THE PRINCIPAL’S ROLE IN LEADING INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE
A CASE STUDY IN NEW PROGRAM ADOPTION

A Dissertation in
Educational Leadership
by
Amy Breon

© 2016 Amy Breon

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education
December 2016
The dissertation of Amy Breon was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Nona Prestine  
Professor Emeritus (Educational Leadership)  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Edward J. Fuller  
Associate Professor of Education (Educational Leadership)

Roger Shouse  
Associate Professor of Education (Educational Leadership)

Jacqueline Edmondson  
Associate Vice President and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education  
Curriculum and Instruction

Kai Schafft  
Associate Professor of Education (Educational Leadership) and Rural Sociology  
Chair of Department of Educational Policy Studies

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

The noise in generating an agreed upon definition of instructional leadership that extends beyond theory to the practice of principals has been almost deafening in the last few decades. Many emphasize the need for the role of the principal to adapt to meet the demands of leadership that maximizes student achievement, but lack the specificity to support principals in transferring touted theories into practice. As the Common Core Standards were adopted by many states, they pressed for shifts from previous practices and resulted in an increased need for leadership during significant instructional changes. This case study sought to understand the role of an elementary principal as an instructional leader during the adoption of a new literacy program intended to meet the new standards. The perception of the role as observed by the teachers and the principal of the school were considered in relationship to how the principal promoted high literacy expectations, teacher-to-teacher interactions, and supported the teachers in their classroom instruction. The findings underscore the need for leadership during instructional change to be differentiated, communicate a clear mission, relay the big picture, and to find a balance between managerial and instructional leadership tasks; all of which satisfies the specific context of the school. Such complexities accentuate the difficulties in transferring the theory of instructional leadership to practice.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................... vii

Chapter 1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  Defining the principal as an instructional leader ............................................................... 2
  Defining literacy .................................................................................................................. 6
  Statement of research problem .......................................................................................... 8
  Conceptual framework ...................................................................................................... 9
  Figure 1.1: The Impact of Principals' Leadership on Literacy Instruction .................... 10
  Significance of the study .................................................................................................. 11

Chapter 2 A Review of the Literature .................................................................................. 15
  Perceptions in practice .................................................................................................... 16
  Principals' perceptions ................................................................................................... 20
  Teachers' perceptions ....................................................................................................... 24
  Comparing teacher and principal perceptions .................................................................. 29
  Principal's role in curriculum change .............................................................................. 35

Chapter 3 Methodology ....................................................................................................... 39
  Rationale for a qualitative approach ............................................................................... 40
  Rationale for case study .................................................................................................. 42
  Site selection and participant recruitment ..................................................................... 44
  Maintaining confidentiality through anonymity ............................................................ 47
  The participant observer role of the researcher .............................................................. 49
  Defining research boundaries ......................................................................................... 53
  Data collection ................................................................................................................ 55
  Data analysis .................................................................................................................... 58
  Trustworthiness and credibility ....................................................................................... 60
  Limitations ....................................................................................................................... 62

Chapter 4 Findings ............................................................................................................... 63
  Organization and orientations ........................................................................................... 63
  The perceptions connected to the promotion of high expectations ............................... 70
    Teachers' perceptions ..................................................................................................... 71
    Principal's perceptions ................................................................................................... 77
  The perceptions connected to the promotion of teacher-to-teacher interactions .......... 79
    Teachers' perceptions ..................................................................................................... 79
    Principal's perceptions ................................................................................................... 83
  The perceptions connected to supporting individual teachers in instruction ............... 84
    Teachers' perceptions ..................................................................................................... 85
Chapter 5  Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications............................................. 91

Conclusions ......................................................................................................................... 92
  Different strokes for different folks ................................................................................... 92
  Necessity of clear communication .................................................................................... 94
  Importance of the big picture ......................................................................................... 95
  Jack-of-all-trades, but master of none? ............................................................................. 98
Recommendations .............................................................................................................. 101
Implications ....................................................................................................................... 103

References .......................................................................................................................... 108

Appendix A  2013-2014 Coaching Schedule ................................................................. 116
Appendix B  2012-2013 Coaching and PD Schedule ....................................................... 117
Appendix C  Grade Level Team Definitions of Literacy Block from 2012 Audit .......... 119
Appendix D  Participant Informed Consent Form ............................................................... 120
Appendix E  Observational Field Notes Template .............................................................. 126
Appendix F  Building Schedule .......................................................................................... 127
Appendix G  District Calendar ............................................................................................ 128
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1: The Impact of Principals' Leadership on Literacy Instruction ..................... 17
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to God for the strength and endurance bestowed upon my family and me to complete this process. May I always possess the wisdom to trust in His plan and to use my gifts for His glory.

To my parents, although I have been late in life to appreciate it, I thank you for instilling in me a drive and moral obligation to give the world my best, encouraging me when times become tough, and for always being proud of me. My best friend, my husband, John, who is and will always be my rock. He deserves sainthood for holding my hand, drying my tears, and for picking up the pieces as I have worked towards this goal. To my greatest gifts in life, my children: Tessa, Sadie, and Landon, I am hopeful that I have modeled for you the need to never stop learning, growing, and reaching for your goals. Thank you for allowing me to be a mother and a student. In addition, I am indebted to my siblings, extended family, and numerous friends who have cheered me on, always reminding me that I could achieve this dream and who have helped me to celebrate the milestones along the journey.

To my doctoral committee members, I am so very grateful that you believed in my vision as it was proposed and have granted me the patience to see it through. Specific praise to Dr. Nona Prestine, my advisor and chair, who continued to give me her continual support and direction despite her being retired! May you now be able to enjoy it without my endless emails.

Finally, to the administration and staff of the school chosen for this study, I will forever be indebted to you for your willingness to subject yourselves to this process; you will always bring a smile to my face and hold a special place in my heart.
Chapter 1

Introduction

“To have effective reading instruction in every classroom… requires a schoolwide emphasis on literacy and someone to lead that effort” (P. Cunningham and Cunningham, 2013, p. 1). In the majority of public education systems in the United States, when the roll is called for the leader, the finger is pointed towards the principal. In many of these same schools, however, when asked who the leader is for effective literacy instruction the finger turns elsewhere. It is widely accepted that literacy acquisition is one of the most important skills children acquire in their elementary education. As Michael Schmoker (2012) asserted in his book, *Focus: Evaluating the essentials to improve student learning*, “Literacy is integral to both what and how we teach; it’s the spine that holds everything together and ties content together in every subject” (p. 37). When principals possess a range of knowledge related on how to best lead literacy instruction, the role of literacy leadership becomes kaleidoscopic in nature. Depending upon the situational demands and the principals’ literacy leadership capacities, each combination can offer an array of outcomes, which may appear random to the outside observer. The intent of this research was to provide an in-depth case study of the role of an elementary principal leading teachers during a shift in literacy instruction. This will be accomplished primarily by comparing the principal’s perceptions of this role with those of the teachers involved in the first year of implementing a new literacy program. This particular study will focus on
leading shifts in literacy instruction as demanded by the adoption of a newly published literacy program aligned to the Common Core Standards.

In the school under study, the administrative positions were streamlined to consist of the district’s superintendent and the elementary principal, who was viewed as the instructional leader of his building. Although it is acknowledged that the role of the principal is not synonymous with instructional leader, for the purposes of this study, the principal will be viewed as the lead instructional leader of his school with the capacity to foster distributive leadership roles within the school.

**Defining the principal as an instructional leader**

The principal as the instructional leader is a role that has ricocheted throughout literature for over three decades. Many authors have attempted various definitions of the role, and although no agreed upon definition has surfaced, common elements can be found connecting the role of the principal with leadership in regard to curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, Murphy, Weil, Mesa & Mitman 1983; Smith & Andrew, 1989; Blase & Blase, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Elmore 2002; Marzano, Walters & McNulty 2005; Zepeda, 2012).

In her 2016 analysis of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Kelly Pollitt, the Chief Strategist of Policy and Alliances for the National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP), defined the role of the principal in the revision of the law to include instructional leadership.
The law includes a definition of the school leader as the principal (which could also mean the assistant principal), or the designated school official responsible for the daily management and instructional leadership inside [emphasis on the original] the school building. There have been a lot of questions about what this term “school leader” could mean, and NAESP worked hard to clarify that it should mean the principal (Pollitt, 2016, para. 4).

Although clearly connecting the role of the principal with that as an instructional leader within ESSA, Pollitt’s description falls short in providing the specificity needed to know ‘how’ a principal should be an instructional leader.

In 2015, the National Policy Board for Educational Administrators released Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, which were formerly known as the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. The previous versions of the ISLLC Standards were used as a framework to influence policy related to educational leadership in 45 states and the District of Columbia. While the authors of the 2015 Standards recognize that school leadership is not a role exclusive to a school level administrator, they do specify that the standards were written for leaders in building level administrative roles who have the responsibility to cultivate school-wide leadership.

Of the 10 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, Standard 4 specifically addresses the administrator’s role in curriculum, instruction, and assessment outlining “Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (The National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2015, p. 12). Based on this descriptor, the school-level administrator’s, or principal’s role
carries with it responsibility for leading curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Mojkowski, (2000), also described the principal’s role as instructional leader, in part, to be that of leading or monitoring the instruction of the curriculum.

Furthermore, the authors of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders elaborate on Standard 4 through a series of elements that are intended to describe the work needed to meet the Standard. The elements aligned with Standard 4 are:

Effective leaders:

a.) Implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and core values of the school, embody high expectations for student learning, align with the academic standards, and are culturally responsive.

b.) Align and focus systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within and across grade levels to promote student academic success, love of learning, the identities and habits of learners, and a healthy sense of self.

c.) Promote instructional practice that is consistent with knowledge of child learning and development, effective pedagogy, and the needs of each student.

d.) Ensure instructional practice that is intellectually challenging, authentic to student experience, recognizes student strengths, and is differentiated and personalized.

e.) Promote the effective use of technology in the service of teaching and learning.

f.) Employ valid assessments that are consistent with knowledge of child learning and development and technical standards of measurement.
g.) Use assessment data appropriately and within technical limitations to monitor student progress and improve instruction. (National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2015, p. 12).

The revised 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders provide additional descriptors through the inclusion of the elements as they claim to “…define the nature and quality of the work of persons who practice that profession, in this case educational leaders…” (p. 8). In actuality, like previous manifestations, they are relatively ambiguous in providing rich descriptors for principals to follow in their actual work. This lack of clarity seems to carry throughout the field as it relates to literacy instruction.

Valerie Browning (2003) also noted the limitations of such guidance as they relate to literacy:

One of the biggest challenges facing elementary principals in becoming effective literacy leaders is how to support teachers so that effective literacy practices are being implemented for all children in their schools. The literature is unclear as to the knowledge, skills, or traits that are required in order for school leaders to direct the implementation of effective literacy practices and to provide ongoing support of effective literacy programs (p.7).

As Browning reports, the rich descriptions necessary for this role to be enacted are lacking, specifically concerning the principal’s role in leading effective literacy, as the research appears bounded. There seems to be few who have explored how specifically an elementary principal, charged to be an instructional leader, is to lead instruction of curriculum, nor how this role requires differing combinations of these abilities within
various educational environments and with different actors. What an elementary principal is explicitly to do to be an instructional leader of literacy instruction is elusive in the literature. This study seeks to compare how one principal and the teachers under his leadership perceived the role of the principal as instructional leader of literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment as they moved forward to implement major changes in literacy instruction.

**Defining literacy**

Although we have had little guidance on the ‘how’ the role of the principal as an instructional leader of effective literacy instruction is enacted, there is specific guidance, albeit somewhat controversial, on the ‘what’ of effective literacy instruction. Three established references seem to be most frequently cited: the National Reading Panel Report, Cambourne’s Theory of Literacy Learning, and the Common Core Standards.

Based on the review of over 30 years of research on effective literacy instruction, The National Reading Panel Report (2000) identified five areas of early literacy instruction that are essential in the development of a child’s literacy development: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Although politically debated, the report became common guidance in both literacy instruction and with publishing companies on “what” should be included in literacy instruction. What the report did not address was “how” instruction on these skills should best be directed, supported, or implemented. It seems to be assumed that instructional leadership will interpret the “what” and intuitively leads the “how”. One could conclude that the lack of
description how best to lead was intentional, allowing for contextual variances related to schools, teachers, and principals.

One might suggest that the Common Core Standards should be the guidance. “The standards clearly demonstrate what students are expected to learn at each grade level, so that every parent and teacher can understand and support their learning” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016, “Read the Standards”, para. 1). Once again, we have a common direction of the ‘what’ of instruction, but not the ‘how’ to best carry out the instruction or ‘how’ to lead the instruction. The Common Core Standards also outline a focus on removing inequities in educational systems across the country (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012). Could the lack of direction as to ‘how’ to lead instruction of the Common Core Standards be contributing to, rather than annihilating, such inequities as the best practices for instructional leadership in literacy are left to the interpretation of the teachers and principals?

Cambourne’s 1995 book, *The Theory of Literacy Learning*, proposes seven conditions in which literacy acquisition can be fostered: immersion, demonstration, expectation, responsibility, approximation, practice, and feedback. Although this theory appears more explicit on the surface as “how” to create conditions for children’s success, principals who serve as instructional leaders must still direct and support literacy instruction so that such conditions are enacted with the fidelity supported by the research. “In other words, school leaders must pay attention to both the curriculum (“what”) and the instruction (“how”) (Mooney and Mausbach, 2008, p. 1), as they lead literacy
instruction. Given the lack of explicit definition and direction concerning “how” the leadership role of literacy instruction should be enacted, principals and teachers may have different interpretations as to what qualifies instructional leadership. The focus of this study was to explore the perspectives of the teachers and an elementary principal in one school concerning the role of literacy instructional leadership, during a time of significant instructional change.

**Statement of research problem**

Although NAESP has lobbied for lawmakers to better understand the importance of the role of the principal as the school leader (Pollitt, 2016), there is a lack of any specific definition as to the skills, knowledge, or traits needed by principals to lead literacy instruction (Browning, 2003). While we have specific guidance on the “what” of literacy instruction, it appears that it has been left up to the principal’s to interpret “how” to best lead literacy instruction based on their interpretations of the needs of their teachers, students, and schools as organizations. The question remains as to how the principal’s interpretation of the role of instructional leadership, within a specific school, align to the role of instructional leadership as perceived by the instructors, the teachers in that school.

The purpose of this study was to compare the role of the principal as an instructional literacy leader as interpreted by a principal and by the teachers of one school, during the first year of implementing a new literacy program. How does the principal’s interpretation of this role compare to the teachers’ perceptions of this role,
during the adoption of a new literacy program? What are the perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy in practice, specifically in relationship to…

1) promoting a school-wide culture of high expectations of student achievement,

2) fostering teacher-to-teacher interactions surrounding instructional changes,

and

3) supporting the instructional delivery of individual teachers in their own classrooms?

Thomas Sergiovanni in his book *Building Community in Schools* (1994) defines communities using the German term ‘gemeinschaft’. According to Sergiovanni, ‘gemeinschaft’ occurs when people come together with shared values, a shared concept of being, and a common goal. Without a previously agreed upon common perception or a shared concept for the role of the principal as an instructional leader, the perceptions appear to be left to the various actors and the implications for obtaining any specified goals as a community are unidentified.

**Conceptual framework**

In order to better conceptualize the question of how the principal and teachers’ perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy might compare during the adoption of a new literacy program, the work of Rita Bean was referenced. In *Best Practices of Literacy Leaders: Keys to School Improvement* (2012), Bean proposed three routes in which principal instructional leadership can indirectly lead to student achievement through their influence on instruction. The first being through the
promotion of a positive schoolwide climate that advances high expectations. Secondly, they can foster teacher-to-teacher interactions. Lastly, principals can have an impact on the instruction given by the individual teacher. These three routes became the lenses of the conceptual framework for this study.

As a principal influences instruction in a specific building, there appears to be connections between promoting a schoolwide culture of high expectations, encouraging teachers to interact with one another in order to collaborate on best practices to meet the high expectations, and supervising the instruction given by individual teachers to ensure the high expectations are met. Figure 1 represents this relationship.
These same components and their relationships may be inferred in the previously referenced Standard 4 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, “Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (The National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2015, p. 12).

It is the study of each of these lenses separately, yet conceptually, as interpreted by the principal and teachers that will be explored in an attempt to better understand the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy in this particular case study.

**Significance of the study**

Booth and Rowsell (2007) describe the role of the principal in effective literacy instruction as the keystone atop an archway that keeps it from collapsing. Although this definition is symbolic, it does little to support the principal in actually leading literacy initiatives: the “how”. Over 30 years after Laffey (1980) alleged, “The elementary school principal plays an important role in the operation of the school reading program; yet there is considerable debate about what that role should be” (p. 632), researchers are still searching for a definition that can be used in both research and practice.

Fiarman and Elmore (2015) in the book *Becoming a School Principal: Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn* stated that in this current period of educational reform, which has lasted over 30 years, little change can be noted in schools on leadership practices. The majority of the change has come from the leadership industry, which they defined as publishers, consultants, professional development providers, and graduate programs,
which relates more to the terminology used to describe leadership practices within education than to the actual practices. “…the absence of a strong clinical component, focused on professional practice, in the education sector has meant the gap between rhetoric and practice is wide and seemingly unbridgeable” (2015, Foreword). Fiarman and Elmore clearly identified a gap between what theories identify as instructional leadership and what takes place in the practice of leaders. This gap can best be filled with more straightforward definitions of instructional leadership in practice.

The most important aspect of a principal’s role as an instructional leader is in guaranteeing student learning (Strong, Richard, & Catano, 2008). As the National Council on Teacher Quality released its 2015 State of the States (Doherty & Jacobs), they indicated that 19 of the 34 states who mandated annual principal evaluations states require student achievement data to be used in the evaluation. Fourteen additional states include student achievement data as a significant part of the principal evaluation.

Analyzing 10 different strategies for utilizing student tests scores in principal evaluation, Fuller and Hollingworth (2014) found that none of the methods were reliable in determining principal effectiveness and that many did not consider other factors for their influence on scores such as student or school characteristics. Given the questions surrounding the current methods utilized by states, it appears that principals and their evaluators could be misled in targeting solutions for increasing principal effectiveness.

Based on their findings, the authors state:

We conclude there are currently no strategies to estimate principal effectiveness that accurately capture the independent effect of principal on student test scores: thus, these current strategies send inaccurate signals to both principals and those
who make employment decisions about principals (Fuller and Hollingworth, 2014, p. 466).

The 2015 *State of the States* report also outlines that states’ implementation of principal effectiveness policies are weak, as “Almost no state in the nation clearly articulates that principals, who have primary responsibility for teacher evaluations, should be themselves evaluated on the quality and effectiveness of the teacher evaluation process within their schools” (p. 24). Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, and Anderson (2010) in their report *How Leadership Influences Student Learning* claimed that instructional leadership is only secondary to classroom instruction in influencing how teachers perform, as principals as instructional leaders set the direction and culture of the school through their evaluations. The significance of the role appears impactful as the literature clearly outlines the principal’s influence on instruction as an instructional leader, yet there appear to be no markers in which to identify this influence in practice, again, leaving the interpretations to the various actors within a school.

Over thirty years later after Laffery (1980) noted the lack of definition of the role of the principal as a leader of reading programs, Hoewing contended that “administrators in elementary schools often lack the expertise needed to lead and support reading and literacy learning in elementary classrooms” (2011, p. 2). Although there remains a lack of clarity about the role of the elementary principal in leading literacy instruction, there are signs of a need for strong leadership in literacy instruction. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) outlined the expectations that all students should be reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade and thirteen states have enacted legislation to identify, intervene or even retain 3rd grade students who do not reach proficiency on their state
accountability measures (Layton, 2013). Learning to read is an essential skill that should be the right of every child in their elementary years. As Sherman (2001) stated, learning to read “opens windows of opportunity” and “(t)hose who are not on track by third grade have little chance of ever catching up” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 212). If American schools are going to meet the literacy demands of not only NCLB, but more importantly, the needs of our children, then we need principals who understand their role in leading literacy instruction (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

This study seeks to compare the similarities and the differences of how the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy as interpreted by both the principal and the teachers during the first year of adopting a new literacy program. Similarities and differences will be explored to define the role, as the actors in this school perceive it during a time of instructional shifts in literacy. Any similarities in perceptions of the role might be useful in understanding how the principal and teachers agreed in interpreting the instructional leadership needs as this school adopted a new literacy program. Conversely, differences in perceptions might be helpful in understanding conflicts that occurred.

Admittedly, this study involves one specific school, during one specific time, and one specific group of actors. Ambitiously, with the lack of clarity in the literature, it was hoped that this comparison of perceptions would provide a stepping-stone in the gap between theory and practice by supporting others in defining the role of the principal as an instructional leader prior to times of instructional shifts. An agreed upon perception has the potential to decrease the amount and intensity of conflict during the process and increase the impact on a common vision of student achievement.
Chapter 2

A Review of the Literature

The role of the principal as an instructional leader emerged in the early 1980’s as research noted that effective schools appeared to be led by principals who viewed their role more as facilitating teaching and learning, than that of a managerial role (Jenkins, 2009). Although the interpretation of this term has fluctuated over the past 30 years, increased accountability for not only teachers but also for principals in student achievement has recently brought it to the forefront, “Without a principal’s leadership and ownership of the curriculum and instruction, teachers and students do not move forward,” (Mooney and Mausbauch, 2008, p. 7).

Jessica Rigby (2013) outlined that while research supports that principals’ as instructional leaders make an impact on instruction, “Currently, there is not characterization in either the practice or research leadership literature that outlines the various ways in which instructional leadership is presented in the institutional environment” (p. 611). The need to further explore this role in practice, as it relates specifically to the perceptions of instructional leadership enacted by the principal during a pivotal time of instructional change, the implementation of a new literacy program, was central to this study.

In order to explore the perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader in the current literature, this chapter first looked globally to the perceptions of the role in practice. Secondly, literature related to specifically principals’ perceptions of the role
were examined, followed by teachers’ perceptions. Next, research comparing teacher and principal perceptions was reviewed. The chapter will conclude with a focus on of the principal’s role as an instructional leader, specifically in literacy curriculum.

**Perceptions in practice**

In 2013, Rigby sought to provide language to define instructional leadership as it relates to principals in practice. This research was compelling in that it recognizes the situational demands that may influence any applications of singular theory-based definitions in capricious organizations, “In this case, principals are exposed to multiple demands from the environment, often in the form of tacit understandings of and beliefs about what it means to be an instructional leader” (p. 611). Rigby chose to organize her findings through logics. According to Scott (2007), logics can be defined as “belief systems and associated practices that predominate in an organizational field” (p.170). By classifying her findings through logics, Rigby clearly identifies that principals need to be flexible in enacting their beliefs and actions within specific organizations. “Although there is the assumption that the primary role of the principal is that of instructional leader, how that is conceptualized and what that looks like in practice varies” (Rigby, 2013, p. 617).

Presenting her findings through three specified logics, Rigby described each logic through common elements of instructional leadership founded through her analysis of the literature: goals, the role of data, and the role of teachers. The first lens was the
‘prevailing logic’, which was based on the role of the principal in being both a manager and an instructional leader in their schools.

Overall, the logic called for principals to focus on learning and instruction, establish relationships with teachers, and to guide teachers to improve instruction to lead toward increased student achievement. However, both definitions of those terms (learning, instruction, improved instruction, and student achievement) and the mechanism through which these outcomes emerged were left undefined and open for interpretation (Rigby, 2013, p. 619).

In relationship to the ‘prevailing logic’, Rigby found the literature lacked any specified goals for good teaching and learning, any targeted direction on how to use data, and no guidance on how to engage and support teachers.

Rigby’s ‘entrepreneurial logic’ borrowed devices, activities, and beliefs from the private sector looking to marketing reforms to maximize efficiency and innovation in education. Through this logic, goals were defined solely by increase student achievement scores, which were accentuated through the data of standardized test scores and were the focus of the principal’s work. The view of the teachers in this logic was simply as the vehicle by which to raise test scores. Although similarities could be found between the ‘entrepreneurial’ and the ‘prevailing’ logics, the ‘prevailing logic’ was considered more open in its approach, whereas, the ‘entrepreneurial logic’ was much more explicit.

The ‘social justice logic’ was the final logic considered by Rigby, in which she defined based on the concept of equalizing opportunities and outcomes among marginalized groups. Through this logic, principals as instructional leaders were action oriented towards goals of a more equitable education, creating structures that support
learning for all students and using data as a measure of closing achievement gaps. Instructional leaders were to lead teachers towards teaching and acting within a paradigm of social justice.

Rigby envisions the logics as not only a means to help provide specified language to the role of instructional leader, but also to provide explicit frames for principal preparation programs in which to create theories of action to be used in dynamic environments of practice.

When considering the principals’ role in instructional leadership Ham, Duyar and Gumus (2015) noted the following:

In addition to methodological limitations in examining school leaders’ influence on educational outcomes, complex, nonlinear, and unique dynamics that often emerge in school and classroom contexts present additional challenges. What works in one school might not necessarily work in another” (p. 226).

Likewise, Anglea Urick and Alex Bowers (2014) sought to explore how the idealized notions of principal instructional leadership compared to how principals across the United States choose to put these notions in practice. Recognizing the impact that transformational, instructional, and shared leadership has on student achievement, Urick and Bowers focused on the role(s) in which the principal choose in practice within a bounded context. Analyzing Schools Staffing Survey (SASS) data collected by the National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES), the authors compared principals’ responses to items asking about their own leadership and secondly the leadership they shared with teachers. These responses were then compared to school demographics, whether or not the school met the state’s accountability goals for the previous year, and
the principal’s educational background, years of experience as a teacher, and years of experience as a principal.

Urick and Bowers (2014) referenced the definition of instructional leadership used by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in which instructional leadership was viewed through the actions of the principal in shepherding a positive school climate, establishing and communicating goals, and supervising instruction. Based on their analysis of the SASS data, Urick and Bowers identified descriptors for three types of principal leadership. The integrating principal used multiple leadership styles to create a high degree of collaboration with teachers. Controlling principals were characterized by having more principal led leadership. Finally, balkanizing principals were described as those sharing more leadership with teachers, with fewer than half reporting that they practiced transformational or instructional leadership less than once a week.

The situations in which each leadership type were most commonly reported are of interest in helping to understand the contextual demands as to principal instructional leadership roles. Integrating principal styles were more commonly found in schools where teachers were instructing with a focus on high academic standards and in schools with lower disciplinary problems. These principals were more often female, and the schools were likely reaching state accountability goals. The integrating principal type was the most commonly identified. Balkanizing principals were more commonly found in small rural schools that were less likely to have met state accountability goals. The majority of balkanizing principals were male. Controlling principals were also more likely to be males and to be working in schools that had not met state accountability goals.
The results of the Urick and Bowers study raises questions as to the type of leadership enacted in varying contexts in relationship to student achievement and demographics. Is it easier to distribute leadership when a school is doing well or when it is small? The authors recommend further study in the area of context-based leadership as it relates to student achievement and principal and teacher perceptions.

**Principals’ perceptions**

“Principal perception and, in turn, principal behavior determine the extent to which school leaders influence organizational change for student improvement” (Urick and Bowers, 2014, p. 98). This section will look more specifically at how principals perceive their roles as instructional leaders in practice and factors that influence their related actions.

In 2005 Ruff and Shoho published *Understanding Instructional Leadership Through the Mental Models of Three Elementary Principals* in which they sought to utilize mental models as a means to provide more precise language to facilitate the understanding of the principal’s role as an instructional leader. The authors framed their use of a mental model based heavily on the components of observation, assessment, design, and implementation; and the definition provided by Kim (1993):

*People experience concrete events and actively observe what is happening. They assess (consciously or subconsciously) their experiences by reflecting on their observation and then they design or construct an abstract concept that seems to be an appropriate response to the assessment. They test the design by implementing...*
it in the concrete world, which leads to a new concrete experience, commencing another cycle (p. 39).

Innate in this experimental learning model was the concept of applying theory to practice, but also an understanding that this was done based on a leader’s context and unique experiences. “They seem to convey cognitive understanding of contextual differences and because of their capacity to uncover tacit assumptions, they serve to clarify abstract meanings rather than bury them further in layers of undiscussability” (Ruff and Shoho, 2005, p. 575).

This study compared the mental models of three elementary principals from San Antonio, Texas with varying experiences: one 1st year principal, one experienced but with no recognition outside the school district and one experienced and recognized as the Texas Elementary School Principal’s Association Principal of the Year and as a National Distinguished Principal by the United States Department of Education. All served as principals in schools recognized by the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS).

The mental model defined by the 1st year principal focused heavily on accountability measures and student achievement data. His perceptual concentration was on how the programs and people aligned, but he kept the work on programs separate from his work with people, creating a continual cycle of conflict and developing an external locus of control through accountability measures. Whereas, the mental model of the more experienced, not recognized, principal was one focused on the integration of conflict management and team building, stemming from an internal locus of control. Each situation encountered by this principal was evaluated based on whether or not it was
helping students achieve their best or needing team building support. The second principal filtered contextual stimuli through a lens of ‘How should I be involved to support students in becoming their best?’ The first two principals saw their role in instructional leadership as superior-subordinate oriented, whereas, the third principal saw her role as a collaborative process. This experienced and recognized principal assumed a more global, integrated, organizational orientation to instructional leadership. In leading with an internal locus of control, she was focused on personal involvement and how expectations could be further promoted by her role.

Ruff and Shoho (2005), examined three bounded case studies and hoped that their work would influence empirical research in considering the actual mental models that principals employ in varying contexts in order to create a “…convergence of cognition and instructional leadership” to inform the practice and preparation programs.

Uncovering and articulating the mental models of these elementary schools principals exposed specific assumptions that resulted in contradictory actions that decreased the efficacy of the principal as well as assumptions promoting organizational effectiveness throughout the school. Stemming from the fact that mental models have the capacity to communicate and structure meaning more precisely, the use of the mental models in principal preparation programs has great potential (p. 574).

The Skillful Observation and Coaching Laboratory (SOCL) was designed by Rutherford (2007) as an intensive professional development program focused on increasing principals’ capacity as effective instructional leaders. At the core of SOCL, principals were taught to identify teachers’ talents from a predefined list of 17 and to
coach teachers towards developing additional talents. Recognizing the struggles that principals face in balancing managerial tasks and tasks associated with instructional leadership, Carraway and Young (2015) sought to investigate variables that facilitated or hindered principals in one district from implementing the principles of SOCL with fidelity. In this study, the authors focused on how principals used ‘sensemaking’ in interpreting and responding within their role. Coburn (2005) was referenced in the study as she further defines the principal’s perceptions as ‘conceptions’:

Principals draw on their own conceptions of what new policy ideas or approaches entail as they make decisions about what to bring in and emphasize, as they discuss approaches with teachers, and as they shape opportunities for teacher learning. These conceptions are shaped by the nature and depth of principals’ knowledge about instruction and teacher learning (p. 501).

Principals reported they understood SOCL was intended to prepare them to be better instructional leaders, and they made an effort to integrate the strategies into practice. The coaching framework was centered on positive interactions with teachers, which in turn built teacher confidence. Some of the designs of the coaching session were more complex, and principals reported not using them because they did not understand them. Additionally, two of the principals mentioned they liked the common language embedded in using the teacher talents, but they only used the teacher talents they could recall from the list of 17, indicating that content knowledge was a variable in implementation fidelity. Preexisting practices also were a limiting factor for some principals who were not willing to replace the new methods of teacher observation with the old.
Although the school district mandated and funded the SOCL training, the principals “…believed that managing the school, other district initiatives, and the time and effort required by the program limited their ability to fully implement SOCL” (Carraway and Young, 2015, p. 246). A lack of cohesion and prioritization among competing district initiatives undercut the implementation of SOCL.

In 1975 Meltzer, Petra, and Reynold stated that humans are reflective beings and that often the behavior exhibited by them results not from within themselves, but from a reflective interpretation derived from internal and external variables. “Perception functions as a meditative experience for the individual in the relationship between himself/herself and the social environment (p.52).

Teachers’ perceptions

“Most of a principal’s instructional leadership actions are focused on teachers—either through direct interactions such as observation and feedback or through indirect interactions such as brokering expertise to improve instruction” (Rigby, 2013, p. 617).

Blase and Blase (1999) studied teachers’ perspectives on principals’ instructional leadership interactions, strategies, and impacts on classroom instruction. Utilizing an open-ended questionnaire that focused on subjective perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader, they asked 809 teachers two questions. The first question asked teachers to describe one characteristic of a principal who had a positive influence on their classroom instruction. The second question asked them to describe one characteristic of a
principal who had negatively influenced their classroom instruction. For the purpose of this particular study, the authors decided to focus on the positive perspectives.

The results were framed around “…developing reflective thinking, collaboration, problem-solving contexts for dialogue about instruction” (Blase & Blase, 1999, p. 355). The authors summarized these outcomes as behaviors that promote a form of thinking centered on reflection and reflectively that influenced the teachers’ behaviors in the classroom. Two major themes surfaced in their analysis of the questionnaires: the promotion of reflection by talking with teachers and by encouraging professional growth.

Five strategies surfaced as being employed by principals to stimulate reflection: (a) making suggestions; (b) giving feedback; (c) modeling; (d) using inquiry and asking for advice and opinions; and (e) giving praise (p. 359). “…talking with teachers in and outside of instructional conferences was the cornerstone of effective instructional leadership; principals value dialogue that, above all, encouraged teachers to become aware of and critically reflect on their learning and professional practice…” (Blase & Blase, 1999, p. 359). Classroom visits that did not lead to specific conversations on instruction still resulted in a positive impact on motivation, self-esteem, and reflective behavior as teachers reported that they felt their work was valued.

Strategies reported to promote professional growth were also delineated from the open-ended questionnaires. According to teachers, effective instructional leaders used six teacher development strategies:

(a) emphasizing the study of teaching and learning; (b) supporting collaboration efforts among educators; (c) developing coaching relationships among educators; (d) encouraging and supporting redesign of programs; (e) applying the principles
of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development; and
(f) implementing action research to inform instructional decision making” (Blase & Blase, 1999, p. 363).

Although respondents were asked to only describe one characteristic, they frequently referenced others, emphasizing that principals identified as effective instructional leaders reflexively utilized a range of strategies. As Wahlstrom and Yoro-Barr stated, “Learning leaders live the value of reflective practice” (2011, p. 32). The respondents also recognized that value of professional development when principals participated in learning alongside teachers and reported principals who were effective instructional leaders supported redesigned programs with essential resources.

In their study, Blase and Blase (1999) assumed the effect of principals on student achievement based on their interactions with teachers. Through open-ended questionnaires, they sought to add to the descriptions of the principal as an effective instructional leader by giving teachers a voice in how specific strategies influenced instruction. In total, eleven strategies were identified as having a positive impact on instruction. These strategies were then conceptualized in building the “Reflection-Growth” model of instructional leadership as a guidance for those wishing to develop leadership skills related to instruction.

In his dissertation entitled Teachers’ Perspectives on How the Principal’s Instructional Leadership Affects Change Directed at Student Improvement, Borzak (2010) interviewed ten teachers from one school to explore their perspectives on how the principal’s leadership practices impacted instructional changes in rural north Georgia during the school’s adoption of the Georgia Performance Standards. It was noted that all
ten teachers had worked with a minimum of three principals with one participant noting:
“Each one wants students to improve and they all have a different idea on how to get that
improvement” (Borzak, 2010, p. 46).

Incorporating ground theory methodology, Borzak identified three common
themes, eight categories, and fifteen sub-categories. For the purpose of this summary,
information about the sub-categories relevant to this study will be embedded in
descriptions of the categories.

The first theme founded in the responses was that of relationships, which the
author defines as the teachers’ perspectives concerning the experiences they shared with
the principal. Nine out of the ten respondents described a distant relationship with their
leader based on two key factors: having the principal accessible to them and receiving
personal support. One category identified under this theme was that teachers wanted the
principals to be accessible to support efforts to implement change, and a second category
was they wanted principals to support grade and subject level meetings.

Some teachers reported that they felt the level of support they received was
related to the number of years the principal had as a classroom teacher, tying to the
second theme that was labeled as supporting the process of implementation. The first
category under this theme relates to the support given in understanding the curriculum
and maintaining the curriculum pacing. The second category encompassed the support
the principal gave with implementing instruction: new programs, new strategies, and
common assessments. The final category identified practices the principal used as an
instructional leader to support the process of implementation and in helping with
classroom management in regards to time, space, and student behavior.
Theme number three focused on outcomes based on the perceived relationships they shared with their principals. The first category in this theme detailed the principal’s role in teacher morale. The second category singled out ways the principal, as a leader of instruction, changed classroom instruction by helping teachers to plan with a backwards design and to teach the standards more effectively. Dealing with leadership programs was the third category to emerge under this theme. Responses under this category referenced a lack of time to implement all the changes and a recognition of the need for changes to benefit of students.

Borzak’s (2010) study stems from the basis that schools are designed to improve student learning and that the role of principals as instructional leaders is vital in implementing change. Based on his analysis of the findings, he further identifies five meta-themes that follow:

1. When teachers are given support in implementing curriculum and instructional support, student achievement is enhanced.

2. When leaders make themselves accessible to teachers, the teachers are more likely to reach out to their leader for advice and support.

3. When teachers are involved in the decision-making process of changes and curriculum implementation, they feel ownership.

4. When leaders offer a myriad of changes focused on improving students, there is a disconnect between teachers and leaders.

5. Changes need to be consistently adhered to and time afforded for the purpose of implementation. (p. 77-80).
These meta-themes are helpful in further defining teachers’ perspectives on the role of the principal as an instructional leader based upon their experiences in implementing change as they relate to relationships, the process of implementation, and outcomes; however, Blase and Blase (1999), recognize that teachers’ perceptions of the role may not align with those of principals.

**Comparing teacher and principal perceptions**

Ham et al. (2015) questioned: “…from both the developmental and evaluative process -what it means if teachers and principals ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ on the principals’ leadership effectiveness” (p. 227). Using the rising trends in educational leadership, these authors sought to explore the relationship of self-other agreement of the principals’ instructional leadership as they considered the perceptions of teachers and principals as they related to the teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs.

Ham et al. (2015) used self-reported data from 11,323 teachers and 672 principals from Australia, Malaysia, Korea and Turkey. The Teaching and Learning International Survey provided the data collected by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Defining the self-efficacy of teachers as a strong belief in their teaching capabilities to affect the learning outcomes for all students and as having a strong research base to support student learning, four questions were considered which focused on how well teachers felt they were being successful with students.

The self-other perceptions were compared based on questions associated with the principals’ role in focusing on school goals, observing instruction, improving teaching,
talking about classroom problems, and providing learning opportunities for teachers.

Self-other rating instruments argue that they offer a more unbiased view over the inclusion of only self-ratings. Furthermore, “…subordinates’ appraisals of their leaders’ effectiveness have become one the main measures in leadership appraisals” (Ham et al., 2015, p. 226). From this study, the authors were hopeful to identify gaps that might exist between principals and teachers’ perceptions, pinpoint factors that allow principals to make improvements where gaps were identified, and improve educational outcomes through increased teacher self-efficacy.

The findings of the study indicated where principals and teachers’ perceptions were different on the principal’s effective instructional leadership; there was also a higher degree of negative teacher self-efficacy. Where there was a high level of agreement, there was also a high level of teacher self-efficacy, suggesting the following:

…a divergence of principals’ self-assessment of their instructional leadership from teachers’ perceptions is likely to affect negatively teacher self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy appears to be nurtured and sustained more successfully in schools where teachers perceive their principals as effective instructional leaders and the principals were confident accordingly (Ham, et al., 2015, p. 240).

The authors of this study recognize the lack of student performance measures in their analysis, but the research connecting teacher self-efficacy to student outcomes suggests a relationship between the congruency in the perception of the principal’s leadership and an indirect link to student achievement.

Like the Borzak, Kolsky (2009) also completed a dissertation on the perspectives of the role of the principal as an instructional leader. Where Borzak’s study focused on an
analysis of teachers’ perspectives, Kolsky sought to find commonalities between the perspectives of both teachers and principals, as to how teachers’ instruction changed as part of their principal’s leadership. Interviewing eight nominated principals and sixteen nominated teachers from a K-8 urban setting, Kolsky identified seven common principal instructional leadership practices that influenced a change in instruction.

They were (a) promoting professional development, (b) communicating goals, (c) providing resources, (d) providing incentives, (e) supervising instruction, (f) providing support, and (g) issuing directives (Kolsky, 2009, p. 123).

Interestingly, both principals and teachers identified fifteen other factors aside from the principal’s instructional leadership, which influenced change on the instruction delivered by teachers.

These were (a) collegiality among teachers, (b) state and national policies, (c) professional development, (d) students, (e) central office staff, (f) graduate work, (g) experience, (h) outside influences, (i) school improvement plan, (j) literacy coach, (k) personal beliefs, (l) assistant principal, (m) department head, (n) technology resource teacher, and (o) family members (Kolsky, 2009, p. 127).

In her role as a participant observer in the study, Kolsky anticipated that these findings would help to influence her work within a district, not only as an assistant superintendent, but also as a provider of professional development for acting and aspiring principals. Ultimately, she hoped to add to the definition of instructional leadership “…a manifestation of a set of behaviors, practices, strategies, and processes based on the need of teachers…” (Kolsky, 2009, p. 120).
In 2009, Wahlstrom, Paul, and Michlin, recognizing the need for “…an operationalized understanding of instructional leadership” (p. 3) and given the theoretical nature of the related literature, sought to better understand the link between high-quality classroom instruction and high-quality instructional leadership. Beginning with a 131-item survey, completed by 3,983 teachers across the United States, 17 items describing principal leadership actions were identified by teachers as influencing their instruction and were supported in the literature. After factor analysis, two distinct factors surfaced ‘instructional ethos’ and ‘instructional actions’.

‘Instructional ethos’ was described as actions taken by the principal to create a culture focused on continual improvement, whereas, ‘instructional actions’ were specific ways in which the principal interacted with individual teachers concerning instructional improvements. Principals were then ranked as high on both factors, ‘high-scoring principals’, and low on either or both, ‘low-scoring principals’. These rankings were then compared to student achievement data, specifically math proficiency scores on state assessments.

To further understand the instructional leadership actions, the researchers used results from the rankings as a basis in which to conduct interviews of high-scoring or low-scoring principals, resulting in randomized interviews conducted with 57 teachers and 14 principals from 127 schools.

One distinguishing feature of principals scoring high in the area of ‘instructional ethos’ was having a clear vision of their mission and a dedication to seeing it through. This vision was based on employing research-based strategies to obtain high student achievement that was focused not only on test scores, but rather on impacting the lives of
children. Low-scoring principals seemed solely concerned about doing their job. “From our initial analysis teacher survey data, we found a clear distinction between a principal’s efforts to create a vision for learning and what he or she would do in order to enact that vision” (Wahlstrom, Paul, & Michlin, 2009, p. 9).

“If principals are to effectively serve as instructional leaders, instructional actions must complement the instructional vision” (Walhstrom, et al, 2009, p.22). High-scoring principals’ ‘instructional actions’ were identified by those taking an active role in instructionally supporting teachers. “The actions guide and support the day-to-day intersection of teaching and learning with the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of every teacher’s classroom practices” (Wahlstrom et al., 2009, p. 11). Some of the greatest difference between high and low-scoring principals were on how often the principal attended planning meetings with teachers and how often the principal promoted collaboration among teachers. The lowest difference was noted in response to how often specific ideas about improving instruction were given by the principal.

In summary of the interviews, three themes characterizing the actions of high-scoring principals surfaced:

1. They have an acute awareness of what is currently happening with teaching and learning.
2. They have direct and frequent involvement with teachers, providing them with formative assessment of teaching and learning.
3. High-scoring principals have the ability and interpersonal skills to empower teachers to learn and grow into the vision set forth for the school (Wahlstrom et al., 2009, p. 14-15).
This research also indicated a distinction between elementary and high school principals in the area ‘instructional actions’. High school principals indicated that they delegated much of the direct involvement of classroom instruction to department chairs, yet the researchers did not find any evidence in responses of secondary teachers that indicated that department chairs visited classrooms or discussed instructional practices.

Finding ways to bolster the skills of both secondary and elementary principals’ direct work with teachers and assisting them to structure their day in order to find sufficient time to do this is a task that most district leaders need to take on.

Principals are vital in providing the link between district initiatives and quality classroom instruction that leads to increased student achievement. Instructional visioning provides sense-making of district/system level demands, but it is only instructional leadership behaviors that can truly address aspects of quality instruction that turn the vision into reality and student success (Wahlstrom et al., 2009, p. 23).

The work of Reeves (2008) may provide an example of how a lack of ‘instructional action’ by the principal could influence the outcomes of a common vision specifically in regards to literacy instruction. Reeves administered a survey to principals, assistant administrators, and central office administrators from 130 schools as a means to compare if they had a common understanding of literacy instruction as compared to the teachers in their schools. The results of the administrative surveys were compared to teachers’ actual practices, identifying three major gaps between what the administrators perceived as occurring and the actual instruction implementation by the teachers.
Administrators felt that a 90-minute literacy instructional block of time was being strictly enforced; where in fact, according to teachers these timeframes ranged from 45 minutes to three hours in practice. Furthermore, the school leaders alleged that struggling readers received immediate and mandatory intervention. In reality, the teachers reported the time allotted for supplemental instruction varied from zero to two hours. Of paramount importance to the focus of this study was the final gap: the ambiguity between the administrators and teachers’ definition of effective reading instruction and the inconsistencies in which terminology such as guided reading, individual work, and group work were understood and implemented.

The ramifications of these inconsistencies trickle through the impact of literacy instruction as teachers receive conflicting expectations from building administrators, curriculum experts, professional development experiences, and colleagues related to classroom instruction. “For an organization to maintain focus on its highest priorities, it must simplify and repeatedly clarify them so that everyone in the organization knows implicitly what to do and what not to do” (Schmoker, 2011, p. 16).

**Principal’s role in curriculum change**

Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliot, and Cravens (2009), found that between 5-20% of a principal’s school day was devoted to curriculum and instruction. Up to this point, this review has focused on the principal’s role in instructional leadership; this section seeks to, specifically, examine this role in connection to the curriculum itself. The definition of curriculum used here follows that of the Common Core Standards, which
specifies that the standards include the ‘what’ should be taught, whereas, the curriculum is a detailed plan of how students will learn it (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016, “Frequently Asked Questions”, p. 1). Although limited, a review of the literature concerning the principal’s role as an instructional leader in curriculum changes follows.

As Sidsel Germeten (2011) conducted an analysis of new curriculum reform in 98 schools in Finnmark, Norway using principals’ perspectives based on surveys and follow-up interviews with five of the principals, he reported “a vulnerable position” in which the principals were situated (Germeten, 2011, p.17). He noted that of the 53 principals completing the survey 18 reported that they alone were responsible for making the decisions regarding implementation of the new curriculum, yet, these same principals, approved headmasters and leaders of their schools, were given very little guidance on the new curriculum nor the implementation process. In fact, 46 of the principals claimed that they were the first person to discuss the curriculum changes with the teachers, making the teachers dependent upon the principal’s interpretation of how the changes should be reflected in instruction.

Germeten highlighted, “The principals were aware of the work the teachers had to put into a new school reform program and understood their responsibility to direct their teachers, but few had insights on the role of an educational provider” (Germenten, 2011, p. 21). Principals reported that they identified difficulties in implementing the new curriculum as issues for the teachers, as they envisioned their roles as outside curriculum and instruction as a supporter and delegated the majority of the work to the teachers.
Germenten concluded by stating, “The principals need extra support mentoring and a new range of tools to support school reforms and curriculum implementation” (2011, p. 22).

In examining *A District’s Adoption of an Elementary Science Curriculum*, Lorsbach (2008) conducted a case study. The initial inquiry of this study was on why one elementary school rejected a new curriculum in favor of a more traditional one; however, during the study, the focus centered on the perceptions of district stakeholders in their role of curriculum adoption. In finding that although there may be a person designated to oversee curriculum adoption; it was up to the principals when it came to enforcing the implementation of the new curriculum and abandoning past curriculum. He also noted that when teachers perceived that changes would not be enforced, they reverted to previous instructional practices, deserting the new curriculum after one year. Lorsbach suggests that administrators need to allow teachers time in their day to process and better understand curriculum changes under the direction of an administrator.

When it comes to guidelines regarding changes in curriculum, Mojkowski (2000) recommends that a checklist be created during the curriculum development that clearly communicates the essential elements of the curriculum, connects the written curriculum to the taught curriculum, creates a shared understanding of the taught curriculum, and engages teachers in evaluating the curriculum. Such a tool might provide guidance to the principal in supporting new curriculum adoption by collecting specific data that could empower teachers to improve their practice. “Leaders can help teachers improve student achievement by implementing best instructional practices for teaching high content standards” (Mooney and Mausbaugh, 2008, p.1).
While hosts of general guidelines for effective leadership exists as a result of countless empirical studies, theoretical arguments, and books written over the last few decades, more fine-grained heuristics for leaders’ actions are needed to assist practitioners in leading change (Elliott, 2007, p. 3).

By comparing the perspectives of the teachers with those of the principal during the implementation of a new literacy program in one school, it was the intent of this study to further consider the principal’s actions as a leader in influencing instructional change. It was hoped that others might use the provided descriptions in improving the quality of instructional outcomes for the students they serve as curricular changes are implemented, for again, “Without a principal’s leadership and ownership of the curriculum and instruction, teachers and students do not move forward” (Mooney and Mausbauch, 2008, p. 7).
Chapter 3

Methodology

Fink and Resnick (1999) indicated that in order to meet the goals of educational reform in literacy there is a need to increase the literacy expertise included in the principals’ repertoire of instructional leadership skills. They found that successful literacy programs are often lead by principals, who serve as instructional leaders, demonstrating a strong expertise in leading literacy instruction.

While hosts of general guidelines for effective leadership exists as a result of countless empirical studies, theoretical arguments, and books written over the last few decades, more fine-grained heuristics for leaders’ actions are needed to assist practitioners in leading change (Elliot, 2007, p. 3).

This study aspired to describe one principal’s literacy instructional leadership actions as perceived by the teachers and that principal during a time of significant literacy instructional reform in their school.

The purpose of this study was to compare the role of the principal as an instructional literacy leader as interpreted by a principal and by the teachers of one school, during the first year of implementing a new literacy program aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Based on the conceptual framework of this study, and in order to analyze how the principal’s interpretation of this role compared to the teachers’ perceptions of this role, three specific questions were considered. What are the
perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy in practice, specifically in relationship to…

1) promoting a school-wide culture of high expectations of student achievement,

2) fostering teacher-to-teacher interactions surrounding instructional changes, and

3) supporting the instructional delivery of individual teachers in their own classrooms?

The intent of this study was to use descriptive, triangulated data from in-depth interviews, field notes, and artifacts to compare the perceptions of the role of the principal as leader of literacy instruction, to build a description of the role as it were enacted in this school during this specific time of instructional reform. Even though this study was set in a particular context, it was hoped the results can be considered, fine-tuned, and tested in future empirical research as “Educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps improve practice” (Merriam, 2009, p. 41).

**Rationale for a qualitative approach**

As this study looks to provide a description of a principal as a leader of literacy instruction during the adoption of a new literacy program in one school through the comparison of the teachers and principal perceptions, it was field based, holistic, and descriptive. As Valerie Browning stated “The current models of instructional leadership do not go far enough. They are inadequate since they fail to describe the actions and
behaviors of the instructional leader that support teaching practices that lead to student achievement” (2003, p. 5).

Merriam (1998) defines qualitative research as an attempt to understand how people in a specific context construct meaning from their experiences in that context. In order to define the phenomenon of the role of the principal during the first year of a new literacy program, a descriptive qualitative study was utilized to gain a holistic understanding of the various ways in which a principal’s instructional leadership behaviors and associated actions were perceived by teachers and the principal of one particular elementary school. More specifically, a naturalistic approach was employed in which the researcher seeks to understand the big picture of the phenomenon from the perspectives of the principal and teachers within the context, not from the perspective of the researcher; “The qualitative nature of the resulting description enables the investigator to see the “real” world as those under it see it” (Owens, 1982, p. 7). It was imperative in this study to take a naturalistic view in order to see the real world as encountered; as a dynamic system that could only be understood by perceiving how all the parts involved influence one another (Owens, 1982). The principal of a school is only one part of the larger context within a school system and can only be viewed by understanding his or her place within the larger context to produce a detail description that describes the perceptions of the principal’s literacy instructional leadership at it was perceived within a unique context. Owens further described the type of descriptive outcome desired by this qualitative research as it

...figuratively transports the readers into the situation with a sense of insight, understanding, and illumination not only of the facts or the events in the case, but
also of the texture, the quality, and the power of the context as the participants in
the situation experienced it (1982, p. 8).

This study seeks to produce such a description of the perceptions of the role of an
elementary principal as a leader of literacy instruction during the first year of a new
literacy program so the experience becomes illuminated and a lived experience for the
reader.

**Rationale for case study**

As Rist contended, “qualitative research posits that the most powerful and parsimonious
way to understand human beings is to watch, talk, listen and participate with them in their own
natural settings” (1982, p. 440). In order to become entrenched within the context of this
particular phenomenon a single, embedded case study was utilized to conduct field-oriented
research.

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the
situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than
outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than
confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy
practice and future research” (Merriam, 2009, p. 19).

Likewise, this case study looks to discover and describe the perceptions of the
practices the principal took within this particular context as an instructional leader in
relationship to the implementation of a new literacy program. Case studies are employed
to identify and explore specific areas of concern and issues within the context of their
natural environment and are used to explain “…a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1981, p. 98). In order to provide a check to see if a case study is the right design in which to study a particular phenomenon, Merriam (2009) advised researchers to check if the data collection is bounded by a set of people who could be interviewed or a specific time frame in which to observe the phenomenon. Given the possibility of teacher or principal transfers and the one-year timeframe in which to observe the implementation of a new literacy program, both people and time bound this study.

Qualitative case studies can be characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon….Descriptive means that the end product of a case study is a rich, ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon under study….Heuristic means that case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998, p. 29-30).

The end product of this qualitative case study was intended to be ‘particularistic’, ‘descriptive’, and ‘heuristic’.

Finally, as Merriam (2009) asserted, part of the confusion with case studies sets with the entanglement of the unit of study with an end product. The unit of study in this particular case was the perceptions of the role of the elementary principal as he enacted instructional leadership practices within the school during the first year of the adoption of a new literacy program. The end product will be a rich description comparing the perceptions of his actions and behaviors during this time as they pertain to the field of
instructional leadership. “Case study research…like literature, is concerned with illustrations rather than definitive answers; but whereas literature may be concerned with the ideal, such research is concerned with the real and the particular” (Watts, 2007, p. 211). ‘(T)he real’ and ‘the particular’ description produced as a result of this case study strives to answer the ever-perplexing question: “What is going on here?” (Rist, 1982, p. 440).

**Site selection and participant recruitment**

“A bounded system, or case, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue, or hypothesis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 28). Of interest in this study are the perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy. In this case, the perceptions of the instructional leadership of a principal of a small elementary school that services approximately 500 students in kindergarten through fourth grade were chosen as the unit of study. The researcher had been granted access by the district administration based on part-time employment, contracting for 60 days during the school year of the study (see Appendix A), providing easy access to the participants and an additional time limit further bounding the study. In the previous year, the research had spent an additional 30 days conducting professional development in the area of literacy instruction and 30 days providing teachers with one-on-one instructional coaching (see Appendix B). The total of 120 days across 2 years provided was thought to be ample time for the researcher to become entrenched in the culture of the school.
During the time of the study, the district had purchased a new literacy program for kindergarten through grade four and was planning to implement it during the upcoming school year. The issue of interest will center on the perceptions of the role and actions that the principal took in relation to leading the twenty-six teachers in this extensive instructional reform as new instructional standards were adopted and embedded as part of the new program.

The “first objective of a case study is to understand the case” (Stake, 2006, p.2). The adoption of a new K-4th grade literacy program was viewed to be pivotal for this principal, who has served in his current capacity for six years but has never taught below fourth grade in his 18 years as a classroom teacher. The district had elected to seek support from a literacy consultant during the first year of the new program to support the principal in its implementation. Another reason for this site selection were the radical shifts in instructional routines anticipated through the adoption of a new program, as it was not replacing an existing program, but instead was replacing an instructional framework with inherent greater instructional flexibilities. Prior to adopting the new literacy program, teachers met daily with grade level colleagues and shared instructional ideas and materials, often found on internet scavenger hunts. The administration reinforced their expectations that teachers focused their instruction on grade level state standards. There was, however, little attention to vertical alignment among grade levels or horizontal alignment between grade levels. For example during a literacy audit in April of 2012, there was evidence at every grade level that instruction was focused on teaching contractions. The same contractions taught in kindergarten were also taught in many subsequent grade levels. It was also noted that one second grade teacher taught a unit on
penguins that none of the other three second grade teachers taught. During the literacy audit, grade level teams met to outline the components of their literacy instructional block. As noted in Appendix C, although there were some commonalities such as guided reading, there was not one component that was utilized at all grade levels. The lack of structure was further exemplified in the previous instructional framework as grade level teachers communicated that the components were viewed more as a menu of options not requirements to be used to teach literacy and that teachers could choose what they wanted to use. As the adoption of the new program inherently brought greater structure, articulation, and coherence to the instruction within the school, the researcher was interested in observing how the principal attempted to ensure highly aligned literacy curriculum would be taught during these changes as understood by the teachers as well as the principal.

An additional variable of interest to this case was the state’s implementation of a new teacher evaluation tool in for the 2013-2014 school year in which half of the measure of the teacher’s effectiveness was based on students’ performance data. The perceptions of the use of performance data to facilitate instructional decisions, goal setting, and teacher evaluation during the implementation stage added additional tensions within the context. Leithwood and Sun (2012) described transformational leadership as directed towards creating a vision, nurturing of group goals, and stimulating other’s intellect. They further added it is “concerned with providing support to individual staff members as they grapple with changing their practices…” (p.149). The challenges faced by this principal during the particular time of this study likely were somewhat common among those currently in leadership roles during an era of increased accountability, as
many states were in the process of implementing the Common Core Standards during this particular school year. “Each of these changes in the core carries with it substantial requirements for new knowledge, and their success depends on the mobilization of knowledge in forms that teachers can use in the course of their daily work” (Elmore, 2007, p. 196), demanding instructional leadership.

According to Merriam (2009), the respondent selection in qualitative research is usually small, purposeful, and nonrandom. The selection for this study was the perceptions of the principal of a small, elementary school servicing approximately 500 students in grades K-4 from a nearly 40 square mile radius in central Pennsylvania. Nearly 92% of the student body were white, nearly 40% are identified as economically disadvantaged, and nearly 10% are receiving some form of special education services. The average teacher has approximately 15 years of service and every teacher has been deemed highly qualified to teach in his or her current position (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2016). In the year prior to the study, 81% of the 3rd and 4th grade students scored proficient or advanced on the state assessment for reading, scoring above the state average. It was a case that has been selected based on its interesting context, people, and accessibility; “because it is intrinsically interesting; a researcher could study it to achieve as full of an understanding of the phenomenon as possible” (Merriam, 2009, p. 28).

**Maintaining confidentiality through anonymity**

Authorization for the design of this study was approved by validating the methodologies and by minimizing known risks to assure the protection of human
participants’ rights through the Pennsylvania State University Office for Research Protections for Human Participants Research Institutional Review Board (IRB). All potential participants were provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix D) approved by the Office of Research Protections outlining the perimeters of the study, potential risks to the participants, and how the confidentiality of their identity would be protected. It was noted that since there was only one principal at this building, his identity would be known by all other participants in the study. In addition, one teacher referenced the support given after her return from a sabbatical. She was the only teacher on leave that year and can be identified by those privy to this information. This aperture of confidentiality was explicitly outlined to the principal and this teacher before consent was obtained, as each participant will be offered a final copy of the study upon completion.

A detailed description of the study and an open invitation to participate in the study were communicated at a faculty meeting in the beginning of the school year with the district superintendent and the elementary principal indicating their support. As the school year ended, during team meetings, teachers were reminded of the opportunity to participate in the interview process. In order to protect the identities of the participants, teachers were then approached individually in the privacy of their empty classrooms to agree or disagree with the interview process. If a teacher agreed to be interviewed for the study, they were given a copy of the consent form and a time and place for the interview was agreed upon. Thirteen of the twenty-six teachers agreed to participate in the interviews, resulting in a 50% participation rate. Of those who declined, many cited a fear of retaliation from district administration as their reasoning.
School, district, and participant identities are confidential, but general information about the school has been provided in order to more fully describe the context of the case. Throughout the study, participants were assigned pseudonyms that were recognized only by the researcher. A listing of the participants’ names, corresponding pseudonyms, and signed consent forms were kept in a lock box in a secure location. All additional data collected and analyzed for the purpose of this study used the pseudonyms and was kept on a secure server that was password protected and backed up on multiple external hard drives. Driven by ethical research standards this study has made every effort to maintain confidentiality through anonymity.

The participant observer role of the researcher

As Stake described it “is always important for me to make myself visible to the reader so as to establish the interactivity between the researcher and phenomena” (1995, p.140). Having served as both a literacy consultant and researcher in this study, my role was as a participant observer in the study, therefore the first person point of view pronoun, I, will be utilized in this section.

In my professional capacity as a literacy consultant employed by a regional service agency, I had been working with the staff of this school for a year and a half before the study was conducted and therefore had a fair understanding of the school, the participants, and its culture. The district administration originally contracted with the regional education service agency, which serves as a liaison between the state department of education and the local school districts, for the purpose of conducting a literacy audit
completed in May of 2012. Based on the results of the audit, the services of the agency were solicited for over 60 school days (see Appendix B) during the 2012-13 school year in order to conduct weekly professional development and coaching opportunities for the district elementary and the middle school language arts teachers in relationship to effective literacy instruction. While being funded through a state funding stream, I also served in this professional capacity. In May of 2013, the district and the agency partnered again with the focus of providing external literacy support to the school as the new program was put into place, and again, I fulfilled this role. The district paid a portion of my salary for this extended work, resulting in an additional 60 days with the staff (see Appendix A). Booth and Rowsell noted, “A key ingredient in the success of major initiatives has been the role of a literacy coordinator as resident authority and overall support to staff” (2007, p. 20).

Based on the rapport established with the participants and the length of engagement with the site during the over 120 days in the school, I sufficiently immersed myself within the culture of the school and had gained insights from the setting that were helpful with this study. During my time in working with these teachers, I was integrated into their community, being invited to dinners, baby showers, and birthday parties given for their peers. In addition, teachers would often confide in me regarding concerns they had with each other or the administration. Krefting (1991) has suggested that in order to reduce the likelihood that the researcher has been given interview responses that are straightforward in telling the story, rather than those given in regard to social acceptability; he or she should consider intense or prolonged exposure to the phenomenon within the context, so that multiple perspectives can be gathered and
included. I believe that the 120 days I spent in this school allowed the participants to provide candid responses in their interactions with me, providing the opportunity for a more accurate portrayal of the case. Merriam (2009) added that the researcher must be sensitive to the setting, the people, their nonverbal behaviors, and their agendas. Given my experiences with the participants and having had at least 120 days interactions with them concerning their literacy instruction, I feel confident that I was able to interpret these variables as they contributed to this study while remaining neutral to the exploration of the role of the principal as it was perceived. During the interview process, I was considerate of the nonverbal behaviors and agendas that I had come to understand from the teachers and the principal given the time that I had spent with them. The majority of my work in the school year prior to the study was with the teachers, during their grade level team time. Although the perspectives of the teachers of this school certainly played a part in this study caution was taken so that previous biases and assumptions did not influence the study of the perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy.

Merriam claims, “Because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being’s worldview, values, and perspectives” (2009, p. 22). I do believe my prolonged exposure in this context supported my abilities to effectively filter the evidence presented in order to provide the reader with a reasonably neutral perspective as if he or she would have lived within the study context. Given the two and a half years that I have worked with this principal and given his self-professed limited knowledge of literacy instruction, we would often collaborate on methods to present the teachers with changes concerning their
literacy instruction. Because of this professional rapport with the principal, I hoped to support him in a deeper understanding of his role during this particular reform based on a comparison of the perspectives, which will only be credible if I am critical of my beliefs, biases, and assumptions as a participant observer.

As an educator and a researcher, I feel it is necessary to illuminate my beliefs, biases, and assumptions as they relate to this study. It is my belief that all educators have a moral obligation to guarantee every child the right to learn to read to the best of his or her ability, using every resource feasible within a school environment to obtain this goal. The social and emotional ramifications of struggling with literacy are a national crisis, yet research suggests that most tragedies of this nature are preventable through the uses of evidence-based practices (Kilpatrick, 2015). I admit to a great deal of bias surrounding those who refuse ownership in the outcomes of children’s literacy results. I try not to find fault with teachers who blame students, not inadequate instruction, on a student’s lack of growth in literacy. In the nearly 30 years I have worked with students with academic difficulties, many teachers have expressed to me that it is their job to teach and the students’ job to learn, giving themselves no accountability to ensure the students are learning as a result of their teaching nor to flex their instructional approaches to meet students’ needs. To safeguard these biases, I attempted to reign my assumptions in perceiving the lack of better outcomes through a lens of a lack of knowledge in evidence-based educational practice as it connects to empirical research, rather than a lack of will or empathy toward children. I believe that the principal, as an instructional leader of literacy, bears the onus of the responsibility to assure that resources are aligned to maximize the number of skilled readers in a school. I did guard, however, against any
misconstrued bias concerning this role through the understanding of the demanding complexities of the role of the principal as an organizational and instructional leader. As a participant observer and researcher, the personal moral compass I possess for effective literacy instruction is difficult if not impossible to mask. However, the reader can rest assured that every effort has been made to remove my beliefs, bias, and assumptions from the data collection and analysis as they relate to this study.

Defining research boundaries

According to Václave Havel, truth “is simply not what you think it is; it is also the circumstances in which it is said, and to whom, why and how it is said” (1990, p. 67). The perceptions of the principal’s leadership actions and behaviors related to the implementation of the new literacy program may indeed present themselves as random, almost kaleidoscopic in nature, as they are inherently entrenched in differing perspectives. It became essential to define boundaries to these perspectives in order to increase their utility. Depending upon any number of factors it might become possible for the essence of the study to become lost in the wide array of data that might be perceived as chronicling the principal’s actions and behaviors. Case studies “get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly, by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)…case studies tend to spread the net for evidence widely” (Bromley, 1996, p. 23). In this study, it seemed likely that a net spread too widely would obscure the boundaries of the study. Therefore, specific parameters for framing the explicit behaviors of interest
seem warranted. Yin (1981) cautioned that one of the challenges of case studies is that the researcher must be trained to deal with a variety of sources that appear relevant to the study. He further recommended a protocol to guide the data collection process, to keep the researcher focused on relevant evidence.

In an effort to follow these guidelines, a data collection matrix was created to help maintain the focus of the study as observational field note data and relevant artifacts were collected, compiled, and codified (see Appendix E). This matrix was used as a guide to determine if the research questions were addressed based upon the conceptual framework engaged in the study. The matrix was not intended to limit additional variables, but to ensure that they were relevant to the purposes of the study; therefore, an ‘other’ column was added. The framing of the interview questions themselves was used as a guide to maintain the focus of the study during the interviews.

As previously noted, given the researcher’s participant role as a literacy consultant employed part-time by the district for the 2013-2014 school year, access to the data did not present any difficulties. The researcher’s primary role in the school was to co-plan, co-teach, and to facilitate problem-solving with classroom teachers as they implemented the new literacy program. During this time, the research was acutely aware of the behaviors and actions enacted by the principal regarding literacy expectations, teacher-to-teacher interactions, and those that influence classroom literacy instruction. Numerous opportunities were afforded to discuss these actions with both classroom teachers and the principal of the school to ascertain their perceptions.
Data collection

“(A) qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon with its context using a variety of data sources” (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 544). Three specific forms of data were collected during this study based upon their accessibility and their contribution to the overall development of the case of study. The collection of documents, observations as reflected in field notes, and both structured and informal interviews provided for different means of describing the perceptions of the principal’s leadership actions and behaviors in his role as an instructional leader overseeing the adoption of a new literacy program.

During the course of the study, the researcher, through the contract with her employer and the district, was embedded as a participant within the context and culture of the school three times a week during the first trimester, two times a week during the second trimester and once a week during the third trimester. The essence of this contract was to provide support to the participants as they experienced a reform in literacy instruction. It is during these times the collection of actual documents from the principal related to the implementation of the new program occurred. This documentation was in the form of email messages, school memos, and/or literacy updates distributed during staff meetings. As a participant observer, the researcher also used field notes to document specific actions of the principal as observed throughout the day and as deemed relevant to the conceptual framework of the study. All data collected were triangulated for analysis. As themes surfaced in one or more of the data collection methods, they were supported or refuted by the others.
Baxter and Jack described possible data sources for case collection as “documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observations, and participant-observation” (2008, p. 554). In an effort to take a more observer-participant role, the researcher also designated specific days each month during the year to observe the principal directly. These days were arranged to coincide with days when he attended grade level meetings to specifically discuss the new literacy program. In addition, the researcher was able to observe the principal during specific staff meetings as topics concerning the new literacy program were discussed.

The final and central data component was collected in the form of interviews with the principal and the various teachers within the building. Permission was granted by each interviewee to record each interview for later analysis and in order to create a more holistic description of the perceptions of the principal’s specific actions and behaviors, and to protect the precise language provided by the respondents when possible. “An interview protocol served as a guide during the interviews, but most interviews digressed from the protocol after initial questions, with subsequent questions emerging from respondent replies” (Reitzug, 1994, p. 288). Initial interviews focused on three general questions:

1) How did the principal as an instructional leader of literacy promote a school-wide culture of high expectations of student achievement?

2) How did the principal as an instructional leader of literacy foster teacher-to-teacher interactions surrounding instructional changes?

3) How did the principal as an instructional leader of literacy support the instructional delivery you provided in your own classrooms?
The thirteen teacher and one principal interviews conducted varied in length, depending upon the depth of conversation and the number of follow-up questions asked by the researcher, with the shortest lasting just over 12 minutes of recorded time and the longest lasting over an hour and a half. The majority of the teacher interviews were conducted before or after school hours either in an empty classroom or in the researcher’s office, always behind closed doors. One teacher interview was held at a local coffee shop. The principal interview was conducted after school in his office. As Rist asserted:

To conduct a good interview is to hold an interesting conversation. Ideas and perceptions are exchanged, information is shared, and participants come to know more about each other in the process. The importance in stressing the conversational aspect of interviewing is to reinforce the notion that qualitative work involves considerable human interaction (1982, p.433).

During the interviews as perceptions were shared, the interviewer would ask participants additional clarifying questions or perhaps to elaborate in specific areas to further gain an understanding of that respondent’s view of the phenomenon of the principal as an instructional leader as it pertained to the case being studied. Participants were asked if they would be willing to answer follow-up questions should there be a need for added clarity once the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. All participants agreed, and three subsequent conversations were conducted to provide the necessary clarity in interpretation for analysis.

During the structured interviews, teachers were specifically asked not to evaluate the principal’s actions, but simply to reflect upon and report them as they perceived them. Given the open response conversational format, as anticipated, the interviews
occasionally moved away from this protocol, but at those points where the interviews
turned to a judgment of the behavior demonstrated by the principal, the researcher
attempted to redirect the respondent back to simply describing the behavior. This was
done by reiterating that the goal of the study was to describe and better understand the
perceptions of his behaviors and actions as they relate to instructional leadership.

In case study, data from these multiple sources are then converged in the analysis
process rather than handled individually. Each data source is one piece of the
‘puzzle,’ with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the
whole phenomenon. This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various
stands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case.

Data analysis

Baxter and Jack (2008) provided caution concerning a danger that is often found
in the analysis stage of a qualitative case study, which is that each data source is treated
as a separate entity. A trademark of qualitative research is that the data collection and
data analysis are intertwined throughout the study. Yin (2003) recommends that if the
researcher has used propositions, that they are used to focus the data analysis. Based on
this guidance, the data collected was collected into theoretical bins as related to those
concepts proposed in relationship to the research framework: the perceptions of role the
principal took in promoting high levels of expectations, influencing the actual literacy
instruction delivered by teachers, and facilitating teacher-to-teacher interactions. This
...step also allowed for what Miles and Huberman (1994) had referenced to as “data reduction” which helped to compress the data into concepts that were specifically tied to the unit of study.

“Juxtaposing what was said with what was done or what was written provides a validity check on the data as well on alternative sources to confirm analysis” (Rist, 1982, p. 444). In an effort to triangulate the field notes, transcribed interviews, and collected artifacts, the researcher analyzed each based on the propositions or categories as they correlated to the research questions and as evidenced in the literature and conceptual framework: perceptions of actions that promoting high literacy expectations, influence literacy instruction and facilitate teacher-to-teacher interactions.

Each piece of observational data, every artifact and each participant response during the interview process was immediately coded based on any findings as it related to the categories defined in the conceptual framework, assuring “that the conclusions being drawn from the data (were) credible, defensible, warranted and able to withstand alternative explanations” (Yin, 2003, p. 8). Perceptions gathered from the interviews and categorized under each element of the conceptual framework were then compared to discover similarities and differences, available artifacts, and/or field notes were then considered as they supported each area. Finally, each data set was analyzed a third time at the end of the study in search for additional patterns that might further provide an understanding of the phenomenon under study.

In the end, the context of these bins assisted the researcher in inductively weaving together the tapestry of a rich description that illustrates how the perceptions of the principal’s instructional leadership in literacy can be described in this case. “Rather, the
researcher must ensure that the data are converged in an attempt to understand the overall case, not the various parts of the case or contributing factors that influence the case” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 555). It is at this juncture of research, where the reader must rely on the skills of the researcher to create a actuate portrayal of the case as supported by the evidence.

**Trustworthiness and credibility**

In qualitative analysis, it is not necessary or even desirable that anyone else who did a similar study should find exactly the same thing or interpret his or her findings in precisely the same way. However, once the notion of analysis as a set of uniform, impersonal, universally applicable procedures is set aside, qualitative analysts are obliged to describe and discuss how they did their work in ways that are at the very least accessible to other researchers (Yin, 2003, p.13).

With a focus on credibility issues, the researcher attempted to be explicit in the processes employed to produce the results of this analysis and to create a precise depiction of this particular case, but as Kvale (1995) asserted qualitative analysis draws on a certain level of artisanship. “Analysis should be judged partly in terms of how skillfully, artfully, and persuasively they craft and argument or tell a story” (Yin, 2003, p.13). It is through the lens of evaluating the story told based on the analysis in this particular case study where credibility is supposed. Qualitative analysis is framed around recognizing patterns, both anticipated and unexpected. In order to maintain credibility, the researcher considered alternative patterns, as well as the seemingly obvious, to define
the best rationale of the data. The illumination and rejection of logical alternatives assures the reader that biases and presuppositions have been accounted for in the analysis. Careful consideration was also given to exceptions to the identified patterns as they pertain to the case of study (Patton, 2015). Additional precautions were employed in this regard, as major respondents reviewed the factual parts of the study, to help reduce the biases of the single perspective of the researcher, (Yin, 1981).

Case studies are often criticized due to the difficulty in generalizing their findings to other settings. Ruddin (2006) refuted the need for case studies to be generalizable, but alleged instead that the value is in the ability of others to make use of them through “naturalistic generalizations”. “Without generalization, we could not interact with our world in a coherent manner—that is to say, we would need continual repetition of the same mental procedures for each new experience” (Ruddin, 2006, p. 798). Although it was true that this case study was a description of the actions and behaviors of a specific principal, in the context of a specific school, as perceived by various actors, during a specific timeframe it was believed that the story told provides useful information in a broader sense. “In the broadest sense, research is a systematic process by which we know more about something than we did before engaging in the process” (Merriam, 2009, p.4). This positions the reader as the determinant of trustworthiness of this study based on his or her ability to draw from the study “some intelligent reason to change the way of doing things in one’s own professional life” (Watts, 2007, p. 206).
Limitations

Stake (2006) explained the ethical responsibility of researchers to understand the influence that their interpretations of the case can have on the field. The decision to use a case study was based on the researcher’s desire to gain insight, discover, and make interpretations concerning the interaction of factors as attributed to the perceptions of the role of principal as a leader in literacy instruction (Merriam, 2009). It is important to recognize that this case study was a single interpretation of a specific context and the actors within. The interpretations could be seen as biased based upon the researcher’s role in the context; given the rapport that was established not only within the content of this study, but previously; or given the researchers beliefs in the need for principals to be equipped as leaders of literacy instruction. It can also be assumed that the data collected in the form of artifacts, documented behaviors, and interviewees are appropriately judged as relevant to this study as compared those that are deemed irrelevant; that data triangulation, not researcher bias, was used to prioritize the data presented.

As Watts also correctly noted in his analysis of case studies “there are answers in the plural- not just one. The story allows the writer or researcher to hold out a choice so that the reader can pick and choose what is appropriate to the circumstances. The reader can determine the truth as he or she sees it.” (2007, p. 212).
Chapter 4

Findings

Organization and orientations

Research utilizing a case study design is a likely choice for those with a story to tell. The story related here might best be conceptualized as a quilt. Respectively, grade level teams formed their own unique squares within the quilt based upon the threads of individual members on that team at the time of the study. There were also individuals whose influence crossed grade level teams as they organized and intricately stitched the squares into a unit, ultimately forming the school as an exclusive phenomenon.

The D. L. Mitchell Elementary School (pseudonym) is a small community-based school servicing approximately 40 square miles in central Pennsylvania with a population of around 9,200. The mean family income was approximately $8,000 below the state level. The elementary school was the sole elementary school in the district enrolling nearly 500 students in grades K-4. At the time of this study, approximately 40% of the student population had been identified as economically disadvantaged and 92% as white. Around 10% of the students were receiving special education services.

At the time of the study, the teacher contract allotted teachers individual planning time for the first 30 minutes each morning. In addition, each grade level team had 35 minutes to meet as a team each day (see Appendix F), while their students attended physical education, art, music, and library classes. Also included in the rotation at this school was the science class, which was taught by an itinerant teacher. It was this 35-
minute daily team planning time that was utilized for the majority of professional
development in the school. Inevitably, this caused scheduling difficulties for special
education and Title 1 reading teachers who taught multiple grade levels. Two special
education teachers were each specifically assigned to co-teach in grades 3 and 4 and
attended their respective grade level meetings. One other special education teacher was
assigned to grades K-2, and one special education teacher was assigned to work with
students with more complex needs in grades K-4. These teachers did not attend team
meetings. One Title 1 reading teacher was assigned to work with grades K-2 and one was
assigned to work with grades 3 and 4. During the year of the study, the Title 1 reading
teachers were given flexibility in their schedules to attend grade level meetings as
necessary. As this caused some disruption in the intervention services they provided to
students, it was done as sparingly as possible.

The kindergarten team was comprised of four female teachers whose years of
experience ranged between 5 and 36 years. This team appeared to work collaboratively
and resolved problems without much incident. Although the team was receptive to
adopting a new literacy program, the Ranges program (pseudonym), they seemed to share
a basic understanding of what they conceived the literacy instruction should be in
kindergarten and saw the new literacy program as more of a tool to enhance present
practice rather than a new doctrine to be adhered to without question. This was
manifested in their struggles throughout the year to reconcile the higher levels of rigor
expected of kindergarten students in the Ranges program that required additional time
with the amount of structured play they believed was a pivotal part of their curriculum.
Three females and one male were part of the first grade team who had between 3 and 32 years of experience in teaching. One teacher was new to this grade level, having taught a different grade level the previous year in the same building. Another was relatively new to teaching. This team appeared to seek direction from and be more dependent upon the principal as an instructional leader more than the other teams. An apparent lack of unity within this team may have been at the root of their need for a more direct form of leadership from the principal. The two senior teachers on this team were more vocal than the others were and at times advocated for different positions about which aspects of the program to emphasize to the consultant. For example, one might have felt the need to spend more time on a word study lesson and skip a writing assignment that was thought to be extraneous; whereas, the other might have viewed the writing assignment as a means to apply the skills from the word study lesson. When those disagreements arose, they often appealed directly to the principal for resolution of these conflicts. When they felt the principal had not provided them with a direct response, they brought their frustrations to the consultant.

Empirical research supports that the gap between those students on track for later reading success and those who are likely to continue to struggle with foundational skills becomes most apparent by the end of 1st grade (Good, Simmons, & Smith, 1998). The increased pressure for student success was also complicated in 2nd grade by the impending state test and its associated accountability in the subsequent year. The four females on this team struggled the most with meeting the increasingly rigorous demands of the Ranges program. They reported utilizing a far less structured curriculum previously in their 2-33 years of teaching. Maintaining the pacing expected by the
administration became a major struggle with this team of teachers, as they were concerned that many of their students lacked the foundational skills assumed by the new program. Increasingly, this struggle appeared to bind this team together and became the essence of their comradery and member support.

The 3rd grade team was also comprised of four women, two of whom had not taught this grade previously. Additionally, a special education teacher was a member of this team as she co-taught with one of the other 3rd grade teachers throughout the day. The years of experience of the members of this team ranged from 3-25. One of the veteran teachers on this team was also a literacy leader in the district as she had previously served as the sole reading specialist in the district. Given her training and experience, administrators and principals often consulted with her on literacy practices.

The team meetings for this grade level were the most focused in the building. The members were consistently on task in their planning of instruction but were also driven to teach with a goal of increasing students’ success on the state assessment in the spring. They embraced the adoption of the new program as a means of more closely aligning the new standards their students needed to master for the upcoming state assessment. After the state assessment, the focus of the team meetings became divided between instructional planning and planning for an end of the year play that was a tradition for 3rd graders in the building.

The 4th grade team was more content driven than the other teams. Having 8-24 years of experience spread among the three female and one male teacher, they were also focused on the skills necessary for students to be successful on the state assessment in the spring. However, they took a different approach than the 3rd grade team in how the
Ranges initiative should be utilized to achieve this goal. Rather than viewing the new program as a tool by which to build new instructional practices they flip-flopped the approach and utilized it more for the variety of readings that the Ranges program offered while often retaining many of their previous methods of instruction. Large-scale writing projects and literature circles based on novels not associated with the new program were still very much a part of their instructional routines. This team also seemed a bit fragmented. Two teachers collaborated extensively, another collaborated more with the special education teacher assigned to co-teach with her, and the male teacher appeared to alternate between them all.

Three key quilters helped to stitch these individual team squares together to form the backdrop of this story about the D.L. Mitchell Elementary: the principal, the superintendent, and the external literacy consultant. Mr. Morris (pseudonym), the superintendent, was very involved in the organization of the committee formed to select the new literacy program but allowed for the actual implementation of the program to be led by the principal and the literacy consultant. Communications between the three regarding the implementation were frequent in the form of phone conversations, emails, and monthly face-to-face meetings. In initial conversations, Mr. Morris clearly communicated that he wanted the teachers to utilize the new program as it was intended to be delivered by the publishing company in order to create a more unified and orderly scope and sequence of instruction both within and between grade level teams and to meet the new Common Core standards. In his view, grade level teams were to be teaching the same content and skills from the series in a similar way, while maintaining the pace suggested by the program to ensure that all grade level content was taught each year. This
approach was intended to eliminate any gaps of instruction students might experience because the previous curriculum lacked this structure. Fidelity to the new program clearly was a priority for the superintendent.

The master quilter in this story was elementary principal, Mr. Katz (pseudonym). Mr. Katz had been an elementary teacher in the district, having taught grades 4-6 in his 18 years as an elementary teacher. Prior to stepping into the role as the elementary principal three years before this study, he taught 6th grade science. Mr. Katz’s honest, no nonsense, straightforward, yet compassionate approach to leadership seemed influenced by his family members’ service in the clergy and the military. Mr. Katz regarded his position as the elementary principal as one of ‘servitude’ (Sergiovanni, 1994). He seemed to mirror Mr. Morris’s intentions for the new program to be implemented with a high degree of fidelity in order to bring the school’s literacy curriculum in better alignment within the building and with the Common Core standards. Both Mr. Morris and Mr. Katz self-professed a lack of knowledge and experience with evidence-based practices in early literacy instruction and relied on the literacy consultant with more extensive expertise in this area during the anticipated changes in literacy instruction.

In my work as the literacy consultant, I was first drawn to the changes in curriculum and instruction being planned by Mr. Morris and Mr. Katz in the Spring of 2012. Conversations about how these changes might best be implemented were stimulating in connection to my graduate studies in educational leadership. When asked to organize a series of professional development opportunities centered on literacy instruction for the 2012-13 school year, I began to see how my role as a literacy consultant would be embedded in this transformation. I became increasingly interested in
how I might capture and document this process as a learning tool not only for myself, but also for those directly involved, and ultimately beyond the narrowness of an individual case as it relates to the field of educational leadership. During the spring of 2013, as the decision was made to further entrench my role within the school during the adoption of the Ranges literacy program, the concept of conducting a case study became the obvious avenue to meet my goals in communicating this experience. District administration approval to conduct the study was subsequently granted during the summer of 2013.

This study focused specifically on investigating perceptions of the principal’s role as an instructional leader involved in a significant curricular change effort from the perspective of the two most relevant parties concerned: the principal and the teachers involved. In an effort to organize and address the question “What is going on here?” (Rist, 1982, p. 440), the findings of this case study were organized around three specific areas of focus related to the perceptions of the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy in practice. Following the conceptual framework, topics of specific interest included the promotion of a school-wide culture of high expectations of student achievement, the fostering of teacher-to-teacher interactions surrounding instructional changes, and support for the instructional delivery of individual teachers in their own classrooms.

As the three areas were considered, each was explored through the perceptions of the teachers in response to the interview questions, and related follow-up questions, as compared to the principal’s perceptions of similar questions. Rather than reporting each participant’s response, responses were clustered around commonalities, team perceptions, and then compared to the principal’s perspective on the same issue. Because the team
members spent a lot of time together discussing their successes and hurdles in implementing the new literacy program, many of the teacher responses contained common perspectives with those of their team members. Therefore, many of the findings were grouped together as common team perspectives. Teacher responses that did not fit the identified patterns were also considered, as they were deemed valuable in providing credibility to the identified patterns. Each area was also triangulated by field notes and related artifacts. In addition, the findings from each focus area were defined by the principal’s actions that the respondent perceived in relationship to each area and what were additional actions the principal might have taken in relationship to each area, as bounded by this study.

**The perceptions connected to the promotion of high expectations**

“Such leadership (effective literacy leadership) is based on the belief that all students can learn and that as educators we have a responsibility to do our best to facilitate their learning” (Bean, 2012, p.17). In response to how the elementary principal in this case study facilitated learning and specifically, the question, “What did the elementary principal do to promote a school-wide culture of high literacy expectations based on a new literacy program?” both teacher and principal perceptions were considered.
Teachers’ perceptions

Across the grade level teams, the majority of teachers referenced the principal’s arrangement of common grade level planning time as paramount in promoting a school-wide culture of high literacy expectations based on the new literacy program. The kindergarten team of teachers noted that they felt supported, encouraged, and positively reinforced by Mr. Katz as they implemented the Ranges program. One recalled being told by the principal in reference to the implementation of the new literacy program that “You are doing a good job. I know you know how to teach.” This team also noted that they were told explicitly to teach following the requirements of the program at the beginning of the year. Later as they were persistent in communicating their frustrations with implementing Ranges and their perceive students’ needs, they were given permission to foster differentiation as deemed necessary based on the demands of new skills and to incorporate more engaging activities back into their grade level routines as supplements to the Ranges program. Team planning time presented them with the opportunity to meet these objectives.

For the 2nd grade team, grade level team planning time provided the opportunity for them to discuss and collaboratively address the gaps they saw in students’ foundational skills and those anticipated in the new program. For example, previously the concept of an adjective was not introduced until 2nd grade. However, the Ranges program taught adjectives in kindergarten and asked 2nd graders to apply this knowledge. When 2nd grade students, who had not been taught using the Ranges program previously, did not know what an adjective was, the teachers had to spend time teaching this prerequisite
skill before the students could progress with new learning in the program. The need to
teach these prerequisite skills often altered the pacing outlined by the publishing
company. The teachers noted the stress and dissonance in trying to balance what they
perceived as the students’ needs in order to be successful with the Ranges program and
the expectation from the superintendent and the principal to maintain the rigorous
instructional pace prescribed by the publishing company. One teacher specifically
mentioned getting directives from Mr. Katz “…as to what can be modified (either cut or
consolidated) within the series to meet the instructional needs of my students.”

The 3rd grade team was focused almost exclusively on how they were going to be
sure their students were prepared for the new standards assessed on the state test and used
their team time to focus on how the program aligned to the upcoming state assessments
and how to supplement their instruction as needed. They expressed appreciation for the
way in which Mr. Katz “…kept team time protected and planned around it.” For the 3rd
grade team supplementing instruction with additional work on standards missing from the
Ranges program did not appear to have a significant impact on the pacing of their
instruction.

Although the grade level teams universally viewed Mr. Katz’s decision to utilize
the IU consultant during team positively, the Title 1 teachers perceived this differently.
While one saw the use of the IU consultant during team time as supporting the
implementation of the Ranges program across the building, the other felt that the
direction for implementation should have been more principal led, citing that “Rather
than turning to the principal, teachers made decisions on their own based on the limited
availability of the IU facilitator.” First grade teachers also noted that, in their perception,
Mr. Katz should have been more involved in the grade level team meetings. “Despite invites, the principal did not attend (team meetings) and many times the teachers left thinking they wished he had been a part of the conversations regarding next steps.”

The majority of 2nd and 3rd grade teachers also reflected a desire for more involvement from Mr. Katz during the process of implementing the new program. One teacher noted,

So many questions went unanswered about the program. I am not sure, if it fell apart with the company’s lack of response or if it was due, in part, by the lack of knowledge of the principal. He was not as knowledgeable about the program as we needed him to be. He definitely deferred many questions to the IU consultant, who was not always in the district. I am accustomed to being able to take questions about a program to the administration and having them be the expert in it. This year we did not have that.

Another felt Mr. Katz’s lack of experience with the early years of elementary literacy inhibited his ability to be more meaningfully involved in the instructional shifts and went so as far as to suggest that all elementary administrators should take a class on teaching reading to better understand the scope and sequence of reading instruction. One teacher felt that if Mr. Katz had possessed a better understanding of research-based reading practices, he would have been in a better position to lead the necessary instructional shifts while protecting the fidelity of the program rather than it being a “trial and error year.” For example, a kindergarten teacher reported that Mr. Katz had shared with the school board, that he was excited about kindergarten students learning nouns. This teacher was adamant that knowing a noun was not a paramount skill to be taught in
kindergarten and that instructional emphasis should instead be focused on skills that are more essential for kindergarten students such as learning their letters and sounds.

Still another teacher stated that if Mr. Katz had been more involved, he might have witnessed the frustrations some students had with reading the grade level materials from the program. She felt that if he had observed these frustrations, he might have been more open to the option of incorporating small group instruction using materials at students’ instructional levels rather than the need to “stick to the program”. She indicated, “Support was needed to decrease struggling readers’ frustrations” with the Ranges program.

One teacher inferred that the limited support Mr. Katz gave the teachers in implementing the new program was intentional in order to allow teachers to grapple and have some ownership in the changes. The 1st grade team as a whole clearly preferred that Mr. Katz be more involved in the instruction of the Ranges initiatives. As one teacher commented, “While limited support was well intended a more hands-on approach would have supported (Mr. Katz’s) limited literacy background.” Another noted the principal should have spent more time understanding the pieces of the series, rather than simply being focused on the big picture. When asked to elaborate, this teacher stated that rather than simply looking at implementation with fidelity, a better understanding and monitoring of the various components of Ranges would have provided better support so that each piece was being implemented as intended.

Across the teams, teachers expressed an appreciation of the way in which Mr. Katz was able to arrange for the allocation of resources and materials to support the adoption of the program. Approximately a month before the start of the school year, each
classroom teacher was provided with a set of teacher manuals, an adequate amount of student textbooks, sets of six readers for small group instruction, and access to a myriad of online resources on the publishing company’s website. Most classroom teachers indicated they had everything they needed to adopt the new program, in a timely manner, “…so, we had time to look at them ahead of time.” Initially, only one set of intervention materials were provided to the Title 1 staff. An additional set was ordered within the first month of school. One intervention teacher did feel that she had limited exposure to the program before being expected to teach it and wanted additional support with organizing the extra resources associated with the program. A special education teacher felt that priority was given to provide Title 1 rather than special education teachers with access to intervention materials. This teacher did co-teach with her grade level counterpart. She had access to grade level materials, but not intervention materials to meet the needs of her students.

Several teachers concurred that although representatives from the publishing company of Ranges were brought in for trainings, these trainings were not particularly beneficial in supporting teachers in the actual implementation of the Ranges program. In July, representatives of the publishing company spent three hours with each grade level introducing the components of the program. In August, a different representative led a three-hour session demonstrating the online tools to teachers, para-professionals and the principal. An extension of this session was conducted in October during the 35-minute team meetings.

Despite the trainings provided by the company prior to the start of the school year, the consultant was inundated by multiple emails from teachers expressing anxieties
about not feeling prepared to teach the Ranges program at the start of the school year. Teachers expressed that they were expecting trainings that would prepare them on ‘how’ to teach Ranges with modeled lessons and such, but felt they were only provided with information on all the components, the ‘what’, of the program. As one teacher wrote, “I know that many of us are apprehensive about the new series and not feeling confident implementing it, yet. I know I have a lot of questions still.” Two of the three initial trainings were offered specifically on the online components of the program, which focused on accessing the supplemental materials for the Ranges program, rather than actually teaching the core program. The consultant in fact later received an email from a representative of the publishing company, which stated that the online program “…can be problematic at times.” Training representatives from the publishing company acknowledged that they had never actually utilized this program with students. Based on teacher input, the principal and superintendent determined that the trainings provided by the publishing company were not beneficial as teachers continued to struggle with implementing Ranges. An additional training session scheduled with the company for the middle of the year was cancelled.

Other themes identified by the teachers as exemplifying Mr. Katz’s effort to develop a school-wide culture of high literacy expectations included promoting the Accelerated Reader (AR) program, a supplemental reading program. In AR students selected and read books independently. They then took online assessments on the content of the book and were awarded points for passing the assessment. Students set goals as to the number of points they wanted to earn within a given period. It was noted that Mr. Katz supported “Cheers in the Hall” for students who meet their AR goals. “Cheers in the
Hall” was a time blocked off each month when students who had reached their goals, paraded down the hall and received applause from the rest of the school. In addition, for every five AR points earned by a student, an additional scale with the student’s name on it was added to a dragon located in one of the main hallways of the building. Mr. Katz kept track of the dragon. Students were reportedly motivated each year to see how big the dragon could become. Finally, teachers noted that Mr. Katz funded “Breakfast with the Principal”, a program to support the classroom teachers in encouraging students to read. A select group of students was chosen each month to eat a breakfast from McDonald’s with the Mr. Katz based on their achievements in reading. These supportive tasks could be deemed as more managerial supports than instructional supports.

**Principals’ perceptions**

In response to how he promoted a school-wide culture of high literacy expectations based on a new literacy program, the principal linked this to the need to promote the successes of the program adoption. As he noted, he “reinforced to staff there were no right answers in how to best implement the program. It was a trial and error year to build upon by identifying the best instructional materials and practices to meet the needs of the students.” He further referenced his organization the previous year of the use of team time for literacy professional development provided by the literacy consultant, as it supported the need for a shift from past instructional practices to meet the new literacy standards embedded within the new program. As teachers encountered new practices in the Ranges initiative, they were encouraged to make the connections to the concepts
presented from these trainings. Based on his decision to use team time for this type of professional development, the principal reported, “The publishing company training was superficial. Having the consultant available in the school was the most beneficial in seeing the results we did.” He also reinforced that neither he nor the superintendent “felt qualified to provide the teachers with the necessary training for successful implementation of a new literacy program.”

Educational reform cannot be done in isolation, but instead must be conducted in reflective practice. The principal sympathized with the some of the frustrations the teachers faced and felt he could have more adequately communicated that they were all in the same situation in learning something new while simultaneously trying to put it into their instructional routines. He stated, “I should have communicated that we were all on the same playing field.” In addition, he reflected that he might have better supported the teachers if he had reinforced upfront that they would see holes between where students currently were instructionally and the increased expectations of rigor expected from the new Common Core standards and the Ranges program, stating, “We will all see gaps in students’ needs and we’ll need to fill them.” An apparent dichotomy was noted between the principal reportedly allowing the teachers autonomy to “grapple” with implementing Ranges and their expressed desired for a more hands-on involvement with instructional leadership as related to the instructional shifts embedded within the adoption of the new program.

The principal pointed towards his participation in both the literacy trainings and team meetings as important in communicating to the staff the importance of the initiative and his support of it. He emphasized the importance of the staff “seeing this.” However,
he also noted that he was frustrated in not being able to attend more team meetings because of the managerial demands of his position. Varying perceptions as evidenced in the data of how successfully the principal balanced and negotiated the role of being an organizational manager, an instructional leader, and/or a facilitator of distributed leadership became an emerging pattern as this study progressed.

**The perceptions connected to the promotion of teacher-to-teacher interactions**

“Principals are more effective when they establish conditions for success and involve others in both formal and informal ways to promote literacy instruction in the school” (Bean, 2012, p.17). In what ways did the elementary principal create conditions for successful teacher-to-teacher interactions during a time of significant instructional changes in literacy instruction in this case study?

**Teachers’ perceptions**

During the teacher interviews, every teacher noted how Mr. Katz prioritized daily team time as a means to promote teacher-to-teacher interactions. A total of 35 minutes daily was allotted in teachers’ schedules to meet with their teams. The responses clearly illuminated how the principal was able to facilitate not only scheduling common team time, but also the use of the consultant to support teachers in implementing the Ranges program during this time. A special education teacher also noted, “The IU consultant was brought in to bring the teams together and she was able to remove divisions between
teams,” through her facilitation of collaborative decision-making. Additionally, it was noted in some of the responses that this common support helped to align grade level decisions. For example, it was discovered that 3rd and 4th grade were weighing the grading of written responses differently on weekly assessments. The consultant and Mr. Katz examined each method and decided which was most reasonable. This method was then communicated back to both teams as the method in which to be used.

A 2nd and a 3rd grade teacher further suggested perceptions of how to better organize these teacher-to-teacher interactions. They proposed that specific days be designated for targeted tasks such as using Thursdays for supporting one another with the technological resources for the program and Fridays for considering a more school-wide vision of implementation where they might meet or observe teachers from other grade levels. When one teacher asked to restructure team time, her idea was dismissed. When she referenced this rejection by Mr. Katz, her frustration was clear as she retorted, “When I tell you I need it; I need it.”

At every grade level, except kindergarten, teachers referenced a perceived need for cross-grade level interactions. Although there were good intentions to organize this opportunity by Mr. Katz, the only time for cross-grade level communication occurred during the program adoption process where grade level representatives met to review possible programs. Many of the teacher responses referenced the need for building level time to have open dialogues with a goal of better understanding the spiral scope and sequence embedded within the program, collaboration as the big picture of the program was realized, and the means by which to prepare students for the next grade level expectations. Unfortunately, there were no in-service days in the district calendar to
facilitate these interactions (see Appendix G). Frustration was evident as one respondent indicated that faculty meetings were designated to discuss upcoming school events rather than instructional issues. She wanted “faculty meetings with open discussions (about the Ranges program) so everyone hears the same messages.” Another suggested an online discussion board to better facilitate cross grade level communication. There is little doubt instructional leadership in the facilitation of cross grade level interactions would have likely helped to support the instructional shifts each grade experienced in implementing the Ranges program as these teacher-to-teacher interactions would have highlighted the embedded scope and sequence of the program. This awareness might have supported teachers in better understanding which aspect of the program to emphasize at their respective grade levels, perhaps easing some of the frustrations felt with the rigorous pacing expectations demanded by the program and communicated by the principal and superintendent.

Every grade level also noted Mr. Katz’s role in organizing additional instructional resources to support teacher-to-teacher interactions. Grade level teams were provided additional training time with the consultant when requested, substitute coverage was provided so teams could align assessments, and a retired teacher was brought in to help facilitate the technology tools for 1st grade teachers. When given additional time to work with the literacy consultant on assessments and report cards, one teacher emailed Mr. Katz and the consultant the following message in response to Mr. Katz’s organization of the time:

Thank you so much for allowing us the time to meet with (the consultant). We are using our team time with her diligently trying to make decisions that best meet the
needs of our students with this new program. However, many times our time with her is not long enough as the questions continue to mount. I’m so thankful for the support from our administration with this new series. It means a lot to us to be given more time to sit and map everything out with (the consultant). She is a true blessing this year!

Furthermore, Title 1 teachers noted how Mr. Katz had adjusted the schedules this year to ensure that the support services were maximized during instruction. Reading was only taught by one grade level at a time, freeing all support teachers and para-educators to be available during that time to provided supplemental instruction for students in need of it. One support teacher noted how Mr. Katz “…coordinated the ability for Title 1 staff to better meet the needs of the students by organizing a schedule to allow for support to be maximized in the classrooms.” Support teachers were also available for their assigned grade level meetings as needed.

The effective management of available resources by the principal supported the teacher-to-teacher interactions during a time of significant instructional shifts for teachers. Although not directly connected to actual instruction, these resources indirectly supported the instructional changes and teacher interaction.

Many teachers expressed a desire for an increased involvement by Mr. Katz in teacher-to-teacher interactions. “There were a lot of teachers figuring their problems out on their own without principal direction.” One teacher indicated that without Mr. Katz explicitly communicating any expectations for teacher-to-teacher interactions, teachers still did things differently, which caused problems for the support teachers who worked with students from the classrooms of all teachers. A teacher also acknowledged a general
perception of the principal’s somewhat taciturn presence at grade level meetings; although she acknowledged that, he was also open to making decisions for the team when necessary.

Two other teachers felt that Mr. Katz lacked an awareness of the culture of the grade level teams and suggested that the only acknowledgement of dissonance occurred when the teachers directly express their frustrations to him. “He assumed that teacher-to-teacher interactions were occurring in team dialogue…and assumed everything was going well. He did not facilitate team dialogue to defuse tensions between team level participants.” They also felt that Mr. Katz should have facilitated more teacher-to-teacher interactions, opening up dialogue about the pros and cons they were facing in implementing Ranges. One teacher suggested her team “…needed more principal led discussions to lead teachers toward common goals.”

Principal’s perceptions

“Providing a literacy consultant to facilitate communication within and between grade levels concerning best practices,” was also noted by Mr. Katz as a means for supporting teacher-to-teacher interactions as he provided common time for grade levels to meet. In addition, he noted that he reported common notes from team meetings through emails to all teaching staff, so “everyone was on the same page.” In this way, competitiveness and tribalization were minimized.

During the principal interview, Mr. Katz put a strong emphasis on the goal of supporting teachers’ use of the data, stating he, “…got teachers to value data collected.”
When asked what he felt he might have done differently, the principal communicated he wanted to transform the “RTII Referral” (Response to Instruction and Intervention) process to rely more on data and in conducting an analysis of data, facilitating conversations around students’ strengths and weaknesses. RTII is an instructional framework intended as a continuous school improvement structure for schools to intervene early for students with academic or behavioral risks based upon their needs and varying levels of intervention intensity (Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, 2009). It is noteworthy that not a single teacher response addressed focusing on data or the “RTII Process”, perhaps indicating a lack of communication between the teaching staff and Mr. Katz.

Although teachers’ responses were more focused on ways to better utilize team time for teacher-to-teacher interactions surrounding instructional shifts, the principal’s focus was on bringing teachers together around data to discuss instructional shifts. This disconnect appeared to be indicative of a lack of clearly communicated goals and methods by which to achieve them, a key component of instructional leadership.

**The perceptions connected to supporting individual teachers in instruction**

Literacy leaders must also possess an in-depth knowledge of literacy that helps them to think about the goals for the program, appropriate materials and resources, ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, and the professional development that will enable staff members to improve instruction for all students (Bean, 2012, p.17).
A review of ways in which the elementary principal in this case study supported individual teacher development in improving their instruction for all students, both teacher and principal perceptions were considered.

**Teachers’ perceptions**

During the program adoption process, the superintendent suggested that those involved in choosing the program have the opportunity to observe specific programs being taught in other districts prior to making a final choice. Two teachers indicated that this was an unmet professional development need and felt it could have helped as they struggled to implement the program in their own classrooms. Additionally, several teachers felt the principal should have pushed for higher quality training from the company to better support the implementation of the Ranges program. One teacher suggested that the program should have been implemented in phases, in her words, “a little of the unfamiliar layer with the familiar”.

Given the instructional shifts necessary for the adoption of the Ranges program, several teachers noted the feedback they received by the principal’s following his observations as supporting the development of their teaching of the Ranges program. However, one teacher specified, “The only time he was in the classroom was for my formal evaluation. All my feedback was positive. I received no constructive criticism, recommendations for growth, or time to discuss areas for growth.” A different teacher specified the supportive listening and problem-solving approach demonstrated by the Mr. Katz as key to her grasp of how to best utilize the new program. Another teacher noted
that the autonomy to adjust the instructional pacing based upon the teacher’s professional 
knowledge and expertise was important in her understanding of how to teach the new 
Ranges program.

Several teachers mentioned the principal’s use of the literacy consultant to 
support their understanding and professional development related to the program and 
clearly approved of such efforts. As one teacher noted:

Because we had the IU consultant and each other, the principal stayed in the 
background but provided the teachers with what was needed. He was available 
when needed. We got frustrated, and we wanted him to take care of everything 
like a dad. That’s not his job.

On the other hand, many teachers also echoed concerns about the lack of presence 
of the principal during literacy instruction. One indicating that the only time he was 
present in her room was as part of her formal evaluation and that he “…never appear(ed) 
without the iPad he used for walkthroughs. He should have just checked in on occasion to 
see how things were going.” Several teachers expressed frustrations about a lack of 
clearly communicated, common instructional goals and the lack of feedback and 
accountability tied to any such goals. Although there was a “camaraderie in recognition 
of the frustrations”, a majority of the teachers expressed a concern about how the 
frustrations were handled. As one teacher noted,

…you were on your own. We had questions and sent an email. It did not get 
answered. The administration was on overload as the entire building was sending 
questions. The only times there were answers is when the literacy consultant
answered them, which is the role this person was given. Because the literacy consultant was the buffer, the administration was unaware of the frustrations.

After another teacher also referenced the superintendent’s decision to bring in a consultant, she was asked if this role (the consultant’s) was ever outlined or discussed with the teachers and she answered, “No. We were only told that the IU consultant would be brought in to support us in implementing the (Ranges) program”. Reportedly, the teachers had not been given a sense as to what role the IU consultant would take in leading the implementation of Ranges or what their expectations might be for the building principal responsibilities in supporting them in implementing the new program.

One teacher noted how the principal worked to safeguard the literacy instructional block by organizing the schedule to maximize staff, reduce assemblies, and eliminate other distractors that interfered with instruction and by taking care of behavior problems, so that instruction could continue. “He protected instructional time by not allowing outside calls to come through during that time, dealing with problematic parents, and serving as a filter for teachers.”

Another teacher discussed how the principal “… scheduled a meeting for me with the IU Consultant to overview program in December before I was to return from my medical leave”. She outlined how one-on-one time was provided with the literacy consultant and how the long-term substitute was also employed for an additional week so that the teacher could watch the new program being delivered prior to her resuming her role with the expectations associated with teaching the new program.
Principal’s perceptions

Mr. Katz indicated that it was important for him to ensure that teachers received the necessary professional development, both with their grade level teams and at their individual levels. One way Mr. Katz felt he communicated his support of the professional development of individual teachers was by reviewing and discussing with the teachers the students’ performance data from the first year of implementation. Mr. Katz also included a number of student interviews he conducted about the new program in this review.

The principal noted that his efforts to support the literacy instructional changes often hinged on elements out of his control. Specifically, he felt that he could have better supported the literacy initiative by individual teachers by being in the classroom more and having more conversations with teachers about their instructional practices, but often he felt pulled from this intent for other duties.

It appears that the negotiating of leadership roles assumed by the principal during the adoption of the new literacy program was not clearly defined. A discussion of when the principal chose a more managerial role as compared to that of instructional leadership and of how the teachers and the principal perceived the effect of that role under the given circumstance was deemed necessary to further describe the principal’s leadership role during a time of significant instructional changes in this case.

Summary of findings

The perceptions of the role of an elementary principal during a time of instructional shifts in literacy were the phenomena of this study. The findings have been
organized based on the perspectives of the teachers and the principal related to how the elementary principal promoted a school-wide culture of high expectations for student achievement, fostered teacher-to-teacher interactions surrounding instructional changes, and supported the instructional delivery of individual teachers in their instruction.

As typical with managing change, the majority of teachers expressed anxieties about feeling unprepared to teach the new literacy program, Ranges, at the beginning of the year. Although some teams struggled between balancing the needs of students and meeting the superintendent’s expectation to stick to the program, others worked to adjust the program to meet the needs of their students. Many teachers were critical of the principal’s leadership in supporting their instructional needs as related to promoting high literacy expectations in the school. The principal also reflected that he wished he could have been more insightful to the challenges that the teachers faced and had been better able to support their needs. The principal and many of the teachers though were able to identify a variety of managerial tasks the principal took as he promoted a cultural of high literacy expectations during the implementation of a new literacy program.

One of the most common ways in which teachers and the principal perceived by which the elementary principal fostered teacher-to-teacher interactions concerning the instructional changes associated with the new literacy program was in the organization and protection of team planning time. Where teachers, additionally, perceived a need for cross-grade level planning, the principal perceived an additional need as having teachers analyze data for the purpose of RTII. Teams that appeared to be more cooperative perceived the principal’s involvement in team time as appropriate as they collaborated in their planning. Teams where there seemed to be more dissonance, expressed frustrations
with the level of involvement the principal had in team meetings. Again, teams expressed appreciation for the managerial task the principal took as he fostered teacher-to-teacher interactions. For example, he arranged extra time for the teams to meet with the IU consultant to work on changes with assessments and with the report card based on the new literacy program.

There were similar perceptions related to how the principal was able to support the individual teachers in their delivery of instruction. The majority of teachers and the principal noted a desire for the principal to have spent more time in the classrooms during actual literacy instruction. Although the principal felt that he supported the teachers by providing the IU consultant as a resource for the teachers, the teachers expressed a desire for more specific feedback from the principal on their instruction as they implemented the new literacy program.

The role of the elementary principal is multifaceted. As the story behind this case study was portrayed as various squares of a quilt, the findings as they relate to the field of instructional leadership should be view as a whole. This quilt cannot be replicated to create the exact same story, but an analysis of the patterns might contribute to better understanding the phenomena of study.
Chapter 5

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case...We study a case study when it itself is of very special interest. We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stakes, 1995, xi).

“Educational change is ubiquitous” (Hargreaves, 1998, p.1) and understanding the role of the elementary principal as an instructional leader during a time of educational change is indeed complex. The genetic markers of any school create circumstances that bound the description of the role of the principal to that specific context. The kaleidoscopic nature of the phenomenon of the principal as an instructional leader is further compounded by the lack of a clear definition in the research. Leithwood, Loius, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) wrote, “The term ‘instructional leader’ has been in vogue for decades as the desired model for educational leaders — principals especially. Yet the term is often more a slogan than a well-defined set of leadership practices” (p.6).

This specific case study was designed to tell the story of the perceptions both the teachers and the principal of one school had of the role of the principal as an instructional leader during the implementation of a new literacy program. Focused on the intent to answer the question: How does the principal’s interpretation of role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy compare to the teachers perceptions of this role, during the adoption of a new literacy program?; this study examined these perceptions through the
lenses of how the principal promoted a culture of high literacy expectations, fostered teacher-to-teacher interactions, and supported the instruction delivered by individual teachers in their classrooms. Although each teacher participant was interviewed separately, the findings represented many commonalities among grade level teams. The principal’s perspectives, artifacts, and field notes were then used to triangulate the findings. During an analysis of the findings, several specific conclusions surfaced and were deemed to be of special interest as they related to this case.

**Conclusions**

**Different strokes for different folks**

Perhaps the dominant conclusion from this study concerned the variability of what counts as instructional leadership as well as how much and what kind was needed in program implementation. Each team had different expectations of the role of the principal as an instructional leader of literacy. Similar to the findings of Ham, et al. (2015), teachers’ perceptions of the principal’s instructional leadership appeared to be closely related to their own self-efficacy. It appeared teams who were goal-orientated appreciated more independence and less direction and oversight from the principal. The kindergarten team was a prime example of this stance as they clearly communicated that they knew how to teach kindergarten students and appreciated the flexibility the principal gave them in using the new program to meet the needs of their students. While the 3rd and 4th grade teams focused on guaranteeing their students would be prepared for the state test, they
too seemed to have valued the freedom the principal provided them to implement the new literacy program as they deemed necessary to reach this goal.

Teams who reported more confusion regarding implementation of the literacy program and who were more tentative in being able to settle on a common goal reported a desire for increased participation and direction from the principal as an instructional leader. As the 1st grade team engaged in a lengthy (and seemingly irresolvable) discussion about what aspects of the instructional program to emphasize, they expressed mounting frustration regarding the lack of involvement from the principal in decisions related to instruction. Similarly, the 2nd grade team struggled with trying to find a balance in meeting the needs of their students while maintaining the pacing outlined by the publisher of the new literacy program and expected by the principal, as well as the superintendent. While the majority of the team strongly expressed a desire for the principal to decide which components of the program to cut in order to maintain the expected pace, as previously mentioned another team member stated, “…the principal stayed in the background but provided what the teachers needed. He was available when needed. We got frustrated, and we wanted him to take care of everything like a dad. That’s not his job.” Danielle Else (2013) in her research on the role of principal leadership as related to student achievement also found ties between a clear vision and the perceived need for principal support with curriculum and instruction.
Necessity of clear communication

A related conclusion that surfaced concerned the communication of and the agreement on common goals or a shared vision. As Stronge, Richard and Catano (2008) noted, “Successful principals understand that it is important to establish clear learning goals and garner schoolwide -and even communitywide- commitment to these goals” (p.5). This premise was also supported in the newly adopted Professional Standards for Educational Leader (National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2015). The first element under Standard 4 reads effective leaders “Implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that promote the mission, vision, and core values of the school, embody high expectations for student learning, align with the academic standards, and are culturally responsive” (p. 12).

From the very start, the one goal clearly communicated by the superintendent and principal related to the anticipated instructional shifts was that of implementing the new literacy program with fidelity. In the beginning, the principal and superintendent, as managers of instruction, adhered to this goal rather steadfastly. However, as the gaps between instructional practice and the needs of students became more evident and as teacher frustrations mounted, the principal gradually shifted to become more of an instructional leader rather than an enforcer of implementation schedules. Thus, teams were allowed the flexibility to adjust their instruction of the program to meet the needs of the students rather than mindlessly focusing only on fidelity of implementation. The principal appeared to clearly understand his own limitations in understanding literacy instructional practices as well as acknowledging the “wisdom of practice” (Shulman,
1987, p. 5) of the teachers. The principal reflected that he wished he could have anticipated this need and better communicated to the teachers at the beginning of the year that they were to adhere to the program, but also be responsive to the instructional needs of their students.

**Importance of the big picture**

The second element of Standard 4 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders states that effective leaders, “Align and focus systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment within and across grade level to promote student academic success, love of learning, the identities and habits of learners, and healthy sense of self” (National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2015, p. 12). As teams worked to implement the new literacy program, regardless of the frustrations they faced as a grade level, each team sought a better understanding of the larger context for implementation as they requested time for cross-grade level meetings. Mooney and Maursbach (2008) recommend that principals leading curriculum change should,

Make sure that teachers work in vertical teams to discuss achievement gaps at all levels. While more teachers have an opportunity to collaborate with the grade-level peers, it is extremely rare for teachers to discuss teaching and learning with the colleagues outside of their consecutive grade levels. When teachers have opportunities to talk with other teachers across all grade levels, the team broadens their understanding of major curriculum issues and begins to move functioning as a group of individuals to working as a professional learning community (p. 3).
Although the teams clearly valued their grade level meetings as communicated in the interviews, they also sought to understand the larger context of their work. A few teachers recognized the IU consultant’s role in aligning the instruction across grade levels, but many others had increased expectations for the principal to orchestrate the school as a community. Many teachers noted that the participation of the principal in these types of meetings were critical and desired even greater contributions. For example, teachers across grade levels suggested having the principal organize a school discussion board to share ideas about implementing the new program, or having the principal arrange for them to observe each other teach the new program, or simply checking to be sure everyone heard the same message when a decision was made about the program.

The teachers clearly sought the leadership of the principal to lead the school as a community toward common goals. Clearly, a critical role of the principal as an instructional leader was to serve as a hub for communicating progress toward common goals.

A related conclusion focused on an overall lack of clarity concerning the role of the principal during the program adoption. Teachers were informed that the IU consultant would be brought in to support the implementation of the new literacy program, but how the duties and responsibilities of instructional leadership were to be divided between the principal and the IU consultant was never clearly articulated to the teachers. The IU consultant was scheduled to work in the district three days a week during the first trimester of the school year, two days a week during the second and one during the third. During this these days, she worked specifically with teams during their team times, which left very little time to observe classroom instruction.
Teachers clearly expressed their desire to have the principal routinely involved in the team meetings and in providing frequent feedback on their classroom instruction. As Horng and Loeb (2010) also noted, teachers with low skills or lack of confidence required more instructional leadership and support than their counterparts. As teachers grappled with implementing the new program, they communicated a desire for a greater amount of support, feedback, and guidance from the principal, “…regular use of observation on what’s going on and how implementation might be improved” (Mojkowski, 2000, p.81). The need for increased feedback was further complicated by the changes in the teacher evaluation during the year of implementation. Under the Act 82, adopted June 30, 2012, teacher evaluation changed to include the PA Teacher Effectiveness System. The new system based teacher evaluation on four areas: teacher observation and practice, building level data, teacher specific data, and elective data. Despite efforts to inform teachers of how the new evaluation system functioned, many teachers were still anxious about how it might influence their annual evaluation.

All this points to the need for principals to differentiate their supervision to meet the needs of the teachers they supervise, especially during major instructional changes. The need for differentiation was noted between teams, between teachers, and between students as the new program was implemented. Different teams necessitated more active involvement from the principal than others did. Depending upon their level of confidence in their instruction, some teachers noted they wanted more feedback from the principal on their classroom instruction. Students at the various grade levels needed varying levels of flexibility in the program in order to be academically successful. Southworth (2002) wrote, “Moreover, as leadership is socially constructed, the very concept could be
expected to vary from setting to setting” (p.2). The varying context of each school and the members of its community contribute to the kaleidoscopic nature of the role of the principal as an instructional leader within the specific context and, therefore, are thought to contribute to the vagueness in the field as far as defining the role in the field is concerned. “However, the literature on instructional is often otherwise theoretical in nature and does not reflect the messiness of what principals do on a day-to-day basis” (Wahlstrom, Paul, & Michlin, 2009, p. 3).

**Jack-of-all-trades, but master of none?**

A final conclusion from the findings was that although the teachers clearly appreciated the tasks the principal completed as a “manager” of the school, both the teachers and the principal struggled with how the principal might best balance the managerial and instructional leadership roles and responsibilities. Carraway and Young (2015) found that when principals are overwhelmed with managerial tasks, instructional leadership takes a back seat. While Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliot, and Cravens (2009) found that principals devoted between 5-20% of their day to tasks associated with curriculum and instruction, Jenkins (2009) noted, “Instructional leadership requires principals to free themselves of bureaucratic tasks and focus their efforts on improving teaching and learning” (p. 34), which appears to be easier said than done.

A meta-analysis conducted by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) reported 21 responsibilities of a principal as a leader with correlations tied to student achievement. In their book, *School Leadership that Works* they further classify the responsibilities by
first-order, or incremental, and second-order, or deep, changes. They further noted, however, “When involved in the day-to-day changes and corrections that a school faces, the school leader must attend to all 21 responsibilities as a regular aspect of managing the school” (p. 75). Tasks, in this particular study, perceived as being associated with the managerial aspects of the principal role included arranging and prioritizing team time, allocating instructional resources, organizing professional development, communicating the importance of literacy to students and other community stakeholders, monitoring the school culture and climate, and managing student behavior.

Urick and Bowers (2013) defined “transactional leaders” as those most concerned with managerial tasks, whereas, “transformative leaders” are those more focused fostering the organization and its members. Horng and Loeb (2010) utilized the term “organizational management” to define those tasks a principal does which provide the school with high quality instruction, “Strong organizational managers are effective in hiring and supporting staff, allocating budgets and resources, and maintaining a positive working and learning environment” (p. 67). By definition, the support that organizational managers provide for their teachers was in organizing an environment in which they teach, rather than directly leading the instruction of any one teacher.

There were many tasks in this study, either implemented or desired, aligned with instructional leadership. This included communicating a shared instructional vision for the organization, being responsive to students’ needs, providing frequent feedback on instruction, differentiation of instructional supervision, and setting the stage for instructional shifts through relevant professional development.
Similar to many other fields, working conditions have a large impact on teacher satisfaction and productivity. The NEA Educational Policy and Practice Department (2008) reported teachers want to work in schools that support their work, recognize their efforts, and where they have a voice. Berlin, Kavanagh, and Jensen (1988) noted in states where surveys on teacher working conditions were conducted, teachers consistently indicated leadership as the most important factor influencing their willingness to stay at a particular school. Principals are largely responsible for molding and leading a school environment that is supportive of both teachers and students.

Former superintendent and current professor of educational leadership and policy studies at the University of Washington, Bradley Portin, noted that the focus of conversations among administrators tends to be on the operations and management responsibilities associated with the role of the principal. He further added, “It is tough for principals to reallocate time from crisis management and operations to a learning-focused agenda” (as cited in von Frank, 2011). "The leadership role played by the school principal is critical. Principals wear many different hats during the school day, but the most effective school principals are not only managers and disciplinarians but also instructional leaders for the school” (NEA Educational Policy and Practice Department, 2008, p. 1). While this is certainly true, one is left with the conundrum of how one successfully manages all of these critical aspects of the job.
**Recommendations**

This study aspired to contribute to the research on the role of the principal as an instructional leader during times significant instructional reform. Its limitations are bounded within the context of a single case study. However, “as a picture of ‘lived reality,’ that knowledge, too, can be examined in scientific ways…what are known as qualitative methods are frequently beginning points, foundational strategies, which are often followed by quantitative methodologies” (Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 9-13). One recommendation from this study would be to attempt to further support the work of Rigby (2013), Borak (2010), and Wahlstrom, Paul and Michlin (2009) by quantifying the specific aspects of instructional leadership that both principals and teachers value during times of instructional shifts. Possible foci of such an investigation might be the actual value both teachers and principals place on providing feedback on instruction as compared to an emphasis on cross-grade level collaboration. The principal and teachers in this study were asked to identify instructional leadership actions, not to rank or rate them. Such findings may prove to be more reliable in measuring a principal’s effectiveness than the use of test scores as refuted by Fuller and Hollingworth (2014) or the methods outlined in the *2015 State of States Report* (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015).

Case studies are useful in understanding a process that you might not otherwise have had the opportunity to investigate, to develop a deeper understanding of educational practice (Zeicher & Noffke, 2001). Another recommendation from this study is to call for the further investigation of anticipated hurdles educators may face in new program adoption. Carraway and Young (2015) recommend that program developers consider
what factors principals view as complementary and compatible in new program implementation. As the principal in this study reflected, there were obstacles that the teachers faced for which he wished he would have had the foresight to better prepare them. “While effective principals have been identified, the unique nature of various context-specific issues and varying context-appropriate approaches to tackle such issues have resulted in a lack of a parsimonious understanding of the conditions of effective educational leadership” (Ham, et al., 2015, p. 226). One would think, however, that there are ample commonalities across contexts to be analyzed and recommendations might be garnered concerning best practices for program adoption either by content areas or by educational levels. Such recommendations may not be applicable in specific contexts, but should at least provide fodder for instructional leaders to consider within their specific context.

As Wahlstrom, Paul, and Michlin (2009) noted, there was a clear distinction between what a principal might communicate as a vision for learning and what they might do to enact that vision. Another possible area of inquiry might relate to the need to differentiate instructional leadership during instructional shifts as envisioned by the principal. Are there common patterns within practice that might provide a leader with indicators that particular groups of educators require differing combinations of leadership practices when experiencing changes in their practice? Can such patterns be defined for consideration in incidences where educational reform is being planned? How might they support a principal in enacting practices that would better support all teachers in achieving a communicated vision for learning?
A final recommendation relates to better defining the roles of managerial and instructional leadership. Is there a formula for balancing managerial and instructional leadership tasks given various school profiles? Horng and Loeb (2010) also noted, “Schools that improve student achievement are more likely to have principals who are strong organizational managers than are schools with principals who spend more time observing classrooms or directly coaching teachers” (p. 66). Whereas, the NEA Education Policy and Practice Department cite studies to support the claim that if principals do not find adequate time away from the managerial aspects of their role to lead instruction, then the school will not progress (2008). Furthermore, while the literature appears not to agree on the importance of one over the other, recommendations as to which role to accentuate during times of significant changes would also support the practice of many principals.

Implications

“Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2015, p. 12). How principals achieve this leadership standard requires further clarification in the literature and the professional development of principals. Principals are vital in providing the link between district initiatives and quality classroom instruction that leads to increased student achievement. Instructional visioning provides sense making of district level/system demands, but it is only
instructional leadership behaviors that can truly address aspects of quality instruction that turn the vision into reality and student success (Wahlstrom, Paul, & Michlin, 2009, p. 23).

The role of the principal has shifted in recent years, “But increased pressure on principals to be instructional leaders who can share a school’s culture and create an environment of continuous improvement in teaching and learning requires a set of skills not often learned in the classroom” (von Frank, 2011, p. 1). A greater emphasis must be made at the collegiate and district level to prepare principals to be reflective problem-solvers who can communicate a vision for learning and lead a building towards greater student success, to help fill the gap between the theory of instructional leadership and the practice of instructional leadership (Elmore, 2015). Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) noted,

We need to be developing leaders with large repertoires of practices and the capacity to choose from that repertoire as needed, not leaders trained in the delivery of one ‘ideal’ set of practices. We believe this evidence argues for further research aimed less at the development of particular leadership models and more at discovering how such flexibility is exercised by those in various leadership roles (p. 10).

Principals need the skills to be understanding of and responsive to the context of the school in which they lead.

Principals as instructional leaders must also possess an understanding of quality instruction in which to facilitate a shared vision of learning. As Fink and Markholt (2013) stated,
Without a shared understanding of quality instruction, we have no basis from which to mount an improvement effort. In the truest spirit of you cannot lead what you do not know, it is incumbent on school leaders to develop their own expertise about quality instruction…They must have enough expertise to recognize quality instruction (p. 319-329).

Principals need to understand what quality instruction, instruction that results in student learning, looks like in practice. In this study, teachers repeatedly expressed a need for feedback on their instruction that was more meaningful than the practices the principal employed for classroom observation. Grant Wiggins concurs and notes, “Basically, feedback is information about how we are doing in our efforts to reach a goal” (2012, p. 12). Principals as instructional leaders need an understanding of quality instruction in which to facilitate learning goals that provide the catalyst for the work of every educator in the building. Without clearly communicated learning goals and a means in which to evaluate progress, the everyday distractions detract from the success of the goal. Teachers undergoing instructional reform need frequent feedback on their progress toward a common learning goal. The learning goal communicated by the superintendent and the principal to teachers in this study was to teach to the fidelity of the program. When teachers are told to teach a program that is textbook driven, Marzano (2003) noted that “…when highly structured textbooks are used as the basis for a curriculum, teachers commonly make independent and idiosyncratic decisions regarding what should be covered and to what extent. This practice frequently creates huge holes in the continuum of content” (p. 23), defeating the goal of teaching the program with fidelity. A study conducted by the Wallace Foundation (2009) focused on creating and supporting
effective leaders highlighted the need for a clear mission formulated and planned for by principals and teachers targeting their specific needs to achieve the goals of the mission. Collaborative planning of instructional goals defines quality instruction for principals and teachers and embeds tools for quality feedback, creating a shared vision of student success.

“It has been said that running a school is about putting first things first; leadership is determining what are the first things; and management is about putting them first” (Barth, 2004, p. 11). During a time of instructional change, leading instructional reform should be a priority for instructional leaders. The principal in this study reported difficulties in trying to balance the role of instructional leader with that of managing the school. Caraway and Young (2015) recommend, “…we should accept the premise that principals are inundated with countless responsibilities, often competing with each other and time sensitive. Either shifting managerial duties to other school personnel or transferring instructional leadership to someone else, like a teacher leader, would improve the likelihood of effective instructional leadership happening” (p. 250). In this particular case study, an IU literacy consultant was utilized as a temporary instructional leader, however, because of scheduling constraints the consultant was not always present in the building, resulting in confusions about the role of the principal as an instructional leader. Without clearly defining the roles of both the IU consultant and the principal each as instructional leaders in advance, teachers became demanding of the principal’s role in instruction, expressing a desire for increased involvement in problem-solving, professional development, and instructional feedback. While distributed leadership is supported in the literature, without a clear definition of how the role of leadership was
distributed, it seems confusion still prevailed. Therefore, it is crucial that during times of change clearly defined leadership roles be delineated and communicated.

The need to clearly define and communicate the role of the principal as an instructional leader is immediate and complex. “Instructional leaders shape the environment in which teachers and students succeed or fail” (NEA Education Policy and Practice Department, 2008, p. 1); however, without a clear and widely accepted definition of what instructional leadership entails the consensus from the literature is that it is rarely practiced. "(I)f principals are to heed the call from educational reformers to become instructional leaders it is obvious that they must take on a dramatically different role" (Stronge, 1988, p. 33). Defining that role in the practice of principals is necessary, yet the literature has been focused on theoretical conceptualizations. In describing the imperative Christine DeVita (2004), former president of The Wallace Foundation, stated,

Effective educational leadership makes a difference in improving learning.

There’s nothing new or especially controversial about that idea. What’s far less clear, even after several decades of school renewal efforts, is just how leadership matters, how important those effects are in promoting the learning of all children, and what the essential ingredients of successful school leadership are…There is still much to be learned about the essentials of quality leadership (p.3).

Gronn (2003) has noted the lack of a concise definition of educational leadership has hindered progress in the field. It was perhaps optimistic to think that this singular case study might move the educational field one small step closer to defining the role for the principal as an instructional leader in practice but it was also necessary.
References


Watts, Micheal. (2007). They have tied me to a stake: Reflections of the art of case study research, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13 (2), 204-217.


Appendix A

2013-2014 Coaching Schedule

Amy Breon’s Coaching Schedule

For 2013-2014

September 3- Tuesday
September 9- Monday
September 10- Tuesday
September 12- Thursday
September 16- Monday
September 18- Wednesday
September 20- Friday
September 23- Monday
September 25- Wednesday
September 26- Thursday
September 30- Monday
October 1- Tuesday
October 2- Wednesday
October 9- Wednesday
October 10- Thursday
October 15- Tuesday
October 17- Thursday
October 18- Friday
October 21- Monday
October 23- Wednesday
October 25- Friday
October 28- Monday
October 30- Wednesday
October 31- Thursday
November 4- Monday
November 7- Thursday

November 8- Friday
November 11- Monday
November 18- Monday
November 20- Wednesday
November 21- Thursday
December 4- Wednesday
December 9- Monday
December 11- Wednesday
December 16- Monday
January 6- Monday
January 9- Thursday
January 13- Monday
January 16- Thursday
January 22- Wednesday
January 24- Friday
January 27- Monday
January 30- Thursday
February 3-Monday
February 6-Thursday
February 10- Monday
February 13- Thursday
February 17- Monday
February 20- Thursday
February 24- Monday
February 27- Thursday

9 select Thursdays from March -June

Total: 60 Days
Appendix B

2012-2013 PD and Coaching Schedule

Literacy Training Calendar for D.L. Mitchell Elementary for 2012-2013

Professional Development to occur during team meetings on Tuesdays with subsequent classroom follow-up on Thursdays. The teachers will be assigned to work 1:1 with the coach at least once every five weeks based on groups of teachers, one or two from each grade level per group. The time can be utilized in either collaborative planning, coaching and/or modeled lessons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>PD Topic</th>
<th>Classroom Coaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>What is reading?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Reading Simulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-The Big Ideas of Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>Phonological Components</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-memory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-units of language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/18</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/20</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>Consonant Phonemes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18</td>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>Vowel Phonemes &amp; Allophonic Variants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>No school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>Error Analysis &amp; Instructional Techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>Act 80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/27</td>
<td>Spelling by Origin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/4</td>
<td>Phonics Instruction: Common Spelling Graphemes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11</td>
<td>Common Spelling Patterns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/14</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td>12/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>Divisibility Rules &amp; Syllable Types</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td>Morphology</td>
<td>1/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td>1/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>The Vocabulary Gap</td>
<td>1/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>Choosing Vocabulary</td>
<td>2/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td>2/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19</td>
<td>Expressive Vocabulary</td>
<td>2/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/26</td>
<td>Vocabulary Expansion Activities</td>
<td>2/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>3/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple View</td>
<td>3/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schema</td>
<td>3/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>RAND Report</td>
<td>3/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/19</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td>4/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26</td>
<td>The Challenge of Academic Language</td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2</td>
<td>Weather Day</td>
<td>4/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/9</td>
<td>Act 80 Day</td>
<td>4/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td>4/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/23</td>
<td>Cohesive Ties and Inferences</td>
<td>4/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30</td>
<td>The Role of Grammar</td>
<td>5/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/7</td>
<td>Sentence Elaboration</td>
<td>5/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/14</td>
<td>Writing Structures</td>
<td>5/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/21</td>
<td>Data Review*</td>
<td>5/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/28</td>
<td>Writing in Response to Literature</td>
<td>5/30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 30 Days

Dates in bold are alternatives to the Tuesday and Thursday sequence.
## Appendix C

### Grade Level Team Definitions of Literacy Block from 2012 Audit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Organization of Literacy Block</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Kindergarten | • Read-alouds for thematic units.  
• “Letter-a-Day”  
• Wright Group and Scholastic Leveled books for Guided Reading  
• Fast for Words  
• KidWriting  
• Centers |
| First Grade  | • Word Study  
• Scott Foresman Anthology  
• Scholastic Leveled Books for Guided Reading  
• Reading Eggs  
• Wilson-based Spelling  
• Reading A-Z |
| Second Grade | • Scott Foresman Anthology  
• Scholastic Leveled books for Guided Reading  
• Sitton Spelling – described as random words without alignment to phonetics, based on high-frequency words  
• Writing – taught separately – Better Answer Sandwich |
| Third Grade  | • Core reading and writing: Trade books, Grammar  
• Guided Reading  
• Sitton Spelling  
• Daily Oral Language |
| Fourth Grade | • Whole group  
• National Geographic  
• Storytown  
• AR  
• Shared/partner reading responses  
• Sitton |
Appendix D

Participant Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: The Principal’s Role in Literacy Instruction: A Case Study of New Program Adoption

Principal Investigator: Amy Breon

Address: 3 Elwood Lane, Lock Haven, PA 17745

Telephone Number: 570-748-1532

Advisor: Dr. Nona Prestine

Advisor Telephone Number: 814-863-3762

Subject’s Printed Name: _____________________________

We are asking you to be in a research study. This form gives you information about the research.

Whether or not you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you.
1. Why is this research study being done?

We are asking you to be in this research because of your professional relationship with the elementary school principal and your experiences within the school in which the study is being conducted.

This research is being done to explore the various ways in which a principal's literacy knowledge influences the actions taken during the implementation of a new literacy program within an elementary school. Specifically,

1.) What does the elementary principal do to promote a schoolwide culture of high literacy expectations based on a new literacy program?

2.) What does the elementary principal do to foster teacher-to-teacher interactions surrounding the instruction shifts anticipated with the adoption of a new literacy program?

3.) What does the elementary principal do to support literacy instruction delivered by individual teachers based upon the new program?

2. What will happen in this research study?

After agreeing to participate in this study, the principal investigator will contact you to set up a convenient time to conduct an interview with you. It is anticipated that the initial interview will last between 15-30 minutes. The interview will be recorded for
the purpose of accurately recalling the details of the interview and in order to
supplement all notes taken by the principal investigator. Depending upon the results of
the data as it is collected and subsequently analyzed, you may be contacted for a
follow-up interview that would last approximately 15 minutes or less.

3. **What are the risks and possible discomforts from being in this research
study?**

   There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is
   obtained by someone other than the investigator, but precautions will be
taken to prevent this from happening.

4. **What are the possible benefits from being in this research study?**

   This study has the potential to inform the field in regard to what specific actions
   a principal may take to influence new instructional initiatives. It may stimulate
   further research as to the effect these efforts have on instruction and student
   achievement.

5. **What other options are available instead of being in this research study?**

   You have the option of refusing to participate in this study.

6. **How long will you take part in this research study?**

   Being in this research study does not require any additional time on your part
   beyond the interview sessions.

7. **How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you decide to
   take part in this research study?**

   Efforts will be made to limit the use and sharing of your personal research
   information to people who have a need to review this information.
   - A list that matches your name with your code number will be kept in a locked
     firebox at the home office of the principal investigator.
Your research records will be labeled with your grade level and a number that correlates with the alphabetical order of your first name in accordance to all participants for your grade level and will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the home office of the principal investigator.

In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

We will do our best to keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, it is possible that other people may find out about your participation in this research study. For example, the following people/groups may check and copy records about this research.

- The Office for Human Research Protections in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) and
- The Office for Research Protections.

Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

8. **What are the costs of taking part in this research study?**

   8a. **What will you have to pay for if you take part in this research study?**

   There are no costs associated with your participation in this study.

9. **What are your rights if you take part in this research study?**

   Taking part in this research study is voluntary.
   - You do not have to be in this research.
   - If you choose to be in this research, you have the right to stop at any time.
   - If you decide not to be in this research or if you decide to stop at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

   If you decide to leave the research, contact the investigator so that the investigator can **destroy any evidence that you have contributed to the study prior to your decision to cease participation.**
During the course of the research you will be provided with any new information that may affect your health, welfare or your decision to continue participating in this research.

10. If you have questions or concerns about this research study, whom should you call?

Please call the head of the research study (principal investigator), Amy Breon at 570-660-5189 if you:

- Have questions, complaints or concerns about the research.
- Believe you may have been harmed by being in the research study.

You may also contact the Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775, ORProtections@psu.edu if you:

- Have questions regarding your rights as a person in a research study.
- Have concerns or general questions about the research.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else about any concerns related to the research.

INFORMED CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Your signature below means that you have explained the research to the subject or subject representative and have answered any questions he/she has about the research.

____________________________  ____________  ________
Signature of person who explained this research  Date  Time

____________________________
Printed Name
(Only approved investigators for this research may explain the research and obtain informed consent.)

Signature of Person Giving Informed Consent and Authorization

Before making the decision about being in this research you should have:

- Discussed this research study with an investigator,
• Read the information in this form, and
• Had the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.
  Your signature below means that you have received this information, have asked the
  questions you currently have about the research and those questions have been answered.

You will receive a copy of the signed and dated form to keep for future reference.

Signature of Subject

By signing this consent form, you indicate that you voluntarily choose to be in this research and agree to allow your information to be used and shared as described above.

___________________________
Signature of Subject

___________________________
Printed Name

__________ Date ____________ Time
Appendix E

Observational Field Note Template

Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors that encourage high literacy expectations</th>
<th>Behaviors that support teacher-to-teacher collaboration</th>
<th>Behaviors that influence literacy instruction</th>
<th>Other pertinent behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F

### Building Schedule

#### 2013-2014 Academic Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:45-9:20</td>
<td>Morning Meeting (Math - Calendar Skills) 30 minutes</td>
<td>8:45-9:20</td>
<td>Morning Meeting (8:45-9:00) [Math - Calendar Skills] 10</td>
<td>8:45-9:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:25-10:00</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>9:25-10:00</td>
<td>Lunch (9:00-10:00) 60 minutes</td>
<td>9:25-10:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05-10:40</td>
<td>10:05-10:40</td>
<td>10:05-10:40</td>
<td>Math (10:45-11:10) 25 minutes</td>
<td>10:05-10:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45-11:15</td>
<td>Reading (10:10-11:40) 90 minutes</td>
<td>10:45-11:15</td>
<td>Recess (11:50-12:05) 100 minutes</td>
<td>10:45-11:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45-12:15</td>
<td>Recess (11:50-12:05)</td>
<td>11:45-12:15</td>
<td>Reading (11:50-1:00) 100 minutes</td>
<td>11:45-12:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-12:45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>12:15-12:45</td>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>12:15-12:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45-1:15</td>
<td>Reading (12:55-1:30) 35 minutes</td>
<td>12:45-1:15</td>
<td>Reading (1:15-1:30) 100 minutes</td>
<td>12:45-1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:40-2:15</td>
<td>Math (1:30-2:00) 30 minutes</td>
<td>1:40-2:15</td>
<td>Reading (1:50-2:50) 120 minutes</td>
<td>1:40-2:15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading:** 125 minutes 145 minutes 120 minutes 140 minutes 145 minutes 145 minutes

**Math:** 80 minutes 95 minutes 125 minutes 100 minutes 100 minutes
## Appendix G

### District Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Report</td>
<td>August 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Report</td>
<td>August 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Day (NO SCHOOL)</td>
<td>September 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-marking</td>
<td>October 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Closed (NO SCHOOL)</td>
<td>October 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 1st Trimester</td>
<td>November 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 80 Day (11:30 AM DISMISSAL)</td>
<td>November 25 &amp; 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Teacher Conferences / Report cards issued</td>
<td>November 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Vacation (NO SCHOOL)</td>
<td>November 28, 29 and December 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Closed (NO SCHOOL) Weather Day #1</td>
<td>December 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 80 Day (11:30 AM DISMISSAL)</td>
<td>December 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Vacation (No School)</td>
<td>December 23-31, January 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-marking</td>
<td>January 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Martin Luther King Day (NO SCHOOL) Weather Day #2</td>
<td>January 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Closed (NO SCHOOL) Weather Day #3</td>
<td>February 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President’s Day (NO SCHOOL) Weather Day #4</td>
<td>February 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 2nd Trimester</td>
<td>February 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Cards Issued</td>
<td>March 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-marking</td>
<td>April 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Closed (NO SCHOOL) Weather Day #5</td>
<td>April 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Closed (NO SCHOOL)</td>
<td>April 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Closed (NO SCHOOL) Weather Day #7</td>
<td>April 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Closed (NO SCHOOL) Weather Day #8</td>
<td>April 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FSSA Testing (March 17-28)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 5 Writing March 31 – April 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 4 Science April 28- May 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Day (NO SCHOOL)</td>
<td>May 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act 80 Day (11:30 AM DISMISSAL)</td>
<td>June 4 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Day of School</td>
<td>June 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITA

Amy Breon
ajbreon@comcast.net

EDUCATION
M. S. Bloomsburg University of PA, Bloomsburg, PA Aug. 1996
B. A. Lock Haven University of PA, Lock Haven, PA Dec. 1990

CERTIFICATIONS
Administrative I, Principal PK-12 Certified 2015
Reading Supervisory Certified 2003
Reading Specialist Certified 1996
Teacher of the Mentally and/or Physically Handicapped Certified 1990

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Educational Consultant: BLaST, Intermediate Unit #17 2003 - Present
Adjunct Professor: Pennsylvania State University 2002 - 2007
Intermediate Title 1 Reading Specialist: Bellefonte Area School District 2002 - 2003
Reading Specialist: Bellefonte Area Middle & High Schools 2001 - 2002
Inclusion Facilitator: Bellefonte Area Middle School 1998 - 2001
Learning Support Teacher: Bellefonte Area Middle School 1991 - 1998
Emotional Support Teacher: Jersey Shore Junior High 1991

SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE
Principal Internship: South Williamsport Area School District 2012 – 2014
Practicum Supervisor: Master’s Level Reading Specialists, Penn State University 2003

SPECIALIZED TRAINING
DIBELS Mentor for Literacy, Data Analysis and Math 2004 – Present
PA Regional LETRS 2007 – Present
(Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling)

PRESENTATIONS
PA/Title 1 Improving School Performance Conference
Reading Apprenticeship: One School’s Story 2008
Coaching in the Content Areas: Engaging Students in Active Reading 2007
National Science Teachers Association – Teacher Research Day
School/University Collaboration to Teach Science through Inquiry & Literacy 2004