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EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN NEW JERSEY:
A CASE STUDY OF ACHIEVENJ AND PRINCIPAL PRACTICE IN A PUBLIC
SCHOOL SETTING

by

James Altobello

A Dissertation

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Dissertation Chair: Dr. JoAnn Manning

Dedication

My father was the hardest working person I've ever known and he never complained about the work, in fact, it provided him with meaning and purpose. My father was also a man of morals. From my father I have taken away my work ethic and moral compass and for that I will forever be indebted. My father dropped out of school at the age of 14 and was illiterate. Never could read, never could write. He spoke often about how he felt inferior because he lacked these skills. Seeing his struggle, I knew from an early point I wanted to be involved in education. I strongly believed, and still do, that no one should face that fate. Education for me was the vehicle for changing this outcome. I dedicate this to you Dad.

My mother was a servant, always putting others first. My mother was an advocate for others, consistently addressing injustices she saw. My mother taught me never to ignore what we see as wrong but to attack it, change it. She instilled the importance of justice, being strong and standing up for my beliefs regardless of the situation. From my mother I have taken away a sense of service and a sense of equity and for that I will forever be indebted. I dedicate this to you Mom.

When I began this process, I never thought I would be writing this dedication as a memoriam to my parents. Never did I expect to lose them both so close and so quick. On July 13th, 2016 my father passed away. Two months later, on September 28th 2016 my mother passed away. I know how proud they were of me, and how proud they would be of me for achieving this accomplishment.

I found a quote that embodies my emotions as I write this dedication and am compelled to add it, as I won't have the chance to say these things to them upon graduation:

> *"I just wanted to say thank you for all the sacrifices you have made, all the support you have given me, all the guidance you gave me when I needed it most and for molding me into the person I have become today… I love you with all of my heart and I am proud to be yours… Thank you…"*

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To My Chair, Dr. JoAnn Manning: I was lucky to have you on my team. Without your encouragement, guidance and diligence, I could not have completed this dissertation. Rowan is lucky to have you as part of the esteemed faculty; I thank you for your efforts.

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To Dr. Lilly Steiner: You have been a sounding board, confidant and collaborative colleague throughout this process and long before. I know I would not be here today without your friendship, I thank you for your efforts.

Finally, to my wife, my partner, my rock… You have been and continue to be my biggest cheerleader. You make me feel invincible because of your confidence. You have sacrificed right along side of me throughout this process and while I may have not said it or shown it enough, I appreciate you and know that I would not be here today without you. I thank you and love you.

Abstract

James Altobello
EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN NEW JERSEY:
A CASE STUDY OF ACHIEVENJ AND PRINCIPAL PRACTICE IN A PUBLIC
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2017-2018
Dr. JoAnn Manning
Doctor of Education

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect the AchieveNJ legislation with their capacity to lead. A qualitative understanding of how school leaders connect AchieveNJ to their personal leadership capacities such as this empowers policy makers to rationalize its influence on: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment; all of which are espoused goals of this legislation. Additionally, gaining an understanding of how standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ informs the thinking, actions, and professional practices of school leaders offer policy makers the opportunity to evaluate this type of legislation in context.

The findings from this study offer qualitative insight into the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and leadership capacity to the broader educational community. Furthermore, the results of this investigation inform school leadership preparation programs as the information gathered and experiences shared provide insight into the training necessary for school leaders in accordance with standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ through evidenced-based descriptions from the field.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

School leaders are essential to the success of their school, its staff, and most importantly its students (Schmoker, 2012). According to the Wallace Foundation (2015), school leaders are a direct "multiplier" of successful student learning. Today's leaders face an ever-increasing expectation to produce tangible results of student growth and achievement (National Policy Board of Educational Administrators, 2015). To meet this expectation, school leaders must be more than operational managers overseeing budgets and schedules (Lashway, 2003).

Today's educational leaders must embrace their fundamental responsibility as instructional masters overseeing teaching, learning, and student growth (Spillane, 2015). According to a National Association of Elementary School Principals (2011), teaching and learning must be at the top of the priority list for school leaders on a consistent basis. The Institute for Educational Leadership indicates that a principal's main focus must be on instructional leadership to truly improve student performance (NGA Center for Best Practice, 2003).

As their role shifts to an instructional first orientation, school leaders must focus on using data to drive decision making to improve student achievement (Seashore Louis, 2015). Leaders must understand the complexities of this type of decision-making and the impact it has on student achievement (Sun, Young, Yan, Chu & Zhao, 2012). Furthermore, leaders bear the responsibility of building the capacity of their teachers to be leaders in today's classrooms (Bartoletti & Connolly, 2014). Evidence strongly

indicates that leaders who embrace these ideals create dynamic learning environments where student growth and achievement increases (James-Ward & Potter, 2011).

According to a 2016 RAND study "school leaders are second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student learning." The Wallace Foundation (2013) reports that school leaders play a vital role in: (1) shaping a vision of success for all, (2) creating a climate hospitable to education, (3) cultivating leadership in others, (4) managing people to foster school improvement, and (5) improving organizational outcomes. Ultimately, the effectiveness of our school leaders is directly linked to the outcomes for our students (Grissom, 2011).

According to Leithwood (2004) school leadership provides a "critical bridge" between education reform initiatives and their impact for students. According to Manna (2015) education initiatives are only successful when school principals are actively leading the work on the ground level. As such, educational policy makers on both a federal and state level have made a number of attempts to create legislation to facilitate this necessary shift in educational leadership practices.

The 1983 "Nation At Risk" report was a seminal moment, which began a shift in our educational priorities towards enhanced accountability measures (Corcoran, 2010). "Goal 2000" was a federal initiative aiming to heighten school accountability (Educational Report, 1997). The 2001 "No Child Left Behind Act" aimed to increase school performance through increased accountability. More recently President Obama launched the "Race to the Top Initiative" (Corcoran, 2010). While discussing the RTTP the president stated, "success must be measured by results" (Corcoran, 2010).

Today, many states have made substantial changes to their policies and procedures for performance evaluations of their school leaders (Anderson, 2012). Delaware, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Colorado have all adopted a leadership evaluation framework, which ties principal practice with quantitative measures of student academic gains (McGuinn, 2012). At the center of each of these initiatives are standards-based, value-added measures, which link student performance data to a leaders summative evaluation (Corcoran, 2010).

To establish clear accountability mandates for school leaders in New Jersey, the Department of Education mandated the implementation of AchieveNJ during the 2013-2014 school year. This legislation aim is to improve student performance through enhanced leadership evaluations focused on professional standards, personal practice, and evidence based student-learning data (NJDOE, 2013a). According the New Jersey Department of Education (2013) AchieveNJ is a standards-based, value-added evaluative framework seeking to promote reflection and enhance leadership capacity in four areas:

- Vision: effective leaders have a clear vision about learning and communicate that vision to all

- Culture: effective leaders create a positive school climate that improves organizational effectiveness

- Professional development: effective leaders provide time, resources and structure meaningful professional development for their organization

- Empowerment: effective leaders empower and retain the best teachers to improve their organization

Statement of the Problem

The recent increase of standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ being deployed in our schools on local, state, and national level has

brought to light the assumed importance of linking accountability measures with leadership capacities through leadership performance evaluations (Sun & Young, 2009). These policy initiatives and evaluative frameworks are not without controversy and have routinely been criticized by individuals in the field as well as professional organizations such as the New Jersey Education Association and the New Jersey Principal and Supervisors Association (McGlone, 2014). According to Wendel Steinhauer the current president of the NJEA in a 2016 cited in a (2016) nj.com article, "When high-stakes tests are used to judge a effectiveness, everyone loses because their performance is based on a snapshot of a student that fails to take into account mitigating factors outside the their control."

Since the inception of legislation mandating the implementation of standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ, little qualitative research has been done to determine their effectiveness in achieving their espoused goals (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). As such, today little is known from the field about the implications of leadership evaluation within an accountability framework, which ties student achievement data to performance (Babo & Villavarde, 2013).

Understanding how school leaders experience these initiatives in context is necessary to determine their actual influence and discover if today's leaders are connecting them to their leadership thoughts, actions, behaviors and professional practices (Maki, 2010). Research into these connection in real-time will inform those tasked with designing the evaluation process in the near-term.

More importantly, in the long-term, a qualitative investigation framed through critical reflection by those experiencing these initiatives will provide a necessary lens into

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the viability of these recently adopted standards-based, value-added evaluations frameworks, such as AchieveNJ, in facilitating the necessary shift in leadership throughout our school environments today (Babo & Villlavarde, 2013).

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as the AchieveNJ legislation with their capacity to lead. Data included semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, participant observation as well as detailed document review. This study was be conducted from a constructivist paradigm, situated in the adult learning theory of critical reflection.

The potential impact of critical reflective theory and its link to improved practice of school leaders is at the forefront of recent literature on school improvement (Liston, 2013, Bartlett & Burton, 2005). According to Mezirow (2000) critical reflection is an internal and appreciative process where meaning is constructed through personal reflection on an experience. In education critical reflection encourages an integration of theory with practice (Mezirow, 2000). Critical reflection improves thinking, learning, and the ability to self-assess (Smith, 2011).

Research Questions

1. How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks, such as AchieveNJ, with their thinking, actions, behaviors and professional practices?

2. How are public school principals connecting the standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks, such as AchieveNJ, with their capacity to create a clear vision, foster a successful school culture, design and deliver meaningful professional development and empower teachers within their schools?

Theoretical Framework

According to Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2014) "the richest resource for learning reside in adult learners themselves." Reflection and reflective practice while not new concepts, have only recently begun to gain momentum in the field of education (Hall & Simmeral, 2015). Today's school systems must incorporate reflective practice into their pedagogy to better understand the effectiveness of their decision-making and implementation of new policy initiatives (York-Barr et.al. 2011). Sustained reflection has proven to optimize growth and facilitative change when necessary (Liston, 2013).

Critical reflection is a metacognitive process used to develop one's ability to think and increase one's awareness of the impact of thinking on their leadership behaviors and leadership actions (Hall & Simmeral, 2015). Critical reflection in education empowers leaders within a school to transform themselves to improve situations for students, teachers and society (Moon, 2005). In education, critical reflection can build a leader's capacity to work through complex issues, make sound decisions, and guide the future direction of their organization (Moon, 2005).

Reflection, which typically occurs after action has been taken, can be described as reflections "on action" (Argyris & Schon, 1978). This is a single-loop learning process, which often fails to recognize any underlying causes of a phenomenon under study (Argyris & Schon, 1978). On the contrary Argyris & Schon (1978) describe reflection

"in action" as a double loop learning process where a person reflects as a phenomenon is occurring. Killion and Todnem (1991) extend this concept further describing reflection "in action" to anticipate future experiences, their possible outcomes, and their potential consequences.

A number of studies have been conducted on educational initiatives through a reflective framework post implementation (Gomez, 2005, Skretta, 2008). Few studies have been conducted on educational initiatives such as AchieveNJ, through a critical reflective framework in context. This study used critical reflection aligned to Argyris and Schon's reflection "in action" and Killion and Todnem's reflection "for action" with school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District to explore how they currently connect the standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to lead.

Philosophical Framework

This study was based on the interpretations of public school principals and the meaning that can be made from their interpretations. Each participant constructed a reality based on their experiences specifically, how they connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and its mandates with their capacity to lead. This study held a belief that different people; in this case public school principals would construct meaning and make connections in different ways (Crotty, 1998).

With a focus on understanding and reconstructing the meanings that the participants held about this phenomenon, this investigation was situated in a constructivist philosophical perspective. Constructivism's foundation is built upon the

notion that knowledge is constructed through social interpretation rather than discovered (Stake, 1995).

Stake (1995) as cited in Baxter and Jack (2008) link case study methods with constructivism:

> Constructivists claim the truth is relative and dependent upon one's perspective. The paradigm recognizes the importance of subjectivity in meaning-making. Constructivism is built upon the premise of social construction of reality. Advantage of case study is the close collaboration between the researcher and participant, while enabling the participant to tell their story. Through these stories participants are able to describe their views or reality, which enables the researcher to better understand the participants actions.

Knowledge or truth, then, from a constructivist lens, comes from an individual's perspective (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Seeking to examine the lived experience of participants and understand how they connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to their capacity to lead, this study utilized face-to-face interviewing, in-person observation, and document review to construct meaning from each participant individually as well as across the case.

Figure 1 below delineates the importance of this study. Through a critical reflective framework situated in a constructivist perspective, this investigation explored the connections between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and their connection to school leader capacity. All interviews, observation, document review, and analysis in this study were filtered through this delineation.
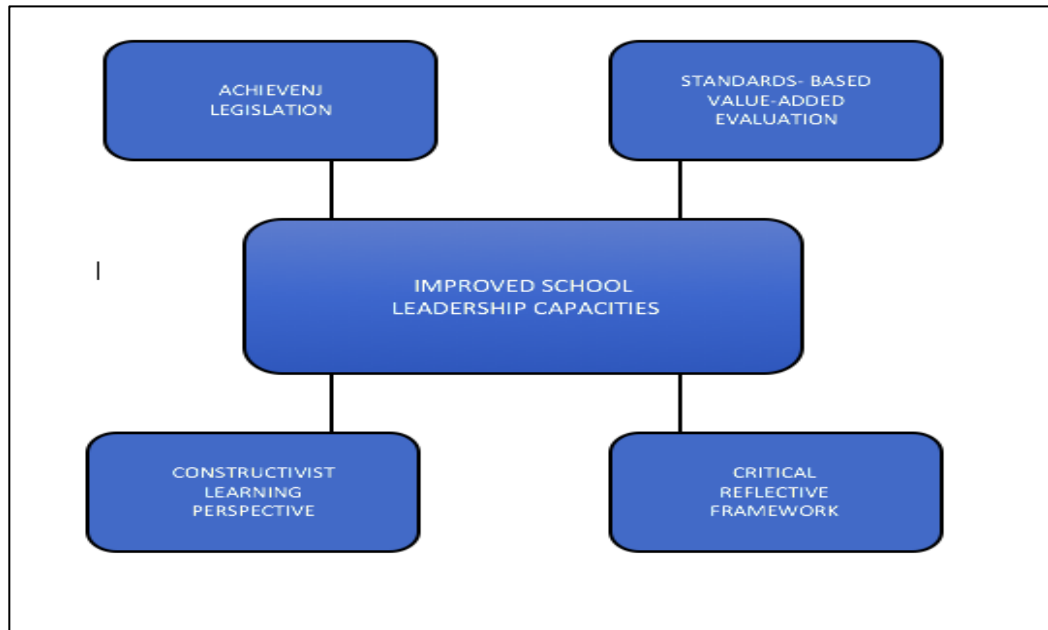
Figure 1. Qualitative Study Conceptual Map

Significance of the Study

School leaders are instrumental in the success of their schools (Schmoker, 2012). A qualitative understanding of how school leaders connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to their personal leadership capacities such as this will empower policy makers in to rationalize its legislative influence on: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment; all of which are espoused goals of this legislation.

In addition a qualitative understanding of how standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ informs the thinking, actions, behaviors and professional practices of school leaders offers policy makers an opportunity to evaluate this type of legislation in context and determine the success of these initiatives in practice.

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The qualitative findings from this study provide insight into the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and leadership capacity to the broader educational community. Furthermore, the results of this study provide a benefit to school leadership preparation programs as the information gathered and experiences shared offer insight into the training necessary for school leaders to be successful in the current legislative environment through evidenced-based descriptions from the field.

Definition of Terms

AchieveNJ - a standards-based, value-added evaluative framework, which seeks to promote reflection and enhance leadership capacity in four areas: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016).

NCLB - part of the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act the federal government established the No Child Left Behind Act. A new paradigm with an espoused goal of reducing uncertainty and ambiguity in education by imposing new laws and regulations driven by data and measured by individualized assessments (Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

RTTP – part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Intended to improve school performance and increase accountability measures nationwide. First reform effort on a national level that mandated student progress measures be tied to individual evaluations of school leaders (Corcoran, 2010).

Standards-Based, Value Added Measures - the attachment of standardized test scores to leadership evaluation. Viewed as more objective criteria for determining leadership effectiveness. Considered to be better predictors of future success and a more reliable gauge of a leader's impact on student growth (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2014).

Summary

This chapter begins by establishing the necessity of this research. This chapter offered the problem statement as well as detailed research questions that guided this investigation. This chapter outlined the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of this study and finally delineated the significance of the research.

AchieveNJ aims to build successful school leaders by promoting reflective and collaborative practice focused on four key leadership capacities: vision, school culture, professional development and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016). The purpose of this study was to utilize a critical reflective framework to explore how public school principals in one New Jersey School Public School District connect AchieveNJ with their capacity to lead.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

AchieveNJ is a standards-based, value-added evaluative framework, which seeks to promote reflection and enhance leadership capacity in four areas: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016). Since the implementation of this legislative mandate, little qualitative research has been conducted to determine its effectiveness in achieving those goals (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). Understanding how New Jersey school leaders experience this initiative in context is necessary to determine its influence and discover if our leaders are connecting standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to their leadership behaviors to improve our schools (Maki, 2010).

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how public school principals in one New Jersey District connect the AchieveNJ legislation with their capacity to lead. This literature review focuses on: establishing the role of school leaders and its connection to the AchieveNJ legislation, establishing the historical perspective of the standards based movement in education, explaining the AchieveNJ legislation, delineating the four core leadership capacities in AchieveNJ: vision, culture, professional development and empowerment and finally establishing a link between critical reflective theory, leadership growth and policy evaluation.

Role of a School Leader

AchieveNJ seeks to foster improved leadership performance in our schools through enhanced evaluations and critical feedback for reflection (NJDOE, 2016). This reform is vital as our schools are in critical need of successful leadership due to the

growing concerns over student improvement (National Policy Board of Educational Administrators, 2015). Improving leadership has proven to be a concrete determinant of improving schools as well as student performance (Action for Excellence, 1983). Research further indicates that efforts to improve education relate directly to the quality of leadership in our schools (National Policy Board of Educational Administrators, 2015).

Today's leaders must be a jack-of-all-trades and a master of all of them as they are the key figure in a school's success or failure (Desravines, 2015). Multiple studies have indicated the impact of a school leader on student performance and student improvement to be both direct and indirect. Andrews and Soder (1987) conducted a two-year study on the role of a school leader on student outcomes and found that students in schools where the leader was rated as "strong" by its staff and community scored significantly higher on standardized assessments than their peers in schools where the leader was rated as "weak".

Marzano, Waters and McNutly (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 5,000 studies on the impact of a school leader on student achievement. They found a substantially strong relationship exists between instructional leadership on the part of a principal and student performance. Their research also indicates that a school leaders plays a key role in helping students grow and schools succeed. Bosker and Kruger's (2003) research established a link between leadership behavior and heightened student achievement. According to Hallinger's (2005) research leadership behaviors, practices and processes are efficient predictors of an effective school.

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A quantitative study by The Institute for Educational Leadership Task Force on the Principal (2002) found that without strong leadership, schools have little chance of meeting any long-term challenges such as improving student performance. According to The National Conference of State Legislature's Task Force on School Leadership (2008) quantitative study of superintendents there is a statistically significant belief that behind every successful school is a great leader.

More recently, the mixed method research of Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) has concluded that leadership is second only to classroom instruction itself in importance to student success. Furthermore, their work found no documented case of successful school change without a talented and effective school leader. According to their work, creating the conditions within an organization where multiple individual variables combine to positively affect student learning is the essence of successful leadership (Seashore Louis et. al, 2010).

Effective school leadership behaviors include effective management, instructional leadership and a continued focus on student achievement (Springer, 2012). In today's schools leaders must create an environment for learning, set high standards for staff, encourage risk taking and consistently implement new methodologies (Bryk, 2010).

Today's leaders must identify, acquire and use social, material and cultural resources to enhance the possibilities of teaching and learning in their schools (Spillane, 2015). Growth and improvement require several leadership functions such as: constructing an instructional vision, building norms of trust throughout the organization, supporting teacher development, and most importantly, close monitoring of instruction

and innovation (Spillane, 2015).   Successful leadership promotions such as these build the change capacity necessary to reform our schools (Fullan, 2011).

Seashore Louis' (2015) work on examining the effects of leadership on student learning identified four essential areas necessary for success. First, she suggests that leaders must encourage collaboration both within an organization and across an organization to bridge differences and share purpose. Secondly, she indicates that today's leaders must form a professional community so that members can share norms and values, while at the same time develop a collective focus. Third, she notes that leaders must engage in everyday work, focus discussions, and provide development based on equity in all aspects of education. Finally, she establishes that leaders must provide coherence and balance between "pressure" and "support" to further a school's mission and its opportunity for success.

Today's leaders face an ever-increasing demand to reach high standards and raise student achievement (Johnson & Sessions, 2015). As such, leaders must continually retool and acquire new knowledge to promote better practice (Keedy, 2005). By developing a deeper control over their theories of practice, today's leaders can become the central vehicles for facilitating wide-ranging reform (Keedy, 2005). Research supports that school leaders have control over factors such as instructional quality, mission, vision, goals, culture and expectations within their schools (Leithwood, Patton, Jantzi, 2010). AchieveNJ seeks to promote growth in these areas for all school leaders in our state in an effort to improve their performance and improve student achievement in their schools (NJDOE, 2016).

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The Standards Based Movement

AchieveNJ is a standards-based, value-added evaluative framework, which seeks to enhance leadership accountability in our state (NJDOE, 2016). Accountability is a frequently used term when discussing education and improvement efforts (Schmoker, 2012). Accountability has come to mean that school leaders take wholehearted responsibility for all student learning and use student achievement data as guiding force in their decision making process (Schmoker, 2012). The link between accountability and school improvement are not a new phenomenon as history has shown that when school leaders are successful, schools improve (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit & Pittenger, 2014).

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education called into question the quality of American public schools and laid the groundwork for immediate reform and increased accountability (NCEE, 1993). The commission described the current educational situation at the time as a threat to the country so much so it could lead to our nation's collapse (NCEE, 1983). Their seminal work "A Nation At Risk" called for the greatest and most sustained nationalized effort to change the structure of our schools to better serve all students and immediately improve the situation for our nation (Owens, 2004).

In the "A Nation At Risk" report the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) cited four main areas to be improved: (a) school curriculum, (b) expectations for achievement, (c) instruction, (d) assessment. As a result of this report and its call for improvement, a series of new legislative efforts began on both the federal and state level in an attempt to rectify the wrongs. The focus for change identified was

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standardizing the curriculum and holding school personnel accountable for student improvement (Owens, 2004).

The restructuring efforts initiated by the report included: (a) developing a method to assess teaching and learning in our schools, (b) comparing U.S. schools to its international counterparts, (c) studying the connection between achievement and college admission, (d) exploration into social influences on achievement to identify problems to be addressed moving forward (Gardner, 1983). Despite the strong call for reform and restructuring in the "Nation At Risk" report, schools effectively remained resistant to change, accountability faltered and the gaps in achievement that necessitated the report continued to develop and expand (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006).

Over the next several, years a number of federal and state commissioned reports were issued, such as the 1990 Educating America Report by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003). Such reports began to articulate a position that public school leaders must become more accountable for student achievement than in the past efforts. In addition, these reports called for fundamental change in the role of school leaders to be one wholly focused on closing learning gaps (Educating America, 1990).

To meet these calls, in 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) of the Council of Chief State School Officers proposed a set of unified school leadership standards. These standards developed over a two-year collaborative period provided specific statements of knowledge, dispositions, and actions that were considered vital for leadership success in our nation's schools (ISLLC, 1996). Today, referred to as the professional standards for educational leaders, they continue to impact school

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leadership and qualifications nationwide (Cassavant, Collins, Faginski-Stark, McCandless, & Tencza, 2012).

While defining leadership is still elusive, these standards of professional practice have brought consensus and been accepted in the field of education (Cassavant et. al, 2012). The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) are as follows:

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

The standards, in conjunction with the National Educational Goals, set by the United States Congress in the 1990's, set the stage for modern day standards-based educational reform efforts. Goal 2000 was established to empower American schools to achieve the goals set forth in the National Educational Goals Report of 1999. The foundation of these goals were built from a principal belief that outcome-based education

would establish a framework of world-class academic standards, measure student progress, and provide support to meet the standards (Goal 2000, n.d)

Schools in our nation continued to be resistant to these reform efforts and frustration grew. In 2001, as part of the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the federal government established the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB as it became known was a new paradigm with an espoused goal of reducing uncertainty and ambiguity in education by imposing new laws and regulations driven by data and measured by individualized assessments (Owens, 2004). NCLB was built from a belief that setting high standards for all students and measuring their success would lead to improved outcomes (NCLB, 2001).

NCLB required the use of research-based practices for improving student achievement; standardized assessment measures nation-wide, and mandated improvement or face sanctions and the potential loss federal funding for failure (NCLB, 2001). Standardized assessment was viewed as a monitoring process to measure the leader-to-learner process (Tienken & Orlich, 2013). NCLB became the most sweeping legislation for school reform in our nation's history, again putting accountability at the forefront of reform only now shifting accountability to be more focused on scientific rating scales (Tienken & Orlich, 2013).

NCLB was implemented and has been evaluated longitudinally in relation to the goals it established. It is clear as that as with previous reform initiatives, for a myriad of reasons, schools continued to resist the changes mandated by NCLB (Schmoker, 2012). In 2008 a new president was sworn into office that as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 introduced the Race to the Top (RTTP) initiative intended to

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improve school performance and increase accountability measures nationwide. (Corcoran, 2010).

The premise of RTTP was to create a systematic shift towards the adoption of a set of core academic standards known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS initiative detailed specifically what students should learn and know annually in the content areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics from kindergarten through high school graduation (CCSS, 2009). The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council for State School Officers (CCSSO) sponsored the CCSS initiative. Today, forty-two of the fifty U.S. states and the District of Columbia are members of the CCSS initiative and use these standards to measure learning (CCSS, 2009).

Value-Added Evaluation Models

RTTP was the first reform effort on a national level that mandated student progress measures be tied to individual evaluations of school leaders (Corcoran, 2010). RTTP indicated that performance evaluations for school leaders should serve to inform learning, by pointing out gaps between a leader's current practice and ideal outcomes (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott & Cravens, 2009). RTTP established that quality evaluations have sources that allow evaluators to make sound judgments based on real and reliable evidence (Corcoran, 2010).

As such, the attachment of standardized test scores to leadership effectiveness has been advocated as an equitable way to evaluate effectiveness as it monitors student and staff progress from year to year (Schochet & Chiang, 2010). Most recently, student-learning gains are commonly being used to evaluate performance, becoming known as value-added measures (Schochet & Chiang, 2010). Some view these value added

measures as more objective criteria for determining leadership effectiveness (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2014). Additionally, they are considered to be better predictors of future success and a more reliable gauge of a leader's impact on student growth (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2014).

Endeavors to heighten accountability have only increased emphasis on evaluation tools being utilized that hold school leaders accountable to high standards (Fuller & Hollingsworth, 2014). Multi-dimensional evaluation tools used within a standards-based environment are a necessary as part of any growth model (Reeves, 2009). As such a number of states are currently implementing accountability driven evaluations based on organizational outcomes including measures of student achievement (Cassavant et. al., 2012).

During the 2013 school year, Delaware implemented a standards-based value-added evaluation model which uses multiple measures including student performance data to determine the effectiveness of school leaders (McGuinn, 2012). Rhode Island instituted reforms requiring evaluation of school leaders based upon measures such as professional practice, professional responsibilities and evidenced-based student learning (McGuinn, 2012). Tennessee adopted a standards-based value-added model in which three components are used to determine the effectiveness of a school leader: observation data, student growth data and student achievement data (McGuinn, 2012). Finally, Colorado has adopted a similar model based on two components: student academic growth and professional practice (McGuinn, 2012).

Value-added evaluation models are considered a gauge of a leader's impact on student growth and improvement (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2014). Steinberg and

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Sartain (2015) advocate these standards based value added measures to be critical for improving feedback and changing practice. Pianta and Hamre (2009) found standards based value added evaluation measures to be valid in identifying areas for improved practice. On the contrary, the research of Hallinger, Heck and Murphy (2013) found little evidence to support a correlation between standards based value added evaluations and change in practice. This finding was supported by the work of Seashore Louis et. al (2010) showing a statistically insignificant amount of professionals believing that these standards based value added evaluations models had any impact on their practices.

Despite the existing differences found in the research, standards-based, value-added evaluation legislation continues to grow in popularity and is currently being used for descriptive purposes in education today without a true understanding of their impact (Betebenner, 2009). At this point, little is known about the connection of these standards based value added evaluation models with respect to leadership and leadership behaviors (Winters & Collins 2013; Sun & Young, 2009). Understanding how leaders experience these evaluation tools and connect them to their daily practices is necessary to better understand their effectiveness, and more importantly, their potential to increase student growth and ultimately improve our schools (Maki, 2010).

AchieveNJ

To meet the increased expectations and regulations created by the RTTP initiative in New Jersey the Educator Effectiveness Taskforce was formed in 2010 to select a new type of systematic educator evaluation system, which would be adopted by each public school in the state (NJDOE, 2013a). The task force was mandated to ensure that the system selected be based on specific measures of effectiveness including measures of

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student achievement and measures that demonstrate effective practice on behalf of school leaders (NJDOE, 2013a).

In selecting an evaluation model for school leaders the task force focused on three strongly held beliefs established by the New Jersey Department of Education. One, that school leaders play a crucial role in raising student achievement because of their enormous contributions to school wide conditions of success (NJDOE, 2013a). Two, the cornerstone of any broad initiative to improve the effectiveness of school leaders is an evaluation system that accurately measures their influence on student learning (NJDOE, 2013a). And finally, school leaders must be accountable for the gains of his/her school's students and the effectiveness of its teachers (NJDOE, 2013a).

Through the work of the task force, a working document was created which would become the foundation of what is now known as AchieveNJ. For the purpose of leadership evaluation, AchieveNJ has a central focus to raise student achievement by improving instruction through the adoption of evaluations that provide specific feedback to educators, inform the provision of their aligned professional development and inform their personnel decisions (NJDOE, 2013a).

In addition, AchieveNJ espouses goals of: TEACH: help educators better understand their impact and ultimately improve student outcomes, LEAD: align leadership responsibilities with practices that are known to have the greatest influence on student learning, and GROW: foster an environment of continual growth for all educators. (NJDOE, 2013a).

On August 6, 2012 this AchieveNJ was approved in by a bipartisan, unanimous vote of the New Jersey legislature. This mandate required adherence beginning in the

2013-2014 school year for all public schools within the state. For the first time in New Jersey a school leaders evaluation would be linked to their ability to raise student growth and achievement (NJDOE, 2013a). Leadership evaluations in New Jersey are currently based on a formula with two categories of equal weight: 50% principal practice and 50% student achievement (NJDOE, 2013a). Figure 2 shows the breakdown of these two categories.
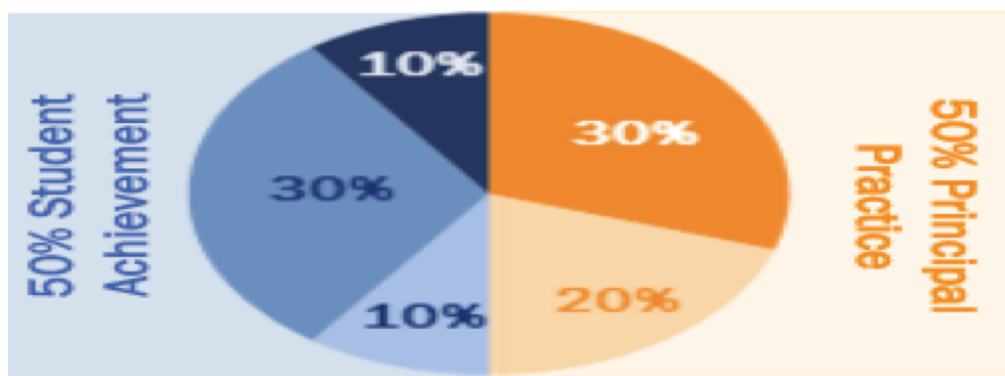
Figure 2. AchieveNJ Leadership Evaluation Breakdown (NJDOE, 2016)

The principal practice portion of the evaluation model is based on evidence from formal observations as well as evaluation of a school leaders ability to implement AchieveNJ and its mandates (NJDOE, 2013a). The student achievement portion of the evaluation model is based on two quantitative measures known individually as student growth objectives (SGO) and student growth percentiles (SGP).

Student growth objectives are long-term learning targets set for groups of students in an individual class that are: (a) specific and measurable, (b) ambitious and achievable, (c) include significant portions of the class and the required curriculum, (d) assessed in alignment with learning objectives (NJDOE, 2013). Student growth percentiles are a

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measure of how much a student has learned from one year to the next compared to peers with similar academic history from across the state based on a state mandated formal assessment (NJDOE, 2013). Figure 3 below provides an overview of the AchieveNJ evaluation formula.
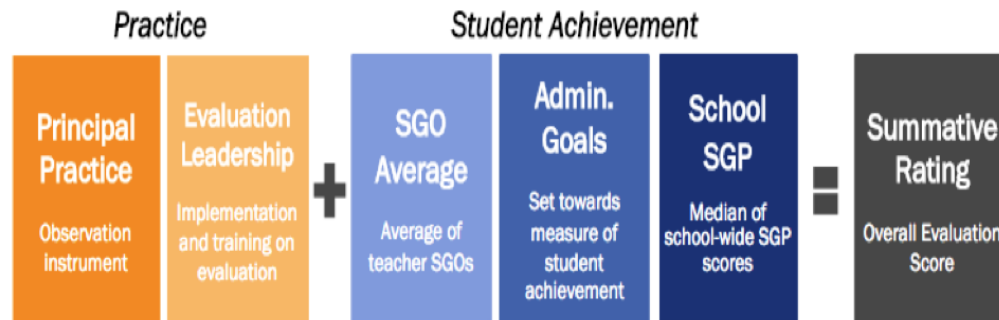
Figure 3. AchieveNJ Leadership Evaluation Formula (NJDOE, 2016)

Today the New Jersey Department of Education espouses a belief that AchieveNJ provides for better professional conversations, more opportunities for meaningful feedback, and a more accurate understanding of a leader's impact on student learning (NJDOE, 2016). The Department of Education currently believes that AchieveNJ provides useful data and promotes reflective and collaborative practices centered around four essential leadership capacities: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016).

This reform initiative is not without controversy. AchieveNJ has been criticized by a number of professional organizations such as the New Jersey Education Association, The New Jersey Principal and Supervisors Association and by educators themselves. There is an inherent concern with the evaluation process as well as the instruments being used for the evaluations (McGlone, 2014). As such, there has been and continues to be

some resistance to AchieveNJ in the state (McGlone, 2014). This study will explore how school leaders in New Jersey are experiencing these evaluation tools and how they connect AchieveNJ to their capacity to create a clear vision, maintain a positive school culture, provide meaningful professional development and empower staff to better understand its impact and inform policymakers in the future.

Leadership Capacity: Vision

According to AchieveNJ (2016) leaders of high achieving schools have a clear vision and communicate to all that learning is of the utmost importance. Vision if effective builds norms and behaviors based on expectation within a school (Hallinger, 2010). A well-crafted vision creates clarity and motivates others to reach goals (Hallinger, 2010). Schools without a vision find it difficult to develop effective strategies for improvement (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). A key indicator to most school improvement efforts is the creation of an environment with a shared vision (Kose, 2011). Successful leaders therefore are ones that can identify, promote and more importantly protect the vision and values in their schools (Wilhelmsen, 2016).

Vision cannot be something imposed or declared. The actions of the leader should guide the development of a shared vision focused on organizational success (Gabriel & Palmer, 2009). A shared vision galvanizes the organization and builds capacity to achieve collective goals (Kose, 2011). In educational organizations, a successful shared vision for school improvement must have an underlying focus on student learning (Hipp & Huffman, 2003). Successful leaders create a vision that unifies the school, generates purpose, provides direction and creates collaborative commitment (Gabriel & Palmer, 2009).

Leaders must see a better future for their organization and effectively articulate that vision and its benefits to all stakeholders to establish buy-in (Kose, 2011). Once articulated and accepted, a vision should lead towards a mission where actions are taken to achieve the vision established (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). To make positive change a leader must translate their vision into sustained actions over the long-term (Wilhelmsen, 2016). Sustaining these actions creates effectiveness, stability, and organizational integrity (Kose, 2011).

Leadership Capacity: Culture

According to AchieveNJ, there is a positive relationship between school climate and leadership, which affects the overall effectiveness of a school (NJDOE, 2016). Research indicates that successful cultures are a direct reflection of the vision and illuminate the way of life in the school (Barth, 1990). Culture is considered the unwritten communication of the vision and if effective leaves no doubt about the school's priorities (Hsin-Hsiang & Mao-neng, 2015). Culture is a representation of what the school believes, essentially it is its self-concept (Snyder, 2015).

According to Hsin-Hsiang and Mao-neng (2015), culture should encompass values, beliefs, and norms for establishing goals in a way that people value. Effective cultures in a school come from collaboration and working together, through shared leadership (Snyder, 2015). Successful school cultures exemplify that everyone is focused on teaching and learning and share in the instructional responsibilities (Owens, 2004). Cultures focused on student outcomes and framed from a learning first orientation and have proven to be successful (Hsin-Hsiang & Mao-neng, 2015). More importantly, achievement can be directly linked to a school's culture (Barth, 1990).

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As such, a school leader must have the capacity to create a culture that promotes collaboration, engages all involved, empowers others, and shares responsibility throughout the organization (Snyder, 2015). When a school leader is focuses on creating a climate conducive to student success, schools are successful (MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009). Developing a positive school climate may be the only way to truly achieve success (Maxwell, 2004).

School leaders have both a direct and indirect influence over a school's culture through their behaviors. These behaviors impact the organization's work and the overall environment of the school (Basom & Frase, 2004). Leaders must encourage others to become leaders themselves to have a positive impact on school culture (Davis & Wilson, 2000). Leaders in schools who develop a culture of empowerment improve student learning and provide for continuous improvement (Hord & Sommers, 2008).

Leadership Capacity: Professional Development

According to AchieveNJ, effective leaders provide the time, resources, and structure for ongoing and meaningful professional development (NJDOE, 2016). The implementation of a successful professional development program is critical to student achievement (Brown & Milltello, 2016). Professional development is a lifelong learning process that creates and sustains individualized and collective growth (Cannon, Tenuto, Kitchel, 2013). Organizations with an orientation towards effective professional development persistently search for better ways to do things (DuFour & Eaker, 2008).

According to the national study Making Sense of Leading Schools as cited by Portin et. al (2003) a school leader is the key factor in building an organization that fosters organizational learning and professional development. DuFour and Eaker (2008)

have said that transforming a school to focus on sustained professional development can only be accomplished through effective leadership. Leaders must continually assess the needs of their organization and provide targeted support to be successful professional development providers (Hord & Sommers, 2008).

Job embedded professional development opportunities and flexible in nature for success in a school setting (Cannon, Tenuto, & Kitchel, 2013). These opportunities must encourage information sharing and continual collaboration to improve learning (Brown & Milltello, 2016). Successful professional development in school is interactive and encourages new knowledge construction (O'hara & Pritchard, 2008). More importantly, effective professional development in school does encourage staff to apply what they learn to facilitate growth and improve student performance (Cannon, Tenuto, & Kitchel, 2013).

Professional development should focus on current issues to provide diverse strategies for various learning styles (Hord & Sommers, 2008). Ultimately, school leaders have a fundamental responsibility to provide the best professional development possible for their staff (Newmann, 1991). The best hope for successful reform efforts in schools is a leader who operates their school as a professional learning community (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Ongoing and effective professional development may hold the most potential for forward movement in education (Cannon, Tenuto, & Kitchel, 2013).

Leadership Capacity: Empowerment

Empowerment has been described as a critical element to reform efforts seeking to improve schools and foster superior outcomes (Schlechty, 2009). The overarching

goal of empowerment efforts must be to convert self-interest into collective aspiration (Ciulla, 2004). Empowerment should shift the focus from individual to a team mentality (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Enhanced commitment and improved performance are outcomes of successful empowerment efforts (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Successful school leaders share power, use delegation, and consultative decision making to instill a sense of belonging and drive teachers towards collective goals (Zellman & Ross, 2009). Empowering leaders use motivational techniques for teachers that enrich what they do, and closely connect them to their daily work and the importance of it (Hall, 2013).

According to AchieveNJ, leaders must be considered empowering by their school community (NJDOE, 2016). A principled practice of school empowerment is sharing power (Schlechty, 2009). Empowerment is synonymous with shared leadership (Hall, 2013). By investing teachers with the right to participate in the development of schools goals and exercise some professional judgment in how and what to teach, leaders in schools become empowering (Segedin, 2011). Empowered teachers have proven to be more committed to their schools (Zellman & Ross, 2009).

According to Kreisberg (1992) empowerment on its own could be viewed as a solution to the plethora of problems our schools face. Empowerment increases teacher capacity, an essential component to school reform efforts (Segedin, 2011). Schlechty (2009) advocated the importance of empowerment due to its impact on students, decisions, and results. A direct correlation between empowerment and positive outcomes according has been established by the work of Bogler & Somech (2004). Ultimately, empowering leaders in schools allow teacher leaders to emerge, encourage them to

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become more confident about their pedagogy, and focus on overall improvement (Schlechty, 2009).

<div align="center">**Reflective Practice**</div>

According to Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2014) "the richest resource for learning reside in adult learners themselves (p.61)." Evidence strongly supports that professional growth requires reflection (Miller & Dalglish, 2011). Critical reflection is a metacognitive process to develop an individual's ability to think and increase their awareness of the impact their thinking has on their actions (Keedy, 2005).

Researchers Hall and Simmeral (2015) contend that reflective practice promotes self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation in order to address the complexities and demands of being a leader. Liston (2013) advocates that reflective practice empowers a leader to challenge assumptions, gain new insights, contemplate decision-making and take alternative actions towards school improvement.

York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere and Montie (2006) established that to be successful reflective practitioners, leaders make a personal commitment to continuous learning and improvement. According to Sagor (2011), through reflective practice, leaders can become learners who conduct constant research, apply diverse strategies, and review their experiences for future actions.

To be successful, then, professionals should intentionally reflect and question the theories that drive their decisions (Schon, 1983). A continuous loop of professional reflection is a process of inquiry, testing, learning, and then inquiry again (Keedy & Achillies, 2007). According to Schon (1987) critically reflective practice is used by

individuals to uncover their own theories and experiment and test new theories in real-time.

Reflecting "on action" has described by Argyris and Schon (1978) as a single loop learning process in which a person reflects after taking action and often fails to question or recognize the underlying causes of a situation or problem. On the contrary, they describe reflection "in action" as a double loop learning process where a person reflects as the action is happening, allowing them to identify values, principles, and assumptions of the situation necessary to develop new strategies to change the outcomes if necessary (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

Practitioners who are able to reflect "in action" as described by Argyris and Schon actively seek answers to problems, test new methods, and continuously reflect on their impact. Schon (1983) identified six steps for successful reflection "in action": (a) recognition of the issue, (b) recognition of a lack of congruence between thought and action, (c) reframing, (d) generation of new ideas, (e) testing new idea in action, (f) evaluate the outcome. By systematically and rigorously questioning their practice through this framework school leaders can gain clarity and learn through an engaging experience (Schon, 1983).

Researchers Killion and Todnem (1991) advocate strongly for reflection "for action." In reflecting "for action" a practitioner extend Schon's concept of reflection-for-action by using reflection to anticipate future experiences and their possible consequences (Killion & Todnem, 1991). This type of reflection guides future action based on past thoughts and actions (Killion & Todnem, 1991). This cyclical reflective

process has no endpoint according to the authors and aligns to an action research framework such as that described as "look, think, act" by Stringer (1996).

Reflective theories such as these are explicitly linked to experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Kolb describes this process as "self-perpetuating" in that learners shift from actor to observer, from direct involvement to analytical detachment. This creates new experiences to reflect upon. Reflective practice is also linked to Piaget (1967) cognitive theory of development. Through assimilation and accommodation the reflector modifies what is already known in light of new learning. Observing practical situations allows for continuous learning and improved practice (Kolb, 1984).

Critical Reflection and Constructivism

Critical reflective practice is a vehicle for ongoing professional growth and development (Mezirow, 2000). Successful professionals engage in self-development through self-study (Taylor, 2007). These professionals reflect critically and systematically, questioning their practice, studying their own work and testing their theories in practice (Taylor, 2007). Thorough contemplation and deliberation about their work, reflective leaders make meaning within context (Hoare, 2006).

This process offers new possibilities as practitioners create and recreate their individual identify (Killion & Todnem, 1991). According to Hoare (2006) reflectors take an interactive role in looking outside to understand a situation and articulate a path forward. From working with their experiences in this manner a reflective practitioner learns (Taylor, 2007). Reflective learners explore what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what impact it has (Hoare, 2006).

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Becoming a reflective practitioner is not so much about the acquisition of a skill but rather the honing of a skill to reflect constructively upon experiences in a way that develops knowledge and improves the effectiveness of one's work (Moore, 2000). According to Mezirow (1990) to learn, practitioners must experience discrepancies, make judgments, and question internal reasoning processes. Furthermore, Mezirow (2000) described critical reflection as a precursor to transformative learning, which leads to changes in personal understandings and more importantly behaviors.

Critical reflection is a constructivist approach to learning where different people construct meaning in different ways (Crotty, 1998). According to Baxter and Jack (2008) constructivism's foundation is built upon the notion that knowledge is constructed through social interpretation rather than discovered. In constructivism, knowledge or truth then is derived through a reflective lens and is formed by an individual's perspective (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Constructivism at its core is a transformational learning process.

Transformative learning allows a person to make substantive shifts in their world (Mezirow, 2000). Learners construct, validate, and reformulate their experiences through the process of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). To be successful within a transformative learning framework practitioners must create new norms within their practice and be critical of their own assumptions, intentions, beliefs, and feelings (Hoare, 2006). This allows leader to reframe their ideals and change their mindset as necessary in real-time.

In education transformative learning encourages an integration of theory with practice and enhances self-confidence (Mezirow, 2000). It improved thinking, learning

and the ability to self-assess (Smith, 2011). It enables the development of a fuller understanding of experiences and ensures being better equipped to lead similar situations moving forward (Thompson & Thompson, 2008).

The potential for using critical reflective theory to improve the practice of school leaders is at the forefront of recent literature on school improvement (Bartlett & Burton, 2005). According to Moore (2000) school leaders must consider themselves as researchers and theorists to critique their practice and move in an informed way towards effective leadership behaviors in the future. Reflective practice is a model way for school leaders to build their own professional learning through active participation (Ostermann, 1990).

Professional growth is dependent upon a leader's ability to eliminate or modify old ideas that no longer work with new ideas to shape their future behaviors (Ostermann & Kottkamp 1993). Researchers identified critical reflection as a means for lasting school change and professional growth (Cooper & Boyd 1998; York-Barr et.al., 2001). School improvement and student achievement require leaders who are reflective in practice to effectively solve contextual challenges as they arise (Moore, 2000).

Critical reflection empowers leaders within a school to transform themselves in ways that improve educational situations for students, teachers, and society (Moon, 1999). Critical reflective practice allows a leader to create solutions to identified problems with clarity that typically escapes them in the clutter of their day (Moon, 1999). Reflective practice builds a leader's capacity to work with complex ideas and make effective judgments for their future and the future of their organizations (Moon, 2005).

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Summary

This literature review provided a detailed representation of the role of school leader as it relates to this study. The history of the standards based movement in education was outlined and the AchieveNJ legislation was described in in context. AchieveNJ delineates four core leadership capacities: vision, culture, professional development and empowerment each of which has been outlined in this literature review. Finally a link between critical reflective practice and leadership has been provided to further delineate the theoretical framework for this qualitative study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey School District connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacities to lead.   This chapter explores in detail the value and rationale of qualitative methodology as it relates to this investigation. Additionally, analysis of and support for employing a case study approach is established.

With the design and rationale delineated, this chapter explains the setting and the sampling methods used to select study participants. Beyond that, this chapter provides an explanation of the data collection, and data analysis methods used. Additionally, it establishes the rigor, validity, and trustworthiness of the study. Finally, this chapter defines the role of the researcher, and the steps taken to ensure ethical compliance.

Research Questions

1. How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their thinking, actions, behaviors and professional practices?

2. How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to create a clear vision, foster a successful school culture, design and deliver meaningful professional development and empower teachers within their schools?

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of a phenomenon in the natural world (Armino, 2006). This methodological approach advocates the use of

multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic, focused on content, and interpretative in nature (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The intent of qualitative investigation is to utilize in-depth examination to illuminate and better understand the lives of the participants and the world within which they are living (Armino, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the selected school leaders were the participants and their world is their school community encompassing all the responsibilities that come with their positions.

In the field of education, qualitative research has grown in popularity over the past quarter century and continues to emerge as a means to answer "how" or "why" questions that arise (Patton, 2002; Parasade, 2005). In qualitative investigations, a strong emphasis is placed on the role of the researcher as an active participant in the study (Creswell, 2005). Stake (1995) identifies the researcher in qualitative investigations as the key instrument in both data collection and interpretation of findings.

A researcher's role in qualitative study is to build a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon, analyze the words participants use to describe their experience with the phenomenon, and then report a detailed view of the information collected in a valid and credible fashion (Creswell, 1998). As a school principal myself in New Jersey experiencing the phenomenon in a similar way as the participants, I was uniquely qualified to conduct this investigation and interpret the findings as they emerged.

Qualitative methods are especially useful in discovering the meaning that people give to events that they experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This is accomplished by allowing the exploration of phenomenon such as feelings, which are difficult to understand through conventional research approaches (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Research supports that when a researcher is seeking to understand a process in context, qualitative methods are best (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study. It fostered a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the participants (public school principals) from their reflections on how they connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their leadership capacities. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this study allowed participants to express the specific ways in which they made these connections and then used a rich description method to provide a detailed account of their experience in context.

Case Study

Case study is a strategy of inquiry where a researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals (Stake, 1995). Case study is applicable when a researcher is seeking to understand some specific people, particular problem, or unique situation by studying a few examples in great depth (Yin, 2009). This investigation focused on a process, specifically reflection in exploring connections made between leadership capacities and standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ. Furthermore, this investigation explored this process with multiple individual participants, making case study a viable strategy.

Stake (1995) has identified three types of qualitative case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Intrinsic case studies are those where the researcher has an interest in the case. Instrumental case studies are those where the researcher seeks to provide insight and refine an existing theory. Collective case studies are those where the

researcher compares one or more cases to draw conclusions across studies in an effort to predict results.

This investigation embodied qualities of intrinsic case study, as the nature of the case is important to the researcher as the researcher currently serves in a similar role to the participants and is experiencing the phenomenon as well. This investigation possessed qualities of collective case study, as the researcher used a compare-contrast approach across the individuals within the case to refine any meanings that are made.

Finally, The New Jersey Department of Education currently advocates AchieveNJ as a tool to provides for better professional conversations, more opportunities for feedback, and a more accurate understanding of leaders impact on student learning (NJDOE, 2016). The goal of this case study was to explore standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ through the lived experience of school principals to provide insight into this phenomenon in context, thus making this study instrumental in design (Stake, 1995).

Case study, regardless of type, is a qualitative methodology, which expects to catch the complexities of a case (Stake, 1995). If effective, readers of a case study should be left with more to think about rather than less as a result of the investigation (Yin, 2009). Successful case study provides theory to build upon and invites further exploration of the phenomenon moving forward (Merriam, 2002).

Yin (2009) compared a research design to a map to be followed by a researcher to deal with four guiding questions: What questions to study? What data is relevant? What data should be collected? How should the results be analyzed? Yin (2009) also established there to be five essential aspects of design for case study.

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First, in case study, research questions that ask "how" or "why" are most appropriate. In this study the research questions grew from the problem statement identified earlier. These questions guided the study and drove the data collection from "how" questions focusing specifically on connection made by participants.

The second aspect established by Yin (2009), is a case study's proposition by which attention is called to something that should be studied. Studies must have a defined purpose. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to lead.

The third aspect of case study according to Yin (2009) is its unit of analysis, essentially the boundaries set which define the case itself. In this study the unit of analysis was the Motown Public School District. Further information regarding boundaries set and the unit of analysis are detailed later in this chapter.

Yin (2009) also identifies a fourth aspect of design being the linking of data to propositions, which is accomplished by ensuring that the data analysis techniques implemented are aligned with the purpose of the study. The analysis techniques used in this study are also detailed later in this chapter.

The fifth and final component of case study design lies in the interpretation methods for a study's findings (Yin, 2009). Case study is a qualitative form of inquiry, which limits the use of statistics and requires other in-depth means for interpretation. Interpretations made in this study will be discussed in future chapters.

Setting

According to Yin (2009), in case study, a case must be a thing, or an entity. Schools and school district can be a case as they are real things, and are easy to visualize (Stake, 1995). Even when the main focus of an investigation is on a phenomenon that is a function such as making a connection in this study, a researcher must still choose a case that is an entity (Stake, 1995). The participant interactions explored within the selected case are what will allow it to be viewed as an integrated system (Merriam, 2002).

Motown is a kindergarten through twelfth grade organization with seventeen total schools servicing approximately ten thousand students daily. There are twelve elementary schools (kindergarten through grade five), three middle schools (grades six through eight) and two high schools (grades nine through twelve).

Motown is a diverse learning community made up of a student body, which is 52% male and 46% female. Eighty-six percent of students are Caucasian, 6% are African American, 3% are Asian, 3% Hispanic and 2% other Multi-Cultural decent. Twenty-three percent of students have been identified as disabled in the community, and 17% are considered economically disadvantaged. As a result, Motown is identified as Title I district according to the United States Department of Education.

The school district has a total of nine hundred and thirty six certified staff members made up of: certified administrators, certified teaching staff, paraprofessionals as well as certified support staff. Seven hundred and fifty of those staff members are female while one hundred and eighty six are male. Ninety-eight percent of those staff members are Caucasian, .8% are African American, .9% are Hispanic and .1% are of Asian decent.

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The most recent New Jersey Department of Education School Performance Report (2015) indicates that district's academic performance is high when compared to other organizations across the state and is also high when compared to its identified peer school districts. This is defined by information about student performance in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics as measured by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Assessment, also known as the PARCC test.

Additionally, the district's student growth performance is high when compared to other organizations across the state as well as when compared to its peers. This is defined by information about school wide student growth, using the Student Growth Percentile or SGP methodology. SGP measures student growth year over year by comparing a student's achievement to a group of students that had similar achievement in previous years. SGP makes it possible to measure how much a student has grown relative to their academic peers with a similar test score history. Finally upon graduation 96.7% of students attend either a two-year or four-year college.

As one of the largest K-12 districts in New Jersey, this site offered a vast number of potential participants making it a suitable setting for this qualitative investigation. Motown has a central office leadership team made up of one superintendent of schools, two assistant superintendents, one business administrator, one director of human resources and six district level supervisors. Each of the district's elementary schools has one principal. The middle schools each have one principal and one assistant principal. The two high schools in the district each have one principal and five assistant principals.

During the 2012 – 2013 school year, Motown was selected by the state of New Jersey to be a pilot school for AchieveNJ, its accountability mandates and required

changes to performance evaluation for school leaders. Leaders in Motown, therefore, have been working under the confines of standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ for more time than other school districts within our state. Making the selected participants viable candidates to offer their experiences with and express how they connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their leadership capacities.

Recruitment, Sampling & Participants

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services (2016) participant recruitment is a major challenge in many research studies involving human subjects. Recruitment involves a number of activities, including identifying eligible participants, adequately explaining the study to the potential participants, recruiting an adequate sample based on study goals and design, obtaining informed consent and maintaining ethical standards, and retaining participants until study completion. In this study to recruit the identified participants the researcher used the following approved recruitment techniques according outlined by the Department of Health and Human Services (2016):

- Sent Letters of Consent
- Approached participants one-on-one
- Placed phone calls to participants

According to Stake (1995) one of the most important aspects of all case studies lies in the selection of cases to be studied. The goal is to select cases that provide the best opportunities to learn (Creswell, 2007). With the large number of potential participants inside of the selected site (44 total school leaders of which 32 have attained tenure) two

distinct sampling strategies were implemented: purposeful and criterion. According to Patton (1990) a mixed sampling method such as this offered more reliability in the selected sample and the overall study.

Purposeful sampling is a strategy where particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information (Maxwell, 2005). In this study, purposeful sampling was initially used to select only school principals as potential participants. This decision was based on their ability to add to the understanding and connect the standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their ability to create a vision, foster a successful culture, deliver professional development, and empower teachers. Purposeful sampling was powerful in that it will allowed the researcher to select information-rich cases for in-depth study (Patton, 1990).

Through purposeful sampling, the participant pool consisted of seventeen school leaders. To ensure that a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation was gleaned it was necessary to apply criterion sampling to hone the participant pool further. Criterion sampling is an approach that allows the researcher to study the cases that meet certain pre-determined criterion (Patton, 1990).

The criterion applied was tenure attainment, which ensured selected participants had leadership experience prior to the mandated implementation of the AchieveNJ legislation. According to AchieveNJ (2016), to earn tenure, a new principal, assistant principal, or vice principal must be rated either effective or highly effective in two annual summative evaluations within the first three years of employment, with the first effective rating on or after completion of the second year. This will made their perspective on the phenomenon more relevant.

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Applying this criterion to the potential participant pool of seventeen yielded a study sample of six elementary school leaders, two middle school leaders, and one high school leader for a total of nine participants.

Participant Race, Gender, and Educational Attainment

Table 1 below delineates the broad group of school leaders who partook in this qualitative investigation by race, gender and educational attainment. All of the participants were Caucasian. Of the nine participants, five were male and four were female. Eight participants had earned a master's degree and one had earned a doctorate degree.

Table 1

Participant Demographics: Race, Gender, and Education

	Participants	Percent
Race		
Caucasian	9	100%
African American	0	0%
Hispanic	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Gender		
Male	5	55%
Female	4	45%
Educational Attainment		
Master's Degree	8	89%
Doctorate	1	11%

Participant Experience in Current Position and Other Leadership Positions

Table 2 below delineates the diversity in experience possessed by the nine participants leaders in this qualitative investigation. This investigation involved only tenured school principals ensuring participants had leadership experience prior to the mandated implementation of the AchieveNJ legislation, making their perspective on the phenomenon more relevant. Six of the participants have worked between 5-10 years in their current position Two participants have worked between 11-15 years in their current position. One participant has worked 16 years or more in their current position. Four participants had between 1-3 years of experience outside their current role. Four had between 4-7 years experience outside of their current role. One had 8 or more years of experience outside of their current role.

Table 2

Participant Demographics: Experience

	Experience (yrs.)	Participants	Percent
Leadership Experience			
Current Position	5-10	6	66%
	10-15	2	22%
	16 or more	1	11%
Leadership Experience			
Other Position	1-3	4	44%
	4-7	4	44%
	8 or more	1	11%
Teaching Experience			
	1-5	2	22%
	6 or more	7	88%

Certified Staff and Students Under the Supervision of Participant

Table 3 below provides a summary of the school teaching population and school student populations where the nine participants serve as principals. Of the nine participants five supervise between 40-60 certified staff members. Three supervise between 61-80 certified staff members and one supervises between 81-100 certified staff members. Two participants supervise 300 or fewer students. Three participants supervise between 301-600 students. Two participants supervise between 601-800 students and one supervises a school with 801 or more students.

Table 3

Participant Demographics: Supervision of Staff and Students

	Number	Participants	Percent
Certified Staff Under Supervision			
	40-60	5	55%
	61-80	3	33%
	81-100	1	12%
Students Under Supervision			
	300 or fewer	2	22%
	301-600	3	33%
	601-800	2	22%
	800 or more	1	12%

Data Collection

Stake (1995) advocates strongly for multiple sources of data collection in a case study to allow the researcher to create a story that honors the meaning-making process. Multiple data sources are a benefit as they ensure the study is robust (Green, Camilli &

Elmore, 2006). In case study, it is imperative to converge sources of data, known as triangulation to ensure that the results reflect the participants understandings as accurately as possible (Stake, 1995).

This particular studies primary data collection method was participant interview data. This was then thickened with participant observation data as well as material culture data collected through document review. Rossman and Rallis (2012) describe this combination approach to data collection as a "seamless enterprise" for understanding the entirety of the case being studied (p. 169).

Interviews

The first phase of this qualitative study was the collection of participant interview data. All forms of interviews must be naturalistic extensions of conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To be successful, the interviewing procedures for this study were conversational between the interviewer and the interviewee (Esterberg, 2002). Interviewers must be active listener in the process as interviewees tell stories and select specific details from their experiences (Patton, 1987).

School leaders are key informants and are people with particular knowledge whose insight assisted in understanding the process of connection in context (Patton, 2002). As such, interviewing allowed for links to meaning making to be made based on the information obtained (Esterberg, 2002).

Researchers indicate that in qualitative investigations there are four reasons for interviews: (a) to study people's understanding (Kvale, 1996), (b) to find out what we cannot simply observe (Patton, 1987), (c) to enable readers to make decisions about

transferability of results (Merriam, 2002), (d) to allow triangulation from other sources, increasing the credibility of the findings (Stake, 1995).

Merriam (2009) identifies six types of questions that lend themselves to successful interviews, which were used as part of this study to structure the interview protocol: (1) Background & Demographic (2) Experience (3) Opinion (4) Feeling (5) Knowledge (6) Sensory. The design of the interview protocol focused on principal's connections and experience with:

- Their current leadership practices under AchieveNJ specific to: vision, culture, professional development and teacher empowerment.

- Their current leadership practices within a standards-based, value-added evaluation environment.

- The changes they have made in their practices as a result of AchieveNJ specific to: vision, culture, professional development and teacher empowerment.

- The changes they have made in their leadership practices as a result of being evaluated within a standards-based, value-added environment.

Interviewing in this case study followed a framework that began with gaining written consent prior and verbal consent at the onset of each interview (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, interviewees were informed at the beginning that they could refuse to answer a question if they saw fit and were able to end the interview at anytime (Merriam, 1998). Interviews were audio recorded for accuracy (Merriam, 1998).

Protocol questions were semi-structured and open-ended which allowed free responses (Merriam, 2002). Probes and follow-ups were then used to encourage elaboration and/or clarification as needed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Each audio-

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recorded interview was transcribed immediately following the interview and the

transcriptions were provided to each participant as a means to ensure accuracy (Patton,

1990).

Observations

According to Maxwell (2005) observations allow a researcher to identify similarities

and differences between espousals and behaviors. Participant observation were informal,

conducted at the participant's school, at a time that was convenient for the participant,

and focused on giving the participant an opportunity to show in context examples of their

connections through their behaviors. The researcher limited observation focus to three

specific performance indicators within the current administrator evaluation tool. Figure 4

below provides a detailed depiction of these indicators.

Figure 4. Motown Leadership Observation Performance Indicators

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Document Review

The final phase of this qualitative study was the exploration of material culture through document review. For the purpose of this qualitative investigation, material culture was defined using Schein (2010) model of artifacts and expressed values throughout the participant leaders educational organizations. This final phase proved important in truly understand the messaging with respect to the phenomenon under investigation throughout the case (Hodder, 20123). Document review included:

(a) School Website: as the primary source of communication with the community the messaging from the school leader(s), this medium was essential to better understand the phenomenon as well as build a thick description of the participants in the case (Merriam, 2002)

(b) School Twitter Account: as a required source of communication and collaboration throughout the Motown School District the messaging from the school leader and the school staff this medium was essential to better understand the phenomenon under investigation and substantiate claims made throughout the interviewing process (Esterberg, 2002)

(c) School Mission Statement: as a covenant of AchieveNJ reviewing this document was vital to further understand the connections being made by school leaders with regards to this legislation and enhance the interview data collected.

(d) Leadership Staff Survey Data: each school leader is required to survey their staff each year as part of their evaluation process in Motown. Reviewing this data offered the researcher a unique perspective of each participant's leadership

through the eyes of those they led. This established alignment between espousals and behaviors as it relates to the phenomenon under investigation.

(e) Participant Leadership Goals: each school leader is required to create two goals aligned to their leadership practices each year. Reviewing this data offered the researcher a path to determine congruence between proposed actions,   and behaviors observed during data collection.

The additional data collection in this study (participant observation) and (document review) were used after the interviewing phase had been completed to clarify and/or substantiate statements made during the interviewing process by participants. These strategies in totality were relevant and applicable to further the development of understanding of the phenomenon and more importantly the participant's meaning-making in context as it related to the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is considered a creative process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). There is a constant interplay happening between data collection and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). To bring credibility to the analysis process it is useful to follow an analysis pattern (Creswell, 2009). As such, data analysis in this investigation followed a six-step pattern outlined by Creswell:

- Step 1: Organization of data: the researcher reviewed the audio files as well as the transcribed documents from the interviews in conjunction with the observation and document review data

- Step 2: Reflect on data: the researcher reflected on the data to uncover the underlying meanings made by participants

- Step 3: Coding of data: to the researcher segmented the data collected into broad categories

- Step 4: Generate descriptions: the researcher reflected on the categories to identify themes and patterns, which presented themselves.

- Step 5: Detail descriptions: the researcher reflected on themes and patterns identified along with participant statements to align them and formulate a rich narrative description

- Step 6: Interpretation: the researcher identified the meaning-making process of the participants free from bias from his own experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

Analysis began with categorical aggregation by coding data into broad categories using an open coding process. According to Esterberg (2002), open coding is working line by line with transcript data in an attempt to identify themes or categories of interest. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe open coding as a study of data to compare it, conceptualize it, and place it categories in an attempt to identify patterns present. As such, open coding was used as first cycle coding process.

After open coding, descriptive coding was employed. Descriptive coding is considered a foundational aspect of qualitative research and in this study empowered the researcher to breakdown and better understand how principals connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their leadership capacities.

Following categorical aggregation, pattern making ensued. According to Patton (1990), pattern making is an inductive process where a researcher looks for similarities and/or differences that present themselves in cases under study. As patterns emerged,

analysis turned to generalization as described by Creswell (2009). Explanations were developed about what was learned from the participants and supporting evidence was identified to support those explanations.

Finally, case description took place. According to Merriam (2009), case description is where a researcher provides a detailed view of the aspects of the case. Reporting of the descriptions came from a within-case analytical framework. According to Stake (1995) this type of reporting is where a researcher provides a description of each case and allows the readers to contextualize similarities and differences. A combination method of reporting was the implemented using both a narrative approach to provide thick description and direct quotes to provide readers access to participants' thoughts (Creswell, 2007).

Researcher's Role

Qualitative inquiry is influenced by the beliefs from where a researcher approaches the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My position as a researcher in this study is grounded in the belief system I have constructed as a public school principal who is experiencing AchieveNJ and connecting it to my capacity to lead. I strongly believe that the rigorous nature of AchieveNJ has had a profoundly positive impact on my practices as a school leader.

With the emphasis AchieveNJ places on linking my own evaluations to the performance of my staff members and my students, I am confident this legislation has forced me to shift more of my administrative focus towards teaching and learning and away from the day-to-day building management aspects of leadership. More importantly,

AchieveNJ has served as a catalyst for me in seeking out professional development opportunities to improve my own capacity as it relates to instructional leadership.

My own experience has allowed me to develop certain assumptions regarding the impact of AchieveNJ on personal practices of school leaders. I believe that a relationship exists between the espoused goals of the AchieveNJ legislation and the actual outcomes thus far in its implementation with respect to its connection to leadership practices. Therefore, I am confident that this study has value to the educational community.

While my beliefs and professional experiences did provide me unique insight and position to conduct this study, there were a number of limitations that they brought as well that required planning to ensure the reliability of this study. As a school leader studying other colleagues there is a definitive personal relationship that exists that could have influence data collection. Additionally, the beliefs I have regarding the connection of AchieveNJ to my own professional practices could have created bias and was addressed to ensure the validity of the study.

It was imperative during this study for me as a researcher to separate my own experiences and assumptions from the participant's stories. To do so I applied what Patton (2002) referred to as empathetic neutrality and mindfulness followed by introspection and reflection on the data to ensure the necessary separation existed.

I employed reflexivity as described by Hatch (2002), where as a researcher I continually tracked my influence through continual reflection on the data, consistently bracketed my biases as I analyzed of the data, and finally monitored my emotional responses to participants stories, behaviors and expressed values throughout this study.

Validity, Credibility, Trustworthiness & Confirmability

Validity

The goal of any qualitative study is to provide data that is high quality, credible, confirmable, and true to the subject under study (Stake, 1995). To ensure validity with respect to this study, a pilot study was conducted. Research supports this practice to be to be an effective means of verifying validity of qualitative instruments (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, a pilot study ensured that any changes necessary were made before the instrument and protocol were finalized and the actual study was conducted.

The pilot study for this investigation was similar in design and methodology but smaller and simpler than that of the actual study. Two participants from a neighboring school district were selected who meet the same established criteria as the actual study. The pilot participants were interviewed using the proposed protocol. Data was collected and analyzed following the same pattern established for the actual study. Critical reflection was used to determine the validity of the proposed protocol in relation to the research questions. Changes were necessitated and made after the pilot study, prior to the onset of the actual study, thus ensuring validity.

Credibility

Credibility requires rigorous methods be applied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research triangulation is used to provide credibility as well as confirmability. Maxwell (2005) asserts that the use of multiple sources and data collection methods is sufficient to ensure triangulation and thus improve credibility. Patton (1990) indicates that by combining interview, observation, and document analysis researchers are able to

acceptably triangulate data. This study utilized multiple data sources to confirm emergent

findings and provided triangulation as described by Maxell (2005) and Stake (1995).

Transferability

In addition to increase credibility beyond triangulation, this study provided a rich

and thick description to allow others to determine transferability of findings (Merriam,

2002). Transferability of qualitative findings can be defined as the capacity for those

findings to be generalized to a larger population (Maxwell, 2005). Transferability occurs

when there are enough similarities between two bodies of research an inference can be

made by the results (Lincoln & Guba (1985). The multi-participant approach to case

study implemented in this study increased the likelihood that the findings be transferable

(Yin, 2009). To ultimately confirm transferability of this studies findings, similar

research is necessary.

Confirmability

Confirmability in case study is dependent upon whether it measures the

phenomenon it was intended to (Yin, 2009). Confirmability establishes that the findings

are derived from the data, not the perspective of the researcher (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Recognition of my assumptions and influence combined with triangulation ensured the

findings of this were study were confirmable (Patton, 2002).

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Ethical Assurances

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To ensure ethical compliance throughout this process as the researcher I followed

the guidelines established by Rowan University including all aspects of the IRB approval

process. Permission was sought by the site selected as well as with all individuals who

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were participants in this qualitative investigation. All data collected was kept in a secure location at my primary residence.

To ensure confidentiality of the participants no identification indicators were used throughout this dissertation. Qualitative interviews after being transcribed underwent member checking as described by Rubin and Rubin (2005) where researcher and participant partnered to review the transcripts for accuracy. Before data obtained was used participant approval was sought. Finally, participants were provided with drafts of the data collection and data analysis chapters of this dissertation for review and refinement.

Limitations

Qualitative research, more specifically case study has limitations, which have brought criticism, which Yin (2009) refers to as "prejudices." The two most common "prejudices" of case study are rigor and generalizability. Rigor can be confidently addressed in case study by a researcher through the use of and adherence to a systematic research protocol (Yin, 2009). Generalizability can be addressed through the use of a multi-participant approach to case study thus ensuring that conclusions drawn are based on multiple interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation under varying circumstances (Yin, 2009).

There were series of limitations to this study one being the difficulties in linking educational policies and leadership practices. Additionally, there are other school leaders within the Motwon School District such as other principals, assistant principals, district-level and district level-supervisors who are also experiencing and making connections

between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and their leadership capacities that were not included in this study.

All school leaders in the Motown Public School District have received training on AchieveNJ over the course of its implementation, which could have biased participant responses. Additionally, there are numerous other public and private school districts in New Jersey where school leaders are experiencing and making connections between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and their capacity to lead that were excluded from this study.

Finally, while the participants of this study were leaders of diverse learning environments made up of both students and teachers from a varied demographic make-up, the participants in this study were all Caucasians. This representative difference could create unidentified bias in the interview responses; observation practices and expressed values identified which must be taken into account with respect to the findings of this study.

Summary

This chapter explored the value and rationale of qualitative methodology as it relates to this investigation. Additionally, this chapter provided analysis of and support for using a case study approach. This chapter explained the chosen setting and sampling methods used to select the study participants. Beyond that, this chapter provided an explanation of the data collection and data analysis methods used. Finally this chapter established the rigor, validity and trustworthiness of the study by discuss the role of the researcher, and the steps taken to ensure ethical compliance.

Chapter 4

Results

Recently educational policy makers in New Jersey implemented legislation, which mandates a new leadership evaluation framework as a key to school reform (Bartoletti & Connolly, 2014). AchieveNJ is a standards-based, value-added evaluation model which aims to build successful school leaders by promoting reflective and collaborative practice focused on four key leadership capacities: vision, school culture, professional development and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacities to lead. This investigation will be driven by the following research questions:

1. How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their thinking, actions, behaviors and professional practices?

2. How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ legislation with their capacity to create a clear vision, foster a successful school culture, design and deliver meaningful professional development and empower others in their organization?

A qualitative understanding of standard-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ in context will empower policy makers in New Jersey to rationalize its influence. In addition a qualitative understanding of how this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework informs the thinking, actions, behaviors, and professional

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practices of our school leaders will offer policy makers the opportunity to evaluate this legislation in context, reflect, and ultimately reframe if necessary to ensure its future viability.

This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative case study as well as an analysis of those findings in relation to the research questions guiding this investigation. The first portion of this chapter will provide a brief review of the setting and participant sample for this study. A delineation of the data collected during this investigation as well as an analysis of the data including themes and patterns identified will follow. Additionally, this chapter will describe the results of this investigation and provide answers to the research questions, which informed the study. Finally, evidence of trustworthiness will be offered to validate this investigation and a summary of results will be offered.

Setting and Participant Sample

Motown Public School District was selected as the research site. Motown is a kindergarten through twelfth grade organization with seventeen schools servicing upwards of ten thousand students daily. This investigation involved nine tenured school principals from the Motown School District. Six of the participants led elementary schools (K-5) within Motown, two led middle schools (6-8) and one participant was a high school leader (9-12) within the district.

Data Collection

Interview Findings

The main data collection method in this qualitative investigation consisted of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with each of the nine identified school leader

participants. Interviews took place during the month of September 2017 and each of the interviews was conducted in the school office of the leader participant. Each participant was asked the same set of questions based on the interview protocol, but probing questions differed according to the responses given by each interviewee and allowed for links to meaning-making to be made based on the information gathered.

Observation Findings

In addition to the semi-structured, face-to-face interviews conducted with all nine participants, this qualitative investigation also included an on-site observation of each leader. Each observation was conducted in an effort to identify in context innate behaviors or leadership actions on the part of participants, which exemplified a connection to standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ.

Document Review Findings

The third and final data collection method used in this qualitative investigation was an exploration of material culture conducted through a detailed document review. This exploration of material culture took place during the months of August and September. For the purpose of this qualitative investigation, material culture was defined using Schein (2010) model of artifacts and expressed values throughout the participant leaders educational organizations.

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Data Analysis

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Data collected through the three phase of this qualitative investigation was initially coded into broad categories and then analyzed to determine similarities and differences offered by the leader participants. General ideas that were presented in a similar context were identified as themes (1) Capacity to lead. (2) Capacity to create

vision. (3) Capacity to maintain school culture. (4) Capacity to provide professional development (5) Capacity to empower. Links that participant leaders made were identified as patterns. The themes and patterns identified offered a path for interpretation. Data was organized to provide a representation of the findings and that organization allowed for the recognition of specific connections established by the data collected.

<div align="center">**Capacity to Lead**</div>

Interview Findings

Findings indicate that connections are being made between standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ and a school leaders thinking, action, behaviors and professional practice. One respondent indicated, "AchieveNJ has created a clear structure, a flow-chart if you will for leaders to follow from the district level to the building level."

Another respondent stated, "There are a number of beneficial elements that have come from my perspective." This participant continued by saying, "The process in itself has assisted me in becoming a better administrator." Finally, a leader indicated that, "AchieveNJ has created opportunities for me to see and share best practices, that is where my growth has come from."

Table 4 below provides a visual representation of these findings, which is followed by a thick and rich description.

Table 4

Capacity to Lead

Theme	Code	Supporting Excerpts
Capacity To Lead	Encourage Reflection	"It is a way to focus us on reflecting and remind us to incorporate our reflections into our practice." "While at times the framework can become overwhelming, it is truly a good reflection piece."
	Provide Feedback	"Framework created a system for receiving effective feedback on my practice which encourages me to seek out opportunities to grow in specific areas." "The feedback that I get is more helpful than past models due to the specificity."
	Fundamental Fairness	"The new evaluation system allows for an objective assessment that is ongoing. It is much more fair than the old system of one visit, one time per year." "Its, fair. We are the ones who must show evidence of our practice, the observer simply supports the evidence."
	Time Intensive	"Simply because of the amount of time devoted to AchieveNJ I'm not able to be as visible as I would like to be which has its impact." "Some of my other responsibilities have suffered, it is difficult at times to strike the appropriate balance."
	Disruptive Process	"AchieveNJ is a cumbersome process which has ever changing guideline from the state department making it more difficult." "At times it disrupts how I operate, it has taken a toll on my contact time with students and parents."

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Encourage professional reflection. Four participant responses indicate that standards-based, value-added evaluation models such as AchieveNJ are viewed as a sound instrument to improve leadership capacities. Six suggested that the emphasis placed on professional reflection in this evaluation model has instilled a desire to grow professionally. Eight of the nine leaders interviewed mentioned "professional reflection" during their responses. One leader responded, "It is a way to focus us on reflecting and remind us to incorporate our reflections into our practice." Another responded, "While at times the framework can become overwhelming, it is truly a good reflection piece."

Provides useful feedback. A leader stated that this framework has "created a system for receiving effective feedback on my practice which encourages me to seek out opportunities to grow in specific areas." Another respondent reported, "The feedback that I get is more helpful than past models due to the specificity." Multiple respondents in some way indicated that AchieveNJ and its evaluation component have effectively quantified the art or craft of school leadership. One leader offered, "When applied appropriately, evaluations such as those required by AchieveNJ can be very useful tools for us as school leaders."

Creates fundamental fairness. Participants mentioned the fundamental fairness of the evaluation process in some way during their interviews. A number of respondents believed the new evaluation system offered a fair assessment of their leadership. One stated, "the new evaluation system allows for an objective assessment that is ongoing. It is much more fair than the old system of one visit, one time per year." Another respondent indicated that they believed it to be fair as "we are the ones who must show evidence of our practice, the observer simply supports the evidence." A final leader

stated, "oh it is fair, those who were doing poorly in the old system are certainly still doing poorly in the new evaluation system."

There were also a series of conflicting views and points expressed by leader participants with respect to standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and their connection to a leaders thoughts, actions, behaviors, and professional practices during the interview phase of this qualitative investigation.

Disruptive process. One respondent stated "AchieveNJ is a cumbersome process which has ever changing guideline from the state department making it more difficult." Other leaders interviewed report that the new evaluation model and its requirements had impacted their student and parent/guardian contact time in a negative way. This is illustrated by one leader's response: "I can't always get to what I see as the real needs of my students." Another stated, "At times it disrupts how I operate, it has taken a toll on my contact time with students and parents."

Time intensive. Some reported their school's climate to be negatively impacted by this new evaluation model and its requirements. A leader offered the following statement indicative of this, "Simply because of the amount of time devoted to AchieveNJ I'm not able to be as visible as I would like to be which has its impact." Another respondent voiced, "some of my other responsibilities have suffered, it is difficult at times to strike the appropriate balance."

Observation Findings

The observation data collected furthered these findings in a number of ways. Instructional leadership was witnessed as participants were seen attempting to drive the success of all through a collaborative implementation of a shared vision for school

improvement. The participant leaders were seen employing differentiated leadership strategies in an attempt to maximize student progress.

Additionally, during the participant observations, school climate efforts were witnessed where the participant leaders attempted to foster success for all by advocating, developing, nurturing, and sustaining a safe, positive, and engaging school. These leaders sought opportunities to build upon current programs and create an environment where students could succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

Finally, the observation data revealed that participant leaders were seen providing leadership in the area of human resources by selecting, assessing, inducting, supporting, developing, and empowering their staff. The participants were observed working to create teacher-leaders to improve student learning and school success.

Document Review Findings

All participant leaders were required to administer, analyze, and review a comprehensive staff survey as part of their professional reflection process. All participant leaders in this study agreed to share the results of their most recent survey. Results were reviewed and indicated that participant leaders were viewed as "effective" as cited by their staff specifically with respect to their capacity to lead

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Capacity to Create Vision

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Interview Findings

Research indicates that a leaders ability to create vision and maintain their school's efforts towards those goals leads to improved outcomes for students (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1984). According to Marzano (2005), "no other dimension of principal

behavior is more consistently linked to school improvement by empirical research than school vision and goals."

Findings indicate that participants have aligned their vision with this research. A leader indicated "We place value in the academic and social development of our students. This participant went on to say, ""We try to provide personalized learning experiences for our students. Finally adding, "Our mission is to improve the learning improving teaching."

Another offered, "Our goal is to provide a positive learning environment, which recognizes individual differences and learning styles." Going on to indicate, "Our Mission is to assure that all students have the opportunity to learn and grow to their full potential." During the interview process a respondent reported, "Children come first. We work cooperatively to foster an environment where students are able to communicate and take ownership over their learning." Furthering their thoughts by stating, "We want them to be respectful of others and their differences. We believe in using data to create a student centered learning environment where kids feel free to make mistakes."

Findings indicate that connections are being made between standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ and a school leaders ability to create a unified vision in their schools. Table 5 below provides a visual representation of theme findings associated with participant's capacity to create vision, which is followed by a thick and rich description.

Table 5

Capacity to Create Vision

Theme	Code	Supporting Excerpts
Capacity to Create Vision	Setting Goals	"The requirements associated with AchieveNJ provide guidance for us as school leaders to set ambitious goals, and effectively communicate our efforts toward attaining those goals." "The legislation has made a huge impact on our practices in terms of establishing goals and remaining focused on those goals."
	Specific Benchmarks	"The added accountability within the AchieveNJ framework forces us to move our staff forward in efforts to attain the goals we set" "The concept of specific benchmarks has allowed us to create an ongoing collaborative process focused on meeting those goals."
	Strategic Compliance	"I believe AchieveNJ has not influenced our school mission or vision. Our vision was in existence prior to AchieveNJ. I do what is required of me, I use it as a guideline and adhere to mandate."
	Time Intensive	"We are forced to spend an inordinate amount of time writing our vision and mission. "The legislation has bogged us down forms and meetings when we could be working to improve the experiences of their students.

Setting goals. One respondent offered, "The requirements associated with

AchieveNJ provide guidance for us as school leaders to set ambitious goals, and

effectively communicate our efforts toward attaining those goals." Another indicated, "AchieveNJ has formalized the process of goal setting. Adding to their thoughts by saying, "The legislation has made a huge impact on our practices in terms of establishing goals and remaining focused on those goals."

Specific benchmarks. A leader stated, "The added accountability within the AchieveNJ framework forces us to move our staff forward in efforts to attain the goals we set", made an interesting point. Going on to also say, "The concept of specific benchmarks has allowed us to create an ongoing collaborative process focused on meeting those goals."

Strategic compliance. One leader offered, "I believe AchieveNJ has not influenced our school mission or vision. Furthering their thought by adding, "Our vision was in existence prior to AchieveNJ. I do what is required of me, I use it as a guideline and adhere to mandate."

Time intensive. A respondent said, "We are forced to spend an inordinate amount of time writing our vision and mission. Forcefully adding "The legislation has bogged us down forms and meetings when we could be working to improve the experiences of their students."

Observation Findings

The observation data collected furthered these findings in a number of ways. A participant leaders was observed during an after school faculty meeting was seen collaborating with staff in an effort to develop a shared vision for educational improvement.

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Another leader observed during a common planning period for a specific grade-level in their building was witnessed collaborating with a group of teacher-leaders to develop a building mission and actionable steps to attain that mission.

A third was observed during a small group planning conference and was seen connecting building initiatives with strategies to maximize opportunities to achieve them throughout the year.

Document Review Findings

All participant leaders were required to administer, analyze, and review a comprehensive staff survey as part of their professional reflection process. All participant leaders in this study agreed to share the results of their most recent survey. Results were reviewed and indicated that participant leaders were viewed as "effective" as cited by their staff specifically with respect to their capacity to create vision.

Additionally, all participant leaders have a defined vision and actionable mission statement. As part of this review, all participants' school vision and mission statements were reviewed and analyzed again through a lens of value expression. The analysis revealed unity with respect to having a shared vision of teaching and learning that reflects excellence Furthermore, messaging as an expression by participants focused on furthering their and raising student and school expectations. This was exemplified by a participant mission statement indicating, "We are a student focused community, driven to ensure the long-term success of our students academically, socially and emotionally."

<center>**Capacity to Maintain Culture**</center>

Interview Findings

Evidence supports that when a school leader focuses on creating a climate conducive to student growth and improvement, schools are more successful (MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009). Developing a positive school climate may be the only way to truly achieve systemic change (Maxwell, 2004). Findings indicate that participants have aligned their leadership beliefs about school culture with the research.

One elementary leader offered the following description of their school culture today, "In one word - team. Now, with that said, it does not come without work." This participant went on to indicate, "We've had to work very hard to raise moral and build our culture. Summarizing their experience this leader said, "Change is not easy but with our culture ingrained in what we do daily, we have been are effective in adapting what we do when needed."

Another participant responded by saying "We are positive, collaborative and rigorous. Our school's culture includes teamwork, trust, and a very positive attitude." Furthering their description by stating, "We help one another. We strive to ensure all feel welcomed and respected."

A middle school leader offered, "We are a positive, student-centered environment. Ideas are celebrated and readily exchanged." Adding, "We focus on fairness and give each student what they need, not treating them all the same all the same." A high school leader proudly discussed their school culture saying, We promote academics, athletics and extra curricular opportunities and pride ourselves on creating a "family like" community."

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Findings indicate that connections are being made between standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ and a school leaders ability to maintain a positive school culture. Table 6 below provides a visual representation of theme findings associated with participant's capacity to create culture, which is followed by a thick and rich description.

Table 6

Capacity to Maintain Culture

Theme	Code	Supporting Excerpts
Capacity to Maintain Culture	Collective Trust	"At the onset obviously there was apprehension. But what I have noticed is over time the level of trust between levels within the organization has grown "This law has in a way forced us to come together as an organization and build a mutual trust for each other."
	Achievement Focus	"Everything we do starts with student achievement at its core now." Our expectations for our kids, ourselves and our school have only increased recently as a result of AchieveNJ." "We try to tie everything back into student achievement; it is the focus of our job.
	Inherent Uncertainty	"Achieve NJ has worked to create an atmosphere of uncertainty due to the constant change from the state." "Uncertainty creates tension, tension creates negativity, and negativity impacts our culture."
	Lack of Clarity	"This is something that Trenton should have taken into account when they enacted this legislation. Instead, they just threw it back on the local schools."

Builds trust. One area, which was prevalent, was the concept of trust between organizational members and the effect that AchieveNJ has had. A majority of school leaders articulated how over the course of time working under the mandates of this legislation, trust and essential feature of school culture has been elevated in their organizations.

One leader interviewed indicated. "At the onset obviously there was apprehension. But what I have noticed is over time the level of trust between levels within the organization has grown. Furthering their thoughts by stating, "In my opinion this has made us stronger as a learning community." Another participant said, "The hardest part of maintaining our school culture is continual buy-in. Going on to say, "We must be constant cultivators. This law has in a way forced us to come together as an organization and build a mutual trust for each other."

Achievement focus. In addition to trust, participant responses established a connection between the legislation and culture with respect to focusing on student achievement. This is an important connection as the research indicates it to be tantamount for school success. One leader said, "Everything we do starts with student achievement at its core now." Going on to say, "Our culture is entirely focused on students. Our expectations for our kids, ourselves and our school have only increased recently as a result of AchieveNJ."

A middle school leader indicated, "Everything we talk about comes back to student achievement, it is all about that now." Adding, "We try to tie everything back into student achievement; it is the focus of our job. Also offering when interviewed "While I

may not agree with all aspects of the law, I do believe that the attention it places on student achievement has narrowed our focus as an organization."

Atmosphere of uncertainty. One participant articulated this confliction in the following way, "Achieve NJ has worked to create an atmosphere of uncertainty due to the constant change from the state. Adding that the "Uncertainty creates tension, tension creates negativity, and negativity impacts our culture."

Lack of clarity. Another respondent started by saying, "The culture, as I see it, wasn't great before Achieve and it wasn't great after." Supporting this statement by indicating that, "It gave the negative group more to be sour about. Summarizing their view by saying "This is something that Trenton should have taken into account when they enacted this legislation. Instead, they just threw it back on the local schools."

Observation Findings

The observation data collected furthered these findings in a number of ways. During an SCIP meeting a leader was observed using data on the social, cultural and emotional importance of school to cultivate a positive environment. Another leader was observed at an after school faculty meeting. The focus of this meeting was to identify ways to involve students, staff and families in the school to promote its positive learning environment.

A leader was observed conducting their daily classroom walkthroughs. After each walkthrough the leader recorded specific data of highly effective teaching practices witnessed. Upon completion of the walkthroughs the leader was observed sending e-mail recognition to each staff member with respect to what was witnessed. The leader indicated that this has proven to be a real benefit to the culture within their building.

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Document Review Findings

    All participant leaders were required to administer, analyze, and review a comprehensive staff survey as part of their professional reflection process. All participant leaders in this study agreed to share the results of their most recent survey. Results were reviewed and indicated that participant leaders were viewed as "effective" as cited by their staff specifically with respect to their capacity to maintain culture.

    Additionally, each of the nine participants are responsible for the regular maintenance of their school website. Each of the leader participant's websites were reviewed and analyzed through a lens of expression, specifically expression of value on the part of the school and the leader. The analysis revealed a definitive consistency throughout where participants actively employed innovative strategies with regards to messaging that sought to highlight student progress, encourage stakeholder participation in school events and build upon school culture, exemplified by a participant website stating "We are a community committed to collaboration and open to community partnership as we move forward together."

Capacity to Provide Professional Development

Interview Findings

    Professional development may hold the most potential for forward movement in education (Cannon, Tenuto, & Kitchel, 2013). Successful professional development programs are critical to student achievement and school success (Brown & Milltello, 2016). According to Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1995) "The best hope for successful reform efforts in schools is a leader who operates their school as a professional learning community).

Findings indicate that participants have aligned their leadership thoughts on professional development school with this research. An elementary leader stated, "Everyone knows that PD is critical in any school. At my school, we utilize PD to enhance instructional practice, align our assessments to those practices, and improve our operations." Another participant offered the following statement in reference to professional development in their school by saying, "We identify areas of concern and provide opportunities for growth through our professional development." Adding, "Our PD is teacher-centered, grounded in data, and designed to support the development of all.

During their interview a leader indicated, "We use our PD as an opportunity to learn and reflect." Going on to say, "By nature in our business we can get isolated at times, PD offers a change for people to sit down and communicate. Another participant said, "Sometimes just having professional conversations leads to a better understanding." Pointing out that, "Our PD focus is on dialogue and reflection and in my opinion it has been really helpful for our school community."

Findings indicate that connections are being made between standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ and a school leaders ability to provide professional development in their schools. Table 7 below provides a visual representation of theme findings associated with participant's capacity to provide professional development, which is followed by a thick and rich description.

Table 7

Capacity to Provide Professional Development

Theme	Code	Supporting Excerpts
Capacity to Provide Professional Development	Data Driven	"Within the evaluation framework, we are better able to use data to identify specific domains that we need to focus on instructionally as a community." "AchieveNJ has forced me to engage my staff in PD that is data driven "This has led staff to focus on more engaging lesson design based on more usable feedback to staff."
	Impactful Dialogue	"AchieveNJ acts as a guide. It has been able to provide our school with concrete data that depicts areas where development is need. It has created more formal opportunities for impactful discussions about teaching and learning based on what we know, not what we think."
	Time Intensive	"Do to the requirements of I feel that we waste time with trainings and SGO/PDP meetings that could be better spent." "There is more benefit from true professional learning opportunities rather than the mandates."
	Over Burdensome	"I do not believe it has impacted our PD. We would still be targeting PD based on student performance regardless of the evaluation model. "We are forced to conduct theses mandatory trainings which staff are not necessary engaged in which has a negative impact on the organization at times."

Data driven. A participant leader said, "Within the evaluation framework, we are better able to use data to identify specific domains that we need to focus on instructionally as a community." Another leader stated, "AchieveNJ has forced me to engage my staff in PD that is data driven. Furthering this contention this participant also said, "We have created a PD period in my building where we focus our discussions and efforts on areas we identify in need of improvement.

Impactful dialogue. Another participant revealed that, "AchieveNJ acts as a guide. It has been able to provide our school with concrete data that depicts areas where development is needed. Additionally, saying, "It has created more formal opportunities for impactful discussions about teaching and learning based on what we know, not what we think."

Time intensive. One leader offered the following, "Do to the requirements of AchieveNJ at times I feel that we waste time with trainings and SGO/PDP meetings that could be better spent. Adding that from their perspective, "There is more benefit from true professional learning opportunities rather than the mandates which seem to continually change anyway."

Over burdensome. Another leader provided a similar description during their interview saying, "I do not believe it has impacted our PD. We would still be targeting PD based on student performance regardless of the evaluation model. Furthering their position by stating, "We are forced to conduct theses mandatory trainings which staff are not necessary engaged in which has a negative impact on the organization at times."

Observation Findings

The observation data collected furthered these findings in a number of ways At an after school faculty meeting a leader was observed sharing the results of a specific needs assessment completed collaboratively to identify and align future professional development sessions. This leader was seen offering evidenced-based best practices with staff by suggesting a teacher-led, professional learning community model moving forward to address identified areas in need of improvement.

Another leader was observed demonstrating the importance of sustained professional development by encouraging staff to partake in an ongoing peer observation model, a longitudinal mentoring program or a defined study group based on individual, group or organizational need.

Document Review Findings

All participant leaders were required to administer, analyze, and review a comprehensive staff survey as part of their professional reflection process. All participant leaders in this study agreed to share the results of their most recent survey. Results were reviewed and indicated that participant leaders were viewed as "effective" as cited by their staff specifically with respect to their capacity to provide professional development.

Additionally, each of the nine leaders who participated maintains a professional social media presence through the use of Twitter. As part of this review, all participants' social media presence was reviewed and analyzed again through a lens of value expression. The analysis revealed some participants used their social media presence to highlight student and staff actively engaged in learning, learning links, and to building

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goals and initiatives. This was evidenced by a participant leader's twitter page where there was continual message and reference to personalized learning, specifically "future ready" initiatives and links to articles, websites and resources for staff and stakeholders to review.

<div align="center">**Capacity to Empower**</div>

Interview Findings

Research suggests that a leaders ability to empower others throughout their organization is tantamount for student success (Barth, 1990; Lieberman, 2004). According to Inger (1993), "in schools were people empowered and work collaboratively, students can sense program coherence and expectations, which may explain improved achievement." Findings indicate that participants have aligned their leadership thoughts on empowerment with this research.

A middle school leader offered, "Our teachers are empowered to promote change. Adding, "As the professionals who work closest with students, their perspectives are valued. We respect their expertise, experience, and professional opinions." An elementary leader stated, "Empowering teachers is critical for them to have buy-in with any initiative. Describing their efforts by indicating, "At my school our teachers are empowered to take risks and reflect. This is both encouraged and expected."

Findings indicate that connections are being made between standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ and a school leaders ability to empower others in their schools. Table 8 below provides a visual representation of theme findings associated with participant's capacity to provide professional development, which is followed by a thick and rich description.

Table 8

Capacity to Empower

Theme	Code	Supporting Excerpts
Capacity to Empower	Encourages Reflection	"AchieveNJ has empowered teachers to be more reflective in what they do and I believe be more inclined to share best practices. "While our teachers would be empowered and their viewpoints valued, regardless of AchieveNJ, it has instilled a "We are all in this together" feeling in our school."
	Recognize Staff	"AchieveNJ has furthered our efforts to recognize highly effective practice "I believe it has influenced the culture of the school and increased the likelihood of our high performers to becoming leaders and influencing others.
	Time Intensive	"I think it has had a negative effect on teacher empowerment. The mandate itself and the time required for professional development at times stifles other opportunities for choice activities and teacher leadership" "If PD was used as intended and teachers could self select professional development I believe they would feel more empowered."
	Heightened Uncertainty	"Achieve creates unease among staff. This unease and lack of certainty at times can cause those who could be or would be teacher leaders to lose their willingness to take on more of a leadership role." "I believe that AchieveNJ has failed at setting the stage for empowerment to be harnessed in my organization. If anything it has held us back."

Encourages reflection. For example, one leader stated, "AchieveNJ has empowered teachers to be more reflective in what they do and I believe be more inclined to share best practices. Additionally saying, "While our teachers would be empowered and their viewpoints valued, regardless of AchieveNJ, it has instilled a "We are all in this together" feeling in our school."

Recognize staff. Another school leader offered the following connection, "AchieveNJ has furthered our efforts to recognize highly effective practice. Going on to say, "I believe it has influenced the culture of the school and increased the likelihood of our high performers to becoming leaders and influencing others.

Time intensive. A high school leader offered the following description of the influence AchieveNJ has had on empowerment in their school, "I think it has had a negative effect on teacher empowerment. The mandate itself and the time required for professional development at times stifles other opportunities for choice activities and teacher leadership" Additionally saying that "If PD was used as intended and teachers could self select professional development I believe they would feel more empowered."

Heightens uncertainty. Another leader supported this view, saying "This goes back to trust for me." Adding that, "Achieve creates unease among staff. This unease and lack of certainty at times can cause those who could be or would be teacher leaders to lose their willingness to take on more of a leadership role." A fellow participant interviewed said, "Empowering teachers requires authentic opportunities for them to lead, to collaborate and to share in the decision-making process. Going on to identify that empowerment "Requires trust and confidence and unfortunately I believe that AchieveNJ

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has failed at setting the stage for these attributes to be harnessed in my organization. Emphatically saying, "If anything it has held us back."

Observation Findings

The observation data collected furthered these findings in a number of ways. During an observation a leaders was witnessed attempting to be empowering to others by implementing a shared-decision making approach with respect to incorporating restorative practices. This empowerment was manifested by the leaders actions, which were a collaborative with staff in a defined attempt to earn respect and boost morale and ownership of the initiative.

A leader was observed during a new staff induction meeting at their school. During this observation the participant was witnessed discussing and collaborating with new staff members in a formal process to support them as they embark on their teaching career. Additionally, this leader provided each new staff member with a mentor, which had been specifically selected for him or her. The leader explained to the new staff members that the mentors were the teacher-leaders in the building and were experts who can and should be relied upon for sound counsel.

Document Review Findings

All participant leaders were required to administer, analyze, and review a comprehensive staff survey as part of their professional reflection process. All participant leaders in this study agreed to share the results of their most recent survey. Results were reviewed and indicated that participant leaders were viewed as "effective" as cited by their staff specifically with respect to their capacity to empower.

In addition, a number of participant leaders used their website and social media presence as a messaging tool for empowerment with their staff. One participant leader used the school website as a vehicle to display real-time pictures and video of selected teachers in action with their students. Another leader used their twitter account to provide stakeholders links to pictures of selected teacher and student learning activities, which were captioned to express the value for those who reviewed.

Results

According to Merriam (2009) the description of results is where the researcher provides a detailed view of the aspects of the case. According to Stake (1995) this type of reporting provides a description and allows readers to contextualize the information. The reporting of results that follows is organized according to the two essential questions driving this investigation.

Research Question One

How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their thinking, actions, behaviors and professional practices?

AchieveNJ espouses goals of: TEACH: help leaders better understand their impact and ultimately improve student outcomes, LEAD: align leadership responsibilities with practices that are known to have the greatest influence on student learning, and GROW: foster an environment of continual growth for all leaders. (NJDOE, 2013a).

The New Jersey Department of Education espouses a belief that AchieveNJ provides for better professional conversations, more opportunities for meaningful feedback, and a more accurate understanding of a leader's impact on student learning (NJDOE, 2016).

Results of this qualitative investigation revealed that participant leaders are currently connecting these standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their thoughts, actions, behaviors, and professional practices. The results of this investigation indicate those connections to be specific to increased reflection, providing valuable feedback, and establishing a sense of fundamental fairness.

Research Question Two

How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to create a clear vision, foster a successful school culture, design and deliver meaningful professional development and empower others in their organization?

Today the New Jersey Department of Education believes that AchieveNJ provides useful data and promotes reflective and collaborative practices centered around four essential leadership capacities: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016). According to the Department of Education (2016), AchieveNJ is assisting leaders of high achieving schools in creating a clear vision and communicate that vision.

Qualitative results indicate that participant leaders are currently connecting standard-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to their capacity to create school vision. The results of this investigation revealed that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have been connected to creating a school vision specifically in the areas of setting goals and establishing specific benchmarks by participant leaders.

The New Jersey Department of Education advocates that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ assist leaders in building a positive school culture (NJDOE, 2016). Qualitative results from this study indicate that

participant leaders are currently connecting standard-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to their capacity to build a positive school culture. The results of this investigation indicate those connections to be specific to building collective trust and encouraging a focus on achievement as part of school culture

The New Jersey Department of Education believes standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ enable school leaders to provide the time, resources, and structure for ongoing and meaningful professional development (NJDOE, 2016). Qualitative findings from this study revealed that participant leaders are currently connecting standard-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to their capacity to provide effective professional development. The results of this investigation revealed these connections to be in the areas of data driven professional development and its ability to facilitate impactful dialogue.

The Department of Education believes that AchieveNJ is encouraging leaders to share power, use delegation, and consultative decision making to achieve collective goals (NJDOE, 2016). Qualitative evidence from this study indicates that participant leaders are currently connecting standard-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to empower others. The results of this investigation revealed this connection to be specifically in the areas of encouraging reflection and increasing recognition of highly effective staff.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Validity

The pilot study conducted, as part of this qualitative investigation was effective in assessing the effectiveness of the interview protocol and ensured that the necessary

changes were made prior to the actual study occurring. Yin (2009) clearly established this practice as an effective means of verifying validity of a qualitative study such as this. In addition to the pilot study, to improve validity, this study involved participant school leaders from elementary, middle and high schools within the Motown Public Schools. This population ensured the sample was broad, another key to validity within qualitative research.

Credibility

To ensure credibility this study utilized multiple sources of data collection to honor the meaning-making process. The primary data collection method was participant interview data, which was thickened with participant observation data as well as material culture data collected through document review. The data collected from these multiple perspectives allowed for verification of viewpoints and experiences. The use of multiple data sources ensured this study was robust and the results were accurate reflections of the participants understanding and connections as advocated by Stake (1995).

Triangulation

By combining interview, observation, and document analysis this qualitative investigation ensured that data could be acceptable triangulated. Findings were shared with study participants for feedback and member checking for accuracy. According to Maxwell (2005) and Stake (1995) the use of multiple data sources and employing member checking as done within this investigation to confirm emergent findings affirms triangulation within a qualitative investigation.

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Transferability

The findings from this qualitative study were established using a thick and rich description framed in context and expressed by participant leaders words, actions and professional practices. According to Merriam (2002) the use of a thick and rich description in qualitative research is an acceptable way to allow others to determine transferability moving forward. In addition, according to Yin (2009) the multi-participant approach implemented in this study increases the likelihood that the findings are transferable.

Confirmability

According to Patton (2002) confirmability requires the recognition by the researcher of their assumptions and its potential influence on findings. In this qualitative investigation the researcher employed reflexivity to track influence and monitor emotional response, reflection, and impact on findings. In addition, study participants were provided a full and bias-free explanation of the study purpose, as well as any potential benefits and risks they may experience as participants. This combination approach ensured that the results were derived solely from the data collected confirming credibility of findings as advocated by Tobin & Begley (2004).

Summary

Presented in this chapter were findings of this study obtained through opinions, views and beliefs of participant's solicited through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews of participants In addition, those participants were also observed by the researcher in context and a review of relevant material culture through document review was conducted in to explore the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and leadership capacities in a public school setting in one New Jersey School District.

Today the New Jersey Department of Education espouses a belief that AchieveNJ provides for better professional conversations, more opportunities for meaningful feedback, and a more accurate understanding of a leader's impact on student learning (NJDOE, 2016). The Department of Education currently believes that AchieveNJ provides useful data and promotes reflective and collaborative practices centered around four essential leadership capacities: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016).

Qualitative results from this study indicate that participants are connecting standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their thinking, actions, behaviors and professional practices including: developing a school vision, creating a school culture, designing professional development and empowering others throughout their organizations.

The information and evidence collected through this qualitative investigation can be used as a reflection and reframing reference point for continued research, current and future policy decisions with respect to standard-based, value-added leadership evaluation

frameworks in New Jersey, and inform the practice of both current and future school

leaders, all of which will be explored in chapter five.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Today, the New Jersey Department of Education espouses a belief that AchieveNJ provides for better professional conversations, more opportunities for meaningful feedback, and a more accurate understanding of a leader's impact on student learning (NJDOE, 2016). The Department of Education also believes that AchieveNJ provides useful data and promotes reflective and collaborative leadership practices centered around four essential capacities: vision, culture, professional development, and empowerment (NJDOE, 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacities to lead. This investigation will be driven by the following research questions:

A qualitative understanding of standard-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ in context will empower policy makers in New Jersey to rationalize its influence. In addition, a qualitative understanding of how this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework informs the thinking, actions, behaviors, and professional practices of our school leaders will offer policy makers the opportunity to evaluate this legislation in context, reflect, and ultimately reframe if necessary to ensure its future viability.

Chapter five will present an interpretation of the findings from this qualitative case study in relation to the research questions guiding this investigation. In addition to presenting the key findings, this chapter will delineate the limitations of this case study

and offer recommendations for future research, policy, practice and leadership. Finally, to close chapter five a conclusion will be offered to this qualitative case study.

Interpretation of Findings

According to Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2014) "the richest resource for learning reside in adult learners themselves." Critical reflection is a metacognitive process used to develop one's ability to think and increase one's awareness of the impact of thinking on their leadership behaviors and leadership actions (Hall & Simmeral, 2015).

In education, critical reflection can build a leader's capacity to work through complex issues, make sound decisions, and guide the future direction of their organization (Moon, 2005). This study utilized a critical reflective framework to allow participants to reconstruct meanings made with respect to the connection of standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and their capacities to lead.

Critical reflection in education empowers leaders within a school to transform themselves to improve situations for students, teachers and society (Moon, 2005). In education, critical reflection can build a leader's capacity to work through complex issues, make sound decisions, and guide the future direction of their organization (Moon, 2005).

Data collected through the multi-methodological approach used in this study: interview, observation and document review were coded into categories and analyzed. Similarities expressed by participants, actions observed by participants, and values drawn from material culture review were identified as themes and offered a path for

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interpretation. Five themes were established for interpretation during this case study regarding the connections made between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks that include:

(1) Capacity to lead
(2) Capacity to create vision
(3) Capacity to maintain culture
(4) Capacity to provide professional development
(5) Capacity to empower

These five themes were separated for thematic interpretation into two categories: "Success" are exemplary based descriptions, observed practices, or identified values found in this research between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and participants professional practices. "Areas for Growth" are exemplary based descriptions, observable practices, or identifiable values found in the research where standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have yet to be effectively connected to participant leaders professional practices. Finally, the five themes were then aligned to the two essential research questions for thematic interpretation of results.

Research Question One

How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their thinking, actions, behaviors and professional practices?

AchieveNJ is a standards-based, value-added evaluative framework, which espouses goals of: TEACH: help leaders better understand their impact and ultimately improve student outcomes, LEAD: align leadership responsibilities with practices that are known to have the greatest influence on student learning, and GROW: foster an environment of continual growth for all leaders. (NJDOE, 2013a).

Capacity to Lead

The New Jersey Department of Education believes that AchieveNJ provides for better professional conversations, more opportunities for meaningful feedback, and a more accurate understanding of a leader's impact on student learning (NJDOE, 2016). Figure 5 below provides a graphic interpretation of these findings followed by a rich discussion.

Success: Intiatives are Currently Increasing Professional Reflection Opportunities	Area For Growth: Initiatives Currently Have Time Requirements That ImpactOther Priorities
Success: Initaitive are Currently Providing Valuable Feedback	Area For Growth: Initiatives Currenlty Have a Disruptive Nature Which Impacts Validity

Capacity to Lead

Figure 5. Capacity to Lead

Participants, through this critical reflective process revealed that they have begun to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their leadership as a result of this this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework providing support to the contentions made by the department of education. Participants indicated a strong connection and made specific meaning as a result of this legislation due to its ability to increase professional reflection, evidenced by the following participant comment, "It is a way to focus us on reflecting and remind us to incorporate our reflections into our practice."

In addition, participant leaders revealed a connection and made meaning as a result of this legislation due to its ability to empower them to provide valuable feedback, exemplified by a participant stating, "This framework has created a system for receiving effective feedback on my practice which encourages me to seek out opportunities to grow in specific areas." Finally, a connection and specific meaning making was identified by participants due to the legislations ability to creating a sense of fundamental fairness supported by a participant saying, "Its, fair. We are the ones who must show evidence of our practice, the observer simply supports the evidence."

Recent research supports reforms in practice such as these are vital to the success of school leaders and increasing student performance. Increasing professional reflection, providing valuable feedback and fostering fundamental fairness have been identified as concrete determinants of improved leadership (National Policy Board of Educational Administrators, 2015). Schoen's (1983) research established that professionals must reflect and question the theories that drive their decision-making. Mezirow's (2000) research established critical reflection as a precursor to transformative learning. Transformative learning allows leaders as learners to construct, validate, and reformulate their experiences to creating new norms within their professional practices.

Through this critical reflective process, participant leaders cited the time management aspect of the legislation to be the most problematic at this point and in need of adjustment, evidenced by one leader stating, "Some of my other responsibilities have suffered, it is difficult at times to strike the appropriate balance." Additionally, participant leaders cited the disruptive nature of AchieveNJ to be problematic at this time and in need of reflection and refinement moving forward with evidenced by a participant

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stating, "At times it disrupts how I operate, it has taken a toll on my contact time with students and parents."

These areas for growth are congruent with results from previous studies conducted on the evaluation process in public schools. Amendt (2004) conducted a study in Iowa of public school leaders with respect to the implementation of a new evaluation model. The findings suggest that respondents found value in the new evaluation process and viewed it as an improvement from the old one but reported areas of concern linked to the amount of time the new evaluation process required.

<div align="center">

Research Question Two

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How are public school principals connecting standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to create a clear vision, foster a successful school culture, design and deliver meaningful professional development and empower others in their organization?

AchieveNJ espoused goals are to help leaders better understand their impact and ultimately improve student outcomes, and to align leadership responsibilities with practices which are known to have the greatest influence on student learning and to foster an environment of continual growth for all educators. (NJDOE, 2013a).

Capacity to Create Vision

According to the New Jersey Department of Education leaders of high achieving schools have a clear vision and communicate to all that learning is of the utmost importance. The New Jersey Department of Education believes that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ assist school leaders in creating a clear vision and communicate that vision to their communities. Figure 6 below provides a graphic interpretation of these findings followed by a rich discussion.
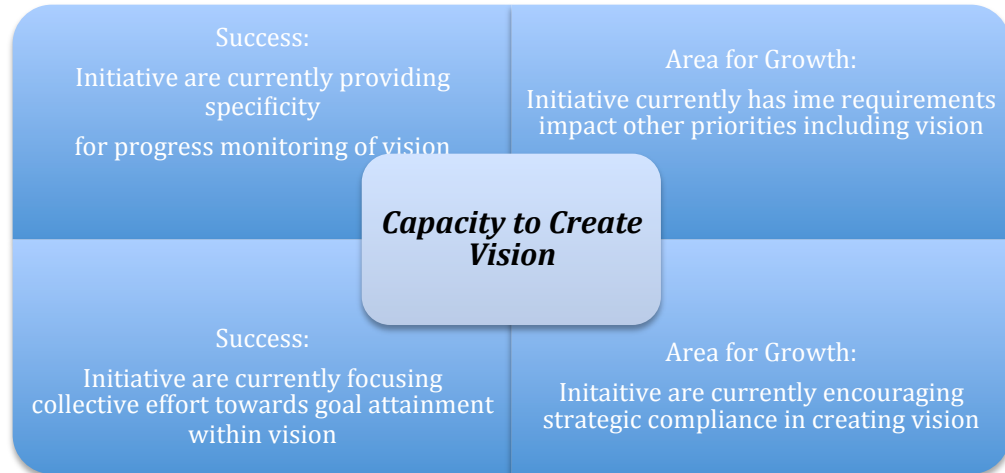
Figure 6. Capacity to Create Vision

Participants, through this critical reflective process revealed that they have begun to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to create vision as a result of this this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework, providing support to the contentions made by the department of education. Participants indicated a strong connection was made due to the legislations specificity, evidenced by one leader stating, "The concept of specific benchmarks has allowed us to create an ongoing collaborative process focused on meeting those goals." In addition, participant leaders also identified a strong connection with respect to vision and goal setting, evidenced by a leader saying, "It requires us as school leaders to set ambitious goals, and effectively communicate our efforts toward attaining those goals."

This aligns with the current research regarding effective school vision. According to Hallinger (2010) vision must create clarity in order to motivate others. Additionally the research of Gabriel and Palmer (2009) found that successful school leaders create a vision that generates purpose, provides direction, creates collaborative commitment based on collective goals.

Through this critical reflective process leaders revealed that they have been unable to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to create vision as a result of this this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework. Participant leaders cited the legislations encouragement for strategic compliance as the major area of concern evidenced by the following statement, "Our vision was in existence prior to AchieveNJ. I do what is required of me." Additionally, another leader stated, "The legislation has done nothing but bogged us down", cited the time intensiveness as a contradiction.

These areas for growth are consistent with recent research on leadership evaluation reform efforts. Firestone (2013) investigated New Jersey's new evaluation model and found that time management to be a major challenge for school leaders in creating an effective school vision.

Capacity to Maintain Culture

According to the New Jersey Department of Education there is a positive relationship between school climate and leadership, which affects the overall effectiveness of a school (NJDOE, 2016). The New Jersey Department of Education believes that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ assist leaders in building a supportive school culture. Figure 7 below provides a graphic interpretation of these findings followed by a rich discussion.
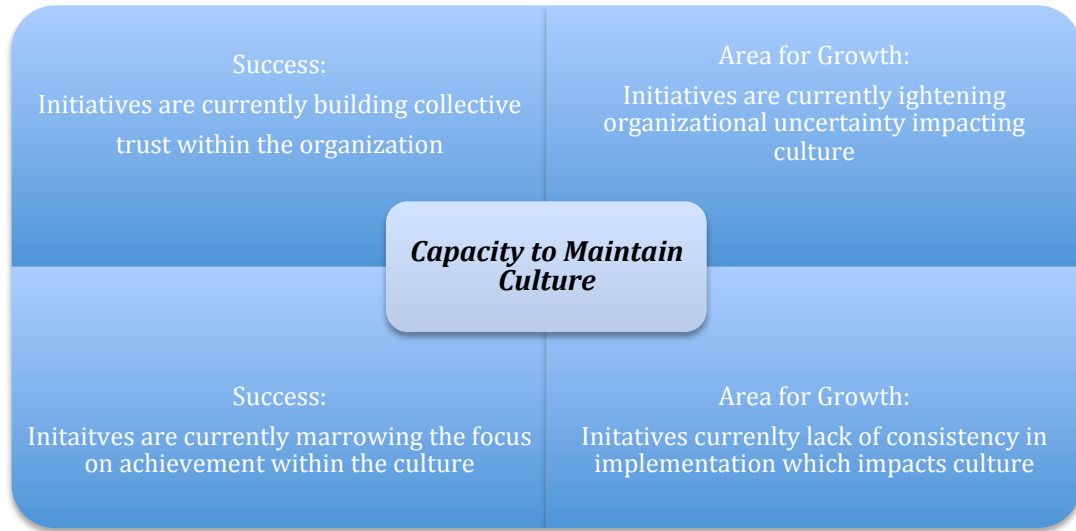
Figure 7. Capacity to Maintain Culture

Through this critical reflective process leaders revealed that they have begun to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to create culture as a result of this this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework providing support to the contentions made by the department of education. Leaders citied this initiatives capacity build collective trust, evidenced by a participant leader statement, "It has forced us to come together as an organization and build a mutual trust." Additionally, leaders cited a strong connection due to the legislations capacity to focus attention of achievement identified by participants, with one saying, "Our expectations for our kids, ourselves and our school have only increased recently as a result of AchieveNJ."

These findings are congruent with current research of effective school culture. According to the work of Hsin-Hsiang and Mao-neng, (2015) Culture is the unwritten communication of the vision and expresses a school's priorities. Furthermore their research indicates that culture which is focused on student achievement have proven to be most successful.

Through this critical reflective process leaders revealed that they have been unable to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to create culture, citing two specific areas of concern. One being the inherent organizational uncertainty created by this initiative as described by a leader, "Uncertainty creates tension, tension creates negativity, and negativity impacts our culture." In addition, participants cited a lack of focus as an area of concern supported by a leader stating, "It gave the negative group more to be sour about."

These areas for growth align to other recent research findings with respect to leadership evaluation reforms. Sartin (2011) conducted a study of school leaders experiences with the implementation of a new evaluation process in Chicago. Findings from this study indicated that participants felt challenged by impact of these efforts on other important responsibilities they had.

Capacity to Provide Professional Development

According to the New Jersey Department of Education effective leaders provide the time, resources, and structure for ongoing and meaningful professional development (NJDOE, 2016). The New Jersey Department of Education believes that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ further a leaders capacity to design, deliver and sustain professional development within their schools. Figure 8 below provides a graphic interpretation of these findings followed by a rich description.

Figure 8. Capacity to Provide Professional Development

Through this critical reflective process leaders revealed that they have begun to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to provide meaningful professional development as a result of this this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework providing support to the contentions made by the department of education. Specifically leaders identified a strong connection due to the legislations ability to encourage meaningful professional dialogue, supported by a participant stating, "It has created opportunities for discussions about teaching and learning based on what we know, not what we think." Additionally, participants cited this initiatives capacity to focus professional development on data, evidenced by a leader's comment, "We are now better able to use data to identify specific domains that we need to focus on."

These findings are congruent with recent leadership studies. According to Cannon, Tenuto and Kitchel's (2013) research, effective professional development is a learning process that which sustains individualized and collective growth through the effective use of student data. Additionally, the research of Hord & Sommers (2008)

indicated that leaders must continually check on the needs of their organization and provide targeted support to be successful.

Through this critical reflective process leaders revealed that they have been unable to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to provide meaningful professional development, citing two specific areas of concern. One conflict cited was the time intensiveness of the overall initiative impacting opportunities for genuine professional development. A leader said, "I feel that we waste time with trainings and SGO/PDP meetings that could be better spent developing our practice" Additionally, participant leaders cited the over burdensome nature of this initiative with one participant offering, "We are forced to conduct theses mandatory trainings which staff are not necessary engaged in."

The areas for growth identified are supported by other recent research with respect to leadership evaluation reform efforts. Firestone's (2013) research on leaders experiences with a new evaluation process revealed participants felt challenged by the amount of time required by the new evaluation process and its impact on professional development opportunities.

Capacity to Empower

According to New Jersey Department of Education leaders must be considered empowering by their school community (NJDOE, 2016). The New Jersey Department of Education believes that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ is encouraging leaders to share power, use delegation, and consultative decision making to achieve collective goals (NJDOE, 2016). Figure 9 below provides a graphic interpretation of these findings followed by a rich description.

Figure 9. Capacity to Empower

Through this critical reflective process leaders revealed that they have begun to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to empower others in their organization as a result of this this standards-based, value-added evaluative framework providing support to the contentions made by the department of education. One area of connection highlighted was the legislations capacity to encourage individual and collective reflection, supported by a leader's statement, "It has empowered teachers to be more reflective and I believe be more inclined to share best practices." Additionally, participants cited the legislations ability to increase recognition of staff, evidenced by a participant who said, "I has influenced the school and increased the likelihood that our high performers become leaders."

These findings are furthered by the literature with respect to empowerment. According to Kreisberg (1992) empowerment on its own is as a solution to the plethora of problems our schools face. Furthermore the work of Bolger and Somech (2004) found a direct correlation between empowerment and improved student outcomes.

Through this critical reflective process leaders revealed that they have been unable to construct new meanings and applications with respect to their capacity to provide meaningful professional development, citing two specific areas of concern. One conflict cited was the time intensiveness of the overall initiative impacting opportunities for genuine professional development. A leader said, "I feel that we waste time with trainings and SGO/PDP meetings that could be better spent developing our practice" Additionally, participant leaders cited the over burdensome nature of this initiative with one participant offering, "We are forced to conduct theses mandatory trainings which staff are not necessary engaged in."

These areas for growth are congruent with other recent research efforts on leadership evaluation reform. Amendt (2004), Sartin (2011) and Firestone (2013) all found time management to be a major challenge for school leaders with respect to standards-based, value-added evaluative framework legislation such as AchieveNJ.

Limitations

This study was limited to tenured, school principals in one public school district in New Jersey. Expanding the sample size to include other school leaders within the selected site of this investigation such as assistant principals, supervisors and district level personnel would broaden the understanding of how school leaders connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their leadership capacities.

Additionally, the sample population in this study lacked demographic diversity representative of the diversity of the district itself. A more robust sample rich with diversity, which aligned more with the diversity of the school district itself, would

broaden the study and address any potential unintended biases, which could exist, based on the lack of diversity within this study.

Further expansion of the sample size to other public school districts within the state of New Jersey would also enhance the trustworthiness of the results obtained from this investigation as the findings could further affirm the evidence obtained from this qualitative investigation.

Furthermore, standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks are not limited in implementation to the state of New Jersey as cited earlier in this study. Delaware has implemented a standards-based value-added evaluation model, which uses multiple measures to determine the effectiveness of school leaders (McGuinn, 2012). Rhode Island instituted reforms requiring standards-based, value-added evaluation of school leaders (McGuinn, 2012). Tennessee and Colorado have implemented a standards-based value-added evaluative framework as well (McGuinn, 2012).

A larger sample size, rich with diversity in experience by school leaders from a number of different states such as those mentioned above could produce qualitative evidence which substantiates or refutes the findings from this case study with respect to the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluation frameworks and leadership capacities.

Implications

As a public school principal who is experiencing AchieveNJ and connecting it to my capacities as a leader coming into this study I believed that the rigorous nature of AchieveNJ has had a profoundly positive impact on my practices as a school leader.

With the emphasis AchieveNJ places on linking my own evaluations to the performance of my staff members and my students, I was confident the legislation had forced me to shift my administrative focus towards teaching and learning and away from the day-to-day building management aspects of leadership. Most importantly, AchieveNJ had served as a catalyst for my seeking out professional development opportunities to improve my own practices.

This research has affirmed my belief in a number of ways. Standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have made a substantial positive impact on school leaders thoughts, actions, behaviors and professional practices. School leaders working under the requirements of this type of legislation are better equipped to align their work with research-based best practices in the field to be effective within this evaluation environment. AchieveNJ has allowed for a better understanding and application specific strategies which are aligned to best practices with respect to creating vision, maintaining culture, providing professional development and empowering others throughout their organizations.

Results clearly indicate that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ are impacting leaders and increasing their professional capacities. Leaders are better able to create school vision today as a result of this legislation due to its specificity and goal orientation. Leaders are better able to create school culture as a result of this legislation as it fosters improved trust and focuses on achievement. Leaders are better able to provide professional development as a result of this legislation as a result of it increasing dialogue and its focus on using data to drive professional development opportunities. Finally, leaders are better able to empower staff as a result of

this legislation due to its encouragement for professional reflection and its ability to increase recognition of practice.

This legislation is not perfect and there are a number of identified areas for growth identified which offer a clear path for policy-makers to improve upon the legislation, which will enhance its impact on school leaders. The most pressing issue identified throughout all areas of this research was the time intensive nature of this legislation and its impact on other priorities. In order for standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to continue to have a positive impact on school leaders, it is essential that the process be streamlined in an effort to reduce its impact on a leaders time.

<div align="center">

Recommendations

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Policy

The findings of this qualitative case study provide the New Jersey Department of Education and policymakers with actionable data to use as an initial reflection point with respect to the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and leadership capacities, specifically the areas for growth identified by participant leaders in this study.

The implications of this research suggested that additional investigation and continued reflection is necessary to ensure that these initiatives are facilitating the necessary change to help leaders better understand their impact and ultimately improve student outcomes, align leadership responsibilities with practices that are known to have the greatest influence on student learning, and foster an school environments of continual growth for all.

This qualitative case study revealed that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as Achieve NJ from a policy context are being connected to leadership capacities within our state. The data also revealed this connection could be a result of ritual compliance due to the mandate itself rather than collective commitment to the change effort.

From a practical perspective the results of this case study indicate that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ are meeting their intended goals but there are definitive areas that must be further explored to ensure the future success of these initiative.

The most pressing issue identified by this study was the time management aspect. Time management was as a definitive area of growth in all themes identified in this study. Moving forward policy makers and policy implementers must work collaboratively to identify the redundancies and inefficiencies associated with the implementation of standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks to streamline the process for our school leaders. Doing so will allow our current leaders to grow into leaders who are better able to create a defined vision, enhance school culture, provide authentic professional development and further empowerment efforts in the future.

Research

To further investigate this phenomenon, an immediate follow up quantitative study should be conducted based on the results of this qualitative case study to determine if the themes which present themselves are generalizable to a larger sample of school leaders.

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Additionally a parallel qualitative study conducted with school leaders from other educational organizations within New Jersey who have attained tenure status is suggested to evaluate if the results from this qualitative case study are congruent.

Finally, a mixed method investigation should be conducted with both tenured and non-tenured school leaders from New Jersey to further evaluate the findings of this qualitative case study and determine the generalizability of its results.

Practice

The findings from this qualitative investigation offer key insight into the effective connections being made between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and leadership capacities in one public school district in New Jersey. The data collected through this case study provide an initial reflection lens for other school leaders to evaluate the connections they are making with respect to AchieveNJ and their leadership. Ongoing professional reflection such as this is vital for their long-term success.

Professional reflection through differentiated lens such as this has been proven effective at increasing leadership capacities. With the realization that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ will continue to play a large role in school reform efforts it is imperative that leaders use studies such as this to reflect internally on themselves. This reflection will lead to changes in their own practices as necessary to better lead the successful implementation of this type of legislation and fundamental change initiative.

Leadership

The findings from this qualitative case study provide leadership preparation programs with insight, experience and contextual evidence of the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and leadership capacities. As those students who are in leadership preparation programs within our state begin to enter the workforce an understanding of this initiative as well as how it can, should, and potentially should not be connected to their leadership is vital to their success as well as the success of the initiative itself.

Evidence from this study indicates that leadership preparation programs must provide future leaders with a detailed understanding of organizational change as it relates to policy mandates and policy implementation. A real-world understanding of this type of change effort and effective processes associated with it will allow future leaders to address the underlying areas for growth identified in this study and others like it and be better positioned to define a path of success with respect to standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ in our state.

Conclusion

According to the Wallace Foundation (2015), school leaders are a direct "multiplier" of successful student learning. Today's leaders face an ever-increasing expectation to produce tangible results of student growth and achievement (National Policy Board of Educational Administrators, 2015). Today's educational leader must embrace their fundamental responsibility as instructional masters overseeing teaching, learning, and student growth (Spillane, 2015).

According to a 2016 RAND study "school leaders are second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student learning." The Wallace Foundation (2013) reports that school leaders play a vital role in: (1) shaping a vision of success for all, (2) creating a climate hospitable to education, (3) cultivating leadership in others, (4) managing people to foster school improvement, and (5) improving organizational outcomes. Ultimately, the effectiveness of our school leaders is directly linked to the outcomes for our students (Grissom, 2011).

Today many states have made substantial changes to their policies and procedures for performance evaluations of their school leaders (Anderson, 2012). Delaware, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Colorado all have adopted a leadership evaluation models that tie principal practice with quantitative measures of student academic gains (McGuinn, 2012). At the center of each of these initiatives are standards-based, value-added measures, which link student performance data to a leaders summative evaluation (Corcoran, 2010).

The goal of any change initiative such as this is to fundamentally alter the underlying behaviors of an organization in order to improve its overall performance (Cawsey, Deszca & Ingols, 2012). Fullan (2011) established several key insights to navigate successful change efforts, indicating that organizations must remain resolute, have patience and be persistent throughout the change process. He established that to be successful, change requires an organization to learn by doing. Most importantly, he advocated that organizations must continually collect data and reflect on their practice to fosters organizational learning.

In creating a new standards-based, value-added evaluative framework for school leaders the New Jersey Department of Education placed emphasis on the crucial role school leaders play in raising student achievement due to their enormous contributions to the conditions for success within our schools. Additionally, a focus was placed on ensuring this new framework accurately measures a school leaders influence on student learning. Finally, emphasis was placed on mandating that school leaders be held accountable for gains of his/her students.

On August 6, 2012 AchieveNJ was approved in by the New Jersey legislature. Adherence was required beginning in the 2013-2014 school year for all public schools within the state. From that time all school leadership evaluations would be standards-based and value-added based on their ability to raise student achievement (NJDOE, 2013a). According the New Jersey Department of Education (2013) AchieveNJ is a standards-based, value-added evaluative framework seeking to promote reflection and enhance leadership capacity in four areas:

- Vision: effective leaders have a clear vision about learning and communicate that vision to all

- Culture: effective leaders create a positive school climate that improves organizational effectiveness

- Professional development: effective leaders provide time, resources and structure meaningful professional development for their organization

- Empowerment: effective leaders empower and retain the best teachers to improve their organization

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This reform initiative is not without controversy and has been criticized due to an inherent concern with the evaluation process as well as the instruments being used for the evaluations (McGlone, 2014). As such, there has been and continues to be some resistance to AchieveNJ in the state (McGlone, 2014).

Since the inception of legislation mandating the implementation of standards-based, value-added evaluations frameworks such as AchieveNJ, little qualitative research had been done in context to study the effectiveness of these initiatives in relation to their espoused goals (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). As such, little was known qualitatively from the field about the implications of standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ on leadership in our state.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to lead. The qualitative understandings established through this study establish how school leaders connect AchieveNJ to their personal leadership capacities and to rationalize its influence on: creating vision, building culture, designing professional development, and empowering others.

The understandings offered by this investigation of how standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ inform the thinking, actions, and professional practices of school leaders offer an authentic opportunity to evaluate standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks in context. This study offers qualitative insight into the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and leadership capacity to the New Jersey Department of

Education, policymakers, other school leaders, and leadership preparation programs throughout our state.

This qualitative case study revealed that our school leaders are connecting standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as Achieve NJ to leadership capacities within our state. Results indicate that standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ are impacting leaders and increasing their professional capacities. Leaders are better able to create school vision today as a result of this legislation due to its specificity and goal orientation. Leaders are better able to create school culture as a result of this legislation as it fosters improved trust and focuses on achievement. Leaders are better able to provide professional development as a result of this legislation as a result of it increasing dialogue and its focus on using data to drive professional development opportunities. Finally, leaders are better able to empower staff as a result of this legislation due to its encouragement for professional reflection and its ability to increase recognition of practice.

Furthermore, results of this case study indicate that while standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ are meeting their intended goals there are definitive areas for growth that must be further explored to ensure the long-term viability of these initiatives. The most pressing issue identified throughout all areas of this research was the time intensive nature of this legislation and its impact on other priorities.

In order for standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ to continue to have a positive impact on school leaders, it is essential that the process be streamlined in an effort to reduce its impact on a leaders time. Continued

research, reflection and refinement are warranted with respect to standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ and their connection to leadership capacities in the field of education.

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Appendix A

AchieveNJ Executive Summary

Description of Teacher Evaluation Components

Teacher Practice is measured by performance on a teacher practice instrument, which is used to gather evidence primarily through classroom observations. Districts have the flexibility to choose from a growing list of state-approved instruments.

- Tenured teachers have two and non-tenured teachers have three required observations each year. Any teachers who end the school year with an Ineffective or Partially Effective rating have an additional observation the following year as part of their Corrective Action Plan (CAP).
- The same requirements apply to teachers of tested and non-tested grades and subjects:

Observation Requirements Summary

Teacher Status	Minimum Observations (at least 20 minutes each)	Multiple Observers
Non-tenured	3	Required
Tenured	2	Recommended
Corrective Action Plan	Plus One	Required

Additional notes on observations:
Announced vs. Unannounced: Within the minimum requirements, all teachers must have at least one unannounced and one announced observation with a pre-conference.
Non-tenured teachers present for less than 40% total school days in an academic year: A minimum of 2 observations are required.
**Post-conferences:** Post-conferences between teachers and their supervisors are required following each observation. These conferences must all be face-to-face for non-tenured teachers and at least one must be face-to-face for tenured teachers.

All observers must:
- Be trained on the instrument before observing for the purpose of evaluation;
- Participate in at least two "co-observations" (also known as double-scored observations); and
- Participate in annual "refresher" training. Superintendents or chief school administrators (CSAs) must certify each year that all observers have been trained.

Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) are academic goals for groups of students that each teacher sets with his or her principal or supervisor at the start of the year. These academic goals should be aligned to standards and measured using high quality assessments of various types including locally-developed tests, performance assessments, and portfolios. High quality SGOs use multiple measures to determine the starting point of the students and are differentiated to be ambitious and achievable for all of the students included. Additionally, SGOs should include a significant proportion of the standards, course work, and students for which a teacher is responsible. The box provides an example of an 8th-grade math SGO.

Sample SGO: 8th-grade Math

Student Growth Objective *
At least 70% (45/65) of my students will attain a score as described in the scoring plan and set according to their preparedness level.

Scoring Plan

Preparedness Group	Assessment Target Score	Objective Attainment Level			
		Exceptional (4)	Full (3)	Partial (2)	Insufficient (1)
Low	70	>85% students	≥70% students	≥65% students	<65% students
Medium	80				
High	90				

*Targets and percentages are suggestions for illustrative purposes only.

Timeline for SGOs

Teachers, supervisors meet to discuss and agree on SGO — By Oct. 31
Adjustments to SGOs can be made, with approval — By Feb. 15
Teachers, supervisors meet to discuss SGOs and other measures — By end of school year

Student Growth Percentile (SGP) data represent the growth an individual student makes on the state standardized assessment from one year to the next and consider how that growth compares to gains made by that student's "academic peers" across the state. Academic peers are defined as students with similar academic
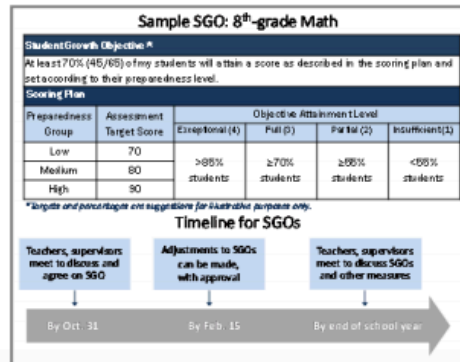
history in previous years. For an individual teacher, the SGPs for all qualifying students are compiled in an ascending list to identify the median SGP (mSGP). The mSGP is a percentage between one and 99, which will be translated to a 1.0-4.0 scale. This approach is more equitable than simply setting a proficiency target, since students start and end the year at different places.

Multiple Measures for Evaluating Principals, Vice Principals, and Assistant Principals

Addressing school leadership and classroom instruction simultaneously ensures that New Jersey schools are taking a comprehensive approach to raising achievement levels and that schools are accountable for student learning. All principals and vice/assistant principals (APs/VPs) are rated Highly Effective, Effective, Partially Effective, or Ineffective based on multiple measures:
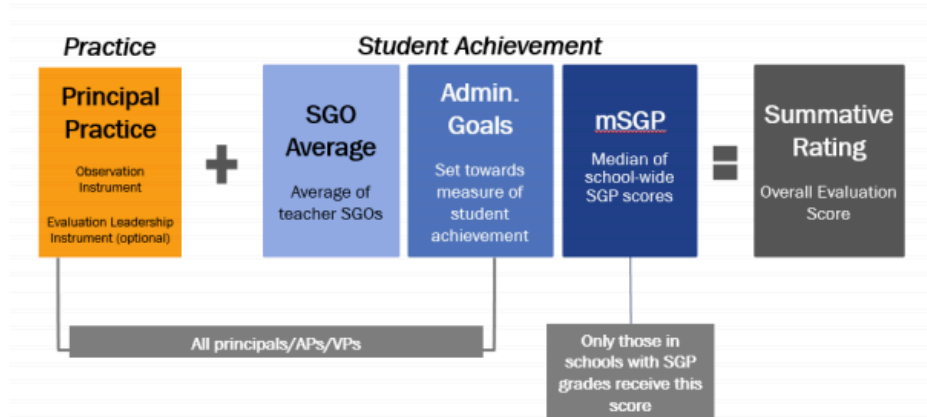
Weighting of Principal Evaluation Components
Student Achievement

- **Student Growth Objective (SGO) Average:** Part of a principal's summative rating is based on the average teacher SGO score in their school. SGOs are measurable academic goals that teachers set for their students based on growth and achievement.

- **Administrator Goals:** The percent of a principal's summative rating based on Administrator Goals varies depending on whether the principal is an mSGP Principal or a non-mSGP Principal. The principal sets these goals, such as increasing scores on Advanced Placement tests or improving graduation rate, with his or her superintendent.

- **Median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP):** Some principals have SGP data for their students. mSGPs are state-calculated scores that measure a principal's ability to help increase student achievement on the state standardized assessments.
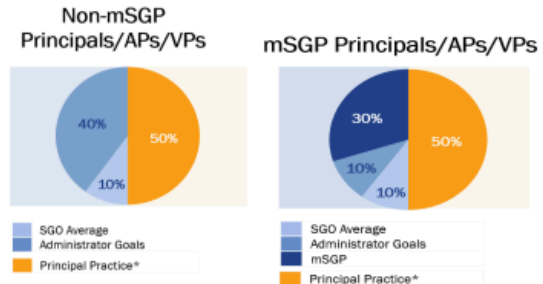
Description of Principal Evaluation Components

- **Observations of a principal's practice** are performed by his or her superintendent using a state-approved principal practice instrument selected by the district. Evidence for practice might be gathered by, for example, a school walk-through, observations of staff or parent meetings, or assemblies.
  - ➤ **Non-tenured principals** are required to have at least three observations a year.
  - ➤ **Tenured principals** are required to have at least two observations per year.
  - ➤ After the first year, principals who receive an Ineffective or Partially Effective rating are placed on a **Corrective Action Plan.** These principals must have one additional observation per year.

- **Evaluation Leadership:** An optional component of a principal's practice rating may be determined using the state Principal Evaluation Leadership Instrument. This instrument measures how well the principal implements the teacher evaluation system in his or her school and includes the following domains and components:

Domain 1: Building Knowledge and Collaboration	Domain 2: Executing the Evaluation System Successfully
Component 1a: Preparing teachers for success	**Component 2a:** Fulfilling requirements of the evaluation system
Component 1b: Building collaboration	**Component 2b:** Providing feedback, coaching, and planning for growth
	Component 2c: Ensuring reliable, valid observation results
	Component 2d: Ensuring high-quality SGOs

- **Average SGO ratings** are based on the average of all the teachers' SGO scores in the principal's building.

- **Administrator Goals** are student growth and achievement goals — such as student scores on Advanced Placement tests, college acceptance rates, graduation rates (in schools under 80%) — that the principal sets with his or her superintendent. The Administrator Goals document offers a template and example goals that districts may use.

Implementation Timeline

The following timeline depicts implementation deadlines

Districts complete evaluation rubric survey	ScIP formed	Districts notify all staff members about evaluation policies and procedures	CAP is implemented for staff rated less than effective in the 2015-16 school year	SGO adjustments made with approval from principal and CSA		All observations for teachers completed
By June 1	**By Aug. 31**	**By Oct. 1**	**By Oct. 31**	**By Feb. 15**	**By April 30**	**By end of school year**
			SGO(s) finalized by teachers with supervisor approval Annual PDP modifications are updated		Required observations completed for non-tenured teachers	Annual conference held to review available component/summative scores for teachers

Professional Development and Support

Throughout AchieveNJ, multiple structures support and develop educators.

Improved Evaluation: The most significant impact on PD comes directly from the evaluation system.

- **Educator feedback:** An increased number of conferences (goal-setting, pre-/post-observation) provide educators with more opportunities to engage in high-quality professional conversations. More objective and nuanced observation feedback allows educators to reflect on their professional practice with more depth and clarity.
- **Data and Information:** Student achievement scores based on student growth give teachers a more accurate idea of their impact and let them work with administrators to improve results. Ultimately, all information and

data that are gathered through the new system at both, the educator and student levels, will help teachers and leaders tailor professional development to better meet staff needs.

School Improvement Panel (ScIP): This panel ensures the effectiveness of the school's teachers by overseeing mentoring activities, conducting evaluations, identifying PD opportunities, and conducting a mid-year evaluation of any teacher rated Ineffective or Partially Effective in the most recent annual summative evaluation. See the ScIP web page for more information.

Mentoring: During their first year of teaching, all novice teachers must be paired with an experienced teacher to serve as a mentor. Mentors are expected to share feedback, model strong practice, and provide confidential support and guidance. During this first year of mentoring, novice teachers will receive an evaluation, but evaluation results will not be linked to tenure decisions. As much as possible, mentoring activities should be developed in consultation with the ScIP. Such activities should be responsive to the unique needs of different teachers in different instructional settings.

Ongoing Professional Development/Individual Professional Development Plans: Beyond the targeted feedback received through the new evaluation system, all teaching staff members* will receive ongoing professional development and an individual professional development plan to support student achievement. Like mentoring, professional development activities should, where possible, be developed in consultation with the ScIP to ensure that the results of evaluation inform instructional improvement.

Corrective Action Plan (CAP): Any teaching staff member who is rated Ineffective or Partially Effective on his or her evaluation will receive additional support through a CAP. The teaching staff member will work with his or her supervisor to create a plan of professional development that is designed to correct the needs identified in the evaluation. The CAP will include timelines for professional improvement and growth and clearly delineate responsibilities of the teaching staff member in implementing the plan.

Evaluation and Tenure

In addition to calling for new evaluations, the TEACHNJ Act also changed how tenure is awarded to all teaching staff members. Educators are eligible to earn tenure after four years — one year longer than it took under the previous law. In addition, for teachers, principals, APs and VPs, TEACHNJ links the earning and keeping of tenure to the results of the employee's annual summative evaluation. The charts below depict the four-year timelines.

Teacher Tenure Acquisition Timeline

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	
• Participate in district mentoring program • Receive evaluation, but summative rating does *not* count toward tenure acquisition	• Receive an Effective or Highly Effective rating on the annual summative rating in at least two of these three years • Employed in the district for four years			**Tenure Granted**

Principal/AP/VP Tenure Acquisition Timeline

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	
• Receive evaluation, but summative rating does *not* count toward tenure acquisition	• Receive an Effective or Highly Effective rating in both of these two years		• Employed in the district for four years	**Tenure Granted**

To maintain tenure, all teachers, principals, APs, and VPs (regardless of hire date) have to continue to earn a rating of Effective or Highly Effective. As required in the TEACHNJ Act, the chart below outlines the process to file a charge of inefficiency (tenure charge) against any tenured teaching staff member who is rated Ineffective or Partially Effective in two consecutive years:

Summative Rating A	Summative Rating B (Consecutive)	Action
Ineffective	Ineffective	The superintendent **shall file** a charge of inefficiency.
Partially Effective	Ineffective	
Ineffective	Partially Effective	The superintendent **may file** a charge of inefficiency or **may defer** by filing written evidence of exceptional circumstances. After the following
Partially Effective	Partially Effective	

*Teaching staff members include teachers, principals, VPs and APs, assistant superintendents, all school nurses, school athletic trainers, and other certificated employees who were hired (Board approved) by their district Board of Education after August 6, 2012.

summative evaluation (i.e., the third consecutive), the superintendent **shall file** a charge of inefficiency if the rating is Ineffective or Partially Effective.

Under the TEACHNJ Act, tenure revocation decisions are made through an expedited arbitration process. The Commissioner maintains a panel of arbitrators who are designated by the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, and the American Federation of Teachers.

For all New Jersey educators, individual evaluation records are exempt from open records laws, and personally identifiable data are not made available for public release.

For more information on the TEACHNJ Act, see the TEACHNJ Guide posted on our website.

Going Forward

The state Department of Education is committed to ongoing data collection, research, and analysis so that we continue to make the **AchieveNJ** evaluation and support system even better. The Department is exploring opportunities to honor Highly Effective educators in the following ways:

- Differentiated observation protocols;
- Expanded career pathways and leadership opportunities; and
- Future awards and recognition initiatives.

We continue to listen closely to educators and make necessary changes. This effort will evolve to ensure that New Jersey educators are among the best in the nation and that New Jersey's children get the world-class education they need to succeed.

Additional Resources and Contact Information

The **AchieveNJ** website www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ includes several resources about the evaluation system, including a comprehensive presentation; overviews for teachers and principals, and FAQ. The AchieveNJ Document Library lists and links to each major resource available.

We are continuing to add new resources and appreciate your feedback. Please contact the Office of Evaluation directly at 609-777-3788 or educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.

Appendix B

Research Protocol and Interview Questions

Hello. My name is James Altobello and I am a Rowan University doctoral candidate. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect the standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to lead. Your participation in this research will assist in the completion of my dissertation requirement.

The findings from this study offer potential insight into the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks and leadership capacity to the broader educational community. The results of this study could benefit school leadership preparation programs in New Jersey as the information gathered and experiences shared will provide insight into the training necessary for school leaders in accordance with AchieveNJ through evidenced-based descriptions from the field, an essential aspect to any future preparation program in our state.

Before we begin I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your willingness to participate in this study. Before we begin do you have any questions or concerns regarding this study. Are there any parts of the consent form that you would like me to review with you? Please remember that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and can be discontinued at anytime. With your permission I plan on audio recording our session today in order to more closely synthesize your responses moving forward. The recording will be used solely for the purpose of transcription and will be destroyed one year from the completion of this study. Finally, please remember that your anonymity is guaranteed, as no names will be used at any point in the reporting process.

Demographic Interview Questions:

Please state your name and your current position within the District.

2.   How many years have you worked in your current position within the District?

3.   How many certified staff members are currently under your supervision?

4.   Have you worked in a leadership position outside of your current role?

5.   If you have worked in a leadership position outside of your current role, how many years were you in that position?

6.   How many years have you worked as a teacher prior to your role as a school leader in any capacity?

7.   What is the highest degree you have obtained?

Research Linked Interview Questions:

1.   Please describe how the standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have influenced your role as a school leader?

2.   Please describe your feelings about standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ?

3.   Please describe in detail your school vision?

4.   Please describe in detail how standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have influenced your capacity to create your school vision?

5.   Please describe in detail your school culture?

6.   Please describe in detail how standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have influenced your capacity to create your school culture?

7.   Please describe in detail your school's professional development planning and delivery?

8.   Please describe in detail how standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have influenced your capacity to design and deliver professional development?

9.   Please describe in detail empowerment within your school?

10.   Please describe in detail how standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ have influenced your capacity to empower others in your organization?

Appendix C

Sample Consent Form

Researcher Affiliation:
James Altobello is a doctoral student at Rowan University, enrolled in the Ed.D P-12 Educational Leadership Program, 2014 Online Cohort.

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how school leaders in one New Jersey Public School District currently connect standards based, value added evaluative frameworks such as AchieveNJ with their capacity to lead.

Procedures:
The researcher will conduct 9 separate interviews with tenured building principals from one New Jersey School District. The face-to-face interviews will last approximately 45 minutes each. Participants will receive interview questions before scheduled appointments. In addition, on-site observations will take place as well as material culture document review of artifacts to include: website, social media, leadership surveys and vision statements.

Voluntary Nature of the Project:
Participation in this research project is voluntary throughout its entirety. Participant(s) may discontinue their participation in this project at anytime without penalty.

Anonymity:
Participant identity will not be revealed at anytime during this research project. No names will be used during transcription process. Participants will be identified solely as administrator 1, administrator 2 and so on.

Confidentiality:
All data collected by the researcher during this project will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Security of Data:
No data collected by the researcher during this project will be stored electronically. Data collected will be secured in a locked filing cabinet for one year and then be destroyed.

Risk:
There are no risks associated with this research project

Benefits:
The findings from this study offer potential insight into the connection between standards-based, value-added evaluative frameworks and leadership capacity to the broader educational community. The results of this study could benefit school leadership preparation programs in New Jersey as the information gathered and experiences shared will provide insight into the training necessary for school leaders in accordance with AchieveNJ through evidenced-based descriptions from the field, an essential aspect to any future preparation program in our state.

Contact Information:
James Altobello, 8 National Avenue, Brick NJ 08724. Email:
altobellj1@students.rowan.edu

Permission to Use Audio Recorder:
An audio recorder will be used to record the participant interviews. Participant names will not be used anywhere during the interview. The audio tapes and written transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in a secured space within the home office of the researcher. The data included in this dissertation will be destroyed in one year.

Acknowledgement of Informed Consent:

I have read this form in its entirety and I agree to participate in this research study. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this informed consent agreement.

Name:_____

Signature:_____

Date:_____