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Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership Practices in Middle Tennessee Schools

A dissertation

Presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Tiffany Jemeise Martin

August 2016

Dr. Virginia Foley, Chair

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Dr. Eric Glover

Keywords: Leadership Practices, Teacher Perception, School Morale, TELL TN Survey

ABSTRACT

Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership Practices in Middle Tennessee Schools

by

Tiffany Jemeise Martin

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the connection between principal leadership practices and the perceptions of how teachers reported the practices that influence teaching and learning. The interview method was used to collect the data for this study. The TELL TN survey is currently used to collect data in public schools throughout the state of Tennessee. This survey is used to obtain data on different aspects of education including school leadership. The TELL TN survey informed my interview questions in order to gain more in-depth data and to gain a greater understanding of the results.

Teachers from different Middle Tennessee schools and who serve different grade levels were interviewed. These interviews were focused on leadership practices of school principals and what they perceived to aid in their teaching and therefore aid in student learning. The overarching themes that were uncovered included support, autonomy, and sincerity.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation work to my family. My loving husband Jason B. Martin has encouraged me when I would not encourage myself. You saw greatness in me before I did. I dedicate this to you because WE did this and I will forever be grateful for the push, the support, and showing me how to really fight for my dreams. The faith that you and Jason B. Martin Jr. have in me has always been insurmountable and I am so thankful.

To my amazing parents Alvin and Johnnie Glenn whose constant encouragement, praise, and prayers pushed me to be my best since before I can even remember. I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Lillie Kennedy, whose strength has amazed me for my entire life. Also my brother Brandon Glenn has been one of my biggest inspirations. He motivates me to shoot for the stars and never to give up.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Schlechty (2011) suggested that it is not enough for teachers to simply be skilled in designing work and curriculum that keeps students engaged. Successful schools must also have leadership that is supportive of the efforts of the teachers. Principal leadership plays a dominant role in the overall success of a school. Ward (2013) conducted research on a California school's journey to improvement and found that principal leadership was the primary factor that contributed to student achievement gains at the conclusion of the school year.

While there are several traits and practices that mark a supportive school leader, Ringler, O'Neal, Rawls, and Cumiskey (2010) reported that teachers need principals to be present and active participants in every aspect of the school including teaching. Ringler et al. suggested that this presence includes attending workshops and staff development. It is important for school leaders to understand the time requirements of professional development opportunities and to take the time to learn and engage together.

Additionally, Gale and Bishop (2014) stated that principals have to build relationships with people in order to create a picture of the ongoing and end goals. Similar to Gale and Bishop, Daniels and Daniels (2007) reminded us that teachers are still human beings with a need for social acceptance and interactions. The teacher's role can be a stressful one at times. It is important that teachers have vested relationships and support systems within the school.

States across the country have been putting more of an emphasis on school leadership and the more unmeasurable aspects of schools. The state of Tennessee uses the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning) survey as one technique to gain feedback for educators.

The TELL rubric requests information in the following categories: Facilities and Resources, Use of Time, Professional Development, Community Engagement and Support, Teacher Leadership, Instructional Practices and Supports, New Teacher Support, Managing Student Conduct (Tennessee Department of Education 2015).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the connection between principal leadership practices and the perceptions of how teachers reported the practices that influence teaching and learning. The interview method was used to collect the data for this study. The TELL TN survey is currently used to collect data in public schools throughout the state of Tennessee. This survey is used to obtain data on different aspects of education including school leadership. The TELL TN survey informed interview questions in order to gain more in-depth data and to gain a greater understanding of the results.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

Research Question 1

What are teachers' perceptions of different principal leadership practices that improve teaching and student learning?

Research Question 2

What are teachers' perceptions of different principal practices that hinder teacher performance?

Research Question 3

What leadership practices increase teacher motivation and teacher efficacy?

Significance of Study

The study reported the perceptions of teachers of different grade levels at different schools and with different amounts of experience in the field about principal leadership. Its purpose was to understand the administrative practices that positively and negatively impact teaching and student learning from the perspective of the teacher. This study could be beneficial to school leaders in identifying practices that teachers perceive to be helpful. School leaders include but are not limited to principals, assistant principals, deans, and teacher leaders. This research would also be beneficial to district, state, and government level leaders. It can provide a guide for helping leaders understand what practices are perceived to help their schools and students as well as how to create positive change.

Definitions of Terms

The *Definition of Terms* section provides explanations of specific terms that are discussed in this dissertation. This section will provide clarity to readers so that there is a clear understanding of the points.

Leadership Practices: The everyday actions of the school principal.

Metlife Survey: Report that examines the views of principals and teachers on the responsibilities and challenges that educational leaders face. The research combined quantitative and qualitative methods to gain clear pictures of perceptions among principals and teachers. This survey is conducted annually. (<https://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/foundation/MetLife-Teacher-Survey-2012.pdf>)

Modeling: living or working according to the purposes and values and the community in deed, thought, and expression. (Sergiovanni ,1996)

Shared vision: is the practice of governing a school by expanding the number of people involved in making important decisions related to the school's organization, operation, and academics.

Stakeholder: Any person or group of people with an interest or influence in a school or school district. These individuals can include but are not limited to teachers, business partners, parents, students, volunteers, and community partners.

TEAM: Teacher Educator Acceleration Model; Tennessee evaluation model in which 50% of a teacher's evaluation score is comprised from student achievement data. Thirty five percent of the 50 is based on student growth represented by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). The remaining 15% is based on addition measures of student achievement chosen by the educator and evaluator. The other 50% of the TEAM evaluation for teachers with measureable growth scores is determined through teacher observations, student perception surveys, conferences, and review of prior evaluations and work. For educators without individual growth measures, 40% of the TEAM evaluation is comprised of student achievement data. Of that 50%, 25% is based on school-wide or system-wide student growth as measured by TVAAS. The remaining 15% is based on additional measures of growth decided between the educator and evaluator. Fifty percent of the evaluation is determined by teacher observations, student perception surveys, conferences, and review of prior evaluations and work. (team-tn.org, 2015).

Teacher Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS): System that is used by public and charter schools in Tennessee. Schools and systems receive web-based reporting through TVAAS

regarding data that involve student growth for 4th-12th grade. These data are based on students' performance each year of mandated testing and the growth achieved over a single school year. (www.tn.gov/education/accountability)

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was delimited to the one Middle Tennessee school district. Thirteen teachers who met the required criteria were selected from different grade levels and from schools with different demographical makeups. Teachers were also selected from schools with varied levels of success from the leadership data obtained through the TELL survey. There were an additional 10 interviews tentatively scheduled to offset the potential number of participants who either did not participate or participated partially. Feedback from teachers of a variety of backgrounds helped to gain a broad picture on the study.

Limitations to this study included willingness of teachers to participate in a timely manner.

Overview of Study

This study contains five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction, purpose of the study, research question, significance of the study, and delimitations and limitations. The second chapter contains the review of over 40 sources of literature. This literature was focused on the characteristics and behaviors of school administrators. This literature also contains research on what many educators and researchers see as effective and ineffective leadership practices. Chapter 3 includes the data collection and methodology of the study. This chapter also contains the research questions that guided the study as well as the validity and reliability of the methods used. Chapter 4 contains data that were obtained through the educator interviews. This includes

interview results as well as field notes. Chapter 5 contains a review of the problem and a conclusion drawn from the findings of the research. Chapter 5 also contains implications and recommendations for research and practice for the future.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researchers have long explored the relationship between principal leadership practices and their direct and indirect effects on teaching. This review of literature is focused primarily on principal leadership practices that teachers reported enhance or hinder teaching. With the state and national demands placed on school districts, it is important to know how teaching can be enhanced. It is also imperative to understand leadership practices that may hinder effective teaching. This literature review analyzed and described selected works from researchers who focused on principal leadership and the impact of principal leadership practices on school performance.

Principal Leadership

The development of the school principal began in the mid-19th century in urban schools (Rousmaniere, 2007). Prior to the placement of head principals there were head teachers who emerged in many districts to help guide the other teachers of the school. Rousmaniere pointed out lead teachers or principals were the authority of the school. This individual was responsible for organizing curriculum, discipline, and managed and supervised all building operation. As the position of principal continued to grow throughout the end of the 19th century, the role became more diverse. While some schools gave the principal record keeping duties, others used the position for a person to handle more operational duties.

According to Cawelti (1984) in the 20th century the role of principal continued to develop. There were professional requirements established and all principals were required to hold a license. For some time the role of the principal was that of a manager, expected to meet

district and state mandates, manage the budget, and personnel and handle other operational duties. As time passed the principals' role has moved more and more towards leadership. Cawelti confirmed that schools are rarely effective unless the principal is a good leader.

With the diversity in the expected roles of the principal leaders it can be difficult to determine what is and is not effective. Sergiovanni (1996) suggested that schools should not adopt corporate models for leadership. Instead, leaders should make their decisions based on the shared vision and values of all stakeholders. According to Sergiovanni the role of the principal should not be to simply manage the day-to-day aspects of a school building. Instead he or she should gather all stakeholders and guide them in discussion and creation of the mission of the school.

Sergiovanni (1996) explained that school leaders need to perform the following nine tasks in order to gain the confidence of those they lead:

1. Purposing: using a voice of morality to transform a shared vision into a pledge that becomes the compelling force guiding the actions of principals, teachers, students, and parents.
2. Maintaining harmony: building accord based on the shared vision and respecting the individual uniqueness of the stakeholders.
3. Institutionalizing values: translating the shared vision into practices and standards that guide behavior.
4. Motivating: providing a balance between both the psychological and cultural needs of the stakeholders.

5. Managing: providing and acting upon the daily procedures that make up a well-organized and effective school.
6. Explaining: working to relate requests for action directly to the common vision established by the stakeholders.
7. Enabling: providing the resources necessary to achieve a common goal. At the same time as removing the obstacles that stand in the way of accomplishing the common goal.
8. Modeling: living according to the purposes and values of the community in thought, deed, and expression.
9. Supervising: providing the oversight necessary to ensure that goals are accomplished.

Sergiovanni (1996) also posited that schools need leaders who promote understanding and problem solving in order to create communities that engage stakeholders in achieving goals. Any change brought about by the school principal should be made with all nine of the above principles in mind.

Northouse (2013) described leadership as a process in which a single individual influences a group of individuals to achieve the same goal. Northouse contested that defining leadership as a process rather than a characteristic that resides in only certain individuals means that there is an actual transaction or event that occurs between the leader and the followers. Northouse stated that process implies that a leader affects and is in turn affected by his or her followers. Leadership is not a one-way event but rather an interactive experience. When leadership is defined as such a process, it gives each individual ownership and personal responsibility in the mission and vision of the school.

Toch and Rothman (2008) suggested that public education tends to define teacher quality mainly in terms of credentials that have been earned over time rather than on the basis of the quality of the teaching and student learning and achievement. Effective principals work beyond merit and credentials. According to Banta (2010) principals are expected to be change agents, improving test scores, providing leadership on curriculum, and promoting success for all teachers and students. These principals are also expected to take responsibility for high stakes assessments. When principals uphold this high level of accountability, they show the teachers that they too are invested in their teaching and student learning.

Alvoid and Black (2014) described the changes in the principal role over time as unrecognizable. Like Banta (2010) they suggested that building leaders were once considered effective when they simply managed the operations of the school building. A principal is now expected to be an aspirational leader, team builder, coach, and an agent of visionary change.

With the increase in expectations of student learning and achievement has come a great amount of change in the roles of not only principal but also teachers. Alvoid and Black (2014) supported the claim that the changing landscape of school leadership is mostly a result of increased expectations around teacher development, instructional improvement, and government expectations.

Leadership Practices

. Schlechty (2011) stated that it is not enough for teachers to simply be good at creating curriculum for students. The school in which they teach must be supportive of their efforts. Schlechty revealed that this means schools must be transformed from bureaucratic structures into learning organizations. This transformation is facilitated by the school leadership. Schlechty

also reported that one of the most important first steps for a principal is to ensure that the directional system is in order and that there is shared understanding among the faculty and between the faculty and principal regarding the direction in which the school is headed. Principals should also invest in teacher development. As teachers show interest in what is happening in the school and the direction in which the principal is going, this should be supported and cultivated. There are many ways to provide this nourishment including giving interested teachers books, materials, and professional development opportunities that are relevant to the school mission.

Ward (2013) conducted extensive research on a California school's journey to success. After analyzing the data she found that principal leadership was the primary factor systematically contributing to the end of year increases in student learning. Similar to Schlechty (2011), Ward found that successful principals spend a great deal of time and energy in developing other people. Providing support to meet both needs of teachers and students is important. Giving teachers specific feedback on their classroom instruction and actually giving them the resources and opportunities to act on that feedback is helpful. Also, allowing teachers the time to attend professional development opportunities that are relevant to their roles show teachers that you are willing to invest in them.

While it is clear that investing in teacher development is of great importance, Ringler et al. (2010) reported that a major leadership practice that enhances teaching is for principals to be present and active participants in every required school training session. For teachers, it was important that principals attend professional development to see what specific strategies would look like in the classroom. Perhaps more importantly, it was helpful for school leadership to understand the time requirements of completing professional development. While principals

have the option to assign staff training sessions and not attend them all, teachers place value on the principals' willingness to invest their time just as the teachers are required to invest theirs.

Another principal practice that research has shown enhances teaching is effective hiring. According to Whitaker (2011) outstanding principals know it takes great teachers to create a great school. A principal cannot create this alone. In its simplicity this statement rings true. While a huge part of getting and maintaining great teachers is through the hiring process, there is also some credit to be given to school leaders who take the time to implement effective new teacher support programs. In hiring it is important that if a teacher earns a position and he or she is not quite a "great teacher" just yet, there is a plan in place to get him or her there. It is equally important that whoever is hired is willing to learn and do what it takes to grow into a great teacher. Whitaker noted that the hiring and development of great teachers also helps maintain the great veteran teachers that are already in place. A team is only as strong as its weakest link. Therefore, when principals hire and keep poor teachers, it can have an adverse effect on the quality of teaching from others in the school building.

Gale and Bishop (2014) stated that principals have to build relationships with people and have to create a picture of what it is that they are trying to do. Gale and Bishop specified that principals should be willing to walk the line between the perception of authority figure and also the one who can develop a relationship with teachers. It is important that effective school leaders know how to lead and manage, even in times when they have to be aggressive, but also know the importance of having and maintaining positive relationships and rapport with teachers. Gale and Bishop also contended that principals have to be very strong communicators. Principals should acknowledge that they are not experts in every area. By not only identifying strengths but also weakness, principals create an opening for teachers and other stakeholders to work as a team

to make up for their weaknesses. Gale and Bishop reported that it is imperative for principals to follow through on the things that they say that are going to do. In order to be an effective leader, followers have to see you as credible. Once you lose that credibility with teachers, it is difficult to regain it.

It is important to remember that teachers are still human beings who require the social interaction. Daniels and Daniels (2007) stated that:

All men and women are social creatures who require personal contacts with others to function effectively. When they cannot find meaningful relationships in one person or one group, they seek it in other places. People focus on the relationships that provide meaning to their efforts. Most employee failure is not so much a failure of the individual as a person as it is a failure of the individual to find the necessary support and training from relationships at work. (p. 169)

The role of a teacher can be a very stressful one at times. It is important that teachers have more vested in their jobs than a pay check because a pay check is easy to walk away from. When teachers have a relationship and a sense of support from school leadership, they feel that there is a safe place to have a rough day and get things back together the next day. Not only in education but in most professions and most aspects of everyday life it is much more difficult to walk away from people and situations that you have a vested relationship with. Daniels and Daniels also argued that good leaders build relationships in ways that followers are comfortable confiding in them. It is important that while the principal is the authority figure, he or she is also approachable enough that teachers and other staff members feel that they can confide in them.

School districts across the world require principals to complete observations and evaluations on the educators whom they lead. While these requirements are different depending on the school district and state, the process can be a stressful one for teachers, leading to more intimidation than learning. For instance the state of Tennessee follows the TEAM or Tennessee

Educator Acceleration Model. With this evaluation model 50% of a teacher's score is comprised from student achievement data. For teachers who do not teach subjects that are measured through state assessments, 40% of their evaluation score comes from student achievement data. Twenty-five percent of the 40% is based on school-wide or system-wide student growth. The evaluation process is stressful enough and the added pressure of knowing that 25% of the evaluation score can come from student achievement that the teacher has absolutely nothing to do with is even more stressful. (team-tn.org, 2015).

Range, Finch, Young, and Hvidston (2014) stated that an informal strategy recommended for principals is classroom walkthroughs. These allow principals to collect data about instruction in short periods of time. Ing (2009) pointed out that classroom walkthroughs are only as effective as the feedback that is provided. If principals expect to see growth, they have to provide constructive feedback that teachers understand and work towards. By consistently conducting these walkthroughs and providing feedback, principals allow teachers to feel more comfortable and able to actually learn from the feedback. This may take away some of the intimidation of the formal observations that may be required by the school's state or district. This also encourages teachers to remain conscientious and aware of the principal's expectations. These walkthroughs should be conducted with all teachers regardless of tenure status. Coggins and Diffenbaugh (2013) argued that high performing tenured teachers who lack supervision that challenges them and causes them to reflect deeply about their teaching could begin to disengage from the profession. Much too often districts require principals to only observe newer teachers. This leaves tenured teachers to fend for themselves in a sense and leaves school leaders in the dark regarding the support that they need. Conducting classroom walkthroughs for all teachers creates a climate where teachers understand the expectations of the principal and also have the

opportunity to let the principal know what he or she needs to better serve the students. Dufour and Marzano (2009) suggested that for improvement in teaching to occur the principal should be in the classroom as a partner with the teacher in order to show the students the importance of learning the material.

Marshall (2008) similarly suggested that principal-teacher interaction is key in the school climate and in teaching and student advancement. This interaction should be consistent and open. Teachers should feel comfortable sharing their own opinions and expertise with school leadership. This can avoid wasting time on interventions and new initiatives that are not likely to be effective in a particular school setting. Toch and Rothman (2008) posited that principals spend too much time discussing different initiatives and new programs. While some initiatives are helpful and can garner success in the school, schools are not typically impacted positively because school leadership do not reserve the time for the necessary follow-ups or to make concrete expectations. If the appropriate amount of time were given to see whether or not an intervention would work for a particular school or district, there would likely be less time spent jumping on new bandwagons.

Research has also shown that principals need to be present and visible to both teacher and students. Gorman and Pauken (2003) maintained that the presence of school administration outside their offices is a very effective start. Principals should make eye contact and make efforts to get to know students on a personal level in order to show that they are a caring figure in the building rather than just a disciplinarian. By taking the time to acknowledge students and teachers, principals show that they value each piece of the school puzzle.

Another key leadership practice for principals is giving recognition. Rath (2004) discussed what he calls the “Recognition Gap”. He stated that one poll showed that 65% of Americans have never received positive recognition in the workplace. It is human nature to want and need at least occasional positive recognition in some form. Rath argued that lack of recognition by school leadership is one reason why staff members are disengaged. They do not feel that others who matter professionally see the value in what they do; therefore, they begin to lose value in those things. This recognition should not come in the form of material things. A simple “thank you” or “good job” will suffice. According to Pink (2009) it is important for leaders to give recognition. If a school principal sees effective teaching, it is important to acknowledge it. When principals fail to accentuate the positive, teachers may not be aware that they are meeting expectations.

Pink (2009) maintained that rewards are an important part of leadership. He also acknowledged what he calls the if-then motivation. When leaders use if-then motivation to get teachers encouraged, leaders are saying that if teachers do this, then they will get that. This takes away teachers’ autonomy because they are simply doing what will get them a reward. Pink suggested that if-then motivation can be considered similar to a drug or alcohol dependency. He contested that extrinsic rewards can be quite addictive and once they start it is difficult for a leader to end them. Staff members also tend to get used to certain awards and began wanting more and more. At some point the “regular” rewards are no longer enough and they want something bigger and better. Pink also suggested that the addictive qualities of extrinsic rewards can distort decision making. He compares this to gambling in a casino. As you sit at a slot machine or gambling table, all around are free drinks, huge food buffets, etc. These types of rewards may lead to individuals switching from risk-averse behavior to risk-seeking behavior.

Therefore, they are more apt to gamble more and make distorted decisions. This can also be compared to the pressure of a teacher's students doing well on district and state mandated standardized tests. When standardized test scores weigh heavily on teacher evaluations and, therefore, teachers' jobs, teachers have a tendency to teach to the test rather than to teach to the whole child. That is why it is important to be careful with extrinsic rewards.

Whitaker (2012) also reported that while praise and recognition are of great importance in a school environment, it is important not to go overboard. He stated that ineffective leaders often think that they can bribe others into doing what they want. By constantly offering them rewards, ineffective leaders feel that teachers will enhance their instruction and student achievement. Whitaker argued that this is simply not the case. He argued that effective principals instead build relationships, making others eager to please him or her.

Nooruddin and Baig (2014) maintained that school leaders play the vital role of formulating and implementing policies and procedures for managing student behavior. Therefore, the overall responsibility of students' behavior lies quite heavily on the shoulders of school leadership. It is the responsibility of school leadership to have systems in place that not only address unfavorable student behavior but also systems that prevent such behavior. Teachers should have the assurance that by the time a discipline issue gets to the point of a student being directed to a school leader, the issue will be handled appropriately. McIntosh et al. (2008) asserted that disruptive behavior presents a barrier to high school graduation because of school disruption and increased use of exclusionary discipline such as suspensions and expulsions. McIntosh et al. implied that students need to be in school in order to get the classroom instruction therefore minimizing discipline that would cause missed school would help in teaching and learning. While it is important for teachers to have effective classroom management, administration can

support this by being consistent with student consequences. According to Lemov (2010) in order for teachers to maintain effective authority in a classroom 100% of students must follow their direction. Without this, it is difficult and at times impossible for teachers to teach effectively. When the 100% is not achieved, Lemov argued that it causes authority to be subject to interpretation. Students will question if you really meant what you said for everyone and some will even question whether they have to follow your direction because someone else is not. When teachers and students alike know that there are consistent consequences from school leadership for poor behavior, there is no need for interpretation. There are consistent consequences put into place by leadership therefore students know beforehand what they may and may not do.

Similarly Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) pointed out that in order for positive change to take place, school leadership should have a structure of organizational supports for student learning. Imperative to making this work is for students to have a normative environment where they feel safe and are encouraged to engage in academic and intellectual behavior. It is nearly impossible to do this when school discipline issues are not tackled face on and kept under control. Porter (2007) discussed the importance of support from school leadership and argued that, no teacher can be effective with every colleague and every student. There are times when administrative support is necessary. Porter suggested that before teachers implement a disciplinary plan, it is important for school leadership to understand it and approve it so that they can be supportive of it.

Kelly and Vaillancourt (2012) suggested school principals should implement effective school-wide discipline models that promote appropriate behavior rather than focus on

punishment. They have 10 tips for administrators in regards to how to implement such a program:

1. Establish a team to lead in the implementation of an effective school-wide discipline plan.
2. Make positive, personal connections with all students.
3. Be consistent in maintaining consistent standards regarding which interventions the school should employ.
4. Publicly support the implementation plan and give team members the necessary time and resources to accomplish it.
5. Guide, not dictate, decision making.
6. Regularly attend and actively participate in team meetings.
7. Provide acknowledgement to faculty and team members for their hard work.
8. Serve as the spokesperson to community and other stakeholders about the value and importance of school-wide supports.
9. Maintain a range of procedures for encouraging expected behavior and discouraging inappropriate behavior.
10. Maintain procedures for data collection, consistent monitoring, and decision making.

Kelly and Vaillancourt (2012) also suggested that the team should come up with tiers of discipline depending on the students' academic performance and behavior. Students at higher risk for failure will need different responses than those who rarely have discipline or academic issues. This aligns with school leaders knowing their individual students and their needs well enough to best serve them.

Principals who enhance teaching typically practice shared leadership. No one principal is great at everything. Therefore, it is important to have a team of individual leaders who can make up for the executive principal's apparent weaknesses. This team should not only be other administrators but also teachers. Louis et al. (2010) suggested that shared and instructional leadership are important variables but they are both related to student learning. While the classroom teacher directly affects student learning, the school leadership is ultimately accountable and responsible for the success of all students and the school as a whole. That is why it behooves principals to partner with teacher leaders so that they can work toward a common goal: growth in student learning.

It is easy to confuse shared leadership with delegation. Just because principals appoint department chairpersons and communicate with them to delegate to the rest of the team does not mean that the leadership is shared. Louis et al. (2010) found that while principals consistently delegated instructional leadership to teacher leaders and department chairs, teachers did not necessarily view that as leadership. Louis et al. argued that many teachers see their department chairs as people who are in charge of interdepartmental budgets and someone who simply has to attend extra leadership meetings that are called by the principal. The perspective of the teacher differed greatly from that of the school principal.

The key of shared leadership is to give everyone an opportunity to display their own leadership skills. While it is helpful to implement a school leadership team and have department chairs, it is equally important to empower all teachers and allow them to step up in leadership positions as they choose to.

According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) there are seven claims regarding school leadership that are supported by first-hand evidence:

1. School leadership is second to only classroom teaching as an influence on student learning.
2. Almost all successful leaders draw on the same collection of basic leadership practices.
3. The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices demonstrate awareness to the settings in which they work.
4. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions.
5. School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely shared.
6. Some patterns of the distribution of leadership are more effective than others.
7. A small handful of personal characteristics explain a high proportion of the differences in leadership effectiveness.

Leadership Types and Traits

Servant Leadership

One of the most commonly used definitions of servant leadership comes from Greenleaf (1970), the individual responsible with creating the term. He suggested that servant leadership starts with the natural feeling that one wants to serve others before himself or herself. A conscious choice is made by one to have the desire to lead. The difference can be seen when the servant leader makes the high priorities of others his or her own top priorities and makes sure

that they are effectively addressed. Greenleaf also stated that servant leaders have a social responsibility to be aware of those who are less privileged and try to remove injustices and prejudices wherein he or she leads.

Similarly, Hale and Fields (2007) reported that servant leaders put others before themselves and prefer to make sure that the interests of the team are met before their own personal interests. Servant leaders exhibit strong moral behavior towards everyone, especially their followers (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010). These characteristics can serve as motivation for teachers to do their very best in aspects of their roles, including instruction. It is often easier to put forth extra effort for a leader who demonstrates that same effort regarding the rest of the team.

Spears (2002, p. 1-16) has also done extensive research on Greenleaf and the servant leader. From Greenleaf's research and writings, Spears developed nine characteristics of servant leaders.

1. Listening: servant leaders know how to actively listen. They listen to what is said before formulating a comeback or response. A large part of communicating is listening and servant leaders are typically great communicators.

2. Empathy: Servant leaders put themselves in the place of others. They are able to see things from the point of view of the followers so that they can really understand and empathize with what they are going through. Empathy helps to validate the follower. Even if a servant leader can't alter the outcome of a particular situation or make things better, showing empathy makes the follower feel heard and understood.

3. Healing: Servant leaders care about the overall health and well-being of their followers.

4. Awareness: Servant leaders understand who they are and what they need and they how they impact the lives of others.

5. Persuasion: While the servant leader thrives on serving others, any effective leader knows that they still have to delegate and get the job done. Servant leaders give consistent communication that lets followers know the importance of change. They make their expectations clear and facilitate the meeting of those expectations.

6. Conceptualization: According to Spears (2002) conceptualization goes beyond day-to-day operational thinking to place more focus on the the total picture. Servant leaders who can conceptualize can serve as the visionary for the organization and lead others to understand the missions and goals of that organization.

7. Foresight: Servant leaders are aware of the fact that not all outcomes will be positive and beneficial. They have the ability to foresee what is likely coming based on what has already happened. This is a skill that good leaders practice in order to master. Leaders should have the capability to think of foreseeable risks and prevent them accordingly.

8. Stewardship: Servant leaders must acknowledge and be responsible for upholding their leadership role. While servant leaders do serve, they must also remember that they must effectively lead a team.

9. Commitment to the growth of people: Servant leaders have a commitment to help each person in an organization grow, whether that is professionally or personally. One mark of a

successful servant leader in a principal position is how many individuals move up the leadership ladder under their guidance.

While many feel that leaders are born with certain leadership styles, Spears (2010) suggested that everyone can learn to be a servant leader. Some characteristics of the servant leader are innately in some of us while others have to practice at them more. However, these leadership characteristics can be learned.

While servant leadership has its advantages in enhancing teaching, it is not the sole leadership style that can be proven either effective or ineffective. Meuser, Liden, Wayne, and Henderson (2011) found evidence that servant leaders partnered with followers who need that type of leader have a positive influence on job performance and behavior. However, when there is not a match between servant leaders and the followers' need for it, there has been no impact at all. Similarly, Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008) suggested that some followers may find a servant leader as a micromanager. These individuals may not need or even want their leader to get to know them personally or try to help them. This shows that while servant leadership can be very positive for school leaders, there may not be one type of leadership that enhances teaching for all teachers.

Transformational Leadership

Another leadership style with characteristics that may enhance teaching is transformational leadership. According to Northouse (2013) transformational leadership describes a process that changes and transforms people. Transformational leadership is encompassed by emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. Transformational

leadership involves a significant amount of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is typically expected of them.

The term transformational leadership was introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. Burns stated that all leaders fell into one of two categories: transactional or transformational. Most leaders are transactional in that they focus on an exchange between followers and leaders. Transactional leaders give to get. While transactions occur in all effective leadership practices and styles, they do not stand alone. Transformational leaders develop more of a mutual advancement. It is a process in which a leader engages others in order to raise the level of motivation in not only the follower but in the leader too. An example of transformational leadership would be a principal who sees bullying and forms programs and interventions within the school where he or she works in order to help students but also ends up growing and learning from the implementation. Zhu, Avolio, Riggio, and Sosik (2011) argued that transformational leadership has a positive impact on the moral decision-making of followers. They also suggest that true transformational leadership affirmatively influences group decision-making and ethical climate.

According to Antonakis (2012) idealized influence describes leaders who are a visible and strong role model for followers. This makes followers want to not only follow them but also emulate them. These leaders are well respected because they set high standards for not only their subordinates but also for themselves. Their followers also see them as someone who can be trusted to be in on the same mission and vision of the organization.

Another factor that Antonakis (2012) discussed is inspirational motivation. Transformational leaders display and communicate high expectations. These leaders use

emotional appeals in order to convince the team that they can accomplish more than they think if they motivate themselves. An example of a principal using inspirational motivation to enhance teaching is a principal who gives positive affirmations to teachers daily in an effort to motivate them to do their very best. These affirmations are not extrinsic but more along the lines of pep talks and positive quotes.

According to Antonakis (2012) the third factor is intellectual stimulation. This factor allows followers the freedom to be creative and to push themselves outside of their own comfort zones in efforts to achieve the team's common goals. This type of leadership as it relates to principals and teachers allows teachers to try new and innovative techniques without the constant fear of failure.

That final factor in transformational leadership is individualized consideration. This factor describes a leader's ability to respond to the needs of each team member on an individual basis. Transformational leaders foster a culture and environment where followers feel comfortable addressing needs and trust that they will be met to the best of the leader's ability. They also know that there is no "right" answer for everyone. While one teacher may need an abundance of freedom to enhance teaching, another may need more directives and structure. The key is taking the time to get to know each member of the team so that you can better serve them as the leader. (Antonakis, 2012)

Jantzi and Leithwood (1996) described six dimensions of leadership behaviors and practices that are apparent in transformational leadership. These dimensions are:

1. Identifying and articulating a vision: leaders exhibit behavior that is geared toward identifying new opportunities for his or her school and developing, articulating, and inspiring others with his or vision of the future.
2. Fostering the acceptance of group goals: behavior on the part of the leader aimed at promoting cooperation among staff members and assisting them to work together toward common goals.
3. Providing individualized support: behavior on the part of the leader that indicates respect for staff members and concern about their personal feelings and needs.
4. Intellectual stimulation: behavior on the part of the leader that challenges staff members to reexamine some of the assumptions about their work and rethink how it can be performed.
5. Providing appropriate model: behavior on the part of the leader that sets an example for staff members to follow consistent with the values that the leader espouses.
6. High performance expectations: behaviors that demonstrates the leader's expectations for excellence, quality, and high performance on the part of the staff. (pp. 514-55)

Janzi and Leithwood found that the leaders who demonstrate participation and contribution to the school's mission, goals, culture, etc. are perceived by teachers as being transformational.

Authentic Leadership

According to Chan (2005) authentic leadership may appear easy to define; however, it is a complex process that is difficult to put into a category. Among leadership scholars there is no single accepted definition of authentic leadership. There are multiple definitions, each written from a different viewpoint.

Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson (2008) described authentic leadership as a habit of leader behaviors that stems from the leader's physiological qualities and personal ethics. Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) proposed that authentic leadership exemplifies four specific characteristics: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. They also suggested that the traits of an authentic leader are not necessarily fixed traits that individuals either have or do not have. Similar to transformational leadership, they feel that these characteristics can be learned and nourished.

Walumbwa et al. (2008) discussed the specific components of authentic leadership. The first is self-awareness. Walumbwa et al. (2008) reported that authentic leaders should be constantly reflecting on their own values, goals, and motives. Walumbwa et al. (2008) suggested that when leaders know who they truly are, these leaders have a stronger commitment to their actions and decisions.

Another component is internalized moral perspective. Authentic leaders should be able to use their own moral values and standards to guide their decisions and behavior rather than allowing other pressures to control them (Northouse, 2013). Followers see this as a trait of an authentic leader because their actions consistently match up with their professed beliefs and morals.

According to Northouse (2013) the third component of authentic leadership is balanced processing. This refers to the leader's ability to take in all sides of an issue prior to making a final decision. Balanced processing also means to avoid favoritism. In order to accomplish this, a leader must not only welcome different viewpoints but should solicit them. This can be in the

form of surveys, meetings, etc. While it is important for authentic leaders to be open about their own viewpoints, they should also show that they are unbiased in regards to viewpoints of others.

The final component of authentic leadership is relational transparency. Northouse (2013) suggested that authentic leaders are open and honest when presenting who they truly are to others. This included leaders acknowledging both positive and negative aspects of themselves. No one is great at everything. Authentic leaders not only know their strengths but also their weaknesses. And they are not afraid to ensure that there are members of their team who can compensate for the weaknesses.

Team Leadership

A team is typically made up of a group of people who are interdependent and share a common goal. Examples of such teams could include school improvement teams, school bullying teams, common core teams, etc. Teams have a specific function within an organization (Levi 2011). In team leadership in the school setting the principal would put together leadership teams depending on the strengths of individuals. Zaccaro, Heinen, and Shuffler (2009) suggested that the development for a framework of team leadership is different from that of a traditional leadership style. They argued that when looking at team leadership, one must look at it from the viewpoint of leader-team interactions rather than leader-subordinate interactions. Kozlowski, Watola, Jensen, Kim, Botero (2009) shared that team leadership requires attention to the process by which teams develop critical competencies. Possibilities that demand shifts in leader action are linked to task and team development dynamics that vary within teams and over time.

One benefit in team leadership as it relates to education is the ability to respond to complex issues at a much faster pace. According to Pearce, Manz, and Sims (2009) such shared leadership has become more and more important in today's organizations to allow faster responses to more complex and complicated issues.

The team leadership model does have some critics. One criticism that can be specifically linked to the education setting is that team members must be very skilled at with what they are tasked. Cobb (2012) suggested that additional skills are needed for some team members or for the environment. Another criticism is that while team members may be skilled at the specific job of the team, they may not be effective members of a team in general. Not everyone has team-oriented skills.

While many of the functions of the organization are delegated to teams in team leadership, there is also a leader who oversees the whole operation. In order for team leadership to function effectively, the leader of the group must know when to and when not to get involved in the day-to-day aspects of the individual groups. According to Northouse (2013) there are several decisions a leader should make when determining whether or not to intervene in efforts to improve team functioning. One decision is whether it is most appropriate at the time to continue observe and monitor the team or to intervene and take action. If there is a conflict, is it one that the group has the capabilities to work through on their own? Another decision is to figure out whether or not the team will need in assistance in accomplishing their task at hand. If the group is clearly at a standstill or does not have the ability to get the end result, it may be necessary for the leader to step in. The final decision is to determine whether to intervene within the team itself or in the team's environment. If there is conflict that needs to be intervened upon or if the team has not made their end goals clear, an internal intervention may be needed.

However if the group's environment is not providing the appropriate amount of support, an external intervention may be needed.

Larson and LaFasto (1989) conducted one of the many studies aimed at focusing on team leadership. These individuals studied a variety of successful teams. Larson and LaFasto found that there were eight attributes that were consistently connected with team superiority. These attributes were seen steadily and consistently among teams that were considered successful.

Larson and LaFasto (1989) found that one of the most important characteristics was having a clear goal. Larson and LaFasto argued that without a clear goal team leadership cannot succeed. The goals must be clear in order for team members to be able to tell when objectives are met. Goals must also be common so that the entire team shares them and therefore everyone shares the appropriate amount of responsibility in the accomplishment of the goals.

Larson and LaFasto (1989) also suggested that teams should have a results-driven structure. Having highly structured teams helps to keep team members on task and working towards the clear and common goal. This also keeps the team from wasting time and efforts. Effective teams also need competent team members, unified commitment, and a collaborative climate. According to Larson and LaFasto it is important that teams are made up of the right mix of people but it is also important that everyone within that group have an appropriate amount of information needed to accomplish the goal. Larson and LaFasto go on to argue that when these individuals are put together to form a team, it is important that the team is unified. Rather than treating the team as a group of individuals, all members should be involved in the process of

accomplishing the goal so that all team members have a level of responsibility in accomplishing the end goal.

Standards of excellence are also essential according to Larson and LaFasto (1989). Teams should come up with group norms that all members agree can be maintained. It is imperative that these group norms are followed during any team meetings or correspondence. Teams should also have external support and principled leadership. The leadership of the team serves in a very important capacity. In practicing principled leadership Larson and LaFasto contended that leaders serve to motivate members, to identify what additional support is needed, and to make sure that team members are given tasks that match their strengths.

Based on the eight characteristics discussed, Larson and LaFasto (1989) developed a 40 item survey that determines a team's level of performance and offers suggestions for improvement. Further research led to the development of Larson and LaFasto's 42- item survey that focused more on the effectiveness of the team leadership. Larson and LaFasto (2001) called these the Team Excellence and Collaborative Team Leader surveys. Both surveys can serve as tools to see where the team is in relation to where the team wants to go. They show not only strengths and weaknesses of the team leader but also that of the team. Larson and LaFasto suggested that based on the responses to the surveys, the team can take action on areas of weakness in order to further improve the overall functioning of the team.

Similar to Larson and LaFasto (1989), the Hill (2013) model of team leadership marked the importance of the team leadership on the overall success of the team. Hill's model, as adapted from Peter Northouse's Leadership: Theory and Practice (2013), suggested that one of the important tasks of the team leader is to know when to monitor and when to take action.

Team leaders should know when extra supports are needed and how to obtain such supports. They should also know when to allow the team to work towards their goals on their own. The Hill model, similar to the points of Larson and LaFasto (2001), argued that there are two ways to determine an effective team. Those factors include whether or not the task was accomplished and how well maintained the team was throughout.

Hill's (2013) model of team leadership also argued that the action that team leaders take must be directly tied to what is needed. Leaders who take action but do not do so in a manner that will positively impact the team are wasting their time. According to Hill's model the leader must listen and be attuned with the group enough to address their specific needs. Leaders must also communicate appropriately with team members in order to follow up after resources are put into place to ensure their effectiveness.

Principal Practices that Interfere with Teaching

While there are a number of practices that principals can implement in order to foster positive culture and effective teaching and learning in schools, there are several practices that prevent such teaching and learning from occurring. Marshall (2008) suggested that when principals lack confidence in their knowledge of curriculum or managerial duties within the school they are less likely to foster teacher-principal interaction and relationships. As previously discussed, a key to being a school leader who enhances teaching and learning is the ability to communicate and build and maintain relationships with teachers. Marshall also suggested that principals who lack the confidence to effectively communicate with teachers tend to focus more on social exchanges because they are typically more comfortable here. However Marshall posited

that these interactions do not create the quality of communication needed to improve classroom teaching practices.

Another practice that could impede classroom instruction is a principal's lack of knowledge about what is going in classrooms. Marshall (2008) suggested that it is up to the principal to know what the teachers are teaching and to be familiar with not only the content but also the way in which the content is delivered to students. Marshall suggested that this familiarity is necessary in order to make classroom improvements. This is not to be confused with a micro-manager or an overbearing leader. School leaders' awareness of what goes on does not necessarily equate to them making the decisions about what goes on in each classroom. It simply means that while teachers have their own individual freedoms in the classrooms, they also have a responsibility to meet the expectations of the administration.

Marshall (2008) stated that principals make hypotheses about what's happening during 99.5 % of the year when they are not in the classroom. Marshall contended that these principals are saying a prayer and relying on teachers' professionalism and competence. Rather than relying on hope, teachers and principals should be consistently discussing and observing student learning and instructional practices.

Another administrative detriment for enhancing learning is the attention, or lack thereof, that some principals pay to teachers. According to Teaching Community (2007) teachers are often frustrated with administrators because they do not see administrators paying the right kind of attention to their classrooms or personal needs. This organization cited that an example could be when test scores come back and go to school administration before being distributed to

teachers. When there is too much time between when principals receive this information and when it is passed along to teachers, the needs of the teacher are not being properly met.

Teaching Community (2007) also reported that school leaders are not always supportive of teachers. While policies cannot be changed, school leaders should make it known that they support their teachers. It is difficult for many teachers to know that they will be blamed when state and district assessment results are not up to par. That is something that the school level leadership team cannot change. However, when these results are subpar it is much more helpful for administrators to intervene and see what resources teachers are missing rather than to reprimand them and penalize them on their formal evaluations.

Another practice that may interfere with teaching is support in the wrong areas. According to Teaching Community (2007) when teachers do get support from administrators, it is often not in a form that the teacher is seeking or needing. This goes back to principals taking the time to really get to know their faculty members. Support is not support to a teacher if it is not what a teacher needs at the time. By really getting to know the faculty members and actively listening to their individual needs, principals will not only waste less time, but they will also prove to be a valued support for teachers.

Hamilton (2012) argued that school leaders' inability to hold themselves and their teachers accountable has an impact on teaching and learning. Hamilton explained that people should be held to high standards of accountability with several checks and balances in terms of action plans and lesson plans. All of these things are used in monitoring student outcome. Making sure there is ongoing professional development and that proper resources are available are of great importance. Not consistently holding teachers accountable leads to problems among

other faculty members. For example, if one teacher constantly fails to submit accurate attendance and other teachers know it, they have no reason to be consistent in this area.

While holding themselves as well as teachers accountable is of great importance, all communication should be handled professionally. Principals who reprimand or criticize teachers in front of students lose not only the respect of the teacher but sometimes even the respect of the students. Teachers and students at a school in Buffalo, NY, recently gave their new principal a failing grade. According to George (2014) one of the major reasons cited for this score was that the principal had a habit of correcting teachers in front of their classes. They cited that this among, another things, killed the morale of the school.

Another practice that interferes with teaching is perhaps beyond the control of building level school leadership. When effective principals are moved to “turn around” low performing schools, it tends to have a negative effect on the success of the original school. Jordan (2012) followed this practice in one school district. She found that once principals were deemed successful, they were often removed from their positions by the superintendent. This is so that they can be placed in schools that needed improvement. The problem here is that someone still has to lead the school the principal left. On one hand this can be positive. The effective principal likely modeled what he or she wanted to see in future educational leaders so that there could be individuals already in the building who are capable of stepping into the role. On the other hand, if a less effective principal is placed at the school, there could be sharp decline in the quality of teaching. Jordan (2012) suggested the school principal sets the tone for the entire school, whether that individual is effective or ineffective.

It is also difficult for school leaders to enhance teaching if the turnover is high in the district and school. According to Jordan (2012) schools typically experience fairly rapid principal turnover, about a new principal every 3 - 4 years. The difficulty here comes from the inconsistency. Initiatives that principals bring with them typically take some time to come into fruition and to be successful. With high principal turnover rates it's nearly impossible to see what works for a school. Jordan stated this is especially true when different principals want to bring with them their own ideas and initiatives that have worked for them in the past. As previously described, the more initiatives that are started and not followed up upon, the less teachers will take new directives seriously.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction plays a huge role on the enhancement of teaching. When teachers are unhappy in their roles, it is much more difficult for them to be willing to put forth the effort to improve or maintain a high level of teaching. According to Richmond (2013) the newest MetLife Survey of the American Teacher indicated there has been a sharp decline in job satisfaction among educators. This survey found that in 2015 only 44% of teachers were satisfied with their jobs. This is compared to 59% in 2009. According to this survey teacher job satisfaction is at its lowest level in 20 years. This same survey showed that over the next 5 years 29% of teachers were expected to leave the profession as compared to 17% just 2 years ago. Richmond suggested that many school and district level leaders tend to equate these survey results with burnout and years of experience. However, she argued that there are few real patterns in the individuals who leave or plan to leave the profession. Rather than look for patterns in experience or grade level and subjects being taught, more attention should be paid to the differences in day-to-day experiences. According to Richmond unhappy teachers are likely

to have had an increase in average class sizes and to have experienced layoffs at some point in their districts. They also had more students coming to class with their basic needs met. Many of these students came to school hungry and likely had more families needing help with basic social services. Further Richmond suggested that these unhappy educators tend to feel that they are not valued as professionals among their peers.

According to Richmond (2013) the MetLife survey also reported a sharp connection between happy teachers and engaged parents and community. Community involvement can take some of the everyday pressures off of the teachers. By having parents who are consistently engaged with students and teachers, principles taught throughout the school day may be reiterated at home.

The MetLife survey presents a serious concern. Richmond (2012) noted that teacher satisfaction is directly correlated to teaching and learning. Therefore, it is important to improve teacher satisfaction. Richmond suggested that the low job satisfaction among teachers will eventually play a significant role in the success of whole schools and districts. She argued that low satisfaction will likely mean fewer qualified and experienced individuals having the desire to move into leadership roles within the education profession. This could mean those moving into administrative positions as well as those who would have been good teacher leaders.

Robertson (2013) conducted an analysis on the 2013 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher. Her findings were similar to those of Richmond (2013). Robertson stated that the findings of the survey showcase the challenges that educators are often required to address to ensure that the students are prepared to compete in today's economy. Robertson added that it is hopeful that the results of the MetLife Survey will be used to address ways that school leadership

can assist teachers in dealing with these challenges for improvement in student learning. When data such as these are revealed, school leaders have a keen responsibility to find ways to make improvements, therefore enhancing teaching.

Roekel (2013), president of the National Education Association, argued that much of the low satisfaction for teachers is the fault of lawmakers. Roekel posited that lawmakers must evaluate how long schools can continue to function being underfunded and therefore understaffed before there is a decline in the quality of teaching. Roekel pointed out that while educators are resilient and committed, the MetLife survey showed evidence of burn out.

It is important for school leaders to get comfortable addressing the needs of their individual schools. At this time budgets and other similar factors can be out of the hands of building level leaders. However, it is important that they do their best in exhibiting the behaviors and practices that teachers need in order to enhance their teaching.

Strauss (2013) also conducted an in-depth analysis of the MetLife survey. After studying her analysis, it is easy to come to the realization that while teacher job satisfaction is of extreme importance to the success of students, principal job satisfaction is also paramount. There are countless pressures added to the plate of school leaders every school year. Seventy-five percent of principals in 2012 felt that their jobs had become too complex. Sixty-nine percent of principals in 2012 said that they had current job responsibilities that they did not have 5 years ago. The burnout and frustration has an indirect effect on teachers, who have a direct effect on teaching and learning. Strauss pointed out that nearly 90% of principals say that ultimately a principal should be held accountable for everything that happens to the children in a school. Perhaps one of the most interesting statistics derived from the survey was the fact that 97% of

teachers gave high ratings to other teachers in their schools. This shows that teachers reported that they and their colleagues are doing an exceptional job but they are still not satisfied. They are certainly not satisfied enough to stay in the profession with so many teachers choosing to change schools and even career paths.

Another survey conducted by the TNTP shows similar findings. The TNTP found that many teachers are dissatisfied because they work in schools where they consider the instructional culture to be weak. They found that 18% of teachers in such schools leave because of dissatisfaction with school leadership. This was marked as the top reason. The next most prevalent reason with 14% was insufficient development opportunities. What was most alarming about the TNTP's findings was the fact that a great number of these teachers leaving either their school of employment or the field altogether were rated "effective" or "highly effective" on their evaluations. That being said, the field is not only losing teachers, but effective teachers. Those who do not leave the profession often do not perform to the best of their ability due to lack of support and motivation. This directly affects the quality of their teaching.

Teacher Responsibility

While principals and school leadership play an immense role in enhancing teaching and therefore student learning, teachers also play a rather large role in this area as well. According to Bullough and Hall-Kenyon (2012) to be effective teachers must be consistently engaged with students even when they prove to be highly limited in various ways whether that be intellectually, physically, or simply resistant to learning. Not having the proper administrative supports in place, while difficult to deal with, is no excuse for poor instruction. Teachers have

been and can be successful on their own will. It is much more difficult to not have the necessary resources from school leadership, but those times would call for measures in which teachers would have to make their own way and use their own resources.

According to the Eton Institute (2013) the 21st century teacher has seven roles that aid in maintaining effective instruction. The roles can help educators to see how they can help themselves to enhance their own teaching. The roles are:

- **The Resource:** The teacher should be able to offer help as needed. He or she should be able to communicate properly and be available so that students can consult.
- **The Assessor:** Teachers assume this role because it is imperative that students know how well or poorly they are doing. Feedback and correction should always be organized so that students can meet expectations.
- **The Organizer:** Student success depends heavily on organization and students knowing exactly what they are expected to do next. The delivery of instructions plays a huge role in student success.
- **The Participant:** When teachers take part in activities, there are improvements made in the overall climate of the class. Since there is a clear link between climate and student learning, it is important for teachers to exhibit behaviors that enhance climate and culture.
- **The Tutor:** Teachers should be comfortable providing guidance to help students on projects and studying. Educators are the experts on learning so it is important for them to communicate and guide students as needed.

While these roles are easier carried out with administrative support, it is important for teachers to not lean solely on that support in case it is not available. These roles provide a guideline and reminder as to what teaching should like on a consistent basis.

Similarly, Arnes (2012) argued that it is up to teachers to enhance their teaching when administrative support is deemed ineffective. Most educators have experienced leadership that did little to enhance teaching and learning. However, the focus still had to remain on the students. Arnes stated that teachers must be willing to learn. That could mean learning from the student, surroundings, or studies.

Administrators play a large role in behavior and management, but teachers are responsible for maintaining a certain level of control over their own classroom. According to Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2009) poor classroom management has been consistently linked to increased behavior problems among students and a decreased focus on academics. Teachers who have poor classroom management tend to spend a large percentage of time trying to keep students on task rather than focusing on enhancing their teaching. Lack of administrative acknowledgement of this issue does not mean that teachers should not take the initiative to find out how they can improve in this area.

The specific type of instruction that teachers choose can also have an impact on the classroom management. A teacher's role is not simply to stand in front of a classroom and talk and pass out worksheets. It is instead to facilitate learning however that may be. According to Zeiger (2015) teachers should ascertain what their students need in order to stay on task and enjoy learning as much as possible. There may be days when small groups are necessary so that the students can collaborate and speak with one another. There may also be days when it is a

good idea to involve the class in lively discussion. The key is not to get into a monotonous routine so that students dread class and try to make it fun by misbehaving.

The Pride Learning Center (2012) suggested that teachers who model the behavior that they wish to see in their classroom have fewer occurrences of disturbances and tend to need less administrative assistance in regards to discipline. Modelling appropriate behavior tends to set a climate of mutual respect that is of great importance to students. When students feel respected as individuals, they are more likely to meet or even exceed the teachers' expectations.

In order to enhance teaching, teachers can also be sure that their expectations for students are set appropriately and are high. According to the Pride Learning Center (2012) a teacher's ideas and expectations of his or her students' capabilities have an effect on student academic performance. This is solely the responsibility of the teacher. Not only should the expectations set be high, they should also be communicated effectively.

The Pride Learning Center (2012) also posited that it is not always up to the school leaders to build teacher confidence. It is helpful and needed for principals to give praise and recognition. However, when that does not happen, there are ways for teachers to continue being effective classroom instructors. According to the Pride Learning Center it is important that teachers believe in themselves and in their abilities as not only educators but also role models because it plays an important role on their students' performance academically and emotionally. When teachers develop efficacy it makes it more difficult for them to be hindered by ineffective school leaders. When teachers are confident in what they know and what they can do, they feel more comfortable doing what needs to be done for the good of students.

Proper planning is also necessary in enhancing teaching. According to Zieger (2015) teachers must put themselves in multiple roles during the planning process. They first have to put themselves in the role as the learner or student. All lesson plans will not work for all classrooms. It is important that teachers make plans based on what they know about their own students. They may also put themselves in the role of the collaborative educator. Zieger suggested that teachers who are trying a new strategy or who are new to the profession should collaborate with teachers who have already tried what they are working toward.

Wolfe (2013) cited classroom atmosphere as among the most important factors that a teacher can control to enhance teaching. He stated that a good teacher works to create a classroom atmosphere in which respect for each other is the guiding principle, an atmosphere in which every student feels safe enough to share thoughts and feelings. Wolfe also suggested that an atmosphere where making a mistake is seen as an opportunity to learn rather than an opportunity to feel like a failure is key to a conducive learning environment. Such an atmosphere will help the teacher take care of problems before they even arise. Students who are treated as though they are allowed to make mistakes and still be supported by not only their teacher but also their peers undoubtedly try harder because they are not afraid to fail. While this certainly takes work, teachers who invest the time and efforts to create this type of atmosphere in the classroom experience success in both their teaching and in student learning. Students crave this type of structure.

Summary

The review of the literature provided an array of information and research that gave a whole picture of how school leaders influence teaching. It also provided an abridgement of

theories, leadership practices, and behaviors that have an overall effect on not only teaching but also learning. Research shows that school leaders have a huge impact on the enhancement of teaching. Research also shows that teachers have the ability to not only influence their classroom and school culture but also to enhance their own teaching through professional development and life-long learning.

After reviewing the literature and available research, effective school leadership is critical in the enhancement of teaching. Not only is it important for school principals to be keenly aware of practices that teachers view as necessary for their success, but it is also crucial for them to be aware of what hinders their efforts in being effective educators. The review of literature provided a basis and understanding of the subject at hand and serves as a basis for the research conducted here.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

This study served as an examination of the connection between principal leadership practices and the perceptions of how teachers reported the practices that influence teaching and learning. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers as to how principals lead. The interview method as was used to analyze the results of this study. The TELL TN survey is currently used in public schools throughout the state of Tennessee to obtain data on different aspects of education including school leadership. The TELL TN survey informed my interview questions in order to gain more in-depth data and to gain a greater understanding of the results.

A qualitative framework was used to determine the relationships between principal leadership and teaching and learning. According to Creswell (1998) it is important for qualitative researchers to actually take the time to sit down with interview participants. This chapter includes the following: Research questions with variables used, researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability of the study, ethical consideration, and a summary of the chapter.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain knowledge of the leadership dynamics that positively and negatively impact teaching and learning. The data obtained from school showing results from the TELL TN survey will hopefully aid in assisting lower performing schools across the district and state. Teachers were interviewed during April and May of 2016.

The following research questions were purposely comprised for schools in Middle Tennessee to be surveyed.

Research Question 1

What are teachers' perceptions of different principal leadership practices that improve teaching and student learning?

Research Question 2

What are teachers' perceptions of different principal practices that hinder teacher performance?

Research Question 3

What leadership practices increase teacher motivation and teacher efficacy?

Role of Researcher

I am a 10-year, tenured educator who has taught English, served as a professional school counselor, and served as testing coordinator for a local high school. The goal of this study was to understand how teachers perceive school leadership practices and how leadership practices. Interviews that were conducted were analyzed in order to ascertain what principal practices teachers found helpful and harmful in regards to their teaching. Once the results were ascertained, the information will be submitted to the Director of Schools.

A cover letter was written to the director of assessment and evaluation in order to obtain permission to conduct the study. In order to conduct this study in the school district, the following criteria were met prior to research:

1. Three copies of the research proposal were submitted in writing to the director of assessment and evaluation.
2. Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained.
3. Final results from the study will be shared with specific school personnel including the director of assessment and evaluation.
4. Permission for the study to be reproduced and disseminated in the event of future research.
5. The review process was approximately 3 weeks and no study could be conducted until approved by the district.

Upon obtaining district approval, school principals were contacted via district email and/or landline phone to gain permission to conduct research in their schools. Here principals were given a written explanation of the study as well as the study's purpose. Upon obtaining principals' permission the researcher obtained a list of teachers in the buildings. The researcher ascertained who met the set criteria below and selected participants who fit the criteria. These criteria are listed in the Recruiting Process section of this chapter.

Participants were contacted by the researcher via district email and/or landline phone and invited to participate in the study. This same method of contact was used to communicate the study's purpose as well as proposed times and dates for interviews to participants. The researcher was available to respond to all questions and concerns prior to conducting any research. Potential participants were contacted a maximum of two times to request participation via email or phone. If no response was received, these potential participants were considered to have refused. Participants were given an informed consent form to sign, granting the researcher permission to record the interviews. This form included the risks and benefits of the study, confidentiality, contact information, the study's procedures and the voluntary nature of the study.

Prior to conducting all interviews, the researcher reminded participants that the interview could be stopped at any time. Interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes.

Recruiting Process

Prior to participants being selected or contacted, approval from the International Review Board (IRB) was obtained. Upon obtaining approval, teacher participants were selected from employees at this school district in Middle Tennessee. In order to saturate the data in this manner, notes of the prevalence of reoccurring themes and categories from the interview data were taken.

The participants in this study were all selected from the same school district in Middle Tennessee. To select participants to be interviewed criteria sampling was used. Criteria sampling ensured participants who were interviewed had comprehensive knowledge about the characteristics of principals in the district thus increasing validity and reliability of the study. Using specific criteria when conducting a study is “useful in quality assurance” (Creswell, 1998). Teachers interviewed for the study met the following criteria:

1. At least 3 years of relevant experience.
2. Employed at a school in this specific school district.
3. Certified
4. Has served with at least two school leaders (either principals or assistant principals).

No research was conducted at the school where the researcher is currently employed or any school where the researcher has ever been employed.

Interview Guide

All interviews were conducted in a casual and conversational manner. The questions were composed with an understanding of the purpose of the study. The questions were in part influenced by the TELL TN Survey. The inclusion of the TELL TN Survey in the development of the interview questions allowed for a more natural conversation and a less intimidating process. The inclusion also allowed for more in-depth and rigorous data to be collected from the closed ended TELL TN items. Interview questions were all open-ended and designed to allow for objective responses, keeping the biases and opinions of the researcher completely concealed.

Interview questions were aligned to the research questions for this study as well as the TELL TN survey. The first three questions were designed to gain basic demographic information and to ensure that all participants meet the required criteria. Interview questions 6 and 8 align with research question 1 as they examine teacher perceptions of practices that improve student learning. Interview questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 all align with research question 2 as they relate to principal practices that teachers perceive to influence teacher performance. Interview questions 9 and 10 relate to research question 3 as the display practices that increase teacher motivation and efficacy.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interview responses. Interviews were continuously conducted until data were proven to be saturated. Interviews were conducted based on the participants' schedules. All participants responded to open-ended questions and all questions were designed to gain an understanding of the teachers' perceptions of what leadership practices aid and hinder their teaching. Interviews were voice recorded and notes were taken throughout

the process. To ensure that interviews remained confidential, each interviewee and school were assigned a pseudonym prior to the research. The school district was also kept anonymous.

Prior to the interviews all participants signed an informed consent form. This form included the following information regarding the study: procedures, background information, benefits and risks, contact information, and the voluntary nature of the study. To protect confidentiality only the researcher had access to the identity of the study participants.

Data Analysis Methods

Data were analyzed in chronological order. First, data were organized based on the similarities of the participants' responses. Common themes were found and responses were grouped together. Responses were also linked to the themes found in TELL TN survey data. Next, axial coding was used to dissect the data in an effort to discover the central revelation from the interviews (Creswell, 1998). Next, a story was generated based on the results from the axial coding. This provided the researcher with themes, relationships, and even outliers found from the data. It also showed the researcher the commonalities of how teachers perceive the everyday practices of school leaders and what helps and hinders their teaching as well as student learning.

Validity and Reliability

The credibility of this study aids in the validity. According to Leung (2015) validity in qualitative research involves the appropriateness of the processes and tools used to conduct research. To ensure that the study is measuring what it is intending to measure, the researcher developed early familiarity with the culture of the participants' organization (Shenton, 2004). The incorporation of the TELL TN data and survey also aid in the validity. The school district where the research was conducted annually completes the survey and uses the data in planning

and implementation. Also aiding in the validity of the study is the researcher's use of strategies that will ensure honesty from the participants (Shenton, 2004). Allowing participants the opportunity to refuse to participate will not only promote honesty, but it will also help to make sure that only those who genuinely want to share their data are doing so. The researcher will also use peer review from a colleague prior to data being collected. This peer review will consist of conducting a practice interview to ensure that questions will garner the appropriate data. This will provide a fresh perspective on the validity of the study (Shenton, 2004).

Leung (2015) suggests that the core of reliability in qualitative research lies in consistency. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not require exact replicability of data. Reliability in qualitative research instead requires a level of consistency in which research of the same topic will yield similar results. To provide reliability for the study, the researcher used repetition. The more that the interviews were conducted, the more the researcher was able to find relative consistency in the responses. The researcher reported the process of the study in great detail. This will give the reader a clear picture of the study and its expectations. Multiple data sources should be used to increase validity and reliability (Yin, 1989). Also assisting in the reliability and validity is the link to the TELL TN survey data and the use of criteria sampling as well as pilot testing prior to interviewing.

Validating the Accuracy of Findings

Rich thick description and member checking were used to validate the study and the accuracy of findings. Member checking is defined as "taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to the participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Creswell, 2003, p. 201). Member checking for this study was conducted

outside of the educational setting. According to Creswell (2003) using rich thick description to convey findings allow readers to envision themselves in the research and relive past experiences related to the study. Merriam (2002) defined rich, thick description as “words and pictures rather than numbers to explain the phenomenon”(2002, p.17).

To ensure validity of the interviews, the researcher worded interview questions based on the TELL TN survey and the district’s professional development literature. The district’s professional development literature was obtained from the district’s director of professional development.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that her opinion was not infiltrated into the interviews or the interview questions. While the researcher has preconceived ideas about teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership styles and practices, it is important to not show any bias so that the responses are honest and open.

Another ethical consideration is ascertaining that responses and participants are kept confidential. By coding the individuals and keeping the school district confidential, potential readers would not be aware who the participants are.

Another consideration is the way in which the researcher selects participants. While it is easy to find a group of teachers already familiar with the researcher, it is important to select a population based on the information needed to be collected. Regarding those who are selected as participants, it is also important to have clear written permission to conduct the research. No data were collected from any school or participant who is in any way related to the researcher.

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and by the director of schools.

Summary

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology that was used for this qualitative study. This study showcased the perceptions that teachers have regarding school principals' leadership practices and how their teaching is influenced. Responses to interview questions by 13 teachers from a common school district with various levels of experience provided the data needed to conduct this study. The following chapter discusses in detail the findings of the data and the results.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the connection between principal leadership practices and the perceptions of how teachers reported the practices that influence teaching and learning. The interview method was used to collect the data for this study. The TELL TN survey is currently used to collect data in public schools throughout the state of Tennessee. This survey is used to obtain data on different aspects of education including school leadership. The TELL TN survey informed my interview questions in order to gain more in-depth data and to gain a greater understanding of the results.

The participating teachers the study were interviewed face to face using the interview protocol (Appendix A). Each participant was asked the same questions; however, all participants were encouraged to fully explain their (the participants) ideas with the use of follow-up questions. Pseudonyms were assigned by the researcher in order for the participants to remain anonymous. Interviews took place at the convenience of the participants and at the participants' schools as requested. Interview sessions ranged from 25-50 minutes in duration.

Using the interview protocol, the following questions along with follow-up questions that came up based on participant responses were asked of each participant:

1. How many years have you worked in this district?
2. What grade levels do you have professional experience with?
3. How many executive principals have you worked for?
4. What specific ways does your school leadership support you?
5. Are you held to high professional standards?
 - a. How does this influence your teaching?
 - b. How does this influence student achievement?
6. How does your school leader use data to improve teaching?
7. How does your school leader use data to improve student learning?
8. How does your school leader reflect the school's shared vision?

9. How does your school leader empower you to take responsibility of your teaching and student learning?
10. How does your school leader empower you to take responsibility in your professional development and growth?

All 13 of the interviews were conducted in a private office or classroom at the school in which the participants are currently employed. Prior to the conducting of each interview, the interviewee was given the Informed Consent document and made aware of the interview process and confidentiality. Each participant voluntarily signed the form prior to the conducting of any interview.

All participants were aware that their names would be kept confidential however the researcher and participant did use first or last names during the actual interview to make the interview more conversational and natural.

Participant Information (Interview Questions 1-3)

Questions 1-3 outlined participant information to make sure that all participants met the selected criteria. Each participant was selected based on the following criteria:

1. Has at least 3 years of relevant experience
2. Employed at a school in this Middle Tennessee school district
3. Licensed
4. Has served with at least two school leaders.

The 13 participants came from a wide variety of experience levels. Their experience ranged from 3-17 years and practice in all grade levels. Participants were also professionally exposed to a wide range of executive principals. The participant who worked with the lowest

number of school leaders served with two executive principals while the participant with the most school leader exposure served with nine executive principals.

Interview Question 4

In what specific ways does your school leadership support you?

Question 4 was written to gain information on what makes teachers feel supported. This question was asked as the first question following the demographic information in an effort to get teachers to begin to think about traits and practices that aid in their teaching. One participant with moderate teaching experience stated that “being left alone and having the freedom to really teach the way that I see fit” made her feel supported. Another participant with slightly less teaching experience also shared that the autonomy to be able to try outside of the box teaching techniques makes her feel supported. He shared that having the freedom to provide after school workshops and take students on informative trips has been helpful in his teaching and helpful in the way that students retain the information that he teaches. This was reiterated from several participants. Another participant stated that “I’ve learned that it really helps me to be able to run my own show”. She stated that this freedom makes her feel that her principal supports and respects her. Participant 13, a veteran teacher, shared a similar response. She stated that “There are few things I hate more in teaching than being micromanaged. It makes me feel a lack of support and trust amongst my school leadership team”.

Another prevalent response to question 4 was that teachers indicated that support with discipline has led to their success. Several participants reported that they feel most supported when discipline issues are handled in a timely manner. One participant, who was fairly new to the profession, stated that she feels empowered when her school leadership “has her back” in

regards to student discipline. She qualified her thoughts by giving an example of a time when she felt that she was not supported with student discipline. She shared a story about a young lady who she has sent to the principal's office for being disrespectful during class time. The student returned after about 10 minutes of speaking the principal, entered the room loudly, and told the teacher "See, I knew I was coming back!" This participant stated that this was one of the single most disempowering moments of her career.

Another participant with significantly more experience shared similar feelings. At her school the executive principal has assigned deans to handle discipline. She felt that because the deans can focus solely on discipline and preventative measures, the discipline referrals get handled in a timelier manner. She stated that it "provides a sense of assurance" when she knows that she can write a discipline referral it will be handled appropriately.

One participant shared that she has worked with principals who were both consistently great with handling discipline and principals whom she did not feel handle discipline effectively. She stated that "when principals aren't consistent when it comes to discipline, students know it. It turns into a chaotic situation because in sense, the students are running the show." This participant shared that she can handle most disciplinary situations on her own but the knowledge that her principal will support her if he is needed provides support and comfort.

Several participants reported that communication and feedback from their principals made them feels supported. One stated that "my school principal calls himself the people's principal. He's hands on and enjoys doing walk through observations but they're never done in ways that would intimidate me." Similarly, another participant reported that her principal does frequent walk through observations and provides feedback on areas of strength and weakness.

Another participant stated that based on feedback her principals lets her know of opportunities for professional development that would likely benefit her teaching. She stated “This makes me feel great because not all principals will take the time and really try and help me improve.”

Another participant with slightly less teaching experience reported that she feels supported when her principal gives her positive feedback. “As teachers, we get beat down a lot. It’s nice to hear that you’re actually doing a good job.” She reported that her previous principal was consistent in giving teachers positive feedback and that made teachers more open and understanding of constructive criticism. This participant also reported that she knows all feedback will not be positive but the positive feedback not only makes her feel supported but it also creates a relationship where there is mutual trust.

Participant 3, a fairly new educator, stated that she feels supported when her principal “knows what he’s doing.” She qualified her statement by clarifying that she needs for her school leadership to know the logistics of what goes in the school. She said that when principals have high expectations for themselves, she feels that they are better equipped to support her.

One participant with quite a bit of educational experience was a bit of an outlier in regards to this question. She reported that she does not currently feel supported at her school but that was ok with her “I don’t look for someone to lead anymore, I am self -led and I make it work.” I asked probing questions to see ways that she may have felt supported in the past and she reported that she has always been self-led even when she served with what she considered “more qualified principals.”

Interview Question 5

Are you held to high professional standards? How does this influence teaching and learning?

This question was asked to examine whether or not school principals had high expectations for their faculty and how these expectations influenced what they did in the classroom. All but one participant stated they are held to high professional standards.

One participant stated that being held to high standards makes her strive to always be better; therefore, she can give her all to students. Interestingly, she stated that she was ashamed to admit that she has worked with a principal with low expectations. “During this particular school year I had to catch myself. I was slacking and realized that that only hurt my students.” She went on to say that during that school year her lessons were not innovative, her kids were not always engaged, and she admitted she slacked but she was not required to excel. Several participants reported that they are held to high standards and because of that they find themselves going above and beyond what they are required to do. One went on to state that she knows that she is expected to do well, it serves as a reminder to push herself to be her best.

One veteran participant gave an emphatic “Yes!” when asked if she is held to high standards. “It forces me to be consistent with my productivity with lessons, data, classroom management, relationships with students and peers, and everything else that might affect my teaching of students successfully.”

Another participant was the only participant who felt that she was not held to high standards. She qualified this by explaining that teachers are constantly late, disengaged at faculty meetings, and overall not motivated. This participant stated that the low professional expectations creates a negative culture in the school and the culture negatively impacts teaching and learning.

Interview Questions 6 and 7

How does your school leader use data to improve teaching? How does your school leader use data to improve student learning?

Prior to beginning the interview process the researcher planned on these being two very separate questions. However, once the researcher began conducting interviews, it was apparent that teachers considered the improvement of teaching to go hand in hand with the improvement of student learning. Responses were intermingled and the researcher found that participants were not clear on what the questions were specifying when they were asked separately. Therefore, the researcher began asking these questions in support of one another rather than as separate entities.

Most participants reported that their school leaders use data relatively consistently to improve teaching. One participant shared that her principal leads data meetings in small teams. Here teachers of common subjects examine student data in order to drive instruction and make instructional adjustments. Another participant who has worked for many executive principals reported that her principal uses data to figure what skills and standards need to be retaught. According to another participant who has served with a few principals, data have become an integral part in teaching and learning.

The school uses the data to adapt to the needs of the student body. Every year a new group of students enters the school with a new set of needs. These needs could be academic, social/emotional or exposure to the outside environment of school. Data meetings occur regularly with both the entire faculty and staff as well as departmentally.

One participant shared that her current school leader is very hands on when it comes to the use of data. She stated that her school leader reflects on student data from classroom and district assessments and regularly challenge the teachers to make instructional decisions to get students “to the next proficiency level.”

Interestingly, two participants stated that they do not feel that their school principal uses data to influence teaching or learning. One stated that this was part of the problem at her school. She personally uses data; however, she asserted that “the school as a whole can’t make academic gains because we don’t know where we are or where we are supposed to go.” She described this as a constant process of “spinning wheels.” Similarly, another participant stated that data are not discussed but are posted throughout her school building. She said that the difficulty in this is that “it is just posted around for us to make sense of.” She suggested the data at her school were “there because it’s supposed to be there but serves no real purpose.” She was referring to several posters hung throughout the school building that show charts and graphs of standardized test data. The researcher was able to look at two such posters following the interview. The posters looked like something that could be useful, but the researcher did not understand what the participant meant by her interview responses.

Interview Question 8

How does your school leader reflect a shared vision?

The researcher included this question to examine the teachers’ perception on whether or not they are truly involved in the schooling process in their buildings. Interestingly, the responses varied greatly between participants.

A few of the participants currently work at the same school. One of these participants who has been at this school for several years stated that her principal is fairly new and has not yet taken the time to develop a shared vision. “She’s just trying to keep her head above water at this point,” this participant shared. Two other participants shared that the principal has discussed the vision for next school year. One of these participants stated that the principal has “just

always said to make everything child centered”. Another participant shared that she is not aware of a shared vision. According to this participant, “if a shared vision exists here it likely needs to be revisited because we sometimes lack clear direction,” Similarly, another participant stated simply that “she doesn’t reflect the schools vision. I’m actually not sure that the school has a shared vision.”

One participant who is newer to teaching shared that the school leader at his current school created the vision and is, therefore, the lead on what takes place. “It all starts and ends with leadership.” The researcher asked probing questions to get an understanding on the effectiveness of this type of vision. This participant then expressed that there is sometimes a lack of understanding and knowledge of the school’s goals because not all teachers are accountable for the vision. She stated that the vision is carried out but only because the school leadership makes sure that it is.

Another participant shared that at her current school, there is a shared vision.

My school leader ensures that at every faculty meeting the school’s vision is shared with the faculty as a whole. At the beginning of the school year, they allowed staff to actually work on creating a vision for the school year.

This participant expressed that she noticed a difference at her current school as opposed to her previous school of employment in that teachers at the current school with the shared vision are much more vested in everyday happenings. They take responsibility for what goes on “because they helped to create the vision.” Similarly, another participant with similar levels of experience shared that her school’s shared vision was created by the faculty and is “modeled by every adult in our building.” Another participant with significantly less teaching experience shared that her school leader takes the time to examine the school vision and school improvement plan and

suggests professional development that will help faculty members reflect the school's shared vision.

Interview Question 9

How does your school leader empower you to take responsibility for your teaching and student learning?

The researcher included this question to examine the teachers' perspectives on how much power they have to positively impact their classrooms and school. The clear trend was that teachers reported that they need freedom and autonomy in order to feel empowered to take ownership of their teaching and student learning. Almost every participant used the term "freedom" or "autonomy" in their responses to question 9.

One participant stated "She trusts me to do my job and leaves me alone." Similarly, another participant shared that autonomy and a clear chain of command empowers her. She shared that she does not feel like she always has to go straight to her executive principals for every small issue because her school follows a chain of command. Another participant stated, "I feel empowered because I can just do what I need to do without being micromanaged."

One participant shared that she felt empowered to take responsibility for her teaching when her principal gives her advice and sends her to professional development to help her improve upon areas of growth. Similarly, another stated that "taking responsibility for what we do and showing us ways to improve" makes her feel empowered. One other participant shared that she finds it helpful when her principal provides feedback and trusts her to make improvements where needed.

During question 9 the researcher noticed a shift in body language. Most participants seemed to sit up much taller and smile more when discussing question 9. This is especially the case for those participants whose response included autonomy and freedom.

Interview Question 10

How does your school leader empower you to take responsibility in your professional development and growth?

This question was asked to examine participants' freedom to attend professional development and growth opportunities and how they perceived this affected teaching and learning.

One participant with many years of teaching experience shared that she appreciates that her principal is "all for any professional development to make you a better teacher and professional". Participants shared that their school leaders allow them to take time off work in order to acquire professional development opportunities. One shared that her faculty's shared vision is directly tied to professional development and growth:

Professional development opportunities are offered regularly. The great thing is that I feel that as professionals working under the same roof and servicing the same students, we all have a shared vision to give our students the best that we have. With that being said, our leadership provides faculty multiple opportunities to get better and master our teaching craft.

Some participants also shared that not only does their school leader allow them to take up professional development opportunities, but they suggest specific opportunities. One participant shared that her principal often makes suggestions on opportunities that he feels may benefit him. Interestingly, all participants felt empowerment when given the freedom and support to leave the school building in efforts for professional growth and improvement.

Another participant shared that he also appreciates that his principal offers in house professional development through profession learning communities. This same participant shared the interesting perspective that these opportunities are especially empowering because they allow teachers who are experts in particular areas to provide the professional development to their colleagues.

Emergent Themes

Several themes emerged from the data and organized into areas. The labels and underlying themes were:

- I. Support
 - a. Handling of discipline issues
 - b. Timely feedback
 - c. Emotional understanding
- II. Autonomy
 - a. Freedom
 - b. Flexibility
- III. Sincerity
 - a. Walking the walk
 - b. Responsibility

Support

When asked interview questions most participants mentioned some form of support. Although they did not all use the word “support”, they spoke of the practices of school leaders in

ways that made it clear that support from leadership was needed and aided in teaching and learning.

Handling of Discipline

When participants spoke about the leadership practices that they perceived to help them in their teaching, several of them mentioned discipline at some point of the interview. Some mentioned negative experiences with school leaders handling discipline and others spoke of their positive experiences.

One participant with a few years of teaching experience compared her experiences with two different school leaders.

Our jobs are difficult enough. The last thing that I need is for my principal to not support me when I write a discipline referral. A principal who I worked with in the past just would not work referrals. He told us to write students up for specific instances and when I did, nothing was ever done. It honestly made me hate my job. I showed up to work, taught, went home and did that over and over again. I knew that I was ineffective and wasn't doing my best so I left. My current school leadership team is the polar opposite. They really have our backs. When a kid is in trouble with me, they know they are going to be in trouble with administration and that is an awesome feeling for me.

She went on to say that discipline is not just about suspending a student or pulling a student from her class. It is also about consistency. This participant went on to say:

My students know exactly what is going to happen when they do something that they aren't supposed to do. The best example that I can give is of our school's cell phone policy for students. There are no warnings, when a phone is out during class, we take the phone and a parent must come to get it. If the student refuses, they are put into ISS for a full day. The kids know this. There is never a surprise and that is because our principals are consistent in enforcing it.

This same participant shared similar feedback. "It is very empowering when my principal has my back. It almost gives me the same level of power that she has when it comes to discipline."

She gave an example of a time when she felt disempowered because of her school leader's perceived poor handling of a discipline issue.

I want to share this example for you because this is something that I don't think I'll ever forget. It sounds insignificant but it was big for me at the time. I had a young lady in my class who was frequently disruptive and at times, blatantly disrespectful to me. This particular day she had used profanity towards me. I sent her to the principal's office with a referral that said exactly what she'd done. Now this student had a reputation of acting out so it wasn't like this was her first time being in trouble. Well she was sent back to my class 10 minutes later and yelled 'See, I knew I was coming back!'. Of course the class laughed. I was upset and embarrassed"

This participant went on to explain how this affected her teaching.

For the rest of that day, all I could think about was the fact that the folks that are supposed to be leading me, did not have my back. I was disempowered and for a while after that, I just went through the motions of teaching to get the school year out of the way.

I went on to ask a probing question regarding how this participant felt that this specific instance affected her teaching. She stated:

Like I said, it was huge for me. Listen, I can control my classroom and I have decent management but when you need to get a student removed without interrupting the whole class and the principal won't do that for you it changes things. Don't get me wrong, I still taught my kids and did my job but I wasn't happy. And I don't care what anyone says, even the best teachers need to feel good about their school leadership. It's kind of a morale thing. I did my job, my students still learned but I know that I could have done more at that school that year.

Another participant with many years of teaching experience and who has worked with several principals shared that her current principal is a bit more hands off with discipline, which she is fine with. "My principal hired deans so he doesn't have to take care of all the discipline issues".

This participant went on to say:

I've been teaching for 12 years. I've worked with principals who honestly didn't have the time to address discipline issues consistently. So I appreciate the fact

that my principal has budgeted in deans to address discipline. When it comes down to it, it doesn't really matter who handles it as long as it's handled. [...] What I've found to be great is the fact that our deans are readily available most of the time so if I'm teaching a lesson and I need someone to deal with a student, they can do that. If this weren't the case, there is no telling how many times I'd have to stop a whole class in order to address 1 student.

Another participant with similar experience gave a little less detail but also mentioned the importance of administrative support in regards to discipline. She stated "One of the things that help me in the classroom is the fact that on the rare occasion that I have a discipline issue that I can't handle on my own, my school's principals are always willing to step in". When probed to see how this affected her teaching, she said "It really just gives me the ability to teach almost uninterrupted".

Another participant shared several experiences from her many years of teaching experience.

I don't have many issues with discipline in my classroom at this point in my career. But when there is an issue, I have to work for a principal who will help me take care of it. I've worked for 8 different executive principals and I would like to think I've seen amazing leadership and terrible leadership. Bottom line is all of the amazing leadership was good at supporting teachers and helping with discipline problems.

She went on to explain that she has seen a number of new teachers who struggled with classroom management, and the difference between whether or not they were successful in the classroom "almost always came down to administrative support with discipline." She stated "new teachers get flustered, they need that type of support in the beginning to give them the confidence they need to do a good job."

The researcher asked this participant a probing question in order to get a better understanding of exactly how important disciplinary support weighs in in her current teaching. She shared:

Like I said, I don't have a ton of disciplinary needs. But I'm still human and this job is still tough at times. For me personally, just knowing that my principal can step in if needed is good for me. It means more that helping with an unruly child. It means trust, understanding and compassion and that in itself is motivating for me.

Timely Feedback

Another prominent theme in the data was the use of walkthrough evaluations and timely feedback. Many of the interview participants mentioned that they perceived feedback to be helpful in their feeling supported by their school leadership. Most of the communication regarding feedback from the interviews were positive, but there were also examples of when teachers perceived feedback to be negative. The common theme seemed to be that if the feedback was constructive and unthreatening, it was perceived as helpful and beneficial.

One participant reported that although she has been teaching for quite a few years, it is still helpful when her principal gives her informal evaluations and provides feedback on her teaching and lessons.

I consider myself a lifetime learner. I've been teaching for many years but I know that I can always improve and work on my craft. My principal and assistant principals sometimes come to my room during class and watch some of my lessons. They take notes and later let me know what they think I did well and what I could work on. They even suggest professional development opportunities that go along with what I should work on.

The researcher asked this participant if she could recall any specific times that she received professional development training based on a principal walk through visit. She responded:

There have been a few times but what comes to mind is when I was earlier on in my teaching career. I struggled with classroom management so my principal sent me to COMP training. That training changed my entire career. It gave me principles to live by in the classroom and I actually still use them. See, newer teachers don't always know what's available and what kind of help they need. They really need principals to encourage them to attend professional development that is relevant to them.

This participant went on to say:

As times change, so do students and what they need. I never want to be comfortable doing what I've always done. That is why I really appreciate feedback from my principal. I know not all principals will take the time and really try and help teachers improve.

Similarly another participant shared that her current principal does walk through observations and provides feedback; however, she has worked with principals in the past who did not.

One thing that I have found that has really helped me is when my principal stops by my classroom and does an evaluation that is not a part of my formal evaluation. The first time I experienced this I thought that it was a set up [laughing] but once I got the feedback from it, I was pleased. What my principal had to say afterwards really helped me because it wasn't intimidating. It was almost like talking to a friend that really just wanted to help you out.

When asked how this compared to a formal observation, this participant shared:

Honestly, I think that the formal observation should be much more like the informal. Formal observations feel stuffy, like a 'gotcha game'. And this is something that I didn't realize until I got more of an informal evaluation. But looking back, I didn't really try to work on the suggestions from formal evaluations. I was just so relieved when they were done [laughing]. So I guess the difference, at least for me, is in the tone of the evaluation. I think I'm going to suggest this to the powers that be! If we really want to see growth, quit putting every little thing on paper and really get into classrooms with the purpose to help.

The researcher and this participant further discussed these differences and the participant shared that "I really think that if more principals were their true selves with their teachers and really just had the motive to be helpful above everything else, teaching and learning would improve and I bet the data would reflect that."

Similarly, another participant shared that she needs positive feedback and reinforcements to feel supported. She shared "it's nice to hear that you're actually doing a good job." The

researcher probed to ask in what capacity does this positive feedback usually come (after an observation, randomly, etc). This participant shared:

My previous principal was good about boosting morale. He sent teachers' positive notes, had his wife make breakfasts and lunches for us. It really made us feel appreciated. And I can only speak for myself here, but for me, it made me go the extra mile.

This response varied a little from the others regarding feedback so the researcher wanted to get a better understanding of the link between this feedback and the improvement of teaching and the feeling of support. This participant was asked a follow-up question regarding the affects that feedback had on the aforementioned aspects of education. She shared “with this particular principal, I just really tried harder. I'm not sure if my students learned more or better but I surely felt that I did a better job because I was happier”. The researcher followed up to ask whether or not the participant has had any positive feedback from a walk through. She added:

My current principal and assistant principals do walkthroughs. I hate to say it but when my assistant principal does a walk through, it's helpful because I actually get feedback before I forget what I taught. Sometimes with my head principal, things get lost in translation. It's like he comes in for a walk through and even stays for a little while, but I don't always get input about what went on. To me, that's pointless. But with my assistant principal, I usually get feedback pretty quick. It's cool because she does let me know what I need to work on but she also lets me know what I'm doing well.

At this point in the interview with this participant the researcher wanted to delve deeper into positive feedback. This participant had mentioned it several times, whereas other participants had spent more time discussing constructive feedback. She was then asked to elaborate on the importance of positive feedback to her as compared to constructive feedback. This participant shared:

For me, I'm not always sure that I'm doing a good job. I've been teaching for a few years and I know that I'm decent at it but sometimes I need to hear that. That being said, I can appreciate constructive criticism, it helps me grow. But I think

it's a little like when a teacher makes contact with a parent. We've always been taught to lead with positive comments. The same should be true; at least it is to me, with communication with a principal. Again, constructive criticism is needed. Everything is not always all good, but for me there needs to be a balance between the two.

Speaking further on constructive feedback this same participant went on to say, "I feel like I should clean this up [laughing]." The researcher assured the participant that her honest responses are all that was needed and there was no reason to alter anything unless it was her honest thoughts. She shared:

I do want to be clear that I'm an adult and I can take negative feedback. I actually need feedback that is not always positive. But I've worked with principals who always harped on what teachers did wrong and what wasn't good. It was draining. That's why I'm so passionate about principals letting teachers know when they have done well. It's because I've seen the opposite, I've felt the opposite. And this feeling wasn't good.

Emotional Understanding

Three of the participants mentioned some form of emotional understanding as a means of feeling supported by school leaders. While they did not all use this specific terminology, they all shared a form of emotional support.

One participant expressed that she liked the fact that her current school leader is very personable and holds the teachers' mental and emotional health in high regards.

My principal is very supportive of our faculty and staff as individuals professionally and personally. It's always nice to work for a principal who will send you on professional development that will benefit you in the classroom. But it special when your principal encourages you to really take care of yourself. My principal once told us that when we are getting burnt out, take a morning off or take a walk outside during our planning period. It sounds simple but it meant a lot. I don't actually take off very often but it's nice to know that he would understand if I really needed to.

The researcher than questioned this participant about other ways that she would feel supported by her principal in regards to emotional support. She shared:

I don't think emotional support is a 'thing'. I think it's just there. Sometimes it's unspoken but it's always clear. It's a sense of trust and understanding that is mutual. To give you an example, my principal has been known to help teachers who are having family issues at home. Sometimes that help comes from just a conversation and sometimes it comes with the principal doing things to boost the morale of the entire faculty. I'm sorry my answer is a little vague but when you are emotionally supported, you sort of just are.

Another participant was a little more detailed in sharing that she felt specific practices showed her that her principal supported her emotionally. She shared:

This job can be exhausting. I find it supportive when my principal recognizes that exhaustion [laughing]. Not to be silly but I appreciate empathy. In my 17 years I have worked with leaders who just could not put themselves in our shoes. That sucked! I'm human and I appreciate a principal who will encourage me and really just understand me.

I then asked this participant elaborate what how this affected teaching. She expressed:

It was more of an effort thing. I worked my tail off when I felt supported. I don't know how to measure the impact on my teaching but I know that I did all of the extra things that make my classroom a positive place. That was because I was in a positive headspace. It wasn't about getting rewards or accolades; it was about knowing that your principal respected you as a person and not just a vessel to spew content at students.

Another participant shared similar thoughts regarding emotional support. She told the researcher about a particular situation that made her feel supported by her school leadership.

Working in education, there are some people you just never forget. I will never ever forget my principal from my first 2 years of teaching. So when we talk about feeling supported she always comes to mind. I could give you a million examples but I'll always remember the time that she pulled me aside and told me I looked terrible. I know, I know. It sounds bad. But she told me this and then engaged in a conversation with me asking about my hobbies and what I enjoyed doing. She then asked how much time I was able to spend doing what I enjoy outside of work. I thought for a minute and realized that I had totally stopped doing what I liked because teaching had consumed my life. I was new at it and didn't realize that I didn't know how to cope. She showed me that. And now, years later when I get overwhelmed, I remember to make that me time.

The researcher then asked this participant how (if at all) this moment affected her in the classroom. This participant added that it “made me a better teacher, friend, and daughter at the time because I learned to stop getting bogged down with work.” This participant also expressed how she felt when she lacked emotional understanding and support from her school leader.

It was a little hard for me when I no longer worked with my first principal. With my next principal, it wasn't like he was unsupportive on purpose. He just didn't do the extra things that I had gotten used to. It was almost a shock for me because I had only had this one experience. I never forgot what I had already learned about putting myself first so I still followed that but it was different. And I don't mean different as far as me teaching, it was a personal difference. I still did my best in the classroom but I was really tired a lot; tired and overwhelmed. So now that I say that out loud, I guess it did affect my teaching. My teaching improved when I started to make time for things outside of school and when my principal supported me in that so I guess the opposite happened when that support declined. So yes, I was more tired and I was very overwhelmed and I suppose that that took away from me as a teacher.

Prior to moving to a different question, the researcher asked this same participant to briefly elaborate on why she thought emotional support would be an important principal practice for teachers. She stated:

I just think some things that principals do can change a teacher's career or even life. A principal providing emotional support doesn't always have to be direct conversation or action but I'll tell you this, if teachers don't feel supported they are not going to be happy. And unhappy teachers have a tendency to not make the best teachers. That's really it. Principals have to be supportive of the needs of their teachers.

Autonomy

The second emergent theme was autonomy. Many of the participants mentioned allowed autonomy as being a leadership practice that they found that positively contributed to their teaching. While not every participant mentioned the word ‘autonomy’, many of them mentioned the characteristics of the term.

Freedom

One participant shared how she hasn't had the most fulfilling experience with her current school leader, but she did have autonomy to do what she felt was best for her students. She shared "I'm self-led; I make it work." When the researcher asked her to elaborate, she expressed:

My principal is new to the school and she came in the middle of the year. I know that's hard so I take that into consideration when making any judgements. But I've noticed that she is a micromanager to a lot of teachers and those teachers hate it. I don't know how I'm different but I'm pretty much left alone. I don't really need someone to lead me, I can lead myself. I guess she recognizes that. So I don't like a lot about what goes on here but I do like that.

To delve deeper and understand why autonomy was important for this participant, I asked a probing question to examine the possible reasons. When questioned, she replied: "For me, freedom shows trust and if my boss can't trust me, I need to work somewhere else". This participant went on to share an example to better explain her thoughts:

If your boss consistently oversteps her boundaries and tries to make you teach the way that she would teach and work the way that she would work, what's left for the real teacher to do? Two heads are always better than one. So if a principal just wants you to do things the way she would, then she may as well just do it. You miss teachers' creativity and imagination when that happens. I know here, teachers have just shut down on her [the principal]. They do what she says to do to get through the year and that's it. It's really sad. We have great teachers in our school who feel like they can't teach.

This participant elaborated on how she felt that a lack of autonomy hurt students.

The best example is here at our school this year. I mean, we have teachers who have taught for years and years and they are really good at what they do. But they feel that their hands are tied so they've become robots. So that is the true detriment. Kids are being taught by robots. Would anyone want their kid to be taught by a robot teacher?

Another participant with similar experience had similar thoughts. She shared about how productive she is when she is left alone to do what she felt was best for her own classroom.

I don't need a bunch of interaction with my principal. I feel more supported by a principal when I'm left alone and allowed to do what I need to do. I think principals should have our backs and be there when we need them but I don't need a principal telling me what how to teach. When I am left to do what I need to do, I get so much done.

She went on to discuss her own experience regarding autonomy. "I am blessed to have only had an experience with one assistant principal who wanted to keep her finger on everything." I asked this participant to explain this statement. She shared:

This AP micromanaged everything. I don't have the time for a principal or anyone else to be always lurking around telling me what to do and how to do it. I'm just not going to deal with that. This AP did walkthroughs what seemed like all the time. But she wouldn't just do them and be helpful about it. She came in and wanted to take over the classroom. She wanted every teacher to be like her.

She went on to share:

When I worked with this AP, I really tried to make the best of the situation but I couldn't. I communicated to my executive principal and let him know that I felt stifled and I couldn't be my best under her [the assistant principal]. I was thankful because he understood what I was saying. But no, I know this job comes with its challenges and I'm ok with that but I need to have freedom. I'm in my classroom every day. There is no person but me who knows what my students need on a daily basis. So it's offensive when someone thinks that they can just make their thoughts and opinions the 'right' thing for me.

Another participant expressed an interesting point of view regarding autonomy and freedom. She shared "I didn't realize how much I needed freedom until I got it." This participant went on to share:

I have only worked at two schools with two head principals. At my first school, my principal was very specific on how she wanted things to be done. She was in our classrooms really often and she always let us know what it was that she wanted us to change. I learned later that this was called micromanaging [laughing]. Well that worked for me as a new teacher, mostly because I hadn't seen any different. That year, I just did what I was told. But when I changed

schools that principal was the complete opposite. He really gave me free reign to do whatever I wanted. At first I thought this was irresponsible and lazy of him. I didn't get why he wasn't giving us more directives. But as the school year continued and after I had more communication with him and my assistant principal, I saw that I was really growing as a teacher.

This participant elaborated:

When the change set in, I realized that I had not really enjoyed teaching my first year. The freedom that I got when I changed schools allowed me to gain my own confidence to take over my class and be more creative with my lessons. [...] My students of course were different kids but the more creative I got, the fewer discipline issues I had and the more they were engaged every day.

This participant also shared that she appreciated “chances to learn from more than just my principal. We have a ton of really good veteran teachers and I like to be able to learn and collaborate with.” She was also asked to think back to her first year of teaching when she thought that a lack of autonomy was beneficial and how she felt when she later had a change of heart. The researcher probed to see if she perceived that there was a true benefit to a lack of autonomy. This participant responded:

Looking back, I'd say no benefit at all. I can compare it to a baby who is always crying and to get them to be quiet, their mom always give them candy. It only stops the crying for a few minutes and it doesn't teach them not to cry. It was the same thing at this school. I was new so it made my job a little easier because I was making my lesson plans but the principal was reworking them almost every week. After a couple months, I just rushed through even making the plans because I knew she was going to change them anyway. So I say all that to say that it made parts of my job easier but definitely not better. I wasn't a better teacher there. So no, it wasn't beneficial at all.

Flexibility

Similar to responses regarding freedom, several participants spoke about autonomy in regards to the principals being flexible. Their responses to interview questions provided insight into why flexibility was a leadership practice that enhanced their teaching.

One participant who is fairly new to the profession spoke about how he appreciated a principal who was flexible and allowed him to “make needed changes to the classroom and lessons without a lot of prior notice.” He went on to explain: “I have a hard time working with rigid people. And that is whether it’s personally or professionally. Not to get rigid folks confused with people who are well organized.” He elaborated saying:

There are a lot of factors that we [teachers] consider during any given school day. Things can change at the drop of a dime and I got to be ready to deal with that. And I need for my principal to be able to trust that I can handle things accordingly. Rigid people don’t get that. I can’t even count how many times I have had to change a lesson the day of because one thing or another happened in my room or in the school that day. I have even had to change plans the day of evaluations.

The researcher then questioned about other examples of when flexibility would be a helpful leadership practice. He expressed:

I haven’t been teaching for many years; I came from a career with the law enforcement. And I think I have a lot to offer in the classroom because of that. Not saying that traditional teachers don’t have a lot to offer, but I do have a lot of worldly experiences to give to my students. I personally need the flexibility to be able to teach in nontraditional ways. I teach criminal justice so we set up crime scenes for the students to analyze. I have attorneys and former FBI agents to come to speak to my students. We take trips to the TBI and to courts rooms. For me to be able to give my students those experiences, my boss has to be flexible and has to appreciate real life teaching that isn’t always written verbatim in the state curriculum.

This participant also shared how he felt that principals’ flexibility ultimately benefitted his students. He stated that his students get to learn from a teacher who has “been there and done that.” He elaborated:

It would be a waste of time for me to teach somewhere where I can’t really teach the way that I want. I didn’t come up just reading and taking tests. I came up learning through experiences and I think there is a lot of value in that. Let me explain, when I finished my first year of teaching, I was exhausted and I felt crazy. Here I am, been in the military, FBI and a whole lot of other places and I couldn’t handle a bunch of teenagers. As time went on I realized that that was

because I wasn't teaching through experiences. I met with my boss at the end of that year and he said to me "[...], I hired you because you can teach Criminal Justice to our kids because you have lived Criminal Justice. I need you to figure out how to cover what you need to cover but do it so it's fun for you." I went home for that summer and reevaluated everything.

This participant went on to explain, "When my boss gave me that flexibility, I knew it was on. Like I said before, my students do all kinds of things now and they really remember and learn from it."

Another participant shared that he has found it helpful when his principal is flexible with professional development opportunities. He shared, "My principal knows that I have career plans to get a position in leadership soon. He has really been flexible with me signing up for professional development that doesn't deal with my teaching position." In this middle Tennessee district educators can only sign up for professional development that is deemed appropriate for their current job unless the teachers' executive principal approves. This participant went on to explain:

I've been allowed to attend professional development where I was the only teacher there because my principal knew that it could benefit me in the future. This summer, I get to go to a workshop for new assistant principals on learning how to evaluate teachers. His [principal] being flexible with this is really going to help me in the long run.

The researcher questioned how the teacher felt that this practice impacted his teaching. He shared:

I don't know that there is a direct impact on my teaching besides the fact that this does create a mutual respect between me and him [my principal]. It shows me that he sees me as a human with goals and plans and he tries to help me to reach them. And in the end, those things make me want to work harder for him since he's doing right by me.

This participant also shared another example of how his principal's flexibility is helpful for him.

My principal has been really good about letting us try different teaching techniques and activities. We have a really high percentage of students who get free or reduced lunch and a lot of them have not been outside of their own communities. One of our business partners held a professional development meeting with our teachers to talk about exposure and how our kids need to explore things that are normal and ordinary for us as adults but not so much for them. Anyway, my principal let a couple of us [teachers] take a group of students to the Frist Center of Arts and then out to eat at a real restaurant. It was shocking how many of them had only been to fast food places. So yes, my principal's openness and flexibility really benefits our students.

Another participant reported principal flexibility helps her when it comes to grades. "With high school students, they just have so much going on that sometimes I need the flexibility to be able to give them extra opportunities to earn satisfactory grades in my class". This participant elaborated:

My students sometimes deal with home issues that I can't imagine going through. Some of them work to help support their families, some are parents to multiple babies, and some just don't have the academic background that they need to be successful. With my principal's approval, I give multiple ways for my students to show competency so that I can help them to be successful.

The researcher questioned whether or not this has always been the case at participant 5's school.

This participant responded:

This has always been the case with my current school principals. But no, this has not always been the case in the past. I have seen students who drop out because they were only given one way of doing things. That just doesn't work with these children. I had one student who had two babies at home. She was in constant contact with the school but just couldn't attend every day because of childcare. At that time, a couple teachers were giving her work online to complete. When that principal found out, the teachers got reprimanded and that student ended up not graduating. I could be wrong, but that seemed silly. I get that there are students who are lazy and just won't come to school and do the work. But if you have a student who is working, whether traditionally or not, they shouldn't be denied the chance to be academically successful. That's where the flexibility comes in; just the understanding that there is more than one right way.

Sincerity

Almost all participants mentioned some aspect of sincerity over the course of the interview. They mentioned this in a context to discuss the practices of school leaders that they find helpful in teaching and learning.

Walking the Walk

Many of the participants who discussed sincerity spoke specifically of the practice of doing what you require others to do or “walking the walk.” Participants deemed this important for an array of reasons including because they preferred working for someone who not only holds teachers to high expectations but also holds themselves to those same expectations.

One participant shared that she appreciates a principal who is not afraid to “get his hands dirty.” She went on to express that her while her principal lacks some of the practices that she would find helpful, he does walk the walk. This participant shared:

I have always appreciated working with administrators who don't just delegate everything and expect teachers to do the opposite. It appears lazy and if I can be candid, it's terrible for a principal who makes substantially more money than teachers, to appear lazy. My principal is consistent about making his expectations clear for us but at the same time, he doesn't ask us to do anything that he won't do. He asks use to provide after school tutoring and he also stays after school. He asks us to make regular parent contacts and he does the same.

This participant went on to discuss how this impacts her in the classroom:

I've been lucky to have never worked with a principal who was what I called a 'delegator'. Delegating is an important part of leading but Delegators delegate everything so their job is to show up in a suit and walk around. This impacts students because the motivation of teachers decreases.

This same participant explained:

When teachers work for principals who they don't feel are working hard, teachers slack. I know because I've seen it at other schools time and time again. When the principal is always late, the teachers are late. When the principal takes too many

days off, teachers do the same. This influences teaching because you can't effectively teach if you have stopped being totally vested in what you're doing.

This participant also discussed that this practice give her an extra level of trust with her principal.

“It shows me that he wouldn't have us doing extra unnecessary work. I trust that everything that he asks us to do is needed because I don't believe he'd ask us to do anything that he himself wouldn't do.”

Unfortunately, another participant with slightly more experience shared this practice from the opposite perspective:

I am in a situation where teachers just don't respect our principal. She hasn't led by example; she has just barked orders and teachers recognize that as a weakness. The consensus here is that teachers can do what they want because she [the principal] doesn't know what she's doing.

This participant went on to qualify this opinion:

I'll speak for myself and just say I don't think she knows what she's doing because she doesn't seem to get anything done. She seems to know what should be done because she asks everyone else to work, but she just doesn't seem to be working as hard herself. And being a new principal, this is not a good look for her.

The researcher then questioned what a school looked like when the principal was seen as hypocritical. This participant expressed:

Funny thing is it makes the teachers closer but in a negative way. Everyone now has something in common: a mutual lack of understanding of our principal's role. So the teachers have pretty much all aligned to be a cohesive team but it's become a team fighting against the principal. Teachers are late to faculty meetings all the time and she [the principal] doesn't address; or can't address it because she too is often late to work. It's a struggle to get teachers to participate in any event that takes place after school hours because she leaves right after dismissal.

Another participant with slightly less teaching experience also spoke about how helpful it is when a principal is willing to walk the walk. She shared similar experiences to others in that she has experience with principals that she perceived as hypocritical. This participant shared:

I've had four principals in the same number of years and feel like I've found a lot of practices that have helped me but even more that have hurt. My last principal was great at telling others what to do but not so good at doing things herself. She stayed on top of us to make sure we were busy but we never saw anything that she ever accomplished.

She explained that this “made us not want to do anything either.” When asked how this practice influenced her teaching, she shared, “I hate to admit it but it made me lazy. I see myself as somewhat of a leader but in that situation, I slacked because I felt that my principal was slacking.” This participant went on to express that by the time she realized she was being lazy, most of the school year was up and she had “somewhat failed the students.” “I hadn't been the best teacher that year” Participant 9 shared.

This same participant also expressed that she was, at the time, considering leaving the education professional. She explained, “It was the weirdest thing because I realized I was being a little lazy but I was so much more worn out; almost like I was just constantly going in circles”. She went on to clarify:

I work a second job part time and I really considered just doing that full time because it was more fun. I was really tired that school year. I'm glad that I stuck it out for another year though because my new principal works really hard for her teachers. But yeah, I was about to give it up because not only had I not done that well, but I been exhausted so much so that I would've thought I'd be the best teacher in America. It was wild.

Responsibility

Another prevalent subtheme was responsibility. Several participants spoke about the importance of principals taking the responsibility for their schools and having their teachers' backs.

One participant with many years of teaching experience shared that she perceived the practice of responsibility to be helpful for her and her teaching. She expressed that “it’s important we get support with parents and students.” She continued:

What I have found great is that my principal never just hangs us out to dry. She really takes control and knows that it’s her school. She doesn’t let parents come in and threaten us without her stepping in. [...] One example, well this example has happened more than once, but I had a student’s mother this year who was very difficult and disagreeable. She thought that everything that I did was wrong and she let my principal know every chance she got. Throughout this, my principal let the parent know that I am a good teacher, she even gave her examples. What really impressed me was that she even took responsibility for all of her teachers saying that “I’m the principal so if you have issues here with my teachers, I take full responsibility for them.”

This participant went on to explain:

My principal has been so consistent with her ownership of the school that the parents and students have come to expect nothing less. There is a lot more constructive communication between teachers and parents now and I attribute that, at least in part, to her leadership.

Another participant with significantly less experience had a similar reflection. She shared:

I need for my principals to be leaders and not pushovers. I have experience working with both great leaders and pushovers. With the pushover principals, it’s like teachers are always in losing situations. I worked for one principal at a school where the students knew it was easy to pit him [the principal] against us [the teachers]. When students went to him with outlandish allegations like “She kicked me out of class for sneezing!” or “She don’t like because I have trouble with math,” the principal used to actually take sides with the kids. I think it was because it was easier at the moment. But that really affected teachers.

This participant went on to explain:

It made us not trust him. I mean you take the word of middle school kids over your teachers? My current principal is really good about leading. Don’t get me wrong, if a teacher is in the wrong, he will address it. But he fights for us.

This same participant described the atmosphere of her current school where she felt her principal had her back as “just all around good”. She said:

It is just a good place. We talk a lot about principals handling discipline, and that is important. But I need my principal to trust that I am good at what I do and if he

has never had a reason to believe otherwise, he should have my back. It only helps us to remember to have his as well.

Another participant with a small amount of teaching experience stated that a leadership practice she perceives to help her is her principal taking responsibility for the school and his mistakes.

She shared:

I think sometimes principals want to be seen as way too superior. They sometimes don't want to be seen as humans and that's not really appealing to me as a teacher. I am thankful to work with a principal who is very relatable.

She explained, "When my principal does something wrong, she owns up to it, fixes it, and moves on." This participant stated:

There is no sense in pretending to be right. Just take responsibility for your downfalls. What this has done for my school is my principal has been able to identify leaders amongst us teachers who can help in areas that are not her strongest. This wouldn't ever happen if she was stuck on being right.

This participant added that her principal's willingness to be responsible "humanized her." She shared:

It made her seem like we could relate to her. She always had an open door policy like so many other principals but it doesn't matter if your door is open if teachers can't relate to you so won't walk through the door."

Summary

Analysis of the data centered on the teaching experiences of 13 teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools in one middle Tennessee school district. The analysis revealed several themes and all of the themes fell into one of three categories: support, autonomy, and sincerity.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the connection between principal leadership practices and the perceptions of how teachers reported the practices that influence teaching and learning. The interview method was used to collect the data for this study. The TELL TN survey is currently used to collect data in public schools throughout the state of Tennessee. This survey is used to obtain data on different aspects of education including school leadership. The TELL TN survey informed my interview questions in order to gain more in-depth data and to gain a greater understanding of the results.

Three labels emerged from interview data along with several underlying themes. The label of support contained three underlying themes: (1) handling of discipline, (2) timely feedback, (3) emotional understanding. Autonomy contained two underlying themes: (1) freedom and (2) flexibility. Sincerity also contained two underlying themes: (1) walking the walk and (2) responsibility.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are teachers' perceptions of different principal leadership practices that improve teaching and student learning?

Support

Handling of Discipline Issues

The perceptions of teachers in this study support the findings of Noorudin and Baig (2014). According to Nooruddin and Baig school leaders are responsible for formulating and consistently implementing policies and procedures for managing discipline. Several participants expressed opinions regarding how their school leaders handle disciplinary issues. There were similar opinions regarding the principal practice of handling discipline. Participants who mentioned their perceptions of this practice felt that it was important that their principals were consistent and present when discipline problems arose in their classrooms.

Participants expressed when their school leaders were consistent with handling discipline issues it empowered them as teachers. They shared that this empowerment helped give them confidence in their teaching and let the students know that all educators in the school were on the same page. One participant shared that her principal is not typically the person at her school who resolves discipline referrals. Instead her principal hired a dean who is devoted almost completely to discipline. She shared that as long as the discipline issues were appropriately handled, it did not concern her who was the person who did it.

Participants also expressed appreciation of those principals who are consistent with handling discipline problems. Participants discussed how these principals helped make their classrooms run more smoothly so students who wanted to learn were able to do so without the distraction of students who chose to misbehave. Some expressed how this perceived help and consistency was helpful for their classrooms because they had the knowledge that their principal supported them and the students had the same understanding. Participants shared that when

students are aware that administrators will address discipline issues, they tend to behave more appropriately.

Participants who were veteran educators shared that they too appreciated the timely and appropriate handling of discipline problems. They all expressed that although the discipline problems in their classrooms were now minimal, they still needed school administrators to act accordingly when the rare problems arose. These veteran teachers shared that they perceived one of the marks of an effective school leader is the supporting of teachers through the handling of discipline problems.

Timely Feedback

According to Dufour and Marzano (2009) it is important for principals to be in the classroom as a partner in order to see improvement in teaching. Several participants also expressed opinions about principals who provide timely feedback. Many participants expressed positive experiences of when their principals conducted classroom walkthroughs and then later shared positive aspects of the participants' teaching as well as areas that need refinement. Some teachers elaborated and shared that they found it helpful for their teaching when principals also suggested professional development opportunities that could directly improve their teaching.

Nearly all participants who spoke about timely feedback shared that this was especially beneficial to them when they were new teachers. Several participants shared that when they were new to the education profession it was helpful for their principals to give them feedback from walkthroughs because it helped them to understand the expectations that were placed on them. Participants shared that informal walkthroughs and evaluations gave them feedback that they have used to help improve their teaching practices.

Participants also shared that even as veteran teachers they found it helpful to them and beneficial to students when principals took the time to provide feedback that is not put into formal evaluations. Veteran teachers expressed that they wanted to keep up as education changed and as students changed with time. They shared that this feedback helped them to not be complacency and to continue growth.

Most participants who discussed feedback also addressed that they appreciate constructive criticism when it is given in an appropriate and timely manner. They expressed that they needed to know what they could do to improve their classrooms, but that it was important for this feedback to come in a timely manner so that they could properly reflect on the lesson that was evaluated.

While all participants who mentioned feedback expressed that constructive criticism was helpful to their teaching, one participant also shared her passion for school leaders giving positive feedback. She expressed that it encourages her teaching when her principals acknowledge what she is doing right just as often if not more often than they discuss what she can improve on. This participant also shared that positive feedback motivates her to do even better in regards to her teaching, expressing that when she is acknowledged for doing well, she pushes herself to do even better.

Emotional Understanding

Spears (2002) reported that a positive characteristic of servant leaders is empathy; these leaders can see things from the point of view of the follower and understand the follower's needs and what they are going through. Three of the 13 participants mentioned some form of emotion understanding as a leadership practice that they perceived to be beneficial to their teaching. All

participants, in some way, mentioned that they had a positive perception of principals who practiced expressing emotional understanding. All participants shared that they appreciated a principal who did not treat them as simply teachers but also as human beings who needed to take care of themselves and their own lives.

Participants also shared that it was helpful to their teaching when their principals reminded them to enjoy their personal hobbies and interests. They described how, especially early on in their careers, they became immersed in teaching and time for their personal interests became more limited. The principal practice of providing emotional understanding enabled them to make more time for things that would keep them mentally healthy, which would also help them to be more effective teachers.

Participants also expressed that there was no one specific way for a principal to provide emotional understanding; rather it was just an understood practice. They reported that this practice had more of a positive yet indirect effect on teaching. While the participants' language varied, they each implied that this understood practice was something that was difficult to verbally describe but very clear when it was there as well as when it was lacking. Participants were also consistent in the positive effects on principals' emotional support.

Sincerity

Many participants discussed how principals who “walked the walk” helped their teaching and overall experience as an educator. These participants expressed that when they perceived their principal as a hard worker they, in turn, worked harder in their classrooms and in the school in general. Gale and Bishop (2014) reported that principals should be able to find a balance between the perception of authority figure while also being able to be relatable to teachers.

Participants shared that working for principals who are hard workers greatly improves teaching and learning because it inspires better teaching.

One participant also shared that when principals walk the walk, their expectations are also made clearer because they are not only verbally expressed but the expectations are also modeled. This participant shared that this helps teaching because it leaves less room for questions regarding the expectations of the principal. The principal does exactly what he or she asks of everyone else so everyone else can see what they should be doing.

Participants shared that they perceived principals who held a sense of responsibility aided in helping teaching. The consistent perception among participants was that when principals took responsibility for their schools as wholes, they are motivated to teach to the best of their ability. They shared that this practice, similar to the handling of discipline issues, made teachers feel as though the principal had their backs. Participants shared that when principals took responsibility for their schools and knew that not everything that happened negatively in the school was the fault of the teacher, it gave them a sense of security and loyalty.

Research Question 2

Research question 2: What are teachers' perceptions of different principal practices that hinder teacher performance?

At some point during the interviews all participants expressed their perceptions of practices that hinder their performance as teachers. While the effects of these practices varied, many of the perceptions were similar among participants.

Handling of discipline

Several participants discussed the ways that a lack of disciplinary support among school administration hindered their teaching. Lemov (2010) argued that in order for teachers to maintain effective authority in a classroom, each and every student must follow their directions. Some participants discussed a feeling of disempowerment when their school leadership failed to support them with disciplinary issues. One participant included a specific example of a time when she perceived that her principal had not supported her with a discipline issue in her classroom. She recalled how this incident left her feeling embarrassed and disempowered. This perception was repeated among several participants. Many participants shared that their students were aware of when a school leader was not going to discipline them for their poor behavior. They expressed that in those instances students knew that they did not have to behave appropriately, so they did not. Participants shared that this hindered their teaching because they were constantly trying to manage the behavior of the classroom rather than sharing the content with students.

Some participants discussed a shift in their effort and motivation when they did not feel supported by their principals. Participants discussed that they sometimes did not give their full effort in their teaching for a couple of different reasons. One reason was because they felt that if their principals would not be an active disciplinarian, it meant that their principals did not have their backs. For this reason participants expressed that they felt that they did not have to work as hard under this type of leadership. Some participants also expressed that they were aware of when their motivation to do well shifted. Some expressed that this lack of motivation was caused because the lack of support from their principals lowered their morale.

Timely Feedback

According to Range, Finch, Young, and Hvidston (2014) classroom walkthroughs are only as effective as the feedback that is provided. Participants shared that they perceived a principal's failure to mentor and provide feedback to hinder their teaching. Some recalled instances when they were formally or informally evaluated but their principals either failed to provide feedback or did not provide it in a timely enough manner for it to benefit their teaching. This was especially the case with teachers when they were newer to the career. Participants expressed that they needed timely feedback in order to understand the expectations of the school and the school leaders. One participant expressed how her principals does walkthrough evaluations but sometimes does not provide feedback at all. This specific participant shared that this was a pointless activity and that she could have benefitted from feedback from her principal.

Some veteran teaching participants expressed that a lack of timely feedback would keep them out of the loop with the changes in students and in education in general. They shared that when their principals fail to provide feedback through walkthroughs, it is easy for the participants to not be aware of changes. Participants also shared that a lack of feedback could keep them from being up to date on what the principals' expect with the ever-changing aspects of education.

Some participants also expressed that they perceived that a lack of positive feedback is a practice that they feel hinders their teaching. They shared that constructive criticism is needed in order to improve teaching however a balance of constructive and positive feedback helps. Participants shared that a lack of positive feedback takes away from their morale and can cause them to discontinue classroom practices that are actually effective. One participant expressed a

particular angst for principals who provide feedback that is consistently negative. This participant shared that she found a lack of positive feedback to be draining in an already difficult profession.

Sincerity

Several participants shared that when their principals failed to “walk the walk” they perceived the principals as lazy. Participants shared that when they felt that they worked for a lazy principal, their own efforts became minimal. They expressed that it was not enough for principals to explain their expectations because if principals were not meeting these same expectations, they seemed hypocritical. Participants shared that when principals lack a strong work ethic, teachers tend to follow suit. Participants also shared that this has a negative impact on teaching because teachers stop being totally vested in what they are doing. One participant elaborated saying that when principals delegate everything and do, what is perceived as, nothing, teachers become complacent and learning suffers.

In walking the walk participants also expressed the importance of their school leaders to know their role, know their school, and know what they are supposed to do. One participant shared that her principal was not respected among the teachers because the principal did not seem to know what she was doing. This participant expressed that this led to teachers, for the most part, doing whatever they wanted to do. This had a negative impact on teaching because there was an overall lack of consistency in school amongst teachers and administrators.

Participants also shared those principals who do not take responsibility for their schools as wholes hinder teaching. Some participants shared that when principals do not defend their teachers when appropriate, the teachers tend to end up in undesirable situations with parents and

students. Participants reported that when principals are not willing to take responsibility, it shows a lack of support to the teachers and a lack of support leads to a lack of effort in the classroom. One participant who shared this opinion went on to express that when principals are perceived as pushovers, teachers are put into situations where they are defending themselves without the support of their principal.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What leadership practices increase teacher motivation and teacher efficacy?

Freedom

According to Antonakis (2012) leaders should provide teachers with intellectual stimulation, allowing teachers the freedom to be creative in the classroom. Many participants mentioned autonomy and freedom at some point when discussing leadership practices that increase their motivation and efficacy. While at different times of the interview process, many participants mentioned that when they were given the freedom to do what they felt was best for their own students and classes, they felt more motivated to do their very best.

Several participants, in some form, expressed that they were typically self-motivated and self-led and needed the freedom to be so. Interestingly this response came mostly from veteran teachers who needed much more support in previous years and just wanted freedom to teach their own way currently. Micromanaging frequently came up among participants regarding freedom, or lack thereof. Some participants elaborated stating that when they are micromanaged, they are less motivated to create and teach interesting lessons. The common opinion was that micromanaging principals tended to push their own opinions on their teachers failing to take into

consideration that not only is every school different but every classroom is also different. Participants expressed that this drove them to put forth less effort in the development of their lesson plans and activities because they knew that the opinions of the administrator would supersede their own ideas.

Participants shared how much a lack of freedom stifled their creativity. A common perception was that when participants were not given the freedom to teach as they saw fit, they felt that there was no reason to produce creative lessons as these lessons would eventually be changed to fit the teaching style of the school leader. Participants expressed that this influenced teaching and had a bigger influence on student learning. Students were not seeing the best and most creative aspects of their teachers.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of teachers as to how principals lead and what principals do and how effective teachers are. The interview method was used to analyze the results of this study. The TELL TN survey informed interview questions in order to gain more in-depth data and to gain a greater understanding of the results. This study served as an examination of the connection between principal leadership practices and the perceptions of how teachers reported the practices that influence teaching and learning.

Analysis of the data caused several themes to surface. Further examination of the emergent themes revealed that there were varied perceptions from teachers of what aids in teaching and learning. First, teachers need to feel supported. This support can come in varied forms including: managing discipline, providing timely feedback, and providing emotional

understanding. In addition, autonomy and sincerity proved to be significant for teachers as it relates to teaching and learning.

Interestingly, factors were not exclusive to gender, current teaching roles, or number of school leaders that teachers had served under. All individuals reported that they perceived that they would benefit from similar leadership practices while they would also be hindered from similar leadership practices.

Conclusions

Many of my perceptions of school leadership practices and their effects on teaching and learning have remained the same following the conclusion of the research. As an educator of 10 years I had learned from experience that teachers needed certain specific supports in order to teach to their full potential. However, some of my perceptions changed. I had never experienced principal walkthroughs, or feedback regarding walkthroughs so I did not expect to see them as significant through my research.

The most surprising aspect of this research was the overarching theme of support. It seemed that nearly every response to nearly every question was tied back to school leaders' support in some way. Participants consistently acknowledged that the support of their principal was what made the difference in their effectiveness as teachers.

Recommendations for Practice

Support, autonomy, and sincerity are factors that teachers perceive to have an effect their teaching and student learning. Based upon this research the following recommendations are being made to schools and districts respectfully:

1. Districts and schools provide professional development for school leaders that address the aforementioned factors that teachers perceive to affect teaching.
2. Establish school level panels that facilitate open dialogue between school leadership teams and teachers to ascertain that concerns are being addressed an consistency throughout school.
3. Create schools' shared mission and vision as a team.
4. Provide periodical walkthrough evaluations and provide teachers with detailed and timely feedback. (Observations should not be associated with the formal evaluation model)
5. Encourage and provide professional development opportunities for teachers in areas that the teacher and/or school leader sees need.
6. Develop a shared disciplinary model and school leadership and teachers follow model consistently.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on this research the following recommendations are made for future research:

1. Additional reserach focusing on themes of this study could be conducted. Survey data could be collected from a larger sample to determine if there are differences among teachers based on experience, gender, teaching assignment, etc.
2. A mixed methods study could be conducted to further identify other potential themes that could add to this research.

3. Provided that the school district offers professional development for school leaders, research could be conducted from the same population as this research to ascertain the effectiveness of the professional development.

Concluding Thoughts

Through the research I have found that above many other aspects of the education professional, teachers need administrative support in order to be successful in the classroom. No participant shared otherwise. Even the participants who expressed the need for freedom and autonomy shared that there was needed support even in that. My hope is that district professional development for leaders and educational leadership programs place an emphasis on not only pedagogy but also ways in which school leaders can be a support to their teams of teachers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

All interviews were conducted in a casual and conversational manner. The questions were composed with an understanding of the purpose of the study. The questions were in part influenced by my own experiences as an educator. The inclusion of this experience in the development of the interview questions allowed for a more natural conversation and a less intimidating process. Questions were all open-ended and designed to allow for objective responses, keeping the biases and opinions of the researcher completely concealed. I understand that questions may be slightly modified as the interview process progresses.

All questions below are aligned with the research questions for the study as well as with the TELL TN survey.

Interview Questions

1. How many years have you worked in this district?
2. What grade levels do you have professional experience with?
3. How many executive principals have you worked for?
4. What specific ways does your school leadership support you?
5. Are you held to high professional standards?
 - a. How does this influence your teaching?
 - b. How does this influence student achievement?
6. How does your school leader use data to improve teaching?
7. How does your school leader use data to improve student learning?
8. How does your school leader reflect the school's shared vision?
9. How does your school leader empower you to take responsibility of your teaching and student learning?
10. How does your school leader empower you to take responsibility in your professional development and growth?

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership Practices in Middle Tennessee Schools

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Tiffany Martin from East Tennessee State University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about ways that school leaders can enhance teaching. I will be one of approximately 13 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no one on my campus will be told.

2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview. This study does include benefits and a slight risk. Benefits include: teacher empowerment to elaborate on TELL TN survey items and school/district level understanding of how teachers perceive leadership practices in their schools. There is however, a slight risk that if audio recordings were to be mishandled, confidentiality could be breached.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by Tiffany Martin. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview will be made. It will be destroyed immediately after the conclusion of data analysis. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.

4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

5. Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.

6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Tennessee State University.

7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a signed copy of this consent form. I understand that if questions should arise, I can contact the researcher at (270)300-8166 or via email at martintj@goldmail.etsu.edu or the study's faculty advisor Dr. Virginia Foley at (423)-439-7615.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understand this Informed Consent Document and that I had the opportunity to have them explained to me verbally. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and that all my questions have been answered. By signing below, I confirm that I freely and voluntarily choose to take part in this research study.

Signature

Date

Tiffany J. Martin

Date

APPENDIX D

Principal Permission Request

Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership Practices in Middle Tennessee Schools

My name is Tiffany Martin and I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University. I am conducting research on teachers' perceptions of principal leadership practices in Middle Tennessee Schools. The Metropolitan Nashville Public School district has granted approval to approach schools for my research. A copy of their approval is enclosed. I invite you to consider taking part in this research.

Research Purpose

This study focused on the overall perceptions about school leadership practices and their effects on teaching and student learning. Through this research, recognition of the link between different principal leadership practices and the quality of teaching and overall success of a school was examined. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers in regards to what they report helps them to be successful in the classroom.

Significance of Study

This study aims to provide an understanding of the administrative practices that positively and negatively impact teaching and student learning from the perspective of the teacher. This study could be beneficial to school leaders in identifying practices that teachers perceive to be helpful. School leaders include but are not limited to: principals, assistant principals, deans, and teacher leaders. This research would also be beneficial to district, state and government level leaders. It can provide a guide for helping leaders to understand what practices are perceived to help their schools and students as well as how to create positive change.

Research Plan

Data will be collected from interviews with teachers who meet the criteria listed below. Teachers will be selected once it has been ascertained that they meet this criteria.

5. At least 3 years of relevant experience.
6. Employed at a school in this specific school district.
7. Certified
8. Has served with at least 2 school leaders (either principals or assistant principals).

All information collected will be treated in strict confidence and neither school nor teachers will be identifiable in any reports. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without

VITA

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