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**A PRINCIPAL STRIVING FOR EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
IN AN ERA OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

by

Matthew J. Mazzoni

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
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Dissertation Chair: Lisa Vernon-Dotson, Ph.D.

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to wife, Kate. We still laugh to think that our second date started with her sitting in my office waiting for me to finish my online presentation to my classmates during a summer course at Rowan University. She has been by my side from that day forward. Kate has seen my highs and lows throughout this dissertation journey, and I am forever grateful to her. She was always there to provide the necessary support, and was the loudest voice I heard when I needed that push to the finish line. Thank you Kate, and I love you.

I also dedicate this manuscript to our daughter, Josephine. Josephine was only 2 months old in my arms when Dr. Vernon-Dotson and the committee members congratulated me on a successful defense. Josephine may not remember the magnitude of this day; however, it is my hope that she will come to understand the value of perseverance and commitment when it comes to reaching a goal, just like her father set out to do in 2012 and accomplished in 2017.

Lastly, Kate framed a quote from Louis Pasteur and placed it in my office, which became my mantra throughout this dissertation journey: “Let me tell you the secret that had led me to my goal. My strength lies solely in my tenacity.”

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Lisa Vernon-Dotson for chairing my committee. Dr. Lisa Vernon-Dotson displayed patience and a positive attitude while finding ways to push me to be just a little bit better. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Gloria Hill and Dr. James Sarruda for their constant feedback and guidance through the entire dissertation phase.

Abstract

Matthew Mazzoni
A PRINCIPAL STRIVING FOR EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN
AN ERA OF ACCOUNTABILITY

2017-2018

Lisa Vernon-Dotson, Ph.D.
Doctor of Education

The purpose of this case study was to explore a principal's experiences and how they aligned to Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) effective instructional leadership practices in an era of accountability. This study of effective principal leadership is timely and relevant due to the recent implementation of national and state mandates for principals to be instructional leaders through the adoption of a distributed leadership model. This seventh year principal, also the researcher-participant in this study, had the responsibility of overseeing approximately 100 professional and support staff members and approximately 750 students ranging from pre-kindergarten to the eighth grade. The pre-k to 8 school being studied was one of five schools out of approximately 54 schools in the county with the same grade span. The researcher concluded that a principal can be an effective instructional leader while spending minimal time in the classroom through setting the school vision, providing feedback on formal evaluations, and supporting professional development opportunities. Furthermore, the principal's ability to adopt a distributed leadership framework with teacher leaders to carry out management and instructional tasks created sustainable change within the school. Further research is needed to explore the type of feedback that principals are providing teachers in the evaluation system.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The role of the principal has been redefined in recent years in order to keep pace with the growing accountability movement in New Jersey and the United States.

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) model guided the current study on principal leadership. The PIMRS identifies three dimensions: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate. The PIMRS model encompasses 10 areas that represent instructional leadership behaviors by a principal (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Furthermore, instructional leadership has shifted away from the principal as the single leader and now encompasses a distribution of leadership to include the principal and teacher leaders (Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpa, 2014; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Spillane, 2005; Spillane & Healey, 2010; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). A leadership team can consist of designated and undesignated leaders in a school (Spillane, 2009; Spillane & Healey, 2010). The capacity building for a principal is to assemble a leadership team of teachers and staff members who are given some level of autonomy to lead professional development opportunities, make instructional decisions, and support novice and/or ineffective teachers in all areas of their professional responsibilities.

In this new era of accountability in education, the role of the principal can be a significant factor for the high turnover rate among principals (Metlife, 2012). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there were approximately 89,810 public school principals in the United States during the 2012-2013 school year (NCES, 2015). Scholars have suggested that 25,000—almost one quarter of principals—leave

their schools each year (School Leaders Network, 2014). Furthermore, nearly 50% of new principals leave their post by the third year (Fuller & Young, 2009).

According to the 2012 MetLife survey of 500 principals, almost one half of the principals surveyed reported high stress at least 3 days out of each week (Metlife, 2012). Furthermore, nearly 70% of the 500 principals surveyed perceived their responsibilities to be drastically different than 5 years ago (Metlife, 2012). Thus, approximately one third of the principals surveyed considered leaving the profession (Metlife, 2012). Principals who have not received any professional development are also 40% more likely to leave their post as principal than their counterparts who received some level of professional development the prior year (NCES, 2013). Principals are not alone in navigating the unsettling seas that the era of accountability has created in schools. According to the Economic Policy Institute (2010), the teacher evaluation systems used in today's schools may hinder teacher motivation in the classroom, and their participation in activities aimed at building the school climate and culture.

A principal can become conflicted in his or her role as the evaluator of teachers using the evaluation system while still trying to engage teachers in their practice and development (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012). Hallinger, Heck, and Murphy (2014) concluded that school leaders with the charge of evaluating teachers “find it difficult at best and counter-productive at worst” (p. 22). Kimball and Milanowski (2009) conducted a mixed-methods study reviewing the decision-making of 23 principals by reviewing the variation in the validity of teacher evaluation ratings. Evaluator perception of the process was generally positive and considered the process a tool for teacher development regardless of how laborious the

paperwork can be for one evaluation (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009). In contrast, Kimball and Milanowski (2009) concluded that “little emphasis is placed on following a uniform process; there is a low level of accountability for accurate evaluation unless a teacher’s job is at stake; evaluators are not required to take follow-up training; and the ratings have little consequence for most teachers” (p. 63). In a massive mixed-method study, the researchers concluded that principals and other designated school leaders (n=1,300) embellished teacher evaluation ratings (Sexton, Muhern, Keeling, & Weisburg, 2009). The findings concluded that 99% of teachers received a satisfactory rating in a two-prong assessment tool: satisfactory and unsatisfactory. In addition, 94% of teachers received one of the two top ratings, while only one percent of teachers rated unsatisfactory (Sexton et al., 2009).

The most recent data on teacher effectiveness in New Jersey corroborated with the aforementioned research that principals tended to score teachers higher on their evaluation to maintain the school climate and the principal-teacher relationship (Kimball & Milanowski, 2009; Sexton et al., 2009). Approximately 98% of New Jersey public school teachers were rated as effective or highly effective during the 2014-2015 school year (Mooney, 2016).

History of the Principal: Origins and Roles

The role of the principal has undoubtedly evolved from its existence. In *The principal’s office: A social history of the American school principal*, Rousmanier (2013) identified the conception of the title, principal, originated in the 1600s as communities became more established in America. A principal had the charge of being the teacher and manager of the one room school. During the Industrial Revolution, schools were

reformed to mirror the factory model; thus, a principal's main priority was to supervisor teachers (Rousmaniere, 2013). John Philbrick, Boston superintendent and former principal in 1865, believed that a principal would be "vested with sufficient authority to manage school planning and to keep all subordinates in their proper place and at their assigned tasks" (as cited in Rousmaniere, 2013, p. 20). Some examples of job tasks principals were responsible for was to ring the bell to mark the start of the day and recess, maintain order and discipline, and monitor student attendance rates (Rousmaniere, 2013). While some of the management tasks from the early days of a principal are still in place, the expectation of a principal has shifted to a focus on instructional leadership.

Pino and Johnson (1968) identified the principal as "the most important single role of administration in any public school system" (p. 522). Dating back to 1968, researchers have urged principals to redefine their role by making instructional leadership practices a priority over management functions that seem to dominate the role of a principal (Pino & Johnson, 1968; Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). The research on principal leadership from the 1970s and 1980s support Pino and Johnson's findings that principals spent a majority of their time on managerial tasks outside of instruction (Morris, Crowson, Hurwitz, & Porter-Gehrie, 1982; Pino & Johnson, 1968). In a study of 24 principals in the Chicago public schools from 1977 to 1980 attempting to capture a principal's workday, Morris et al. (1982) concluded that instructional leadership was not a principal's central focus. Instead, the principal's workday was busy with:

1. School monitoring behaviors (touring school corridors; receiving information on "what's going on" from staff, students, or parents; checking on activities in progress);
2. Serving as school spokesperson (giving information to people outside the school, including administrative superiors);
3. Serving the school staff internally as a disseminator of information and group leader (giving instructions to subordinates, socializing with the faculty, criticizing or commending a staff member);
4. Serving the school as both disturbance handler and resource allocator (settling disputes between students or staff members, overseeing pupil scheduling and staff deployment, handling unexpected crises or injuries).

James G. March, a professor at the David Jacks Higher Education School at Stanford University and a leading voice in education towards the end of the twentieth century comments seemed to reinforce the findings in the Chicago study. March's (1978) assertion 37 years ago adds to the conversation of how principals spent a majority of their school day. "Educational leaders spend considerable time talking to people about minor things, making trivial decisions, holding meetings on unimportant agendas, and responding to little irritants in organizational life" (March, 1978, p. 233).

As schools neared the new century, others began to raise new ideas about the main function of the principal. Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) affirmed that the role of the principal has evolved from the role of manager as aforementioned to an instructional leader that empowers teacher leaders with shared leadership. Elmore (2002) argued that many of the tasks principals were reluctant to undertake in past years were coming to the

forefront. Elmore (2002) asserted support for instructional leadership, stating, “That grinding sound you hear out there is a system waking up to the fact that it is now responsible for the learning of children. It’s metal on metal. It’s not very well lubricated” (p. 11).

This Wallace Perspective (2013) identified five areas that effective principals do well in today’s schools: (a) shaping a vision of academic success for all students; (b) creating a climate hospitable to education; (c) cultivating leadership in others; (d) improving instruction; and (e) managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement. The five areas identified by the Wallace Perspective for effective principals are similar to Hallinger and Murphy’s (1985) conceptual model on effective principal leadership that focus on three dimensions: defining the school’s vision and mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate.

A principal should be an influential force in the school and community to ensure the vision of the school is focused on student achievement (Porter et al., 2008). A principal shall create an image for his staff that pushes the boundaries of the status quo (Northouse, 2012). Fullan (2011) further explained that effective leaders need to focus on a limited number of goals and work effortlessly to develop others to buy into the vision and mission of the organization.

The principal is responsible to create an environment at the school that involves students and school community members into school-wide activities that promote a positive school climate (Portin et al., 2009). Principals are challenged with balancing the time and efforts spent on school-wide activities and the time spent on instructional activities such as classroom observations and walkthroughs. Additionally, Horng, Klasik,

and Loeb (2010) concluded that teachers and parents were more likely to have a negative perception on the school climate the more time principals spent in classrooms with observations.

Current researchers have demonstrated that schools with principals who strongly focus on instructional leadership and collaboration amongst teachers have an indirect correlation to student academic achievement more so than their counterparts (Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015; Seashore et al., 2010). An example of this is a principal who protects instructional time in the classroom and builds teacher leadership through collaboration (Portin et al., 2009). Heck and Hallinger (2009) concluded from their longitudinal study that principal stability had a positive effect on teacher perceptions of distributed leadership.

The role of a principal today consists of improving instruction by closely monitoring teaching and learning in the classroom. This is largely accomplished through principals participating in formal evaluations of teachers to the implementation of classroom walkthroughs where teachers gain feedback from what principals saw or did not see in the informal evaluation (Seashore et al., 2010). As a result of the classroom visits, professional development opportunities are then afforded to teachers in need of specific strategies to improve teaching and learning (Seashore et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, principals are still responsible for a high amount of management tasks. Horng and Loeb (2010) found that the highest performing schools had principals who were effective organizational managers. The tasks of an organizational manager consist of “hiring and supporting staff, allocating budgets and resources, and maintaining positive working and learning environments” (Horng & Leob, 2010, p. 67). Effective

principals also have the necessary task of removing teachers identified ineffective and show minimal to no professional growth (Horng & Leob, 2010; Portin et al., 2009).

Standards for Effective Leadership

Variables such as a principal's experience, school policies, student population, and school demographics have to be taken into consideration when analyzing a principal's practice (Goldring et al., 2009). Nonetheless, a principal's practice can be generalized to the actions aligned to effective school leadership (Goldring et al., 2009). The professional standards for school leaders in New Jersey are a by-product of the original work done by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1996 to develop national standards for school leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers Interstate School Leaders Consortium, 2008).

The original ISLLC standards were revised in 2008 and then replaced in 2015 by newly adopted standards for educational leaders called the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Numerous national associations developed the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. The associations included the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders standards were developed using three sources of information. The committee used empirical evidence about effective leadership as a major source of information to create the standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). In addition to empirical research,

more than 1,000 school and district leaders participated in focus groups and completed surveys to assist in the development of the standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The standards were developed to guide principals and assistant principals instead of district-level leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

According to the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015), “The 2015 Standards were ‘model’ professional standards in that they communicate expectations to practitioners, supporting institutions, professional associations, policy makers and the public about the work, qualities and values of effective educational leaders (p. 6). Figure 1 shows how the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders support the overall goal of student learning:

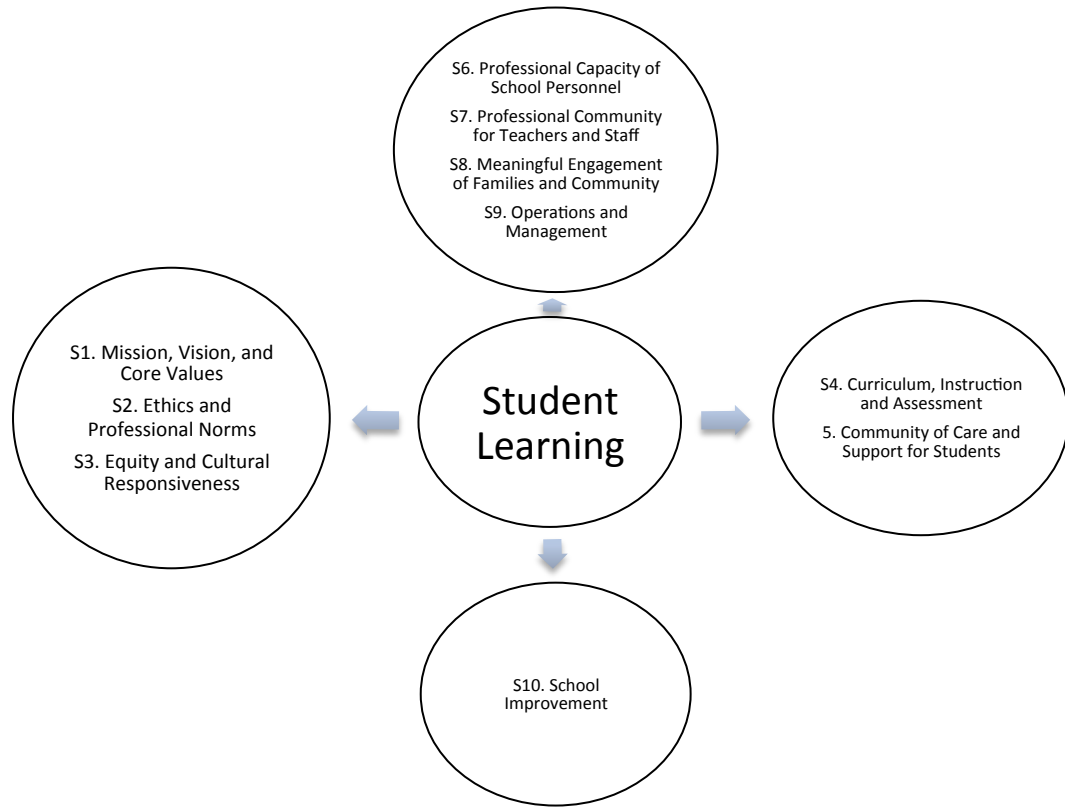


Figure 1. Professional School Leadership Standards (2015) to improve student learning.

The figure above illustrates the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders into four domains. The domains collectively are an integral part of students' abilities to learn and succeed in school. The first domain is Mission, Vision and Core Values, Ethics and Professional Norms, and Equity and Cultural Responsiveness. The second domain consists of Professional Capacity of School Personnel, Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community, and Operations and Management. The third domain encompasses Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and Community of Care and Support for

Students. The fourth domain is School Improvement, which affects the other three domains (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

In addition to the professional standards outlined above, the role of the principal has been clearly defined by the recent accountability mandates. Educational policies at the national and state level have become an emphasis to the role of a school principal today. This is evident from the most current educational legislation in New Jersey identifying the principal to serve the school population as the instructional leader and create a culture focused on student learning.

Federal and State Mandates

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has significant impact on the educational program at the state and local school district level. Federal involvement into school governance to ensure student equity dates back to President Lyndon Johnson signing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law in 1965 under the belief that "full educational opportunity should be our first national goal" (ESSA, 2015, para. 7). In 2001, the United States congress reauthorized the ESEA by putting into law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. "NCLB put in place measures that exposed achievement gaps among traditionally underserved students and their peers and spurred an important national dialogue on education improvement" (ESSA, 2015, para. 8). This focus on accountability has been critical in ensuring a quality education for all children, yet also presented challenges in the implementation process. NCLB outlined accountability measures for schools to meet called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This was the first time in history that schools were mandated to conduct annual student standardized assessments connected to state-adopted standards to identify schools that

were meeting or falling short of AYP (Dee, Jacob, Hoxby, & Ladd, 2010). The critics of NCLB rejected federal government's involvement partly due to the impractical goal set for student achievement on standardized tests. For instance, schools were expected to have all students at the proficient level in English Language Arts and mathematics by the year 2014 (Porter, 2007).

President Obama signed the ESSA into law on December 10, 2015. This bipartisan measure reauthorized the 50-year-old ESEA. The ESSA continues the practice of standardized testing in the areas of math and English Language Arts for students in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school, however, the ESSA will give states more autonomy in identifying student success (Klein, 2015). The ESSA enables states to develop their own goals to address student proficiency on standardized assessments, English-language proficiency, and graduation rates (Klein, 2015).

Prior to ESSA, the Obama administration granted flexibility to states regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to close achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of instruction, and increase outcomes for all students in 2012. The ESEA Flexibility required states to reform their teacher and principal evaluation systems with the goal of supporting educators and improving instruction (ESEA Flexibility Renewal Form New Jersey, 2015). The Race to the Top program focused on four tenets of education reform:

1. Adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
2. Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;

3. Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
4. Turning around the lowest-performing schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2014)

Local school districts that receive state funding under ESSA are responsible to execute a myriad of responsibilities that fall on the shoulders of a school principal. One obligation for schools is to develop a teacher evaluation system that partly takes into account student achievement and includes multiple measures of teacher performance (ESSA, 2016). Furthermore, the ESSA (2016) mandated state agencies to evaluate local school districts to ensure comprehensive programs and activities are being implemented that focus on, but are not limited to, the following areas:

1. Personnel decisions/hiring;
2. High quality professional development;
3. Rigorous but fair evaluation of teachers;
4. Use data to drive decision-making;
5. Reduction in class size;
6. Improving teaching and student learning and achievement;
7. Integrate technology into curriculum and instruction;
8. Effectively engage parents, families, and community partners;
9. Develop policy, interventions and supports for student success;
10. Early intervention in the early grades;
11. Assessments to improve instruction and student academic achievement;
12. Address health and wellness;

13. School-based mental health programs;
14. Create a safe school environment;
15. Address chronic absenteeism;
16. Provide drug and alcohol education;
17. Implement gifted and talented education;
18. Implement English language learners education;
19. Educate students with disabilities;
20. Effective school library programs;
21. Promote science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and computer science;
22. Improve school climate;
23. Integrate rigorous academic content; and
24. Infuse career and technical education. (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2016)

TEACH NJ and AchieveNJ

Federal funds were earmarked for states that implemented teacher and principal evaluation systems. For example, the State of New Jersey was awarded a 38 million dollar Race to the Top award for their ESEA waiver application with the commitment to improving evaluations for all educators (Barra & Kobus, 2011). In turn, the “Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey” Act, referred to as TEACH NJ, was signed into law by the governor on August 6, 2012. In response to the TEACH NJ law, the new evaluation system in New Jersey titled, AchieveNJ was implemented into public schools at the start of the 2013-2014 school year (S. 1455, 2012). New Jersey was one of the 42 states along with the District of Columbia approved

for a waiver from the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as far back as 2012. One of the stipulations of the NCLB waiver was the development and implementation of a principal evaluation system that includes student achievement growth and principals' leadership practices. The TEACH NJ Act declared the following:

Changing the current evaluation system to focus on improved student outcomes, including objective measures of student growth, is critical to improving teacher effectiveness, raising student achievement, and meeting the objectives of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (S. 1455, 2012).

Thus, the New Jersey Department of Education created a new evaluation system, AchieveNJ, to carry out the directives outlined in the TEACHNJ Act. A guiding principle of AchieveNJ is structured around the belief that educator effectiveness has a significant impact on student learning (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014).

Teacher evaluations. States such as New Jersey have adopted policies to bring more rigorous standards to the teaching profession is partly due to the groundbreaking research in recent years centered on student achievement and teacher effectiveness (Cantrell & Kane, 2013; Sexton et al., 2009). Researchers have supported the proposition that improving teacher quality is one of the most powerful ways—if not the most powerful way—to create better schools. A 3-year study funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation determined that a student assigned to an effective teacher for a single school year may gain up to 1 full year's worth of additional academic growth compared to a student assigned to an ineffective teacher (Cantrell & Kane, 2013). Having a series of strong or weak teachers in consecutive years compounds the impact. If high-need students are given three highly effective teachers in a row, they may outperform students

taught by three ineffective teachers in a row by as much as 50 percentile points (Sexton et al., 2009).

The era of accountability has yielded a number of empirical studies that focus on the impact teacher evaluation systems have on student learning (Hallinger et al., 2014). Hallinger and colleagues asserted that there are insignificant results between standards-based teacher evaluations and student learning. Furthermore, Borman and Kimball (2005) concluded in their study of 400 teachers and 7,000 students in one school district that results were minimal between teacher effectiveness and closing the achievement gap. Borman and Kimball explained:

This analysis suggests that teacher quality, as defined and applied in the evaluation system of one school district, may not show reliable relations to closing achievement gaps between poor and more advantaged, minority and nonminority, and low- and high-achieving students. The implications for the evaluation system are important, especially if a key component of teacher quality is an ability to close achievement gaps. (Borman & Kimball, 2005, p. 18)

In a similar study, Kimball, White, Milanowski, and Borman (2004) investigated whether teachers identified effective on the evaluation system produce higher levels of student learning when compared to their peers. The results offered little evidence that teacher evaluation systems correlate to student learning. More so, the relationship between the principal and teachers have intensified due to the teacher evaluation system.

Statement of the Problem

The current study of effective principal leadership is timely and relevant due to the recent implementation of AchieveNJ in public schools. AchieveNJ mandates

principals to be instructional leaders through the development and support of teachers as referenced in ESSA. The mandates that New Jersey principals are facing with Achieve NJ mirror other principals in the United States. The ESSA (2016) aims to increase the number of principals “who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools” (p. 300) through recruitment, training, and preparation (. Nevertheless, the multitude of roles and responsibilities of a school principal reduces his or ability to facilitate teachers in instructional practices.

The ESSA (2016) takes into account that principals need to develop teachers for leadership roles through a distributed leadership approach. The law outlines the federal and state commitments to support principals for “building the capacity of teachers and opportunities to develop meaningful teacher leadership” (ESSA, 2016, p. 333). This kind of approach to principal leadership is necessary but not easily accepted by teachers. According to Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995), teachers identified as leaders in a school put them in conflict with their coworkers as the job responsibilities of administration and teachers become distorted.

Through the results of this case study, the researcher aimed to support principals in their own unique school-communities engaging in instructional leadership practices. In order to do so, the principal has to be viewed by all, educators, parents, and board of education members to be the catalyst and practitioner for improving instruction and student learning. The researcher aimed to assist principals in creating a school culture where instructional leadership actions are the highest priority.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore a principal's experiences and how they aligned to effective instructional leadership practices in an era of accountability. AchieveNJ outlines that principals are to serve as instructional leaders and maintain a culture of learning and collaboration for all teachers. Additionally, this researcher aimed to examine how the adoption of a distributed leadership model supports a principal's ability to be an instructional leader under the new evaluation system in New Jersey.

The principal as researcher-participant in this study had the responsibility of overseeing approximately 100 professional and support staff members and approximately 750 students ranging from pre-kindergarten to grade eight. The grade span of pre-k to grade 8 at the school was unique when compared to other elementary and middle schools in Atlantic County, New Jersey. The school is one of only five schools out of approximately 54 schools in the county with the same grade span of pre-k to grade eight.

Research Questions/Subquestions

The researcher focused on one central research question with four subquestions to guide this study. The central question was: How can a principal be an effective instructional leader in an era of accountability? The subquestions included:

1. How does a principal engage in effective instructional leadership practices on a daily basis?
2. How much of a principal's day focuses on instructional leadership activities?
3. How does a principal balance the organizational management tasks with the instructional leadership tasks on a daily basis?

4. How does a principal distribute tasks to designated and undesignated leaders in the school?

Theoretical Framework

The researcher used the framework on effective principal leadership developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) to explore the principal's experiences and perceptions of instructional leadership. The model focuses on three dimensions of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate. Each dimension of the instructional leadership framework includes various principal practices and behaviors, as outlined in Figure 2 below.

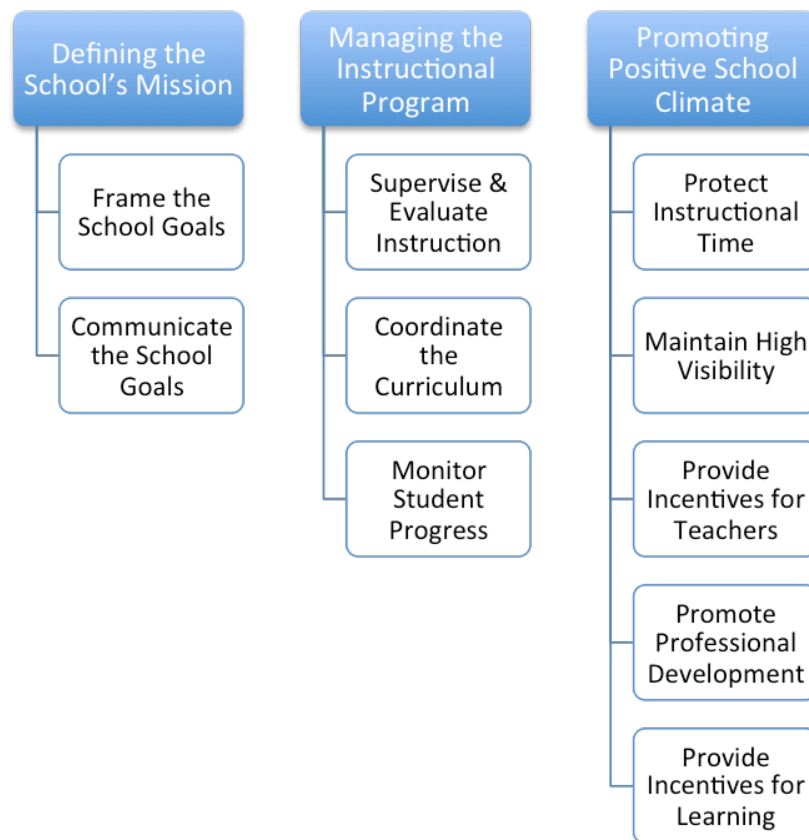


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework based on Hallinger and Murphy's framework on principal leadership.

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptual framework on principal leadership led to the development of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The PIMRS consisted of three dimensions and ten principal behaviors and practices. Defining the school mission consists of the school leader creating a sense of purpose for the school community through the development of goals (Hallinger and Murphy, 1987). In addition to creating a vision for the school, a leader must focus on the instructional program. Principals are accustomed to completing teacher evaluations and walkthroughs as prescribed by state and local school district mandates. Hallinger and Murphy asserted that principals must "pay equal, if not greater, attention to two other related instructional management functions: coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress" (1987, p. 57). The third dimension of the instructional leadership framework is promoting a positive climate. According to Hallinger and Murphy, a principal's ability to model the expectations and communicate the mission with the school community in a variety of settings creates the positive school climate.

The theory of distributed leadership is the framework that guided this qualitative study. Distributed leadership has been heavily studied by researchers and is often referred to as team leadership, shared leadership, and democratic leadership (Spillane, 2005). Spillane argued that the main priority of principals should be the improvement of teaching and student learning; however, policy changes from the federal and state level have made it nearly impossible for principals to be content specialists in all subject areas. Thus, successful leadership can be accomplished if the responsibilities are shared, or distributed, to other members of a leadership team.

The proposed change is for a principal to identify a number of designated and undesignated leaders in the school to support the wide spectrum of job responsibilities that seem to be ever growing for a school leader (Spillane, 2009; Spillane & Healey, 2010). The role of a principal can no longer be a specialist in one particular area or subject matter; rather, principals must have the essential skills to support leaders and followers in all aspects of a school. School leaders are challenged with a number of variables that differ from state, district, and school level. A rural elementary principal operates in a different context than a high school principal in an urban setting. The leader has to take into account a wide array of factors when establishing their role in the school that include, but not limited to, state mandates, school board, policy, personnel, community, resources, curriculum, unions, and finances (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998). The adoption of a distributed leadership model will give opportunity for staff willing and able to lead specific areas of the school. For example, the identified leaders will support teachers to effectively differentiate content and pedagogy to students of various learning abilities and styles through the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs).

Significance of the Study

The primary purpose of this case study was to explore a principal's experiences and how they aligned to effective instructional leadership practices in an era of accountability. The researcher aimed to provide insight to principals when balancing instructional leadership tasks with management tasks through the adoption of a distributed leadership model. The significance of this study supports the need for a principal to adopt a distributed leadership model to achieve effective instructional leadership practices.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

A level of bias in the data is evident as the researcher is also the participant (Yin, 2014). Bolman and Deal (2008) cited that “managers’ effectiveness is impaired because they over-control, ignore feelings, and are blind to their impact on others” (p. 169). The principal’s espoused leadership style and how he or she perceives an event may differ from the staff’s perception of the event. Bolman and Deal identified these differences between espoused theories and theories-in-use, meaning that oftentimes, the way individuals describe themselves are disconnected from their actions.

Another challenge with using a participant-observation technique in the case study is not having adequate time to collect data when compared to an external observer (Yin, 2014). The principal may not find the necessary time to record and reflect on behaviors and events in a timely manner due to the number of tasks a principal is involved in at a given time. Another limiting factor is that the principal cannot be a participant or an observer in all of the significant events occurring during the school day (Yin, 2014). Thus, the principal as the participant-observer may produce an imperfect depiction of how leadership is distributed by the principal.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of reviewing the literature is to gain further insight to how principals use effective principal leadership practices day-to-day in the decision-making process. The conceptual model developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) will guide the discussion on effective principal leadership. The model focuses on three dimensions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It is important for the reader to understand what instructional leadership is and how a principal can use the distributive leadership framework to ensure effective principal leadership within his or her school.

Figure 3 below identifies the conceptual model for instructional leadership embedded into a distributed leadership framework. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) contributed heavily to the development of the current study's framework with their focus on three variables for effective principal leadership: promoting a positive school climate, managing the instructional program, and defining a school's vision and mission. The framework is threaded throughout the literature review that follows.

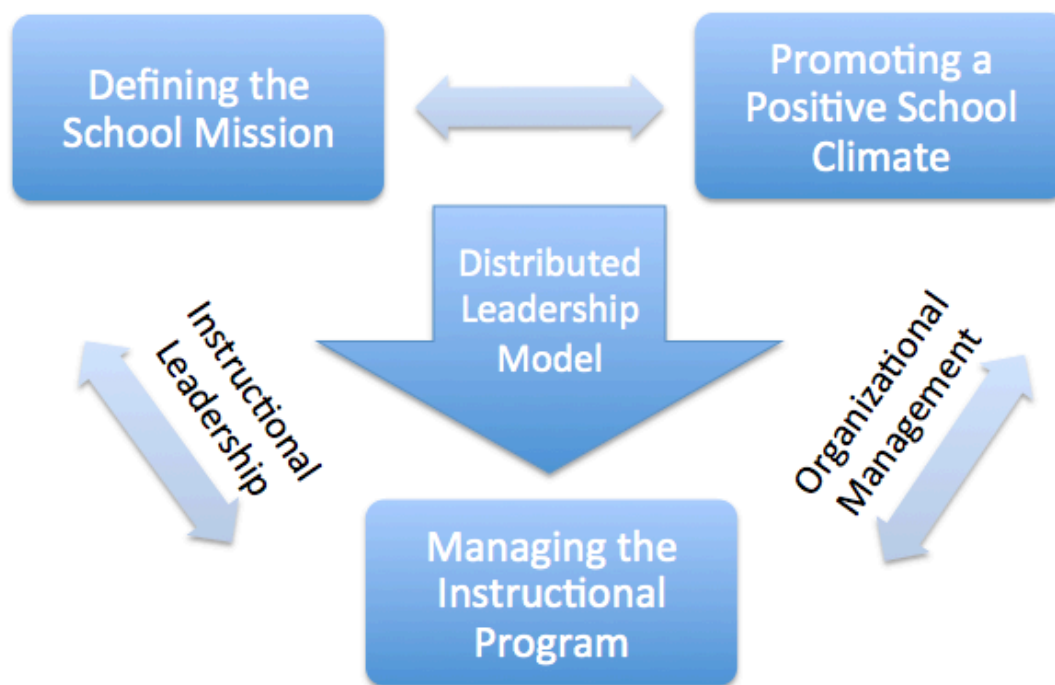


Figure 3. Distributed leadership framework embedding the dimensions of instructional leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Instructional Leadership

Researchers have identified instructional leadership as an important factor in student achievement; however, conclusions vary regarding the essential skills required to be a successful instructional leader (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) conducted a study of 10 elementary principals with the goal to capture their specific behaviors as it relates to instructional management. Hallinger and Murphy contended that principals aspiring to be instructional leaders lacked the guidance to really know what that phrase means or how to get there; therefore, they developed a conceptual model on effective principal leadership focusing on three dimensions: defining the school's vision

and mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate.

Vision. “The only vision for a school worth its salt is one that aims to work relentlessly and creatively toward the single goal of creating and nourishing the best possible environment for teaching and learning” (Ritchie, 2013, p. 21). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) found that the most influential effect of the principal is his or her ability to shape the school’s vision and mission. Principals lead through building a mission and manage their activities that are aligned to the purpose. Nevertheless, Hallinger and Murphy concluded from their study of 10 elementary teachers that principals were less active in involving teachers in establishing and communicating school goals to the school community. According to Northouse (2012), “A characteristic of vision is that it challenges people to transcend the status quo to do something to benefit others” (p. 113).

A teacher’s commitment to his or her school is strengthened when he views his principal of providing a clear school vision, setting direction for teachers, and providing instructional support (Devos et al., 2014; Printy & Marks, 2006). A school’s vision is not enough to lead and support change within a school. The mission of empowering staff and gaining buy-in for the vision is essential to successful implementation (Thornton, 2010). Through a survey of approximately 1,500 teachers from 46 secondary schools, Devos and colleagues (2014) concluded that teachers who shared similar goals as their principal were able to trust each other and be involved in their school.

Education is constantly changing, due to the mandates of tenure reform and teacher accountability. There is no time like the present for a leader to inspire the staff. It is critical for the staff to understand the direction the school is moving towards under a

principal's leadership. The vision of the leader must allow for motivated and competent staff to take chances in the goal of establishing a culture for learning. A leader must be mindful not to penalize staff for taking chances when pushing the envelope in pedagogical practices.

The capability of a leader to motivate and inspire his or her staff to break through the status quo to benefit the students calls for a clear vision and precise implementation. According to the Leadership Orientation Survey, "A good leader is a prophet and visionary, who uses symbols, tells stories and frames experience in ways that give people hope and meaning" (Bolman & Deal, 2008). It is evident that principals value the need to share the school's vision with staff. The frequency of a principal communicating the school's mission to teachers, however, varies greatly from school to school. Some principals communicate the school mission with staff up to six times a year, while other principals only discuss goals with their staff twice a year (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The theory of changing and adapting teaching to benefit all students is the goal; however, it is not as simple as it sounds.

Van de Ven and Poole's (1995) life-cycle theory to change best fits into a school environment that is conducive to "organic growth" (p. 513). An example of organic growth in a school would best be described as unavoidable change such as technology integration into student learning. The life-cycle theory incorporated five steps to the model of organization development. Principals are to be creative in their vision while still providing clear direction to their staff. Next, the principal has to be able to coordinate and delegate the vision to the staff through collaborative efforts (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Principal leadership today rarely resembles the life-cycle theory of change, but rather

dialectical theory of change. According to Van de Ven and Poole, dialectical change occurred “as two different points of view collide and some resolution is reached” (p. 517). As educational reform movements are adopted, recycled, and revised, principals must be a positive force and visionary to the students and staff (Leone, Warnimont, & Zimmerman, 2009). Fuhrman (2004) recognized how federal and state mandates pressure school leaders and staff to incorporate a “one size fits all” approach in the area of educational accountability rather than incorporating what is best for each individual school (p. 152). In addition, Hallinger (2005) emphasized that instructional leadership begins by addressing the specific needs of a school rather than grouping all schools in the same context.

Instructional program. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1986), effective school principals recognized as instructional leaders shared three similarities: a focus on results, constant monitoring of student progress, and high visibility around the school. The term *instructional leadership* was created to account for a wide array of principal tasks met to support students learning and teachers teaching. Some examples of these tasks are staff development, classroom observations, and protecting instructional time (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

Prior researchers have identified the skilled instructional leader as coming from the ranks of teaching and have a wealth of knowledge in the content areas and pedagogy. This instructional leader would act in the role of a mentor to the teaching staff. Some examples would include, but not limited to, evaluating instruction, providing feedback and modeling lessons. In reality, this is a monumental task that is not probable due to two reasons. Principals may have a content area of strength, but it is unrealistic to believe in

all areas being taught in the school. Another reason is a principal finding the time to provide considerable time to the entire school population (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

Anderson (2008) viewed the principal's role as an instructional leader who focused on "academic issues, such as curriculum, teacher training and effectiveness, and student evaluation" (p. 37). Nevertheless, there is little evidence that principals have become more engaged in hands-on supervision and learning in the classroom than witnessed 25 years ago (Hallinger, 2005). According to Mitchell and Castle (2005) in a study of 12 elementary principals, the principals were unaware of how they directed their time and attention throughout a school day. In addition, the researchers concluded that the limited time principals spent on instruction did not equate to effective instructional leadership practices. Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) discovered similar findings in their mixed-methods study of instructional leadership practices in the Miami-Dade County, Florida school system. Researchers concluded that the amount of time principals spent on coaching teachers in instruction did not correlate with gains in student performance. Principals spend an average of approximately 13% of their time on instructional-related work. Approximately five percent of that instructional work consisted of classroom walk-throughs (Grissom et al., 2013). Parkes and Thomas (2007) argued that effective principals have mastered the practice of being "eminently interruptible" with the vast responsibilities he or she encounters in a day. It is essential that student learning is a top priority in their school day. Mitchell and Castle (2005) supported this claim by emphasizing the importance of the principal and their priority to instruction becomes the school's top priority. Nonetheless, there are too many times when teachers view their principals' low commitment to protecting instructional time

(Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Often, instructional time is sacrificed in schools due to interruptions ranging from assemblies, dealing with student discipline issues, lunchrooms, school repairs, and compliance requirements (Chirichello, 2004; Hornig et al., 2010). Ritchie (2013) supported this claim by asserting that “The job of a principal can be emotionally exhausting when he or she is expected do more, listen better, and be more places than any person could ever do or be” (p. 20).

School climate. A principal’s ability to promote a positive school climate is viewed as an effective principal leadership practice (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The relationship between a principal and teacher is essential in creating an environment that is conducive to student learning. The principal is able to create a school climate and culture where students feel safe, valued, and are able to take risks in their learning (Ritchie, 2013). Anderson (2008) asserted that:

The role of the principal is to develop a supportive environment in which teachers may make mistakes and not feel at risk. In such schools, teachers develop harmonious, open professional relations with their colleagues, and come to trust the principal and, finally, each other. (p. 37)

Mitchell and Castle (2005) affirmed that principals create an effective school climate through daily dialogue, praise, and encouragement with teachers, students, and the school community. Goddard and colleagues (2015) suggested that principals who frequently monitor instruction and provide guidance to teachers were viewed by their staff as a part of the school culture that resembled collective work habits among teachers to improve pedagogy.

An increase in student learning and improvement in instructional practices is a byproduct of relationship building between the principal and his or her staff. This is grounded in what Bolman and Deal (2008) considered the “human resource frame” as it relates to the concepts of “self-efficacy, self-concept, and motivation” (Reitzug, West, & Angel, 2008, p. 698). The job of the principal is to empower his or her staff through collaboration, a team approach to decision-making, and providing meaningful work (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In turn, Anderson (2008) concluded that the hours teachers spent talking to their principals correlated to higher student achievement scores. The researcher paid close attention to which teachers consulted with their principals about instruction. Approximately 30% of teachers reported having a designated school leader to support classroom instruction (Goddard & Miller, 2010).

“Learning environments that construe ability as an acquirable skill, deemphasize competitive social comparison, and highlight self-comparison of progress and personal accomplishments are well suited for building a sense of efficacy that promotes academic achievement” (Bandura, 1993, p. 125). In a longitudinal study of 1,915 students in 85 primary schools, researchers concluded that strong principal leadership and teacher collaboration resulted in greater teachers’ collective efficacy of the learning climate of the school and improved math scores (Dumay, Boonen, & Van Damme, 2013). However, there was no direct effect to the correlation between principal leadership to improved math scores, but rather the stronger the teacher collaboration, the stronger teacher collective efficacy led to a significant gain in math scores (Dumay et al., 2013). The findings from Anderson’s (2008) qualitative study suggested that teacher preparation

time and common planning time lowered teacher turnover and improved student-learning outcomes.

Organizational Management

Hornig and Loeb (2010) viewed instructional leadership to be inclusive of organizational management in regards to instructional practices. Organizational management encompasses a principal's ability to "hire and support staff, allocate budgets and resources, and maintain positive working and learning environments" (Hornig & Loeb, 2010, p. 67). In a study of more than 800 principals, 1,100 assistant principals, and 32,000 teachers, Hornig and Loeb concluded that "schools demonstrating growth in student achievement are more likely to have principals who are strong organizational managers" (2010, p. 67). In addition, Grissom and Loeb (2011) argued against principals only focusing on instructional practices and dismissing "traditional management functions such as facilities and personnel" (p. 119). A balance between instructional leadership and organizational management is essential to cultivate school improvement.

The time principals spent on organizational management was positively associated with the teachers' satisfaction of the school environment (Hornig et al., 2010). "Principals' time spent on day-to-day instruction activities was significantly and negatively related to parents' assessment of the school" (Hornig et al., 2010, p. 516). The more time principals spent on daily instruction activities, the less likely that the teachers and parents viewed the school climate in a positive light (Hornig et al., 2010).

As stated earlier, principals spend a fraction of the school day focused on curriculum and instructional activities. In a survey of 332 secondary school principals in Iowa, Gilson (2008) concluded that 93% of principals spent less than 30% of their time

on professional activities that enhance teaching and learning and follow up to classroom observations. Fifty-eight percent of the principals responded that they spent a majority of their time on activities categorized as organizational leadership, with only 24% of principals responding to instructional leadership (Gilson, 2008). This scholar also determined that principals spent approximately the same amount of time on instructional practices as they do with meeting with parents and dealing with classroom management and disciplinary issues (Gilson, 2008).

In a study of 65 principals in Miami-Dade County, Horng et al. (2010) concluded that principals spent a majority of their day in their personal offices rather than in the classrooms. For instance, principals spent 30% of the school day on administrative tasks such as student discipline and meeting compliance requirements while approximately eight percent of the school day in classrooms and 10% on instruction-related tasks (Horng et al., 2010). A time management tip for principals is to be more visible in the school day. At times, the issues that cannot seem to wait can be addressed through preventative measures as walking and talking to students and staff (Gilson, 2008).

It is essential to gain insight on the principal in relation to his or her experience to lead a school. Novice principals spent about 34% of their time on administrative tasks, while the time decreases to approximately 22% with principals of at least four years of experience (Horng et al., 2010). Thus, the number of years spent at a specific school were associated with higher student achievement scores in language arts rather than total years of experience (Anderson, 2008). Heck and Hallinger (2009) supported Anderson's claim, asserting that a principal's stability in one school had a positive effect on teacher perceptions of academic capacity using a distributed leadership model.

The belief of the principal being the head teacher with all the answers is no longer a reality. School principals are better suited to be recognized as the head learner in schools. As head learner, the principal leads by experience, modeling, and successes with the goal teachers and students will follow (Barth, 1986). Collaboration between administration and teachers is essential to the development of teacher leaders in a school to support the principal's vision of the school (Devos et al., 2014; Irvin & Flood, 2004). Goddard and colleagues (2015) concluded that "A principal's instructional leadership and teacher collaboration for instructional improvement are important indirect predictors of differences among schools in student academic achievement" (p. 26).

There are certainly benefits to teachers collaborating informally throughout the school day. Furthermore, current research supported that teachers' participation in their professional learning community improves student learning and pedagogy practices (Goddard et al., 2015). It is essential that school leaders recognize the importance of teacher collaboration in order to provide the time within the school day and take an active role in the process (Goddard et al., 2015).

Distributed Leadership

There is an unrealistic belief that failing schools are the result of weak principals and successful schools are due to heroic principals (Spillane, 2009). A school's success does not solely lie on a single leader; rather, it requires an array of individuals contributing in various capacities to the school's vision and mission (Devos et al., 2014; Spillane, 2005; Spillane & Healey, 2010; Spillane et al., 2001). According to Spillane and colleagues (2001), "Leaders practice is stretched over the social and situational contexts

of the school; it is not simply a function of what a school principal, or indeed any other individual leader, knows and does” (p. 6).

Principals should stop trying to be everything to everyone and give some serious thought to restructuring their job (Chirichello, 2004). In a study of novice principals, Spillane and Lee (2014) concluded that the “shock of responsibility” was a common theme amongst the principals. Principals felt the stressors of “being ultimately responsible” for the school and the welfare of the employees (p. 442). The volume of responsibilities put on a principal can be overwhelming and far-reaching (Spillane & Lee, 2014). According to one novice principal interviewed as part of a study on principals stated, “You’re everything: instructional leader, engineer, counselor, you got to listen to people’s parents—they come to you with all sorts of problems that have nothing to do with school—let’s see, a lunch room manager” (Spillane & Lee, 2014, p. 450).

Chirichello’s (2004) comments concurred with Spillane and Lee’s findings:

Principals are expected to be knowledgeable of the students, curriculum, teacher performance, and the community they serve. At the same time, principals are expected to manage day-to-day activities that include scheduling, building repairs, lunchrooms, and ordering, leaving little time to engage in reflective thinking and proactive planning. (p. 122)

A shift to a distributive leadership model is necessary to achieve what Hallinger and Murphy (1985) viewed as effective principal leadership. Spillane and Healey (2010) concluded that on average, schools vary in formally designated leaders to staff in a ratio of 1:3 to 1:5, meaning one formally designated leader to every three to five staff members. It is essential that informal leaders “perform important leadership and

management functions” regardless of their lack of formal leadership training (Spillane & Healey, 2010, p. 270). This particular kind of leadership is often referred to as *distributed leadership*.

The distributed leadership framework was developed through the interactions of leaders, followers, and the situation (Spillane, 2005, 2009; Spillane et al., 2001). The framework was developed from two theories: distributed cognition and sociocultural activity theory (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2009; Spillane et al., 2001). Activity theory was the catalyst when looking at human behavior and engagement in a social setting—in this case, a school (Gronn, 2000). Gronn believed that the division of labor was a major factor in the activity theory. Division of labor consisted of the type of work, the relationships, personalities of the members, and the available resources (Gronn, 2000).

Distributed leadership involves multiple leaders in formal and informal positions. An example of a formal designated leader is a principal of a school while an informal leader can be viewed as a veteran teacher to a specific grade level. In addition, distributed leadership primarily focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers regardless of designated titles.

Spillane (2009) identified two essential elements to distributed leadership: the leader-plus and the practice aspect. The leader-plus element refers to the leading of schools involving multiple individuals. The practice aspect focuses less on action and more on the interaction between leaders, followers, and the situation.

Distributed leadership focuses on leadership practice in a school from the perspective of how leadership is distributed among formal and informal leaders, rather than a sole designated leader (Spillane et al., 2001). It is essential to have an

understanding of the task along with how the school leader uses his or her expertise and resources to find a resolution. When dissecting distributed leadership, more attention should stress on how leaders involve participants into the particular situation with less emphasis on the individual (Spillane et al., 2001).

Distributed leadership aligns to the changing work culture from a bureaucratic, top-down approach to a flattened system that promotes employees to be problem-solvers (Hartley, 2007). One of the challenges to successful implementation of distributed leadership is the traditional structure of leadership in schools that operates from a hierarchical approach (Chirichello, 2004). Within this structure, teachers assigned leadership roles are challenged with being in direct opposition of their colleagues. Teachers identified as teacher leaders benefit themselves from the designation; however, there is little evidence that followers learn at a similar rate as the designated leader (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995).

The hierarchical forms of accountability remain in place in schools, however, how the tasks are completed reflect a shared-approach (Hartley, 2007). For instance, teachers' input and collaboration on a school schedule does not eliminate this task from the school leader's responsibility. Principals are merely one piece of the puzzle when it comes to identifying leaders in a school. Assistant principals, supervisors, curriculum specialists, and mentor teachers are some of the individuals designated as leaders in a school (Spillane, 2009). In addition to the designated leaders, Spillane concluded that staff not designated as leaders shared responsibility for approximately 31% of the activities (Spillane, 2009). Administration should also consider distributing identified teacher leaders across grade levels when creating teacher assignments. Highly effective teachers

spread throughout the grade levels have the potential positively impact on their colleagues (Spillane, 2016).

Several researchers have supported that principals were less likely to take a leadership role in curriculum decisions than in organizational management tasks. “Principals reported taking responsibility for over three-quarters of all administrative activities in which they participated, however, they reported taking responsibility for just over half of instruction and curriculum activities” (Spillane, 2009, p. 71). In a study of 23 elementary schools, Spillane ascertained that teachers turned to undesignated leaders in the school for advice and support in the areas of language arts and mathematics almost 50% of the time (Spillane, 2009). Spillane (2016) later suggested that “subject-specific leaders were more likely to be sought out and to provide instructional advice to staff in other schools than any other type of leader” (p. 11).

Principals must create opportunities for teachers to be in leadership roles throughout the school. In doing so, principals have to be willing to interchange their role from leader to follower in certain situations (Chirichello, 2004). Principals who can inspire teachers are more likely to create a school environment that promotes teacher buy-in and values a distributed leadership model in the decision-making process (Devos et al., 2014; Printy & Marks, 2006; Thornton, 2010; Watkins, 2005). Staff meetings provide a forum for teachers to build leadership capacity with colleagues (Thornton, 2010). Another suggestion to improve time management is to delegate various powers to staff (Gilson, 2008).

Hallinger and Heck (2010) defined collaborative leadership as “strategic school wide actions directed toward improvement in student learning that are shared among

teachers, administrators, and others” (p. 228). The purpose of their study was to measure teachers’ perceptions of their school’s efforts to improve teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). The findings suggested that collaborative leadership was a driving force of change in school improvement. Heck and Hallinger (2009) conducted a 4-year longitudinal study examining the effects of distributed leadership on school improvement and growth in student achievement in 195 elementary schools in one state. Their findings supported the need to distribute leadership practices focusing on the improvement of pedagogy and learning, however, offer little insight on what and how tasks can be distributed to staff members in the school.

The shift to develop teacher leaders in a school creates a number of new challenges to how teachers perceive decisions are made. Principals identify teacher leaders in a school by their level of expertise. In turn, principals have to be committed to these identified teacher leaders by providing the necessary resources and support in their new role in the school (Printy & Marks, 2006). Nevertheless, Thornton (2010) concluded that schools had a large contingent of teachers with leadership capabilities, however, they were seldom used in that capacity. For instance, only four out of the 44 middle schools that participated in the study identified teacher leaders in the school with leadership skills that were being used in leadership roles (Thornton, 2010). Furthermore, Thornton identified the principal’s ability to support and nurture teacher leaders during the school day were one of the most prominent obstacles facing teachers stepping in a leadership role (2010). In addition, the working alongside designated school leaders perceived that decisions were already made without their input (Thornton, 2010).

According to Thornton (2010), teachers perceived that only a select number of teachers were asked to participate in leadership positions resulting in jealousy and resentment amongst their colleagues. A number of teachers successfully completed school leadership programs, however, do not enter the realm of administration. These identified teachers can be a valuable resource to their colleagues in the school while being viewed in an informal leadership role (Richardson, 2003).

In summary, the role of the principal is greatly weighted in organizational management tasks and instructional leadership tasks. Researchers have concluded that principals spent the least amount of their school day in classrooms supporting student learning or focused on curriculum and instruction when compared to organizational management tasks (Gilson, 2008; Hallinger, 2005; Horng et al., 2010). Thus, the principal's ability to identify teacher leaders for specific tasks resulted in a positive school climate that shifted the leadership responsibility from the shoulders of one individual to a shared approach amongst a select number of individuals within the organization (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). Scholars have confirmed that effective principal leadership is supported through the adoption of a distributed leadership model (Gilson, 2008; Printy & Marks, 2006; Spillane, 2009; Thornton, 2010; Watkins, 2005).

Chapter 3

Methodology

The researcher chose a case study method of inquiry for the current study in order to explore one principal's behaviors on a daily basis. According to Yin (2014), a case study is most appropriate when studying "a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context" (p. 16). In this case study, the researcher used the conceptual model developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) on effective principal leadership to explore the behaviors related to day-to-day activities of one principal during this era of accountability on education.

The researcher used the theory of distributed leadership, often referred to as shared leadership, along with Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptual model of effective principal leadership to guide this case study. Spillane (2005) argued that the main priority of the principal should be the improvement of teaching and student learning; however, policy changes from the federal and state level have made it nearly impossible for principals to be content specialists in a number of subject areas. Thus, a shift in instructional leadership from the principal to specific staff members is one avenue to support the newly adopted standards (Spillane, 2005).

Research Questions/Subquestions

One central research question and four subquestions guided this case study. The central question focused on: "How can a principal be an effective instructional leader in an era of accountability?" The subquestions included:

1. How does a principal engage in effective instructional leadership practices on a daily basis?

2. How much of a principal's day focuses on instructional leadership activities?
3. How does a principal balance the organizational management tasks with the instructional leadership tasks on a daily basis?
4. How does a principal distribute tasks to designated and undesignated leaders in the school?

Setting

This qualitative study occurred in an elementary school located in a rural part of southern New Jersey with a total population of 6,147 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The racial make-up of the township was 83% Caucasian, 12% Hispanic, and five percent African-American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In comparison of the 2010 United States Census with the 2000 U.S. Census, the township had a four percent growth in total population from 5,912 to 6,147 residents. In addition, only 13% of residents are renters, compared to the state average of 36% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The county the township is located in ranks 19th out of the 21 counties in New Jersey, with a per-capita income of \$21,034 and a median household income of \$43,933. In 2010, the township had a median income for a household of \$50,417 and a per-capita income of \$19,764 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The demographics of the school during the 2015-2016 school year mirrored the community with minimal diversity in the student body. The 738 students' ethnicities consisted of Black, Hispanic, and White. The percentages of each ethnic group are noted below in Table 1.

Table 1

2015-2016 SY Demographics of the School

Ethnicity	Grades 5-8	Grades PK-4	Total	School %
Caucasian	220	291	511	69
Black	22	29	51	7
Hispanic	69	107	176	24
Other	0	0	0	0

Note. New Jersey School Performance Report (<https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/pr/>)

School personnel were committed to provide the necessary supports and interventions to meet the needs of the diverse learners through an inclusion model. For instance, special education services were within the general education setting rather than by students being pulled-out of the classrooms for services. The child study teams were major contributors in assisting teachers to meet the diverse learning abilities and needs of all students within the classrooms. Three self-contained special education classes supported students with significant disabilities in the school. In addition, these students received some services in the general education classroom with the appropriate supports. The percentages of students in each program are noted below in Table 2.

Table 2

2015-2016 SY Enrollment by Program Participation

2015-2016	Count of Students PK-8	% of Enrollment
Economically Disadvantaged Students	319	43
Students with Disabilities	114	15
English Language Learners	3	0.4

Note. New Jersey School Performance Report (<https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/pr/>)

The researcher measured student performance in grades three to eight at the school using the New Jersey adopted standardized assessment, Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). PARCC assesses student-learning levels in two content areas: English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA/L) and Math. This assessment is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, and measures students' fundamental skills and knowledge. It also required students to think critically, support their arguments, and solve real-world problems (PARCC, 2016).

The PARCC reports students' overall scale scores that range from 650 to 850. The researcher placed students' overall scale scores into five performance levels (level 1 through level 5), with levels 4 and 5 reflecting students met or exceeded expectations, respectively, for the particular subject area. The researcher compared the percentages of students in each group who met/exceeded expectations at the school to the New Jersey average for the 2015-2016 school year; these comparisons are noted below in Table 3. Furthermore, Table 3 emphasizes the percent of students identified in the school as economically disadvantaged and met or exceeded expectations on PARCC in English

Language Arts and mathematics, as compared to similar students in the State of New Jersey. Overall, the students as a whole significantly scored below the state average in both subject matters during the 2015-2016 school year, while students identified as economically disadvantaged partially closed the gap between the school's percentile of students who met or exceeded expectations and the state average.

Table 3

2015-2016 Percent of Students Who Met/Exceeded Expectations on PARCC

Grade Level	3	4	5	6	7	8
ELA % Met/Exceeded						
Schoolwide Average	41	37	36	43	29	31
State Average	48	54	53	52	56	55
Economically Disadvantaged						
School Average	24	24	31	27	21	14
State Average	28	33	33	33	37	38
Math % Met/Exceeded						
Schoolwide Average	59	45	32	27	21	19
State Average	52	47	47	43	39	26
Economically Disadvantaged						
School Average	37	29	23	13	14	23
State Average	32	27	28	23	21	18

Note. New Jersey School Performance Report (<https://homeroom5.doe.state.nj.us/pr/>)

Approximately 22% of the 73 teachers in the school were residents of the community, while 78% of teachers lived outside the community. Approximately 30% of the teaching staff had three or fewer years of classroom teaching experience in the district. There are approximately four classroom teachers per grade level, excluding support and special area teachers.

The school district entered into a send-receive agreement with a neighboring school district for the start of the 2016-2017 school year. A main factor for the send-receive agreement was to offset the financial burden both districts faced due to defeated local school budgets and funding cuts from the State of New Jersey. There were approximately 65 students and five teachers from the neighboring school who joined the district for the start of the 2016-2017 school year.

Participants

This case study took place in a school setting where the school principal was the researcher-participant. The principal was in his seventh year in the school district. Prior to his role at the present school district, the principal encompassed a number of leadership positions in a neighboring district. The leadership roles consisted of coordinator of a 21st Century Community Learning Center, the vice principal of a middle school, and a principal of two elementary schools.

The principal was entering his third year as principal of the middle and primary school, respectively. The setting being studied is identified as two separate schools: a middle school serving fifth through eighth grades and a primary school serving grades pre-k to fourth. The teachers were accustomed to having a principal in each school; however, the board of education chose to combine the two schools and have one principal

at the start of the 2014-2015 school year. It should be noted that the schools are geographically located under the same roof only separated by a hallway. The principal is responsible for approximately 66 teachers, 30 instructional aides, three secretaries, and three members of the child study team, as outlined in the organizational chart (see Figure 4).

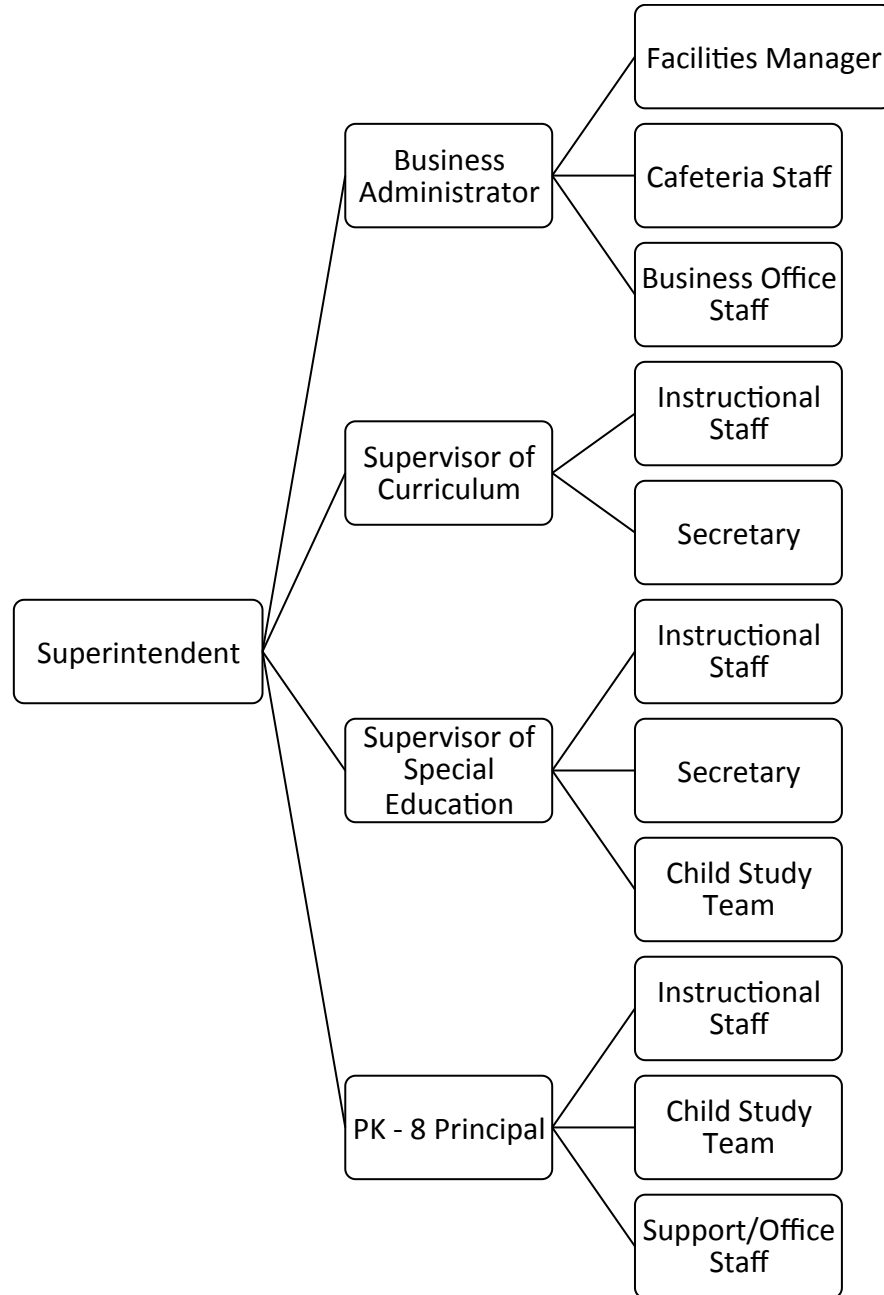


Figure 4. Organizational chart of the school district.

The researcher used a participant-observation technique in this case study because it provided access to events and individuals otherwise not available to an external researcher (Yin, 2014). The principal as researcher created a unique advantage point from the “inside” (Yin, 2014, p. 117). The researcher recorded and analyzed the principal’s daily interactions with staff in order to gain insight to how the principal spent his time and distributed tasks to designated and undesignated school leaders. There were potential risks if the school and school-community members were specifically identified in the case study; therefore, the researcher protected the privacy of participants by withholding their names and specific roles (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Philips Elementary School and Vine School District are made-up names to protect the school-community members in the study.

The researcher selected the participants for the case study using purposeful and criterion sampling procedures. Purposeful sampling is a technique that enables the researcher to gather in-depth information pertaining to his or her research topic from using a small number of selected participants (Patton, 2002). The strategy that the researcher used within the purposeful sampling technique was criterion sampling. Researchers use criterion sampling in order to identify and choose participants using a specific criterion (Patton, 2002). The current researcher chose purposeful and criterion sampling was to study principal leadership in the current due to the various organizational contexts principals lead within their schools. The role of a principal varies greatly from one school to the next due to factors such as physical location (urban, rural,

etc.), level of schooling (elementary or secondary), and student population size (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

The established criterion for selecting participants in the study was to identify full-time teachers in the school that have at minimum of four years of teaching experience and two years of working with the current principal. Twenty-seven of the possible 46 full-time teachers (59%) who met the established criterion above signed the agreement to participate in the study. In addition, 17 of the 27 (63%) full-time teachers who returned the agreement to participate in the study completed the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale , and 13 (48%) full-time teachers answered the interview questions.

Data Collection

The researcher used multiple methods of data collection to investigate the principal's behaviors in alignment with effective instructional leadership qualities identified by Hallinger and Murphy (1985; Maxwell, 2013). The methods consisted of a survey instrument, self-observation interval chart and teacher interviews.

Survey instrument. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) developed the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) as an instrument containing 50 statements about principal instructional leadership behaviors. The participants responded to the statements using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (Almost Always) (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The researcher administered the PIMRS to teachers who were willing to participate in the case study and who met the criterion. The researcher analyzed the findings from the survey against the other methods of data collection in order to strengthen the study's validity.

Self-observation. Self-observation is a disciplined approach aligned to the research such as what to observe and how it will be done (Chang, 2008). In this study, the researcher-participant self-observed and recorded his behaviors and tasks in 20-minute time intervals from November 28, 2016 to December 9, 2016. A self-observation schedule allowed the researcher-participant to gain an understanding of the types of leadership practices that he engaged in daily (Chang, 2008). The researcher created the Principal Leadership Self-observation tool using a Google spreadsheet. The researcher-participant used the self-observation tool to record interactions, behaviors, and location of the behavior. Next, the researcher-participant categorized each recorded behavior to the elements of Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) definition of effective principal leadership (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In addition, the researcher-participant noted those behaviors that the principal engaged in daily that do not align to effective principal leadership practices.

Self-reflection. The researcher recorded his personal narratives through daily journaling at the end of each day a full seven-day week from Monday, September 12, 2016 to Sunday, September 18, 2016. The researcher-participant kept a journal to capture and reflect on his personal thoughts and feelings, as well as how the tasks that he was involved in on that particular day aligned to the characteristics of an effective instructional leader (Chang, 2008). This journal provided the researcher-participant with "Self-reflective data result from introspection, self-analysis, and self-evaluation" of whom he is as an instructional leader (Chang, 2008, p. 95). The researcher recorded each journal entry using the Principal Leadership tool created using Google spreadsheet.

Interviews. In-depth interviewing was a method that the researcher collect data from the teacher-participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher developed an interview protocol consisting of nine questions pertaining to the research question, How can a principal be an effective instructional leader? The questions focused on the experiences, thoughts, and expectations that teachers have of a principal to be an effective instructional leader. Each topic offered the participants the opportunity to share their experiences or thoughts and in turn, enabled the researcher-participant to gain more information from the teachers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher-participant did not follow up with participants on the interview questions as a step to ensure the participants' anonymity in the study.

Data Analysis

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) definition of instructional leadership guided the analysis process. It was essential to maintain the chain of evidence within the study; therefore, the analysis of data reflected the central research question and the review of the literature focused on principals as instructional leaders within their schools (Saldana, 2013; Yin, 2014). As a novice researcher-participant, it is important to keep the theoretical perspective of the study at the forefront of the analysis process.

The initial step in the data analysis process consisted of applying the method of Descriptive Coding to the collected data (Saldana, 2013). "Descriptive Coding summarizes in a word or short phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (Saldana, 2013, p. 88). According to Wolcott (1994), one way to use the data is "to stay close to the data as originally recorded. The underlying assumption, or hope, is that the data speak for themselves" (p. 10). Next, the researcher

used pattern coding as the second cycle coding method to assist in categorizing the descriptive nouns together to construct developing themes, concepts, or theories related or unrelated to the central research question under principal leadership (Saldana, 2013; Yin, 2014).

The researcher used Google Sheets to analyze data from the interviews, self-observation tool, and survey instrument. The first step in the process was at the data level—coding passages, assigning data into quotations, and adding comments where necessary. The next step was the conceptual level. This was where the researcher connected codes and quotations into meaningful relationships.

Credibility and Rigor

The validity of one data source is questionable, especially when that one data source was from the researcher-participant's viewpoint. For this reason, the researcher-participant needed to support his or her findings through interviews, surveys, self-observation, and self-reflection to triangulate the study (Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Rossman and Rallis affirmed that secondary data sources would corroborate or contradict the interpretations of the other data collected in the study.

It was essential that teachers who participated in the interview protocol had an understanding of principal leadership and the research problem. The researcher gave teachers who agreed to participate in the interview a hard copy of this study's literature review prior to the interview. The researcher sent the interview protocol to the 27 full-time teachers who agreed to participate in the study. Thirteen of the 27 full-time teachers answered the interview questions. The researcher-participant used Google Forms to gather the participants' answers. The researcher-participant assured participants in the

study anonymity through the Google Form that their responses would be automatically anonymous. Following the interview, the researcher implemented a level of member checking with interview participants as a strategy to ensure validity (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The 13 participants had access to their interview answers, and had the ability to review and change their responses for accuracy (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Self-reflection also acted as a measure to limit what Maxwell (2013) referred to as “researcher bias” (p. 124). It was essential that the researcher-participant recognized how his and expectations may have had a positive or negative influence on the validity of the data collected (Maxwell, 2013). Rossman and Rallis (2012) concurred that the data collected included a perspective from the researcher-participant’s own interpretation. The researcher-participant lessened his biases from influencing the study by constantly recording and reflecting on these experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

It is important to note that a single case study does not have to be generalizable to a population, but rather draw in the reader to identify how the use of the theoretical frameworks possibly can be used in their leadership role and environment (Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Yin, 2014). A local expert in the field served as an external auditor by providing guidance and feedback to the study’s design, analysis, and interpretation (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Toma, 2006). Through an audit trail, the researcher provided a close investigation to the central research question and subquestions, data collection methods, and preliminary findings of the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The local expert in the field has extensive experience in the

content area of educational leadership and distributed leadership, while also being skilled in qualitative research methods.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of the principal in day-to-day activities, and to explore how these align to the newly adopted Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and Achieve NJ. Furthermore, this researcher closely examined how the adoption of a distributed leadership model supports a principal's ability to be an instructional leader under AchieveNJ, the new evaluation system in New Jersey.

One central research question and four subquestions guided this case study. The central question was: How can a principal be an effective instructional leader in an era of accountability?

The subquestions included:

1. How does a principal engage in effective instructional leadership practices on a daily basis?
2. How much of a principal's day focuses on instructional leadership activities?
3. How does a principal balance the organizational management tasks with the instructional leadership tasks on a daily basis?
4. How does a principal distribute tasks to designated and undesignated leaders in the school?

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) research on principal leadership provided the conceptual framework for this study. The researcher used multiple methods of data collection to investigate a principal's behaviors in alignment with effective instructional leadership qualities identified by Hallinger and Murphy. The data collection methods consisted of a survey instrument, a self-observation interval chart, and teacher interviews.

In 1987, Hallinger and Murphy developed the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale as an instrument containing 50 statements about principal instructional leadership behaviors (see Appendix A). The participants responded to the statements using a 5-point Likert scale (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The researcher administered the PIMRS to teachers willing to participate in the case study and that met the study criteria. The researcher used the results of this survey to measure effective principal leadership, focusing on three dimensions: defining the school's vision and mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987).

The researcher-participant self-observed and recorded his behaviors and tasks in 20-minute time intervals each day from November 28, 2016 to December 9, 2016. The purpose of this method was for the principal-researcher to gain insight to the types of tasks in which he engages on a daily basis (Chang, 2008). The researcher-participant used the self-observation tool to record interactions, behaviors, and location of the behavior every 20 minutes throughout the workday using a Google spreadsheet (see Appendix B).

The researcher performed in-depth interviews to collect data from the 13 full-time teacher-participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview protocol was broken into five sections, each focusing on a research question, for a total of 21 questions. Follow-up questions are not included in the protocol due to the interview occurring on the Internet using a Google Form developed by the researcher-participant. The Internet interview was more private for the participants than in a face-to-face or a focus group interview. Also, this approach gave the participants greater time to respond to a question than an interview conducted in person (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Results

The researcher has organized the results reported in this chapter according to each corresponding research question. There is a brief introduction about the data analysis and the demographics of respondents to set the stage for the analysis. Findings for the first subquestion pertain to the extent that the principal's day focused on instructional leadership activities. Findings for the second subquestion pertain to the extent that the principal balanced the organizational management tasks with the instructional leadership tasks on a daily basis. Findings for the third subquestion pertain to the extent that the principal's day focused on instructional leadership activities. Findings for the fourth subquestion pertain to the extent that the principal distributed tasks to designated and undesignated leaders in the school. Finally, the researcher provides a summary of the results.

Demographics

The demographic data indicated that 27 of the possible 46 full-time teachers (59%) signed the agreement to participate in the study. Seventeen of the 27 (63%) full-time teachers who returned the agreement to participate in the study completed the PIMRS rating scale, and 13 (48%) answered the interview questions.

Among the 17 respondents to the PIMRS rating scale, 41% ($n = 7$) identified as having more than 15 years of teaching experience, 29% ($n = 5$) identified as having between 5 and 9 years of teaching experience, 17% ($n = 3$) identified as having between 10 and 15 years of teaching experience, and 12% ($n = 2$) identified as having 4 years of teaching experience. A majority (76%) of the teachers have worked with the principal for between 5 and 9 years, while 24% ($n = 4$) teachers have worked with the current principal

for between 2 and 4 years. Table 4 provides an overview of the respondents' demographic responses on the PIMRS rating scale. The researcher-participant assured participants of their anonymity by omitting their name from the PIMRS rating scale. The participants returned the completed PIMRS rating scale in a mailbox in the school's main office.

Table 4

PIMRS Rating Scale Respondents' Demographic Data

Demographic Data	<i>F</i>	Percent
Years worked with the current principal		
2-4	4	24
5-9	13	76
Years of experience as a teacher		
4	2	12
5-9	5	29
10-15	3	18
More than 15	7	41

Note. n = 17.

Among the 13 respondents to the interview questions, five identified as having more than 15 years of teaching experience, three identified as having between 10 and 15 years of teaching experience, three identified as having between five and nine years of

teaching experience, and two identified as having four years of teaching experience. A majority (85%) of the teachers have worked with the principal for between five and seven years, while two teachers have worked with the current principal for between three and four years. Table 5 provides an overview of the interview respondents' demographics.

Table 5

Interview Questions Respondents' Demographic Data

Demographic Data	<i>f</i>	Percent
Years working with the current principal		
3-4	2	15
5-7	11	85
Years of experience as a teacher		
4	2	15
5-9	3	23
10-15	3	23
More than 15	5	39

Note. n = 13.

Answering the Research Questions

The researcher analyzed the overall results from the PIMRS by comparing the participants' responses in the 10 subsections. Next, the researcher answered each research subquestion through a detailed analysis of the PIMRS, participant interviews, and the

self-observation tool. Each subquestion contains subheadings that assist in answering each subquestion. Lastly, the researcher-participant has interwoven the answer to the central research question throughout the four subquestions.

Research subquestion 1: How does a principal engage in effective instructional leadership practices on a daily basis? The researcher analyzed the responses from the teacher participants ($n = 17$) through descriptive statistics to determine the mean, standard deviation, and standard error for each of the 10 subsections and 50 statements on the principal's practice. The mean, standard deviation, and standard error for the 10 subsections are shown below in Table 6.

Table 6

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) Responses

PIMRS Subsections	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>S</i>
Frame the School Goals	4.4	0.69	0.17
Communicate the School Goals	4.3	0.74	0.18
Supervise & Evaluate Instruction	4.2	0.77	0.19
Coordinate the Curriculum	3.8	0.93	0.23
Monitor Student Progress	4.2	0.75	0.18
Protect Instructional Time	4.1	0.87	0.21
Maintain High Visibility	3.7	0.94	0.24
Provide Incentives for Teachers	3.9	0.83	0.20
Promote Professional Development	4.2	0.80	0.19
Provide Incentive for Learning	4.2	0.76	0.19

Note. $n = 17$; M = Mean, 1= *Almost Never*, 2= *Seldom*, 3= *Sometimes*, 4= *Frequently*, 5= *Almost Always*; SD = Standard Deviation; SE = Standard Error

The mean score for the principal ranged between 3.8 and 4.4 on each subsection from the respondents. Thus, this principal displays an active role in instructional leadership behaviors with his teachers. Furthermore, no means were displayed for the frequency of leadership behaviors at 1 (*Almost Never*) and only one statement was indicated for 2 (*Seldom*). The PIMRS statement “tutor students or provide direct instruction to classes” recorded the lowest of all the 50 statements, with a mean score of 2.6 (*Seldom*).

The three subsections that compose the dimension of the principal managing the instructional program—“supervise and evaluate instruction,” “coordinate the curriculum,” and “monitor student progress,” received a rating of 3.8 to 4.2 (*Frequently*). An overview of the 15 statements that encompass a principal managing the instructional program are detailed in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Managing the Instructional Program

Subsections and Statements	M	SE
Managing the Instructional Program		
Supervise & Evaluate Instruction	4.2	0.77
Ensure Consistent Classroom Priorities	4.4	0.7
Review Student Work	3.9	0.9
Conduct Informal Observations	3.8	1.03
Point out Teacher Strengths	4.7	0.47
Point out Teacher Weaknesses	4.2	0.73
Coordinate Curriculum	3.8	0.93
Make Clear Who Coordinates	3.9	0.99
Uses Test Results for Curricular	4.0	0.94
Monitor Classroom Curriculum	3.8	0.88
Assess Curriculum Overlap	3.8	0.90
Participate in Review of Curriculum	3.5	0.94
Monitor Student Progress	4.2	0.75
Meet with Teachers to Discuss Students	3.8	0.83
Discuss Performance Results	4.2	0.83
Use Tests to Assess Progress	4.4	0.71
Inform Teachers of School's	4.6	0.49
Inform Students of School's Progress	4.2	0.88

Note. The Managing the Instructional Program dimension encompasses three leadership functions. Each leadership practice includes five statements; $n = 17$; M = Mean, 1= *Almost Never*, 2= *Seldom*, 3= *Sometimes*, 4= *Frequently*, 5= *Almost Always*; SE = Standard Error

The researcher also used the Principal as Instructional Leader interview protocol to gain further insight from participants on how the principal engages in effective instructional leadership practices on a daily basis. Interview questions 5 and 8 asked respondents to write in their own words to how the principal engages in instructional practices on a daily basis. All 13 participants answered the opened-ended questions. Table 8 provides the key words and phrases by theme that emerged when coding the responses.

Table 8

How Does a Principal Engage in Effective Instructional Leadership Practices on a Daily Basis?

Interview Questions	Key Themes	Words & Phrases
How does the principal engage in instructional practices on a daily basis?	supervision & evaluation of Instruction	offering advice positive feedback formal observations constructive feedback conferences
	high visibility	open door discussions engages students walk-throughs
What is the principal's role in creating a school climate conducive for learning?	school goals	enthusiastic celebrate successes leads and models
	high visibility	involved active role motivate & encourage
What is the principal's role in instruction?	support	discussion listening encouragement
	framing school goals	set guidelines expectations rigorous yet achievable goals
What is the principal's role in staff development?	collaboration	workshop opportunities turn key information shared leadership surveys staff input

Note. n = 13.

Supervise & evaluate instruction. The researcher asked the participants in the study to explain how their principal engages in instructional practices on a daily basis. The researcher developed two central themes developed from the participants' responses. The themes focused around (a) supervision and evaluation of instruction and (b) high visibility. The two themes were preset before the coding process, and are directly aligned to Hallinger and Murphy's (1987) PIMRS subsections.

I can say he has been instrumental in my growth as an instructor. He is wonderful at informal support. Whether that may be popping into my class or grabbing me in the hall and offering me advice or positive feedback. Such communication method provides an amazing comfortably for reception. (Participant 7)

Other participants described the principal engaging in instructional practices by stating:

“Through observations and providing additional support” (Participant 11).

“Conducts formal observations and provides constructive feedback for improvement, as well as compliments” (Participant 8).

“Does try to give honest and helpful feedback to staff through observations and conferences” (Participant 11).

Three other participants had similar responses to the ones aforementioned by identifying observations as a way the principal engages daily in instructional practices. The results from the interview protocol were consistent with participants' responses on the PIMRS.

The overall mean for the principal leadership subsection was 4.2. The behavioral statement with the highest mean of the five statements ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 0.47$), confirms that the participants' perceptions of the principal from the prompt is that he *almost*

always “identifies specific strengths in teacher’s instructional practices during post-observation meetings,” based on a high frequency of 4s and 5s ($n = 17$). The prompt, “Ensure that the classroom priorities of teachers are consistent with the goals and direction of the school” had the second highest mean ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 0.7$), with a high occurrence of 4s and 5s ($n = 15$). The participants also indicated that the principal *frequently* “points out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional practices in post-observation feedback (e.g., in conferences or written evaluations” ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.73$) based on the number of 4s and 5s ($n = 14$). The prompt, “Review student work products when evaluating classroom instruction” ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 0.9$) was a behavior in this subsection that fell in the *Sometimes* range, with approximately three-fourths of the ratings being 4s and 5s ($n = 12$). The prompt, “Conduct informal observations in classrooms on a regular basis (informal observations are unscheduled, last at least 5 minutes, and may or may not involve written feedback or a formal conference)” received the lowest mean of the five statements ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 1.03$). The respondents rated the principal at either end of the scale, with $n = 11$ for 4 and 5, $n = 5$ for 3, and $n = 1$ for 1.

Participants supported the principal being accessible for discussions, questions, and support for teachers. For instance, participants stated, “He is always available for quick questions regarding instruction and is always willing to help” (Participant 6) and “Open door discussions” (Participant 9). Furthermore, participants identified the principal’s presence in the classroom with students and teachers in terms of engagement. Participants stated the following:

“[Principal] is always a presence in our school. He often stops by classrooms for informal walk-throughs and engages with my students” (Participant 8).

“When necessary and appropriate the principal will come into individual classrooms and carry out lessons and the principal interacts with the teachers and students during this time” (Participant 13).

“He will drop in to check on instruction and class climate at times” (Participant 1).

Coordinate curriculum. The questions in this subsection produced the second smallest mean of the 10 subsections ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.93$). Nevertheless, the leadership rating for coordinating curriculum was in the upper range of Sometimes indicating a mixed teacher perception of their principal’s ability to coordinate the curriculum. This subsection had statements that produced the lowest rank among the three subsections for managing the instructional program. The behavioral statement with the highest mean of the five statements ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.94$) confirms that teachers’ perceptions are that the principal frequently “draws upon the results of school-wide testing when making curricular decisions,” with a high frequency of ratings of 4 and 5 ($n = 12$). The prompt, “Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels (e.g., the principal, vice principal, or teacher leaders)” had the second highest mean ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 0.99$), with an occurrence of 4s and 5s ($n = 10$), while one third ($n=6$) of the respondents rated the principal as Sometimes. The prompts, “Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers the school's curricular objectives” and “Assess the overlap between the school's curricular objectives and the school's achievement tests” tied for the third and fourth highest mean in the subsection ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.90$ and 0.88 , respectively). These behaviors in this subsection nearly occurred Frequently, with approximately 64% of the respondents’ ratings being either 4 or 5 ($n = 11, 10$,

respectively). The prompt, “Participate actively in the review of curricular materials” was the lowest mean of the five statements ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.94$). The respondents rated the principal across the scale with nearly as many for 4 and 5 ratings ($n = 8$) as for 2 and 3 ratings ($n = 9$).

Furthermore, the researcher asked the interview participants to identify what they perceive to be the principals role in instruction. The researcher developed two central themes from participants’ responses. The themes focused around the principal’s ability to support and encourage teachers, along with the principal’s ability to frame school goals and set high expectations. Participants identified the principal’s capacity to set high expectations for teachers. Participants’ statements that supported this claim included:

“His role is a strong leader who has a say in the day-to-day instruction without being a micromanager. Teachers are held to a high standard in terms of instruction however there is room for flexibility and creativity” (Participant 13).

“He interprets educational data, determines areas in need of updating or improving, addresses the necessary staff, and develops effective plans for change” (Participant 8).

“To set guidelines and expectations for staff to follow” (Participant 1).

“He sets rigorous yet achievable goals and expectations for staff and students” (Participant 6).

A number of participants described the principal’s ability to support and encourage teachers in pedagogy and curriculum by stating:

“Support teachers” (Participant 12).

“Support teacher's instructional methods” (Participant 2).

“Principal spends quality time discussing and listening to instructional successes and challenges in the classroom” (Participant 6).

“Encouraging collaboration amongst teachers within and across content areas” (Participant 3).

Furthermore, two participants addressed how the principal fosters teachers to take risks in their instruction by stating, “Support staff to take risks” (Participant 13) and “Although he may not directly influence our curriculum, he does encourage us to use outside resources and ‘out of the box’ thinking. This allows teachers to do what they feel is best for their students” (Participant 11).

Monitor student progress. The principal’s behaviors to monitor student progress was perceived by the respondents to be in the Frequently range ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.75$) and contained more behavioral statements in the Frequently range when compared to the other two subsections aforementioned. The teachers’ perceptions from the prompt was that the principal Frequently ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.49$) “Informed teachers of the school’s performance results in written form,” with 100% of the responses of Almost Always and Frequently ($n = 17$). The prompt, “Uses tests and other performance measure to assess progress toward school goals” had the second highest mean in the subsection ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 0.71$), with a high frequency of respondents rating the behavioral statement Frequently ($n = 15$). The prompt, “Discuss performance results with faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses” ($n = 12$) and the prompt, “Inform students of school's academic progress” ($n = 13$) had the same mean ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.83$, 0.88). The high number of respondents rated each instructional leadership behavioral statement in the Frequently ($n=13$) or Almost Always ($n=12$) range. The prompt, “Meet individually

with teachers to discuss student progress” (M = 3.8, SD = 0.83) had the lowest rating in the subsection, with a proportion of responses rated in the 5s and 4s ($n = 11$) or 3s and 2s ($n = 6$).

Staff development. The researcher asked participants in the study to identify what they perceive to be the principals role in staff development. The researcher developed one central theme from participants’ responses. The theme focused around the principal’s ability to collaborate with staff.

[Principal] understands the staff is on the front lines fighting the classroom fight and would best understand what is necessary for improvement. He does a great job of getting staff feedback and pushing for staff driven development, including staff presentation (Participant 7).

Participants identified the principal’s capacity to empower teachers to lead professional development opportunities in the district. Participants’ statements to support this assertion included:

“Workshop opportunities for staff and allows time for them to turn key information to the school community” (Participant 6).

“Shared leadership opportunity for staff to grow” (Participant 6).

“The principal encourages staff to run professional development when necessary or helpful. He sees value in that and can see the strengths in his teachers” (Participant 13).

“Principal encourages us to seek professional development whenever possible, whether it is through webinars, attending conferences, or reading books. In fact, just last year we participated in a book club with other staff members...to

encourage us to take chances” (Participant 11).

A number of participants described the principal’s willingness to collaborate with administrators and teachers to provide effective professional development by stating “Gather ideas from staff and discussions, work with curriculum coordinator to provide quality PD” (Participant 12) and “Provides opportunities for staff input when planning staff development” (Participant 10). Furthermore, two participants addressed how the principal used surveys as a tool to determine professional development needs by stating, “Staff surveys are often used to gather information” (Participant 9) and “[Principal] uses state mandates, teacher surveys, and collaboration with the Curriculum Coordinator to determine our PD” (Participant 8).

Research subquestions 2 and 3: How much of a principal’s day focus on instructional leadership activities? How does a principal balance the organizational management tasks with the instructional leadership tasks on a daily basis? The researcher used data from the survey, interviews, and the self-observation tool to address research subquestion 2 (How much of a principal’s day focuses on instructional leadership activities?) and subquestion 3 (How does a principal balance the organizational management tasks with the instructional leadership tasks on a daily basis?). The researcher used the Principal Leadership Self-observation Tool to gain further insight on how the principal spent his days leading the school. The researcher-participant recorded his behaviors and tasks in 20-minute time intervals each day from November 28, 2016 to December 9, 2016. An overview how the principal spent the 10 days engaged on instructional leadership activities is identified in Table 9 below.

Table 9

Results from the Principal Leadership Self-observation Tool

Days	Number of Intervals	Instructional Program	Management	Culture / Climate	Vision and Mission
Day 1	29	10% (3)	76% (22)	10% (3)	4% (1)
Day 2	27	26% (7)	74% (20)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Day 3	15	33% (5)	60% (9)	7% (1)	0% (0)
Day 4	26	35% (9)	65% (17)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Day 5	3	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (3)	0% (0)
Day 6	25	32% (8)	48% (12)	20% (5)	0% (0)
Day 7	25	32% (8)	48% (12)	20% (5)	0% (0)
Day 8	37	49% (18)	27% (10)	24% (9)	0% (0)
Day 9	27	33% (9)	37% (10)	30% (8)	0% (0)
Day 10	25	72% (18)	24% (6)	4% (1)	0% (0)
Total	239	36% (85)	49% (118)	15% (35)	0% (1)

Note: Day 5 was a Saturday when there was no school, therefore, only three intervals were collected on this particular day.

The principal utilized the Principal Leadership Self-observation Tool to record his actions, interactions, and the location every 20 minutes of the principal's workday. A total of 239 observations were recorded over the 10-day span. One of the 10 days recorded by the researcher-participant was a Saturday, in which the principal attended the funeral of a student's father. The principal recorded an average of 24 intervals throughout the workday, excluding this Saturday.

The researcher used the Principal as Instructional Leader interview protocol to gain further insight on teachers' perceptions of how the principal balances organizational management tasks with instructional leadership tasks. The researcher-participant created interview questions directly related to the research questions guiding the study. Respondents answered two interview questions pertaining to organizational management. Respondents wrote in their own words how they believe that the principal spends a majority of his day doing, and provided examples of how the principal is an organizational manager. All 13 participants answered the opened-ended questions. Table 10 provides the key words and phrases by theme that emerged when coding the responses.

Table 10

How does a Principal Balance the Organizational Management Tasks with the Instructional Leadership Tasks on a Daily Basis?

Interview Questions	Key Themes	Words & Phrases
What are some examples of how the principal is an organizational manager?	collaboration, scheduling	creating a leadership team seeking strengths in staff Schedules
What do you feel the principal spends a majority of his day doing?	high visibility supervise & evaluate instruction	being present, walking halls observing teachers providing instructional feedback
	handling issues time management	handling parent concerns solving problems disperse his time manage his time

Note. n = 13.

The results of the Principal Leadership Self-observation Tool, which recorded the principal's location during tasks and activities for a 10-day period, contribute to the discussion on principal leadership and the balance of tasks. Table 11 shows where the principal spent his time engaged on tasks and activities.

Table 11

Results from Where the Principal Spent His Days

Days	Number Intervals	Princip Office	District Office	Classrooms	Cafeteria/ Hallways	Bus Loop	Other
Day 1	29	6	13	1	1	3	5
Day 2	27	11	11	0	0	2	3
Day 3	15	13	2	0	0	0	0
Day 4	26	20	5	0	1	0	0
Day 5	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Day 6	25	16	0	2	5	2	0
Day 7	25	14	6	3	1	0	1
Day 8	37	14	0	6	4	2	11
Day 9	27	13	3	3	3	4	0
Day 10	25	12	4	6	0	1	2
Total	239	119	44	21	15	16	24

Note. The table above identifies the principal's location for the total intervals.

Principal as organizational manager. The principal spent approximately 49% ($n = 118$) on management tasks as documented by the researcher using the Principal Leadership Self-observation Tool. Example of management tasks included the principal answering emails, interviewing candidates for a teaching position, signing letters, along with completing time sheets. For instance, the principal and superintendent conducted six 30-minute interviews of applicants for a first grade and fourth grade teaching positions on the first day of data collection. The principal began and ended each day with responding

to or composing emails. The task of writing or responding to emails prior to the school day starting and once the school day ended represented at least 16% ($n = 38$) of the principal's workday. Below is a list of management tasks the principal engaged in during the 10 days:

1. Conducted four 30-minute interviews at local university for seniors preparing for graduation in the field of education;
2. Reviewed the technology budget in preparation for the 2017 SY budget;
3. Met with an outside vendor regarding the possibility of implementing a study skills online program into the curriculum;
4. Met with a parent regarding a student's grades;
5. Received a phone call from a New Jersey State Senator advocating on behalf of a parent and student on a bullying issue in the school;
6. Addressed a staff issue due to a teacher missing the morning staff meeting;
7. Met with a teacher to discuss a personal matter;
8. Met with the School Resource Officer regarding a substitute teacher issue;
9. Investigated a student residency issue;
10. Met with the nurse and parent regarding a custody issue;
11. Met with the superintendent regarding teachers wearing pins to show they are "safe;"
12. Participated in an administrative training on software used for developing purchase requisitions; and
13. Created a memo directed at the vice-principal and a staff member about procedures.

Furthermore, the researcher asked the participants of the interview protocol to give examples of how their principal is an organizational manager. The researcher developed two central themes from the participants' responses. The themes focused around (a) collaboration and (b) scheduling. The results from the Internet interview protocol illustrate that respondents believe that the task of scheduling is a significant example of how their principal is an organizational manager. The respondents gave examples of how the principal developed teacher and student schedules to maintaining a school calendar. One participant referenced scheduling to be significant aspect of the principal as an organizational manager by stating, "Schedules - daily, weekly, monthly, yearly. School Calendar. Events - Sports, Dances, Fields Trips, Assemblies, etc..." (Participant 12) and "Schedules" being a significant task for the principal (Participants 3, 7, and 8).

Seventy-seven percent ($n = 10$) of respondents connected the principal's ability to collaborate with staff as an example of being an organizational manager. This theme provides evidence that respondents perceive the principal's ability to collaborate and delegate tasks is an important aspect to his leadership style, thus utilizing a distributed leadership model. Participants described the principal's ability to collaborate with staff by stating the following:

"An example is the idea of instructional leadership (MELT) where teachers are leaders who are managed by Principal" (Participant 2).

"Developing a positive school culture by including all stakeholders in the process" (Participant 3).

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“Creating a leadership team to share the role as leaders in the school. This is a great way to organize information and push out ideas to the school” (Participant 6).

“Seeking strengths in staff and providing them with opportunities to share with others” (Participant 8).

“Frequent meetings with PLCs or grade levels, effective communication with staff regarding school wide plans/meetings/etc” (Participant 13).

Furthermore, the researcher recorded a total of 239 intervals identifying the principal’s location during the 10-day span. Approximately 50% ($n = 119$) of the recorded intervals occurred in the principal’s office. The researcher-participant recorded an average of two intervals occurring in the principal’s office first thing each morning and at the end of the principal’s day, respectively. The most common tasks that occurred in the principal’s office were answering and/or drafting emails and memos, parent and teacher meetings, and post-observation meetings.

The location with the second highest frequency was the district office. The district office represented approximately 18% ($n = 44$) of the principal’s location during the 10-day time span of recorded intervals. The district office is within the school building and consists of the superintendent, curriculum supervisor, and special education supervisor’s office. The most common tasks that occurred in the district office were staff interviews and school leadership meetings with administration.

Principal as instructional leader. The principal spent approximately 36% ($n = 86$) of his time on the instructional program when compared to 49% ($n = 117$) of time on management tasks. An example of an instructional program task was the principal

holding a grade level meeting to discuss supplemental tutoring for a student dealing with a medical issue. Only 13% ($n = 11$) of recorded behaviors categorized under the instructional program consisted of the principal in the classroom observing teacher practice and student learning. Classroom visits by the principal consisted of informal walkthroughs and formal evaluations of teachers. The principal had at least one observation on 6 of the 9 school days. Furthermore, the principal visited classrooms in some capacity 7 of the 9 days, not including the Saturday event when school was out of session. Below is a list of instructional program tasks the principal engaged in during the 10 days:

1. Met with after-school director and coordinator to discuss “at-risk” students who failed MP1 and the possibility of setting up after-school tutoring and/or a mentoring program;
2. Held a monthly staff meeting that focused on teachers creating goals in their profession and for student learning;
3. Met with a teacher to appropriately place an incoming transfer student;
4. Met with counselors to create supports for students who received a failing grade;
5. Created a student action plan that focused on previewing the content, after-school tutoring, and keeping open lines of communication with the student's mother;
6. Reviewed the failure rate of students followed by the grading criteria of teachers;

7. Met with 3rd and 4th grade math/science teachers to discuss curriculum for next year along with possible grant opportunity;
8. Met with counselors to discuss student 504 plans;
9. Met with teacher to discuss curriculum and gifted and talented program;
10. Conducted formal and informal observations;
11. Conducted post-observation meetings with teachers; and
12. Participated in a vertical articulation meeting at the sending high school.

The researcher asked the interview participants what they felt their principal spends a majority of his day doing. Four central themes emerged from participants' responses. Two of the four themes, high visibility and supervise and evaluate instruction, directly aligned to Hallinger and Murphy's (1987) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale subsections. The two other themes focused around (a) handling issues and (b) time management.

Four participants described the principal's focus being on the supervision and evaluation of instruction by stating the following:

“Observing teachers” (Participant 1).

“Majority of his day completing observations and writing evaluations”
(Participant 2).

“Teacher evals” (Participant 1).

“Observations” (Participant 11).

Two other participants contributed similar responses to the principal focusing on supervise and evaluate instruction as:

“A great deal of this time is spent on instructional strategies” (Participant 8) and
“Providing instructional feedback” (Participant 9)

Balance of leadership tasks. The results from the Internet interview protocol illustrated that respondents believed the principal attempted to manage his time with the many job responsibilities each day. For instance, participants responded to the second interview question in the following manner:

“[Principal] divides his time among many areas of leadership. He speaks with teachers, parents, colleagues and students for various reasons throughout the day” (Participant 8).

“He truly trying to disperse his time between communicating with staff, students, and parents as well as district responsibilities in the building” (Participant 6).

“I do see that when he has a free moment he is visible and engaged in the school community” (Participant 2).

Participants also described the principal of spending a majority of his day handling issues and being a problem solver:

“Dealing with the many matters that help run a school such as discipline” (Participant 5).

“Handling parent concerns” (Participant 1).

“Solving problems” (Participant 9).

“Large portion of time is spent handling issues that arise during the course of a particular school day” (Participant 12).

“Educational bureaucracy” (Participant 7).

Culture and climate. High visibility by the principal became a significant theme

in what respondents felt their principal spent a majority of his day doing. Examples were given of the principal “Being present, walking hallways, morning drop-off, afternoon dismissal” (Participant 12). Respondents described high visibility by the principal’s ability to “Communicate with staff, students, and parents” (Participants 6). Furthermore, respondents related “Parental communication and a liaison between the school-community” (Participant 8).

Participants in the study were asked to identify the principal’s role in creating a school climate that is conducive for learning. Two central themes developed from participants’ responses. The themes focused around the principal’s ability to develop and communicate school goals and teachers and maintaining high visibility.

The principal is not only the “face” of the building, but it also the “voice.” Like most team models, the constituents take on the personality of their leader and [School] are no different. When I first arrived here, a climate of status quo and stagnation was acceptable amongst the staff. However, in the years since, an evolution of progression has taken shape under [Principal]. Now, teachers are constantly pushing in all directions - teaching strategies, PLCs, leadership groups, etc... [Principal] has empowered staff to be the change they want to see (Participant 7).

The principal effectively developed school goals and in turn, clearly communicated them to students and staff. Three participants supported this assertion by stating:

“Our principal provides a supportive environment for both teachers and students. He is enthusiastic about the schools goals and celebrates both adult and child

successes and allows educators to provide feedback regarding all aspects of our educational environment” (Participant 8).

“Our principal encourages us to take chances with our teaching and not be afraid to fail. This message starts at the top and is projected onto our students so that they are aware that it is OK to try something you never did before!” (Participant 12).

“The principal not only leads and models behavior for the whole school, but he also supports staff in decisions to ensure the school community, as a whole, runs effectively for student learning” (Participant 6).

The principal maintained high visibility with teachers and students. This is evident as two participants stated:

“The principal is very much involved in the day to day happenings within the school and individual classrooms. All children know him and are used to having him walk throughout the hallways and into the classrooms. There is a high level of respect there and he is willing to step in and talk to students in order to motivate and encourage when needed” (Participant 13), and

“The principal takes an active role in checking in often with teachers and students to be sure the climate is one of respect and learning” (Participant 9).

Approximately 15% ($n = 13$) of the principal’s behaviors were categorized as pertaining to the culture and climate of the school. Only one behavior recorded by the researcher-participant was categorized under the vision and mission. Thus, there was overlap between the principal’s behaviors categorized as management and instructional program to being recorded as culture and climate and vision and mission. For instance,

the principal praising a teacher on his or her strengths during the post-observation meeting could also be considered under the category of culture and climate. Below is a list of culture and climate tasks the principal engaged in during the 10 days:

1. Greeted students and staff at the door;
2. Greeted parents and community members to the winter chorus concert;
3. Sent out a tweet about the family event, Meatballs and Math;
4. Presented a student with a \$10 gift card for their recycling efforts;
5. Visited the cafeteria and spoke to 7th and 8th grade students during lunch;
6. Spoke to staff and students informally in the hallway;
7. Attended the funeral of the passing of a student's father;
8. Conducted morning announcements via the intercom; and
9. Assisted staff at the car loop for student drop off by parents/guardians.

Lastly, the principal spent approximately six percent of his time in the cafeteria, walking the hallways, and at the “bus loop” greeting students and assisting with bus arrival or dismissal. The researcher-participant documented only four-15-minute occurrences at the bus loop in the morning due to the principal being pulled away to assign substitute teachers to classrooms.

Of the interview protocol, participants believed the principal took an active role in communicating with teachers on a daily basis. This was evident because the researcher used the Principal as Instructional Leader interview protocol to gain further insight on how frequently teachers communicated with the principal. Interview question nine asked respondents to identify the frequency he or she communicates with the principal. Eight-five percent ($n = 11$) of the participants answered the opened-ended question, while two

participants answered the question by saying, “Whenever necessary” and “Should be able to speak as needed” (Participant 4). Approximately 55% ($n = 6$) of the respondents communicate daily with the principal, while 36% ($n = 4$) of respondents communicate on a weekly basis with the principal. One of the eleven respondents stated, that he or she communicates with the principal “once every other month.” Furthermore, 77% ($n = 10$) of respondents believed the principal was readily available to assist he or she in school-related matters.

Research subquestion 4: How does a principal distribute tasks to designated and undesignated leaders in the school? The researcher used the Principal as Instructional Leader interview protocol to gain further insight on teachers’ perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader. The researcher-participant created interview questions directly related to the research questions guiding the study. Interview questions 17 through 21 asked the respondents to write in their own words to how the principal distribute tasks to designated and undesignated leaders in the school. All 13 participants answered the opened-ended questions. Table 12 provides the key words and phrases by theme that emerged when coding the responses.

Table 12

How does a Principal Distribute Tasks to Designated and Undesignated Leaders in the School?

Interview Questions	Key Themes	Words & Phrases
How are decisions made at the school?	staff input	committee brainstorm
Who makes the decisions?		staff has a strong say polled
How are teachers encouraged to participate in the decision-making process?	involvement committees	to get involved always invited to be a part of that conversation PLCs
How are teacher-leaders identified in the school?	volunteer strengths experience	volunteer basis opportunities knowledge of staff/students experienced teachers
How does the principal distribute tasks to staff in the school?	identification	PLCs, grade level teams committees staff with specific skills
What are examples of tasks the principal distributes to staff?	instructional school climate	professional development SGOs student data school-wide activities

Note, n = 13.

Identifying teacher leaders. The participants in the study identified how decisions are made at the school and who makes the decisions. The results of the question were evenly distributed from participants' perceptions of how decisions are made ranging from a top-down approach, a ground-up or grassroots approach, and a team approach. One common theme arose from participants' responses to this interview question. Regardless if the participant felt it was a top-down or ground-up approach, input from staff was a

common theme throughout the answers. Some participants' responses referenced a top-down approach to how decisions are made at the school. For instance, participants stated:

“Administration as a whole” (Participant 1).

“I feel like it starts from the superintendent and trickles down the chain of administrators” (Participant 6).

“Administrators and through chain of command” (Participant 10).

Participants' responses mentioned that staff input was taken into account in decisions, but not the final say. Three participants stated:

“Administrators, sometimes with staff input” (Participant 12).

“Teachers and community members are polled or asked to join a committee, the final decision is made by the administrators” (Participant 2).

“Our administrative team is responsible for making a majority of the decisions at our school but there are various committees, made up of staff members, which give their input (DEAC [District Evaluation Advisory Committee], MELT [school leadership] Team, Health and Wellness Committee, etc.)” (Participant 11).

In contrast, four participants responded that decisions are made through a bottom-up approach and/or through a team approach. For example, participants stated:

“Admin team, school board team, teacher team work together to make decisions” (Participant 9).

“The staff has a strong say in many decisions given there are many committees in the school consisting of teachers. We are consistently asked our opinion and do not feel like decisions are forced upon us” (Participant 13).

“The decision process many times begins with a meeting to address a concern that

involves the people directly affected by the concern. The team will brainstorm different ways to approach the matter. In the end, the team will come to a consensus about how to handle the matter” (Participant 3).

The participants also identified how teachers were encouraged to participate in the decision-making process. Two common themes resulted from participants’ responses to the interview question. The themes focused around the principal’s making efforts to involve staff in the decision-making process and staff participating on committees.

A majority of the participants mentioned the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and committees as an avenue to participate in the decision-making process. The seven participants who supported this assertion stated:

“[Principal] allows staff to participate on various committees, such as, Leadership, Safety, Professional Development, and Wellness” (Participant 8).

“Teachers are encouraged to get involved in all committees to start committees, to lead PLCs and in-services” (Participant 7).

Furthermore, participants mentioned the use of surveys (Participants 1, 6, 10), emails (Participant 3), and face-to-face conversations or meetings (Participants 3 and 6) as examples of how the principal encourages teachers to participate in the decision-making process.

Teachers are given many opportunities to lead staff in various ways. Many will present professional development, participate in committees, pursue graduate courses, facilitate school wide programs, and lead professional learning communities (Participant 3).

Participants in the study were asked to identify how teacher leaders are identified

in the school. Three common themes resulted from participants' responses to the interview question. The themes focused around teachers (a) volunteering their time, (b) their experience in the field, and (c) their strengths in the particular area.

Six participants described teachers of having a number of opportunities to serve in a leadership role at the school. Some participants identified teacher leaders being chosen through volunteerism (Participants 5, 9, 13). One participant echoed this belief by stating, "Teacher leaders in our school are mostly through the committees as well. Any teacher has the opportunity to be a part of any of these committees if they so choose" (Participant 11). Four of the six participants whom identified teacher leaders through volunteerism also supported teacher experience and/or strengths as a criterion. For instance, participant responses included the following: "This happens in various ways. Often opportunities are mentioned in faculty meetings. Sometimes in conversations with staff, [Principal] may say, "You might be a good fit for this committee" (Participant 9) and "Experience, strengths, volunteer basis" (Participant 13).

Participants in the study were asked to identify how the principal distributed tasks to staff in the school. One common theme resulted from participants' responses to the interview question. The theme focused around the principal identifying a staff member or group of staff members to complete a task. Some participants believed the principal distributed tasks to staff in the school depending on the magnitude of the task and a teacher's strength. For instance, participants responded to the question by stating:

"By asking those who would be able to perform the task and succeed" (Participant 12).

"He will also create calendar events and meet with individuals in person to offer

certain opportunities” (Participant 3).

“At times the principal may ask specific staff to provide their skill set in helping in certain areas” (Participant 2).

Other participants believed that the principal distributed tasks to staff in a manner that allowed all staff or a group of staff members a chance to participate in the task. Six participants identified the principal of communicating tasks to staff through email communication (Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8). One of the six participants stated, “An email is sent out inviting all staff who may be interested to join a committee, athletic, or club to send letter of interest” (Participant 2). Furthermore, participants also emphasized that the principal distributes tasks to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), committees, and grade level teams. Two participants supported this assertion by stating:

“Tasks are usually assigned by content area or grade level. For example, in the past two years we have met twice a week with our PLC's [professional learning community] to unpack standards and discuss ways to improve our pedagogy” (Participant 11).

“PLCs, committees” (Participant 10).

Types of tasks distributed. Participants in the study were asked to give examples of tasks the principal distributed to staff. Two central themes emerged from participants’ responses. The themes, (a) instructional and (b) school climate, directly aligned to Hallinger and Murphy’s (1987) PIMRS subsections.

Some tasks personnel have undertaken may include: turn-keying information during our PLC meetings, helping organize an educational assembly or outside

experience, analyzing student test scores, and various committee work (Participant 12).

A majority of participants supported the belief that the principal distributes instructional tasks to staff. Some examples from participants were as follows:

“Grade level activities” (Participant 13).

“Analyzing student test scores” (Participant 6).

“Assessments, and SGO requirements” (Participant 10).

“Teacher evaluation forms, lesson planning, staff meetings and professional development involvement (Participant 8).

“Teachers who are strong in a specific area are asked to share their expertise to other staff members” (Participant 2).

Other participants responded to the question by referencing the principal distributing tasks pertaining to the planning and execution of school-wide events. For example, five participants gave examples of tasks distributed by the principal that were categorized as school climate by stating, “Helping organize an educational assembly or outside experience” (Participant 12) and “Organizing school activities and events” (Participant 1, 2, 6, and 10).

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this case study was to compare a principal's daily actions to the perception teachers have of their principal as an instructional leader. This study on principal leadership required school district personnel, parents, and lawmakers to examine the discrepancy between the perceived roles of a principal when compared to the reality of a principal's role today in schools. The quantitative and qualitative data collected from this study provided an authentic perspective of an elementary school principal attempting to balance the number of responsibilities that often seemed to be insurmountable by identifying teacher leaders through the adoption of a distributed leadership framework.

The researcher set out to answer the central research question: How can a principal be an effective instructional leader? To address the central research question, the researcher developed the following subquestions:

1. How does a principal engage in effective instructional leadership practices on a daily basis?
2. How much of a principal's day focus on instructional leadership activities?
3. How does a principal balance the organizational management tasks with the instructional leadership tasks on a daily basis?
4. How does a principal distribute tasks to designated and undesignated leaders in the school?

The researcher-participant identified common themes from the three data collection tools used to gather information on principal leadership. The participant

responses from the interview, Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), and the results of the self-observation tool developed by the researcher-participant provided significant findings in the area of instructional leadership along with how the principal distributes leadership tasks to teacher leaders in the school. The results from the study provide an authentic examination of an elementary school principal navigating the multi-faceted tasks faced on a daily basis. In this chapter, the researcher will answer the central research question of how can a principal be an effective instructional leader; the researcher will also provide the implications of the findings for practice, policy, and future research.

The researcher used Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) framework for instructional leadership to identify how a principal can be an effective instructional leader. The framework consists of three aspects: promoting a positive school climate, defining the vision and mission, and managing the instructional program (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This study involved an elementary school principal integrating a distributed leadership model to become an effective instructional leader. Heck and Hallinger (2009) emphasized that schools that lead from a distributed leadership model are perceived to have more impact on teaching and learning. Recent researchers have also support the belief that principal leadership should adopt a distributed leadership model (Gronn, 2002; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Spillane, 2005).

The principal in this study had the charge of leading a school with a grade span ranging from pre-kindergarten to grade eight. Horn and Loeb (2010) suggested that it is impractical to believe that the principal can be an expert in the content with the variety of subject matter and grades in a pre-k to grade eight school. Thus, it is imperative for the

principal to identify and support designated and undesignated leaders within the staff in order to reflect shared leadership qualities. This study is supported by the work of Grissom and colleagues (2013), who found that principals spend minimal time on instruction and even less time in the classroom. The findings from this study concluded that the principal spent approximately nine percent of his time in the classroom.

The principal's ability to collaborate with teachers on a daily basis was a significant indicator to effective principal leadership (Devos et al., 2014; Goddard et al., 2015; Irvin & Flood, 2004). The findings from the study supported the principal's capability to empower staff through evaluation feedback, professional development, and being accessible throughout the day. This was evident in how participants identified the principal's ability to collaborate and delegate tasks through the use of a leadership team, professional learning communities, and grade level meetings. In addition, participants believed that teacher leaders were identified by the principal for a wealth of shared leadership opportunities in the school by skill level, experience, and willingness to be a part of the decision-making process.

In addition to the principal's ability to communicate and support staff, two additional themes emerged from participants' perceptions that the principal engaged in instructional practices on a daily basis. Participants identified high visibility and supervision and evaluation of instruction as a common theme that produced conflicting results. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) believed that effective school principals understand the importance of being highly visible around the school. Thus, the findings of Horng and colleagues (2010) mirrored the results of this study in regards to a principal's time mostly

being spent in the office and sparingly in the classroom working with teachers and students.

High Visibility

The participants concluded that approximately 13% of the principal's recorded behaviors occurred in classrooms. This is in comparison with approximately 68% of the principal's recorded behaviors occurred in the principal and district offices. The PIMRS survey results in the subsection, *High Visibility*, corroborated with the results from the self-observation tool. Participants identified the principal of maintaining high visibility to be the lowest rated subsection on the PIMRS survey. The results of the PIMRS survey confirmed that the participants' perception of the principal is that he sometimes visited classrooms to discuss school issues with teachers and students. Furthermore, another reason for the low ranking in this subsection was due to two statements that received the lowest ranks in all of the 45 statements. Participants identified the principal of seldom covering classes or tutoring students. To the contrary, participants' perception of the principal is that he frequently took time to talk informally with students and teachers during recess and breaks and attended/participated in extra- and co-curricular activities.

In contrast to the PIMRS survey results, participants in the interview protocol identified one of the principal's strengths was high visibility around the school. Participants in the interview believed the principal exemplified behaviors that reflected high visibility. Participants gave examples ranging from the principal's ability to be available for assistance to engaging students in classrooms and throughout the school, whether it was greeting students off the school buses to making a presence in the cafeteria.

Supervision and Evaluation of Instruction

Prior researchers have identified the importance of principals to take an active role in the instructional program; however, there is little evidence to support that is happening (Hallinger, 2005). Grissom and colleagues (2013) concluded in their study of instructional leadership practices that principals spent approximately five percent of their workday in classrooms observing teachers. This study was no different from the perspective of a principal formally and informally evaluating teaching and learning in classrooms. For instance, the principal in this study spent on average approximately 13% of the school day in classrooms. The current researcher found, however, that there were significant findings of the principal supervising and evaluating instruction with minimal classroom visits when compared to other job responsibilities during the time data was collected for the study.

The principal in this study visited classrooms on seven of the nine days that data were collected, and conducted six formal teacher evaluations. The number of evaluations and classroom visits gave the impression of significance; however, the principal had approximately 50 classroom teachers in the pre-k to grade eight school. A common thread from participants whom took part in the Internet interviews identified the principal's ability to offer support and constructive feedback in two spectrums: informal conversations and during post-observation meetings. This—coupled with the results from the PIMRS survey, in which participants identified the principal of frequently supporting the supervision and evaluation of the instruction—supports the claim that effective principal leadership is not just synonymous with a principal in the classroom. This study is supported by the work of Horng and Loeb's (2010) assertion that the schools that

showed the highest academic growth were more likely to had principals who were effective organizational managers than instructional leaders.

Time Management

Furthermore, the current researcher concluded that handling issues took a great deal of the principal's time; therefore, time management strategies were essential for the principal's success as an instructional leader. Participants in the study recognized the principal's ability to balance managerial and instructional tasks. This was evident when the participants identified that the principal spent a great deal of time communicating with parents arising from issues. The research findings support Hallinger and Murphy's (1986) work on principal leadership by the principal being actively involved in maintaining positive parental relationships. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) posited that a principal's role is "mediating the demands and expectations of the community and soothing relations between teachers and parents" (p. 350).

Implications for Practice

The current researcher concluded that approximately half of the principal's workday was spent on managerial tasks, and 36% on instructional leadership tasks. Furthermore, the principal spent 68% of the time in the principal's office or in the district office, in comparison to only nine percent of the time in classrooms. These findings further support there is a misconception that a principal can be an effective instructional leader without spending a majority of his or her time in classrooms. The research findings support Spillane and Healey's (2010) conclusion that a designated leader in a single position has a greater likelihood to be more efficient and effective in the focused area, when compared to leaders whom hold multiple positions and responsibilities. Thus, it is

imperative for the principal to identify teacher leaders within the school to assist with the complexity of instructional leadership tasks such as curriculum and pedagogical practices. According to Spillane and colleagues (2001), classroom instruction greatly differs from content, delivery, materials, student motivation, and classroom management. This is just one example of the many aspects of school leadership.

One school district went a step further in distributing the daily managerial tasks at a school. The District of Columbia Public Schools was identified as one of the first school districts in the United States to “liberate principals to focus more on teaching evaluation, planning and assessment and far less on milk, leaky faucets or security” by hiring directors of operations and logistics (Westervelt, 2017). The pilot project started in the District of Columbia Public Schools in 2014 and is presently in 70 of the city's 115 public schools (Westervelt, 2017). The researcher recommends a model similar to the District of Columbia Public Schools or another alternative model that not only emphasizes distributed or shared leadership, but also puts the model to practice.

School districts may be challenged to adopt the model being used in the District of Columbia Public Schools due to budgetary constraints and for its uniqueness to the field of public schools. An alternative plan with an immediate impact, however, is the distribution of leadership tasks that once fell solely on the shoulders of a principal. When examining a distributed perspective in leading, an individual or organization should not only consider who the leaders are and their roles and responsibilities, but also what the leaders do throughout their workdays and their actions (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane & Sherer, 2004). Furthermore, a distributive leadership framework includes investigation into the duties of staff across many levels of positions, rank, or seniority (Spillane et al.,

2001; Spillane & Sherer, 2004). For example, the schools commitment to adopt professional learning communities, leadership teams, and committees to address the vast responsibilities and tasks is a practical step that can be delegated by the school principal. The benefits of adopting a distributed leadership framework at the school level includes the principal's ability to collaborate with others, acknowledge and value various staff input, as well as motivate and impact sustainable change.

As the leadership teams (i.e., PLCs, committees) become more secure and trusting of one another, the principal can begin to identify teacher leaders from each of these groups of teachers. Teachers can become accountable for being a teacher leader on a school's leadership team. These liaison teachers will communicate directly with the principal regarding any staff concerns or needs relating to the classroom, instruction, curriculum, resources, and/or training (Stein & Nelson, 2003). In return, the principal will have opportunities to follow up with the teachers, gain their input, and make any necessary decisions that will further student growth.

Implications for Policy

Doherty and Jacobs (2015) made the argument that principal evaluation systems, "are an afterthought" for many states when compared to the teacher evaluation systems (p. 23). Additionally, the mandates found in the teacher evaluation systems were omitted from the principal evaluation systems. According to Doherty and Jacobs, 28 states have mandated dismissal charges for teacher ineffectiveness in the evaluation system; however, only 18 states hold principals accountable to the same policy consequences.

From a national perspective, only 11 of the 50 states mandate multiple observations required for all teachers, with New Jersey being one of those states (Doherty

& Jacobs, 2015). Furthermore, only 26 of the 50 states require multiple observations for all new teachers (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). Lastly, only 27 states, including New Jersey, require principal evaluators to receive training on the teacher evaluation system, and only nine states require principals to be certified in the evaluation system (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015).

As for the principal evaluation systems, 34 of the 50 states require principals to be evaluated annually. The question for many states is who is responsible to conduct observations on principals. Twenty-two states do not specify who is responsible in observing principals (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). New Jersey explicitly identified the chief school administrator or designee to evaluate principals. Only New Jersey required that principals be evaluated on the quality and effectiveness of carrying out the teacher evaluation system for teachers (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). New Jersey has been at the forefront of all states to adopt a teacher and principal effectiveness policy that has been revised since its inception. The researcher will examine AchieveNJ's principal requirements below, highlighting policy initiatives and recommendations for improvement.

The requirements outlined in AchieveNJ set an expectation for the school principal to be an effective instructional leader through the development and support of teachers with the goal of improving students' academic growth. According to the New Jersey Department of Education (2014), AchieveNJ requires 50% of the principal evaluation to consist of an observation instrument that measures principal practice and the remaining 50% to be broken into three sections: median student growth percentile (30%) administrator goals (10%), and the student growth objective (10%). The findings from

this study aligned to AchieveNJ's principal practice evidence for what attributes exemplified an effective instructional leader. Evidence of principal practice may be gathered through a number of instructional tasks including, but not limited to (a) conferencing with teachers following observations, (b) participating or leading professional development activities, and (c) conducting parent conferences.

In addition to the principal practice evaluation tool outlined above, the State of New Jersey has made the once required Principal Evaluation Leadership Instrument now an option (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). The Principal Evaluation Leadership Instrument measured a principal's ability to do the following:

1. Prepare teachers for success;
2. Build collaboration;
3. Fulfill requirements of the evaluation system;
4. Provide feedback, coaching, and planning for growth;
5. Ensure reliable, valid observation results;
6. Ensure high-quality Student Growth Objectives.

It is evident that the requirements of AchieveNJ strictly from the principal practice component are reasonable for a principal evaluation tool. The challenge lies with how principals can manage their responsibilities with more attention on instructional leadership tasks. For instance, this study concluded that the principal frequently supervised and evaluated classroom instruction through formal and informal observations. The current principal, however, spent minimal time in the classroom evaluating instructional practices when compared to other tasks. For example, the principal spent approximately 36% of his time focused on the instructional program and

49% on the management tasks. Furthermore, the principal conducted six formal observations within the 10-day span of data collection. The principal was perceived effective by a majority of participants in the study, although the results from the Principal Leadership Self-observation Tool showed insignificant number of classroom visits (n=21) by the school principal in a 10-day span. This conclusion supported the principal as an effective instructional leader for his ability to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in teacher's instructional practices during post-observation meetings. Second, participants in the study believed that classroom priorities of teachers were consistent with the goals and direction of the school. Lastly, participants in the study recognized the principal's ability to support and encourage teachers. This was evident as participants identified the principal's capacity to empower teachers to lead professional development opportunities in the district.

Principals are faced with time constraints in successful implementation of the new teacher evaluation system. According to a 2013 survey of principals, the national principal associations concluded that a comprehensive teacher evaluation requires approximately 11 to 15 hours per teacher over the course of the school year (Maxwell, 2014). The challenge this principal faced with AchieveNJ in terms of principal practice was fulfilling the evaluation requirement set forth by the district. The principal was responsible for conducting approximately 40 formal evaluations on teachers during the 2016-2017 school year. Prior to this school year, the principal conducted approximately 60 formal evaluations on teachers over the past 2 years. The reason for the decrease in evaluations from one year to the next was due to the addition of an administrator in the district.

The requirement in New Jersey is for non-tenured teachers to have at least three observations each year for a minimum of 20 minutes (New Jersey Department of Education, 2017). Tenured teachers will have at least two required 20-minute observations each year. The principal spent on average a total of 40 minutes in the classroom during the observation phase of the evaluation.

Within the minimum requirements, all teachers must have at least one unannounced and one announced observation with a pre-conference (New Jersey Department of Education, 2017). The principal spent approximately 30 minutes meeting with teachers in the pre-conference phase of the evaluation. During the 2016-2017 school year, the principal conducted 12 pre-conferences with teachers.

Post-conferences between teachers and their supervisors are required following each observation (New Jersey Department of Education, 2017). These conferences must all be face-to-face for non-tenured teachers and at least one must be face-to-face for tenured teachers. One caveat implemented at the start of the 2016-2017 school year was the option for teachers rated highly effective on their previous evaluation with the option of completing a portfolio of practice in place of their second evaluation (New Jersey Department of Education, 2017). This option was offered to teachers in the principal's school, however, there were no takers for this newly adopted assessment. In addition, the principal conducted all of his post-conferences face-to-face with teachers. The principal conducted six post-conference meetings with teachers during the 10-day span data was collected in this study. The post-conference meetings ranged in time from 20 to 30 minutes.

The principal's responsibility in regards to fulfilling the teacher evaluation

requirement was manageable during the 2016-2017 school year. The decrease in teacher evaluations for tenured staff from three evaluations to two was an improvement. Furthermore, the addition of an administrator in the district to evaluate teachers lessened the load on the principal's teacher evaluations by 33% from the prior year; however, an administrator position was eliminated from the school in the 2017-2018 school year due to a budgetary shortfall. Thus, the principal will have additional teacher evaluations that will resemble the 2015-2016 school year. The uncertainty in school funding in the State of New Jersey from one year to the next makes the roles and responsibilities of the school principal ever changing. In addition to the extra teacher evaluations, the school principal is responsible for student discipline in grades five through eight for the following school year due to the elimination of the vice-principal position.

AchieveNJ is a policy to improve teacher practice with the goal of student achievement; however, it cannot react to budgetary restraints faced in districts. Therefore, it is essential for district and school leaders to rethink job roles and responsibilities to ensure principals are able to focus a majority of their time on instructional leadership tasks.

Future Research

Several comments by participants in the study suggested decisions were made by administration and pushed down to the teaching staff. Other participants identified teachers of giving input to a decision, but the final say was with the principal and/or administration. Numerous participants in the study referenced how the principal encouraged staff to participate on committees and in professional learning communities to address many school decisions. There is a discrepancy between teacher involvement in

the school and who makes the decisions in the school. Thus, teachers' perception of the decision-making process is an area that needs further research.

AchieveNJ has set the groundwork for principals to engage in instructional tasks, but further inquiry needs to be done that stretches beyond principal compliance under AchieveNJ. The current researcher recommends future study in a number of areas directly related to the evaluation process. For example, the timing between an observation and the date of the post-conference could have an effect on the teacher reflection and principal recommendations. During this study, the principal conducted six teacher observations and only spent 40 minutes during the 10-day span writing the final teacher evaluations. Future research is needed to identify not only when principals are finding the time to write and finalize teacher evaluations, but also the quality in the final product.

A study on principals providing feedback to teachers using the Teacher Practice Evaluation System would produce meaningful data to test the validity of the findings from the State of New Jersey. As stated previously, the most recent data on teacher effectiveness in New Jersey concluded that approximately 98% of New Jersey public school teachers were rated effective or highly effective during the 2014-2015 school year (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015; Mooney, 2016). This was not only an issue in New Jersey, but also across the nation, where an average of 95% of teachers were identified as effective or highly effective (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). The 2015 report from the Council on Teacher Quality recommended states to adopt an evaluation system that included five performance categories rather than the four categories that New Jersey and 33 other states used to rate teacher performance. For example, New Mexico adopted five categories in their performance assessment, and the results differed drastically from New Jersey.

During the 2014-2015 school year, 26% of teachers were identified ineffective or minimally ineffective compared to only two percent in New Jersey (Doherty & Jacobs, 2015). Thus, future research in this area is needed to explore the type of feedback principals are providing to teachers. For example, are principals pointing out specific strengths and weaknesses of instructional practices in the post-conferences and in the written evaluations, or do they find the teacher evaluation system more of an obstacle in teacher professional growth (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Hallinger et al., 2014; Sexton et al., 2009)?

Conclusion

This current researcher based this case study upon one central research question: How can a principal be an effective instructional leader in an era of accountability? It is important to understand the researcher-participant's background and leadership experiences as the reader will also compare the findings from this study with their own unique leadership experiences.

The title of instructional leader was not a title that resonated with this principal even after completing his eighth year as principal. The principal's career in education has been highlighted with one job promotion after another in a short span of time. His rise in administration can be viewed as a positive; however, he recognized his limitations as an instructional leader. From 2002 until today, he encompassed the position of teacher, coordinator of a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC), vice principal of a middle school, principal of a middle school, and principal of three elementary schools in two different school districts. His inexperience in curriculum and pedagogy was masked by his strength to lead a staff through school-wide initiatives focusing on

character education, positive behavior supports, and strong organizational management skills.

The principal began his career in public education as a young, energetic special education teacher serving students in a middle school self-contained setting. He was hired as a teacher on an emergency certificate. Next, the superintendent designated the researcher-participant to lead a 21st CCLC in the winter of his third year as a teacher. The program was designed to create more learning opportunities for students after the regular school day. His experiences in the after-school program afforded him the chance to become a vice principal of a middle school.

The researcher-participant became a vice principal at the same middle school he attended and taught at by the age of 26. He faced the harsh reality of being a school leader to a majority of tenured staff who were once his teachers when he was a student in the school. It was the researcher-participant's perception at the time that the staff did not view him as an instructional leader. More so, he did not believe in himself as an instructional leader due to his minimal time in the classroom as a teacher.

As the researcher-participant became principal two years later and still continues in that role today, he thirsted for the chance to further his education at the graduate level. The doctoral program at the local university provided him the chance to redefine himself as an instructional leader and gave him the confidence to lead a staff through a number of instructional initiatives. This coupled with the changes to public schools in New Jersey has brought this principal's leadership capabilities to the forefront.

The career paths for individuals who desire to be a school principal have many roads and detours. More so, the role and responsibilities of a principal tests one's ability

to flourish in such a dynamic educational system. The requirements under AchieveNJ for principal practice provide an overview of what is important in the role of a principal; however, it does not prescribe a blueprint for principals to how to the balance of number of management tasks and instructional leadership tasks faced on a daily basis. The findings from this study produced authentic experiences that practicing principals can apply to their own leadership practices and behaviors.

Additionally, it is the researcher's hope that this study can provide members of the school community (i.e., board of education members, teachers, etc.) a clear picture of how far-reaching the job responsibilities of a principal are under this new era of accountability. Effective principal leadership can no longer be viewed as a superhero in a cape, but rather as an instructional leader that empowers teacher leaders through the adoption of a distributed leadership model (Elmore, 2002; Hallinger & Murphy, 2005; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998; Spillane, 2005).

Epilogue

This study on principal leadership provided the researcher with an opportunity to look at his leadership behaviors as a principal. The findings from the study validated instructional leadership practices that he once perceived to be a weakness prior to the study. This study also initiated the opportunity for the researcher create new leadership behaviors that mirrored effective instructional leadership behaviors through the adoption of a distributed leadership model.

Prior to this research study, the researcher was challenged by the remarks of a select number of principals who consistently posted to the social media site, Twitter. These particular principals would post that principal leadership happens in the classroom

and not in the main office. One principal even went as far to not being in his office four of the five days of the school week. The researcher began to question his own practices as an instructional leader due to the constant messages that he was seeing through the Twitter chats. This study validated for the researcher principal leadership is not identified by the leader's location in the school day, but rather the principal's actions. A majority of the researcher's day as a principal is spent on management tasks; however, this does not dispute his effectiveness as an instructional leader. Furthermore, this study has revealed how the implementation of teacher leaders in the school can prove to be a valuable resource in the role of a principal. This study has allowed the researcher become more self-aware of his interactions with teachers and how to empower teachers for leadership roles.

As an instructional leader, the researcher created a culture at the school for teachers to use data to inform instructional decisions for their students, but seldom measured his own leadership practices and its impact on the school. This research experience caused the researcher to explore his own behaviors in the area of principal leadership. The researcher has learned a great deal about himself as a principal through the two-year period of the dissertation phase. Moving forward, the researcher will use the findings from this study to guide his leadership practices, whether it is in the same role or as a district leader working with principals faced with similar challenges.

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