leaders) and servant leaders (leaders focusing on individual and ethical practices) are two types of leaders needed in any area where the focus is on comfort, satisfaction and employee satisfaction and loyalty of its customers. In this instance, in schools.

These behaviors were demonstrated by these principals in several ways. One way was through using visibility as a key leadership trait. Four of the six principals noted that being visible was an important factor of their leadership style. They all noted that they were out front at the carpool every morning and at the bus lot in the afternoons. During the site visits, every principal was observed at the carpool line or talking with parents and students in the hallways in the morning and at the bus lot in the afternoon. "The day ends, I go out and I do bus duty every day. I see 1,000 kids. One thousand kids see me," said Mr. Carter and that was witnessed. Mrs. Mackey availed herself to teachers

immediately after school. “This time of day, there are a lot of teachers asking questions, coming up with ideas, or I am just walking around while teachers are in their PLCs.”

Mrs. Mackey described the first 15 minutes of the day as “checking on children.”

Lisa says:

Children are welcome here. Between 7:00-8:00am, it is quiet here, children are in orderly places; fifth graders have jobs and they go to their jobs at 7:30am. At 8:00, we do announcements, the pledge and our Learn, Think, and Lead and anything else important that day.

Mrs. Mackey said there was a time when students were not allowed in the building before 7:30am:

I allow children to enter the building as soon as parents can drop them off. Not being open before 7:30 does not always work for my parents . . . they may be on the sidewalk or waiting on the bus in the dark. I would rather they be here. They come here and they read—It is quiet here, they can read, it’s warm here and they will have breakfast.

When I visited this school, Mrs. Mackey was there early on that day and students were arriving to school as the principal described when I arrived. Promptly at 8:00 am, the principal began the morning announcements and students recited the school pledge. Next, I observed Mrs. Mackey have three informal meetings with the Assistant Principal and two teachers. They discussed routines that needed attention and they prepared for a discussion they were going to have with a grade level that afternoon.

Another example of high visibility is through Dr. Camp. Dr. Camp arrives at school between 4:50–5:15am each day. During this time, he checks email and answers messages from the day before. “This is something you can get behind on very quickly

and I try to respond promptly,” he declares. The principal’s mornings before school are spent reading local newspapers (Asheville, Charlotte, and Raleigh) and national websites like MSNBC as well. That way the school day is devoted to the staff.

Another important detail Dr. Camp mentioned was dedicating time to checking on his staff. He particularly mentioned the head custodian. She is currently in school and some mornings are spent touching base with her and keeping her encouraged. At that point, the instructional day began with “rounds” before announcements, conducting morning announcements, and opportunities to visit classrooms throughout the day.

Advocacy

Secondly, advocacy resonated among these principals through active participation in teaching and learning in their schools. Most of the principals felt it was their duty to ensure teachers have what they need to do their job and many times involved themselves in the learning process. Genuine interest in the needs of their staffs resonated with every principal at every site. Consistently these principals were advocating for their teachers’ needs while I observed their schools. The morning of one visit was shared with a visit from the Superintendent. The principal and Superintendent allowed me to overhear a few minutes of their conversation and they were discussing how to better support the one-to-one initiative at their school.

Dr. Camp said this about his teachers:

The responsibility of a 21st Century principal is around data. I kinda look at it as servant leadership. Not just mandating and telling them what they should be doing, but doing it for them.

Mrs. Mackey said this about her teachers:

I'm learning at the same time, so it is more facilitated and trying to find materials for them. Even as an instructional leader, I take the role of what an Instructional Facilitator would do at another school, I have to do it here; like finding materials and running things off for them.

Dr. Amos said, "I try to prioritize, but if someone needs me, I will stop what I am doing and help. I try to visit classrooms every day." Other principals discussed finding out what the needs of the staff are and differentiating to meet that need.

One significant comment was made by Mr. Carter:

So we have to understand that it is about differentiating . . . for the needs of the building so we talked about differentiating in the classroom but as a principal, you have to differentiate for the needs in your building—you have to know where support is needed, where you don't need support, and the key there is tying everything together.

Charisma

Charisma was another leadership trait that was demonstrated among these *NC DLP* principals. Charismatic leaders are very skilled communicators. They are individuals who are both verbally eloquent and able to communicate to followers on a deep, emotional level. Several principals described the qualities of a charismatic leader as an influence on their leadership:

I think that you have to have a lot of different experiences to become a charismatic leader and I would think that (and I have not been in education all of my career) . . . I have been deemed a renegade—so I am easy to get along with, but not when it comes to dancing around a problem. I believe in a direct approach. If there is a problem, let's face it, let's come up with a plan, let's move

forward . . . that comes from industry and quality training, which is why I loved Baldrige so much . . .

I treat my staff as professionals. If you have an appointment, let me know and just go. Maybe not culture, but attitude.

Remember our NC motto: To be rather than to seem. I don't want the parents to think I'm a different person from than the children think I am, than what my teachers think I am. I want them to be able to trust me and know what I say is my word. And that I will go to the ends of the earth to try to make it happen. And if I can't do it, I'll be honest about it. Sometimes I say wait . . . let me think about it . . . don't jump to conclusions until you have seen all the different sides to something.

Mrs. Mackey evidenced her charisma through the belief that she is an encourager as a leader. Her staff understands Mrs. Mackey truly has an open door policy and they can share things with them, positive or negative, that may impact them personally or their professional performance at school. Lisa also reflects that her encouragement is shown through modeling leadership:

I don't expect my staff to do anything that I wouldn't do. If there is something to clean up, I will do it too. I think they need to see me doing it. I want the kids to see me doing it, I want the teachers to see me doing it. I'm not too good to get out there in the pouring rain and direct traffic . . . child throws up, child bleeding then I put on gloves, take children home if I need to.

Lastly, another way charisma was modeled was by Mr. Carter. It is through the transparent insight into his core values; staff seemed enthusiastic about their leader and his leadership. He was witnessed to be a genuinely caring leader who constantly made connections with his school community. I walked the halls with him and many times the teachers took the opportunity to share their personal stories with me regarding their

feelings about this principal. Teachers seemed to appreciate knowing Mr. Carter was interested in them as a person.

I think the kids know that I care for them; the teachers know I care about them. I think that when they trust you and they know you care about them, they will do their best to perform. And that's teachers and kids.

Summary of Findings

According to these distinguished principals, the human aspect of the leader cannot be ignored when discussing leadership. Rather than focus on them, a visible leader inspires and motivates followers and fosters a desire to improve and achieve. A leader who is an advocate for their followers demonstrate qualities such as optimism, excitement about goals, a belief in a future vision, a commitment to develop and mentor followers and an intention to attend to their individual needs. A charismatic leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. Together, these are concrete behaviors and practices modeled by these *NC DLP* principals that prove to be successful in their schools.

Research Question 3

What are NC DLP principals doing to develop “leadership capacity” that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?

The success or failure of a school is often attributed to the leadership of the principal. The irony of the situation is that leadership is not a position or a person. It is a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of the school. Studies on school change indicate that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership within the organization (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Sustainable

improvement depends on successful leadership. But making leadership sustainable is extremely difficult. The roles and responsibilities that involve all staff and nurture collaboration are processes that will transform a school. In North Carolina, this resolve is embedded in all seven functions of leadership outlined in the NC Standards for School Executives (State Board of Education, 2006).

This description includes a discussion of leadership accoutrements, competencies, standards, and leadership themes that surfaced with the principals in this study. The behaviors will describe the competencies in the NC Standards for School Executives and they affirm the concept of accoutrements described in Papa and English's (2011) research. Within the Standards, it defines competencies that are obviously inherent in the successful performance of all of the practices listed under each of the seven critical functions of leadership. The principal may or may not personally possess all of these competencies but must ensure that a team is in place that not only possesses them but can effectively and efficiently execute them (State Board of Education, 2006).

Key Finding: The ability to apply leadership accoutrements through professional development and teacher empowerment to build leadership capacity was an important strategy used by NC DLP principals to support high quality teaching and learning in their schools.

The working definition of school leadership for this study was the “reciprocal learning process that enables participants in a community to construct meaning toward a shared purpose” (Lambert, 1998, p. 55). With that being said, there was an intimate connection between the seven leadership standards, the NC competencies, the accoutrements of leadership, the leadership themes from the principals, and the premise of building leadership capacity throughout this study. As principals in this study

maintained leadership within their schools and pragmatically applied their leadership styles on a day-to-day basis, the more discernible were the behaviors and themes that made a difference in those schools.

Embedded within those concepts were strategies to build leadership capacity within the schools. Building leadership capacity was a core construct of effective leadership explored in this study. Capacity was defined as the collective power of the full staff to work together to improve student learning school wide. The capacity-building principal focuses on developing the culture of the school and creating synergy of individual skills of teachers, learning relationships among teachers, a relentless focus on instruction, and ongoing mobilization of resources citation. Research shows that principals who have the ability to empower and encourages others to lead will have the potential to make a significant difference in teaching and learning and positively impact school improvement (Huber, 2004; Leithwood et al., 1999; Murphy, 2002; Yukl, 2006). Newmann, King, and Young (2000) found that successful schools have a certain “capacity” that enables them to focus on teaching and learning and is linked closely to student achievement. This is achieved by examining student learning and identifying actions needed in the classroom and the school for improvement (Fullan, 2006).

A leadership perspective that focuses on individual capacity is insufficient for understanding practice, therefore isolating the parts of leadership completely misses the power of the whole. The principals in this study focused on the leadership of their teachers in a variety of ways to ensure high quality teaching and learning. Multiple occurrences were noted throughout the study of how principals employed this concept to

maintain success within their schools. One emerging strategy was through the process of identifying a need and developing a plan to address the need. This was approached by these principals through professional development, teacher initiative, and building relationships among the staff.

Professional Development

An example of using professional development to build capacity and teacher leaders was visible and constant opportunities for the principal and lead teachers to lead learning opportunities to address a need. Dr. Amos had an extensive professional development calendar on the wall in the front office outlining opportunities the staff had to participate in. Beyond the regularly scheduled staff meetings on Wednesdays, the teachers were the facilitators of the workshop sessions. During the Wednesday staff meetings, Dr. Amos had workshop sessions and topics noted that he would facilitate. In particular, he facilitated sessions on Time to Teach (classroom management) and Positive Behavior and Instructional Support (PBIS); and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) in support of the school's English language learners. Mr. Carter conducts semester-long book chats with his staff on various topics that are a part of the yearly focus for the school. He introduced including an article or current text to present to his staff each month this year to continue the dialogue and invite professional learning opportunities for the staff. Dr. Amos brought in credible speakers, like Korrel Kanoy from Peace College who did trainings on EQI, which is Emotionally Quotient Inventory, to try to get people to discover that the emotional quotient, unlike intelligence, does change and can impact relationships and performance in the classroom. The coaching

model was also implemented to drive professional development at these schools.

Listening to Dr. Amos describe the impact of using transparent data analysis throughout the school was evidenced as:

Now we've pulled in professional development to work on the gaps we've identified. For teachers, it was important to look at their EVAAS growth data, and what we did was have our accountability person take every teacher in the building and create a running three year trend analysis for every teacher on proficiency and on growth. By every subgroup. So at our school, we had 25 subgroups year before last and met all 25 subgroups. We were able to do that because we had already been talking to teachers three/four years ago, identified gaps in their rooms, and planned PD based on those gaps.

Other principals described many opportunities for their teachers to demonstrate leadership within the school, either through grade level meetings or whole staff meetings. Some principals also used early release days and hosted professional development driven by the district, but also brought in teacher leaders and the teachers showcased their skills and knowledge. "The best feedback we received was actually having a revolving PD time to allow you to pick and choose what you need," said Dr. Amos during our interview. Other examples of teacher leadership expressed were:

One of my teachers facilitated the whole EVAAS process. We are done. She did that herself and managed a 4-5 combination. She enjoys it and she's really tech savvy (and I'm not) and we both saw that it would be best if we helped figure out the percent of instruction and sat down with the grade levels as a group and figure out if we were right, enter it in, and be done.

The 3rd grade teachers really have this sense of urgency in improving instruction. They are trying to get their small groups as small as possible for an extended period of time, so I have one teacher is working on that. All came about with conversations with them and getting to know them and making sure they have everything they need to teach. And letting them know I support them. I am their

principal and their leader, but my job is to help them and help them facilitate better instruction for their students.

Empowering Teacher Leaders

Other observed behaviors that demonstrated the Leadership as a Skill theme was in the way teachers were empowered to be leaders. Mr. Carter allowed teachers to be in control of their students, particularly when it comes to behavioral issues. Greg said:

Build capacity. I turned that over to my teams and my teachers. I'm giving you the authority to handle, to a point. You guys tell me, you can't change policy but your interpretation of the those is up to your grade level and if there are issues among the grade levels, that is when I will settle the dispute. The principal can't do this by themselves.

This success was made possible through the relationships that were built by the principal with the staff. It is evident that these principals intentionally spent time ensuring their staff were comfortable taking risks and that they had an environment that appreciated their initiative. Mrs. Smith quoted:

A teacher borrowed a book from me (because we are going to be learning about data teams within our school and will be trained by the district) and she has already read Chapter 3 and said to me, 'I think we need to make copies of this for fifth grade and have them read it before the summer training.' So I think just showing that you trust them and you learn things that may not have been brought out before.

Lastly, there was evidence of leading through relationships with teachers who were sometimes resistant to change. Dr. Amos recalled a teacher who was called "the submarine commander," the one who shot down anything you would come up with and

was not always upfront and vocal about their concerns on the surface. This teacher always lurked around the corner and after a staff meeting, would be the first one to say how something was not going to work.

Building a strong relationship with her and coming to find out that she had some of the best student data folders I had ever reviewed, and getting her (bragging on her) and getting people out of their shells to share out, we had lots of people to do that and they then had informal power.

Mrs. Smith reflected on their leadership and contends that relationships are key, particularly in difficult situations:

Relationships are key. Both with students and staff members. Have to do what's best for kids even when it's difficult. Even if it's addressing teachers that have never been addressed before. Difficult conversations. Which I came into here. Most of my problems are with tenured teachers. Prior administrators have not addressed them. So doing what's right. Even when you really don't want to—that's the bad part of the job—but I always say I have to sleep well at night. I have to go home and know that I did what's best for kids. So it may have been uncomfortable for adults or it might have been sad for adults . . .

Additionally, Mrs. Mackey was faced with the possibility of having to create a new classroom after the first ten days of school. She called in her strongest teacher to her office to talk with them about her plan to move her as the teacher for the new class. I was fortunate enough to be invited to overhear the conversation she had with this teacher. Because of the relationship she had built with this teacher, she felt both comfortable with me as a guest in the room and with the discussion about the impending change. The teacher was able to come to this meeting with prepared questions she had about how the transition would occur and the opportunity to voice any concerns she felt as a

professional to Mrs. Mackey. Mrs. Mackey was very honest with the teacher and her approach seemed to ease the teacher's fears. She left the office with a smile and information she wanted to take away to ponder on for the rest of the week.

Summary of Findings

Teacher leadership has a place in innovative schools where transformation occurs. Principals who understand the power of teacher leadership increases the influence their leadership has on student performance. In fact, empirical research shows that among the many individual in-school factors that influence student achievement, two stand out. Teacher impact is the single most important factor, accounting for 33% of school-level variation in achievement, closely followed by the influence of the principal at 25%. A host of other school-level factors, some of which cannot be adequately measured, account for the balance of 42% (Walters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). It is the collective community of teachers, led by the principal that is key to promoting school-wide learning (The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011).

Because a school leader's influence is largely indirect, the power of leadership lies in building collaborative structures and cultures of trust. School leaders need to build a culture of trust in schools so that adults open their practice to one another and can learn from their peers. To accomplish these goals, principals must create structures to allow for such collaboration, such as common planning time, opportunities for peer observation, and focused cross grade meetings.

Principals who build this capacity with their staff focuses on developing the culture of the school and creating synergy of individual skills of teachers, learning

relationships among teachers, a relentless focus on instruction, and ongoing mobilization of resources. In this study, building capacity is represented through empowering their teachers to have collective ownership in teaching and learning in their schools with deliberate time to collaborate. They also have solid professional development opportunities for their staffs to learn and grow professionally.

Lastly, they develop their own distinct key skills that support building capacity within their schools: interpersonal skills, planning skills, instructional observation skills, and skills in research and evaluation.

Interpersonal or people skills are essential for the success of being a principal. These are skills that maintain trust, spur motivation, give empowerment and enhance collegiality. Relationships are built on trust and tasks are accomplished through motivation and empowerment wherein teachers are involved in planning, designing and evaluating instructional programs. Empowerment leads to ownership and commitment as teachers identify problems and design strategies themselves. Collegiality promotes sharing, cooperation and collaboration, in which both the principal and teachers talk about teaching and learning.

Planning begins with clear identification of goals or vision to work towards as well as induce commitment and enthusiasm. Next is to assess what changes need to occur and which may be accomplished by asking the people involved, reading documents and observing what is going on. Observing instruction (supervision) aims to provide teachers with feedback to consider and reflect upon. But teachers should make their own judgment and reach their own conclusions.

Lastly, research and evaluation skills are needed to critically question the success of instructional programs initiated and one of the skills most useful would be action research.

Research Question 4

What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?

This work is framed by the assumption that a school leader's leadership style significantly impacts high quality teaching and learning. Without an effective principal, a school is unlikely to have a culture of high expectations or strive for continuous improvement. In North Carolina, the seven standards aim to surface the behaviors and practices required to lead a school towards success. Leadership standards could provide the framework that gives resonance to what effective principals do and what can be replicated for more effective schools. Knowing what leaders do is one thing, but without a rich understanding of how and why they do it, the understanding of leadership is incomplete (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

Key Findings: Building trust and relationships, collaboration, and focusing on leading rather than managing are significant competencies demonstrated by distinguished principals and are shown to be key elements of success for effective principals.

Early researchers have linked teacher collaboration with student success. For teachers, collegiality disrupts the isolation of the classroom and brings about rewards and frequent satisfactions. It avoids end-of-year burnout and stimulates enthusiasm. Instead of grasping for "the single dramatic event or the special achievements of a few children as the main source of pride, teachers are more able to detect and celebrate a pattern of accomplishments within and across classrooms" (Little, 1987, p. 497). Over time,

teachers who work closely together on matters of curriculum and instruction find themselves better equipped for classroom work. They take considerable satisfaction from professional relationships that withstand differences in viewpoints and occasional conflict.

Principals in this study have not only encouraged teachers to work together and solve problems, they have used keen leadership skills such as building relationships to facilitate the collaborative structures in their buildings that influence teaching and learning. It is through leadership, which Kotter (1990) says “produces change and movement” that these principals prove these are key elements of success for effective principals (p. 3).

Building Relationships

An overwhelming theme among the principals in this study attributed school success, principal leadership success, and teacher leadership success to the ability to develop strong, meaningful relationships throughout the building. “I think developing relationships is key. And getting to know your staff. They are humans. They are teachers, but they are human beings and they bring stuff to school every day like we do,” said Dr. Camp. Mr. Brown’s approach to leading through relationships was:

I start my day by ensuring I take care of people’s needs. What I mean by that is, if a parent comes to see me, I will drop whatever I am doing to see them. Because there was a lack of trust among the community over the years. As with my teachers, (like when I walked out [during this interview]) it was for a teacher. I clean out my calendar and schedule my walkthroughs . . .

Principals in this study also acknowledged trust as a critical point of building relationships. These principals devoted meaningful time to establishing and maintaining trust among their staff. “There are little things I do now to build trust. I don’t write when I go into classrooms, unless I am doing an evaluation. I make sure I am smiling when I walk into the classroom, even if it’s the worst lesson I’ve ever seen,” says Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown and Mrs. Smith, the two principals who changed schools over the past two years, credited the initial months of collecting data and spending time in teacher’s classrooms to successful relationship building. These principals were highly visible throughout the day and I saw them constantly talking with teachers in the hallways. Mr. Brown simply gave one of his teachers’ a pleasant “nod” as they passed each other in the hallway. This was their gesture of acknowledgement towards each other and a mutual form of respect for each other.

One question asked of the principals was to describe the responsibility of a principal in the 21st Century. One response was:

It’s changing. It’s so complex, not sure if you can sum it up. Lots of people will say instructional leadership, but the ability to pull people together and build trust is essential. That allows you to open the door to fix, tweak, or change the culture so the trust element is big; you have to build trust.

One interesting factor of relationships that emerged from a majority of the principals was the influence of technology in their schools. The connection to technology was overwhelmingly articulated through a discussion of differentiation and personalizing education. The principals used technology to change the role of the teachers as facilitators of learning and not simply telling students the answers. There was

exploration and ingenuity witnessed during class time that included the use of technology appropriately. Technology also became a way for these principals to build an environment of accountability and trust among the students and the staff. Allowing technology to support the instructional atmosphere of their schools proved to be a meaningful way to encourage high level success as well as to refine internal relationships.

Mr. Brown is leading a 1:1 initiative at his new high school this year. He communicated that, "Differentiation is at the core, meeting every kid where they are at, and driving them as far as you can possibly get them is my belief about teaching and learning." This led to a conversation about the usefulness of technology in the learning environment. He continued to say, "It is really helping our school culture and with technology now, I think we need to be more flexible with where, when, and why the kids are learning and what they are learning." His staff was balancing their instructional capacity with technology along with the leadership capacity of the students with their equipment this year. A majority of the teachers are motivated and have bought into the vision, according to the principal. What I observed in several of the classrooms was the engaging use of the SMART board during their lessons and students using their personal laptops to record their notes and in one classroom, capture their homework for the day. Another strategy implemented by both high schools principals was allowing the use of cell phones and mobile devices during non-instructional times of the day. Both principals have proclaimed that this small change in the culture has supported the focus of teaching and learning in their schools because this has lessened the distraction of the students at focused times of instruction.

Mr. Carter discussed technology as a part of their school's culture.

We encourage teachers to be innovative, we encourage teachers to integrate technology as much as they can; we encourage teachers to look outside the classroom . . . I'll give you a couple of examples: a lot of HS have a zero-tolerance policy for telephones (for cell phones). We don't have that policy. We leave it up to the individual teachers, which sometimes annoys them, but we've got some innovative teachers who have actually had the students use their cell phones in class and they integrate their cell phone usage in the class . . .

Mr. Brown, the other high school principal, has the same strategy at his school.

He reported that this one change has drastically reduced the amount of discipline problems among the students, especially during peak times of the day (class transitions, lunch/cafeteria, and bus dismissal).

Another example of differentiating through technology from Mr. Carter was:

One of my credos that I always go back to is that one size doesn't fit all. And so we've not bought a SMART board for every classroom. We bought some SMART boards and we let a small group of teachers experiment with them. Some teachers liked them, some didn't. A lot of the math teachers didn't like the SMART boards, so we went to something called a Mobi, which is a tablet that talks to a laptop. And they liked the tablet a lot better. What we tried to do is to provide resources, but to do it in a way that differentiates. Cause once again, one size doesn't fit all.

Lastly, Mrs. Smith discussed technology as an educational tool:

I think though one of the biggest challenges now as a leader is when you are coaching teachers, helping them to understand, especially new teachers, that technology is not going to necessarily help kids as much as them. For example, when I got here . . . (interrupted by student, Jennifer) . . . teachers were having Razz Kids and Brain Pop and all these different centers and things going in their classrooms and we had to have long discussions during our grade level meetings (because they are not PLCs yet) about what their small groups should look like and what their Instructional Assistants should be doing. How if technology is

implemented, how it should be meaningful and purposeful and aligned to the core curriculum and should not be busy work, or fun, it should be educational.

Leadership vs. Management

Principals in this study held that fundamentally leadership is about guidance and management is attention to details; both important in order to be successful. A question asked of each principal was the difference between leadership and management. The responses unanimously conveyed a discrete distinction between the two. “The key to leadership is not just doing this the right way, but doing the right things . . . I think a leader inspires people. A manager manages people,” proclaims Mr. Carter. Added Mrs. Mackey:

Leadership is not constant. Leadership is more exponential. You have to have a blend. There are some days I feel that all I’m doing is managing. But I try to do it in a way that models leadership. . . . then I go in and teach it to my staff . . . so when they do it, they feel that they are taking on leadership so they are doing their role or their part . . . it gives them all a piece of the pie.

I asked Dr. Camp to describe the difference between leadership and management and he emphatically said, “Leadership is inspiring others to do the best that they can do and creating a culture so others are inspired, and management means making sure all the routines are down and all logistics in place.” He took a great deal of time to explain his response and recalled the start of last school year, which was a difficult year for several of his staff. Personal tragedies caused the principal to use inspiration and make the most of the familial culture of the school to motivate the staff like never before.

Mrs. Smith's response to the question was:

I think that a leader has to be able to manage, but I don't think just a manager can lead. What I mean by that is, when you are leading, there are managerial things that you have to get done, like the cafeteria and the buses, and you have to not lose that organizational processes and task process but that is not leadership. If you do that and don't develop relationships, you do not coach your teachers, and you don't do all of that, then obviously you are not going to be very successful as a leader.

Mrs. Mackey said:

Leadership is laying the track and Management is keeping the train on the track. It's knowing which direction you need to go in and management part is pretty much how to get the things in place to get them there.

Collaboration

Lastly, the elementary principals reported a greater amount of collaboration among the school leaders in regards to instructional responsibilities around the school. Mrs. Smith shared that "we are both instructional leaders." As a result, Carrie struggled more with managerial tasks (such as planning field trips or handling bus issues) because both she and her Assistant Principal tend to focus more on teaching and learning. Carrie sees her Assistant Principal as an instructional leader, but needs someone to be a task master. More attention to managerial tasks was something they felt they needed to work on. Mrs. Mackey divided instructional responsibilities with their Assistant Principal by general education and Exceptional Children. The Assistant Principal worked extensively with the Exceptional Children staff in all areas, from classroom instruction to leading the Student Assistance Team. Lisa reported that there was a high functioning staff at this

school and less than 5% of the teachers were beginning teachers. Additionally, this school had very little disciplinary issues and very little turnover of staff. Leaders at this school were able to dedicate more time to observing and assessing learning in the classroom as a result.

Mrs. Smith collaborates with her staff on many school-wide decisions. “What we do here is I talk with my teachers about what is best for the kids . . . I’ll always go back to that . . . every decision . . . I ask what do you think is best for kids? That’s how we develop our master schedule, not based on someone’s recess time or lunch time or specials, it’s about large blocks of instruction for students.” The School Improvement Team, or School Leadership Team, collaborates with the staff to get approval on items brought to the team that affect the entire school and then work with Mrs. Smith to make the final decision. Dr. Amos follows a similar strategy for his school. Teachers take initiative with the yearly scheduling calendar. Teachers come to consensus.

Additionally, the Assistant Principal and counseling staff coordinate a time to gather information from their feeder elementary schools and they have an opportunity to share the information with the receiving teachers. This has proven to be a successful partnership between the schools because there is a strong sense of ownership among the teachers, counselors, and administration to provide appropriate placement for students through a critical transition year.

Summary of Findings

Successful principals concentrate on leadership rather than management. Leadership is the guidance and direction of instructional improvement (Elmore, 2000).

Fullan (2002) points out that “only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement” (p. 16). Principals in this study leaned heavily on their leadership styles and established processes such as not readily giving teachers the answer, rather allowing them to draw their own conclusions and being responsible for decisions throughout the school, to successfully impact teaching and learning.

This would include building and sustaining strong relationships with the staff. It was evident spending time in these schools the principals were genuinely transparent and amorous to their staff. In turn, the schools had welcoming environments and the teachers looked happy. The principals used visibility to lead and spent time with teachers to understand what their strengths were.

Collaboration was another strategy that was mature with these principals. It was evidenced that the roles and responsibilities that involve all staff and nurture collaboration are processes that will transform a school. Utilizing the Assistant Principal to guide both an instructional and academic placement process for the school was one strategy that grew from having a collaborative culture within the schools.

Teachers who work in schools with strong collaborative cultures behave differently from those who depend on administrators to create the conditions of their work. In collaborative cultures, teachers exercise creative leadership together and take responsibility for helping all students learn. Through leadership practices and behaviors, principals create the conditions conducive to effective teaching and learning environments (Davis et al., 2005). For example: Dr. Camp organizes his teachers into

learning communities by specific content areas or grade level. The teachers are then expected to use collaboration time to identify and implement effective instructional strategies based on the results of their common and formative assessments. Next, the teachers improve their instruction by sharing best practices, resulting in students performing better on their future assessments. Thus, the principal creates the condition of the learning community to help teachers improve their instructional practice, and therefore enhances student learning. This type of relationship shows a linkage between leader learning experiences, their practices, and their effect on student learning.

Most empirical evidence about a leader's effects on student learning has come from research on school level leaders, especially principals. Based on the results of an analysis of research conducted between 1980 and 1995 on principals' effects on student achievement, Hallinger and Heck (1996) reported that principal leadership can make a difference in student learning. According to the findings from Hallinger and Heck (1996), the principal's leadership practice that makes the most difference in student outcomes are strategies aimed toward influencing the internal school processes (the instructional organization and the practice of teachers) that are directly linked to student learning. This includes the principal's ability to sustain a school-wide vision focused on student learning. Instructional leadership predictors of school achievement are the amount of time principals spend directly observing classroom practices, promoting discussion about instructional issues, and emphasizing the use of test results for program improvement (Heck et al., 1993). In 1998, Hallinger and Heck identified four "avenues of influence" through which principals guide both individuals (teachers, parents, and

students) and the organizational systems within the school, therefore impelling student outcomes. Hallinger and Heck (1998) defined the four areas through which leadership may influence the organizational structure as (a) purposes and goals of the school; (b) the school structure and social networks; (c) the people; and (d) the school culture.

Research Question 5

What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?

What executive standards do *NC DLP* principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement in their schools? The standards for School Executives in North Carolina were developed as a guide for principals and assistant principals as they reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout all of the stages of their careers (State Board of Education, 2006). These standards called attention to the prevailing demands of a 21st Century leader. By identifying leadership standards, the context of an effective principal is defined. Although there are many influences on a school leader's development, these standards served as an important foundation for principals and assistant principals as they considered their growth and development as school executives leading schools in the 21st century.

Key Findings: Standard 4 (Human Resource Leadership), Standard 3 (Cultural Leadership), Standard 1 (Strategic Leadership), and Standard 2 (Instructional Leadership) were perceived to be the most important standards that would improve student achievement for NC DLP Principals.

Twenty-first Century principals should be about evolution and critical reflection of your own practice. And there are certain skills you should bring to the table. I now take nothing personal. 6 or 8 years ago, they couldn't have told me I was doing a terrible job; I would be pretty upset and lose a lot of sleep. Now, I want them to tell me what I can do to improve.

This quote was in response to the question about which standard was the most important standards that would improve student achievement in a school. There was some evidence from these principals that skill as a leadership behavior represented the Human Resource Leadership (Standard IV) standard in this study.

Human Resource Leadership (Standard 4)

Standard IV, Human Resource Leadership, expects the principal to ensure that processes and systems are in place that results in the recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development and retention of a high performing staff (State Board of Education, 2006). Communication and Change Management were two of the NC competencies which directly aligned to the understanding of the adult learner accoutrements from Papa and English's research. The principals in this study provided several examples of this standard in action through their responses during the interviews and through the observations of the learning as it occurred.

One way was evidenced through these principal's hiring practices. Two of the six principals stated this was a leadership strength for them. Recruiting, inducting, supporting, evaluating, developing, and retaining high-performing staff is undoubtedly the most important actions of the school leader. A high-quality teacher is the most important factor of student learning (Goldhaber, 2002; Hanushek, 2005). Mr. Carter said directly, "the single-most important thing that I do as principal is hire great people." All principals engaged teachers in this process at their schools. All but one principal began their hiring process with the teachers and had multi-level steps to their hiring processes. Two principals conducted pre-screening interviews with potential candidates, two

principals required candidates to teach a model lesson during the initial interview, one principal screened applicants first and sent potential candidates to the grade level to interview, and one principal had teacher teams exclusively handling the hiring process. Mr. Brown asks for the team's top two finalists and they had to contend and support why the principal should choose one candidate over the other. Once he conducted the reference checks, they made the final decision together. Carl said:

My first principalship, I did not do it this way. My second one, I non-renewed a lot of people I hired so I decided to give it to the teachers to do. They did a lot better job. And this helped to build the trust piece among teachers and the ones we brought in. My teachers were able to explain what the culture was in our building and what we wanted.

Cultural Leadership (Standard 3)

Another key standard these principals implicitly perceived to be important was Standard III, Cultural Leadership. Cultural leadership, as a form of “reculturing” the school, was validated in this way:

We saw some gains in my first principalship but it kicked my butt. One of the things I learned was accountability. Holding people accountable was very important. Not just teachers, but everyone, including my APs. My second principalship taught me it's the way you hold people accountable.

This was a direct quote from Mr. Brown. Leadership as a Process for these principals meant finding what worked for their staff and finding opportunities to capitalize on the strengths of their teachers as well as their own leadership styles. In School Executive Standard III, Cultural Leadership, a school leader fosters a positive school culture focused on student achievement. As example, Mrs. Smith described her

leadership style as collaborative. “I don’t like to micromanage at all.” She described this as a personal challenge, especially being at a new school this year. The teachers at the new school were familiar with a leader who was very directive and told teachers how their teaching should look.

Everything was, here’s what Guided Reading should look like, here’s what Whole Group should look like, here’s what your centers should look like, here’s what Math should look like, and I believe that my teachers should facilitate that. They know their students, they know what their data says; they know them better than I do at this point, so I’m not going to micromanage their teaching.

This particular principal noticed that the problem solving skills of the teachers were not utilized primarily because they were always told how to do things. Given her collaborative leadership style, this principal has been able to change how teaching and learning looks at this school in the short time they have been there. Mrs. Smith affirmed, “I don’t like to lead alone. I really believe we are all in this together . . .” She believes in empowering teachers to lead. She says:

Facilitating leadership at grade levels is very important so that you are not micromanaging that and it is happening on its own . . . that those conversations about data and how to teach differently and what to do next start to happen without you being there with them.

Strategic Leadership (Standard 1)

Distributive leadership, otherwise called teacher leadership, can improve teacher retention, strengthen the teaching profession, build the capacity of school leaders, and facilitate innovative advances to the structure of school staffing (National Comprehensive Center for Teaching Quality, 2010). Cultivating teacher leadership emerged as a

perceived component of effective leadership with the *NC DLP* principals, in the literature under the Strategic Leadership (Standard I) standard, and evidenced the Leadership as a Process theme.

Mr. Carter described his leadership style as consensus-building. He spoke about the power of delegating responsibility. He said:

I am a big picture guy, I am an idea person, and so I have learned that if I have a lot of people like me, we have great ideas but we don't get anything done . . . So my style is, I will throw ideas out, we will bounce things around, and we will for the most part make it work.

Leadership as a Process for Mr. Carter was ensuring that their building leaders had a voice in the decision-making. He listened to their ideas and supported ideas that came directly from the teachers. An example of this was the upper level English teachers complaining that the students were not reading. Greg sought to find out why. The first thing they noticed was the lack of variety in the selection of reading for the students. The teachers' reading selections included *Beowulf* and *Canterbury Tales*; very old classics and not interesting reads for their current students. Through articulation sessions between their ninth-grade English teachers and the eighth-grade English teachers from their feeder middle schools they found that students had self-selected reading time in middle school but teachers at the high school were not allowing this opportunity.

So I had a teacher that was really struck by this and he said he was beginning to go work on his masters at Carolina in Literacy and he said I'm going to start doing free reading in my English class. He piloted doing free reading and it was very successful, the kids started reading books, the circulation in the library went up, it just took off . . . so now that philosophy of doing free reading has spread.

Instructional Leadership (Standard 2)

Lastly, the principals in this study collectively believed that Instructional Leadership (Standard II) was a critical standard for improving teaching and learning. Dr. Amos explained why this is true in their district:

Those who take on that challenge have better results than those who do not. The staff cannot see you as not supporting significant curricular change in the building. We have an Instructional Facilitator model in our district (Lead Teacher, if you will) . . . that model will not work if the principal is not engaged in that process. If you think the IF is the only one in the building leading instructional leadership, your school is not going to go up. You will be seen as a figure head. So it is very important.

“If you are going to lead in today’s climate and make it successful, you have to be the key point for instructional leadership in the building,” declared Mr. Brown, and “you have to be able to coach teachers and improve instruction and also keep up with the changing times in the 21st Century,” quoted Mrs. Smith. An instructional leader spends significant time in the classroom and understands how learning occurs. This type of leader understands the instructional practices in the building are what drives innovation and the progression of the school. As example from Dr. Amos was:

Taking your school from a School of Progress at 64–65% to constantly being a School of Distinction and getting that kind of growth from 55–60% free and reduced lunch students is key. Doing that, you have to be an instructional leader. That is one of the most key things. Now, you have to do the other things well too, but those things should be second nature to a good principal. The operational things doesn’t get you all upset, especially if you have experience, but if you can’t do that you will struggle to be an instructional leader because you will focus on the operational.

Lastly, an interesting comment that surfaced with several of these principals was about the adoption of instructional programs. “It is not about the programs, rather the quality of teaching in the building,” simply put by Mr. Brown. It was noted that many of the principals felt that there were many programs available to districts and schools, but a true assessment of the fidelity of implementation of the programs, an assessment of how they impact the learning that occurs with students, and the importance of the program to the learning environment would ultimately determine the success of the program. Mr. Carter explained:

We put the Auto Tech program back in and we have developed internships with some of those dealerships. We have an Advisory Board for that department. We brought back the Agriculture program. The Agriculture program had not been here for years, but, whereas formally, the Agriculture department may have taught more farming, now we’re teaching more nursery type, plants and things like that. We have a very strong culinary arts program, because again, some of our kids are interested in going and working in restaurants and being chefs. So what my philosophy and what I think has been born out since I’ve been here is to provide as many opportunities as kids as possible to find out what their passion is about.

Dr. Amos, who recently became an Associate Superintendent, even made reference to the importance of assessing the relevance of programs at the district level in his new position. “What I am trying to do here is harness everyone in, and look at research-based, or evidence-based programs and that is the key—because there are so many out there—pick out a few programs for core instruction and interventions at elementary, middle, and high. Implement those with fidelity.” He mentioned earlier during the site visit that he embraced the same mindset as a building principal.

Summary of Findings

Standards I, II, III, and IV were perceived to be the most important standards to improve student achievement for *NC DLP* Principals. While the NC School Executive Standards were grounded in the premise that the job of a principal is uniquely complex, interrelated, and combined both practice and competence, there were standards that stood out more than others with these principals. These successful principals understood both the needs of the school and the skills and qualities of their leaders and cultivating those elements within their schools was embedded through those particular standards.

Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers, individually or collectively; formally influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the goal of increased student learning and achievement (National Comprehensive Center for Teaching Quality, 2010). Through Standard 1, teacher leadership remains an integral factor of success for the *NC DLP* principals. Teachers are active participants in the teaching and learning process within these schools. They have opportunities to explore their ideas and take risks to improve structures that may impede learning. It was evidenced that these principals constantly empowered their teachers and found opportunities for them to learn and grow.

Improving teacher perceptions of the principal as instructional leader is essential to the reading and mathematics achievement of students, particularly among historically low-achieving students (Andrews, Soder, & Jacoby, 1986). As Dr. Amos mentioned in the interview: “If you think the Instructional Facilitator is the only one in the building leading instructional leadership, your school is not going to go up. You will be seen as a

figure head . . . so the principal has to be constantly connected . . . instructional leadership is very important.” As an instructional leader today, it means principals are expected to play an active role in leadership, consider the processes, activities, and relationships within their school and use those factors to positively affect teaching and learning (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). They must know academic content and pedagogical techniques (Knowles, 1984). They must work with teachers to strengthen skills. They must collect, analyze, and use data in ways that fuel excellence. They must rally students, teachers, parents, local health, and social service agencies, youth development groups, local businesses, and other community residents and partners around the common goal of raising student performance (Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2000). And they must have the leadership skills and knowledge to exercise the autonomy and authority to pursue these strategies (Lashway, 2003). The *NC DLP* principals exploit this codependency of leadership expressed in Standard II and illustrate how impactful this can be on teaching and learning in their buildings through their leadership styles and facilitating leadership.

Through Cultural Leadership (Standard III), effective leaders understand the culture so they are able to push for the necessary changes without destroying the school culture (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). While teachers are ultimately responsible for improving student learning in schools, changing the organizational conditions for improvement across schools is the central task of school leaders (Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, & Thomas, 2005). The *NC DLP* principals use their knowledge of their school’s culture to positively impact change in their schools. Teachers are just as accountable for

the teaching and learning in their buildings as the building leader. Principals report that teachers are not micromanaged and they are put into positions to lead from every aspect of the school.

“It is my job to hire great teachers,” says Mr. Carter. Several principals noted that acquiring great teachers is an area of strength for them. Recruiting, inducting, supporting, evaluating, developing, and retaining high-performing staff is undoubtedly the most important actions of the school leader. A high-quality teacher is the most important factor of student learning (Goldhaber, 2002; Hanushek, 2005). All of these principals took potential hires through a rigorous and lengthy hiring process. They shared that they not only interview them, they interview the school. Candidates were given a tour and had an opportunity to have a one-on-one with the principal. Adding this screening process allows the principal to get to know them more personally and sense their passion. Mrs. Smith believes this is why she rarely has a “bad hire.” “I really like to get a feel for them and their background and their interest and what they are passionate about . . . that’s usually the first process and the second process we do again and it’s longer, then we walk around the school and ask them more questions” Carrie says. It works; this principal confirmed.

While Standards 5, 6, and 7 are equally relevant to their leadership, the principals did not perceive them to be the most important. However, the principals reported that the standards are interrelated and overlap each other. Dr. Camp acknowledged that External Development Leadership (Standard 6) was an area he was not strong in. He shared that he was working on finding ways to improve his leadership in this area. His school has a

strong emphasis in the arts programs and is Music Department is well-received and well-organized. This is a strength he believes he can capitalize on to improve external relationships with the school. Mr. Brown and Mr. Carter shared they had lots of external relationships and partnerships built through their athletic departments and specialty programs such as the Auto Technology Department and the Agriculture Department. These programs not only provide financial assistance for the school, they have a substantial connection to the parents and the local business community. The Agriculture Department at Mr. Brown's school has an alumni club and they host an "Ag Day" every year that brings over 200 visitors to the school. The Auto Technology Department at Mr. Carter's school has a similar following, only they have an honorarium for two students who were killed that attracts sponsors and willing volunteers to the school during the year. Dr. Amos declared that, particularly in North Carolina, "the community piece is becoming more and more instrumental in the success of schools. You've got to market your school, you are competing with the charter school opening down the street." These are examples of how these principals acknowledged their relevance in their leadership. They also reported that the gaps they experience with the standards are often filled by the leaders they surround themselves with.

Chapter V concludes with a discussion of the findings, possible impact on policy and practice, and implications for future research of the power of principal leadership on teaching and learning.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Researchers have empirical evidence that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). What is not so indubitable is the influence of the school leader on student performance. There is some research (Leithwood, et.al., 2008; McREL, 2011; Sergiovanni, 1992; The Wallace Foundation, 2003) that presents a substantive argument that strong school leaders have certain qualities and leadership styles that lend themselves to creating an environment that breeds high performance. The *NC DLP* principals in this study demonstrated consistent and significant behaviors and practices in their schools that has shown continuous success related to teaching and learning in their buildings.

Statement of the Problem

Given the statewide implementation of a comprehensive evaluation tool and the addition of the educator effectiveness measure within the last three years, very little research has been conducted to date on the relationship between sustained student achievement and principal leadership in North Carolina. Research says that the success or failure of a school is often attributed to the leadership of the principal (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Harris & Lambert, 2003). The irony of the

situation is that leadership is not a position or a person. It is a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of the school. Studies on school change indicate that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership within the organization (Harris & Lambert, 2003).

The problem then is ascertaining how a principal effectively supports high quality teaching and learning. While there is research demonstrating how principals influence school effectiveness; there is a gap in the research that informs how such capacity is developed and how principal leadership influences teacher practice and what students learn (Davis et al., 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to inquire about the principals selected to participate in the pioneer cohort of the *NC DLP* program and to understand what leadership practices they applied within their schools that positively impacted teaching and learning. The thematic analysis presented in this study investigated the significant leadership behaviors and practices or accoutrements of exemplary principals in North Carolina to understand the impact school leadership had on teaching and learning in their schools. Deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina based on the new School Executive Standards illuminated the important characteristics principals need to continue to build successful schools and improve student achievement across the state in the future.

Research and Guiding Questions

The major research question for this study was, “How does a principal’s leadership support high quality teaching and learning?” From this major research question, five guiding questions emerged to serve as integral components of this study:

1. What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?
2. What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of *NC DLP* principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
3. What are *NC DLP* principals doing to develop “leadership capacity” that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?
4. What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?
5. What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?

Study Design

This study used a thematic analysis approach to analyzing the qualitative data collected throughout the data collection period. Thematic analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method for this study, particularly because interview transcripts were transcribed. This is a method for identifying, describing, analyzing, and reporting themes and patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The qualitative data for this study were collected through observations, in-depth semi-structured interviews, a leadership survey, and site visits including a second round

of interview questions. The focus of both the interviews and site visits centered on descriptive questions which revealed information about the “hows” and “whys” of changes in principal leadership behavior following participation in the NC DLP program as well as the impact of the leader’s practice on teaching and learning and organizational structures.

Triangulation from all three data points in this study helped to describe the perceived relationship between effective school leadership practices and student performance. According to Cohen and Manion (1986), “triangulation is an attempt to map out or explain fully the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint” (p. 254). By combining multiple data sources, the researcher used methodological triangulation to increase the reliability and validity of the findings in this study. Based on the data collected in Chapter Four, conclusions will be summarized and findings for each research question addressed.

Summary of Findings

Research Question #1: What do distinguished principals perceive to be the relationship between the principal leadership and student achievement in North Carolina?

Highly effective, or “distinguished” school leaders, are highly skilled at creating systems for change and building strong communities and relationships while improving student performance (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013a). In 2010, the NC DLP Program supported a cohort of “distinguished” principals with a cohort-based yearlong professional development experience. Leaders who take the foundation of the leadership standards to transform a complex and dynamic environment, such as a school, into a thriving learning organization are considered “distinguished” leaders in North Carolina.

These principals had a proven track record for achieving strong student results. The program's committee reviewed the data from the principal's most recent NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey data and their school's student achievement scores as part of the application process.

Student growth will now become one of the state's measures that support effective teaching and leadership. Beginning in 2011–2012, North Carolina publicly reported on the effectiveness of teachers and administrators across the state using the standards for teachers and principals (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2013b). Given that there is only one year of data at this time, it is difficult to determine the full impact of the standards on student growth for NC principals. These evaluation data, alongside the student performance data for students in North Carolina's schools, will eventually provide insight into what effective school leadership looks like to build and maintain successful schools.

It was noted in Chapter 4 that the distributions of the seven leadership standards remained statistically consistent and there was no significant change between the ratings of each standard from year to year. The overall percentages did decrease slightly; however, there was less than a 2% difference of the ratings for each standard. Most principals were rated accomplished across the state. The standards that were rated highest were Standards 2, 3, 4, and 7 which comparatively aligns with the standards the NC DLP principals perceive to be the most important leadership standards (Standards 1, 2, 3, and 4).

Although these comparisons do not show significant correlations, there was evidence of effective practices that do impact teaching and learning in these schools. First, the findings expand on what we know about the value of professional learning communities (PLCs). Recruiting, inducting, supporting, evaluating, developing, and retaining high-performing staff combined with fostering collaborative structures such as PLCs creates a synergy amid teaching and learning for both the teachers and the students that is making a difference in these schools.

Secondly, innovation is admired and rewarded in education. Even the Race to the Top federal grants were awarded to states to encourage and reward states that “creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; implementing ambitious plans in four education reform areas and achieving significant improvement in student outcomes” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In the school building, innovation may lead to significant changes in instructional practices thus improvements in student learning. The *NC DLP* principals showed skill in developing creative yet successful ways to solve structural problems that would bear positive changes in teaching and learning in their schools.

Research Question #2: What are the leadership perspectives and outlooks of NC DLP principals that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?

The research defines accoutrements as the significant aspects of a leader’s style that blend acquired habits learned through the sum of life’s experiences and habits of the mind that come from knowledge of self and the collective energy of others (Papa, English, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012). These behaviors in North Carolina are defined as competencies, which are the effective leadership perspectives and outlooks expected of

principals. The findings in this study revealed that these perspectives and outlooks were exhibited by these *NC DLP* principals in the form of visibility, advocacy, and charisma. There were two key findings that helped arrive at this conclusion and answer this question. First, these principals focused on their teacher's needs and were available to their teachers when they were needed. They used presence and genuine care and concern for their staff to strengthen the relationship among them, which proved to positively impact teaching and learning because the staffs grew to trust them as their leaders.

Secondly, leaders who use diversity and constructive differences among staff members to push the school toward its goals are able to capitalize on this collective energy and ultimately move a school forward. Communication is a critical behavior that one must be skilled at and use effectively to improve teaching and learning; and effective communication was how these *NC DLP* principals made this happen. This behavior falls under ignored but intended skill, which is one critical accoutrement exemplified by these principals that seemed to make a difference. They consistently used their charisma and effective communication skills to articulate their compelling visions and stimulate passion and commitment in their teachers. There were multiple examples of these principals demonstrating these behaviors, particularly with the morning routines they established to make contact with their teachers, their involvement in learning throughout the day, and their honesty and transparency with the staff.

These findings add to the research that strong school leaders have certain qualities and leadership styles that lend themselves to creating an environment that breeds high performance. Research furthermore says that good leadership improves both teacher

motivation and work settings. This, in turn, can fortify classroom instruction. Compared with lower-achieving schools, higher-achieving schools provided all stakeholders with greater influence on decisions, the researchers write compellingly, and the higher performance of these schools might be explained as a consequence of the greater access they have to collective knowledge and wisdom embedded within their communities (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Research Question #3: What are NC DLP principals doing to develop “leadership capacity” that support high quality teaching and learning in their schools?

Teacher leadership has a place in innovative schools where transformation occurs. Research shows that principals who have the ability to empower and encourages others to lead will have the potential to make a significant difference in teaching and learning and positively impact school improvement (Huber, 2004; Leithwood et al., 1999; Murphy, 2002; Yukl, 2006). Developing leadership capacity, the underlying weight of leadership in this study, was a critical component of success for these schools. It is the collective community of teachers, led by the principal that was one key to promoting school-wide learning.

The findings from this study suggest that principals who center their attention on developing the culture of the school and creating synergy of individual skills of teachers, learning relationships among teachers, a relentless focus on instruction, and ongoing mobilization of resources can potentially make significant contributions to teaching and learning in a school. One, the *NC DLP* principals in this study used professional development opportunities as one example of developing leadership capacity within their schools. The workshop sessions that were offered during grade level or department

meetings, during faculty meetings, and other afterschool meetings were largely led by the staff. Teacher leaders also contributed to important decisions and actively initiated advances in school policy and practice.

Another deliberate element of leadership the *NC DLP* principals incorporated within their schools to develop leadership capacity were building strong relationships with the staff. While this aspect of leadership was one element that resounded in many areas of this study, it was significant to developing capacity because the teachers genuinely felt that they were an important part of the school's culture. In turn, they showed consistent initiative and took ownership of many of the issues that arose.

Lastly, developing leadership capacity with teachers who are resistant to change was a strategy explored by these principals. There were many opportunities when these principals were challenged by teachers on their staff. The approach to leadership for the principals was to address the situation through the relationships that had been built. In order for this to be successful, the principals had to invest time and effort into these relationships and sometimes wielding their informal power to win over others on the staff.

Research Question #4: What competencies within the School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important in their leadership?

After reviewing the data analysis for this study, there is evidence that the leadership styles of these principals are showing success with teaching and learning. Structured interviews and site visits focusing on their beliefs about leadership, their leadership styles, and the actual demonstration of those behaviors validated there was consistency in numerous areas. These areas included principals who lead with skill,

influence, process, behaviors, and through relationships. All six principals in this study spent a significant amount of time on building strong relationships with their staffs. They all had longevity with their staff (more than five years) and had a rapport with their teachers that was now showing rewards through the achievement of their students.

Trust through relationships was an area principals in this study focused on. By clearly and regularly communicating with and engaging fellow teachers in dialogue about improving teaching and learning, teacher leaders build a school culture of trust, which leads to improvement in instructional practice and ultimately positively affects student achievement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Technology was an unexpected influence on teaching and learning at these schools. Change in leadership and learning has become more prominent in a world that has become borderless through information and communication, bringing about new needs in knowledge, science, and technology. It has also changed the trend and profile of students and modified the role and function of schools making them more challenging than before. As this phenomenon played out in the schools in this study, the principals established technology as an instructional tool and removed them as barriers to learning. This was proving to be a positive influence in their educational environment.

Additionally, refining their individual leadership practices rather than simply “running a school” was what these principals concentrated on. Many times during the interviews and the conversations that occurred during the site visits there was evidence that the principals spent less time handling managerial tasks and more time observing instruction in the classrooms and having instructional conversations with their staff.

It was also found that External Development Leadership (Standard VI) is the weakest area for all of these principals. There was evidence of partnerships that have been developed (PTA, Rotary Club, Booster Club, YMCA, etc.) at their schools, however, they were not key elements of their leadership they spent most of their time on. Research explains that school leaders today should seek greater engagement among building stakeholders, including teachers, parents and students in the development of school goals and objectives. This is an area recommended for growth for these principals and where more attention may be focused in future professional development.

Research Question #5: What School Executive Standards do distinguished principals perceive to be the most important to improve student achievement?

The Standards for School Executives in North Carolina offer a leadership construct in the form of Strategic Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Cultural Leadership, Human Resource Leadership, Managerial Leadership, External Development Leadership, Micro-Political Leadership and most recently an eighth standard, Academic Achievement Leadership. The NC Standards for School Executives are the guiding foundational principles for every school leader in North Carolina and define the most critical skills needed for an effective leader. Within the Standards, it defines competencies that are obviously inherent in the successful performance of all of the practices listed under each of the seven critical functions of leadership. The principal may or may not personally possess all of these competencies but must ensure that a team is in place that not only possesses them but can effectively and efficiently execute them (State Board of Education, 2006).

The findings in this study concentrated on which standards *NC DLP* principals perceived to be the most important to their leadership. These standards were Standards I (Strategic Leadership), Standard II (Instructional Leadership), Standard III (Cultural Leadership), and Standard IV (Human Resource Leadership).

Strategic Leadership involved teacher leadership and building leadership capacity among all stakeholders in the building. Sergiovanni acquiesced that “the more that leadership is cultivated in a school, the more likely it is that everyone will get a chance to use their talents fully and the more committed everyone is likely to be” (2006, p. 173). Leadership capacity for these principals was about creating conditions within the school for growth, self-renewal, and the development and distribution of leadership throughout the school organization.

Instructional leadership included those actions that a principal took, or delegated to others, to promote growth in student learning (Flath, 1989). The principal provided the leadership essential for student learning; therefore the role of the principal and of other school staff were restructured to reinforce that leadership was the driving factor to manage the implementation of the school program effectively. It would be understood, then, that the basics of management are “givens” rather than administrative priorities. This adds to the literature that principals who want to see results in student learning invest energy to build leadership capacity around key issues regarding student achievement, rather than micromanaging the staff (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010).

School leaders who fostered a positive school culture focused on student achievement also proved to be an aspect of success for these principals. When necessary,

the administrator led the school community to shape its culture into a more positive one. In other instances, the principal used the strong culture already rooted in the school to drive intentional decisions about teaching and learning that proved successful. They all served as models; symbolizing the group's unit and identity and retold the stories that carried shared meaning among the staff.

Lastly, Human Resource Leadership (Standard IV) was the standard that focused on the school as a professional learning community. In effective schools, adult learning is a high priority along with student learning. If teachers are going to continually hone their craft, they need access to new ideas and sources of expertise, including high-quality professional development that is informed by student data and linked to continuing growth spanning a career. Putting teachers who wish to learn in contact with other innovative teachers, support organizational processes for discussion and consideration of curricular issues, and provide feedback based on student learning outcomes (Marks & Printy, 2003) is a role of the school leader. In essence, effective leadership means creation of an effective, high-functioning professional community.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this study have reinforced what we know about effective behaviors and practices demonstrated by successful principals. Knowing that professional development for leaders is a critical factor that influences effective leadership, further study of the DLP program would inform the body of research on future professional development necessary for NC principals. It is found that high performing school systems leverage their knowledge of effective school leadership to

develop their principals into drivers of improvements in instruction (“Ahead of the Curve,” n.d.). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has announced adopting a National Board Certification for Educational Leaders that further exemplifies the strength of uniform and consistent criteria for school leaders across the nation and attention to the development of strong leadership.

However, many questions remain. The following is a list of areas where there remain gaps in the literature as it relates to effective leadership practice implementation and capacity building:

- There is a need for districts to find ways to continue successful leadership at the school level. Successful principals are often tapped for other leadership roles in the district and leave a gap in leadership.
- There is a need to investigate the evaluation of principals and improve the fidelity of the data. This research exposes some disconnect between overall principal and teacher ratings and the overall achievement of students. With the “effective” and “highly effective” data, NC will be able to further define what a distinguished principal looks like and how they impact teaching and learning.
- There is a need to develop Assistant Principals. The research discovered that principals are under-utilizing their Assistant Principals in the teaching and learning process.
- Professional development is key. There is favorable data in this research on the impact of the *NC DLP* Program and its current graduates. Earlier research

also concluded that principals feel the job has become more demanding and the need for professional development in curriculum, instruction, and student achievement is warranted (McLean, 2009).

Conclusions

This study sought to develop an understanding of by what means does a principal's leadership style and their demonstrated leadership behaviors impact teaching and learning in a school building. The literature review revealed a gap in the research that informs how leadership capacity is built and how principal leadership influences teacher practice and what students learn (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Lambert identified the vitality of a principal's interactions with teachers enable the school to focus purposefully on student learning. Consequently, the indirect nature of the principalship relies heavily on building the capacity of that adult community, the teachers, in the school (Lambert, 2003). As a result, the techniques used by the *NC DLP* principals to cultivate leadership capacity were another underlying aspect of this research.

Previous research has revealed that leadership in schools has advanced in the 21st century (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). The role of a school leader has evolved even more drastically (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). As the world and the children served by our schools continue to transform, subsequently, school leadership has been impinged upon. Holistically, education must change to mirror the experiences and atmosphere of an unpredictable, technology-driven, socially motivated, and diverse environment. These changes have profound implications for teachers, teaching and learning as well as for the

leadership of schools and education systems. Building the skills and opportunities for children in a learning environment such as this demand a strong and dynamic leadership skill set, one that is quite different from what may have worked for leaders in the past. A child starting school at the age of five in the year 2000 has a long educational journey to the completion of post-secondary education or a career in the workforce and will probably not start work until the year 2015 or later. That same child will be in the labor force in the year 2050 and beyond. What is more, that child could be working with technologies that have not yet been invented in an organization that is yet to be created. A school leader fostering learning for this condition requires skills beyond basic skill and content acquisition; rather, perspectives and outlooks developed through application and practice that are descriptively sewn into one's persona (Papa & English, 2011). These are the aspects of leadership that are innate and go beyond the basic requirements of a leader.

Leadership does matter. The findings suggest that the leadership style of these *NC DLP* principals did have an impact on teaching and learning in their schools. These principals were making great progress within their schools and with their staffs. It seemed to be because of the strong development of the effective leadership practices and skills they employed. Through my data collection process, I compiled a few pieces of sound advice from these distinguished principals to share that align and connect to the evidences I saw implemented in their schools:

- ❖ *It is really different when you get into these shoes. You really can't explain it but some days it is almost a sense of loneliness . . . so have a support system.*
- ❖ *Read inspirational things. I keep abreast of literature, I like to read Bennis and Lincoln on Leadership, quotes inspire me . . .*

- ❖ *I would be honest about what they are getting in to . . . you have to be strong and it's draining and you work long hours . . . so I think principals who retire say to take care of yourself.*
- ❖ *To veteran principals—keep learning. Don't want to stay too long, but you should be willing to learn and keep that in mind. Don't get jaded or cynical.*
- ❖ *To a new principal—try to get through that first and second year.*
- ❖ *Advice to aspiring principals: lose your ego. We go into education because we like people and generally want to be liked, but making the transition is not always pretty.*
- ❖ *Be someone who will stand up for education and withstand pressure because education is under attack.*
- ❖ *Find balance.*
- ❖ *Don't be afraid to stand up for what you know is right for children.*
- ❖ *If you don't know what to do, ask somebody that you trust.*
- ❖ *Make sure you have one true confidant, not necessarily your spouse.*
- ❖ *Expose yourself to other points of view.*
- ❖ *Don't forget you are a lifelong learner.*
- ❖ *Eat well and sleep well.*
- ❖ *I just think that principals need to understand that to be effective and to do a good job, you've got to feel good and that is eating healthy and getting some rest. Rest is so important.*
- ❖ *What I would tell all of them is to make sure you have a mentor. The only way I would come here is if I had one.*

- ❖ *I would tell new principals to go in and listen, be willing to learn and be willing to change.*
- ❖ *Veteran principals, be willing to change.*
- ❖ *Aspiring principals should go for it—it is a noble job to do; don't jump on any job you may get, make sure it is the right fit. And decide that it's something you want to do. Don't do it just to do something different or to make more money than a classroom teacher. You will quickly burn out if you do.*
- ❖ *You've gotta know yourself. You've gotta have strong core beliefs. You've gotta have that integrity within yourself. And that does not come right away, it develops over time. But you gotta know yourself.*
- ❖ *You have to be yourself. If you try to be somebody else, the kids will see right through it. You have to be authentic with kids.*
- ❖ *You have got to build networks and seek council. You've got to have people you can call on and ask for advice. I still do it. That is so important. Because this can be a very lonely job and you've got to have people you know you can call.*
- ❖ *It's ok not to know everything. I don't know but I'll find out.*
- ❖ *Communication is key. And be timely. Sometimes you gotta make the hard call. You've got to make the call and you've got to be honest. Communication up and down is very, very important.*
- ❖ *Being deliberate works for me. Very rarely will I make an important decision without going for a run and sleeping on it. It takes me some time to process things. Don't send that email when you're mad. Hold on to it. Don't send that letter, don't send that note. You need to be deliberate and sleep on it.*
- ❖ *As an AP, you are good at what you do because you are very task-oriented. You get things done. You take care of it. As a principal, you have to learn to delegate and become less task-oriented and more idea-oriented and looking at the big picture.*

- ❖ *Visibility—So important. You gotta lead from the front. . . . When I go every kid is gonna know who I am.*
- ❖ *Establishing trust and establishing trust. Know that you have integrity. Trust is huge.*
- ❖ *Have balance in your life. It's what you do, not who you are. You gotta have fun. We have a lot of fun here. We do some silly things. I've gotta lead from the front, but family comes first . . . If I want my staff to believe that family first, I've got to model that.*

Additionally, the job of school leaders is to determine the leadership capacity within their schools and use that knowledge to cultivate high quality teaching and learning. Building leadership capacity among the staff in the schools of the *NC DLP* principals proved to strengthen the instructional capacity of the teachers and allowed the principals to focus more on instruction than managerial tasks. Hallinger and Heck (1998) found that principals indirectly influence student achievement through several key “avenues of influence”: people, purposes, and goals of the school, structure of the school and social networks, and organizational culture (p. 171). These *NC DLP* principals believed that the NC standards emphasized these behaviors and practices and the majority of the standards had an impact on their learning environments. Overall, the findings from this study suggest that principals who center their attention on developing the culture of the school and creating synergy of individual skills of teachers, learning relationships among teachers, a relentless focus on instruction, and ongoing mobilization of resources can make significant contributions to teaching and learning in a school.

To further improve teaching and learning outcomes and the academic success of all students we need to find ways to support the development and the nurturing of strong leadership perspectives and outlooks in both aspiring and current school leaders across the United States. There is a dire need to address the achievement gap and turn schools toward success. The literature supports the notion that school leadership, particularly in the 21st Century, has become a very complex and dynamic sport and requires a dynamic and evolving set of skills in a collaborative leader in order to be successful. It is no longer a job for a manager.

There are many examples of successful leadership development programs in the literature, so the knowledge is there to address how to improve the leadership in our schools (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Leadership evolves and becomes more effective over time and is ultimately a function, not a role. It takes the combined synergy of practice with skill to make a difference. Fullan (2004) says that in order to change organizations and systems it will require leaders who get experience in linking to other parts of the system. These leaders in turn must help develop other leaders with similar characteristics. In this sense the principal, for example, is not the impact on the bottom line of student achievement at the end of their tenure but rather how many good leaders he or she leaves behind who can go even further.

However, without a solid support system, the best-laid plans for strengthening the principalship are jeopardized. Research indicates that leaders need to be supported through comprehensive evaluations and continuous professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Support for the principalship must

revolve around leadership for learning. To sustain a new breed of leaders for greater student learning, we must take a fresh approach to professional development, mentoring, coaching, and peer support networks as well as principal compensation (IEL, 2000).

There is still much more to learn about how effective leadership practice and support structures can impact teaching and learning. As we add to our understanding of the skills and behaviors that influence leader practice and we begin to implement assessment tools like the NC Educator Evaluation System to guide leader practice it is my desire that policy and practice will be influenced in ways influence the preparation of more effective principal leaders. Policymakers could use the data gathered in this study to begin to create infrastructures that identify effective leadership preparation programs by designing data collection structures that could track program improvement and evaluation efforts (Young, Fuller, Brewer, Carpenter, & Mansfield, 2007).

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APPENDIX A

ACCOUTREMENTS OF LEADERSHIP

Accoutrements involve the following:

1. **Adult Learners:** Leaders should know adult learners learn on a need-to-know basis.
2. **Human Agency:** Leaders must have a varied repertoire of fair and just behaviors.
3. **Ignored Intended Skills:** Leaders must be adept at listening, mentoring, and showing compassion.
4. **Intellectual Curiosity:** Leaders must be curious. Curiosity is fairness in action as it asks “why” with no assigning of blame.
5. **Futurity:** Leaders must be exposed to learning frames that go against the grain of current wisdom. Going against the grain may just be the best leader trait we can encourage.
6. **Imaginativeness:** Creativity, inspiration, originality, resourcefulness, visionary, artistic, inventive, ingenious is the synonyms to imaginative leadership. Experience with a good heart, an almost spiritual need to be of service to others; to be the hope for others; to help others be all they can be; to see the good in others is limited only by one’s lack of imagination.

Source: Papa and English (2011)

APPENDIX B

EIGHT EXECUTIVE STANDARDS FOR NC PRINCIPALS

North Carolina Standards for School Executives

*As Approved by the State Board of Education
December 7, 2006*

A New Vision of School Leadership

Public education's changed mission dictates the need for a new type of school leader – an executive instead of an administrator. No longer are school leaders just maintaining the status quo by managing complex operations, but just like their colleagues in business, they must be able to create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. Schools need executives who are adept at creating systems for change and at building relationships with and across staff that not only tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess but powerful relationships that also stir their passions for their work with children. Out of these relationships the executive must create among staff a common shared understanding for the purpose of the work of the school, its values that direct its action, and commitment and ownership of a set of beliefs and goals that focus everyone's decision making. The staff's common understanding of the school's identity empowers them to seek and build powerful alliances and partnerships with students, parents and community stakeholders in order to enhance their ability to produce increased student achievement. The successful work of the new executive will only be realized in the creation of a culture in which leadership is distributed and encouraged with teachers, which consists of open, honest communication, which is focused on the use of data, teamwork, research-based best practices, and which uses modern tools to drive ethical and principled, goal-oriented action. This culture of disciplined thought and action is rooted in the ability of the relationships among all stakeholders to build a trusting, transparent environment that reduces all stakeholders' sense of vulnerability as they address the challenges of transformational change.

Philosophical Foundations of the Standards

The standards are predicated on the following beliefs:

- ✿ Today schools must have proactive school executives who possess a great sense of urgency.
- ✿ The goal of school leadership is to transform schools so that large-scale, sustainable, continuous improvement becomes built in to their mode of operation.
- ✿ The moral purpose of school leadership is to create schools in which all students learn, the gap between high and low performance is greatly diminished and what students learn will prepare them for success in their futures, not ours.
- ✿ Leadership is not a position or a person. It is a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of the school district.
- ✿ The work of leadership is about working with, for and through people. It is a social act. Whether we are discussing instructional leadership, change leadership or leadership as learning, people are always the medium for the leader.
- ✿ Leadership is not about doing everything oneself but it is always about creating processes and systems that will cause everything to happen.
- ✿ Leadership is about the executive's ability to select and develop a strong executive staff whose complementary strengths promote excellence in all seven functions of leadership identified in this document.
- ✿ The concept of leadership is extremely complex and systemic in nature. Isolating the parts of leadership completely misses the power of the whole. It is not just knowing what to do, but why to do it, how to do it and when to do it.
- ✿ Within a school district there are nested leadership systems (local boards of education, central office, school, and classroom). For the organization to be successful these systems must be aligned and supportive, and function as a team.
- ✿ Leadership is about setting direction, aligning and motivating people to implement positive sustained improvement.
- ✿ Leaders bring their "person" to the practice of leadership. Matching the context of leadership to the "person" of the individual is important to the success of the leader.

Intended Purposes of the Standards

The North Carolina School Executive Standards have been developed as a guide for principals and assistant principals as they continually reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout all of the stages of their careers. Although there are many influences on a school executive's development, these standards will serve as an important tool for principals and assistant principals as they consider their growth and development as executives leading schools in the 21st century. Taken as a whole these standards, practices and competencies are overwhelming. One might ask, "How can one person possess all of these?" The answer is, one person cannot. It is, therefore, imperative that a school executive understands the importance of building an executive team that has complementary skills. The more diversity that exists on the team the more likely the team will be to demonstrate high performance in all critical function areas. The main responsibility of the school executive is to create aligned systems of leadership throughout the school and its community.

In addition, these standards will serve other audiences and purposes. These standards will:

- ✱ Inform higher education programs in developing the content and requirements of school executive degree programs;
- ✱ Focus the goals and objectives of districts as they support, monitor and evaluate their school executives;
- ✱ Guide professional development for school executives;
- ✱ Serve as a tool in developing coaching and mentoring programs for school executives.

Organization of the Standards

Each standard is formatted as follows:

- ✱ **Standard:** The standard is the broad category of the executive's knowledge and skills.
- ✱ **Summary:** The summary more fully describes the content and rationale of each Standard.
- ✱ **Practices:** The practices are statements of what one would see an effective executive doing in each Standard. The lists of practices are not meant to be exhaustive.
- ✱ **Artifacts:** The artifacts are evidence of the quality of the executive's work or places where evidence can be found in each Standard. Collectively they could be the components of a performance portfolio. The lists of artifacts are not meant to be exhaustive.

- ✱ **Competencies:** Although not articulated, there are many obvious competencies inherent in the practices of each critical leadership function. This document concludes with a list of those competencies which may not be obvious but that support practice in multiple leadership functions.

The Seven Standards of Executive Leadership and Their Connection

Relevant national reports and research in the field focused on identifying the practices of leadership that impact student achievement were considered in the development of these standards. Particularly helpful were the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework, and work by the Wallace Foundation, the Mid-continental Regional Education Laboratory, the Charlotte Advocates for Education and the Southern Regional Education Board. Work by the National Staff Development Council, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Middle School Association, the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration Education Leadership Constituent Council were also considered in the development of these standards. Additionally, input was solicited from stakeholders and leaders in the field.

The seven critical standards used as the framework for the North Carolina School Executive Standards are borrowed from a Wallace Foundation study, *Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principalship* (2003). Unlike many current efforts that look at all of the things principals "might" or "should" do, this study examined what principals actually do. As such, it is grounded in practice, exploits story and narrative, and supports the distribution of leadership rather than the "hero leader."

North Carolina's Standards for School Executives are interrelated and connect in executives' practice. They are not intended to isolate competencies or practices. Executives' abilities in each standard will impact their ability to perform effectively in other standard areas. For example, the ability of an executive to evaluate and develop staff will directly impact the school's ability to reach its goals and will also impact the norms of the culture of the school. School executives are responsible for ensuring that leadership happens in all seven critical areas, but they don't have to provide it.

The standards and their practices follow.

Standard 1: Strategic Leadership

Summary: School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry that challenges the school community to continually re-purpose itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

Practices: The school executive practices effective strategic leadership when he or she:

- ✳ Is able to share a vision of the changing world in the 21st century that schools are preparing children to enter;
- ✳ Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes;
- ✳ Systematically considers new ways of accomplishing tasks and is comfortable with major changes in how processes are implemented;
- ✳ Utilizes data from the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey in developing the framework for continual improvement in the School Improvement Plan;
- ✳ Is a driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21st century skills;
- ✳ Creates with all stakeholders a vision for the school that captures peoples' attention and imagination;
- ✳ Creates processes that provide for the periodic review and revision of the school's vision, mission, and strategic goals by all school stakeholders;
- ✳ Creates processes to ensure the school's identity (vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals) actually drive decisions and inform the culture of the school;
- ✳ Adheres to statutory requirements regarding the School Improvement Plan;
- ✳ Facilitates the collaborative development of annual school improvement plans to realize strategic goals and objectives;
- ✳ Facilitates the successful execution of the school improvement plan aligned to the mission and goals set by the State Board of Education;
- ✳ Facilitates the implementation of state education policy inside the school's classrooms;
- ✳ Facilitates the setting of high, concrete goals and the expectations that all students meet them;
- ✳ Communicates strong professional beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning that reflect latest research and best practice in preparing students for success in college or in work;
- ✳ Creates processes to distribute leadership throughout the school.

Artifacts:

- ✳ Degree to which school improvement plan strategies are implemented, assessed and modified
- ✳ Evidence of an effectively functioning, elected School Improvement Team
- ✳ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ✳ School improvement plan, its alignment with district and state strategic priorities, and a plan for growth on items of concern as evidenced in the NC TWC Survey
- ✳ The degree to which staff can articulate the school's direction and focus
- ✳ Student testing data

Standard 2: Instructional Leadership

Summary: School executives will set high standards for the professional practice of 21st century instruction and assessment that result in a no nonsense accountable environment. The school executive must be knowledgeable of best instructional and school practices and must use this knowledge to cause the creation of collaborative structures within the school for the design of highly engaging schoolwork for students, the on-going peer review of this work and the sharing of this work throughout the professional community.

Practices: The school executive practices effective instructional leadership when he or she:

- ✳ Focuses his or her own and others' attention persistently and publicly on learning and teaching by initiating and guiding conversations about instruction and student learning that are oriented towards high expectations and concrete goals;
- ✳ Creates an environment of practiced distributive leadership and teacher empowerment;
- ✳ Demonstrates knowledge of 21st century curriculum, instruction, and assessment by leading or participating in meetings with teachers and parents where these topics are discussed, and/or holding frequent formal or informal conversations with students, staff and parents around these topics;
- ✳ Ensures that there is an appropriate and logical alignment between the curriculum of the school and the state's accountability program;
- ✳ Creates processes and schedules that facilitate the collaborative (team) design, sharing, evaluation, and archiving of rigorous, relevant, and engaging instructional lessons that ensure students acquire essential knowledge;
- ✳ Challenges staff to reflect deeply on and define what knowledge, skills and concepts are essential to the complete educational development of students;
- ✳ Creates processes for collecting and using student test data and other formative data from other sources for the improvement of instruction;

- ✱ Creates processes for identifying, benchmarking and providing students access to a variety of 21st century instructional tools (e.g., technology) and best practices for meeting diverse student needs;
- ✱ Creates processes that ensure the strategic allocation and use of resources to meet instructional goals and support teacher needs;
- ✱ Creates processes to provide formal feedback to teachers concerning the effectiveness of their classroom instruction;
- ✱ Creates processes that protect teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their instructional time;
- ✱ Systematically and frequently observes in classrooms and engages in conversation with students about their learning.

Artifacts:

- ✱ School improvement plan
- ✱ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ✱ Student achievement data
- ✱ Dropout data
- ✱ Teacher retention data
- ✱ Documented use of formative assessment instruments to impact instruction
- ✱ Development and communication of goal-oriented personalized education plans for identified students (ESOL, exceptional children, Level I and Level II children)
- ✱ Evidence of the team development and evaluation of classroom lessons

Standard 3: Cultural Leadership

Summary: School executives will understand and act on the understanding of the important role a school's culture contributes to the exemplary performance of the school. School executives must support and value the traditions, artifacts, symbols and positive values and norms of the school and community that result in a sense of identity and pride upon which to build a positive future. A school executive must be able to "reculture" the school if needed to align with school's goals of improving student and adult learning and to infuse the work of the adults and students with passion, meaning and purpose. Cultural leadership implies understanding the school as the people in it each day, how they came to their current state, and how to connect with their traditions in order to move them forward to support the school's efforts to achieve individual and collective goals.

Practices: The school executive practices effective cultural leadership when he or she:

- ✱ Creates a collaborative work environment predicated on site-based management that supports the "team" as the basic unit of learning and decision-making within the school and promotes cohesion and cooperation among staff;
- ✱ Communicates strong ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and professional learning communities with teachers, staff, parents, and students and then operates from those beliefs;
- ✱ Influences the evolution of the culture to support the continuous improvement of the school as outlined in the school improvement plan;
- ✱ Systematically develops and uses shared values, beliefs and a shared vision to establish a school identity that emphasizes a sense of community and cooperation to guide the disciplined thought and action of all staff and students;
- ✱ Systematically and fairly acknowledges failures and celebrates accomplishments of the school and staff;
- ✱ Visibly supports the positive, culturally-responsive traditions of the school community;
- ✱ Promotes a sense of well-being among staff, students and parents;
- ✱ Builds a sense of efficacy and empowerment among staff that result in a "can do" attitude when faced with challenges;
- ✱ Empowers staff to recommend creative 21st century concepts for school improvement.

Artifacts:

- ✱ Work of Professional Learning Communities within and tangential to the school
- ✱ Documented use of the SIT in decision-making throughout the year
- ✱ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ✱ School improvement plan
- ✱ Teacher retention data
- ✱ Student achievement data
- ✱ Awards structure developed by school

Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership

Summary: School executives will ensure that the school is a professional learning community. School executives will ensure that processes and systems are in place that result in the recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development and retention of a high performing staff. The school executive must engage and empower accomplished teachers in a distributive leadership manner, including support of teachers in day-to-day decisions such as discipline, communication with parents, and protecting teachers

from duties that interfere with teaching, and must practice fair and consistent evaluation of teachers. The school executive must engage teachers and other professional staff in conversations to plan their career paths and support district succession planning.

Practices: The school executive practices effective human resource leadership when he or she:

- ✱ Provides structures for the development of effective professional learning communities aligned with the school improvement plan, focused on results, and characterized by collective responsibility for instructional planning and for 21st century student learning;
- ✱ Models the importance of continued adult learning by engaging in activities to develop personal knowledge and skill along with expanded self – awareness;
- ✱ Communicates a positive attitude about the ability of staff to accomplish substantial outcomes to improve their efficacy;
- ✱ Creates processes for teachers to assume leadership and decision making roles within the school that foster their career development;
- ✱ Creates and monitors processes for hiring, inducting and mentoring new teachers and other staff to the school;
- ✱ Uses the results of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey to create and maintain a positive work environment for teachers and other staff;
- ✱ Evaluates teachers and other staff in a fair and equitable manner and utilizes the results of evaluations to improve performance;
- ✱ Provides for results-oriented professional development that is aligned with identified 21st century curricular, instructional, and assessment needs, is connected to school improvement goals and is differentiated based on staff needs;
- ✱ Continuously searches for the best placement and utilization of staff to fully benefit from their strengths;
- ✱ Is systematically and personally involved in the school's professional activities.

Artifacts:

- ✱ School improvement plan
- ✱ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey – with special emphasis on the leadership and empowerment domains
- ✱ Copy of master school schedule documenting the time provided for individual and collaborative planning for every teacher
- ✱ Number of National Board Certified teachers
- ✱ Teacher retention data
- ✱ Number of teachers pursuing school executive credentials, National Board Certification, or advanced licensure in their teaching areas
- ✱ Records of school visits for the purpose of adult learning

- ✱ Record of professional development provided staff and an assessment of the impact of professional development on student learning
- ✱ Mentor records, beginning teacher feedback, and documentation of correlation of assignment of mentor to mentee
- ✱ Copies of professional growth plans
- ✱ Student achievement data

Standard 5: Managerial Leadership

Summary: School executives will ensure that the school has processes and systems in place for budgeting, staffing, problem solving, communicating expectations and scheduling that result in organizing the work routines in the building. The school executive must be responsible for the monitoring of the school budget and the inclusion of all teachers in the budget decisions so as to meet the 21st century needs of every classroom. Effectively and efficiently managing the complexity of every day life is critical for staff to be able to focus its energy on improvement.

Practices: The school executive practices effective managerial leadership when he or she:

- ✱ Creates processes to provide for a balanced operational budget for school programs and activities;
- ✱ Creates processes to recruit and retain a high-quality workforce in the school that meets the diverse needs of students;
- ✱ Creates processes to identify and solve, resolve, dissolve or absolve school-based problems/ conflicts in a fair, democratic way;
- ✱ Designs a system of communication that provides for the timely, responsible sharing of information to, from, and with school and district staff;
- ✱ Designs scheduling processes and protocols that maximize staff input and addresses diverse student learning needs;
- ✱ Develops a master schedule for the school to maximize student learning by providing for individual and on-going collaborative planning for every teacher;
- ✱ Collaboratively develops and enforces clear expectations, structures, rules and procedures for students and staff.

Artifacts:

- ✱ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ✱ School Improvement Plan
- ✱ External reviews, such as budget
- ✱ Copies of master schedules/procedures
- ✱ Communication of safety procedures and behavioral expectations throughout the school community

Standard 6: External Development Leadership

Summary: A school executive will design structures and processes that result in community engagement, support, and ownership. Acknowledging that schools no longer reflect but in fact build community, the leader proactively creates with staff opportunities for parents, community and business representatives to participate as “stockholders” in the school such that continued investments of resources and good will are not left to chance.

Practices: The school executive practices effective external development leadership when he or she:

- ✱ Implements processes that empower parents and other stakeholders to make significant decisions;
- ✱ Creates systems that engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success;
- ✱ Designs protocols and processes that ensure compliance with state and district mandates;
- ✱ Creates opportunities to advocate for the school in the community and with parents;
- ✱ Communicates the school’s accomplishments to the district office and public media in accordance with LEA policies;
- ✱ Garners fiscal, intellectual and human resources from the community that support the 21st century learning agenda of the school;
- ✱ Builds relationships with individuals and groups to support specific aspects of the learning improvement agenda and also as a source of general good will.

Artifacts:

- ✱ PTSA participation
- ✱ PTSA meeting agendas, bulletins, etc.
- ✱ Parent attendance at school improvement team meetings
- ✱ Survey results from parents
- ✱ Evidence of visible support from community
- ✱ Booster club participation
- ✱ Number of school volunteers
- ✱ Plan for shaping the school’s image throughout the community
- ✱ PTSA membership
- ✱ Evidence of business partnerships and projects involving business partners

Standard 7: Micropolitical Leadership

Summary: The school executive will build systems and relationships that utilize the staff’s diversity, encourage constructive ideological conflict in order to leverage staff expertise, power and influence to realize the school’s vision for success. The executive will also creatively employ an awareness of staff’s professional needs, issues, and interests to build social cohesion and to facilitate distributed governance and shared decision-making.

Practices: The school executive practices effective micropolitical leadership when he or she:

- ✱ Uses the School Improvement Team to make decisions and provides opportunities for staff to be involved in developing school policies;
- ✱ Creates an environment and mechanisms to ensure all internal stakeholder voices are heard and respected;
- ✱ Creates processes and protocols to buffer and mediate staff interests;
- ✱ Is easily accessible to teachers and staff;
- ✱ Designs transparent systems to equitably manage human and financial resources;
- ✱ Demonstrates sensitivity to personal needs of staff;
- ✱ Demonstrates awareness of informal groups and relationships among school staff and utilizes these as a positive resource;
- ✱ Demonstrates awareness of hidden and potentially discordant issues in the school;
- ✱ Encourages people to express opinions contrary to those of authority;
- ✱ Demonstrates ability to predict what could go wrong from day to day;
- ✱ Uses performance as the primary criterion for reward and advancement;
- ✱ Maintains high visibility throughout the school;
- ✱ Maintains open, vertical and horizontal communications throughout the school community.

Artifacts:

- ✱ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ✱ Teacher retention data
- ✱ Dissemination of clear norms and ground rules
- ✱ Evidence of ability to confront ideological conflict and then reach consensus
- ✱ Evidence of shared decision-making
- ✱ Evidence of use of a decision matrix
- ✱ Evidence of a school that operates through teams
- ✱ Evidence of distributed leadership

Competencies

A competency is a combination of knowledge (factual and experiential) and skills that one needs to effectively implement the practices. Factual knowledge is simply “knowing” content; experiential knowledge is the knowledge one gains from understanding – it is knowing the when and why. Skills bring structure to experiential knowledge. It is when one can put their accumulated knowledge into a series of steps that – if followed – will lead to practice.

There are many competencies that are obviously inherent in the successful performance of all of the practices listed under each of the seven critical functions of leadership. The principal may or may not personally possess all of these competencies but must ensure that a team is in place that not only possesses them but can effectively and efficiently execute them. Although the principal may not personally possess them all, he or she is still responsible for their effective use in the various leadership practices.

The competencies listed below are not so obvious in the practices, can be applied to multiple practices and are absolutely essential for all school executives to possess to ensure their success. For example, the competency – conflict management is important in Micropolitical Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Cultural Leadership, and perhaps one could argue that this competency is necessary in all seven Standards. These competencies are listed here to emphasize their importance and to make sure they are incorporated into the development of school executives.

- ✳ **Communication** – Effectively listens to others; clearly and effectively presents and understands information orally and in writing; acquires, organizes, analyzes, interprets, maintains information needed to achieve school or team 21st century objectives.
- ✳ **Change Management** – Effectively engages staff and community in the change process in a manner that ensures their support of the change and its successful implementation.
- ✳ **Conflict Management** – Anticipates or seeks to resolve confrontations, disagreements, or complaints in a constructive manner.
- ✳ **Creative Thinking** – Engages in and fosters an environment for others to engage in innovative thinking.
- ✳ **Customer Focus** – Understands the students as customers of the work of schooling and the servant nature of leadership and acts accordingly.
- ✳ **Delegation** – Effectively assigns work tasks to others in ways that provide learning experiences for them and in ways that ensure the efficient operation of the school.
- ✳ **Dialogue/Inquiry** – Is skilled in creating a risk free environment for engaging people in conversations that explore issues, challenges or bad relationships that are hindering school performance.
- ✳ **Emotional Intelligence** – Is able to manage oneself through self awareness and self management and is able to manage relationships through empathy, social

awareness and relationship management. This competency is critical to building strong, transparent, trusting relationships throughout the school community.

- ✳ **Environmental Awareness** – Becomes aware and remains informed of external and internal trends, interests and issues with potential impacts on school policies, practices, procedures and positions.
- ✳ **Global Perspective** – Understands the competitive nature of the new global economy and is clear about the knowledge and skills students will need to be successful in this economy.
- ✳ **Judgment** – Effectively reaching logical conclusions and making high quality decisions based on available information. Giving priority and caution to significant issues. Analyzing and interpreting complex information.
- ✳ **Organizational Ability** – Effectively plans and schedules one’s own and the work of others so that resources are used appropriately, such as scheduling the flow of activities and establishing procedures to monitor projects.
- ✳ **Personal Ethics and Values** – Consistently exhibits high standards in the areas of honesty, integrity, fairness, stewardship, trust, respect, and confidentiality.
- ✳ **Personal Responsibility for Performance** – Proactively and continuously improves performance by focusing on needed areas of improvement and enhancement of strengths; actively seeks and effectively applies feedback from others; takes full responsibility for one’s own achievements.
- ✳ **Responsiveness** – Does not leave issues, inquiries or requirements for information go unattended. Creates a clearly delineated structure for responding to requests/situations in an expedient manner.
- ✳ **Results Orientation** – Effectively assumes responsibility. Recognizes when a decision is required. Takes prompt action as issues emerge. Resolves short-term issues while balancing them against long-term goals.
- ✳ **Sensitivity** – Effectively perceives the needs and concerns of others; deals tactfully with others in emotionally stressful situations or in conflict. Knows what information to communicate and to whom. Relates to people of varying ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
- ✳ **Systems Thinking** – Understands the interrelationships and impacts of school and district influences, systems and external stakeholders, and applies that understanding to advancing the achievement of the school or team.
- ✳ **Technology** – Effectively utilizes the latest technologies to continuously improve the management of the school and enhance student instruction.
- ✳ **Time Management** – Effectively uses available time to complete work tasks and activities that lead to the achievement of desired work or school results. Runs effective meetings.
- ✳ **Visionary** – Encourages imagineering by creating an environment and structure to capture stakeholder dreams of what the school could become for all the students.

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background Questions—how long have you been principal? How long have you been at this school? What is your background?

How would you describe the responsibilities of the principal in a school in the 21st Century? (1-7)

Describe your leadership style. (1-7)

Describe your school's vision and examples of conditions you have put in place to realize that vision. (1)

What are your core beliefs about teaching and learning? (2)

Walk me through a "day in the life" at your school. How do you prioritize your day? (5)

Describe your hiring practices. (5)

Describe how you encourage teacher leadership in your school. (4)

Describe the strategies you use to promote a sense of culture in your school. (3)

Describe how you involve external stakeholders in your leadership. (6)

Describe what collaboration looks like within your school. (7)

Do you have an Assistant Principal? Describe the role of your Assistant Principal(s) related to teaching and learning. (2)

In your own words, describe the difference between leadership and management. (7)

What influences impact your decisions the most regarding teaching and learning? (2)

What advice would you give to an aspiring principal, a new principal, or a veteran principal about effective leadership?

Standard 1: School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imaging the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry that challenges the school community to continually re-purpose itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

Standard 2: School executives will set high standards for the professional practice of 21st century instruction and assessment that result in a no nonsense accountable environment. The school executive must be knowledgeable of best instructional and school practices and must use this knowledge to cause the creation of collaborative structures within the school for the design of highly engaging schoolwork for students, the on-going peer review of this work and the sharing of this work throughout the professional community.

Standard 3: School executives will understand and act on the understanding of the important role a school's culture contributes to the exemplary performance of the school. School executives must support and value the traditions, artifacts, symbols and positive values and norms of the school and community that result in a sense of identity and pride upon which to build a positive future. A school executive must be able to "reculture" the school if needed to align with school's goals of improving student and adult learning and to infuse the work of the adults and students with passion, meaning and purpose. Cultural leadership implies understanding the school as the people in it each day, how they came to their current state, and how to connect with their traditions in order to move them forward to support the school's efforts to achieve individual and collective goals.

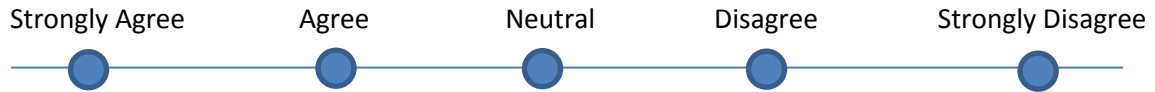
Standard 4: School executives will ensure that the school is a professional learning community. School executives will ensure that processes and systems are in place that results in the recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development and retention of a high performing staff. The school executive must engage and empower accomplished teachers in a distributive leadership manner, including support of teachers in day-to-day decisions such as discipline, communication with parents, and protecting teachers from duties that interfere with teaching, and must practice fair and consistent evaluation of teachers. The school executive must engage teachers and other professional staff in conversations to plan their career paths and support district succession planning.

Standard 5: School executives will ensure that the school has processes and systems in place for budgeting, staffing, problem solving, communicating expectations and scheduling that result in organizing the work routines in the building. The school executive must be responsible for the monitoring of the school budget and the inclusion of all teachers in the budget decisions so as to meet the 21st century needs of every classroom. Effectively and efficiently managing the complexity of everyday life is critical for staff to be able to focus its energy on improvement.

Standard 6: A school executive will design structures and processes that result in community engagement, support, and ownership. Acknowledging that schools no longer reflect but in fact build community, the leader proactively creates with staff opportunities for parents, community and business representatives to participate as "stockholders" in the school such that continued investments of resources and good will are not left to chance.

Standard 7: The school executive will build systems and relationships that utilize the staff's diversity, encourage constructive ideological conflict in order to leverage staff expertise, power and influence to realize the school's vision for success. The executive will also creatively employ an awareness of staff's professional needs, issues, and interests to build social cohesion and to facilitate distributed governance and shared decision-making.

APPENDIX D
FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



1. When I think of a 21st century leader, I think of a person who can effectively adjust to change.
2. Leadership is about what people do rather than who they are.
3. Building relationships is a key element of successful leadership.
4. Followers can influence the leadership process as much as leaders.
5. Some people are born to be leaders.
6. The key to successful school leadership is having the right skills.
7. The most important job of the principal is to hire the right staff.
8. Effective principals seek out opportunities for teachers to lead and take risks.
9. Principals who do what's best for students is a leader who makes tough choices and makes decisions that may not be popular.
10. Effective principals focus more on teaching and learning rather than running the school.
11. A principal helps the school realize their vision.
12. Teachers are most important to teaching and learning in a school.
13. Leaders impact the culture in a school by influencing others.
14. Effective principals understand that leadership is about the common purpose of leaders and followers.
15. Leaders "influence" and managers "maintain."
16. Effective leaders demonstrate both competence and knowledge.
17. People can develop the capacity to lead.

APPENDIX E**LEADERSHIP SURVEY QUESTIONS**

- 1) When you hear this statement: Effective principals focus more on teaching and learning rather than running the school, what does that mean to you?

- 2) How have you been able to maintain this high level of achievement (and what caused the small decrease last year, if applicable)?

- 3) Which leadership standard(s) do you believe were the most impactful to your leadership?

- 4) Do you believe “The key to successful school leadership is having the right skills?” If so, why? If not, why not?

- 5) Leadership capacity. You mentioned this several times. Give an example of PD, systems, processes, structures, etc. that allowed you to build leadership capacity.

APPENDIX F

COMPOSITE READING, MATH, AND EOC SCORES

Alamance-Burlington Schools/Grove Park Elementary (Principal A)

YEAR	2009-2010			2010-2011		
Student Subgroup	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III
All Students	161	279	57.7%	146	286	51.0%

Buncombe County/North Buncombe Elementary (Principal B)

YEAR	2009-2010			2010-2011		
Student Subgroup	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III
All Students	236	327	72.2%	228	299	76.3%

Gaston County Schools/Belmont Central Elementary (Principal C)

YEAR	2009-2010			2010-2011		
Student Subgroup	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III
All Students	457	540	84.6%	453	532	85.2%

Iredell-Statesville Schools/Troutman Middle Schools (Principal D)

YEAR	2009-2010			2010-2011		
Student Subgroup	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III
All Students	275	387	71.1%	284	417	68.1%

Orange County Schools/Gravelly Hill Middle (Principal E)

YEAR	2009-2010			2010-2011		
Student Subgroup	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III
All Students	335	490	68.4%	338	506	66.8%

Wake County Public Schools/Apex High School (EOCs) (Principal F)

YEAR	2009-2010			2010-2011		
Student Subgroup	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III	# At or Above Level III	# Valid Scores	Percent At or Above Level III
All Students	3816	4018	95.0%	2909	3076	94.6%

APPENDIX G

APPROVED IRB



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

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Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Carl Lashley
Ed Ldrship and Cultural Found
342 School of Education Building

From: UNCG IRB

Date: 2/04/2013

RE: Notice of IRB Exemption

Exemption Category: 2.Survey, interview, public observation

Study #: 13-0013

Study Title: School Leadership in North Carolina through the Eyes of Distinguished Leaders: A Thematic Analysis

This submission has been reviewed by the above IRB and was determined to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Study Description:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC to understand the impact school leadership has on teaching and learning in NC Schools.

Regulatory and other findings:

- If your study is contingent upon approval from another site, you will need to submit a modification at the time you receive that approval.

Study Specific Details:

- Your study is approved and is in compliance with federal regulations and UNCG IRB Policies. Please note that you will also need to remain in compliance with the university Access To and Data Retention Policy which can be found at http://policy.uncg.edu/research_data/.

Investigator's Responsibilities

Please be aware that any changes to your protocol must be reviewed by the IRB prior to being implemented. The IRB will maintain records for this study for three years from the date of the original determination of exempt status.

CC:
Yvette Stewart
ORC, (ORI), Non-IRB Review Contact

Cohort 2 – Survey Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

Project Title: School Leadership in North Carolina through the Eyes of Distinguished Leaders: A Thematic Analysis

Project Director: Yvette Stewart

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. The purpose of this study is to understand the behaviors and practices that influence teaching and learning, particularly those that increase the ability of a school to sustain its success. The major research question for this study is, *"How does a principal's leadership support high quality teaching and learning?"* This study aims to investigate the behaviors and practices of effective school leaders in North Carolina who have successfully influenced teaching and learning in North Carolina's schools.

Why are you asking me?

You are participating in the Distinguished Leadership in Practice Program cohort. This program is designed to focus a yearly cohort of successful principals and expose them to models of exemplary school leadership, which allows participants to study the behaviors, attitudes, and competencies that define a "distinguished" school leader (NCASA, 2010). This study is to understand what leadership practices distinguished principals apply within their schools that positively impact teaching and learning. Specifically, this study will investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. You have been identified as a distinguished principal. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

This discussion and the consent form given to you will tell you about the study to help you decide if you want to be part of the study. Your participation will involve completing a consent document and one (1) survey questionnaire with approximately 15 questions, which will last approximately 15-20 minutes in length. The survey will be done through Qualtrics, a survey software program and a hard copy option will also be offered to you (if you do not have access to a computer). All responses taken through hard copy will be entered into Qualtrics by the Project Director, Yvette Stewart.

Is there any audio/video recording?

You will not be audio recorded throughout the course of this study.

What are the dangers to me?

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form

Valid 2/4/13 to 2/3/16

Cohort 2 – Survey Questionnaire

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. There are minimal risks associated with this study. Participants in this study are involved in a statewide leadership development program; therefore, the analysis and conclusions of the data from this study will be known by the state. The researcher will be transparent about the data and what specific conclusions that will be made. The data collected will be made available to the state.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Dr. Carl Lashley who may be contacted at (336) 334-3745 or carl.lashley@gmail.com or Yvette Stewart at 919-697-6001 or Yvette_Stewart1@yahoo.com.

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 Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

There is little research on the practices that effective school leaders demonstrate in North Carolina since the adoption of the new evaluation instrument across the state in 2009. In this study, the researcher will investigate and analyze the new evaluation standards and the performance evaluation instrument aligned to those standards for North Carolina's school leaders. This will be a critical body of knowledge for this study because it will define key characteristics and competencies leaders are expected to demonstrate that should positively impact teaching and learning. The study will also describe the importance of school leadership and the influence principals have on student achievement relative to the standards presented in the evaluation instrument.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation in this study. Indirect benefits of being in this study may include contributing to the current body of knowledge around school leadership by creating a framework for measuring effective school leadership in North Carolina, informing the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.

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?

The survey will be administered online and all responses will be anonymous. The survey will be created through Qualtrics, an electronic survey program and a link to the survey will be generated. A hard copy option will also be offered (for those without access to a computer). All responses taken through hard copy will be entered into Qualtrics by the Project Director. Respondents who must submit a hard copy will turn in their survey in a sealed envelope to maintain their anonymity. A disclaimer on the cover page of the survey will describe that participation is voluntary, that your responses will be anonymous and that the researcher will be the only person who will have access to the data. Permission will be solicited prior to meeting with the subjects. The data will be secured through password protected access. Because the survey was conducted through electronically through Qualtrics, the data will be stored in the program behind a password and destroyed after the research is complete.

After the study is completed, all material that contain identifiable data about the participants will be destroyed by shredding any documents and erasing any electronic files within thirty (30) days after the completion of the study and approval of the dissertation. Consent forms will be kept for 3 years after completion of the project.

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form
Valid 2/4/13 to 2/3/16

Cohort 2 – Survey Questionnaire

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the investigator must add a description of any legal duty to report abuse that might supersede these confidentiality promises. Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when finished so no one will be able to see what you have been doing. The researcher will use every effort possible to maintain the security of the information entered into the site and the Project Director will be the only one who will have access to the data in the program.

What if I want to leave the study?

You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and talk to your family or friends before you decide if you want to be in the study. If you decide you want to be in the study you will need to sign the consent form given to your earlier.

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. Deciding not to participate in the study will not affect your employment in the school/school district.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

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, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Yvette Stewart, Project Director.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form

Valid 2/4/13 to 2/3/16

Consent-Interviews_Site Visits

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

Project Title: School Leadership in North Carolina through the Eyes of Distinguished Leaders: A Thematic Analysis

Project Director: Yvette Stewart

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. The purpose of this study is to understand the behaviors and practices that influence teaching and learning, particularly those that increase the ability of a school to sustain its success. The major research question for this study is, "How does a principal's leadership support high quality teaching and learning?" This study aims to investigate the behaviors and practices of effective school leaders in North Carolina who have successfully influenced teaching and learning in North Carolina's schools. Yvette Stewart has explained in the earlier verbal discussion the procedures involved in this research study. These include the purpose and what will be required of you. Any new information that comes up during the study will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

Why are you asking me?

You have been picked for this study because you were selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of the Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP) program and this study is to understand what leadership practices distinguished principals apply within their schools that positively impact teaching and learning. This research study is about how a principal's leadership supports high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. Specifically, this study will investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. You have been identified as a distinguished principal. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

This discussion and the piece of paper (long form) given to you will tell you about the study to help you decide if you want to be part of the study. Your participation will involve completing a consent document, one (1) taped face-to-face interview, which will last approximately 60-90 minutes; and one (1) site visit observation following the interview, which will last approximately one (1) full school day. I would like to reserve the right for a follow-up interview and/or site visit, if necessary.

Is there any audio/video recording?

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form

Valid 2/4/13 to 2/3/16

Consent-Interviews_Site Visits

You will be audio recorded throughout the course of this study. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described below.

What are the dangers 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. There are minimal risks associated with this study. Participants in this study are involved in a statewide leadership development program; therefore, the analysis and conclusions of the data from this study will be known by the state. The researcher will be transparent about the data and what specific conclusions that will be made. The data collected will be made available to the state.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Dr. Carl Lashley who may be contacted at (336) 334-3745 or carl.lashley@gmail.com or Yvette Stewart at 919-697-6001 or Yvette_Stewart1@yahoo.com.

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 Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

There is little research on the practices that effective school leaders demonstrate in North Carolina since the adoption of the new evaluation instrument across the state in 2009. In this study, the researcher will investigate and analyze the new evaluation standards and the performance evaluation instrument aligned to those standards for North Carolina's school leaders. This will be a critical body of knowledge for this study because it will define key characteristics and competencies leaders are expected to demonstrate that should positively impact teaching and learning. The study will also describe the importance of school leadership and the influence principals have on student achievement relative to the standards presented in the evaluation instrument.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation in this study. Indirect benefits of being in this study may include contributing to the current body of knowledge around school leadership by creating a framework for measuring effective school leadership in North Carolina, informing the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.

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?

Your privacy will be protected by a chosen pseudonym for your name and school district and any hard copy responses will be submitted in a sealed envelope. The taped interview and notes will be kept under lock and key. After the study is completed, all material that contain identifiable data about the participants will be destroyed by shredding any documents and erasing any taped data within thirty (30) days after the completion of the study and approval of the dissertation. Consent forms will be kept for 3 years after completion of the project. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition the investigator must add a description of any legal duty to report abuse that might supersede these confidentiality promises.

What if I want to leave the study?

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form
Valid 2/4/13 to 2/3/16

Consent-Interviews_Site Visits

You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and talk to your family or friends before you decide if you want to be in 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. Deciding not to participate in the study will not affect your employment in the school/school district.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

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, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Yvette Stewart.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

UNCG IRB
Approved Consent Form
Valid 2/4/13 to 2/3/16

Script for Oral Discussion
Study #: 13-0013

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2013

Script:

- My name is Yvette Stewart and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You may recognize my name through my career work at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. I was formerly the Lead Trainer for the Principal and Teacher Evaluation Standards in 2009 and I am currently the Project Coordinator for Race to the Top (RttT) Professional Development.
- You are being asked if want to be in this research study. I am trying to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.
- You have been picked for this study because you have been identified as a distinguished principal by the State of North Carolina based on your proven leadership ability, your school's performance data and the permission of your superintendent. Participants who were not included in the first cohort of the DLP program will not be invited to be a part of this portion of this study.
- This discussion and the piece of paper (short form) given to you will tell you about the study to help you decide if you want to be part of the study. You will be asked to complete a consent document, one (1) taped face-to-face interview, which will last approximately 60-90 minutes in length; and one (1) site visit observation following the interview, which will last approximately one (1) full school day. I would like to reserve the right for a follow-up interview and/or site visit, if necessary. These face-to-face interviews will take place in early spring and the site visit observations will take place following the completion of the interviews.
- Compensation is not provided.
- You will be audio recorded throughout the course of this study.
- There are no direct benefits to you for your participation in this study. Indirect benefits of being in this study may include contributing to the current body of knowledge around school leadership by creating a framework for measuring effective school leadership in North Carolina, informing the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.
- The anticipated risks of this study are minimal, if any at all.
- Your privacy will be protected by a chosen pseudonym for your name and school district and any hard copy responses will be submitted in a sealed envelope. The taped interview and notes will be kept under lock and key. After the study is completed, all material that contain identifiable data about the participants will be destroyed by shredding any documents and erasing any taped data within thirty (30) days after the completion of the study and approval of the dissertation. Consent forms will be kept for 3 years after completion of the project. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition the investigator must add a description of any legal duty to report abuse that might supersede these confidentiality promises.
- You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind to participate in this research study. You can think about it and talk to your family or friends before you decide if you want to be in the study. If you decide you want to be in the study you will need to sign the piece of paper (short form) given to your earlier.
- If you decide you do not want to be in the study later, you are free to leave whenever you like without penalty or unfair treatment. Deciding not to participate in the study will not affect your employment in the school/school district.

Appendix A

RESEARCH LETTER OF INVITATION

Student Researcher:

Yvette Stewart
6305-303 Flowerfield Lane
Raleigh, North Carolina 27606
919-697-6001
Email: yastewar@uncg.edu

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2013

Research Title: School Leadership in North Carolina through the Eyes of Distinguished Leaders: A Thematic Analysis

December 20, 2012

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP) Principal:

My name is Yvette Stewart and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You may recognize my name through my career work at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. I was formerly the Lead Trainer for the Principal and Teacher Evaluation Standards in 2009 and I am currently the Project Coordinator for Race to the Top (RttT) Professional Development. Under the direct guidance of Dr. Carl Lashley, my dissertation chairperson and faculty advisor, I am conducting a study on how a principal's leadership supports high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. Specifically, the purpose of my study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of *distinguished* principals in NC. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina. This is information that is not substantial in our state currently and consequently, you would be integral for a study such as this. I am inviting you to participate in this study because you have been identified as a distinguished leader by your superintendent and you have agreed to participate in this leadership development program sponsored by the State of North Carolina. Participants who are not participating in the DLP program will not be invited to be a part of this portion of this study. I trust that you will recognize the unique contribution you can make as a *distinguished* principal in North Carolina. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Invitation-Questionnaire

In order to prepare you to fully consider participation in this research study, I would like to provide you with important information relative to your participation. Your participation will involve completing one (1) survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 15-20 minutes in length. By agreeing to participate, you are agreeing to fully answer each of the questions and submit your responses into the Qualtrics system, an electronic survey program. A link to the survey will be provided to you. If you do not have access to a computer, a hard copy option will be available to you. You will receive a self-addressed, stamped envelope to mail your responses back to me. All responses taken through hard copy will be entered into Qualtrics by me, the student researcher.

Measures of confidentiality will be maintained throughout this process. No names or school districts will be reported or disclosed and each participant will have a chosen pseudonym for extra security. School data (i.e., student achievement data, school size data) will be reported in this study; however, it will not be reported individually, rather in the aggregate; only to show comparisons and to describe the participants as a collective group. The anticipated risks of this study are minimal, if any at all. Compensation is not provided. If you have additional questions regarding your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Carl Lashley (phone – 336-334-3745; email – carl.lashley@gmail.com) or Yvette Stewart (phone – 919-697-6001; email – Yvette_Stewart1@yahoo.com).

Enclosed you will find a consent form. If you accept this invitation to participate in this study, please complete the consent form and return the item in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope or send electronically to my email at yastewar@uncg.edu.

I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this exciting project highlighting the principals who are considered *distinguished* in NC and selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of the DLP program to understand what leadership practices they apply within their schools that positively impact teaching and learning. I fully recognize the many demands requiring your time and I thank you in advance for your attention and support. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Yvette Stewart, Researcher

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2013

Appendix A

RESEARCH LETTER OF INVITATION

Student Researcher:

Yvette Stewart
6305-303 Flowerfield Lane
Raleigh, North Carolina 27606
919-697-6001
Email: yastewar@uncg.edu

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2013

Research Title: School Leadership in North Carolina through the Eyes of Distinguished Leaders: A Thematic Analysis

December 20, 2012

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice (*DLP*) Principal:

My name is Yvette Stewart and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You may recognize my name through my career work at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. I was formerly the Lead Trainer for the Principal and Teacher Evaluation Standards in 2009 and I am currently the Project Coordinator for Race to the Top (RttT) Professional Development. Under the direct guidance of Dr. Carl Lashley, my dissertation chairperson and faculty advisor, I am conducting a study on how a principal's leadership supports high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. Specifically, the purpose of my study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of *distinguished* principals in NC. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina. This is information that is not substantial in our state currently and consequently, you would be integral for a study such as this. I am inviting you to participate in this study because you have been identified as a distinguished principal by the State of North Carolina based on your proven leadership ability, your school's performance data and the permission of your superintendent. Participants who were not included in the first cohort of the DLP program will not be invited to be a part of this portion of this study. I trust that you will recognize the unique contribution you

Invitation-Interviews_Site Visits

can make as a *distinguished* principal in North Carolina. Your participation is completely voluntary.

In order to prepare you to fully consider participation in this research study, I would like to provide you with important information relative to your participation. Your participation will involve completing a consent document, one (1) taped face-to-face interview, which will last approximately 60-90 minutes in length; and one (1) site visit observation following the interview, which will last approximately one (1) full school day. I would like to reserve the right for a follow-up interview and/or site visit, if necessary. These face-to-face interviews will take place in early spring and the site visit observations will take place following the completion of the interviews.

Once the face-to-face interview and site visit observation notes have been transcribed, you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts and my interpretations of the interview and observation prior to submission of the final draft of my dissertation. This review will grant you the opportunity to confirm my data including direct quotations and summarized data. The dissertation will be reviewed by the four (4) members of my dissertation committee prior to final publication. It is feasible that portions of this research project may appear in educational publications and/or related presentations in the future.

Enclosed you will find a consent form and the interview questions which consist of 15 open-ended questions that will give us a context to begin our dialogue about your leadership style and perspectives of leadership that impact how you lead. If you accept this invitation to participate in this study, please complete the consent form and return the item in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope or electronically to yastewart@uncg.edu.

Measures of confidentiality will be maintained throughout this process. No names or school districts will be reported or disclosed and each participant will have a chosen pseudonym for extra security. School data (i.e., student achievement data, school size data) will be reported in this study; however, it will not be reported individually, rather in the aggregate; only to show comparisons and to describe the participants as a collective group. The anticipated risks of this study are minimal, if any at all. Compensation is not provided. If you have additional questions regarding your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Carl Lashley (phone – 336-334-3745; email – carl.lashley@gmail.com) or Yvette Stewart (phone – 919-697-6001; email – Yvette_Stewart1@yahoo.com).

I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this exciting project highlighting the principals who are considered *distinguished* in NC and selected to participate in the inaugural cohort of the DLP program to understand what leadership practices they apply within their schools that positively impact teaching and learning. I fully recognize the many demands requiring your time and I thank you in advance for your attention and support. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

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FEB 04 2013

Invitation-Interviews_Site Visits

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvette Stewart". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Yvette" and last name "Stewart" clearly legible.

Yvette Stewart, Researcher

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FEB 04 2013

First Email to Participants who agree to participate in the Interview portion of the study:

[Date]

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice Principal:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

As described in the invitation letter, your participation will involve completing a consent document, one (1) taped face-to-face interview, which will last approximately 60-90 minutes in length; and one (1) site visit observation following the interview, which will last approximately one (1) full school day. I would like to reserve the right for a follow-up interview and/or site visit, if necessary. These face-to-face interviews will take place during the spring and the site visit observations will take place following the analysis and interpretation of the data. This message is to ask for a reserved 60-90 minutes of your time between [insert date range here] that would be most convenient for you to participate in the face-to-face interview.

Attached is a copy of the interview questions that will be used during our interview. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this study at any time. You are not obligated to participate in this study. If you choose to not participate, please respond with your regrets and I will cease any further correspondence to you.

Again, I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration and I will humbly represent you and your contribution to this body of knowledge with dignity and pride.

Sincerely,



Yvette Stewart
Researcher

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2013

Follow-Up Email to Participants who agree to participate in the Interview portion of the study:

[Date]

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice Principal:

I look forward to hearing from you so I can include you in my study.

As described in the invitation letter, your participation will involve completing a consent document, one (1) taped face-to-face interview, which will last approximately 60-90 minutes in length; and one (1) site visit observation following the interview, which will last approximately one (1) full school day. I would

like to reserve the right for a follow-up interview and/or site visit, if necessary. These face-to-face interviews will take place during the spring and the site visit observations will take place following the analysis and interpretation of the data.

This message is to follow up with you and reserve 60-90 minutes of your time between [insert date range here] that would be most convenient for you to participate in the face-to-face interview. You are not obligated to participate in this study. If you choose to not participate, please respond with your regrets and I will cease any further correspondence to you.

Again, I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration and I will humbly represent you and your contribution to this body of knowledge with dignity and pride.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvette Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Researcher

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2013

First Email to Participants who agree to participate in the Survey Questionnaire portion of the study:

[Date]

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice Principal:

My name is Yvette Stewart and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You may recognize my name through my career work at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. I was formerly the Lead Trainer for the Principal and Teacher Evaluation Standards in 2009 and I am currently the Project Coordinator for Race to the Top (RttT) Professional Development.

Under the direct guidance of Dr. Carl Lashley, my dissertation chairperson and faculty advisor, I am conducting a study on how a principal's leadership supports high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. Specifically, the purpose of my study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina. This is information that is not substantial in our state currently and consequently, you would be integral for a study such as this. I am inviting you to participate in this study and I trust that you will recognize the unique contribution you can make as a distinguished principal in North Carolina. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will not be compensated for your participation.

This message is to ask for your participation in this research study. Your participation will involve completing one (1) survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 15-20 minutes in length. By agreeing to participate, you are agreeing to fully answer each of the questions and submit your responses through the Qualtrics survey link given to you below. Please submit your responses by [date deadline]. If you choose to not participate, please respond with your regrets and I will cease any further correspondence to you.

Click [here](#) to begin the survey. Attached is a copy of the survey questions that will be used to help you prepare your responses. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this study at any time. Again, I appreciate your time and consideration and I will humbly represent you and your contribution to this body of knowledge with dignity and pride.

Sincerely,



Yvette Stewart

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2013

Researcher

Follow-Up Email to Participants who agree to participate in the Survey Questionnaire portion of the study:

[Date]

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice Principal:

I am inviting you to participate in my doctoral study and I trust that you will recognize the unique contribution you can make as a distinguished principal in North Carolina. Your participation is completely voluntary.

My name is Yvette Stewart and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You may recognize my name through my career work at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. I was formerly the Lead Trainer for the Principal and Teacher Evaluation Standards in 2009 and I am currently the Project Coordinator for Race to the Top (RttT) Professional Development.

Under the direct guidance of Dr. Carl Lashley, my dissertation chairperson and faculty advisor, I am conducting a study on how a principal's leadership supports high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. Specifically, the purpose of my study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina. This is information that is not substantial in our state currently and consequently, you would be integral for a study such as this. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will not be compensated for your participation.

This message is to ask for your participation in this research study. Your participation will involve completing one (1) survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 15-20 minutes in length. By agreeing to participate, you are agreeing to fully answer each of the questions and submit your responses through the Qualtrics survey link given to you below. Please submit your responses by [date deadline]. If you choose to not participate, please respond with your regrets and I will cease any further correspondence to you.

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FEB 04 2013

Click [here](#) to begin the survey. Attached is a copy of the survey questions that will be used to help you prepare your responses. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this study at any time. Again, I appreciate your time and consideration and I will humbly represent you and your contribution to this body of knowledge with dignity and pride.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvette Stewart". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Yvette" written in a larger, more prominent style than the last name "Stewart".

Researcher

APPROVED IRB

FEB 04 2012

APPENDIX H

APPROVED IRB MODIFIED



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY
2718 Beverly Cooper Moore and Irene Mitchell Moore
Humanities and Research Administration Bldg.
PO Box 26170
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170
336.256.1482
Web site: integrity.uncg.edu
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Carl Lashley
Ed Ldrship And Cultural Found
342 School of Education Building

From: UNCG IRB

Date: 6/25/2013

RE: Notice of IRB Exemption

Exemption Category: This study continues to meet the following exempt categories: 4.Existing data, public or deidentified,2.Survey, interview, public observation

Study #: 13-0013

Study Title: School Leadership in North Carolina through the Eyes of Distinguished Leaders: A Thematic Analysis

This submission has been reviewed by the IRB and was determined to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Study Description:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC to understand the impact school leadership has on teaching and learning in NC Schools.

Regulatory and other findings:

- If your study is contingent upon approval from another site, you will need to submit a modification at the time you receive that approval.
- For Cohort 2 portion of study (questionnaire): This research meets criteria for a waiver of written (signed) consent according to 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2).

Study Details:

- Modification dated 6/3/13 regarding the following: Submission of survey questionnaires for Cohort 2 principals in study (to be administered either via Qualtrics or hardcopy)

Investigator's Responsibilities

Please be aware that any changes to your protocol must be reviewed by the IRB prior to being implemented. Please utilize the most recent and approved version of your consent form/information sheet when enrolling participants. The IRB will maintain records for this study for three years from the date of the original determination of exempt status.

Please be aware that valid human subjects training for all members of research team need to be kept on file with the lead investigator. Please note that you will also need to remain in compliance with the university "Access To and

Retention of Research Data" Policy which can be found at http://policy.uncg.edu/research_data/.

CC:

Yvette Stewart

ORI, (ORI), Non-IRB Review Contact

cohort 2 - Survey Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: LONG FORM

Project Title: School Leadership in North Carolina through the Eyes of Distinguished Leaders: A Thematic Analysis

Project Director: Yvette Stewart

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Carl Lashley

Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. The purpose of this study is to understand the behaviors and practices that influence teaching and learning, particularly those that increase the ability of a school to sustain its success. The major research question for this study is, *"How does a principal's leadership support high quality teaching and learning?"* This study aims to investigate the behaviors and practices of effective school leaders in North Carolina who have successfully influenced teaching and learning in North Carolina's schools.

Why are you asking me?

You are participating in the Distinguished Leadership in Practice Program cohort. This program is designed to focus a yearly cohort of successful principals and expose them to models of exemplary school leadership, which allows participants to study the behaviors, attitudes, and competencies that define a "distinguished" school leader (NCASA, 2010). This study is to understand what leadership practices distinguished principals apply within their schools that positively impact teaching and learning. Specifically, this study will investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. You have been identified as a distinguished principal. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

This discussion and the consent form given to you will tell you about the study to help you decide if you want to be part of the study. Your participation will involve completing a consent document and one (1) survey questionnaire with approximately 15 questions, which will last approximately 15-20 minutes in length. The survey will be done through Qualtrics, a survey software program and a hard copy option will also be offered to you (if you do not have access to a computer). All responses taken through hard copy will be entered into Qualtrics by the Project Director, Yvette Stewart.

Is there any audio/video recording?

You will not be audio recorded throughout the course of this study.

What are the dangers to me?

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Cohort 2-Survey Questionnaire

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. There are minimal risks associated with this study. Participants in this study are involved in a statewide leadership development program; therefore, the analysis and conclusions of the data from this study will be known by the state. The researcher will be transparent about the data and what specific conclusions that will be made. The data collected will be made available to the state.

If you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Dr. Carl Lashley who may be contacted at (336) 334-3745 or carl.lashley@gmail.com or Yvette Stewart at 919-697-6001 or Yvette_Stewmtl@yahoo.com).

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 Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

There is little research on the practices that effective school leaders demonstrate in North Carolina since the adoption of the new evaluation instrument across the state in 2009. In this study, the researcher will investigate and analyze the new evaluation standards and the performance evaluation instrument aligned to those standards for North Carolina's school leaders. This will be a critical body of knowledge for this study because it will define key characteristics and competencies leaders are expected to demonstrate that should positively impact teaching and learning. The study will also describe the importance of school leadership and the influence principals have on student achievement relative to the standards presented in the evaluation instrument.

Are there any benefits to *me* for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation in this study. Indirect benefits of being in this study may include contributing to the current body of knowledge around school leadership by creating a framework for measuring effective school leadership in North Carolina, informing the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina.

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?

The survey will be administered online and all responses will be anonymous. The survey will be created through Qualtrics, an electronic survey program and a link to the survey will be generated. A hard copy option will also be offered (for those without access to a computer). All responses taken through hard copy will be entered into Qualtrics by the Project Director. Respondents who must submit a hardcopy will turn in their survey in a sealed envelope to maintain their confidentiality. A disclaimer on the cover page of the survey will describe that participation is voluntary, that your responses will be anonymous and that the researcher will be the only person who will have access to the data. Permission will be solicited prior to meeting with the subjects. The data will be secured through password protected access. Because the survey was conducted through electronically through Qualtrics, the data will be stored in the program behind a password and destroyed after the research is complete.

After the study is completed, all material that contain identifiable data about the participants will be destroyed by shredding any documents and erasing any electronic files within thirty (30) days after the completion of the study and approval of the dissertation. Consent forms will be kept for 3 years after completion of the project.

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Cohort 2-Survey Questionnaire

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the investigator must add a description of any legal duty to report abuse that might supersede these confidentiality promises. Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when finished so no one will be able to see what you have been doing. The researcher will use every effort possible to maintain the security of the information entered into the site and the Project Director will be the only one who will have access to the data in the program.

What if I want to leave the study?

You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and talk to your family or friends before you decide if you want to be in the study. If you decide you want to be in the study you will need to sign the consent form given to you earlier.

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. Deciding not to participate in the study will not affect your employment in the school/school district.

If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG toll-free at (855)-251-2351.

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 completing this survey 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 participating in this survey, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate.

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First Email to Participants who agree to participate in the Survey Questionnaire portion of the study:

[Date]

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice Principal:

My name is Yvette Stewart and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You may recognize my name through my career work at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. I was formerly the Lead Trainer for the Principal and Teacher Evaluation Standards in 2009 and I am currently the Project Coordinator for Race to the Top (RttT) Professional Development.

Under the direct guidance of Dr. Carl Lashley, my dissertation chairperson and faculty advisor, I am conducting a study on how a principal's leadership supports high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. Specifically, the purpose of my study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina. This is information that is not substantial in our state currently and consequently, you would be integral for a study such as this. I am inviting you to participate in this study and I trust that you will recognize the unique contribution you can make as a distinguished principal in North Carolina. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will not be compensated for your participation.

This message is to ask for your participation in this research study. Your participation will involve completing one (1) survey questionnaire, which will take approximately 15-20 minutes in length. By completing this survey 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 participating in this survey, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate. Please submit your responses by [date deadline]. If you choose to not participate, please respond with your regrets and I will cease any further correspondence to you.

Click [here](#) to begin the survey. Attached is a copy of the survey questions that will be used to help you prepare your responses. Respondents who must submit a hardcopy will turn in their survey in a sealed envelope (without a return address) to maintain their confidentiality. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this study at any time. Again, I appreciate your time and consideration and I will humbly represent you and your contribution to this body of knowledge with dignity and pride.

Sincerely,

APPROVED IRB

JUN 25 2013



Yvette Stewart
Researcher

Follow-Up Email to Participants who agree to participate in the Survey Questionnaire portion of the study:

[Date]

Dear Distinguished Leadership in Practice Principal:

I am inviting you to participate in my doctoral study and I trust that you will recognize the unique contribution you can make as a distinguished principal in North Carolina. Your participation is completely voluntary.

My name is Yvette Stewart and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You may recognize my name through my career work at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. I was formerly the Lead Trainer for the Principal and Teacher Evaluation Standards in 2009 and I am currently the Project Coordinator for Race to the Top (RttT) Professional Development.

Under the direct guidance of Dr. Carl Lashley, my dissertation chairperson and faculty advisor, I am conducting a study on how a principal's leadership supports high quality teaching and learning in North Carolina. Specifically, the purpose of my study is to investigate the significant leadership behaviors and practices of distinguished principals in NC. By deeply studying the practices and qualities of exemplary principals in North Carolina who are supporting their leadership with professional development based on the new School Executive Standards, it is my hope that I will uncover a wealth of information that will inform the body of knowledge around leadership best practices, the body of research on the effectiveness of evaluation for school principals in North Carolina, and future professional development for principals in North Carolina. This is information that is not substantial in our state currently and consequently, you would be integral for a study such as this. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will not be compensated for your participation.

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JUN 25 2013

your questions concerning this study have been answered. By participating in this survey, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate. Please submit your responses by [date deadline]. If you choose to not participate, please respond with your regrets and I will cease any further correspondence to you.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvette Stewart". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Yvette" and last name "Stewart" clearly legible.

Researcher

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JUN 25 2013

- a. ☐ Significant change in the scope or research objectives of the project.
 b. ☐ Change in the overall risk/benefit ratio.
 c. ☐ Newly identified risk or an increase in the occurrence of risk since last approval.
 d. ☐ Addition of vulnerable population to study
 e. ☐ Addition of study procedures which involve greater than minimal risk
 f. ☐ Reopening the study to enrollment (study was closed to enrollment prior to this amendment)
 g. ☐ Some increases in number of participants being enrolled
 h. ☒ None of the above

***If this study was originally reviewed by the Full IRB and A,B,C,D,E, or F is checked, this revision must be reviewed by the Full IRB. If Full Board review is required, submit original and one copy. Other changes could also require review by the Full IRB, if in the opinion of the IRB Chair/Vice Chair they are considered more than minor or constitute greater than minimal risk. If this is the case, you will be contacted.

Part 3:

CERTIFICATION OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

This investigation involves human participants. I am submitting this form in accordance with the policies of UNCG for the protection of human participants participating in research. I certify that I have a valid certificate of IRB education, and have read UNCG's policy on Research with Human Participants. I understand the University's policies concerning research involving human participants and agree to:

- *Obtain the voluntary informed consent of participants (or of participants' legally authorized representatives) to the extent required by federal regulations and by the determinations of the IRB;*
- *Report to the IRB any serious or unexpected on-site or off-site adverse events or unanticipated problems within the appropriate reporting period;*
- *Obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering this research project or implementing changes in the informed consent document;*
- *Maintain informed consent documents and progress reports as required by institutional and federal policies;*
- *Accept the responsibility for the conduct, supervision, and surveillance of this research and the protection of human participants as required by state and federal law and regulation, and as documented in the UNCG Federal Wide Assurance, UNCG IRB guidelines, and UNCG policies and procedures."*
- *Maintain confidentiality in accordance with procedures outlined in this protocol as the UNCG IRB has approved.*

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Signature of Co-Investigator

Date

Signature of Co-Investigator

Date

Yvette A. Stewart

Signature of Student Researcher (if applicable)

6/3/13

Date

Signature of Student Researcher (if applicable)

Date

APPENDIX I

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW: DISTINGUISHED MATRIX

Principal Interview: Distinguished Matrix				
Leadership Functions:	Referenced In Interview?			Observation Notes:
	WEAK (1-2 times)	MODERATE (3-4 times)	STRONG (5 or more times)	
Strategic Leadership				
School Vision, Mission, and Strategic Goals				
Leading Change				
School Improvement Plans				
Distributive Leadership				
Instructional Leadership				
Focus on Learning, Teaching, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment				
Focus on Instructional Time				
Cultural Leadership				
Focus on Collaborative Work Environment				
School Culture and Identity				
Acknowledges Failures/Celebrates Accomplishments and Rewards				
Efficacy and Empowerment				

Principal Interview: Distinguished Matrix (cont.)

Principal Interview: Distinguished Matrix				
	Referenced In Interview?			Observation Notes:
Leadership Functions:	WEAK (1-2 times)	MODERATE (3-4 times)	STRONG (5 or more times)	
Systematic Communication				
School Expectations for School and Staff				
External Development Leadership				
Parent and Community Involvement and Outreach				
Federal, State and District Mandates				
Micro-political Leadership				
School Executive Micro-political Leadership				
Human Resource Leadership				
Professional Development/Learning Communities				
Recruiting, Hiring, Placing and Mentoring of Staff				
Teacher and Staff Evaluation				