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Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing High-Poverty School

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SUPERINTENDENT PRACTICES AND INITIATIVES FOR BUILDING PRINCIPAL
INSTRUCTIONAL AND COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP CAPACITY IN A
HIGH-PERFORMING HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOL

by

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This study explores how superintendents build school principal leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. A particular focus for this study is the ways in which superintendents work with principals to build instructional and shared leadership capacity in order to turn low-performing schools that educate high-poverty student populations into schools that outperform their demographic peers. This study describes the activities and strategies that characterize the ways in which superintendents build a strong collaborative leadership team with their school principals, then use that collaborative team to develop individual principal's instructional leadership capacity.

The research design for this study is an instrumental case study. The study participants include a superintendent and principals to learn how the superintendent works with principals and other district leaders to shape and implement initiatives to develop strong instructional and collaborative leadership at the school level while modeling the same behaviors at the district level. Data was collected through interviews with the superintendent, interviews with two principals, and observation notes. Inductive analysis and qualitative open coding techniques were used to analyze the data for themes and subthemes. The four major themes that emerged from all data sources are communication, trust and autonomy, collaborative teamwork and a learning community,

and visibility and engagement. Through the superintendent's leadership, principals and school staff were empowered to raise achievement scores of a low socio-economic population of students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many children in the United States today are living in poverty, which negatively impacts their growth and academic achievement in school (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2015; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Zhao, Valcke, Desoete, & Verhaeghe, 2012). However, current studies show that some schools manage to break the link between poverty and low academic achievement (Barber, 2013; Kearney, Herrington, & Aguilar, 2012; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Suber, 2012). Even with higher levels of poverty in these schools, they were successful in overcoming the powerful effects of poverty and producing higher levels of student academic achievement than other schools with similar demographics. These findings from outperforming schools have influenced further studies to explore some ways to address this issue.

Among the many ways that schools override the potential negative impact of poverty on student performance, principal leadership capacity emerges from the findings of many studies as a consistent factor (Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, & Ylimaki, 2007). Leaders are the heart of their organizations, and their leadership behaviors, skills, and attitudes have the core impact on everything in their organizations, from strategy development to operations (Bolman & Deal, 2008). School principals play an important role in developing school performance over time and increasing academic achievement of students (Fullan, Hill, & Creʹvola, 2006; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2008; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006). However, the challenges in high-poverty schools are complex, and many studies of school development argue that school leaders cannot be solely responsible for educating all students (Noguera, 2003; Warren, 2005).

School improvement through strong empowerment of collaborative leadership teams that include district leaders, principals, and other stakeholders has emerged from recent studies as a

successful strategy for developing the leadership capacity needed to turn a low-preforming school into one that outperforms its demographic peers with improved student success (Botha, 2016; Bush & Glover, 2012; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Maxfield & Klocko, 2010; Suber, 2012). In particular, studies on superintendent leadership have identified building principal instructional leadership capacity as a factor associated with improving student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Williams, Tabernik, & Krivak, 2009). While some studies have examined how superintendents can develop and support principals' ability to function as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Thompson & France, 2015; Williams et al., 2009), further research is needed to explore how superintendents and principals work together to develop shared collaborative leadership across the school district and within each of the schools, particularly in schools that serve high-poverty student populations.

This study explored how superintendents build school principal leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. A particular focus for this study was the ways that superintendents work with their central office administrators and principals to build shared leadership capacity in order to turn low-performing schools, that educate high-poverty student populations, into schools that outperform their demographic peers. This study described the activities and strategies that characterize the ways that these superintendents and principals, in a district with poverty levels above average for their state, work together to build shared and collaborative instructional leadership.

The aim of this study was to gather accurate information about how superintendents contribute to improving school performance, i.e. "improving student success," by being directly involved with principals in building their instructional and shared, collaborative leadership

capacity. In turn, the empowered principals are able to involve their school staffs and other stakeholders who work to engage in academic achievement efforts. The results of the study described the current strategies, activities, and initiatives that principals believe have a positive impact on increasing their leadership capacity and the capacity of their school to improve student success. These strategies may help other district leaders and educators who face similar challenges of achieving better academic performance in schools that serve economically disadvantaged students. Also, the results of the study may help researchers, policymakers, and district leaders establish a fuller understanding of how district leadership can develop principal performance by promoting a culture of collaboration among and between principals to improve both the performance of specific schools in the district and the district as a whole.

Background

By 2006, data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics indicated that about 42% of children in United States schools were from families living in poverty. Additionally, 2013 data showed that 51% of U.S. school-age children were from low-income families (Percent of Low Income Students in U.S. Public Schools, 2015). This means that, increasingly, public schools in the U.S. are serving students with declining SES status. The income gap between poor and advantaged children is important to address because income correlates significantly with children's academic success (Reardon, 2013), which is strongly linked to low student academic achievement (Allington, McGill-Franzen, Camilli, Williams, Graff, & Zeig, 2010; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001). Schools in poor communities are often characterized by less efficient, incompetent, and inexperienced teachers, inadequate systems of support, and low parental education. Moreover, Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2010) found these schools are most likely to have teachers with less experience than teachers in wealthy schools.

All of these factors are also linked to low student achievement (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Milne & Plourde, 2006).

Other studies, such as those conducted by Evans (2004) and Evans and Rosenbaum (2008), focused on limited family resources and academic achievement. They found that family income correlates significantly with children's academic success because lower-income students have fewer opportunities for cognitive improvement. Others have also found that children in poor households have fewer books, visit the library less often, and have fewer supports with doing homework at home due to limited parental education (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Evans, 2004; Milne & Plourde, 2006), which emphasizes the significant challenges for schools that serve high poverty populations of students.

The U.S. Department of Education (2012) has increasingly held states accountable for identifying schools with persistently low overall achievement and persistently high achievement gaps based on SES, race and ethnicity, gender, and special needs. For example, the U.S. Department of Education is responsible for establishing processes that support revisions enacted since the initial passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1968. Such updates include the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, Race to the Top (RTT) Act of 2009 (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009), and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. With each subsequent update, the U.S. Congress has re-emphasized and adjusted both the expectations and provisions for states to address schools that persistently lag behind in achieving the national education agenda of academic proficiency for all students regardless of student characteristics and circumstances. While each revision somewhat altered the consequences for schools that failed to make adequate progress toward the national achievement goals, the expectation for all schools (regardless of student demographics) to

educate all students well has remained constant. However, progress in achieving that goal has lagged behind the timelines originally established under No Child Left Behind.

At the same time that poverty levels in U.S. public schools are increasing, state reports on federal accountability measures show that schools that serve the highest proportion of students living in poverty represent the majority of schools on the persistently lowest performing schools lists generated each year under both NCLB and ESSA. These schools are labeled "Priority Schools" in Michigan and are threatened with either reorganization or closure if a series of interventions do not help them raise student achievement sufficiently to come off the list of lowest performing schools within three years. For instance, on January 20, 2017, the Michigan School Reform Office (SRO) issued the 2016 list of 38 Michigan "Priority Schools" at risk of closure, the majority of which are schools that serve high poverty urban and some rural communities (Kennedy, 2017; Michigan School Reform Office, 2017).

While high poverty schools across the U.S. still comprise the majority of schools labeled as persistently low-performing (i.e., Priority Schools), current studies have shown that some schools serving students at or below the poverty level have succeeded in overcoming the negative impact of poverty on student learning and have successfully educated their students (Ambrose, 2008; Barber, 2013; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Suber, 2012). These studies showed that some schools that serve high-poverty students can lead their low-income students to high academic achievement by providing supports that enable them to achieve at high levels and even match the performance levels of their more wealthy peers. For instance, Ali and Jerald (2001) found several high-poverty schools in California with similar community and school characteristics as the state's lowest performing schools, but these schools yielded high student

achievement. Even with higher levels of poverty in these schools, they were successful in overcoming the powerful effects of poverty and producing higher levels of student performance.

Such studies are influencing further research that attempts to isolate the factors associated with schools that outperform their low SES peers. For example, Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, and Sobel (2002) investigated how seven high-poverty middle schools exhibited strong academic achievement, performing at levels consistent with, and sometimes better than, higher-income schools in the same states. Of the four themes that emerged from this study, the function of leadership in promoting collaborative learning environments in these schools was important regardless of the high level of poverty. Moreover, Cunningham (2006) conducted a study in six schools with high levels of poverty. These six schools were located in five different states in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast United States. The proportion of students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch ranged from 68% to 98%. All six schools scored better on their literacy tests than other schools in the districts that had lower levels of poverty. The researcher endeavored to answer this question: What were these schools doing that supported their ability to beat the odds? The researchers identified 12 factors that appear to be important for high literacy achievement, and one of these factors was the significant role of leadership toward student achievement. All six of these schools had strong leadership from principals who expected much from their teachers and students, and they gave them daily support and encouragement.

Although the studies of high-poverty and high-performing schools identified effective leadership as essential to school success, they also defined what effective leadership looks like in generalized ways—one of which is building shared or collaborative leadership within the school (Cunningham, 2006; Kearney, Herrington, & Aguilar, 2012; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Picucci et al., 2002; Suber, 2012). Studies of superintendent leadership have also identified building

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leadership capacity as a factor associated with improving student achievement (Cudeiro, 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2007; Williams et al., 2009). While some recent studies have examined how superintendents develop and support principals' ability to function as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Thompson & France, 2015; Williams et al., 2009), to date no studies have focused specifically on how superintendents and principals work together to develop shared collaborative leadership across the school district and within each of the schools. This is a deficiency in the research because one of the consistent findings from both principal and superintendent leadership studies suggests the importance of building a culture of shared and collaborative leadership inclusive of administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students (Brazer, Rich, & Ross, 2010; Hallinger, 2010; Maxfield & Klocko, 2010; Olivier & Huffman, 2016), yet no studies could be found exploring this issue. Therefore, this study was designed to address the gaps in research through an in-depth qualitative study to collect data through observations and the direct interviewing of superintendents and principals to explore the ways in which the superintendents work with their central office administrators and principals to build instructional and shared leadership capacity in order to turn low-performing schools that educate high-poverty student populations into schools that outperform their demographic peers.

Problem Statement

There is no doubt that poor communities or low socioeconomic status (SES) have an adverse impact on student achievement (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2015; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Malecki & Demaray, 2006; Tobin, 2016). Some schools that have a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students struggle to educate their students and, thus, become or remain underperforming schools (De Witte & Van Klaveren, 2014). As poverty levels have increased in the U.S., so has the percentage of schools that serve high-poverty student

populations (Percent of Low Income Students in U.S. Public Schools, 2015). This trend has made it increasingly difficult for the U.S. to achieve its national education goals, even though the U.S. Congress and Department of Education have provided funding to eliminate persistently high achievement gaps based on SES, race and ethnicity, gender, and special needs.

In addition to financial resources targeted at high-poverty schools, the U.S. Department of Education also works with states to enact provisions to sanction schools that persistently demonstrate low overall achievement and significant achievement gaps for many years. Under these provisions, such schools could be threatened with closure, which on the surface seems like a reasonable response (De Witte & Van Klaveren, 2014; Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011). Yet studies of the impact of school closure have revealed some harmful and disparate impact on minority students' education and have shown that these students may face difficulties in adjusting and settling into new school environments (Zubrzycki, 2012). Kearns, Lewis, McCreanor, and Witten (2009) and Kirshner and Pozzoboni (2011) argued that school closure has a serious social influence on families, teachers, and the local communities, as well in terms of disrupting neighborhoods' structures and creating a social disturbance that may negatively influence student academic outcomes.

Importantly, while high-poverty schools across the U.S. still comprise the majority of schools labeled as persistently low-performing, current studies show that there are schools that manage to break the link between poverty and low student academic achievement. These schools enable their students to achieve at high levels and even match the achievement levels of their more wealthy peers (Ambrose, 2008; Barber, 2013; Cunningham, 2006; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Reeves, 2003; Suber, 2012). Such studies offer an alternative view of how to address persistent low achievement related to poverty. Rather than close the schools, these studies provide both

hope and some important clues for how high-poverty, low-performing schools can become high-performing, turn-around schools.

Deficiency Statement

Studies of high-poverty high-performing schools have identified effective leadership as essential to school success; they have also defined what effective leadership looks like in generalized ways. Building shared or collaborative leadership among and between school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and community members is one of those generalized characteristics exhibited in the turn-around school process (Cunningham, 2006; Kearney, Herrington, & Aguilar, 2012; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Picucci et al., 2002; Suber, 2012). Such studies suggest that this is complex and challenging work for principals to achieve alone. Studies of superintendent leadership have also identified the building of leadership capacity as a factor associated with improving student achievement (Cudeiro, 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2007; Williams et al., 2009), but these studies do not specifically focus on how the superintendent helps the principal do the same at a school level. While some recent studies examine how superintendents develop and support principals' ability to function as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Thompson & France, 2015; Williams et al., 2009), to date, these studies do not address the strategies and actions that superintendents carry out to build a strong collaborative leadership team with their school principals and, then, use that collaborative team to develop individual principal capacity. In other words, these studies do not specifically examine a district process for developing principal leadership capacity by forming a collaborative learning community between the superintendent, principals, and other central office leaders.

Findings from recent research suggest that superintendents' actions and support for change initiatives influence building principals' capability to lead and support change. Moreover,

these efforts, directly and indirectly, impact principal leadership practices and principals' sense of efficiency (Barnes, Camburn, Sanders, & Sebastian, 2010; Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2015). Despite these general findings that suggest a strong link between the superintendents' leadership and the leadership capacity of principals (Thompson & France, 2015), the literature review did not reveal studies that explore the connection between principal and superintendent leadership as it pertains to the development of instructional and shared, collaborative leadership capacity in schools that serve high-poverty student populations.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

On January 20, 2017, the Michigan School Reform Office (SRO) issued the 2016 list of 38 Michigan "Priority Schools" of which the majority are schools that serve high-poverty urban and some rural communities. Those may be forced to close because of a history of persistently poor academic performance (Kennedy, 2017). However, at the same time, the Michigan SRO also released 79 schools from the Priority School list after meeting exit criteria and showing a significant and rapid turnaround in student outcomes (Michigan School Reform Office, 2017). Each year, some schools will work their way off the Priority Schools list by showing and sustaining significant gains in student achievement, while others will end up on the list because their student achievement trend is either declining or not improving sufficiently to avoid being categorized as one of the 5% lowest performing schools in the State. For this study, I was interested in districts where one or more of the schools that serve high-poverty (at or above the state average, which is about 50%) student populations are either outperforming a group of demographic peers or have improved enough to be released from the Priority Schools list. I was also interested in a district where the superintendent is directly involved in leading and participating in one or more initiatives to develop principal leadership capacity, with a focus on

instructional and shared, collaborative leadership. Thus, I was seeking to identify an instrumental case.

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to explore how the superintendent of a district with one or more improving or out-performing high-poverty schools works to build principals' leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. It is important to explore how superintendents and principals engage with each other around these two forms of leadership capacity development because the studies of high-poverty and out-performing schools commonly have found that principals exercise strong instructional and shared, collaborative leadership (Kearney, Herrington, & Aguilar, 2012; Suber, 2012). This study described the activities and strategies that characterize the ways in which superintendents and principals of high-poverty schools work together to strengthen instructional leadership and build shared and collaborative leadership.

The study aimed to address the following overarching research question: How do the superintendent and other district leaders work with the principals, in general, and the principals of high-poverty schools, specifically, to increase instructional leadership and shared, collaborative leadership capacity? The study also was guided by the following sub-questions:

1. What specific strategies is the district using to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?

2. What specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop shared, collaborative leadership between all district leaders as well as between district leaders and teachers, students, and parents?

3. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and school principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?

4. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high-poverty schools?

Conceptual Framework and Narrative

As seen in the first row of the Conceptual Framework (Figure 1), through multiple revisions to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1968 and other associated Acts, including the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, Race to the Top (RTT) Act of 2009 (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009), and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, the U.S. Department of Education has mandated increasingly high standards of accountability for students success. The red boxes immediately below show the three ways in which the U.S. Department of Education rates the effectiveness of student performance at the district, school, and educator levels, including principals and teachers. All are based on student academic achievement on standardized tests (Rhodes, 2005).

To increase student success, in particular low-income students, the green rows show how districts, through superintendents and/or central office teams, collaborate with principals and stakeholders at the district level to play an important role in building district strategic plans and school improvement initiatives. Through the district central office, school leaders organize and coordinate efforts to develop strategic plans and initiatives, which include plans for professional development, allocations of resources and supports, systems of rewards and recognitions, and strategies to develop leadership capacity. According to Hallinger and Heck (2010), collaborative leadership should focus on developing district team strategic plans and initiatives that are aimed at school improvement and shared among the administrators, principals, teachers, parents, and

other key stakeholders. Collaborative leadership involves the use of governance structures and organizational processes that empower a school capacity including staff, parents, and students, and encourages broad participation in team decision-making and problem solving to foster shared accountability for student learning.

The row at the bottom of the conceptual framework depicts that district collaborative leadership teams and district leaders can create an environment of team problem solving and decision-making that helps develop individual principals' leadership capacity for supporting instructional and collaborative leadership with staff and stakeholders at their schools, including teachers, parents, and students. This school-level collaboration ultimately leads to increased student success. Indeed, Maxfield and Klocko (2010) found that by empowering all school members and stakeholders to become active participants and decision-makers, school organizations will develop competent leaders to build a more trusting working environment that can identify potential solutions for student learning issues. Similarly, Hallinger and Heck (2010) found the idea of school collaborative leadership teams was a positive way to foster school improvement and increase student success. They concluded that collaborative leadership was positively related to improving student achievement by empowering school members to work in school teams, which helps build principal's own leadership capacity for supporting student learning needs.

Instructional leadership also has been found to be a strong influence on student achievement. Instructional leadership focuses on consistent practices of effective teaching, establishing high expectations for student success, supervising teacher strategies and curriculum, and monitoring student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Figure 1 also illustrates the application of both instructional leadership and collaborative

leadership to the development of principal leadership capacity through both district leadership

team problem solving and decision making with the expectation for raising student achievement;

i.e. student success.

Improving Student Achievement in High Poverty-Schools
Through Principal's Instructional and Collaborative Leadership
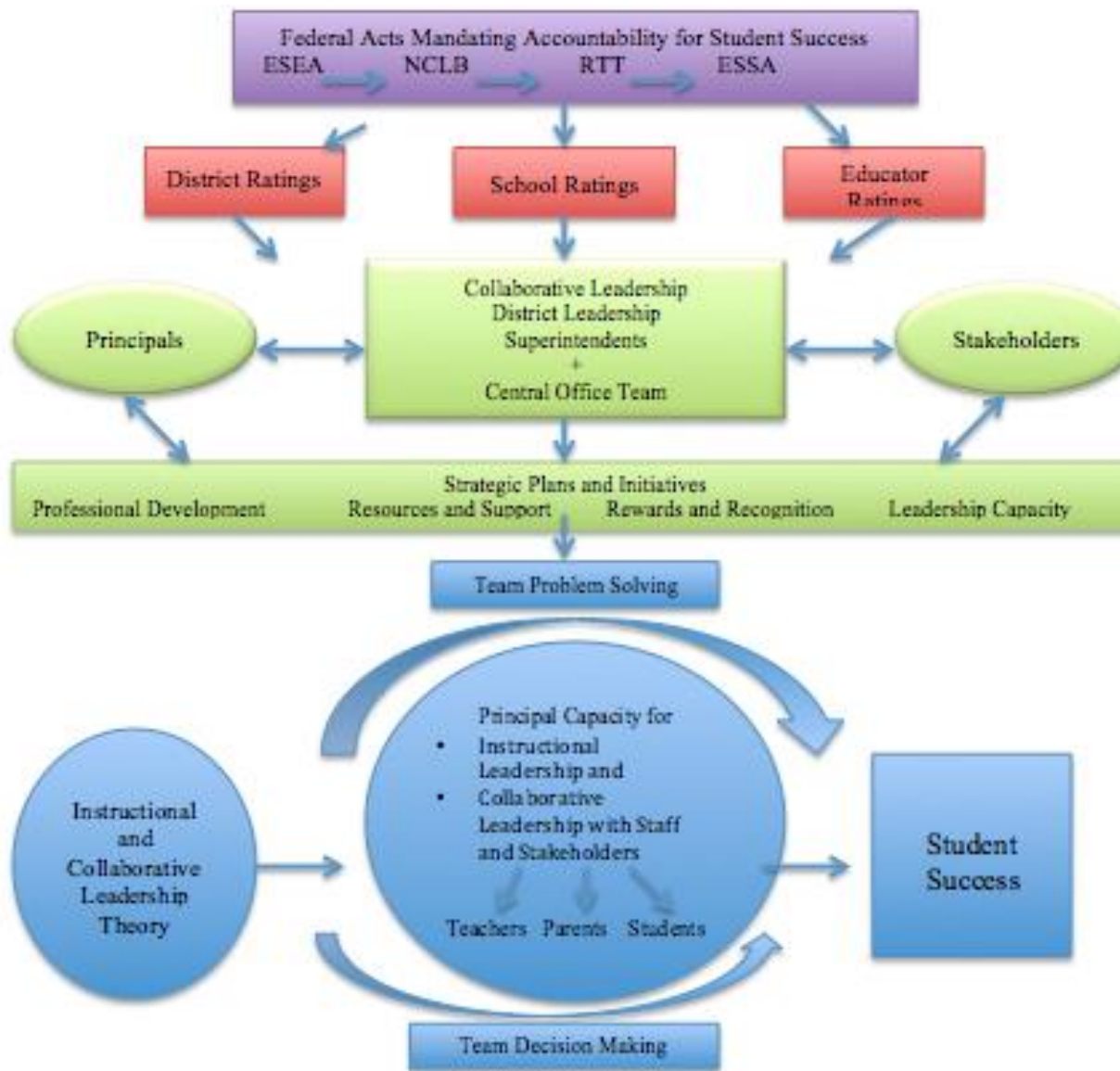
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Significance of Study

This study sought to understand how superintendents work with school principals to build shared and collaborative instructional leadership capacity at the school level. By developing a detailed description of how superintendents work with principals in one district with schools that outperform their high poverty demographic peers, this study produced examples of practices and behaviors that other similarly situated schools and district leaders can employ to increase both instructional and shared, collaborative leadership in order to maximize growth in student achievement. Also, these practices and behaviors may help other educators and district leaders who face similar challenges lead their schools and districts to high academic results while also serving high poverty student populations.

This study gathered specific information about how superintendents improve low school performance through building strong instructional school leaders and collaborative leadership capacity, both among principals and among teachers and other stakeholders. The findings from this study may add to the specificity of leadership development practices that the superintendent can use to support the growth of school principals and maximize productivity in schools that serve economically disadvantaged student populations. By focusing on the specific strategies and activities that superintendents use to build a culture of shared and collaborative leadership among district and school level leaders, this study added depth and dimension to a growing conversation in the school leadership literature regarding the influence of district leaders on the leadership capacity at a school level.

The results of this study could possibly assist researchers, policymakers, and district leaders by describing specific strategies and initiatives employed by superintendents to build shared leadership capacity and exploring how principals respond to those strategies and

initiatives. They may help school districts to have a clear insight to provide principals and other teachers with targeted professional development to support particular leadership behaviors regarding increasing their collaborative and instructional skills. By studying an instrumental case, where the superintendent is specifically focused on developing shared leadership capacity and the district is achieving some success with improved student success in high-poverty schools, this study may provide the superintendent further insight into the important relationship between central office leadership and building strong leadership in schools that serve high-poverty populations.

Finally, the results of the study may help researchers, policymakers, and district leaders more specifically operationalize the behaviors of superintendents that influence leadership capacity among principals and within the school culture. This study may assist superintendents to evaluate their abilities to what extent that they can support principal leadership capacity for turning schools from low-performing to high-performing schools. Also, this study will be useful for the K-12 Ministry of Education and the school heads in Saudi Arabia to develop the supervisor leadership capacity to work closely with school principals to improve their capacities for instructional and collaborative leadership.

Methods Overview

This study was conducted utilizing the instrumental case study approach. This approach involved collecting multiple forms of data to provide a clear picture of superintendents' approaches in using and implementing specific strategic plans and other school improvement initiatives to develop principal leadership capacity, with a focus on building a culture of shared collaborative leadership (Creswell, 2013). Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) describe the instrumental case study approach as one that investigates and analyzes what is occurring in specific cases to

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improve a wider understanding of issues that transcend cases. For this study, these issues are the ways in which the superintendents work to build principals' leadership capacity and develop shared leadership capacity in schools that have made sufficient improvements in student achievement to be removed from the state's persistently lowest performing schools list, called the Priority Schools list.

Chapter I Closure

This first chapter outlines the introduction, background, problem, and significance of this study. The purpose of the study is described, and research questions are presented, in exploring how superintendents work with building principals to build leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. The conceptual framework that supported this study also is described.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review analyzes the literature relevant to superintendents' work to develop

principals' instructional and collaborative leadership capacity in out-performing schools serving

high-poverty populations. The chapter begins with a look at how poverty contributes to student

achievement decline in schools. Next, the chapter provides an overview of the multiple U.S.

Congressional acts that have directed the U.S. Department of Education to focus on improving

academic success for all students, with a particular emphasis on reducing and eliminating the

achievement gaps of students attending high-poverty schools. This section includes a snapshot of

the Michigan School Reform Office (SRO), the state office that monitors school performance

and provides assistance to priority schools with a history of low performance based on federal

law. Lastly, the literature review turns to the characteristics of principals who lead schools that

show academic improvement as well as the characteristics of district leaders who work with

school principals to develop their instructional and collaborative leadership capacity. Included in

this discussion is the literature concerning the initiatives district leaders focus on developing

instructional and collaborative leadership capacity.

The Link between Poverty and Student Achievement

Low-income students now comprise the majority of students attending public schools in

the United States. In 2006, data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics

indicated that about 42% of children in U.S. schools were from families living in poverty. Seven

years later, in 2013, 51% of U.S. school-age children were from low-income families (Percent of

Low Income Students in U.S. Public Schools, 2015). Most recently, the Anne E. Casey

Foundation (2016) reported that, in 2015, about 15 million children in the United States lived in

poverty communities. This means that increasingly, public schools in the United States are serving students with low socioeconomic status.

Poverty and Academic Achievement

Researchers continue to link low SES to low academic achievement (Allington, McGill-Franzen, Camilli, Williams, Graff, & Zeig, 2010; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001; Reardon, 2013), reading achievement in particular. For instance, Allington et al. (2010) reported that more than 77% of economically advantaged students in 4th grade achieved a necessary level of reading proficiency, while only 46% of disadvantaged students met the same modest level.

Aikens and Barbarin (2008) examined the relationship between SES and children's reading growth. The sample consisted of 21,260 children from 1,277 kindergarten classrooms in public, Catholic, and non-Catholic private schools. Using hierarchical linear modeling techniques, Aikens and Barbarin (2008) found the rate of reading growth differed across SES for children from kindergarten to 3rd grade. In fact, children above the mean SES had reading scores that were about 2.24 points higher than children at the average SES, and about 4.48 points higher than children below the mean SES. This suggests the level of children's SES and education outcomes are strongly correlated, with high SES children gaining reading skills at a faster rate than low SES children.

The correlation between SES and academic performance has been shown to widen over time in the United States (Reardon, 2013). According to Reardon (2013), "If we do not find ways to reduce the growing inequality in educational outcomes between the rich and the poor, schools will no longer be the great equalizer we want them to be" (p. 10). This statement is from the conclusion of his study examining income levels in the United States and their effect on the reading achievement gap between low and high-income students over the last five decades. He

utilized research from 12 nationally representative studies that collected data on family income and student performance on a standardized reading test. After Reardon (2013) examined the link between student reading performance and their household income over the past 50 years, he found that for students born in the 1950s and1960s, the reading achievement gap between low and high-income students was about 0.9 of a standard deviation. This gap increased about 1.25 of a standard deviations for children born in the mid-1970s to 20 to 25 years later, and has continued to widened over last few decades in the United States.

Other researchers have found a strong relationship between low SES and reduced math achievement. Shin, Davison, Long, Chan, and Heistad (2013), for example, collected four-wave longitudinal mathematics data from 4th to 7th grades to examine the relationship between students who receive additional services (i.e., special education, a student with English-as-second-language, free and reduced lunch program) and their mathematics achievement. The sample included 2,517 students in a large urban school district in the mid-western United States who participated in district wide testing in 4th grade at the first time of measurement, and were followed for 4 years. In their growth curve modeling, they found that rates of growth in math achievement declined over time, and that math achievement gaps did not close in special education and low-income students. Students with English as a second language had higher mathematics achievement levels, whereas students who received special education and free and reduced lunch consistently performed at lower academic achievement levels. This confirms that students from low-income families are more likely to have low math achievement levels over time.

Research has also linked low rates of academic progress to poverty (Allington et al., 2010; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001; Reardon, 2013). In their study, Okpala et al. (2001) found

that children from higher income families performed better on standardized academic tests than children from low-income families. The low SES children acquired vocabulary skills more slowly and showed delayed speech awareness compared to their wealthier peers.

Many researchers have sought to uncover why SES level affects student achievement. They have found several factors of low SES that contribute to academic failure, including limited family resources, lack of attention to students' health, and less-than-adequate school environments (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Constantino, 2005; Milne & Plourde, 2006). According to Vail (2004), "children from high poverty environments enter school less ready to learn, and they lag behind their more affluent classmates in their ability to use language to solve problems" (p.12). The following sub-sections examine the home, school, and health related factors that are influenced by poverty.

Poverty and Support for Learning at Home

Home factors can contribute to the learning achievement of students (Jeon, Buettner, & Hur, 2014). Many studies have found poverty affects on children academic failure through home factors including limited family resources, limited parental involvement in child education, and limited mother educational background (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Constantino, 2005; Milne & Plourde, 2006).

Family resources. Parent socioeconomic status has been linked to the ability to provide children with learning opportunities away from the classroom, including access to books in the home and involvement in educational activities (Allington et al., 2010). Unfortunately, families from low-SES communities are less likely to have the financial support or available time to provide their children with academically related opportunities (e.g., access to books and other in-

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home learning materials) or to be involved in their children's learning experiences at school (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008).

Development of cognitive ability and reading competence is linked with both the number and type of books owned and/or available in the home (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Low-income students overall receive less cognitive simulation than middle or upper-income students. A study by Constantino (2005), and another by Milne and Plourde (2006), support existing findings showing that low SES families have fewer books at home to support the cognitive abilities and academic achievements of their children than high SES families. Constantino (2005) examined the access of books in home among six communities of different income levels in Los Angeles and its relationship to reading assessment results. Participants included 16 students ranging in age from 7 to 12 from elementary public schools in the greater Los Angeles area. Constantino (2005) surveyed each community and found statistically significant differences between high and low SES families regarding both the number and type of books in the home. Notably, the high-SES students had access to many books and enjoyed the benefits of reading good books, while poor students had few good books and were less likely to read for pleasure. This suggests that limited financial support prevents poor students from obtaining good and sufficient books to help them develop their academic reading skills or the desire to read for pleasure.

Milne and Plourde (2006) examined the factors of low SES that influence students' academic achievement in a 2nd-grade classroom. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and multiple documents. The results showed a relationship between three common characteristics: (a) educational support (in the home) (b) the mother's education, (c) and child's success. The first two factors were negatively related to the third for low SES students. In reference to the first of their findings regarding educational support in the home, the researchers

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found that low SES homes had far fewer educational materials than the homes of middle or high SES families. Additionally, while parents all discussed that having, at the very least, books and writing materials available, some low SES mothers noted that they do not have money to buy enough educational materials to be available to their children.

While Constantino (2005) and Milne and Plourde (2006) explored how access to books in the home was important for student achievement, Crosnoe, Leventhal, Wirth, Pierce, and Pianta (2010) explored exposure to books in the home since early child care. They conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationships between family SES and children learning to read, mediated by consistent educational stimulation. Their sample included 1,364 American children from birth to age 6 who had been exposed to learning stimulation at home, in preschool childcare, and 1st-grade classrooms in 10 locations in the United States. They found that high SES children had consistently more exposure to educational environmental stimuli at home, and that early childcare promoted their reading achievement. In general, childcare is seen to facilitate cognitive improvement. This further supports findings that stimulating children with books or educational materials in the home is positively associated with higher academic achievement.

In another study, Jeon, Buettner, and Hur (2014) investigated the link between parent socioeconomic risk, neighborhood disadvantage, and children's school readiness through cognitive stimulation at home. Their quantitative study included a sample of 420 children from 48 early childcare programs, with 38% of children identified as Black, non-Hispanic, Hispanic, or other minority race. One-third of parents (32.4%) had annual incomes less than $30,000, and almost 60% of these parents had at least a high school diploma. Jeon et al. (2014) found that the level of household income was indirectly associated with children's school readiness. Families with lower SES had less cognitive stimulation at home, including books and learning materials,

which, in turn, were related to lower level of children's school readiness and cognitive achievement ($\beta = 1.04$, p < .05). This suggests home learning environments are associated with family socioeconomic disadvantage and children's cognitive skills; however, if enough books were available to low SES students, these students would have higher academic achievement.

Other researchers have investigated how to mitigate the effects of low SES on students' academic achievement. Allington, McGill-Franzen, Camilli, Williams, Graff, and Zeig (2010) found that low-income students might have higher educational results when learning materials are available to them over the summer. The participants of their study were students from 17 high-poverty elementary schools in two large districts in Florida. They identified students based on eligibility for free/reduced lunch. The 1,082 children in the treatment group were randomly selected to receive the summer books, and 631 children in control group did not receive books. In the fall, Allington et al. (2010) compared the reading scores of the treatment group to those of the control group and found that the group of students who received books during summer had higher reading scores than the control group. This suggests that increasing book access to low-income students in their homes could improve their academic success. Providing at-risk children with more books, however, is not enough to develop their academic skill (Constantino, 2005; Crosnoe et al., 2010; Jeon et al., 2014). Rather, it is essential for parents to interact with their children during educational activities in order to encourage higher academic achievement (Bracken & Fischel, 2008).

Family involvement. While involving parents in educating their children is not enough to predict academic achievement, it is important to understand the relationship between parental-child reading interaction and the education skills gained. Bracken and Fischel (2008) examined the low-income family reading behaviors of 233 preschool children who were attending Head

Start in southeastern New York. By conducting a survey, they found that there was a correlation between low-income parents and their interaction with their children while reading ($r = .46$). The more parents interacted with educating their children, the more the children became interested and motivated to learn how to read. However, they found that for low-income parents the interaction with their children while reading was a small predictor of the child's development in the story, print concepts, and general emergent literacy skills ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$). This study asserts that low-income parents tend to spend less time reading books to their children or being involved in the early practice of reading skills. This inadequate interaction may contribute to lower motivation and interest of their children to learn.

In addition to the correlation between academic achievement and low SES families' access to educational materials, families from low SES communities are also less likely to be involved in their children's learning. Although parental involvement has been associated with higher increases in academic achievement, several researchers have found that low-income families have limited time to be involved in supporting their children with academic skills and homework (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001). Limited time leads to a lack of parental involvement in their children's education, which has been found to be a significant factor contributing to academic achievement gaps of underperforming students.

For example, Okpala et al. (2001) looked at income levels of parents and their available time for supporting student educational activities. They examined, in particular, the impact of parental involvement and socioeconomic status on mathematics achievement scores of 4th-grade students in a low-income county in North Carolina. They surveyed 4,256 students across 42 elementary schools and found that low-income families are less likely to be involved in helping their children with their homework, which was negatively associated with student academic

performance in mathematics. The study findings suggest that the limited involvement of low SES parents in their children's education is strongly linked with lower academic achievement.

Okpala et al. (2001) identified a lack of parental involvement as a contributing factor related to low children achievement. Bracken and Fischel (2008) added new information regarding how increased interest and motivation for learning can be dependent on parental behaviors and involvement in supporting their children's education. Moreover, some studies have sought to discover the reasons that low SES parents have limited involvement in supporting their children's academic skills (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Milne & Plourde, 2006).

SES and mother's education. Several studies have found that parental academic achievement can be associated with inadequate involvement in educating their children. Milne and Plourde (2006), for example, conducted a qualitative study that explored the factors of low SES families that influence student academic achievement by examining a 2nd-grade classroom in a central Washington school. They purposively selected six 2nd-grade students and their parents who were identified as living in low-SES homes and qualifying for free or reduced lunch. They collected interviews, observations, and multiple documents and found that three themes emerged: (a) educational support (b) the mother's education, (c) and the child's success. Milne and Plourde (2006) found that most low SES mothers had at least completed the 10th grade, but had dropped out after 10th grade. These mothers who did not complete high school believed that they did not have enough educational background to support their children when doing homework. The study suggests that limited parental education and the household poverty level can be obstacles to parent engagement in the education of their children.

Similarly, Dearing et al. (2006) examined the relationship between family involvement and low-income children's literacy performance from kindergarten to 5th grade. The study was drawn from a sample of low-income children and their families ($N = 281$) at three sites, including a northeastern city with a primarily African American population, a rural New England town with an almost entirely European American population, and a western city with a primarily Latino population. Through their quantitative study, the researchers found that the relationship between the average level of family involvement and average children literacy performance was significantly different between children with less educated mothers and children with more educated mothers from kindergarten to 5th grade. Children whose mothers had below-average levels of education had lower levels of family involvement, which was associated with lower improvement in their literacy performance. This phenomenon was common among low-income families who experienced many barriers to involvement in their children's early literacy because of their own limited educational background. This emphasizes that lower-income families exhibit relatively low levels of involvement, which can, in turn, negatively impact educational outcomes for their children.

Although the two studies discussed above were conducted in different cities in the United States, Washington (Milne & Plourde, 2006), and three sites across the United States (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006), the findings support a consensus that parental education level and income strongly relates to the quality of support parents provide to the education of their children.

Poverty and the School Environment

In addition to factors such as access to educational materials, parental involvement, and parent education level having a negative effect on the academic achievement of low-SES

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students, school environment can also contribute to lagging academic achievement of low SES students (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). The schools in low economic communities are often characterized as older school buildings with less quality of educational resources and less competent and experienced teachers (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010).

School buildings. The quality of a school building is strongly related to student achievement (Uline &Tschannen-Moran, 2008). Unfortunately, school buildings that serve high poverty neighborhoods are likely to be older with less space per student in the classroom areas than schools serving wealthy communities (Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010). Kozol (1991, 2005) studied opportunities provided to wealthy children compared to poor children in school buildings and published two books from their findings. Kozol (1991, 2005) described his visits to schools in both affluent and poor districts. Through interviews with administrators, teachers, and students, he found that schools in poor districts suffered from crowded classrooms and buildings that are in disrepair. The study asserted that the quality of school buildings in these poor communities is insufficient to the point that these schools are not properly prepared to facilitate student learning.

Similarly, Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) examined facilitating educational resources in school buildings for increasing student achievement. Specifically, Jimenez-Castellanos (2010) examined the relationship between educational resources and student achievement in 43 elementary schools in one large urban and suburban district with significant numbers of low-income students (65%) in Southern California. They used a mixed methods approach and found inequitable resources allocated between schools within a school district, which led to different student outcomes. Notably, resources were distributed differently based on demographics, and this inequity was negatively related to student achievement. Schools with more low-income

students have a higher percentage of teachers with less experience, while White students have a higher percentage of fully credentialed and more experienced teachers. Also, schools with more low-income students have older buildings with smaller classrooms and less space per student in restrooms and other rooms in schools.

In another study, Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) investigated the connection between the quality of school building and student performance through the influence of school climate, including academic learning, teacher professionalism, and community engagement. They surveyed 80 teachers across 80 Virginia middle schools and gathered data on student SES and achievement. Using bivariate correlational analysis and multiple regression, the researchers found a connection between the quality of school building and student achievement in English and mathematics ($r = 0.25$; $p = 0:05$). They also found school climate is a mediating variable in the relationship between school building quality and student achievement. In other words, when learning takes place in inadequate buildings, such as in poor communities, students tend to not focus on academic learning. Also, when school buildings are crude and inadequate, they are less likely to attract community engagement in school activities that would support teaching and learning. Teacher attitudes and behaviors were associated with the quality of the school buildings as well, with teachers less likely to show enthusiasm in teaching and to support student learning when they teach in poor quality school buildings. Research conducted by Uline, Tschannen-Moran, and DeVere Wolsey (2009) support the previous results, finding that school climate is a mediating variable in the effects of the quality of school facilities on student achievement.

Durán-Narucki (2008) investigated not only the quality of school building as an important factor for student achievement, but also the impact of school building condition on student achievement through school attendance. Durán-Narucki (2008) surveyed a sample of 95

elementary schools in New York City to rate building features that were visible to students. He found that school attendance mediated the relationship between school building condition and academic achievement. That is, the poor condition of school buildings negatively affected student attendance, and lower attendance was correlated with poorer performance on mathematics and English language arts standardized tests.

While Durán-Narucki (2008) and Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) looked at the condition of the school building as important for student achievement, Haverinen-Shaughnessy, Moschandreas, and Shaughnessy (2011) examined classroom indoor environmental quality, specifically the relationship between classroom ventilation rates and student academic achievement. Their quantitative study included 100 elementary schools from two school districts in the southwest United States. During school days, the ventilation rates were estimated using concentrations measured, and student standardized test scores in the classrooms studied were obtained from the two districts. They found that there is a relationship between classroom ventilation rates and students' academic achievement within the range of 0.9 to 7.1 per child. For every unit (per child) increase in the ventilation rate within the range, the proportion of standardized test is likely to increase by 2.9% for math and 2.7% for reading. They also found that among 100 classrooms, 87 classrooms had ventilation rates below recommended guidelines based on ASHRAE Standard 62 as of 2004, and this correlated to lower standardized test scores in math and reading. This suggests low indoor environmental quality in the classroom is associated with lower student achievement, and this is most common among schools in high-poverty communities.

It should be noted that although the studies above indicate that poor school buildings negatively affect student achievement, and improved quality of school buildings is associated

with improved student achievements (Bemer, 1993; Durán-Narucki, 2008; Jimenez-Castellanos, 2010), the building's age and condition may not be the best indication of the quality of student learning. The quality of student learning may be determined more by the effectiveness of their teachers.

Less competent and experienced teachers. Schools in high poverty communities are often characterized by less efficient, less competent, and less experienced teachers, with difficulty recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. While not the sole indicators of teacher quality, years of experiences and quality of preparation have been associated with student academic achievement (Gimbert, Bol, & Wallace, 2007; Scott Krei, 1998). Therefore, schools with more experienced and qualified teachers are linked more strongly to higher student achievement (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006). Unfortunately, schools with a high proportion of economically disadvantaged students are more likely to have teachers with less experience and competence than teachers in schools that serve wealthier or more economically advantaged students.

Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002), for example, used New York State as a case study to determine which schools had the least qualified teachers. The New York City school district showed great differences among student groups in the qualifications of their teachers. They included data for every teacher who was hired in a New York public school at any time from 1984-85 through 1999-2000 and found that low-income students in urban schools were more likely to be taught by less experienced and competent teachers; that is, in New York City, poor students had less competent and experienced teachers than students in wealthier schools. Twenty-two percent of poor students had teachers who were not approved in any subject they taught in comparison to 17% of wealthier students. Also, 30% of poor students were taught by

teachers who failed either the General Knowledge or Liberal Arts and Science certification exam, compared to 21% of wealthier students. The study suggests that low SES students are further handicapped because they are taught by less competent and less experienced teachers.

Lankford et al.'s (2002) findings were replicated in North Carolina by Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006), who investigated the relationship between non-random distribution of teacher characteristics and student achievement. Prior to conducting the study, they presented evidence that the administrative data related to 5th-grade students in North Carolina supported the belief that more highly qualified teachers tended to teach in schools serving more advantaged children. They similarly found that teachers with more experience, degrees from more competitive universities, and higher degrees tended to work at schools serving more affluent students. These findings were consistent with Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor's (2010) study, which examined the link between teacher credentials and student academic achievement at the high schools in North Carolina. Again, they found that the non-random distribution of teacher credentials by socioeconomic status of high school students, with less qualified and experienced teachers appearing to be less effective in teaching high school students from low SES communities.

While the studies were conducted in different areas, New York City (Lankford et al., 2002) and North Carolina (Clotfelter et al., 2006; Clotfelter et al., 2010), all supported previous research suggesting there is a relationship between teacher characteristics and student achievement. Teachers with less experience and competence correlated strongly to higher student poverty and lower student achievement.

Poverty and Health Issues

Health plays a crucial role in all students' success. However, poverty further contributes to children academic failure through health issues that occur at greater rates among low SES

students, including inadequate nutrition and emotional and behavioral health (Basch, 2011; Taki,

Hashizume, Sassa, Takeuchi, Asano, & Asano, 2010).

SES and nutrition. Children who grow up in low SES families have access to food with

lower nutritional value than students in more affluent families. This poor nutritional value affects

students' academic achievement by adversely influencing cognition. Taki et al. (2010) conducted

an experiment with three groups of children in order to compare the relationship among breakfast

staple type, gray matter volume, and intelligence quotient (IQ) in 290 children. They found a

statistically significant relationship between the three variables among children, suggesting that

poor nutrition value at breakfast affects adversely cognitive function in children and this

phenomenon is more widespread among low-income students.

In his study of the disparities of breakfast consumption among urban minority youth,

Basch (2011) looked at not only poor nutrition, but also skipping breakfast among low-income

students. He found that skipping breakfast is very common among urban minority youth, and

approximately half of them (46%) were qualified for free/reduced lunch. He found also the

skipping breakfast negatively affects their academic achievement through various aspects of

cognitive performance, including attention, memory, and problem-solving, as well as decreasing

school attendance. This study, as well as Taki et al.'s, (2010) study, suggests that poor nutrition

was significantly associated with health status and poor school performance of low-income

students in particular.

SES and emotional and behavioral health. In addition to malnutrition among low SES

children, poverty further contributes to a critical risk factor for children and youth's emotional

and behavioral disorders associated with difficulties in learning in the future. Kalil (2009) looked

at long-term consequences of parental job loss for children. He examined the effect of parental

joblessness on the wellbeing of families and children's experiences across social economic status. Kalil (2009) reviewed empirical evidence from quantitative and qualitative studies that shed light on parental job loss and its relation to children's development and their educational attainment. Through these studies, he found the job loss of low-income families was associated with children's emotional and behavioral issues. This is because job loss caused additional challenges in the marital relationships and increased the possibility of a marital breakup, which had an impact on children's emotion and behavior.

In another study, Yoshikawa, Aber, and Beardslee (2012) looked at not only parental job loss and its association with children's emotional and behavioral disorders, but also poor family behavior and its impact on their children's emotional and behavioral health. Yoshikawa et al. (2012) examined the impact of poverty on children's emotional and behavioral wellbeing based on the findings from recent advanced research in family poverty. Across a large number of studies, Yoshikawa et al. (2012) found that poverty had an impact on children's emotional and behavioral health through parental behaviors and conflicts. Economic hardship was linked with depressed parental mood and marital struggle. These factors impact negatively on children's emotional and behavioral health, which in turn relate to inconsistent discipline and behavior in childhood and later in adolescence. This may include harshness of discipline, exposure to violence, and life stressors. These factors are strongly correlated with low academic achievement. This study, as well as Kalil's (2009), suggests that poverty and children's emotional and behavioral disorders are strongly linked to academic failure.

The effects of poverty on students' health, as well as the relationship between student health and academic achievement, are well established in the literature and represent yet another element that schools must address with limited resources. Although such studies as referenced

here show that poverty is a strong factor associated with reducing student academic achievement, other factors combine to make high-poverty schools successful for student achievement. In other words, increasingly, research findings from schools that outperform their low SES peers provide clues for how schools can overcome, at least to some degree, the negative effects of poverty on student achievement. Among such findings, studies frequently point to the quality of principal and superintendent leadership among the most important factors for school success.

Conclusions Regarding the Negative Impacts of Poverty

Without a doubt, poverty has a strong association with reducing student academic achievement (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Allington et al., 2010). When the influences of poverty converge on the home, the school, the community, and the health and well-being of students, the complexity of serving economically disadvantaged students expands exponentially. This complexity requires even more of school leaders by way of strategic response and places even greater importance on the development of leadership capacity to meet that demand. Under President Johnson's War on Poverty agenda, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was enacted as a counter measure to the effects of poverty on student achievement; yet, a full half century later, America still struggles with the means to educate all children well despite the growing percentage of school-age children living in poverty.

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The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

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The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was approved into law in 1968 by President Lyndon Baines Johnson. The law of ESEA offered new grants to districts, in particular, those that served low-income students. The subsequent No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) were reauthorizations of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968 (ESEA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These

reauthorizations established and then revised federal guidelines for state accountability systems that focus on achieving core curriculum academic success for all students within a specified timeline.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed in 2002 by President George W. Bush, placed higher expectations on all of the nation's schools to improve student achievement. The main purpose of NCLB was "to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (Title I, 2004, sec. 1001, para. 1). This reauthorization of ESEA was designed to provide schools and educators with additional tools to close the achievement gap and increase achievement for every child despite their economic or racial backgrounds. Additionally, NCLB held schools and educational providers more specifically accountable for student learning at all grade levels, again, requiring schools to work to improve the achievement of all students despite their economic status or demographic background.

To ensure academic achievement under NCLB legislation, districts across all states were required to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). As stated in the law, the two major aims of NCLB were that (a) states, districts, and schools work to close the achievement gaps that exist fundamentally between high and low-performing schools because of low and high-income students; and (b) states, districts, and schools be held accountable by forcing government sanctions if AYP was not achieved and the achievement gap continued (Schmidt, 2008). This meant that if districts (including districts serving a high percentage of low SES students) did not

meet AYP, it was a possibility for the state to take over the low-performing schools (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002).

Title I of NCLB sought to address disadvantages associated with students in poverty (i.e., low SES) attending high-poverty schools. Of the 12 objectives provided in Title I (2004), three objectives relate to the focus of my study:

1. Meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in our nation's highest-poverty schools;

2. Closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers;

3. Holding schools, local educational agencies, and states accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students by identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education (Title 1, 2004, sec. 1001, para. 2-5).

In short, districts and schools must work to close achievement gaps between high SES and low SES students, and turn low-performing schools into high-performing schools.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was approved into law by President Barack Obama and, again, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968 (ESEA). Different from the NCLB reauthorization under President Bush, and the subsequent Race to the Top incentives signed into law by President Obama, "the ESSA shifted a great deal of education authority from the federal government back to states and local education agencies"

(Sharp, 2016, p. 9). The ESSA accordingly presents a meaningful opportunity for states and local policymakers to refocus on how best to develop improvements for their schools (Johnson, 2016).

To achieve the improvements of local schools, this reauthorization of the ESEA highlights six objectives, and two of these objectives are related to the focus of this study:

1. Advance equity by upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-need students;

2. Maintain an expectation that there will be accountability and action to effect positive change in the lowest performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time (Sharp, 2016, p. 9).

These two objectives suggest district leaders should hold high expectations for increasing the learning of all students, including those who are high-needs students and not making progress. Therefore, since Congress passed the ESSA, states are more responsible for measuring and rating school performance related to increasing student achievement, including students from low SES communities (Osborne, 2016). Schueler, Goodman, and Deming (2017) pointed out that after the passage of the ESSA, states were required to develop policies that identify and turn around low-performing schools as part of a larger state accountability system. States, therefore, have to identify strategies that go beyond the school takeover provisions under NCLB. Under the ESSA, states are to develop better systems to support those schools with a long history of low performance, the majority of which are located in low-income communities. After over a decade of school take-over strategies under NCLB, the federal government is now looking to better collaboration between states and local districts to address the challenges facing persistently low achieving schools and school districts.

Although the three acts above hold states accountable for increasing student performance, they have not shown that they allocate the specific funding and resources needed for planning strategies to improve the academic achievement of low-income students at the district level. This remains primarily the responsibility of local districts under public school funding systems that rarely differentiate funding for schools serving high poverty communities. The federal government has augmented this funding under Title I and Title II of the ESEA, but the funding allocations for these programs have not kept pace with the growing rate of schools serving high poverty student populations (Thomas & Brady, 2005).

Holding schools accountable for student achievement under NCLB and ESSA does give states a clearer picture of academic performance with more precise ways to track the progress of low-performing schools each year. In this way, states can better target support and resources to those schools most in need of help in breaking the pattern of low academic achievement. Under the ESSA, Michigan must provide better mechanisms for those schools most in need of assistance to request that assistance from the Michigan School Reform Office (SRO). That said, it remains the primary responsibility of district and school leaders to diagnose and address those factors that impede student achievement for their students, and use both local resources (including the capacity of stakeholders) and state/federal resources effectively to address those factors in more effective ways.

Michigan School Reform Office (SRO)

Beginning in 2010, the Michigan School Reform Office (SRO) started to identify the public schools that were among the lowest achieving (5%) of all public schools in the state. Those identified as priority schools are continually monitored for improvement for 4 years

following being identified on the list (Michigan Department of Education, State School Reform Redesign Office, 2017).

There are several steps a school must follow in the school improvement process. Within 90 days of being identified as a priority school, the school is placed under the supervision of the SRO and provided implementation and redesign plan guidelines. The plans include extra support from the U.S. Department of Education, Michigan Department of Education (MDE), and local Intermediate School Districts (ISD) (Michigan Department of Education, State School Reform Redesign Office, 2017).

After receiving a school's redesign plan, the SRO has 30 days to review and issue an approval, disapproval, or creation of changes to the program. If the SRO approves the plan, then the school board of directors must start to implement the plan by the beginning of the next school year. Schools whose plans are disapproved must begin the planning process again, or make changes, which are often suggested by the SRO (Michigan Department of Education, State School Reform Redesign Office, 2017).

The schools that "meet the exit criteria by reaching 95 percent state assessment participation, achieving annual goals in reading and math, and ranking above the lowest five percent statewide" are eligible to be released from the priority school list before their 4-year review period ends. For example, on January 20, 2017, the Michigan School Reform Office (SRO) issued the 2016 list of 38 Michigan Priority Schools that had been identified because of poor performance (Kennedy, 2017). However, with the 2017 list, the Michigan School Reform Office (SRO) also released 79 schools from the Priority School list after they reached their exit criteria and showed a significant and rapid turnaround in student outcomes (Michigan School Reform Office, 2017).

If a priority school remains on the list of lowest performing schools in the state for 3 or more years (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002) despite SRO acceptance of the school's redesign plan, it remains possible for states to takeover those schools or move toward closure. A major emphasis, therefore, is on the schools that have historically been classified as priority schools and have not made sufficient or notable progress (U.S Department of Education, 2004). Most the priority schools demonstrate common characteristics that are most notably associated with community poverty and student academic achievement, and such schools are the focus of my study (Puma, Karweit, & Price, 1999; U. S. Department of Education, 2002).

A Priority School in Michigan

A priority school in Michigan is a one that has been distinguished as the lowest-performance five percent of Title I schools over the past three years. This placement of a priority school often signifies low student achievement results in one or more core subject areas over time, low overall performance, significant declines in student performance, large achievement gaps, or all of these factors (Michigan's Priority Schools, 2013).

Beginning in 2010, no later than September 1 of each year, the superintendent of public instruction must announce a list identifying the public schools in the state that the department has determined to be among the five percent lowest achieving of all public schools in that state. These schools are placed under the supervision of Michigan School Reform Office (SRO). Priority schools are required to implement a strategic plan for these schools that facilitates a rapid turnaround to improve student achievement. The reform plan for school policies and practices must be based on evidence from research and data analysis that can influence all stakeholders' actions and practices in the school, and can lead to a refocus on instruction in ways that will improve student achievement, including the academic achievement of low SES students

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(Michigan's Priority Schools, 2013; Michigan Department of Education, State School Reform Redesign Office, 2017).

After implementing a reform strategy or strategic plan, the schools that meet the exit criteria of reaching 95 percent on state assessment participation, achieving annual goals in math and reading, and rank above the lowest five percent statewide are eligible to be released from the priority school list before their 4-year review period ends. In contrast, schools with a persistent record of poor performance are potential targets for closure (Kennedy, 2017).

Many factors contribute to schools being released from the priority list, and studies of released priority schools (high-performing, high-poverty schools) have identified effective instructional and collaborative leadership as essential characteristic to school success (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Picucci et al., 2002).

Characteristics of Principal at High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools: 90/90/90 Schools

A 90/90/90 school is a term that was established in 1995 by Douglas Reeves. This term was defined after investigations in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These schools are characterized by 90 percent or more of the students eligible for free/reduced lunch, 90 percent or more of the students members of ethnic minority groups, and 90 percent or more of students meeting the district or state academic standards in reading or another area (Reeves, 2003, p. 1).

Reeves (2001) attempted to identify the common characteristics of high academic achievement for high-poverty, high-minority schools and found a common set of characteristics of the 90/90/90 schools, which were mainly exhibited by the leaders and teachers. The five common characteristics of are: (a) a focus on academic achievement; (b) clear curriculum choices; (c) frequent assessment of student progress; (d) multiple opportunities for improvement; (e) an emphasis on nonfiction writing; and (f) collaborative scoring of student work (Reeves,

2003, p. 3). All of these characteristics were driven by strong school leadership as an essential component in schools with high student achievement, high minority enrollment, and high poverty levels (Reeves, 2003).

One of the most significant characteristics of 90/90/90 schools is the use of collaborative teams in scoring student work. Reeves (2003) identified teachers and school leaders working together as collaborative teams to "develop common assessment practices and reinforced those common practices through regular exchanges of student papers" as the key to improve student academic achievement (Reeves, 2003, p. 6). More importantly, instructional leaders in 90/90/90 schools exhibit a culture of shared leadership among the school members and stakeholders. Reeves (2003) found that the ways to instructional leaders' success in these schools were meeting weekly with parents and students to discuss student achievement, providing additional time for collaborative scoring of student work, personally managing monthly assessments in language and math, and empowering teachers to demonstrate proficient and excellent teaching skills for student learning (Reeves, 2003, p. 14). Reeves's (2003) study suggests that the building of principals' collaborative and instructional leadership is a highly predictive factor associated with improving student achievement.

Kearney, Herrington, and Aguilar (2012) also found collaborative and instructional leadership to be one of the common characteristics exhibited by strong leaders in 90/90/90 schools. They conducted an in depth case study of one high-performing high-poverty school serving students of color in South Central Texas. They employed the same criteria for 90/90/90 schools created by Reeves (2003) mentioned above to select their sample case, but they only found one school that met the criteria for the years 2006 through 2010. Within this school, they conducted focus groups, site visits, and interviews with the principal, teachers, staff, parents, and

children to learn how they had reached a level of 90/90/90 school success that set them apart from all other buildings in the same district.

Kearney et al. (2012) highlighted three themes of school success, which included support structures, building relationships, and consistency. Support structures included hiring the right staff for the position, developing staff with professional development, significant dependence on teacher and staff input, and strong principal leadership. There were also supportive relationships between administrators, teachers, students, low-income parents, and the broader community through participating in the school activities and programs. Importantly, the strong principal adopted a shared leadership approach to empower all school staff and stakeholders to be leaders and share in the school decision-making to address collectively student learning issues. This is consistent with all of the empirical research on 90/90/90 schools, which have identified effective collaborative and instructional leadership within schools as essential to school success (Reeves, 2001, 2003; Riggins-Newby, 2004).

Other research that studied the school leadership of high-poverty, high-performing schools suggests that "turn around" school principals embraced particular characteristics and use common practices that lead them to increase student achievement in these schools (Riggins-Newby, 2004). For example, Picucci, Brownson, Kahlert, and Sobel (2002) investigated how seven high-poverty middle schools exhibited strong academic achievement, performing at levels consistent with, and sometimes better than, higher-income schools in the same states. They conducted focus groups and interviews with principals, teachers, staff, community members, parents, students and central office administrators; conducted observations; gathered documents; and administered teacher surveys in different settings throughout the United States. Of the four themes they derived from this study, the function of leadership in promoting collaborative and

instructional learning environments was especially important when associated with high levels of poverty.

Similarly, Suber's (2012) mixed methods study looked at common characteristics of principals in high-poverty, high-performing schools in urban and rural South Carolina. These schools were recognized as South Carolina Award Winners regardless of their high levels of poverty. Suber (2012) collected surveys, observations, and interviews with the principals and teachers, and found six common characteristics that were adopted by the principals in their high-performing schools. Of the six characteristics, the function of instructional leadership and collaboration were the most significant practices to turn these schools around. These principals exhibited instructional leadership through developing teacher performance and supervising and organizing classroom instruction strategies. Also, the principals exhibited collaborative leadership through creating positive cultures of shared teamwork with all school communities, which translated into greater student success.

After reviewing the empirical studies, it can be concluded that principals charged with turning around a failing school achievement profile do so by exhibiting effective leadership characteristics. Among these principals' characteristics, building strong instructional and collaborative teams are qualities well established in the literature to turn high-poverty schools into high-performing schools. These characteristics are also identified to have a significant association with student academic achievement for not only high-poverty school principals but also all school principals (Marzano & McNulty, 2003).

Characteristics of Principals who Lead Schools That Show Academic Improvement

Characteristics of principals are essential to student success, as the principal's behavior as an instructional leader has a substantial influence on student achievement (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Also, student success is likely to be greatest where staff and the school community are involved in shared collaborative leadership with the school principal to identify sources of student success and share accountability to accomplish this target. Instructional leadership and collaborative leadership are two leadership characteristics that school principals adopt to lead and interact with their followers.

Principal Instructional Leadership

In Waters, Marzano, and McNulty's (2003) study of 21 leadership responsibilities, they identified practices and behaviors for all school principals that are significantly associated with student academic achievement. Waters et al. (2003) synthesized over 5,000 studies conducted between 1978 and 2001, comprising 14,000 teachers, 2,802 principals, and over 1.4 million students to examine the effect of principal practices and behaviors on student achievement. They found that leadership characteristics positively correlated to student achievement at an average of .25. In particular, Waters et al. (2003) explained that leaders who utilized more effective instructional practices into the daily work of the classroom (0.24) and worked collaboratively with teachers and faculty to drive the instructional vision of the school (0.24) were more closely associated with schools that had increasing student achievement. When controlling for those characteristics that were most associated with second order change (i.e., the level of change required for a turn-around school process), the researchers found seven of the 21 principal leadership characteristics were most strongly correlated with improvements in student achievement. Among those seven characteristics, two focus on instructional leadership and distributing leadership responsibilities throughout school team to bring all school communities and work together to make a difference in improving learning.

Instructional leadership, in particular, was defined by Heck, Larsen, and Marcoulides (1990) as the practices of organizing, preparing, monitoring, and supporting teachers in their instructional strategies to provide high-quality educational opportunities for students are essential to promote positive school learning in every classroom. Many academic and non-academic factors influence student achievement. One of these factors is the principal's practice. As the instructional leaders in their schools, principals influence student academic achievement by helping teacher improve their instructional strategies (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Principals who embrace many instructional leadership practices are expected to help teachers prepare, organize, and improve instructional activities in order to influence the classroom conditions in which students learn and teachers teach.

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) provided a practical descriptive framework of instructional leadership practices that includes: (a) framing and developing school goals; (b) communicating the school goals to teachers, students, and parents; (c) organizing and improving instruction; (d) coordinating the curriculum and individual programs; (e) monitoring student progress; (f) protecting instructional time; (g) maintaining high visibility; (h) providing incentives for teachers; (i) supporting professional development; (j) developing and enforcing academic standards and norms; and (k) offering incentives for learning (p. 227). Of these instructional leadership practices, organizing and improving of classroom instruction was seen as the most important factor that contributes to increasing student achievement.

Regarding the impact of instructional leadership practices on student achievement, Borden (2011) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between Paraguayan principals' instructional leadership practices and school outcomes as perceived by teachers. Borden (2011) randomly selected 1,317 teachers and 265 principals across 256 public primary

schools and collected data via survey and academic achievement measures. Borden (2011) found that there is a statistically significant effect of principal instructional practices on school effectiveness ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.10$), which indicated higher grades in student math achievement. Students also had higher math achievement in schools where principals provided time for improving and organizing instructional activities with teachers ($\beta = 0.60$, $p < 0.05$) than in schools where principals did not provide this dedicated time. Because previous studies support evidence that principals who exhibit instructional leadership practices can impact student learning through improving teachers' instructional strategies (Crum & Sherman, 2008; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), Borden's (2011) study suggests that principals should work on developing teacher performance to enhance instructional strategies and classroom conditions for student learning.

Teacher professional development. School principals can improve teachers' performance by involving them in professional development (PD) activities. Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) examined the impact of principal leadership on classroom instruction and student achievement through major organizational factors, including teacher professional development. They surveyed 3,529 teachers across 99 high public schools in Chicago during the 2006-2007 school year. They found that principals indirectly affected instruction and student learning when they provided teachers with high quality professional development. Because the study showed that principals affect student learning through teacher professional development, this suggested principals should play an important role to support teachers' participation in professional development.

Just making professional development available for teachers alone is not enough to ensure their active participation or, moreover, to influence their classroom practices. Therefore,

principals should encourage teachers' participation in PD by creating supportive environments for their development. For example, Mukundan, Hajimohammadi, and Nimehchisalem (2011) examined the relationship between teachers' interest in professional development activities and the administrative support they received. They randomly surveyed 300 teachers from the list of teachers in the Ministry of Education in Melaka (a city located in the southwest of Malaysia) and found a significant relationship between teachers' interest in professional development activities and administrative support (the Chi-Square value = 152.653, $p < .05$). A higher percentage of the teachers who received administrative support, such as encouragement (87 percent) in participating in professional development activities were more interested as compared to those who were not supported and motivated (79 percent). This study suggests the importance of principals' role in supporting and motivating their teachers to engage more effectively in PD instead of only making the PD available.

In addition, effective leaders not only encourage teachers to attend professional development, but they also model the way by participating in PD as a learner. Hilton, Hilton, Dole, and Goos (2015) examined whether the participation of school leaders in teacher professional development had a positive impact on teachers' and leaders' professional growth. The study used educational design research to plan and implement a series of professional development workshops for grades 4 to 9 teachers in Australia. The participants included 70 middle school teachers from 18 schools, as well as 20 leaders from 11 schools who were invited to participate in the workshops along with the teachers. The data collection included interviews, surveys, and workshop discussions. They revealed that the participation of school leaders in teacher professional development programs had a positive impact on improving the teacher capacity to reflect on new knowledge and practices. They also found a positive impact on the

leaders' professional growth. Specifically, Hilton et al. (2015) found that involving school leaders in teacher professional development programs supported teacher growth in terms of creating flexibility in instructional expectations, engaging in collaborative planning, sharing plans for classroom activities, and showing team teaching.

Although the previous two studies were conducted in the two different countries, Malaysia (Mukundan et al., 2011) and Australia (Hilton et al., 2015), they both emphasized the importance of principals' roles (e.g. creating supportive environment and being a role model by attending as a learner in PD) and professional development for teachers. However, in order to maintain gains from effective teacher professional development, it must be followed up with principal observations.

Principal observation. In addition to instructional leadership practice and offering and participating in professional development, principals can improve teacher performance through classroom observation and providing meaningful feedback. Ing (2010) examined the variability of principals' classroom observations and its relationship to improved classroom instruction. Ing (2010) surveyed 319 principals and 15,818 teachers and found that more than 80 percent of the principals conducted informal classroom observations several times a week or almost every day with a focus on instructional development. The study found that principals use of frequent classroom observation positively contributed to supporting teachers' performance and improving their instruction. Ing (2010) also found that conducting observations plus providing specific feedback to an individual teacher contributed to greater improvement in classroom instruction.

Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) examined the relationship between instructional principals' time spent on observing and evaluating instructional tasks in the classroom and school effectiveness as measured by student achievement gains over three school years at 125

Miami-Dade County Public Schools. They conducted full-day observations, surveys, and interviews of 100 urban principals and found that principals' time spent on observing the classrooms and providing meaningful feedback contributed to improving teaching strategies and had a positive impact on student achievement growth. Furthermore, principals who showed specific leadership behaviors, such as spending time on teacher coaching and evaluation during the observation, were predictive of a more positive impact on instructional development and student math achievement. Grissom et al. (2013) concluded that when principal spends time in teacher coaching and evaluating during the observation, math achievement increased by about 1 percent of standard deviation. Both Ing (2010) and Grissom et al. (2013) agreed that principals' observations in classroom contribute to teachers' development, which leads to improved student achievement. Grissom et al. (2013) added that principals should not only spend time on observing teacher performances, but also coach them based on their identified needs.

Effective instructional leaders not only complete teacher evaluations and observations, but also model for teachers instructional leadership characteristics related to visibility and engagement to support teachers' achievement and academic growth for instructional development in a classroom. May and Supovitz (2011) in their study of principal efforts to improve instruction, examined the extent to which principals delegate some their instructional-oriented work to teachers. Through conducting surveys to collect data from 51 schools in an urban southeastern district, May and Supovitz (2011) found that the principals who modeled visibility in schools and had the greatest amount of direct interactions with teachers around issues of instructional improvement contributed to increasing teachers' ability to improve instruction.

While the findings from these studies show that principal instructional leadership practices have a significant impact on student achievement through exhibiting practices in supervising and developing teachers' instructional activities (Hallinger, 2003; Ing, 2010; Jaquith, 2015; May & Supovitz, 2011), other researchers have focused on collaborative leadership in addition to instructional leadership. This shift has shown a new line of research looking at different conceptualizations of leadership, which most researchers call shared leadership or collaborative leadership (Gumuseli & Eryilmaz, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Principal Collaborative Leadership

Principals today are expected to motivate and empower teachers and others to work together in collaborative teams for increasing school improvement and student achievement. So, while instructional leadership has gained much attention for improving student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1998), other researchers have focused on increasing student success through a school culture of shared collaborative leadership (Gumuseli & Eryilmaz, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Collaborative leadership was defined by Gumuseli and Eryilmaz (2011) as when "School leaders completely value ideas of the teachers, seek input, engage staff in decision-making and trust the professional judgment of the staff" (p. 17). Regarding the implementation of an effective collaborative leadership, Hallinger and Heck (2010) explained that collaborative leadership builds school capacity through the empowerment of staff, parents, and students to engage in some of the decision-making processes for improving student success.

The implementation of collaborative leadership can raise student achievement. For example, Leithwood, and Mascall (2008) examined the impact of shared leadership on key teacher variables and on student achievement. The sample included 2,570 teachers from 90

elementary and secondary schools across 45 districts within the nine states. Data sources were teacher survey and student achievement data in language and math averaged over 3 years between 2003 and 2005. They found that shared leadership had a significant indirect influence on student achievement through its influence on teacher motivation ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.05$), and that shared leadership accounted for 20 percent of the explained variation in student achievement across schools. The schools whose student achieved in the highest 20 percent on standardized test were associated significantly with the implementation of shared leadership in school. Specifically, shared leadership has a significant impact on student English language arts and math achievement through raising teacher motivation in working together in collaborative teams to improve teaching strategies for student learning. The findings from this study suggest effective shared leaders have a significant impact on student language and math achievement through teacher motivation. Also, it is expected that effective collaborative leaders focus on not only cultivating teacher motivation alone for student achievement, but also on developing school capacity by empowering all school members and stakeholders and enabling them to work on common goals and problems of practice in collaborative teams.

Comprehensive collaborative leadership for student success should cultivate school capacity within both the internal and external environment, including the empowerment of staff, teachers, students, parents, and other relevant stakeholders to participate in the development of student learning. Hallinger and Heck (2010) examined the effects of collaborative leadership on school capacity and student achievement and whether its effect remains stable over time. They randomly selected 12,480 of students drawn from grades 3 through 5 across 192 public elementary schools in one state in the United States. Through their a longitudinal study covering a period of 4 years, they found that collaborative leadership has a significant direct effect on

increasing school capacity and indirect effect on student reading achievement through the school capacity (β=0.10, $p < 0.05$). They found that increasing collaborative leadership had a significant direct effect on development in school capacity ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$) and that development of school capacity directly affected student learning ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$). These results suggested that the effect of principal leadership on student reading achievement would be greater when school principals increase school capacity by engaging staff and stakeholders to work together in collaborative team towards school improvement.

Although the previous studies (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008) revealed that collaborative leadership has an indirect impact on increasing student English language arts, math, and reading achievement, it can be expected that the impact of collaborative leadership on student learning goes beyond those three core subject areas to other subjects as well.

In terms of building school capacity, teacher, staff, stakeholders, and students should be involved in collaborative team decision-making to increase student achievement. For example, Chance and Segura (2009) employed semi-structured interviews to understand the collaborative approach used at a rural high school in the western state in the United States. The researchers noticed the rural high school exhibited significant academic growth and maintained student achievement over a 3-year period. The significant academic growth was identified based on the following measures: (a) test scores, (b) performance of AYP, and (c) attendance and graduation rate. Data were collected from 16 individuals who participated in the school improvement plan including the school's principal, the superintendent, 10 teachers, two parents, and two students. Also, documents were collected as artifacts of the school improvement process, and observations

were conducted at various locations and events including classrooms, staff meetings, and faculty collaborative planning meetings.

Through their cases analysis, Chance and Segura (2009) identified various factors associated with the improvement process including (a) assigned time for teacher collaboration; (b) building collaboration time dedicated to developing instruction and student achievement; and (c) leadership behaviors that focused on planning and accountability towards student learning. One of the significant findings was that the school principals helped improved student achievement by assigning time for teacher collaboration. During this time, teachers planned and worked together with the principal 1 day each week on strategies that targeted student academic improvement. Also, teachers were encouraged to be involved in decision-making. Decisions were made through consensus, which ultimately led to a shared vision of instruction and curriculum. Staff also was involved in school decision-making by sharing responsibility for developing the agenda for each collaboration meeting and establishing accountability for the achievement of all tasks. The researchers concluded that the time dedicated to collaborative decision-making contributed to improving student achievement.

Similarly, Crum, Sherman, and Myran (2010) conducted an inductive exploratory study to identify important practices of successful elementary principals that promoted high levels of student achievement in the tumultuous school accountability climate. Twelve elementary principals were interviewed who worked in a diverse cross-section of elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study was based on the four core practices of successful school leadership, summarized by Leithwood et al. (2006).

The core practices are: (1) setting directions, (2) developing people, (3) redesigning the organization, and (4) managing the instructional program. Crum et al. found five

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common themes of instructional leadership practices: (1) honesty and relationships; (2) encouragement of ownership and collaboration; (3) leadership recognition and development; (4) instructional awareness and involvement, and (5) leadership with data. (p. 48)

Of the five themes of leadership practices generated, one focused on the encouragement of ownership and collaboration in order to promote a culture of shared collaborative leadership with stakeholders and teachers for increased student achievement. Crum et al. (2010) noted that the school principals obtained "buy-in" with their staff by fostering ownership and collaboration over the long-term. They encouraged collaboration through involving staff in shared school data to make informed decisions about instructional development. The major decisions were never made without a basis in the school data and input from teachers and staff. The researchers concluded that this approach contributed to high student achievement.

The implementation of collaborative leadership can raise student achievement when the principals involve teachers and staff not only in decision-making processes, but also in high expectations for student learning. Timperley (2011) studied five New Zealand elementary school principals' practices that showed their student achievement improved threefold over the expected rate of progress. He found that one strategy these principals' leadership practiced was establishing a school vision and goals based on high expectations for student learning. These principals extended the high expectations of students to include themselves and teachers who provided the learning environments in which all students could learn. In this way, all principals and teachers held themselves accountable for the learning achievement of all students.

Although the two empirical studies described above were conducted in two different states in the United States, a western state (Chance & Segura, 2009) and Virginia (Crum et al.,

2010), they revealed that significant improvement in student achievement was a result of involving teachers and staff in collaborative decision-making for student learning. Timperley (2011) added that communicating high expectations for student learning with the school staff empowers them to be accountable in meeting the needs of these students. However, these studies focused mainly on shared decision-making and high expectations for student learning with teachers and staff, and neither of them focused on the importance of shared decision-making and high expectations with parents and larger school communities, particularly collaborating with low-income parents as a contributor to improve their student learning.

Parental involvement in shared decision-making. Unfortunately, parental involvement in some schools' decision-making has been limited to a small number of activities, and this negatively impacts their students' learning (Kabir & Akter, 2014). To build strong collaborative decision-making with parents, school leaders should incorporate various strategies. Ishimaru (2013) conducted a qualitative interview and observational study to describe the conditions and experiences that empowered principals to share leadership with teachers and low-income Latino parents in an effort to improve student learning. Ishimaru (2013) examined how the principals perceived and enacted collaborative leadership practices with organized parents in the three new small schools. The study was drawn from the Rockland Elementary School District, located in a large metropolitan area of California, with the high percentage of low-income Latino students of Mexican heritage. The participants of the study included three principals, nine parents, four teachers, and organizers. Ishimaru (2013) found that the principals of the three new schools exhibited collaborative leadership practices through supporting shared decision-making with parents and teachers, and engaging them in the strategy of a design team process. The design team process built bridges between teachers and parents as they shared their knowledge and

experiences in schools, as well as dreams for their children. Through the design team, parents, teachers and principals shared decision-making for their new schools that included all aspects of schools such as the school agenda, instruction, assessment, parent involvement, scheduling, budgeting, hiring, student recruitment, and others. These various strategies encouraged parents to hold a high expectation of improving their student achievement. The researchers concluded that all the school principals believed that student achievement is a group effort performed through ongoing collaboration between principals, teachers, and parents in school decision-making.

After reviewing the empirical studies, it can be concluded that principals charged with turning around a failing school achievement profile have much by way of evidence based practice to draw upon. Among the significant findings that hold the most promise for improving student achievement are those practices associated with both instructional and collaborative leadership, both of which focus on developing school capacity (i.e., teacher, staff, stakeholders, and students).

Although all the studies of high-poverty schools referenced in the previous review show that poverty is a strong factor associated with reducing student academic achievement and school principals alone cannot achieve the responsibility of increasing student achievement, the following sections of this review will examine how other factors can contribute to student success in high-poverty schools. Among those factors, the quality of principal and superintendent leadership is particularly the most important, especially, when success is determined by the capacities of principals and superintendents to work together as a collaborative team for supporting staff, teachers, and stakeholders in raising the achievement of their students, despite the negative influences of poverty.

Characteristics of District Leaders Focused on Developing Principal Leadership Capacity

Effective district leaders are one of the most important elements for student success. One way that they increase student success is by developing the instructional leadership capacity of their school principals (Waters & Marzano, 2007). However, instead of looking to principal instructional leadership alone for student achievement, district leaders need to develop a culture of shared collaborative leadership among all school members who can impact improvement in student performance (Maxfield & Klocko, 2010). Building instructional and collaborative leadership capacity among principals provides a frame for examining how district leaders (i.e., superintendents) interact with and develop their principals for increasing student achievement.

District Leaders Work to Improve Principal Instructional Leadership

A review of the literature revealed the major characteristics of district leaders who develop principal instructional leadership are supporting principal professional development and improving principal supervision and evaluation. To determine to what extent district leaders influence student achievement, it is essential to understand how superintendents work with developing principals on their instructional leadership. Waters and Marzano (2006) synthesized findings of 27 quantitative studies that examined the influence of school superintendents on student achievement. The sample included all studies involving district leadership or related to district leadership in the United States from 1970 until 2005. They involved approximately 2,714 districts and the achievement scores of 3.4 million students. Through their meta-analysis, Waters and Marzano (2006) found that the district leadership has a positive impact on student achievement about ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$). They also found superintendents influenced student achievement through developing principal instructional leadership. For example, in high-performing districts with greater levels of student achievement, effective superintendents ensured

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that the goal setting focused on developing student achievement and classroom instruction. The superintendents involved all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, principals, and board members, in establishing goals for their districts. They allocated the necessary resources to accomplish the district's goals, including funding dedicated to support principal professional development. The superintendents made sure that the planning for principal professional development was consistent with the needs to accomplish the district goals for instruction and student academic achievement. They aligned their use of district resources for planning principal professional development with district goals. Also, superintendents supported principal autonomy in professional development. They provided high-quality professional development while allowing school principals autonomy in planning their professional development based on identified needs and accomplished district goals. The study of Waters and Marzano (2006) suggests the effective superintendent practices in establishing learning goals and aligning with principal professional development contributed to principal development as instructional leaders.

While Waters and Marzano (2006) looked at supporting principal professional development, Williams, Tabernik, and Krivak (2009) looked at supporting ongoing collaboration between principals and teachers in professional development to exchanging expertise for instructional improvements. Williams et al. (2009) studied 28 effective Ohio superintendents who strongly influenced improvement in student math and science achievement in their districts by establishing the Science and Mathematics Achievement Required for Tomorrow (SMART) Consortium. The SMART Consortium was established in northeast Ohio in 1998 with the belief of increasing superintendents' effect on student academic achievement. They expected that superintendents could drive improvements in student achievement through developing principal instructional leadership capacity. Williams et al. (2009) found that during the first 7 years of the

consortium, SMART superintendents supported the professional development by providing time for teachers to participate in principal professional development. Importantly, this collaboration in professional development contributed to building trust, sharing practices and knowledge, which led to improvement in their instructional leadership capacity. The principals empowered teachers to adopt teaching strategies that led to increase students' math and science achievement. These findings were consistent with Funk's (2013) findings that district staff builds strong professional development. They supported collaborative professional development between principals and planners, mentors, and mentees in order to significantly develop instructional leadership capacity.

In another study, Cudeiro (2005) investigated not only developing principal professional development, but also developing principal supervision and evaluation to improve instructional leadership. The study also investigated how successful superintendents can influence student learning through their relationships with building principals. She conducted her study in a rapidly growing school district in California where all the superintendents had shown consistent growth in student academic achievement by utilizing different strategies to develop principals. After conducting qualitative interviews and observations with three superintendents over 4 years, she found that the superintendents had a positive influence on student achievement when they developed their principals' instructional leadership capacity with effective supervision and evaluations. Cudeiro's (2005) research can be summarized in three major findings. First, the superintendents engaged principals to discuss district goals and the high expectations for all students. Second, the superintendents supported their principals' growth as instructional leaders through devoting time and resources. Lastly, the superintendents not only supported professional development, but they also developed principals' evaluation and supervision. The

superintendents held principals accountable for being instructional leaders and making a measurable progress in student learning. They aligned the principal supervision and evaluation system with the instructional leadership practices that tied to student learning. They evaluated and supervised principal instructional practices through implementing site visits and walkthroughs, followed up with written feedback to help them become effective instructional leaders. The superintendents make themselves available "open door policy" to principals and others to discuss issues and support them to achieve the district vision.

The above empirical studies clearly suggest superintendents have potential to impact student learning by developing principal instructional leadership with targeted planning for professional development and evaluation. In addition, involving school members in principal professional development can lead to the sharing of practices and ideas for leadership development. While there is strong evidence suggesting teacher collaboration in professional development with school principals increases shared leadership capacity, there is a lack of studies that focus on broader participation of district leaders (including the superintendents) in principal professional development. In addition, little research exists regarding how superintendents develop a culture of collaborative leadership with stakeholders that focuses on improving instruction specifically geared to students living in poverty.

Research on the effects of poverty on student success helps school leaders better understand their challenge, but school leaders must look to additional lines of inquiry in order to identify strategies that they can use to counter the effects of poverty on student achievement sufficiently to meet the educational goals set by federal acts, state statutes, and local communities. The present study is particularly interested in the interactions between superintendents, other district leaders, and principals as a mechanism for developing the

leadership capacity of principals and the culture of shared leadership within and across schools. With the complex challenges that poverty presents for the leadership of schools, shared leadership capacity that engages all stakeholders may be the most important of all for developing the capacity to counter the effects of poverty on the students' learning opportunity and success.

District Leaders Work with the Improvement of Shared Collaborative Leadership of School principals, Teacher, Parent, and Students

Maxfield and Klocko (2010) explained the importance of promoting a culture of collaborative leadership in school to develop individual principals' leadership capacity. They found that by empowering all school members and stakeholders to become active participants and decision-makers, school organizations develop competent leaders to build a more trusting working environment that can identify potential solutions for student learning issues. Similarly, Hallinger and Heck (2010) found the idea of school collaborative leadership teams was a positive way to develop individual principals' leadership capacity and increased student success. They revealed that the implementation of collaborative leadership involves the broad participation of principals, teachers, and stakeholders in decision-making contributed to developing principal leadership capacity associated with student success. Maxfield and Klocko (2010) and Hallinger and Heck (2010) shed light on the two components to develop a culture of collaborative leadership in schools through shared collaborative decision-making and problem solving.

Superintendents are a key factor in empowering shared collaborative decision-making with principals and stakeholders. Brazer, Rich, and Ross (2010) conducted multiple case studies to determine how three superintendents in U.S. school districts supported principals and stakeholders in collaborative decision-making processes to formulate strategic education for improving student learning. These superintendents were charged with addressing lower student achievement through involving principals and stakeholders in their school districts. Brazer et al.

(2010) conducted an interview and observation data from principals and stakeholders, including parents, central staff and teachers, and the three superintendents, and found that all three superintendents responded to accountability pressure for improving student achievement by supporting principals and stakeholders in collaborative decision-making. The three superintendents established committees in an effort to engage principals and stakeholders in collaborative decision-making. The shared decision-making encouraged collective conversations concentrated on improving student academic achievement, which led to educational strategies that were more appropriate for student learning. This study is consistent with Schechter's (2011) study, which explored how superintendents learn collectively and work to make robust decisions linked to increased student learning. The researcher argued that the superintendent role, today, has shifted from traditional leadership focused on managerial aspects to instructional leadership achieved by encouraging collaborative learning opportunities to improve both the district and school levels. Schechter (2011) emphasized when making important decisions in school districts, superintendents should encourage school leaders and stakeholders to continuously be involved in these processes to deliberate problems solve together and make the right decisions that affect student learning.

Another study conducted by Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2011) showed that involving stakeholders in decision-making contributed to not only improving student learning but also rebuilding schools as a whole. They investigated how superintendents of small school districts gave voice, involving stakeholders in decision-making to build democratic communities. They conducted interviews and focus groups with 35 superintendents from small districts across various regions of the United States including New England, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West. Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2011) found that the superintendents

listened to, gave a voice, and shared experiences with stakeholders through involving them in decision-making strategies that resulted in positive outcomes for the schools. The districts had to make plans to increase student learning for the coming year and build the school building or close the school. The superintendents, therefore, established three groups (i.e., the business community, teachers, and parent groups) in order to obtain input from the school community's stakeholders in decision-making. Based on the information yielded from the stakeholders involved in these groups, the decision was made to relocate the classrooms and move forward on school reconstruction. This study indicates that superintendents are rethinking how to involve others in decision making for building capacity of their school districts. Also, it is expected that building schools will incorporate building strong school principal leadership capacity as well.

While Brazer et al. (2010), Schechter (2011), and Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2011) looked at how collaborative decision-making was important for improving schools and student learning, Maxfield and Klocko (2010) emphasized the importance of facilitating open and sustained collaborative decision-making among school principals and stakeholders. Maxfield and Klocko (2010) conducted a mixed methods case study to show how district leaders involve principals and stakeholders in a yearlong collaborative decision process with the goal of developing strategies for student learning. They examined the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and board of education members regarding the impact of the Collaborative Leadership Initiative (CLI) on school improvements in a mid-western state school district. The researchers collected survey data from 252 participants, including 126 teachers, 112 support staff members, eight administrators, and three board of education trustees. They also conducted focus groups interviews with stakeholders. Maxfield and Klocko found all participants strongly agreed that the yearlong collaborative decision making process was essential to ongoing improve

student achievement. They also found that collaborative decision-making process promoted shared leadership by capturing ideas and practices from all perspectives to positively influence student achievement.

Across studies, researchers agree that involving principals and stakeholders in district decision-making can contribute to student achievement. District leaders can also build a culture of shared leadership capacity in schools by establishing collaborative structures, such as collaborative problem solving. For example, over a 2-year qualitative case study conducted at an elementary school, Santangelo (2009) investigated how the district leaders supported the implementation of the collaborative problem-solving program (CPS) and its impact on the participants in a large school district located outside a major metropolitan city. Data was collected via mute evidence, field notes, observation, and interviews with a CPS team including the principal, the district superintendent, general education teachers, special education teachers, and several nonteaching professionals. Santangelo (2009) found that participation in CPS teams enhanced collective learning of their members to understand and address why students are experiencing difficulty. It provided them opportunities to work collaboratively to identify problems, solve problems, plan, implement, and evaluate appropriate learning interventions. More specifically, CPS programs increased trust and collaboration among the program teams. They improved their ability to gather, interpret, and use data, as well as their ability to implement instructional strategies that produced significant and meaningful academic and behavioral improvements among referred students.

Although the studies of superintendents' characteristics to support principal collaborative leadership capacity are still limited, the findings from the above empirical studies suggest the importance of superintendents in promoting a culture of shared collaborative leadership among

school principals and teachers through collaborations in decision making and problem-solving. What is not clear in the studies is how superintendents implement several strategies and initiatives to promote and maintain the collaborative leadership in schools both among principals and stakeholders including staff, parents and students.

An Initiative of District Leaders that Focuses on Developing Principal Leadership Capacity

Effective school principals are one of the most important elements for school success. The school's success can be seen through students' academic achievement. Camburn, Sanders, and Sebastian (2010) and Honig (2012) emphasized the importance of building a principal's instructional leadership capacity in order to increase students' academic achievement. In addition, Camburn et al. (2010) and Honig (2012) shed light on the important role of district leader practices, including the superintendent, to take the initiative and create opportunities for principals' leadership development.

Developing Principal Instructional Leadership

One approach through which superintendents can serve as an instructional leader is by building the instructional capacity of others. In a case study involving 12 superintendents from the most instructional effective districts in California, Murphy and Hallinger (1986) described a framework of six important functions of district leadership practices required to be considered a successful instructional leader for student learning: (a) setting goals and establishing standards and curriculum, (b) hiring staff, (c) supervising staff, (d) establishing an instructional focus, (e) ensuring consistency in technical core work, (f) and monitoring instruction and curriculum. Murphy and Hallinger (1986) also found that although superintendents facilitated the establishment and communication of the district's instructional vision, principals are essential in implementing district's instructional vision and organizing curriculum for student achievement.

Therefore, it is essential for superintendents to develop the principals' knowledge and skills necessary to lead their schools as instructional leaders.

Principal professional development. Superintendents are a key factor for encouraging principals' leadership development by providing professional development focused on transforming principals into better instructional leaders. Barnes, Camburn, Sanders, and Sebastian (2010) used a mixed method approach to investigate the influence of a district professional development program (DPD) on principals' instructional knowledge and practices aimed to transform them into instructional leaders in the southeastern United States. They randomly selected 48 principals, of which half were assigned to the control group and half were assigned to the treatment group of the DPD. Principals were interviewed immediately following the DPD sessions at four stages of the DPD program. Prior to the beginning of the DPD, data showed that school principals spent most of their time on managerial duties. After participation in the treatment group, Barnes et al. (2010) found that the principals improved their instructional practices and increased their use of strategic plans that focused on student learning, while the principals in the comparison group spent more of their time on managerial leadership tasks. The study suggests that when district leaders provide professional development for school principals with a focus on instructional leadership development, principals are more likely to improve both their knowledge and practices related to their instructional leadership.

While Barnes et al. (2010) looked at how DPD was important for building principal instructional leadership, Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, and Goddard (2015) investigated the impact of district professional development goes beyond improving principal capacity to instruction and student achievement. Jacob et al. (2015) examined the impact of the Balanced Leadership Professional Development (BLPD) program on principal efficacy, instructional

climate (i.e., norms for teacher collaboration in instructional practices), and student achievement over 3 years. The goal of the BLPD program was to improve the leadership skills of principals by helping them to better understand and implement the 21 key instructional leadership characteristics in a sample of rural northern Michigan schools. Half the principals of 126 schools were randomly assigned to a treatment group of the BLPD program, and the other half was assigned to a control group. Jacob et al. (2015) surveyed the principals and found the BLPD program widely improved school principals' instructional practices ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$). For example, the principals who participated in the program felt more actively involved in instruction and reported the use of more effective instructional leadership practices than principals in the control group. Their teachers worked collaboratively with them to select more appropriate instructional strategies and activities for student learning, which led to improved instruction for students ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$) when he/she collaborated with staff and teachers on increasing the effectiveness of school instructional practices and activities ($\beta = .0.26$, $p \leq .10$). Therefore, principals who participated in this program were more effective instructional leaders than principals in the control schools. Both Barnes et al. (2010) and Jacob et al. (2015) agreed that providing district professional development contributes to improving principals' skills to be instructional leaders. Jacob et al. (2015) added a new idea that principal participation in PD could lead to enhancing the school instructional activities associated with improving student learning through collaboration with teachers. This is consistent with my study wherein the superintendent encourages the principal to work with teachers to develop teaching strategy and activities for student learning, which led to improved instruction for students.

Principal training. In addition to improving principal instructional leadership by offering and participating in district PD, superintendents also build principal instructional

leadership by providing training. Making training available for principals alone is not enough to assure the training success, however, the impact of training increases when central office leaders set the example by participating with principals as co-learners. Honig (2012) studied the practices of Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs) who engaged in training principals to support their instructional leadership in three districts located in Atlanta, New York, and Oakland. Honig (2012) conducted a case study and found that ILDs have the specific charge for strengthening principal instructional leadership through being involved in a principal training program as a teacher. They joined with principals in negotiating meetings, and used various tools such as rubrics and self-evaluation to engage principals in new ways of reflecting on and evaluating their leadership practices. Lastly, ILDs consistently provided differentiated supports for principals over the entire academic year depending on their needs and strengths as instructional leaders. The trainers supported principals by using both internal and external sources to enhance the instructional assistance that was accessible to their schools. Similarly, Mendel and Mitgang (2013) found that after districts hire principals, district leaders have the responsibility to support and develop principals' growth to insure success in leading their schools. In addition, Mendel and Mitgang (2013) suggested that the participation of district leaders as teachers in principal training provided more support for principal development in becoming effective instructional leaders.

Across the empirical studies, it was revealed that district leader practices are essential to develop principal instructional leadership. However, little is known regarding whether or how district leaders build principal collaborative leadership capacity that contributes to improving student achievement for all students, including low SES students.

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Developing Shared, Collaborative Leadership

While the instructional leadership practices of district leaders focus primarily on developing student achievement through building principal instructional leadership, other studies have shown that empowering and supporting a culture of collaborative leadership among principals and school members contribute effectively to addressing achievement for all students (Honig & Rainey, 2014; Olivier & Huffman, 2016). Collaborative leadership was defined by Hallinger and Heck (2011) in this way: "collaborative leadership focuses on strategic school-wide actions that are directed towards school improvement and shared among the principal, teachers, administrators, and others" (p. 11). Hallinger and Heck (2011) also pointed out, "Collaborative leadership entailed the use of governance structures and organizational processes that empowered staff and students, encouraged broad participation in decision making, and fostered shared accountability for student learning" (p. 97). The implementation of collaborative leadership contributes to building individual principal leadership with school members and stakeholders for holding collective accountability for student success. The main strategy described in the literature for superintendents' initiatives to build a culture of shared and collaborative leadership in schools is professional learning communities (PLCs) (Honig & Rainey, 2014).

Harris and Jones (2010) defined the purpose of PLCs as a place where "practice is developed and refined through the collaboration of groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 175). The implementation of PLCs contributes to developing shared knowledge, beliefs, and skills among school principals and a school community for promoting collaborative leadership capacity in schools.

Superintendents' practices are essential in terms of promoting PLCs to develop principal collaborative leadership capacity. Honig and Rainey (2014) described how the central office administrators, including a superintendent, ran the process of PLCs in ways consistent with the goal to improve principal instructional leadership. Six instructional leadership directors (ILDs) established PLCs to facilitate learning collaboration in one midsized urban district that involved more than 100 principals. They collected direct observations of 25 PLC meetings, 46 semi-structured interviews, and reviews of more than 150 documents. They found that the ILDs continuously interacted with principals in the PLC meetings. In particular, Honig and Rainy (2014) found the central office leaders' engagement in those PLC practices was associated with more positive results in supporting principal instructional leadership. ILDs met their principals approximately twice monthly with the consistent and clear goal of building principal leadership capacity. All ILDs engaged with principals in conversations to open their understanding of quality instruction and leadership practices. They used tools, materials, or protocols to challenge conversations about instructional leadership practices. For instance, ILDs created summaries of books and provided principals a series of questions to push their thinking regarding the implications of their own practices. Honig and Rainey (2014) concluded that when the ILDs interacted with principals in the PLC, it contributed to building collegial relationships, which enable principals to work together as professionals by sharing expertise and knowledge for instructional improvement.

Honig and Rainey's (2014) study revealed that central office leaders' specific practices are important to facilitate principal instructional leadership growth in PLCs. In particular, engaging district leaders in sustainable PLC activities with school principals contributes to sharing practices and ideas, and reflects ultimately on increasing principal leadership capacity for

school improvement. This suggests involving principals in PLC activities with district leaders encourages the building of collaborative leadership. More recently, Olivier and Huffman (2016) investigated not only involving school principals and district leaders in PLCs, but also empowering a broader array of school members' to participate in PLC activities associated with more significant school improvement. The data for their case study included individual interviews and focus groups, through which they explored how school district personnel (i.e., central office staff) improved schools with the professional learning community process. The participants included school level administrators, teacher leaders, and central office staff from districts in Louisiana and Texas. All schools within the Alpha School System in Louisiana and Beta ISD in Texas utilized the professional learning community process. Olivier and Huffman (2016) found that the superintendents supported implementation and sustainability of the PLC process within schools, and they provided broad participation for school members including the central office staff, principals, assistant principals, and teachers in PLC activities to form collaborative groups for sharing school planning and decision making. The superintendents also supported shared leadership responsibilities among school administrators and teachers. For example, districts facilitated monthly meetings with groups of school administrators and teachers to discuss guidelines and lessons, and share ideas, school plans, assessments, and data related to student work. All these collaborative practices in PLCs among district staff and school members contributed to school improvement.

Chapter II Closure

The literature review in this chapter illustrated the relationship between poverty and student achievement via such influences as student access to learning opportunity, parent involvement, school quality, teacher quality, and the leadership of principals and district leaders.

This review also established the importance of leadership capacity at both the school and district levels, along with the importance of district leaders being directly involved in building both instructional leadership and collaborative leadership with principals, school staffs, and other stakeholders to improve student learning. Many of the studies reviewed, however, involved large school districts with more district personnel capacity than available to most districts in states with a large number of small to medium sized (i.e., less than 1,000 students to 5,000 students) districts and limited central office capacity.

Further studies are needed to examine how superintendents and other district leaders take on responsibility for developing principal capacity for shared collaborative and strong instructional leadership. Specifically, there is a need for additional case studies in districts with schools that serve high poverty populations and focus on developing principal capacity in those two areas in order to improve achievement in low-performing schools and/or even turn those schools into high-performing schools. The present study adds to the conversation in the literature by seeking out an instrumental case of a district committed to developing principal capacity for both instructional leadership and collaborative leadership. Through such an instrumental case, this study develops a detailed description of how the superintendent and other district leaders work with principals to increase instructional leadership and collaborative, shared leadership capacity in the district and within the district's most academically challenged schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to provide a comprehensive insight into how superintendents build school principal leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. It was important to explore how superintendents and principals engage with each other around these two forms of building leadership capacity. This study was conducted in a school district with one or more high-poverty schools (i.e. with student free/reduced lunch enrollments at or above the State average of 48%) that are either outperforming demographically similar schools and/or have recently improved sufficiently to be removed from the State's Priority Schools list. This study also focused on a district where the superintendent has implemented school improvement initiatives to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity and build a culture of shared, collaborative leadership between district leaders, school leaders, and other stakeholders, including students and parents.

The study aimed to address the following overarching research question: How do the superintendent and other district leaders work with the principals, in general, and the principals of high-poverty schools, specifically, to increase instructional leadership and shared, collaborative leadership capacity? The study was also guided by the following sub-questions:

1. What specific strategies is the district using to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?

2. What specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop shared, collaborative leadership between central office and building leaders and between all district leaders and staff, students, and parents?

3. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?

4. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high-poverty schools?

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used for this instrumental case study to provide a detailed understanding of how superintendents develop school principals. In particular, the study provided comprehensive insights into the specific activities and strategies (Creswell, 2013) that characterize the ways in which superintendents and principals of high-poverty and out-performing schools work together to build collaborative and instructional leadership. This qualitative case study employed an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources to ensure that the study issue was not explored through only one lens, but rather a variety of lenses, which allowed for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 1995, p. 544). The processes of using different initiatives by the district superintendent to developing principal's leadership capacity were fully explored by utilizing a variety of data sources, including interviews with multiple participants and observations in order to gain a clear understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Research Design, Approach, and Rationale

This study applied the instrumental case study approach to yield a detailed and thick description of how the superintendent selects and carries out strategies that focus on building instructional and shared, collaborative leadership capacity, both between central office leaders and principals and between/among principals, teachers and other stakeholders with special

attention to improving student achievement in high-poverty schools (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007). Yin (2013) claimed that the case study approach is a more suitable method to describe what, how, and why something happened (or is happening) through the perspective of a person or group of persons who experience the phenomenon under study within the same context. They are highly contextual and useful for understanding the phenomenon of interest as it occurred or is occurring within a bounded case. This case study described how the superintendent of a district of interest (i.e. the bounded case) works to develop principal leadership capacity that contributes to a real and measurable development in student success within high-poverty schools.

Merriam (1998) suggested that the case study design is useful to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning of the participants involved in the study. Another reason to use a case study approach was to obtain an in-depth description of a process, activity, event, method, or situation involving either an individual or a group and based on extensive data collection. In this study, the in-depth description and analysis focused on the process that a superintendent utilizes with principals and other central office administrators to develop principal leadership capacity.

Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) describe the instrumental case study approach as one that investigates and analyzes what is occurring in specific cases to improve a wider understanding of issues that transcend cases. For this study, the issue of developing principal leadership capacity in high-poverty schools was of strong current interest to researchers, policymakers, and local district leaders because existing research points to the pivotal role of a school principal in building school capacity to mitigate the negative influences of poverty on student achievement. There is also a growing body of research that suggests superintendents can and do contribute to improved student success, primarily via the ways in which they work with the board of education

to focus attention and allocate resources and the way they work with other school leaders to create defined autonomy supported by district systems to support teaching and learning (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Defined autonomy is a concept that Marzano and Waters (2009) developed to represent evidence from their meta-analysis of the research on superintendent characteristics that schools and districts that turn around failing patterns of student achievement and become highly reliable in sustaining that turn-around are ones in which both school level and district leaders (especially the superintendent) exercise strong leadership. This type of superintendent leadership is characterized by unwavering focus on student achievement and strategic measures to grow principal and teacher capacity to insure a strong instructional program. At the same time, this type of superintendent leadership contributes to the development of highly skilled and autonomous school level leaders; i.e. school principals. Thus, the emergence of the concept of defined autonomy. This concept established a new appreciation for strong leadership that the superintendent exercised through "district-defined, nonnegotiable, common goals and a system of accountability" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 16).

The defined autonomy concept has also altered the notion that the superintendent's work is disconnected from the day-to-day process of teaching and learning. Defined autonomy requires more of the superintendent than just top-down direction and influence. Rather, defined autonomy works hand-in-hand with collaborative goal setting (Waters & Marzano, 2006, pp. 12-16), non-negotiable expectations for student learning, and strong support for the work of both school leaders and teachers. This infers that superintendents of high-reliability districts (those that sustain strong student success regardless of district demographics) are highly engaged with principals and teachers and laser focused on developing the capacity of both.

For this study, I identified an instrumental case of a district whose superintendent is highly engaged in developing principal capacity and employing strategies that increase that capacity in the areas of instructional and shared, collaborative leadership. This study focused on a case that can be instrumental in learning how the superintendent works with principals and other district leaders to shape and implement initiatives to develop strong instructional and collaborative leadership at the school level while modeling the same at the district level. Yin (2003) explained the instrumental case study method focuses on investigating and analyzing the experiences of various participants in the phenomenon being studied. In this study, I sought to describe the leadership capacity development process from the perspective of the superintendent and the principals.

I sought to understand how the superintendents and principals interact and engage with each other around the two forms of leadership: instructional and collaborative. I focused on the contexts and situations in which the superintendent provides specific activities and strategies to encourage collaborative leadership practices of school principals with other stakeholders for school improvement. The instrumental case study method involved the multiple data sources, including interviews, observations, and informal interactions and communications between me and the district superintendent, principals, central office administrators, and, where relevant, other stakeholders. Through these multiple data sources, I elicited descriptions of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives that provided me with a clearer sense of the structure and meaning of the superintendent's work to build principal leadership capacity. Through this case study, the participants were able to describe their views of reality and enabled me to have a better understanding of their actions (Lather, 1992; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The interviews, observations, and informal interactions and communications assisted in providing a clear picture

of the superintendent's approach to developing principal leadership capacity. The perspectives of all parties involved in this approach also helped me ascertain the meaning each party ascribed to the process of principal leadership development.

Reflections on My Identity

My educational background consists of a Bachelor of Arts degree from College of Education, Al Hasa, Saudi Arabia, with a major in Geography. I have a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Western Michigan University, where I am working on my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. My work experience includes being an elementary teacher for two years in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Through my teaching experience, I noticed that the development of education depends on local district administrators of the Ministry of Education. I also noted that superintendents (supervisors) are considered to have very powerful positions in the school system of Saudi Arabia. Superintendents are responsible for the supervision and the implementation of policy, planning, and programs in the school district. They accordingly spend most of their daily task time on administrative matters rather than on the improvement of instruction and future planning (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Although the Ministry of Education has provided great effort and immense funding to improve education by implementing new instructional strategies, school principals face new challenges to improve school functions because of advances in information and communication technologies, which have created a requirement for new skills that Saudi education needs to promote (Tatweer, 2010). I saw that principals needed the superintendent to work with them to implement these new instructional strategies and decisions, but the superintendents are not hired to directly be involved in these activities with the principals. Nor is it the expectation that superintendents be involved with enabling principals to continuously improve their schools and

student academic achievement. The superintendents are not actively engaged in the processes of PLCs that would help to work collaboratively with the district leaders to developing principals' instructional leadership capacity (Besley & Coate, 2003).

The educational issues that I noticed regarding the limited involvement of superintendents to improve Saudi Arabian principals' instructional and, more specifically, shared collaborative leadership, led me to conduct this study. This is because I am interested in learning and exploring how superintendents in U.S. school districts work with building principals to build leadership capacity by developing (a) principals' capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. I want to explore how they are using specific strategies and initiatives to improve principal leadership capacity. I plan to disseminate the findings from my study in Saudi Arabia, in order to expose school leaders and policy makers there to alternative models for defining the work of the superintendent and for developing the capacity of principals as a result of the superintendent's direct involvement in that effort.

Population, Sample, and Setting

The population for this study was superintendents, principals and other district personnel in the southwest section of a Midwestern U.S. state. The sampling procedure for this study was to purposefully select one instrumental case study district that yielded an in-depth look at how superintendents and principals engage with each other while developing instructional and shared, collaborative leadership capacity in schools that serve high-poverty populations (Creswell, 2013). The number of subjects recruited to complete this study was one superintendent plus two principals in one K-12 School district to be recruited from the southwest section of a mid-western U.S. state. Other district personnel were involved in the study only as participants of specific activities and environments in which I conducted observations of the superintendent at

work. Since these additional people were not directly recruited, consented, or engaged as participants, they were not considered sources of data. Rather, the observed ways in which the superintendent engaged with these people became the data collected under the observation form of data.

I started the recruitment process by examining the data collected from the State's Department of Education to determine which rural districts met the following criteria within the geographic region of the southwest portion of the State:

1. The superintendent and other participants must be from a district with at least one school that has 48% or more of its total students (the State average), who qualified for free/reduced lunch for any period between 2015-18.

2. At least one of its schools placed on the State's Priority Schools list or has been in stage 3-4 of the NCLB AYP process over the last 7 year period and has made adequate enough academic progress to be removed from the Priority Schools list or to meet AYP.

3. District and/or school level state assessment results in math and/or English language arts for the most recent three-year period fall in the top quartile of a State level peer group of demographically similar districts.

After determining rural districts that met the above criteria, the ideal maximum numbers of recruiting districts in this study would be 30 school districts identified as a high-performing high-poverty school district within the geographic region of the southwest portion of the State. Given some rigorous selection criteria for a district, very few candidates qualified for my study. I determined only three rural districts that met the above criteria that identified as a high-performing high-poverty school district within the geographic region of the southwest portion of the State. I sent the recruitment letter (see Appendix E) to the three school districts to invite them

to participate in the study. In the recruitment letter, superintendents who met the following study criteria qualified to participate in the study:

1. One full-time superintendent and at least one other central office administrator.

2. The superintendent is actively involved in developing instructional and collaborative leadership among and between principals and other district leaders.

The letter asked the superintendents to contact me for further information if they believe they met the study criteria and are interested in learning more about the study. Upon receipt of permission by the district superintendents, only one superintendent of a rural school district in the southwest portion of the State that met the study criteria contacted me among the three qualified school districts. I recruited this district because it met all the study criteria. I emailed the letter of invitation (see Appendix F) to the superintendent. After the superintendent responded to the letter of invitation, I invited him to communicate directly with me to learn more about the study and considering participation.

I scheduled a telephone call to discuss the research study and review the consent document. I provided the superintendent a complete description of the study and the details of participating in the study. The superintendent had an opportunity to ask questions. The consent document (see Appendix H) was emailed to the superintendent prior to the telephone call to allow review. The superintendent agreed to participate in the study, and he signed the informed consent form to indicate willingness to participate in the research study.

Upon receipt of a signed consent from the superintendent, I worked through the superintendent to recruit the school principals to explore how the superintendent works to build their instructional leadership capacity and/or a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. A letter of invitation was emailed to the superintendent to be forwarded to the two principals (see

Appendix G). Two principals expressed interest in learning more about the study, so I scheduled a time to meet with those two principals to review full study details and conduct the consent process. After I received the consent forms from the two principals (see Appendix I) indicating a willingness to participate in the study, that school district was accepted into the study.

While many such studies would give preference to cases of rural districts, this study did not exclude any district that meets the above characteristics, as they are the basis for framing and bounding the instrumental case. The southwest region of State has mostly small districts (under 1,000 student), and medium (1000-5,000 students), and a majority of those districts have high rates of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch (the poverty indicator for this study). Moreover, small- and medium-sized districts often have very small central office administrative teams, making it more likely that the superintendent will be directly involved in the work of developing their principals' instructional and collaborative leadership capacity.

The region does have three mid-sized urban districts with high poverty rates, and those districts serve more diverse student populations with significant proportions of students identifying as African American and Hispanic, while many of the smaller, more rural districts in the region report much smaller proportions of non-White students. In the recruiting process, diversity of student ethnicity/racial identity will also be a determining characteristic if more than one district that meets the five primary study criteria responds with interest in participating in this study.

Data Collection Procedures and Instrumentation

Data collection occurred during visits to the school and district sites. Data was collected through open-ended and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the study participants (Creswell, 2013). Also, I observed meetings and shadowed the superintendent to see how this

superintendent and principals work together to carry out strategies that focus on building instructional and collaborative leadership capacity of principals. My observations included the observations I made while the superintendent was showing me the documents that he worked on, but I did not analyze the documents independently of those observations. Documents sometimes were shown to me during the interviews but I analyzed the interview transcripts but not the documents.

I began the case study by conducting the first interview with the superintendent, during which the superintendent and I dialogued about the superintendent's approach to developing principal capacity. The first superintendent meeting was a 50-minute open-ended and semi-structured face-to-face interview with building principal leadership capacity to gain the superintendent's perspective on the work that he is leading to develop instructional and shared, collaborative leadership capacity. Creswell (2009) suggests that open-ended questions allow respondents to have more description and explanation. I asked the superintendent and other participants to elucidate ideas of interest to this study in more detail through probes. Appendix A contains the interview protocol for the initial superintendent interview. I developed protocols for the remaining interviews and debriefings based on the data gathered from the first superintendent interview and the observations.

Following the initial interview with the superintendent, I scheduled the interviews with the two principals. Each interview was conducted separately in the principal's office in the schools, and both took approximately 55 minutes. The primary purpose of these principal interviews was to explore how the superintendent is directly involved in the work to develop their instructional leadership capacity and/or a culture of shared, collaborative leadership in the schools. A particular focus for the principal interviews was to describe the current

superintendent's strategies, activities, and initiatives that principals believe have a positive impact on increasing their leadership capacity and the capacity of their school to improve student success. The principals' interview questions were written after the initial interview with the superintendent. The principal interview protocol is designed to guide the interview and includes open-ended questions, semi-structured questions and possible probes (see Appendix C).

After the initial superintendent's and the principals' interviews, I analyzed the data and used the analysis to develop an interview guide for the follow-up interview with the superintendent (see Appendix D). The follow-up interview lasted approximately 50 minutes and was held in the superintendent's office. All the interview protocols were reviewed by my dissertation committee chair and were submitted for HSIRB approval prior to use. Also, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to ensure the accuracy of the collected information.

All recordable data was labeled with pseudonyms and/or codes to avoid compromising confidentiality. I transcribed all recorded interactions, redacting or substituting any information that would reveal the identity of participants in the study. I maintained all data on a password protected encrypted electronic storage devise and placed that device and all working papers for the study in a locked cabinet or file either in my home or in the office of my dissertation chair until the completion of the study, after which, I will destroy all audio recordings. Data was transported directly by me and will be stored separately in a secure location in the principal investigator's office at Western Michigan University for at least three years after the close of the study.

Following the first superintendent interview, I carried out the schedule of observations developed with the superintendent plus shadowing. I also requested opportunities to debrief with

the superintendent and the principals through short follow-up interviews after observations. This resulted in several observations and short follow-up interviews between April and September 2018. I observed meetings and other engagements to see how the superintendents work with the principals, in general, and also to describe how they develop and implement activities and strategies to increase instructional and a shared, collaborative leadership capacity. The nature of superintendent interactions with principals and other stakeholders were of particular interest for these observations, along with the strategies that the superintendent uses to develop principal instructional leadership capacity and a shared, collaborative decision-making culture.

I conducted five observations, and all these observations took place during visits to the school and district sites in several days between April and May of 2018. I was welcomed into a variety of meetings facilitated by the superintendent that included: 1) a monthly leadership team meeting of the superintendent, the two principals, transportation, the technology, and the food service, 2) the individual principal meetings of the superintendent and the principals, and 3) the principal team meeting of the superintendent and the two principals. Also, I shadowed the superintendent in the schools and district as he conducted his activities over several days between April and June of 2018. These shadowing activities helped me to link what I observed and the information that I collected from the interviews. In this way, I was able to triangulate and verify the validity of my interpretations and probe further to a better understand the superintendent's approach in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership among and between the school and district level administrators and stakeholders. During these meetings, I was observing them in the normal course of their professional activities and did not interact with every individual on a personal basis.

I spent enough days in the district to access opportunities for meaningful observations pertaining to how the superintendent develops and carries out strategies to develop instructional and shared, collaborative leadership capacity. "Observation allows researchers to formulate their own version of what is occurring and then check it with participates" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007). The purpose of the observation is to get additional information on how the superintendent and principals engage with each other around developing these two forms of leadership capacity.

The observation plan included the time that I sat to observe meetings and other engagements between the superintendent, principals, central office administrators, teacher leaders, and/or other stakeholders, during which I created field notes to capture relevant observations and the essence of both verbal and non-verbal interactions (see Appendix B). I was an outsider participant, watching and taking field notes from a distance and avoiding any intrusion into the activities I was watching (Creswell, 2013). I took notes during each observation, including descriptions, direct quotations, and observer comments. I took notes of the physical actions, interactions, and discussions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I wrote the field notes using a laptop, and I arranged the notes soon after I left the school setting (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007). In total, the data collection plan occurred over several days between April and September of 2018.

Trustworthiness in Collecting Data

Before conducting the interview with the participants of the study, a pilot test was conducted with participants that have similar interests as those that participated in the study (Turner, 2010). The pilot test helped to determine whether the pilot group would understand the interview questions, if the questions were appropriate, and if the time they need to answer questions was enough (Billinton & Allan, 1984).

"The interview guide and procedures should be pilot-tested to ensure that they will yield reasonably unbiased data" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007). Also, the interview questions were refined through pilot testing with piloting the instrument before conducting the interviews to develop a research instrument with frame questions and determine the appropriateness of the questions (Creswell, 2013). Since my dissertation chair was a superintendent of schools and carried out several initiatives to develop principal leadership capacity during her tenure as superintendent, I tested my interview protocols with her and one other W.M.U. faculty member who also has experience as a superintendent of a K-12 district to check the reliability and validity of the interview questions (Billinton & Allan, 1984).

Finally, I used triangulation that involved corroborating evidence from different sources, such as interviews with multiple participants (superintendent and two principals) and observations that were conducted over several days to produce an understanding of ideas and perspective gained from participants and to strengthen the credibility (Creswell, 2013).

Data Collection Instruments

I developed an interview protocol for collecting data during the first interview with the superintendent. I wrote the interview questions based on my review of the literature, and these questions also corresponded to my research question. The interview protocol was designed to guide the interview, and it included both open-ended questions, semi-structured questions and possible probes (see Appendix A), as well as a brief description of the project (Creswell, 2013). After the initial superintendent interview, I analyzed the data and used the analysis to adapt the interview for collecting data from the other study participants (see Appendix C). Subsequent variations on the initial interview protocol were reviewed by my dissertation committee chair and submitted for HSIRB approval prior to use.

I also used the study research questions to frame an initial observation protocol. The observational protocol included descriptive notes in the left column, and the researcher's comments and analytic insights about the participant behavior and learning in the right column. The observation protocol also included date and time of observation, place, and a description of the activity or circumstances observed (see Appendix B).

Storing Data

I used a computer to organize and store transcripts and observation notes. I also used NVivo software to sort and organize data. I developed backup copies of computer files to keep the data from interviews and observation notes, such as Microsoft Word files (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). All data was kept on a password protected, an encrypted data storage device, which was locked in a secure file when not in use. All data used identification codes or pseudonyms, and any identifying references were redacted to protect the anonymity of participants and the setting for the study.

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Data Analysis

</div>

Type of Data Analysis

I used inductive analysis to explore patterns and significant ideas in the data. According to Voss, Tsikriktsis, and Frohlich (2002), "Open coding is an analytic process by which concepts are identified and are developed in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 212). I used open coding to select significant segments of data and salient points. I organized those data segments and salient points into coding categories based on my research questions and proceeded to analyze the coding categories to identify concepts that provided more refined coding categories until the resulting categories served to summarize what I saw happening in the data and provided a framework for the case description (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Analysis Steps

I analyzed each data source separately at first. After analyzing them separately, I analyzed the case as a whole to look for the common themes that showed up in this data (Creswell, 2013). The analysis approach for each data source was inductive and followed the same steps as laid out in the following paragraphs.

First, I read the transcripts and observation notes to transform them into codable form (Foss & Waters, 2007). I organized and prepared data for analysis. Interviews and observation notes were transcribed and word-processed. Then, the data was imported into the NVivo program to organize. I organized the data in the sources section of NVivo. Then, I read the texts several times and wrote memos to immerse myself into the details of data and try to get a sense of the information before dividing them into categories that I could use to distill themes (Creswell, 2013). I identified units of analysis to determine which aspects of data needed to be focused on for coding prior to data reduction, and, ultimately, deducing patterns and themes (Foss & Waters, 2007).

The next step was moving from reading the data and writing memos to describing and interpreting the data into codes and themes. In this process, the data analysis occurred on two levels using Saldana's (2016) first and second cycle coding methods. In the first cycle coding level, I developed detailed lists of codes to make a whole description of the case and its context. The data analyses began with a short list of coding, and then it expanded the coding as continuing to review the data.

In the second cycle coding, codes were reorganized and condensed into prospective major theme and sub-theme categories. For this stage, I used "pattern coding" to group codes into a smaller number of major theme and subtheme concepts to reduce and collapse them. Then,

I used "focused coding" to search for the most frequent or significant ideas in terms of numbers of codes that were presented for each prospective theme and sub-theme concept for each dataset, including the superintendent data, the principal data, and observational notes and quotations. The final stage of focused coding helped me confirm the final set of themes and sub-themes. In the first and second cycle coding levels, I relied heavily on the quality of my literature review to assist me in the analysis and interpretation of data.

I started with very obvious groupings and named the categories, and I continued to refine the groupings and renamed categories as I began to crystallize the key ideas and relationships that served to answer the research questions. I finished by moving items and renaming categories until I reached a final schema that held up as an authentic way to frame the case description (Creswell, 2013). Based on the major themes and subthemes, I highlighted the elements/examples that describe the activities and strategies that characterize the ways in which the superintendent and principals of the high-poverty district work together to strengthen instructional leadership and build shared and collaborative leadership.

After completing the case description using the themes and sub-themes as the "story frame", I examined and described how the themes and sub-themes respond to the research questions. In Chapter 5, I linked the interpretation of the data to other research literature and explored the implications of the case (Creswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness in Data Analysis

Trustworthiness of the data analysis was investigated through peer debriefing, rich, thick description, reflexivity, and researcher bias or triangulation. Two education faculty members, who specialize in qualitative research methods and capable of discussing the problems about the

research process, took part in reviewing my codebook as peer reviewers. They reviewed my data collection processes, analysis, findings, and conclusions (Creswell, 2013).

In addition to peer debriefing, I was able to produce a rich, thick description of the study case, which readers of my study can use to make decisions regarding transferability. I made sure that I provided a detailed description of both the participants and the setting to enable readers to transfer the findings of the study to other cases they deem comparable. Also, I achieved a rich, thick description by displaying the participants' voices and perspectives with each theme and by presenting a detailed description of the final case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Throughout my study, I practiced reflexivity by writing both interpretive and analytic memos to explore potential for researcher bias, apply bracketing strategies to ensure that researcher opinions, and any biases did not impact the inquiry. I considered and was careful to bracket potential researcher biases when interviewing, observing, and analyzing the data. I endeavored to remain a neutral observer and collector of the data (Creswell, 2013). Any potential researcher bias was minimized through conducting triangulation of data: involving different data sources, such as interviews with multiple participants (superintendent and two principals) and observations to produce an understanding of theme and the perspective of the participants (Bowen, 2009).

Limitations and Delimitations

One delimitation to this study was the criteria for qualifying a school district as a potential site for this study within a defined geographical region in one state. The study focused on one instrumental case based on how districts that met the study criteria responded to the recruitment process. In other words, the selection of the case was based both on the study

inclusionary criteria and the initiative of a given district superintendent to commit his district to participation in the study.

The first limitation was that this study focused on only one superintendent in one rural school district so findings may not transfer beyond mid-western U.S. small, rural schools of similar demographics.

Also, a limitation of this study was that qualitative research is often open-ended, and the participants have more control over the content of the data that I collected. Therefore, it is more difficult to confirm reliability or credibility of the data, but credibility was increased by the use of triangulation between multiple sources of data from multiple perspectives (i.e., the superintendent, two principals, and the researcher).

Also, a limitation of this study was the qualitative research requires several intensive analysis methods, such as categorization, recoding, etc. (Creswell, 2013). Also, qualitative research heavily depends on the perspective of an experienced researcher to obtain objective data from the participants. Therefore, conclusions can be dependent on the personal characteristics of the researcher. Also, the data and its analysis may have been limited by the background knowledge of the researcher about U. S. school districts (Maxwell, 2005). To mitigate these factors, I took great care in my interpretation of the U.S. literature and using that literature to inform both data analysis and interpretation.

A final limitation of this study was that the qualitative research is based on the individual skills of the researcher and more easily affected by the researcher's personal biases. I considered these biases when interviewing, observing, and analyzing the data. I endeavored to remain a neutral observer and collector of the data (Creswell, 2013). Also, the bias was minimized to

establish credibility through using triangulation of multiple data sources from multiple

participant perspectives (Bowen, 2009).

Chapter III Closure

This chapter described the design and methodology that was used to explore how

superintendents build school principal leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to

function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. The

research questions were identified, and the population sample for the study was described. The

structure and trustworthiness were also described in detail, and the methods of data collection

and analysis were discussed. Chapters IV and V outlined the results and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how superintendents build school principal leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. The overarching research question that guided this study was: How does the superintendent work with the principals, in general, and principals of high-poverty schools, specifically, to increase instructional leadership and shared, collaborative leadership capacity? The four sub-questions included:

1. What specific strategies is the district using to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?

2. What specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop shared, collaborative leadership between all district leaders as well as between district leaders and teachers, students, and parents?

3. How is the superintendent working with school principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?

4. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high-poverty schools?

I collected data for this study through interviews with the superintendent, interviews with the two principals, and observation notes and quotations. Inductive analysis and qualitative open coding techniques were used to analyze the data for themes and subthemes. This chapter (a) describes the data collection methods and procedures (b) describes participant profiles, (c) presents the themes and subthemes for each participant group, and (d) presents a case study summations.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Recruitment Process

I started the recruitment process by examining the data collected from the State's Department of Education to determine which rural districts met the following criteria within the geographic region of the southwest portion of the State:

1. The superintendent and other participants must be from a district with at least one school that has 48% or more of its students (the State average) qualifying for free/reduced lunch for any period between 2015-18.

2. At least one of its schools is placed on the State's Priority Schools list or has been in stage 3-4 of the NCLB AYP process over the last 7-year period and has made adequate enough academic progress to be removed from the Priority Schools list or to meet AYP.

3. District and/or school level state assessment results in math and/or English language arts for the most recent three-year period fall in the top quartile of a State level peer group of demographically similar districts.

Given the rigorous selection criteria for a district, very few candidates qualified for my study. I determined only three rural districts that met the above criteria that identified as a high-performing high-poverty school district within the geographic region of the southwest portion of the State. I sent the recruitment letter (see Appendix E) to the three school districts to invite them to participate in the study. In the recruitment letter, superintendents who met the following study criteria qualified to participate in the study:

1. One full-time superintendent and at least one other central office administrator.

2. The superintendent is actively involved in developing instructional and collaborative leadership among and between principals and other district leaders.

The letter asked the superintendents to contact me for further information if they believe they met the study criteria and are interested in learning more about the study. Upon receipt of permission by the district superintendents, only one superintendent of a small town, rural school district in the southwest portion of the State that met the study criteria contacted me among the three qualified school districts. I recruited this district because it met all the study criteria. I emailed the letter of invitation (see Appendix F) to the superintendent. After the superintendent responded to the recruitment letter, I invited him to communicate directly with me to learn more about the study and consider participation.

I scheduled a telephone call to discuss the research study and review the consent document. The consent document (see Appendix H) was emailed to the superintendent prior to the telephone call to allow review. The superintendent agreed to participate in the study and he signed the informed consent form to indicate willingness to participate in the research study.

Upon receipt of a signed consent from the superintendent, I worked through the superintendent to recruit the school principals to explore how the superintendent works to build their instructional leadership capacity and/or a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. A letter of invitation was emailed to the superintendent to be forwarded to the two principals (see Appendix G). Two principals expressed interest in learning more about the study so I scheduled a time to meet with those two principals to review full study details and conduct the consent process. After I received the consent forms from the two principals (see Appendix I) indicating a willingness to participate in the study, that school district was accepted into the study. The superintendent indicated that the other central office administrators serve in finance and operational support areas. Since these other administrators do not engage with the principals and instructional staff in ways that relate to the focus of this study, I did not include them as

participants. Additionally, I did not include members of the Board of Education as participants as they do not directly observe the superintendent's day-to-day engagement with principals and instructional staff.

Data Collection Process

I began the case study by conducting the first interview with the superintendent in April of 2018. To assist him in preparation, I sent the interview questions via email to the superintendent to reflect upon prior to the interview. The first interview lasted approximately 50 minutes and was held in his office. The interview was semi-structured which provided the superintendent an opportunity to provide more clarifications and descriptions regarding the research topic discussed during the interview (see Appendix A).

Following the initial interview with the superintendent, I scheduled the interviews with the two principals. Each interview was conducted separately in the principal's office in the schools and both took approximately 55 minutes. The primary purpose of these principal interviews was to explore how the superintendent is directly involved in the work to develop their instructional leadership capacity and/or a culture of shared, collaborative leadership in the schools. The principals' interview questions were written after the initial interview with the superintendent. The principal interview protocol is designed to guide the interview and includes open-ended questions, semi-structured questions and possible probes (see Appendix C).

After the initial superintendent's and the principals' interviews, I analyzed the data and used the analysis to develop an interview guide for the follow-up interview with the superintendent (see Appendix D). The follow-up interview lasted approximately 50 minutes and was held in the superintendent's office in July of 2018. All the interview protocols were reviewed by my dissertation committee chair and were submitted for HSIRB approval prior to use. Also,

all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to ensure the accuracy of the collected information.

Following the first superintendent interview, I carried out the schedule of observations developed with the superintendent. I also requested opportunities to debrief with the superintendent through follow-up interviews after observations. This resulted in several observations and short follow-up interviews with the superintendent and principals between April and September 2018. I conducted five observations, and all these observations took place during visits to the school and district sites in several days between April and May of 2018. I was welcomed into a variety of meetings facilitated by the superintendent that included: 1) a monthly leadership team meeting of the superintendent, the two principals, and the directors of transportation, technology, and food service; 2) the individual principal meetings of the superintendent and the principals; and 3) the principal team meeting between the superintendent and the two principals. Also, I shadowed the superintendent in the schools and district as he conducted his activities over several days between April and June of 2018. These shadowing activities helped me to link what I observed and the information that I collected from the interviews. In this way, I was able to triangulate and verify the validity of my interpretations and probe further to better understand the superintendent's approach in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership among and between the school and district level administrators and stakeholders.

Participant Profiles

I created the following profiles through the conversations with the superintendent and others to get an overall picture of who this person is, his background, and how he functions in his role in the district.

Profile of the Superintendent

My first impression upon meeting the superintendent was positive. The superintendent demonstrated a balance between establishing a welcoming relationship with me and showing his strong leadership abilities. I observed that the superintendent is a tall, energetic man with a bright smile and a lively step. In the first interview with him, he immediately helped me to feel at ease through his warm, quiet, and energetic behavior. He is an imposing personality with great confidence and poise. Also, during all meetings with him, I felt comfortable to ask him anything, and there was not any stressful situation in the meetings. This is how the middle and high school principal described the superintendent during the interview in terms of his respectful treatment of people:

> He's extremely easy to talk to and I'm not even nervous about talking with him. It is not stressful. I can go in there and talk to him about anything, and I don't have to worry about him blowing up or losing his temper or questioning me. He is a really good person.

Over the conversations with the middle and high school principal, I have learned that the superintendent is a 1983 graduate of the high school and holds MA & EdD degrees in School Administration. The superintendent had worked as a school principal in private and public schools in Central and South America, Alabama, and Michigan for the past 31 years. Through 31 years of experience in education and administration, as well as working with the different leadership styles of various other superintendents, he adopted and developed his own leadership style and his approach to developing and strengthening relationships with principals and other stakeholders.

After 31 years, the middle and high school principal told me the superintendent decided to come back to his hometown to apply for the superintendent position. He was hired in 2014 and

was in his 5th year in that position at the time of this study. This is where he graduated and grew up and also where his children are. This contributes intrinsically to the superintendent's motivation for this school to be successful and to his long-term commitment to serve as their superintendent. He believes this makes him more connected to the district and community than if he would have gone to some random district to become a superintendent. It is more personal to him, and as a result, he cares more about his work in the superintendent role, which goes well beyond his "job".

Also, the middle and high school principal mentioned that the superintendent has been working as a superintendent in the current district for five years, but prior to taking the job of superintendent, he and his family lived in the same rural area. As a result, he had already established strong trusting relationships with the community members over the years before he came back to the district to serve in this position.

The middle and high school principal reported how the superintendent developed a strong trusting relationship with the community. He showed that the superintendent has a lot of brothers and sisters who live here, and everyone knows him. He is very outgoing. The superintendent knows a lot of people and has developed many relationships. He always creates a connection with parents or involves the grandparents when events or situations occur in the school. He has an open door policy and always reminds people to call or meet him at different times if they have issues or questions. In the interview, the middle and high school principal emphasized that the superintendent "has done a really great job of making connections with community members and brings all people in, and he has an open door policy so the community can talk to him or call him."

The middle and high school principal also reported that the community, likewise, has a strong sense of trust in him. Everyone knows he is a good person from a good family and cares about the school. When he communicates issues with those people, they trust him as if they are hearing it from an old family friend rather than hearing it from a stranger. The middle and high school principal has described the superintendent as trustworthy when he stated that:

When there are issues, he immediately communicates them with people, and I think the overall sense of the community is that he is from here, he cares about the district, and he is trustworthy. He is known for years, and people really trust him.

The middle and high school principal went on further to tell me that the superintendent strengthened the trusting relationship with the community by regularly sharing information with them through different ways of communication as the superintendent stated, "I shared information about what we do in several different ways". The middle and high school principal shared with me that the superintendent writes and publishes weekly articles for the local newspapers and makes phone calls to members of the community to establish direct contact. Likewise, the superintendent shared with me that he uses technology to publish school events on the district Web site. He makes weekly phone calls to families and teachers for some information and announcements.

In addition to sharing school information, the middle and high school principal emphatically told me that the superintendent always participates in community events and activities, such as Senior Night, and goes to all football games. He is also a part of a local service club made up of community members who support district and community initiatives to ensure all children develop to their full potential. One principal explained, "The superintendent is

definitely an advocate for our school. I mean he is out in the community participating. So he's really done a good job of bringing the community together and rallying around the school."

The superintendent builds trusting relationships not only with the external community but also with the internal community. Both the middle and high school principal and elementary school principals told to me that the superintendent is highly visible in and around the school, so everyone can keep in touch with him. The middle and high school principal characterized the superintendent by saying "He is very visible. The school staff knows that they can trust him. The superintendent loves the district and he loves this town."

Both of the principals also showed that the superintendent rarely sits in his office for long periods of time. He is hands on and daily does a walkthrough and shares leadership activities with the principals. The superintendent always communicates with staff and teachers, and he has an overall positive vibe with them. To illustrate, the middle and high school principal said:

> The superintendent is very visible. He is always out and about in the school. He very rarely sits in his office for long periods of time. Every morning, he will go over to the elementary school. He'll be outside when the little kids are getting out of their cars or parents are dropping in. Also, he is always checking with teachers and checking in with other employees and he is always very positive with them.

The superintendent shared with me his philosophy of shared leadership is based on his belief that one leader cannot achieve the substantial change and sustainable improvements in a low-performing school. This philosophy is also displayed on the district website, where the mission reads: "With the cooperation of faculty, staff, parents, and community, all students will achieve the academic and social skills necessary to be life-long learners and productive members of society."

The superintendent revealed to me that he played a significant role in getting the school off of the priority list through building a culture of shared and collaborative leadership, which empowered everyone to be a leader and work collaboratively towards school improvement. This is what the superintendent explained to me:

> Well, when in the school before I got to the district, it was put on the priority list and so we had so many years to get off the priority list, which we did. After a few years of being here, we collaborated with all the teachers and principals to develop the school plans.

This story has been repeated time and again by the principals and others' voices over the four years that the superintendent has worked at the current district. Recognizing this achievement is one manner by which the superintendent was able to keep the district vision alive and maintain continuous development in the district when everyone was invited to participate in the creation of school action plans and focus for the whole year.

Profile of the District

The superintendent leads a small, rural district in the southwest region of the State. The District is located in a small town surrounded by agricultural and minimally developed rural areas. It is situated within 30 miles of a mid-sized city and 60 of a large urban center. It is also within 15 miles of another small town with a resort economy and an extensive coastline that attracts tourism and supports a robust agricultural economy. Approximately 769 students are served by the district. The district has two public schools including one elementary school and one middle and high school. The district office is located in the heart of the two public schools. The number of central office staff in the district is four. The district was recently recognized for turning the district around from being on the list of State districts with low-performing schools to being in the top performance quartile of demographically similar schools across the State—thus,

becoming a high-performing school. In 2015-2016, the district was honored as a reward school by the State's Department of Education as a result for getting the school off of the priority lists and significantly increasing test scores.

The percentage of students across the district identified as economically disadvantaged is currently 64.63%, which is significantly higher than those economically more advantaged (35.37%). The percentage of students who qualify for free or reduce lunch is around 65%, which indicates a low level of socioeconomic status in the district.

The district has a high population of white students (71.65%), but a low population of African American students (1. 56%). The remaining student population is from diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as 20.42% Latino American, 6.24 % two or more races and .13% Asian American.

The demographic profile of the district is important in my study, as one of my research criteria focuses on a school district with one or more high-poverty schools (above the State average of 48%), with evidence of recent academic success improvement sufficient to be removed from the State's Priority Schools list. Thus, drawing a clear picture of the district will be important to the reader's understanding of progress made in the district and the strategies that the superintendent uses to influence this progress as presented in the study findings. This is an important element of the school profile because it is very difficult to move schools out of the lowest performing among all state schools. Under the superintendent, however, this district accomplished that, plus the district improved enough to become a "Reward" school (outperforming demographic peers).

Table 1

Demographic Data: Public School 2017-18

Student Ethnicity	Percent of Total Enrolled Students
White American	71.65%
Latino American	20.42%
Two or More Races	6.24%
African American	1.56%
Asian American	.13%

Table 2

Details of Students' Socioeconomic Status

Economic Groups	Public Schools
Economically disadvantaged	64.63%
Economically advantaged	35.37%
Free breakfast/lunch eligible	55.4%
Reduced breakfast/lunch eligible	9.6%

Profile of the Principals

Profile of the middle and high school principals. The Middle and High School Principal graduated with a master's degree in educational leadership from a State public university in 2000. He served in the study district as a high school science teacher for 17 years. Then, he decided to apply for the principal job in his school. He wanted to become the principal in the study district to make a difference and get the school headed back in the right direction. At the time of the study, he had served as principal in the district for five years at the middle and high school level. During his position as a principal, he has focused on getting the test scores up and continuously improving student academic achievement. Overall, he wants the school to be a

great, safe, fun and positive place where students enjoy coming and learning new things. He feels he has accomplished that by sharing responsibility among staff members, creating a leadership team, trusting them, and giving them more ownership and autonomy to do their job.

Profile of the elementary school principal. The elementary school principal graduated with a master's degree in educational leadership from the same State public university as the middle and high school principal. She began in the study district as a middle school math teacher and served in that role for 11 years. Then, she moved into the role of middle and high school instructional coach, serving in that role for two years. Through these positions, she was provided an opportunity to accumulate experience in various leadership roles in this district and was ready to move to a different job in leadership. When the elementary principal job came open in the district, she was encouraged to move into that position. The high school principal noticed her skills to be an effective principal although she is still passionate about teaching. In her position as a principal, she focuses on building a collaborative team to foster good relationships and ideas, share expertise, and influence change in the school in a positive way.

Table 3

Participant Data: School District 2018-2019

Participants	Years of Administrative Experience in the Study District	Previous Educational Experience
The superintendent	5 years as a superintendent	31 years as a school principal in private and public schools in Central and South America, Alabama, and Michigan
The middle and high school principal	6 years as a middle and high school principal	17 years as a high school science teacher in the study district

Table 3—Continued

Participants	Years of Administrative Experience in the Study District	Previous Educational Experience
The elementary school principal	3 years as elementary school principal	11 years as a middle school math teacher & 2 years as a middle and high school instructional coach in the study district

Data Analysis Methods and Procedures

The data analysis occurred on two levels using Saldana's (2016) first and second cycle coding methods. In the first cycle coding level, I developed detailed lists of codes to make a whole description of the case and its context. The data analyses began with a short list of codes and then expanded as I continued reviewing the data.

In the second cycle coding, codes were reorganized and condensed into prospective major themes and sub-theme categories. For this stage, I used "pattern coding" to group codes into a smaller number of major theme and subtheme concepts to reduce and collapse them. Then I used "focused coding" to search for the most frequent or significant ideas in terms of numbers of codes that were presented for each prospective theme and sub-theme concept for each dataset, including the superintendent data, the principal data, and observational notes and quotations. The final stage of focused coding helped me confirm the final set of themes and sub-themes. In the first and second cycle coding levels, I relied heavily on the quality of my literature review to assist me in the analysis and interpretation of data.

Based on the major themes and subthemes, I highlighted the elements/examples that describe the activities and strategies that characterize the ways in which the superintendent and principals of the high-poverty district work together to strengthen instructional leadership and build shared and collaborative leadership. In the following discussion of themes and subthemes, I

used both direct interview and observational quotations and notes to highlight and personalize the data.

The Superintendent's Role in Turning Around a Low-Performing, High-Poverty School

Before presenting the themes and subthemes, I have provided an introduction that illustrates the role that the superintendent plays in turning low-performing schools that educate high-poverty student populations into schools that outperform their demographic peers. In the present case, the superintendent acknowledged that one leader alone cannot achieve the substantial change and sustainable improvements needed to turn a low-performing school into an outperforming one. He believes that, before he became a superintendent in the current district, the district was on the priority list because school staff relied on one individual to lead the school and its instructional planning. He said, "I think that's probably what happened in the past when schools got in trouble…they were relying on one person to be the leader of that. That never works out, one person being the leader never works. Especially when you have a priority school that started to change."

He further explained that he believes that, if a leader is overly controlling in the school and micromanages the staff, they will not buy into the school vision or work toward school improvement. He described his philosophy as follows: "You can't just put out a plan and say we're going to do that. Teachers have to buy in and say the way that the curriculum should be."

He revealed that he has played a significant role in getting the school off of the priority list by building a culture of shared and collaborative leadership, which empowers everyone to be a leader for working towards school improvement. The superintendent said: "Before I got to the district, the school was put on the priority list, and then we had many years to get the school off

from the priority lists, which we did it. We did that by conducting all school planning in collaboration with the principals and teachers."

He clarified that school improvement is made by strong collaborative leadership teams that include district leaders, principals, and other stakeholders and, for them, this is a successful strategy for developing the leadership capacity needed to turn a low-performing school into one that outperforms. He explained that the strategy of building collaborative leadership teams with others empowers them to share the leadership roles and buy in to the vision for school improvement:

> Because one thing, we're a small district, and I don't want to be the king of the school. I think when you have shared leadership, people are going to buy into the process, and they're going to work towards school improvement. So that's why shared leadership is so important.

This superintendent, who turned the low-performing, high-poverty school into a school that outperforms, embraces strong leadership practices and strategies and models leadership characteristics that are presented as themes and subthemes in the following findings.

Findings from the Superintendent Interview

Six major themes have emerged as the most significant strategies that the superintendent has used to promote instructional leadership and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership with principals and stakeholders. These major themes are the superintendent:

1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain shared vision of academic achievement for all students.

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2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy.

3. Supports leaders working together as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community.

4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school.

5. Sets and communicates expectations that all students are capable of success regardless of their socio-economic status.

6. Overcomes roadblocks to shared leadership that builds shared responsibility for the success of all students.

Theme 1: Engages in Communication and Substantive Conversations with Stakeholders to Share Leadership Responsibility and Sustain a Shared Vision of Academic Achievement for All Students

Engaging in communication and substantive conversations emerged from the data analysis as an approach used by the superintendent to share leadership with the principals and stakeholders and to motivate them to share the school's vision. The superintendent emphasizes that these daily meetings have been an effective strategy for sharing leadership, as well as for gauging if the principals and stakeholders are moving in the same direction in terms of the school's vision. He states:

> I think the daily meetings are the strongest ones that we have…You can really kind of gauge where your leadership is going as far as the direction of where you want to go to. So I think that's as far as a shared leadership or vision that we had here before.

The superintendent uses two strategies related to communication and conversations as a tool to develop strong relationships with stakeholders in order to encourage them to share

leadership responsibility and motive them to move in the same direction as the school vision. His two strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding the development of curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues. The superintendent reported that he uses different forms of communication that begin with listening in order to gather stakeholders' input about school issues or to plan school improvements. He stated that, "The big part in communication is getting information and sharing information with them, and then getting their input. So that involves a lot. We send out e-mails and text, make phone calls, or meet face to face."

The superintendent went on to confirm that he shares leadership by keeping lines of communication open with stakeholders to inform them about school issues and elicit their input prior to making decisions so that they are all moving in the same direction. He said, "We share the beliefs and the direction that we need to go through communication. Also, we focus on the communication when an issue comes up…because that's part of shared leadership. I want to get their input before decisions are made."

Even though the superintendent uses different ways of communicating, he asserts that the best way to reduce misinterpretation by text or e-mail is daily, face-to-face meetings during which he actively listens to stakeholders: "I know the best communication is the one-on-one— the talking—because there are some things that can be misinterpreted by text or e-mail. I don't think it's so much of an issue when you sit down and talk to somebody."

Also, the superintendent applies a range of formal and informal communication methods that happen daily, weekly, or monthly with the principals and stakeholders for developing curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues.

Uses formal communication to invite stakeholders' voices in curriculum development and instruction. The superintendent highlighted the importance of monthly meetings ("formal communication") to build collaboration with the principals and stakeholders and to invite a diversity of voices into the conversation for improving school plans to achieve the district vision that concentrates on providing all students with the skills and knowledge necessary for continued growth and success at school and in the community. These formal meetings are usually set at a specific time. He stated, "Our monthly meetings are more of summarization of what has happened and what we're looking at for the next month or the next months down the line."

The superintendent confirmed that his goal with using these formal communications in the district is to share leadership in which all teachers, principals, and everyone involved with the school has a say in what they feel about what the curriculum and instruction should be. He said, "Well, I want all teachers to have a voice. The goal is that all teachers, principals, the superintendent, and all parents have a shared voice in what our curriculum is going to be."

This is done in order to increase commitment from all key stakeholders to developing and achieving the school vision of academic growth for all students. Formal communication supports the superintendent's belief that teachers' voices need to be valued and involved in curriculum reform in order to encourage them to buy into the school's vision and work towards curriculum development. He echoed this approach: "I mean, if it's coming from me saying to do this, I don't think you get much buy-in. I think it's better if it's coming from the teachers, especially when we're talking about curriculum reform."

The superintendent explained that one of the strategies to share stakeholders' voices in the decisions about curriculum development and instruction is through formal team leadership meetings on school data. He encouraged principals and teachers to meet monthly or weekly and

have open conversations on data to discuss teaching practices, the quality of curriculum, and monitor students' learning. He elucidated that:

> The principals are going to be the key because they are sitting down with those teachers once, sometimes twice, a month. They're collecting data on all those formative assessments and they'll look at some form of assessments.... Now many of the students were doing well or proficient and obviously we want to keep on. We're working on improvement in struggling students.

The superintendent shared that he encourages both the principals and teachers to meet regularly to involve their voices in addressing issues discovered in data and planning for instructional improvement, "we had done all planning for instructional development in collaboration with all the teachers". For example, in order to improve the quality of curriculum and meet the learning needs of struggling students, a Multi-Tier System of Support model (MTSS) is the foundation for conversations among the principals and teachers regarding teaching and learning that facilitates the identification of student needs and enables a formal system of selecting the best methods for addressing them. The superintendent had this to say about the model:

> We're really looking at the MTSS, a Multi-Tier System of Support, that involves principals, superintendent and teachers in that process, and this model offers one-on-one of struggling students an additional 30 minutes per day if they need it in English language arts, math or even science and social studies, but it's mostly mathematics where a lot of kids are struggling.

To communicate this shared vision, the superintendent influences principals and teachers to share curriculum expectations and achievement data with parents during formal parent/teacher

conferences and individual educational planning meetings, and to encourage parents to discuss their ideas related to student achievement. The superintendent emphasized that school staff gathers input from parents to drive instruction development throughout the year and next year by saying:

It is the same thing when we talk about monthly meetings; the principals and teachers are going to collect the data and look at these data to drive the teachers' instruction. So hopefully, the input they're collecting is going to help them direct decisions [that achieve our shared vision]. We talk to parents about that and get their input.

Another tactic under the formal communication strategy used to elicit parental input and implement the shared vision is that the superintendent provides an opportunity for parents and teachers to work together for curriculum development. The superintendent has built an organizational structure that facilitates time for teachers and parents to meet and discuss the academic needs of students and to identify educational programs that address students' needs. The superintendent states: "Another opportunity to involve parents and teachers' voices is through our organizations. They have an organization to work together in the school."

Another formal communication strategy the superintendent used to invite stakeholders to share their voices in curriculum development and instruction was to include them in the development of the 2020 school improvement plan. The superintendent asserted that this is the most successful strategy used to increase their commitment in developing and achieving the school's vision to meet the needs of all students. He explained this strategy:

For the example, we involved the stakeholders in our 2020 plan where we have four goals that we are working on, and what we want the school to be in the year 2020. So, that's the strongest activity where we involved stakeholders' voices in developing curriculum.

The superintendent showed that he has shared leadership with school staff during the 2020 school improvement planning to work on a formal collaborative leadership team and put the plan into action:

> That's where you get your shared leadership is during our school improvement plan with the four committees, including the principals, the dean of student, parents, and teachers, and that we have and we work on. I would say we get back and talk about developing a plan. We say this is what we need for this year and these resources, which I mean money that it's going to cost us for the school plans. And then together we put the plan into action plans.

The last formal communication strategy that the superintendent uses to invite stakeholders to share their voices regarding curriculum development and instruction is to involve stakeholders in decisions regarding district initiatives to improve academic achievement for all students. The superintendent also indicated that he has built a partnership with teachers, parents, and community members and encouraged them to take leadership roles as decision makers on the district's school improvement team in order to keep the district initiatives going in the future and improve student outcomes in learning. For example, the superintendent shared voices of all stakeholders during the formal team meeting on school improvement planning that led to decisions regarding district initiatives on the ways to use technology for developing instruction:

> I'll give a great example of our technology within the district. This is a perfect example to show how we shared leadership with stakeholders to focus on increasing student achievement. All of our students have a one-to-one initiative, a device, a Chromebook or Microsoft's Surface Pro 3. In order to keep the process going, we have a tech committee, and we had an election back three years ago that involved parents, community members,

and teachers who gave us the guidance on how we wanted to keep this [the technology

plans] going for the next few years.

Uses formal communication to invite stakeholder input when addressing school issues.

The superintendent also spoke about his use of formal meetings to share the tough decision-

making with stakeholders on school and student issues and to keep everyone informed. He is

regularly involved in private meetings with the principals and parents that focus on listening and

discussing discipline issues, offering, "I've sat in several parent meetings with principals or with

parents and students; it's regarding discipline issues."

The superintendent also related that they had a safety issue before spring break. There

was a message left in the school about somebody wanted to "shoot up". In this case, he explained

that he did not address the issue and make a tough decision by himself; rather, he met with the

principals and parents who have backgrounds with safety, and they worked together as a

leadership team with U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the local police department to

address the issue and talk about all possible scenarios. Then, together, they came up with a safety

plan. He said, "I met with the principals and two parents this week and we talked about school

safety because they have…a background with safety."

In addition to meetings to address specific issues, like the threat of violence, the

superintendent also has formal meetings with board members to examine special issues within

the schools. He said, "My board of education, we have two meetings per month, plus I

communicate via e-mail or phone calls when a big issue happens."

Uses informal communication. The superintendent reported that he also uses informal

communication to share leadership with the principals and stakeholders by maintaining daily and

close communication with them. These communications often take the form of meetings with

flexible meeting times. He offered: "That's a part of shared leadership is that I keep daily and close communications with them. In one word it's all communication."

The superintendent explained that, since the district is small, the daily communication and meetings become an easy and important way to inform the school principals about small or big school issues on a regular basis and to collaborate to address them right away, rather than waiting for a monthly meeting. The superintendent said:

> So collaboration at that point it is fairly easy because I see them every day. I see both of them numerous times throughout the day and that's not the case that you would have in a large district…. I meet with them every day, whether it's a big issue or a small issue. We can discuss it right away and work on getting a student discipline or a safety issue or curriculums issues. We don't have to wait until our monthly meeting.

The superintendent also holds daily meetings with the principals to elicit their input and involve them in collective decisions about curriculum, students, and safety issues rather than make all decisions himself. He explained:

> I meet with my principals every single day, and sometimes it's about whatever issues or problem. Maybe there's a parent issue, student issue, or curriculum issues.... The biggest part that we have now is we'll sit down and we'll talk about it for a while. It wasn't one person making the decisions as much as all of us talking about it.

The superintendent showed that, because he was able to build a strong leadership team with the principals through daily communication and meetings, the principals can achieve a similar relationship with the teachers. He said, "I'm able to build strong leadership capacity between the three of us just because we're able to meet every day and they have the similar capacity with their teachers."

The superintendent also meets daily with the central office staff on student, staff, or curriculum issues and reemphasizes that daily communication is a foundation in his small district to enhance shared leadership with the principals and stakeholders:

I get a lot of that comes back to the daily routines that we have with daily communication. That's our foundation of daily communication. Also, we have our monthly Ed staff meetings here. But most of them, I go back to being a small district; we meet daily and meet every single class. Sometimes, I'll meet with both principals at the same time and sometimes it's one on one but every single day that we meet.

Subtheme B: Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings. The superintendent not only embraces communication in formal and informal settings with all stakeholders, he also facilitates substantive dialogue to foster discussions that can lead to improvements in the schools. The superintendent fosters substantive dialogue during meetings in three ways: 1) encouraging two-way reflective conversations, 2) encouraging an atmosphere of open communication, and 3) supporting others' ideas.

The superintendent encourages two-way substantive conversation to develop stakeholders' understanding of school issues/plans. Along with listening in order to gather input related to school issues or plan improvement, the superintendent also wants all stakeholders to develop their own understanding of the issues or plans related to student achievement, school safety, and the school plans. In order to do this, the superintendent regularly holds meetings with principals and parents that focus on two-way substantive conversations. During them, he not only listens and gathers input but also shares information from the principals and parents to bounce ideas back and forth for addressing safety issues. He stated that "We'll be talking and sharing information about school safety, and I want to bounce some ideas back and forth with

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my principals and parents". The superintendent begins conversations by stating the issue and supporting the meeting members to share some ideas and express all points of views, whether positive, negative (or general fears) related to a decision, which leads to deeper dialogue about both the issue and the possible solutions. All of the members in the meeting can add additional points of view regarding the issue, and at the same time, share input into the pros and cons of implementing a solution. This deeper conversation requires careful listening, reflecting on the thoughts shared, and expanding on ideas to clarify or add to what is being discussed.

When addressing student issues, the superintendent said that he has holds private meetings with parents and principals to share information and encourages the meeting members to express their viewpoints to elicit a deeper understanding of what lies behind the issue and figure out ways in which to resolve it: "Yeah, I think especially with the discipline issue. If two kids are fighting sometimes, you need to get them in the room with the parents and talk about the problem. So I think that's part of resolving issues."

The superintendent creates an atmosphere that encourages open communication during meetings. The superintendent shared the importance of open conversations with people. He believes in and supports their right to speak freely and respects their ideas, which encourages everyone to be willing to share their thoughts and become part of school solutions and plans. He claimed, "There's nothing more powerful than meeting with people and developing a relationship. It is really open communication. I mean people have to be able to speak freely without thinking, 'I'm going to get them in trouble.'"

The superintendent is supportive of others' ideas. The superintendent also indicated that he supports the principals and teachers when they bring new suggestions or implementation for developing plans regarding curriculum and instruction. He also offers them feedback when

needed. The superintendent stated, "I definitely accept and support both the principals and teachers to provide suggestions for implementing or developing curriculum, for example, they are saying that 'we're going to look at this or try this regarding improving curriculum.'"

Overall, in order to attain the district's vision to assist all students in reaching their academic potential so they feel success in school and in the community, this superintendent makes sure communication occurs regularly in both formal and informal settings. Because the district serves a small, compact community, his office is on the school sites, his administrative team is small, and he has a long-standing relationship with the community, he can be very involved, accessible, and engaged at the staff, parent, and community level. This superintendent takes advantage of this intimacy with the whole community and school system to facilitate open communication that is not only collaborative so it brings together the voices of all stakeholders, but it is substantive so it gets to the deeper roots of issues and identifies solutions that are more likely to be successful. The superintendent is key in promoting and modeling collaborative and substantive communication that builds strong relationships with stakeholders and gives them a sense of empowerment to have autonomy to use their expertise in order to contribute to finding the best strategies for meeting the needs of all students and making academic success for all students a reality.

Theme 2: Supports Leadership Development by Trusting Others to Use Their Expertise and Empowering their Autonomy

The second major theme that emerged from the data analysis as an explicit approach that the superintendent uses to support leadership development in the principals and stakeholders centers on establishing trust. The superintendent conveys that he trusts his principals, teachers, and other stakeholders by encouraging them to use their expertise. For example, he invites them to bring their expertise into the decision-making process. Also, he gives them autonomy for

leading their own projects, which empowers them to work toward school improvement. The superintendent stated:

> Well, people that I trust, and the trust obviously is number one and was earned throughout the weeks and the months when I work with people. It's all about building trust and giving people the ability to make decisions, getting into their suggestions, and allowing them to lead their own work.

The superintendent trusts that his administrators and staff have the expertise to lead their own work without micromanaging. This is because the superintendent aims to evoke and develop leadership in others so they feel empowered and confident to take responsibilities for making decisions related to school regulations and student learning, and meeting the vision of academic achievement for all students. Again, the small and more intimate district context provides this superintendent the opportunity to know all the staff and appreciate the expertise they bring to the work. It also makes it easy for him to see the work in action and develop confidence that good work is being done to support the school and district vision.

The superintendent uses five strategies related to building trust by honoring expertise and empowering people to have autonomy. His five strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Trusts principals' expertise and empowering their autonomy for leading and making important decisions for the school. The superintendent trusts the principals to use their expertise in making important decisions in the school, including evaluating teachers for next year and hiring new teachers. This is because the superintendent wants to give them autonomy to lead their own programs and projects. The superintendent stated, "I expect

them to do their own work and bring information to me when it is something that we need to have shared decision-making on. I definitely allow them to work and run their own buildings."

Subtheme B: Trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy needed to exercise their roles as instructional leaders. The superintendent emphasized that he trusts in the principals' expertise to exercise their instructional leadership roles within the schools in order to help teachers to be effective. He trusts principals to use their expertise for monitoring the quality of teachers' instructional practices and meeting their needs. He has found that this can be accomplished by empowering the principals to regularly be involved in the classroom, which includes observing how teachers manage their classrooms and teach lessons. He highlighted his vision for a better instructional leader when empowering them to be in a classroom to develop the quality of instruction and support teachers by saying: "Well, the vision I have is that they're going to be obviously the leaders of instruction. We encourage our principals to be in the classrooms as much as they can because our principals are a good example of instructional leadership in the classroom. So I think that's been a big change in the last 10 years."

The superintendent encourages the principals to practice their instructional roles while supporting teachers. The superintendent trusts the principals' abilities to help teachers grow and become the professional educators they deserve to be. He encourages the principals to work with teachers individually and as a team to discuss the best instructional practices, monitor student achievement, and ask questions to help them reflect on their own teaching practices. Part of how he accomplishes this is to set expectations for principals to hold one-on-one meetings with teachers. The superintendent said, "The principals meet with teachers individually and with each the grade levels. Usually once a month, they'll go over instructional practices and monitor the students. So that's been the biggest push for instructional leadership with the principal". He

further explained the way he encourages the principals to empower teachers to grow and think on their own teaching practices:

> We don't like to tell teachers how to do it this way or to do that way. We want then to ask them questions. How would you evaluate the students? How would you know that the student actually learned the lesson? How are you going to reach them because I could see a couple of kids in the classroom that were not quite getting in lessons? You know those are just general questions you get the teacher thinking on.

The superintendent went on to show that he trusts principals to use their expertise for choosing and leading professional development in the school. He encourages the principals as they organize their own professional development with teachers and look for professional development that meets their needs by saying, "I love my principals to do what they need to do with the staff and look for any professional development that is out there". Overall, because the superintendent trusts his principals and teachers, and they trust him, everyone feels empowered to find the best methods and strategies to identify and meet the needs of all students.

Subtheme C: Trusts and counts on teachers' expertise to lead the school meetings and supports them to become leaders. The superintendent trusts teachers to use their expertise to share in conversations and lead meeting discussions in an effort to support their leadership development associated with increasing student learning outcomes. The superintendent said, "We expect the teachers to be leaders and leading the meeting, but not me or the principals. So that's the biggest part. The principals and I now are not leading the meeting but the teachers are leading."

The superintendent trusts teachers to lead the school improvement plan. The superintendent enables the principals to trust teachers' abilities to lead school improvement plan

committee work sessions and meetings and to provide valuable insight and ideas to principals

and the committees as they work together toward school improvement plans. The superintendent

acknowledges that tapping into the expertise of teachers and empowering them to be leaders

throughout that process can increase the success of teaching and learning for all classrooms. This

is possible in this district, because teachers have so many opportunities to work through

instructional and other student success challenges together, come up with shared solutions, test

those solutions, and monitor their impact. He explained his approach this way:

> We want the teachers to be the leaders of those four committees including principals, the
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> dean of student, teachers, and parents. If I'm going to take a group and become a leader
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> of them, that means it will be coming from me and telling them what to do, but I do not
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> want that to come from me, it should be coming from the teachers.

> Taking on leadership roles in school improvement committees is just one example of the

opportunities the superintendent and principals provide teachers for collaboration and decision-

making.

The superintendent trusts the principals in their development of teacher leaders to

share information, data, and new knowledge for leading instructional decisions. The

superintendent mentors the principals as they develop a team of teacher leaders who facilitate

dialogue among their colleagues informed by data analysis of student achievement.

> The superintendent encourages the principals to have conversations with teacher leaders

on student data and trust teachers' abilities to share valuable information to evaluate data. Then,

the principals enable teacher leaders to use the information to plan for instructional improvement

on the basis of this data. The superintendent discusses this strategy by saying:

The principals and teachers meet and talk about students, curriculum and instructional issues as a group, and use data to drive a lot of their decision-making. And again the principals might be leading the discussion, but we depend on our teachers to really give us the feedback on data.

Subtheme D: Trusts teachers' expertise to lead the classroom and develop students to be leaders and independent learners. The superintendent encourages the principals to challenge teachers to be leaders in leading their classrooms by giving them the professional autonomy to use their expertise to use more challenging strategies to help students lead and be more responsible for their own learning. He elucidated, "I want teachers to be a leader and leading their classroom. So my goal is how principals are going to challenge their teachers to reach that goal regarding challenging their students to be responsible for their own thinking? That's huge". The superintendent further showed that he has the expectation for students to be leaders and independent learners by saying, "I want that leadership come from the student. So I think that's where we are."

The superintendent expects the principals to encourage teachers to use more challenging strategies, such as collaborative groups or working independently, to support all students to search for information, debate, give opinions, and justifications in order to learn to be effective critical thinkers and leaders. He stated, "We're expecting students to do their own work. We're expecting them to debate. We want them to give their responses or their opinions and justify them. That looks a lot different even though the overall theme is still the same developing thinkers and leaders". The superintendent also expects principals and teachers to communicate these expectations to parents on a regular basis so that they too can challenge their students to be independents learners, "I want teachers to challenge their students and to let parents know."

Subtheme E: Empower both teachers and students to be leaders in the schools and embrace lifelong leadership. The superintendent operates on the theory that putting both teachers and students in leadership positions will encourage them to be leaders in the future. He stated that he and the principals encourage teachers to develop students to be leaders in the classroom in order to give them more power and some experience in leadership to grow up and be ready to move to different leadership jobs in the future. He described his expectation of teacher and student growth by saying:

> I want them to be leaders and use the thinking process because when they get in the real world, their boss is going to expect them to be employable and be able to lead, for example, professional development for their teachers.

> The superintendent constructs collaborative teams in meetings, professional development or classroom observations to enhance a learning community during which everyone can interact, share expertise and become mutual learners.

Theme 3: Supports Leaders Working Together as a Collaborative Team to Enhance a Learning Community

Working as a collaborative team is the third theme that emerged from the interview data as a significant approach that the superintendent uses to enhance a learning community. Providing opportunities to work in a collaborative team with the school principals and staffs in meetings or professional development activities supports the goals of the superintendent; he uses collaborative teams to develop shared and distributed leadership capacity in which everyone can interact and learn from each other as mutual learners. The superintendent asserted that, "I meet with them (the principals) every day. So I'm able to build their leadership capacity". The superintendent uses five strategies related to enhancing the learning community. His five strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning related to teacher evaluation and school regulations. The superintendent works with the principals as a colleague learner by consistently participating with them in external team professional development. The superintendent demonstrated that he is involved with the principals in team professional development to improve teacher evaluation. He frequently attends professional development with the two principals. In one situation that occurred during this study, he attended training on the teacher evaluation system, because there was an update on teacher evaluations, and he wanted to understand these evaluations when he goes to the classrooms. He stated that:

> We have a certain evaluation for teachers, and the principals have to understand how they are going to evaluate them. It's kind of an update of the strategies that we've used. That was the most recent one we did together in professional development.

Another example of team professional development with the principals includes a conference on student discipline. He said they all learned that "there are several strategies and there are seven areas that need to be considered before any student is disciplined…. And that is a professional development we did together to see how student discipline works and then meet later on". The superintendent shared that this particular team professional development on student discipline was led by the State School Board Association and which gave him and his principal team the opportunity to interact with other superintendents and principals to collaborate on what has been happening across the districts.

To promote shared learning, the superintendent has held follow-up meetings with the principals after team professional development to share and discuss professional information, "We meet and talk about it later to see how it is going to work."

Subtheme B: Influences principals to involve teachers in team professional development and engage them in shared learning and practices. The superintendent is a model for colleagues in shared learning. He encourages principals to not only send teachers to professional development but also to participate with them as a learner to obtain shared information and augment teachers' and their own professional growth at the same time. He encourages the principals to participate with teachers in the "Reading Now Network," which involves visiting other schools to give both the principals and teachers new strategies on how to address student needs with improved literacy instruction. After that, they meet together to share learning and practices for curriculum reform. The superintendent explained that:

> We address the curriculum needs right now. Our biggest push is the Reading Now Network. The big part of this is professional development and that we have several times per year. We can go to school districts and the principals, superintendents, mostly teachers, and instructional coaches are doing these visits. I think that's been huge to not only show what we're doing well, but also learn how to improve curriculum by looking at what other schools are doing now.

Subtheme C: Participates in teams with the principals as co-observers in teacher observations and collaborates in sharing personal practices and professional information. The superintendent is often involved in classrooms with the principals for teacher observations. He does not hesitate to go into the classroom with the principals if he has concerns or wants to see, first hand, how the teachers work. He then participates in follow-up meetings with the principals to talk about their experience and share professional information. He said:

> I go into classrooms with the principals to evaluate and to supervise, not all of them but some of them who I might have concerns with what is going on but also the good ones

too to see how the teacher does this, and then we meet and talk about it, but mostly the principals do the final evaluation.

Subtheme D: Encourages principals to be involved regularly with teacher observations and work with teams to share professional information. Because the superintendent conveys that his vision is to be a model for instructional leadership, it is important that he is visible in classrooms with the principals to help understand the current state of instructional practice in the district and challenge teachers to reach their goal of improving student learning. He, then, encourages the principals to be in the classrooms with teachers most of the time to help and meet their needs, in particularly with those who are struggling. The superintendent claimed, "the principals are in the classrooms all the time. There are some of the teachers who might struggle a little bit or might be younger and need a little more guidance, and that's why I think it's important for the principals to meet their needs."

Also, he encourages the principals to meet with a team of teachers after classroom observations to discuss information on instructional practices and student learning. Through discussions as a collaborative team, teachers are better able to reflect on and develop strong shared teaching practices. These conversations also contribute teachers discovering new and better instructional practices. During observations and follow-up meetings, the principals and teachers work as teams to better meet all student needs.

Subtheme E: Uses collaborative team building in daily meetings to develop principal leadership capacity. The superintendent believes that the strongest strategy to help the principals acquire skills, abilities, and leadership capacity is through daily meetings to address concerns or issues. As a collaborative team, the superintendent and the principals discuss and

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find ways to address student discipline or safety and curricular issues. The superintendent indicates that this provides an opportunity to learn from each other and share personal practices:

> The strategies that help principals develop as instructional leaders are through daily meeting. With professional development, I don't like to send principals out, because we see so much professional development. We want to get a focus. Again, so for the strategies to develop the principals, I'm going back to the same thing I keep saying it is the communication and daily meetings that we have.

The superintendent went on to explain that he focuses on daily meeting and open communication to not only to develop principal leadership skill but also to determine their needs for professional development. As a team, "We sit down and talk about that. When I evaluated them and I shared that I may notice some areas that they need to improve or to be stronger. And then together, we can find professional development for them for that specific area". He admitted that he doesn't want to give principals more generic professional development, but would rather focus on their individual needs and tailor the development to those needs.

The superintendent not only promotes shared learning among collaborative teams to develop their capacity so they become effective to meet student needs but also models leadership characteristics to support them to achieve the district vision of academic growth of all students.

Theme 4: Is Actively Engaged and Highly Visible in and out of the School

The fourth major theme that emerged from data interviews includes a significant leadership characteristic of the superintendent. This major theme includes two subthemes of the superintendent's characteristics to support stakeholders to achieving the district vision: a) he is hands-on and regularly visible in the school and b) he maintains an open door policy.

Subtheme A: He is hands-on and regularly visible in the school. The superintendent likes to know what is going on in his schools. He regularly performs walkthroughs with the principals and is involved with them in the classroom. This is so he can see how teachers are managing the classrooms and discuss that with the principals to support teachers. He makes himself visible in the classrooms,"

Subtheme B: He maintains an open door policy. The superintendent is accessible for discussion with and support of the principals. About his policy, he said, "We have an open door communication. I think that's the best way that I can support them". He also asserted that he is accessible to with the district members and the community members. He claimed: "Well I think it's about communications and relationships. It's being seen and working with people daily, and that's huge." The superintendent has also used various ways to maintain accessibility and to keep connecting and working with the parents on a daily basis. He said, "Parents will come in at different times or call at a different times every day. So we get parents all the time". This is another example of how intimate the district culture is and this superintendent both welcomes and utilizes that intimacy to promote positive change and greater student success.

Theme 5: Sets and Communicates Expectations that All Students Are Capable of Success Regardless of Their Socio-Economic Status

The fifth major theme that has emerged from the interview data is a significant approach that the superintendent uses to meet all needs of students who live in poverty. The superintendent acknowledges that poverty is an issue; however, he does not use it as an excuse when evaluating student achievement:

I guess we don't use it as an excuse for how our students are doing because if we do that we say "Well our kids are poor so we expect them not to learn as much." When I hear a

teacher say that, I say, "No, these kids deserve your attention, they deserve to be

instructed as any other kid in the United States should be."

He has a strong belief that all students are capable of success if all needs are met, no

matter their socio-economic level. He said, "I don't try to focus on poverty quite frankly. I know

it's an issue, but I want all the needs of the kids are met". This fifth major theme includes three

strategies that the superintendent has adopted to meet the needs of all students. These three

strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

**Subtheme A: Focuses on meeting all students' academic needs and taking the focus

off of the poverty issues.** The superintendent's approach for student learning focuses on

providing academic needs, in particular for students who are struggling in education, no matter

their economic status. He said, "I mean the kid is struggling if they're rich or poor we're going to

give him the academic support…we can't change what happens at all and we can only change

what the kids have at school."

The superintendent fosters conditions to meet academic needs of all students in several

ways. One of these ways is to encourage the principals to support teachers to acquire essential

skills on how to challenge students to become independent learners. He claimed:

> It's our responsibility to challenge students. The entire school and the whole school
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> community, whether they are inside the classroom or outside the schools, we need to
>
> challenge these kids. So I think I want to take the focus off the poverty issue and just say,
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> "Hey we're going to challenge our kids the best that we can to help them reach to their
>
> academic goals."

Because socio-economically disadvantaged students tend to perform lower on State tests,

the superintendent encouraged the principals to bring an external expert to the school to work

with teachers for training on the curriculum when the school was on the priority list. During the work with the expert, team leadership among teachers and principals was strengthened to collaborate in implementing the MTSS model that provides an additional 30 minutes of educational support during the school day. He claimed that the MTSS model is a team effort of the principals and teachers to support all students who need more learning assistance. He highlighted the importance of the MTSS model to support struggling students:

> Kids who are struggling whether it's economics or not, they're going to get some more attention because we have an MTSS small types tiered system of support… Again that was the principal, superintendent and teachers that were involved in that process and are still involved in that process. But, that was a huge team effort that pushed the MTSS.

In addition to supporting all students' learning, the superintendent has facilitated the implementation of the initiative called the Reading Now Network that gives teachers strategies to address literacy development needs and to use MTSS to support that development when whole group and other forms of classroom instruction are not enough. He said that the Reading Now Network is a powerful initiative to develop student academic achievement:

> The indirect way on how we can help all kids in learning better, which most of our kids are in poverty, is that right now we have our biggest push of the Reading Now Network that supports the principals and teachers to address the curriculum needs.

The superintendent has also provided additional support throughout the regular school day, with extended hours after school, and during a summer school program, "We also have extended hours after school for an hour and then we have a summer time program."

Subtheme B: Includes all parents in the school vision of success for all students. The superintendent wants all parents to know what their children are learning and consistently keeps

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meeting and sharing relevant information. He said, "As a parent at the school, I want to know what my kids are going to learn and to give me an idea of how you're going to involve my child in the thinking process". The superintendent considers parental involvement in the school vision as a significant way to support student learning and this is even more important for lower socio-economic parents.

Involves parents in meetings, conferences and classrooms. The superintendent regularly involves parents in meetings and conferences to demonstrate how it is important to read to their children at home and to encourage parents to attend a classroom and work with their kids during the implementation of MTSS. He stated:

> We provide support to parents that explain how to read to their kids, and how many minutes per day or what they should be doing to make sure they monitor their kids' progress. So, there are different meetings that we've had for parents and most of the communication that we send out is focused on parents of lower economic students.

Communicates curriculum expectation with parents. The superintendent shares educational goals with parents. He holds high expectations to challenge students in their learning to be thinkers. He, therefore, has encouraged teachers to communicate this expectation with parents: "I want teachers to challenge their students and to let parents know."

Communicates school and education information with parents. The superintendent uses different ways of communication to share school and educational information with parents. He said: "We have a system that's called Power School. We can send out e-mails and voice recordings. Those are the two biggest things. I can send up texts. Also, we send out a weekly announcement or newsletter so all parents can get information." The superintendent uses this system in an effort to be transparent: "We want to be as transparent as we can. We now use

technology wisely (example) a phone call that we record some new information now. They can go to the Web site to check announcements to see what's going on."

***Communicates student achievement data with parents*.** He further explained that he has encouraged the principals and teachers to share student data with parents throughout and at the end of the school year. He said, "We send the information to the parents so they get their own copy about student assessment, and when we get the information, we send it out to their home."

Subtheme C: Enhances a positive school environment that facilitates an equal education for all students. The superintendent focuses on enhancing a positive school environment as a foundation to support student learning and effective teaching. This has been done by enhancing school safety and providing healthy food.

For example, the superintendent regularly holds meetings with the principals, teachers, and parents to discuss and address student discipline or school safety issues. He stated that he wants "all the needs of the kids met. I mean they should be in a safe and happy school."

Likewise, the superintendent creates a positive school environment by providing students with healthy food during and after the school day to improve attendance and the potential for better grades. He claimed, "They should receive breakfast and lunch every day. The basic needs that all kids have."

Theme 6: Overcomes Roadblock for a Shared Leadership That Develops Shared Responsibility for the Success of All Students

The last major theme that has emerged from the interview data involves the significant challenges that the superintendent has experienced during the development of a shared leadership within the district. The superintendent revealed that the biggest obstacle to building shared leadership is that, "time is always going to be your challenge."

This major theme involves three sub-themes that relate to the importance of time to achieve success for all: a) it is important to take time to learn about the community and its people, b) it is important to take time to empower and build trust, and c) it is necessary to take time to teach shared leadership wherein everyone feels as though they have a role and are responsible for the success of all students. Without investing time to learn about the needs and wants of the community, teaching and modeling how to share leadership, and empowering others, this superintendent believes the goal to educate all students to their highest potential will not be achieved.

Subtheme A: It is important to take time to learn about the community and its people. The superintendent showed that he needed to learn about the community and the strengths of the individuals therein.

Understanding the peoples' strengths and expertise. He explained that time was needed to learn about the school community's strengths and expertise and begin collaborating with them to develop shared responsibility for developing school effectiveness, "I needed to know the people themselves and what they're capable of doing."

Understanding peoples' issues and needs. He also claimed that one of the challenges to building shared leadership was understanding the issues and needs of stakeholders and students and how he could help them to become better, but this takes time:

Again the first thing is not knowing them well and what are the issues that they need to work on because we can all work on something. Time was always a factor.

Understanding peoples' expectations of their children. The superintendent further indicated that he wants to know the expectations of others—principals, parents, and the community—for their children and this has taken time:

When I started here, it took a time to know the district. So again what I mean knowing

the district is "what are people's expectations are for their children." I knew the people

but I want to know what their expectations and challenges were, and it wasn't so much

difficult but it just took time.

He explains that he has spent time in daily meetings, talking and listening to school staff

and stakeholders in and around the schools to learn about the school community and culture,

including expectations, needs, and expertise among parents, staff, and community leaders.

Subtheme B: It is important to take time to empower and build trust. The

superintendent reported that building a trustworthy relationship with the community has been

one of the challenges during the development of a shared leadership because it has taken time.

The superintendent asserted that, because shared leadership involves everyone, they need

to feel that the superintendent trusts them. The superintendent has built strong relationships with

people by involving them in decision-making processes. He said, "It's all about building trust

and that's, you know, giving people the ability to make decisions and getting into their

suggestions."

Subtheme C: It is necessary to take time to teach shared leadership wherein

everyone feels as though they have a role and are responsible for the success of all students.

Along with building trust within the community, the superintendent acknowledged that

stakeholders, including the principals, teachers, staff or parents, needed to learn how to

participate in shared leadership and how they could create a shared vision. The challenge here, is

providing the time and patience to help people become used to, comfortable with, and confident

in sharing leadership and responsibility, while not telling them what they need to do or

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micromanaging them, "I mean we're a very small central office and I do not want to tell people what they need to do. So that has been a challenge."

He showed that he has helped others to understand what shared leadership is through modeling and much dialogue. He believes that this investment of time and effort are worth it, because by sharing leadership, everyone can contribute as a leader and can participate in leading the school to work toward the common vision/goals. About giving up individual leadership power to embrace his shared vision, he said, "I like to give as much power as I can to the principals and they likewise do that to the teachers because we want them to be the leaders. I mean if it's coming from me saying to do this, I don't think they get much buy into the school vision."

He also encourages stakeholders to meet regularly and to use real data as a tool to identify the needs of students and see their improvements. By doing so, the superintendent invites them to share leadership responsibly by working as a team of leaders who take responsibility for evidence-based decisions that support success of all students and achieve the district's vision. This quote illustrates that point, "A lot of the strategies… come when they are talking about student issues and using data to drive decisions". He feels that this shared responsibility and decision-making is key to how the district changed from being one of the lowest performing in the State to one that out performs its demographic peers. He and others described the previous district culture as missing this element of shared leadership and responsibility along with teacher and principal autonomy. He concluded, "I think that's probably what happened in the past when the school got in trouble because they were relying on one person to be the leader."

Summary of Findings from the Superintendent Interviews

Table 4, below provides a summary of the major themes and sub-themes derived from

analysis of the superintendent interviews. Significant quotes are also provided to illustrate.

Table 4

Findings from the Superintendent Interviews

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quote
1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain shared vision of academic achievement for all students	a) Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding the development of curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues	"The big part in communication is sharing information with them, and then getting their input. So that involves a lot. We send out e-mails and text, make phone calls, or meet face to face" "I meet with my principals every single day, and it's about whatever issues. Maybe there's a parent issue, student issue, or curriculum issues"
	b) Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings	"It is really open communication. I mean people have to be able to speak freely without thinking, 'I'm going to get them in trouble'"
2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy	a) Trusts principals' expertise and empowering their autonomy for leading and making important decisions	"It's all about building trust and giving people the ability to make decisions, getting into their suggestions, and allowing them to lead their own work"
	b) Trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy needed to exercise their roles as instructional leaders	"Well, the vision I have is that they're going to be obviously the leaders of instruction. We encourage our principals to be in the classrooms as much as they can because our principals are a good example of instructional leadership in the classroom"
	c) Trusts and counts on teachers' expertise to lead the school meetings and supports them to become leaders	"We expect the teachers to be leaders and leading the meeting, but not me or the principals"
	d) Trusts teachers' expertise to lead the classroom and develop students to be leaders and independent learners	"I want teachers to be a leader and leading their classroom. So my goal is how the principals are going to challenge their teachers to reach that goal to challenge their students to be a leader and responsible for their own thinking? That's huge"

Table 4—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quote
	e) Empower both teachers and students to be leaders in the schools and embrace lifelong leadership	"I want them to be leaders and use the thinking process because when they get in the real world, their boss is going to expect them to be employable and be able to lead"
3. Supports leaders working together as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community	a) Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning	"We have a certain evaluation for teachers... That was the most recent one we did together in professional development"
	b) Influences principals to involve teachers in team professional development and engage them in shared learning and practices	"Our biggest push is the Reading Now Network. The big part of this is professional development...We go to school districts and the principals, superintendents, mostly teachers, and instructional coaches are doing these visits"
	c) Participates in teams with the principals as co-observers in teacher observations and collaborates in sharing personal practices	"I go into classrooms with the principals to evaluate and to supervise, not all of them but some of them who I might have concerns with what is going on"
	d) Encourages principals to be involved regularly with teacher observations and work with teams to share professional information	"The principals are in the classrooms all the time. There are some of the teachers who might struggle...and that's why I think it's important for the principals to meet their needs""
	e) Uses collaborative team building in daily meetings to develop principal leadership capacity	"The strategies that help principals develop as instructional leaders are through daily meeting" "I meet with them every day. So I'm able to build their leadership capacity"
4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school	a) He is hands-on and regularly visible in the school	He makes himself visible, so that he can "go into classrooms to evaluate and to supervise"
	b) He maintains an open door policy.	"We have an open door communication. I think that's the best way that I can support them"
5. Sets and communicates expectations that all students are capable of success regardless of their socio-	a) Focuses on meeting all students' academic needs and taking the focus off of the poverty issues	"I don't try to focus on poverty quite frankly. I know it's an issue, but I want all the needs of the kids are met"
	b) Creates inclusion of all parents in attaining the school vision of success for all students	"As a parent at the school, "I want to know what my kids are going to learn and to give me an idea of how you're going to involve my child in the thinking process"

Table 4—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quote
economic status	c) Enhances a positive school environment that facilitates an equal education for all students	"All the needs of the kids met. I mean they should be in a safe and happy school"
6.Overcomes roadblock to shared leadership that builds shared responsibility for the success of all students	a) It is important to take time to learn about the community and its people	"I needed to know the people themselves and what they're capable of doing… and what are the issues that they need to work on. Time was always a factor"
	b) It is important to take time to empower and build trust	"The trust obviously is number one and was earned throughout the weeks and the months when I work with people"
	c) It is necessary to take time to teach shared leadership wherein everyone feels as though they have a role and are responsible for the success of all students	"I mean we're a very small central office and I do not want to tell people what they need to do. So that has been a challenge"

Findings from the Middle and High School Principal Interviews

Four major themes have emerged from the middle and high school principal as the most significant strategies that the superintendent uses to promote instructional leadership and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership with principals and stakeholders. These major themes are the superintendent:

1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain a shared vision of academic achievement for all students.

2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy.

3. Supports leaders working together as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community.

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4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school.

These four themes parallel themes 1-4 from the superintendent interviews; thus they offer further validation of these themes. The comments from the principals also add dimension for understanding how these four themes apply to this superintendent's work.

Theme 1: Engages in Communication and Substantive Conversations with Stakeholders to Share Leadership Responsibility and Sustain a Shared Vision of Academic Achievement for all Students

Engaging in communication and substantive conversations is the first major theme that emerged from the data analysis of principal interviews as an approach used by the superintendent to share leadership responsibility and sustain a shared vision of academic growth for all students with the principals and stakeholders. The middle and high school principal emphasized that the superintendent regularly meets and shares conversations with the principal team, and asks for their opinions related to school improvement plans and a wide range of other issues, so that they are on the same page on how to respond to these situations in ways that align with the school vision before making decisions. About the superintendent's strategy, the middle and high school principal said, "I think the conversations are pretty common among the three of us. We try to be proactive and work through situations and make sure we work together to be on the same page before we make any major decision."

The middle and high school principal claimed that the former superintendent did not create a collaborative leadership team with school staff in the meetings or ask them for their opinions to involve them in school improvement plans or addressing school issues. The principal described a type of micromanaging by his previous boss: "The old superintendent told you what needed to be done instead of valuing your opinion and collaborating."

This principal further discussed how the current superintendent has built a collaborative leadership team with school staff in meetings, and shares responsibilities for school planning and decisions, which has influenced him to follow his path in sharing leadership with teachers and staff. He described this domino-like effect:

> I am trying to get where the superintendent is sharing leadership responsibilities with the principals, I'm trying to share leadership responsibilities with the teachers to be part of this. So, I would like to keep creating a leadership team with the people in the building and keep giving them more responsibility.

Three sub-themes have emerged from the first major theme as strategies to engage in communication and conversations in order to share leadership responsibility with stakeholders and motive them to move in the same direction as the school visions. These sub-themes also parallel the sub-themes that emerged from the superintendent interview data. The three sub-themes are presented in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding developing curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues. According to the middle and high school principal, the superintendent uses various ways of communicating with stakeholders to inform them about the school issues and engage them in conversations about school plans, curriculum and instructional development, and other issues and to elicit their input prior to making decisions. He described the superintendent's approach as an excellent communicator when he said:

> He's a really excellent communicator. He does an excellent job of communicating all issues with their parents and us. We have a phone system where he can make a phone call

to everyone in the community. He shared email where it goes out to every person in the school and every parent.

The middle and high school principal further explained that the superintendent rarely acts by himself in tough situations. Although he is in charge, he always communicates the school issues with the principals and parents to discuss them together before decisions are made, however the principal also emphasized that, no matter what, the superintendent is "always in charge and he's always in control."

The principal also discussed the superintendent's application of a range of formal and informal communications. These communications happen daily without a set time, or at a regular meeting times. The principals verified that the superintendent uses these communications in order to share conversations and listen carefully to their input prior to making the decisions that affect the district.

Formal communication. The middle and high school principal shared that the superintendent holds formal weekly or monthly meetings with the principal teams or with principals and school staff to invite many voices to discuss school plans and issues and keep everyone informed. The principal offered, "We have a formalized meeting the three of us [the superintendent and principals], and with other people who work at the food service and transportation."

As an example of using the formal communication strategy to discuss the school issues as a team, the principal confirmed that the superintendent regularly holds a meeting with the principal teams when situations occur, to discuss and be on the same page. He indicated that the superintendent discussed teacher evaluations with the principal teams and elicited their opinions before making tough decisions for which teachers they might need to lay off for the next year.

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In addition to formal communication strategy, the middle and high school principal also showed there was a safety issue in the district when somebody left a message threatening to shoot up the school. The principal asserted that in this was a tough situation. The superintendent very rarely acts by himself or does something without letting others know. The principal said that the superintendent communicated that issue with the internal and external community. The superintendent attempted to address this issue by bringing the parents, who have backgrounds with safety in their they work with the office of homeland security and the police department, together with the principals to create a safety committee with multiple voices to join the conversation on this issue. They worked as a leadership team in formal meetings to discuss the issue and design a school safety plan. He said:

> If we were to have some type of a school related issue, and actually we had one before spring break.... So in a case like that, what we did is that we communicated together. We talked about what happened. We talked about possible scenarios in the leadership team and together we hosted a safety meeting and met with these parents to create a school safety plan together

Informal communication. The principal emphasized that the superintendent communicates daily and meets with the principals without a set time to share one-on-one conversations: "We meet quite frequently, and a lot of times he meets with me when it's about my building, and I'm sure he meets with the elementary school principal when it's about the elementary school building."

The middle and high school principal said that the superintendent informally meets him before making major decisions and always talks to him before making contact with a group of parents to elicit his input. He stated:

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Before he makes contact with a group of parents--whether he sends out a letter to all of parents, or he's going to make a phone call to all the parents--before he does anything major, he talks to me about it and tells me what he's thinking and asks for my opinion. So I think he definitely values my opinion and wants to include me in the things that he's doing for his job.

The middle and high school principal went on to show that, when parents have an issue with him, they may call the superintendent first and talk about that issue. The superintendent is an excellent communicator in telling him what the parent's issue is and keeping him informed. The principal said, "If a parent calls him first and talks about an issue, he's always really good about telling me what the issue is and keeping me informed. So we communicate very well as far as parents."

The principal concludes that neither the superintendent nor the principal talk to a parent without letting one another know, which is a great shared leadership model. He stated that, "The superintendent doesn't talk to a parent without me knowing and I don't talk with a parent without letting him know."

Subtheme B: Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings. The middle and high school principal said that the superintendent not only shares substantive dialogue, or meaningful conversations, with the principals and stakeholders in formal and informal communication regarding developing curriculum or addressing issues, but also fosters these dialogues in meetings in three ways: 1) encouraging two-way substantive conversations, 2) supporting others' ideas, and 3) encouraging an atmosphere of open communication.

The superintendent encourages two-way substantive conversations to develop stakeholders' understanding of school issues. Along with listening and gathering opinions

related to school issues, the middle and high school principal indicated that the superintendent focuses on two-way substantive conversations with principals and stakeholders to develop their understanding of the school issues and allow them to get to the roots of issues and, then, respond with possible solutions. The superintendent regularly has private meetings with the principal team to discuss and have a better understanding of the teaching evaluations. The superintendent encourages the principal teams to share information and data to have a better understanding and be proactive prior to making a decision. He also encourages the principal team to express all points of views and fears related to pending decisions, which helps to get a deeper conversation before making a decision about important topics like, which teachers they might need to lay off for the next year. The high school principal stated that:

> The whole dialogue was between the superintendent, the elementary principal and I about evaluations and making sure we had all the things we needed for evaluations and all the paperwork, and collaborating together, so we can make sure we make the best decision in the interest of the district.

    The superintendent is supportive and respects the principals' ideas. The middle and high school principal explained that the superintendent is strongly supportive and respectful of others' ideas in meetings. He said that the superintendent accepts suggestions from the principals to try new things and make visible changes within the schools. He described the superintendent by saying, "We communicate very well together and he is really supportive of our ideas." He further said: "I think the biggest thing about the superintendent is that he really respects my opinion."

    The middle and high school principal claimed that, for example, the school had a library/media lab that was neglected (haven't bought new books for it and is not well used), so he

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wanted to hire a new teacher who had previous library experience because he and the teachers wanted to improve upon the library. He went to the superintendent with the idea and explained how it would have a very positive effect on student learning. The superintendent was excited and supported his idea. The superintendent provided resources with which to buy the new books that had been requested by the teachers. He explained in more detail that,

> We haven't bought a lot of new books lately, but I hired a new teacher this year who had some really good ideas about how to make our media center kind of engaging for students again. So, we met with him to share our ideas, and he was very supportive and excited. He provided money to buy the new books that the teacher asked for it

The superintendent creates an atmosphere that encourages open communication in meetings. The middle and high school principal discussed the atmosphere in meetings that encourages participation in dialogue. Because the superintendent is so easy to talk with and makes others feel comfortable and willing to share ideas without stress or tension in the room, the meetings are easygoing. The principal highlighted this by saying:

> There's never tension in the room, by which I mean it's easy going. But with the past leadership in our school that wouldn't have been the case. I mean there were more stressful situations or conversations that might have been not really harsh but more one sided.

The middle and high school principal further described how they never feels nervous about talking with the superintendent about anything or asking questions because he does not blow up or lose his temper or question them. The principal described their relationship:

> The superintendent is extremely easy to talk to, and I'm not ever nervous about talking with him. It is not stressful. I can go in there and talk to him about anything. And I don't

have to worry about him blowing up or losing his temper or questioning me. I mean, it's a great working relationship, and I think it's the trust that we've built up over the last few years that's the most important thing that makes our relationship work.

The middle and high school principal also explained that the superintendent sets norms in a meeting with the principal team to encourage them to talk and make them feel their opinions are valued. One of these norms is that the superintendent keeps the conversations confidential among the principal team, which leads to building trust. The middle and high school principal clarified this norm of meetings in relation to the superintendent by saying, "Our superintendent is a very strong person, and we've set that norm in meetings, especially when it's just the elementary school principal, and I and him are in the meeting that whatever we talk about in the room stays in the room, and we don't have to worry about issues of trust."

Another standard is that the superintendent usually asks questions to encourage the principals to give him their opinions because he wants to know what they think and include them on the district decisions; on the other hand, the principals feel confident to give ideas or suggestion even if the superintendent will not agree with these ideas. The middle and high school principal stated, "Quite often he'll ask me for my opinion directly, he'll ask the elementary school principal for her opinion, and we can feel free to give him our opinion whether it's right or wrong because he really wants to know what we think."

Subtheme C: Influences the principals to elicit the stakeholders' input and listen to their ideas prior to making any major decisions on school issues/improvements. The middle and high school principal emphasized that the superintendent is a great model for shared leadership because he considers the viewpoints of others before making a decision. He discussed how the superintendent has influenced him to talk regularly with staff and ask them for their

opinions before making important decisions for the school. Also, he seldom makes critical

decisions by himself without considering the staff opinions. He indicated that:

> I try to keep my staff and my teachers involved in most of the decisions I make, and I
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> asked for their opinion, and I'm really concerned about their opinion, like taking that into
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> account. I very rarely will make an important decision by myself without at least first
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> talking to them and getting their viewpoints.

Theme 2: Supports Leadership Development by Trusting Others to Use Their Expertise and Empowering their Autonomy

Trusting others to use their expertise and giving them autonomy to lead their own work is

the second major theme that has emerged from the principal data analysis as an explicit approach

used by the superintendent to support leadership development. The middle and high school

principal illustrated the superintendent's approach to trust the principals' expertise, as they are

professional leaders in leading their work without micromanaging:

> He trusts me and he allows me to run the school the way I think it should be. This is his
>
> fourth year in the district, and he is awesome. He doesn't micromanage me.

The second major theme includes five sub-themes related to trust and empower

autonomy. The five sub-themes are presented in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Trusts the principals' expertise and empowering their autonomy for

making important decisions for the school. The middle and high school principal emphasized

that the superintendent does not micromanage and tell him what he needs to do, but he trusts him

and gives him the autonomy needed to run his own building and make important decisions. The

middle and high school principal described this kind of working relationship with the

superintendent as follows:

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Our superintendent is extremely extremely supportive. He does not micromanage. He's not telling me what to do, he's not telling me how to do it. He trusts me and allows me to run the school the way I think it should be run.

The middle and high school principal went on to explain that the superintendent not only trusts and gives him the autonomy to complete his job, but also supports him if he needs suggestions or assistance. He said:

He lets me run my building and I communicate with him frequently and let him know what's going on. If I ever need anything or need some suggestions then we talk about it, and he's able to provide me support or anything that I need. But he's not looking over my shoulder.

This principal demonstrated how the superintendent trusts the principals' expertise in making their own decisions about teacher evaluations. He said that the superintendent discussed that topic with the principal team, but eventually he allowed them to make their own decisions and encouraged them to communicate any suggestions. The principal gave an example of this kind of supportive behavior from the superintendent:

We probably have to lay off a teacher or two this year because our enrollments got smaller. So he's not going to micromanage the elementary school principal and me, or telling us which teacher we need to get rid of. But, he trusts us and lets us do our job and handle that part. So a lot of the important decisions like that he's going to share with us in the daily operations of our buildings. He's not going to tell us how we run our buildings. He'll provide some suggestion and some support, but he lets the elementary school principal and I do our own work.

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The middle and high school principal offered another example of how the superintendent trusts his expertise to make important decisions in the school by offering that the superintendent trusts him to make a decision to hire an experienced teacher even if she costs more money than a new teacher. The principal described the superintendent's approach to support his expertise in making his own hiring decisions:

He supports and trusts us to make our own decision. For example, this summer I need to hire new teachers...in many cases I know there are a lot of superintendents who would, if they get two candidates, they go with a new one because they cost less money. But when I explained to him that I've got some really good candidates that I think they're going to do an excellent job with kids, but it's going to cost us a little bit more. He's always very supportive of that and allows me to make my own decision and hire the teacher that I think she works for this job. His feeling is to get the best person available for the job even if she/he costs more. But he doesn't look over my shoulder and tell me what he thinks I should do and which teacher I need to hire, but when I need the help, support or advice, he's always there to give it to me.

The principal concluded that, even though the superintendent is strong and can handle everything in the district, he does not micromanage; rather, he empowers the principals to be leaders and to run their staff the way they think works best, as well as supporting them if they so require his assistance. The principal stated:

He knows he's got a handle on what's going on in whole district, but he's not telling me or telling the elementary school principal, "Here's what you need to do, and here's what you should do." He allows us to be our own leaders and to run our buildings, and we know that if we get into a bind or we need some support, he is there for us.

Subtheme B: Trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy needed to exercise their roles as instructional leaders in the classroom. According to the middle and high school principal, "He trusts both the elementary school principal and I that we want to be the instructional leaders of our building. He knows that we want to be able to do a good job, and I think he is very supportive of that". The principal demonstrated that the superintendent trusts the principals to be effective instructional leaders and empowering their autonomy to do their job and work with teachers in the building. He stated that:

> He trusts me on what I want to do with my teachers and the way that I want to do it. He
>
> doesn't say, "Hey, this teacher isn't doing well, or we need to work in this."

> The principal showed examples of how the superintendent trusts the principals' expertise

to practice instructional leadership in the school without micromanaging them, without controlling, in order to support them to be effective. His examples presented in the following descriptions.

Gives the principals the autonomy to do teacher observation and support teachers. The middle and high school principal depicted the superintendent as someone who trusts him and gives him leeway to exercise his role as the instructional leader, including being in the classroom to observe and support teachers by providing timely feedback and working together in using data studies to have the best interest of students. The high school principal claimed, "The superintendent never told me, 'this teacher is not doing well, or you need to work with this teacher.'"

The middle and high school principal indicated that he not only completes teacher evaluations but also performs walkthroughs in support of younger and less experienced teachers and holds a follow-up meeting to discuss their needs. He explained:

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It is my job to evaluate teachers during these little quick walkthrough where I spend 10 or

15 minutes in their classroom. So I'm not there to evaluate them, but I'm there also to try

to help and support them. Then, we can have a dialogue about some questions because

we try to do the best we can to share some of those ideas with our younger teachers.

Trusts the principals' expertise and gives him autonomy for choosing and leading

professional development plans within the school. The middle and high school principal went

on to say that the superintendent trusts his expertise and gives him leeway to work with staff for

choosing and leading their professional development based on their individual or small group

needs. Also, the superintendent has given leeway for the principals to support teachers as they

attend conferences or professional development classes to meet their needs. He stated:

He doesn't tell me that you need to tell your staff this. He loves me to do what I need to

do with my staff and organize our professional development. He gives me a kind of

leeway if I think a teacher needs to attend a certain conference to help them out with

something or other. So, he is supportive in that because he wants to us to be effective in

the school.

Also, this principal further showed that the superintendent has not ordered him to go

through specific professional development; rather the superintendent trusts him and empowers

his autonomy when choosing professional development that meets his needs:

I went to workshop to get an idea of what we're supposed to be looking for teacher in

evaluations. But it's not something that he found for me and said, "You need to go." This

is something that I found it and thought was valuable for me and he fully supports it. If I

think I need to go sometime, he is completely supportive and pays for it and says, "Yeah

go for it."

Subtheme C: Influences the principals to build trusting relationships with the staff and empower their autonomy to lead the school decisions and plans. The principal followed the modeling of the superintendent regarding building trusting relationships with the staff in the school. In other words, the principal acknowledged that the superintendent has influenced him to trust and empower staff autonomy in the schools. He stated "the superintendent shares responsibilities and trusts the principals. I'm trying to share responsibilities and trust the staff". The principal indicated that he trusts the dean of students and staff to use their expertise to run their work and use new strategies when these might meet their schools' and students' needs. He said "I'm starting to learn how to delegate more responsibilities to the people that I trust than others. So I'm trying to create more of a shared responsibility among staff members and give them more ownership and autonomy in the school". The trusting and empowering autonomy to share responsibilities of leadership that the superintendent modeled is valued by the principal, which he uses successfully with his staff.

Subtheme D: Trusts teachers' expertise and gives them the autonomy needed to lead the classrooms and develop students to be leaders and independent learners. The middle and high school principal said that he has a similar leadership style to the superintendent in terms of empowering teachers' autonomy in the classroom. The superintendent has influenced him to trust teachers' expertise, allow them to run their classrooms and to try new instructional strategies when these might meet their students' learning needs. The middle and high school principal discussed this trickle down effect from his relationship with the superintendent:

> I have the same relationship with my teachers that I have it with my superintendent. I'm there to provide support and guidance especially when they need it or they ask for it, but I trust them that they're professionals and that they're in control of their classroom. I don't

tell them how to teach. I give them the freedom to do and perform the way that they think

is best for their kids. So I'm not going to micromanage them and tell them here's how

you need to do this.

The superintendent encourages principals to encourage teachers to have a freedom to use

their expertise to take a risk in applying more challenging strategies, such as using technology, to

be creative in making lessons that are more engaging for students, thus building professional

autonomy.

The superintendent made it easier for teachers to take more risks and then challenge their

students and not worry about either I or the superintendent coming into their classroom

and saying, "What the heck are you doing?" This is because we want teachers to have the

freedom to be creative. We want them to be innovative with technology and make lessons

that are engaging for their students.

The middle and high school principal went on further to show that the superintendent

encourages teachers to use technology in order to challenge students to be leaders and take

responsibility for their own learning to master the information by themselves, while using, for

example, a Chromebook or Microsoft's Surface Pro 3. The principal also strongly believes

incorporating these tools in learning inspires students to construct their knowledge and design

their own learning. The principal explained that:

We have one-to-one technology, which means all the kids have Surface Pros. We're

going to go for more of a teacher-centered learning environment where the teachers

weren't in control of the classroom, and it was more student-centered student leadership.

So that's been an easy way for students to take more of responsibility for their own

learning through those opportunities.

The principal discussed how the superintendent has not only given teachers the freedom/autonomy to try new things, but also promotes fail-safe opportunities, which are failures without consequence to be creative in the classroom and improve student learning. He said:

One of the first things he did when he got here is that he's really good with teachers also. He let teachers know that it was okay to make mistakes because he wants them to be creative in the classroom, and if they do something and it doesn't work out, no big deal, just be yourself and do the best you can.

Subtheme E: Empowers teachers to be leaders and embrace lifelong leadership. The superintendent has also influenced the principal to put teachers in leadership positions in meetings and classrooms to gain some more power and experience, and to prepare them for a leadership job in the future. The middle and high school principal stated that: "Teachers and staff get the experience and the leadership role in the school, and then they will be ready to move to a different job in leadership. It's ok because they are growing."

The middle and high school principal explained that the current elementary school principal used to be a middle school math teacher. He provided the elementary school principal with the opportunity to be a teacher leader then instructional coach in the same school, which helped her to embrace leadership skills and become a principal. He explained in more detail that:

The elementary school principal took a different job within the district. She was a middle school math teacher and I just thought she was outstanding and excellent. And I convinced her to move into the role of the instructional coach position in the middle school and high school and she did that for two years, and she did an outstanding job. Then, when the elementary principal job came open, I encourage her to go for it, and so

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she moved into that position. We're trying to give people more power and some experience in leadership.

Theme 3: Supports Leaders Working Together as a Collaborative Team to Enhance a Learning Community

Supporting leaders to work as a collaborative team is the third major theme that emerged from the middle and high school principal data as a significant approach used by the superintendent to enhance a learning community. The middle and high school principal asserted that the daily meeting and working as a collaborative team with the superintendent act like professional learning community (PLC) for developing principals' capacities. The principal stated that, "We have our professional learning communities take place with my staff, and I lead my staff to work together in those types of meetings. But the professional learning community for me, I probably I think that talking with my superintendent two, three or four times a day is an effective strategy to develop my capacity. It's much more effective for the two of us to sit and talk than waiting for a monthly meeting, by which I mean "the formalized meeting". The third major theme includes five strategies in relation to enhancing the learning community. These five strategies presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning related to teacher evaluation and school regulations. The superintendent works with the principals as a colleague by consistently participating with them in team professional development and following up in a meeting to share learning and professional information. For instance, he said:

Every spring we [the superintendent and the principal teams] go to professional development in Lansing for the update of all the legal aspects. Also, the superintendent did go with the elementary school principal and I to the Five D Plus for the teacher

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evaluation. He sat in for the five days with us because he wants to be able to know what he should be looking at when he goes into classroom and observes a teacher.

The middle and high school principal said that the superintendent has always invited him to attend conferences on school safety together and to share professional information. The superintendent includes the principals in major elements that he needs to know about them. The principal showed this with the following example:

The events like the conferences that normally a superintendent would go to by himself; he takes me along and invites me to go with him. For example, anytime our law firm puts out a presentation about legal aspects of education, he encourages me and we go together, and we're going to a conference in May on school safety. Normally, the things that the superintendents need to know about it, he includes me, and he wants me to go to these things with him. So he's kind of sharing.

Subtheme B: Participates in teams with the principals as a co-observer in teacher observations and collaborates in sharing professional information. The middle and high school principal showed how the superintendent is involved with the principals in the classroom observations of teachers. To promote learning, the principal explained that the superintendent follows up a meeting with the principal team to share experience and professional information in order to meet the needs of both teachers and students. The principal said, "He does visit classrooms as often as he can, and he tries to do at least one teacher observation…a formal teacher observation for each teacher every year."

Subtheme C: Encourages principals to be involved regularly with teacher observations and work with teams to share professional information. The middle and high school principal explained that the superintendent influenced him to consistently be involved

with the dean of students in the classroom for teacher observation and meet as a team with teachers to give them feedback to improve the quality of lessons, saying that his "dean of students who was a really good teacher for 20 years has taken on that role for teacher observation. So we try to make these visits to teacher's classroom at least once a week or two."

The middle and high school principal also credited the superintendent in his support to help struggling teachers to develop their teaching practices. The superintendent has encouraged him to help teachers who are struggling by pairing them with experienced teachers. About pairing teachers to interact and collaborate as a team to discover best practices that would develop their teaching skills, the principal stated that:

> Because I've been in many classrooms, I know the teacher who is good at and what the teachers are struggling with. So it's my job to set up a struggling teacher with the experienced teacher to have them work together out the problems.

Subtheme D: Shares professional information with principals and teachers to encourage lifelong learning. The middle and high school principal claimed that the superintendent is a good model for shared leadership in the area of professional learning. He illustrated his point by the following example: "He reads a lot of articles about a lot of different things in education. If he comes across something he thinks is important or he thinks is interesting or a new way of teaching, he will send it out to me and the teachers too". The superintendent attempted to share articles to enhance professional learning opportunity among staff so the principals and teachers can meet and share professional information.

Subtheme E: Uses collaborative team building in daily meetings to develop principal leadership capacity. The middle and high school principal asserted that he strongly believes that talking and meeting with the superintendent every day is an effective strategy to learn from the

superintendent and develop his leadership capacity. He clarified that having the superintendent available to talk every day takes the place of PLC. He echoed this idea:

> I talk with my superintendent two, three or four times a day which is much more effective to support developing my leadership capacity than it is for me to wait for a formalized meeting. Even though we don't have like as many formalized meeting as you might think, I guarantee that we're communicating every day more than other superintendents and principals in other districts.

The middle and high school principal showed that the superintendent develops his instructional leadership when he uses daily meeting to ask for professional development based on their needs, new initiatives in the district, or new laws. He said that:

> Every once in a while we have professional development, for example, the safety meeting, the superintendent said "What if you come with me to this?" But anything else that I need, I just say, "Hey that's a good thing [professional development]. Can I go to it?" and he sure supports that.

Theme 4: Is Actively Engaged and Highly Visible in and out of the School

The last major theme that emerged from the middle and high school principal data is significant characteristics of the superintendent. This major theme includes two subthemes of the superintendent's characteristics: a) he is hands-on and regularly visible in and out of the school and b) he maintains an open door policy.

Subtheme A: He is hands-on and regularly visible in and out of the school. The middle and high school principal emphasized that the superintendent has built strong relationships with the internal and external community by being highly visible in and around the

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school in a way that everyone in the community can keep in touch with him. About his superintendent, the principal said:

> He is definitely an advocate for our school. I mean he's out in the community participating. He's very visible. Our community knows that they can trust him and that he loves the school, and he loves this town. So he's really done a good job of bringing the community together and rallying around the school.

The middle and high school principal highlighted some examples that illustrate how the superintendent is highly visible in the school and participating in the community activities in the following description.

The superintendent is highly visible in the school. The middle and high school principal stated that the superintendent rarely sits in his office for long periods of time and performs walkthroughs in and around the school. He shares leadership activities with the principals on a daily basis. The principal said that the superintendent helps the elementary school principal ferry kids from their car rides in the morning and greets parents: "He is very visible; he is always out and in the school. He very rarely sits in his office for long periods of time. Every morning, he will go over to the elementary school. He'll be outside when kids are getting out of their cars or parents are dropping in."

The superintendent is highly visible in the classroom. The principal also stressed how his boss walks in and around the classrooms and communicates with teachers and staff to support them. He has an overall positive vibe with them, about which the principal said, "He's not just kind of hiding out in his office. He is always checking with teachers and checking with other employees, and he's always very positive with them. He is a really good person."

The superintendent is highly visible outside of the school. The superintendent also makes it a point to be visible at events within the larger community. For example, he attends football games, and according to the principal, "He is part of the Optimist Club, which is a group of community members."

In addition, the superintendent publishes weekly articles for the newspapers that go out to the community and "makes the phone calls" to them as well.

Subtheme B: The superintendent maintains an open door policy. The superintendent has made connections between stakeholders and the school, according to the principal. The superintendent also maintains an open door policy so that the community members can talk to or call him; the principal said, "The superintendent has done a great job of making connections with his community members and bringing all people in [to work together to meet the academic growth of all students]. He has open door policy so the community can talk to him or call him."

The middle and high school principal also asserted that the superintendent is accessible to the two principals of the district. He discussed how easy it is to go to the superintendent's office and have a conversation with him: "His office is inside, so it is easy to communicate with him. I can walk to his office, and we sit down and talk, so it is really a good relationship". The principal further described that the superintendent is readily available to support the principals with advice and bring information to him: "When we need the help, support or advice, he's always there to give it to us."

<center>**Findings from Elementary School Principal Interview**</center>

As with the middle and high school principal, the same four major themes emerged as the most significant strategies that the superintendent has used to promote instructional leadership

and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership with the elementary school principal and stakeholders. These major themes are the superintendent:

1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain a shared vision of academic achievement for all students.

2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy.

3. Supports leaders working together as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community

4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school.

Theme 1: Engages in Communication and Substantive Conversations with Stakeholders to Share Leadership Responsibility and Sustain a Shared Vision of Academic Achievement for All Students

Engaging in communication and substantive conversations is the first major theme that emerged from the elementary school principal interview as an approach used by the superintendent to share leadership roles and sustain a shared school vision with the principals and stakeholders to assist all students in reaching their academic potential, so they feel success in school and in the community. The elementary school principal stated that, through maintaining daily and open communication, the principals and school staff have the support to work together towards school improvement plans, so that they all move in the same direction with the school's vision. About the relationship, the elementary school principal said, "We have got that relationship where I think we are all pretty open to talk and collaborate about what is going to work best here for us as a district. So I think it's all open communication". The first major theme

includes three sub-themes related to communication and conversation. The three sub-themes are presented in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding curriculum development and instruction or addressing school issues. The superintendent uses different forms of communication to gather stakeholders' input about school issues or plans regarding developing instruction and curriculum to improve academic achievement for all students. The elementary school principal said, "I think a nice job of communicating through letters and bringing back input to us. We have also surveys, robo calls and we have so much that we can send that information out there to parents, but then we ask for information and input to come back to us."

The elementary school principal emphasized that the superintendent is interested in gathering people's input and suggestions even if he has all the background information about the school plans for curriculum development and instruction. She claimed, "He is very supportive. When we talk about 'third-grade reading law', and he knows a lot about it himself, he knows where the needs of that are. And he knows how important it is to bringing ideas, thoughts and suggestions to him."

The elementary school principal also said that superintendent has a range of formal and informal communication with the principals and stakeholders. These happen daily without a set time or in a monthly meeting usually are set at a specific time in order to share conversations for developing curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues.

Uses formal communication to invite stakeholders' voices into curriculum development and instruction. One of these formal meetings, or formal communications that are set at a specific time, to gather stakeholders' voices in the decisions about instructional and curriculum

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development is a team leadership meeting on school data. The elementary school principal said that they share leadership in the school through working as a collaborative team with teachers in formal meetings, especially in regard to school data on curriculum and academic achievement, and discuss best practices to involve all voices when addressing the issues discovered within the data and planning for improvement. The elementary school principal stated "I think that shared leadership becomes so important because you can't do all jobs by yourself, and so having that shared leadership and the ability to meet and collaborate with teachers to talk about best practices is important to lead instructional improvement together."

To communicate the shared vision and commitment, the elementary school principal indicated that the superintendent involves parents in instruction development. She disclosed that the superintendent encourages the principals and teachers to share achievement data with parents during parent/teacher meetings and through a letter twice a year. He also encourages parents to discuss their ideas related to student achievement and asks for the information to come back to him to lead instructional development throughout the coming years by saying, "The superintendent keeps communicating with parents through letters and meeting to share student information and asks offering input to him."

Another tactic under the formal communication strategy used to invite stakeholders' voices in curriculum and instructional development was to include them in the development of the 2020 school improvement plan. The elementary school principal showed that involving stakeholders in the development of the 2020 school improvement plan was the most significant way to share their voices in curriculum and instructional development. She said that the superintendent has been a great, shared leadership model from the time that she was an instructional coach. She revealed that, when she was an instructional coach, the superintendent

considered everyone when setting out to develop the school improvement plan, not only the principals. She stated, "He built that idea of the 2020 school improvement plan. But at the time when I was an instructional coach in his building, we all were working on this activity together."

The last formal communication strategy to share stakeholders' voices in developing instruction and curriculum is by having a team leadership meeting to discuss curriculum and technological initiatives. The elementary school principal explained that the superintendent regularly held a formal meeting with principals and school staff focused on discussing the district initiatives and considered their voices on how to acquire and implement the technology for developing instruction. The principal said:

> I think a lot of shared leadership is discussed when we're working in different district initiatives, such as a different PBS. Because our district is smaller, we are all together working to look at staffing issues, and different sort of curriculum and technology initiatives and how we're going to utilize these initiatives.

The elementary school principal claimed that, even if the teachers were not in these meetings, the superintendent had asked the principals to share the information with the teachers and to bring the feedback to him for most instructional decisions, which is a great shared leadership model:

> We were talking about some things and not only does he share it with the principal team, but he asks the principal team, "Let's take that back to your teachers and bring their input back to me." So I mean it's a very shared leadership model.

Uses formal communication to invite stakeholder input when addressing school issues. The elementary school principal explained that the superintendent regularly holds monthly or weekly meetings with the principals, school staff, or with principal team and stakeholders. The

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goal of these meetings and interactions is to discuss school issues, including student discipline, safety or curriculums issues, and keep everyone informed prior to deciding on how to address them. She said:

> We have usually monthly leadership meetings with the district leadership team that includes principals, transportation, the technology, and the food service. So we're working together on school issues, and it's about making sure that all of us are informed.

Uses informal communication. The elementary school principal emphasized that the superintendent meets and shares conversations with the principals and stakeholders daily without a set time. She explained that the goals of these daily meetings and interactions are to maintain shared leadership activities or discuss the school issues right away rather than waiting for a monthly meeting and something becomes lost in translation. She stated:

> It makes shared leadership and working together so much easier because I see my superintendent every morning. We have this very informal setting of leadership to where we meet regarding our leadership activities. Sometimes, some of the best discussions happen informally when you're in passing because you do not need to wait for the next meeting and something may be lost in translation.

The principal continued to emphasize the importance of using informal meetings by saying: "Now you got that person to talk, and sometimes it can escalate unnecessarily. Waiting until meeting can be helpful because you have time to deescalate, but I also think that informal meetings can be so valuable."

The principal further indicated that the superintendent informally communicates with parents when issues occur in the school to keep them informed and gather their input, stating:

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"When we had a safety issue in the school, the superintendent immediately got a phone call out to the parents. I'd say within the hour he had informed them about that issue."

The elementary school principal concluded that the superintendent's intention of these formal and informal interactions and communication is to strengthen relationships with the school staff to work as a team in sharing substantive conversations and collaborating together to improve the school in order to motivating everyone to move in the same direction.

The elementary school principal concluded that the superintendent's intention of these formal and informal interactions and communication is to strengthen relationships with the school staff to work as a team in sharing substantive conversations for improving school planning or addressing issues which is a fundamental way motivate everyone to move in the same direction toward school improvement.

Subtheme B: Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings. The elementary school principal indicated that superintendent fosters these substantive dialogues, or meaningful conversation, with stakeholders by using various ways to improve the school are: 1) encouraging two-way reflective conversations, 2) encouraging an atmosphere of open communication, and 3) supporting others' ideas.

The superintendent encourages two-way substantive conversation to develop stakeholders' understanding of school issues/plans and dig deeper into decisions. The superintendent holds two-way substantive conversations with stakeholders to aid them in understanding new plans or educational issues within the school. As an example, the principal illustrated that the superintendent regularly meets with the principal teams to discuss the implementation of "Third Grade Reading Law" for a new assessment, and encourages the principals to share information, express all their viewpoints with positives, negatives, or

concerns related to a decision on how to implement it. This allows conversations to get deeper and support more informed decisions in order to reach an effective way on how to implement this new initiative.

She went on to explain that the superintendent has influenced her to work with a reading coach (RC). She explained how he encouraged her to share conversations to understand the literacy issues and bounce ideas back and forth to dig deeper into decisions and come up with new strategies in reading achievement. She said, "I work with the RC in the same way I work with the superintendent. I have some ideas and then I'll go run them past him, and we'll kind of bounce some ideas back and forth to come up with a decision. So I've taken the same way to work together with the RC. I work very well with her in that same way."

The superintendent creates an atmosphere that encourages open communication. The elementary school principal described how the superintendent has built a trusting open relationship with the leadership team in meetings. She clarified that he has done so in order to have them feel comfortable and willing enough to share ideas without consequence. She describes, "We all feel comfortable sharing our ideas and that there are no ideas are bad or good."

The elementary school principal also described how the superintendent uses open conversations to encourage everyone to participate in meetings and to work together through any problems to have the best for the whole district, "We're all pretty open to talk and collaborate about what is going to work best here for us as a district."

The elementary school principal also showed that the superintendent usually asks questions in meetings to get conversations started. She thinks that this strategy encourages participation and collaboration to make the best decisions for the district. She states that:

I think he does a nice job of asking questions about like that how can we do this. What would it look like if we do this? How can we make something like this? I mean it's a lot of like these questions to get the conversation started for us to and to encourage us to think, share ideas and figure out what's going to be the best fit for our district.

The principal further showed how the superintendent encourages us to talk and not dismissive of our ideas:

I feel that I'm not going to be dismissed if I speak up because I know we just kind of take our turns, and we think we have this very trusting open relationship but we also understand the professionalism in how to react and I think that an open trusting relationship has been built over time.

The superintendent is supportive and respects others in meetings. The superintendent supports new ideas in meetings to try new things in school and offers feedback on them. The elementary school principal stated, "The superintendent is really supportive and letting us have that opportunity to try new things. So he's very supportive and just kind of giving us the openness to try things and work on things."

For example, the principal brought an idea to the superintendent to have a STEM specialist in the school in order to increase science scores. She was passionate about that idea and convinced him that it would have a very positive effect on science scores. The superintendent listened attentively to her idea and provided feedback. The superintendent shared the principal's enthusiasm for the idea and allowed her to go ahead with it.

Subtheme C: Influences principals to use various ways of communication to elicit stakeholders' input prior to making any decision related to school issues and improvement plans. The elementary school principal asserted that the superintendent is a great model for

shared leadership and that he influences her to meet regularly with the RC before implementing

any plans or making decisions to ensure they are moving in the same direction:

> We [the principal and reading coach] always come back to meet and talk about it before
>
> we try or implement anything until we talk about it, and that way we know we're going to
>
> be on the same page because where we want that shared leadership is that we need to
>
> make sure that we are all moving in the same direction.

She said that she always meets with the RC to discuss the third-grade reading law and the

individualized reading plans (IRPs) before making any final decisions on how to implement

them, "We always gather and talk about it before implementing, I would say especially with the

new initiatives, such the third-grade reading law and the individualized reading plans (IRPs) and

how we're using those IRPs."

The elementary school principal went on to show that the superintendent has influenced

her to have informal/daily meetings with the middle and high school principal and to share

school activities and information on a regular basis before making decisions, rather than waiting

for the weekly or monthly scheduled meetings. She stated:

> The same way with the middle and high school principal, he is my former principal, so I
>
> have a good working relationship with him too. Once again, we're all in the same
>
> building, so it's so easy to meet and work together. We don't have to wait for certain
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> activities or meetings. We're all so accessible, which I think is wonderful.

Theme 2: Supports Leadership Development by Trusting Others to Use Their Expertise and Empowering Their Autonomy

Trusting others to use their expertise and empowering them to have autonomy is the

second major theme that emerged from the elementary school principal data analysis as an

explicit approach used by the superintendent to support leadership development. The elementary

school principal said that the superintendent empowers her to have autonomy to lead her own work in the school. This is because the superintendent highly trusts that she is a professional who can effectively run her own building, which supports her leadership development, "the superintendent trusts me that I am professional to run my building". The second major theme contains four strategies in relation to trusting and empowering autonomy. These four strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Trusts principals' expertise and gives them autonomy for leading and making important decisions for the school. The elementary school principal stated that the superintendent gives her the autonomy to make her own decisions and come up with new ideas for the best for student learning, and this is because he trusts her expertise. For instance, she came up with the idea for how to implement a new assessment tool, and the superintendent encouraged her to have the initiative to reach out to other principals to see how they handled the new assessment tool.

In addition, the superintendent highly trusts in her expertise and has given her the autonomy to look for a program to develop literacy. She stated that she watched a webinar on reading core and talked to the superintendent about it. The superintendent was excited and encouraged her to apply for the grant. She revealed:

> One example of how he trusts us to make our decisions, I've watched this webinar about the reading core, and I went to him, and I was really excited. I mean the superintendent 100% supported that, and we received the grant to provide that extra support.

Subtheme B: Influences the principals to build trusting relationships with the staff and empower their autonomy to lead the school decisions and plans. The elementary school principal emphasized that the superintendent is a great model for building a trusting relationship

with the staff so that they learn to lead in their own work in the school without being micromanaged.

The elementary school principal emphasized that, because of her relationship with the superintendent, she has been able to mirror it when building trust with the RC and give her the authority to be a leader in her own work:

> When I'm thinking about shared leadership and what the superintendent has done for me and it's really influenced me that it is ok to let others take on the role of being a leader, and I have someone I work very closely with her, she is my reading coach, and I've really given her a lot of authority to take on that role.

The elementary school principal stated that she trusts the RC and gives her free reign to make important decisions to improve literacy. About the RC, the principal said, "She holds a lot of strength in my literacy area and I trust her to make the decisions."

The principal showed examples of how she allows the reading coach to have the authority to be a leader in her own work because she trusts her ability. Her examples presented in the following descriptions.

Trusts the RC to lead an important decision for literacy. She explained that she empowered the RC to take a leadership role and gave her the authority to implement plans for the Third Grade Reading Law and the individualized reading plans (IRPs) to meet student-learning needs. The RC also holds a family literacy night to communicate these goals with parents. The principal said:

> I give her free rein to what she thinks she needs to do. I would say especially with the new onset of the third-grade reading law and the individualized reading plans and how

we're using and communicating the IRPs, and doing family literacy nights. I mean I've

kind of let her have the authority to do these.

Trusts the RC to work with teachers for literacy improvement. The elementary school

principal went on to show that she gave the RC the autonomy to take on a leadership role when

working with teachers and examining the data to make decisions on how to improve literacy. She

stated that

RC works with teachers in the classroom and looking at data with the teachers. She has

done a nice job of taking in a leadership role in the area of literacy and she knows that

she is there to work with teachers and develop trust with them and I don't need to know

all of these.

She has also encouraged the RC to work with teachers to build a tier-one reading

intervention, and the latter has shown great work in keeping the intervention strong. The

principal said, "I encourage her to work with teachers on building our tier one reading program

because we have become so strong in the interventions that we feel that we need to keep our Tier

1 growing as well."

**Subtheme C: Trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy needed

to exercise their roles as instructional leaders.** The elementary school principal discussed how

the superintendent trusts her expertise to practice her role as an educational leader in the

classroom that includes "being in the classrooms and providing timely feedback and working

together with teachers for the best interest of students, which requires so many things as data

studies and it's not always an easy thing to accomplish."

The superintendent also trusts her brand of instructional leadership not only in the

classrooms but also in meetings. Because of the positive influence of the superintendent, she has

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conversations with teachers to share important information on student data to drive school decisions and use the best teaching practices based on research. She said:

I would say the biggest influence that the superintendent has reminded us [the principals and teachers] to do instructional leadership through using data-driven decision-making. So we don't do what we think is best but we use data to drive our instructional goals because instructional leadership is not only trying to develop stronger instruction but also using best practices, research-based best practices, and data behind the students to influence a good instruction and then we start having some goals and looking at where our needs are.

The superintendent also trusts the principal's expertise to organize and provide professional development opportunities for the teachers in order to meet their needs. She said that, "I want to be an instructional leader and provide a professional development opportunity for the teachers. So he gives me free rein in these activities."

Subtheme D: Trusts and counts on teachers' expertise to lead the school meetings and supports them to become leaders. The elementary school principal confirmed that the superintendent has influenced her to have team conversations with the teacher leaders on best teaching practices and encourage teachers to take on leadership roles in providing ideas on how to develop instruction in light of these best teaching practices. She stated, "The superintendent encourages me to work with my teacher leaders in this building to have conversations on the best teaching practices."

Theme 3: Supports Leaders Working Together as a Collaborative Team to Enhance a Learning Community

The third major theme that emerged from the elementary school principal data was a significant approach that the superintendent uses to enhance a learning community. The principal

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emphasized that working as a collaborative team with the superintendent and staff in meetings or professional development contributes to sharing personal practices and expertise as mutual learners associated with developing their leadership capacities. She stated:

> We're going to support each other, and to me, what shared leadership is, is that support that we need because we're looking to each other and all of us have different areas that we are better at and experts in. Therefore, having that shared leadership and working together allows us to share expertise and rely on people who are an expert in some areas, which that becomes so important.

This third major theme includes seven strategies in relation to enhancing a learning community. These seven strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Encourages principals to format teamwork with teachers and the reading coach (RC) in meetings and provide professional opportunities in which to share expertise. The elementary school principal said that working with teachers as a collaborative team has provided an opportunity in which to foster ideas and share expertise. For example, this principal stated that the superintendent has supported her in holding professional learning community (PLC) meetings with teachers to interact as a team and discuss the high quality of curriculum and best practices, which helps to share expertise for improving their teaching skills. She stated:

> Collaborating with teachers and talking about best practices is important to share expertise and then saying "this is not my area of expertise, this is something that others are stronger in some areas" and then sharing leadership lets expertise go from one person to others. So I think that is where shared leadership becomes increasingly important.

The elementary school principal went on to explain that the superintendent has supported her work with the reading coach and to have open conversations on student work to exchange expertise for improving reading. About this support she said, "The superintendent is very supportive of me when I have got a reading coach. She is stronger in the literacy area and then he is very supportive and gives me the openness to work with her and rely on her to share expertise and improve the reading."

Subtheme B: Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning related to school regulations. The superintendent works with the principals as a colleague learner by consistently participating with them in team professional development. The elementary school principal said that the superintendent has taken part in professional development along with them as a learner himself and often involves the principals in team professional development on law and reading core and collaborates to share learning. The principal stated, "I'd say professional development among the three of us, we have done a workshop in law. Another workshop has been done by the superintendent and me was about reading core."

Subtheme C: Influences the principals to be involved with teachers in team professional development and to engage them in collaborative learning. The elementary school principal has followed the superintendent's behavior when it comes to participating with teachers as learners in team professional development and to share professional information. The elementary school principal demonstrated that the superintendent has influenced her to have consistent professional development with a team of teachers in Van Buren (ISD) and to attend master's classes for potential reimbursement. She stated:

We've got a great ISD. There are so many great opportunities for professional

development, and the superintendent encourages that because the district here does offer

some reimbursement for some master's classes. But with all the different workshops and

professional development, we [the principals and teachers] try real hard to learn together

and get some good meaningful professional development.

The principal also indicated that the superintendent has encouraged her to participate in

monthly professional development with other principals and teachers in Van Buren ISD for the

Reading Now Network that has helped her to share professional information and developed her

leadership capacity for acquiring specific strategies on how to improve curriculum. She clarified:

He encourages us to go to the Reading Now Network and work with other principals. So

we have a principal meeting where we meet every other month and that gives us a chance

to build our capacity and work on curriculum reform.

**Subtheme D: Participates in teams with the principals as co-observers in teacher

observations and collaborates in sharing personal practices and professional information.**

The elementary school principal claimed that the superintendent enjoys being involved in the

classroom and assists her with teacher observations. To promote learning, the superintendent

holds a follow-up meeting after observation with the principals to share experience and

professional information on how to help teachers to be effective in leading the classroom and

teaching more engaging lessons. The elementary school principal said:

He helps me out with observation and especially if there are some teachers who I may

have concerns about, or I just want to get his eyes and his opinion too. If I say, "Hey, I'd

really appreciate it if you could come and do an observation on this teacher." He is more

than happy, and I think he really enjoys that.

Subtheme E: Encourages principals to be regularly involved with teacher observations and work with teams to share professional information. The elementary school principal explains that the superintendent encourages her to be involved in the classroom with teachers, perform walkthroughs and ask questions to help the teachers reflect on developing their own teaching practices for improving student learning. Also, the superintendent encourages the principal to regularly hold meetings with teachers after observations/walkthroughs to discuss teachers' concerns and help them become better.

The principal went on to show that the superintendent has influenced her to share teacher observation with the reading coach. She stated that the "reading coach works with the teachers in the classroom" to help in their professional development.

Subtheme F: Shares professional information with principals and teachers to encourage lifelong learning. The elementary school principal explained that the superintendent shares leadership even in the area of professional development. She acknowledged that the shared leadership is more effective in the district when the superintendent constantly shares articles with both principals and teachers on law and education to encourage lifelong learning. For example, she said:

> He sends out different articles to read. I mean there are different things that he made accessible for us [principals and teachers] to develop our educational information. And I think what's nice is when we want to talk about shared leadership, we have that here at the district level, but I think it goes even higher than that.

This principal also showed that the superintendent not only share professional information with her but also encourage her to meet with other superintendents in the ISD and work together to share professional information about the third-grade reading law to improve

student achievement. She stressed that these are a great opportunity for shared leadership in the area of professional development. About this kind of learning in her position, she said:

> When we talk about ISD, and there is a new initiative of third-grade reading law and information that's becoming available to us, the superintendent encourages us to get together with other superintendents and then disseminate the information down. I mean there's a lot of great-shared leadership in the area of professional development in an effort to continue to move student achievement in the right way.

Subtheme G: Uses collaborative team building in daily meetings to develop principal leadership capacity. The elementary school principal claimed that one of the most effective strategies in helping her to develop her leadership capacity is the daily meeting and open communication with the superintendent. She said, "I can daily communicate with him face-to-face. I can text him or make a phone call. You know, I can also email him. I mean, he is available because he wants to help me to become better and stronger."

She said she is a better instructional leader because the superintendent encourages using open communication to talk to him any time to share ideas, address concerns and problems, and learn from him. She echoed this by saying:

> He supports me, and I feel like if I have a question or I'm not sure or feeling lost, I can pick up the phone and call him or meet him…. So, he's working to help to develop my capacity to be strong and trust him. But I would say he is supportive, and he is available, and that has been huge for me in helping me to become a better principal.

Theme 4: Is Actively Engaged and Highly Visible in and out of the School

The last major theme that emerged from the elementary school principal data includes significant leadership characteristics of the superintendent. This last theme includes two sub-

themes: a) he is hands-on and regularly visible in the school, and b) he maintains an open door policy.

Subtheme A: He is hands-on and regularly visible in the school. The elementary school principal indicated that the superintendent is highly visible in and around the school because he wants to know what is going on the district. The principal showed that the superintendent completes daily walkthroughs with her in the school to see the whole picture. He shares leadership activities with her every morning, such as helping kids from their cars and greeting parents at drop-off times. She stated, "He really genuinely wants to know what's going on in his district from the students. I see my superintendent every morning because he is out there. He is helping get kids in the car in the morning and greeting parents."

Not only does he perform walkthroughs in and around the school but also inside the classrooms. The superintendent regularly visits the classrooms to see how teachers are managing and engaging students in learning. About this level of engagement, the principal said:

> He wants to be in the teacher's classrooms to see the whole things, and he does it here in the middle school and high school. So he is very supportive with me and then with the teachers too. I think it made clear he really is *the* superintendent.

Subtheme B: He maintains an open door policy. The principal also praises the availability of the superintendent and says that, if she has questions, concerns, or gets lost, he is available to talk with. About this characteristic, she said, "I can communicate with him face-to-face or on the phone. Also, I can text him or e-mail him. I mean he is available."

The elementary school principal highlighted open door policy as well, which the superintendent maintains not only with the internal community but also with the external community so that stakeholders can talk to him at any time. She stated, "He knows a lot of

people and he has a very open door policy, so people can get in touch with him". She further explained that the superintendent is available to address concerns or issues because he puts people at the heart of his attentions. The principal stated, "He is available to address concerns because he puts people in his mind, since we're talking about people's kids in the school."

The principal concluded that the superintendent's availability has influenced the school staff in the district and schools to be accessible, too. She confirmed that the middle and high school principal makes himself accessible, so they can work together, which is a great professional relationship:

> It is the same with even the middle and high school principal. Because we are all in the same building, so it's easy to communicate with him. We don't have to wait for certain activities. We're so accessible.

Summary of Findings from the Principal Interviews

Table 5, provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes derived from the interviews with the two district principals. In the table, P1 represents supporting quotes from the middle and high school principal and P2 represents supporting quotes from the elementary school principal.

Table 5

Findings from the Principal Interviews

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quote
1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain shared vision of academic achievement for all students	a) Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding developing curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues	-P1 "He's a really excellent communicator. He does an excellent job of communicating all issues with their parents and us" -P2 "I think a nice job of communicating through letters and bringing back input to us. We have also surveys, robo calls and we have so much that we can send that information to parents"
	b) Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings	-P1"We feel free to give him our opinions whether it's right or wrong because he really wants to know what we think"

Table 5—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quote
		-P2 "We all feel comfortable to share our ideas and there are no ideas are bad or good"
	c) Influences the principals to elicit the stakeholders' input prior to making decisions on school issues/improvements	-P1 "I try to keep my staff and my teachers involved in most of the decisions I make" -P2 "We always come back to meet and talk about it before we try or implement anything until we talk about it"
2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy	a) Trusts principals' expertise and empowers their autonomy for leading and making important decisions for the school	-P1 "He trusts me and he allows me to run the school the way I think it should be. He doesn't micromanage me" -P2 "He trusts me that I am professional to run my building"
	b) Trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy needed to exercise their roles as instructional leaders	-P1 "He trusts both the elementary school principal and I that we want to be the instructional leaders of our building" -P2 "I want to be an instructional leader and provide a professional development opportunity for the teachers. So he gives me free rein in these activities"
	d) Trusts and counts on teachers' expertise to lead the school meetings	-P2 "I work with my teacher leaders in this building to have conversations on the best teaching practices"
	e) Trusts teachers' expertise to lead the classroom and develop students to be leaders and independent learners	-P1 "I have the same relationship with my teachers that I have with my superintendent. I trust them that they're professionals and that they're in control of their classroom. I don't tell them how to teach"
	f) Empowers both teachers and students to be leaders and embrace lifelong leadership	-P1 "Teachers get the experience and the leadership role in the school, and then they will be ready to move to a different job in leadership"
	g) Influences the principals to build trusting relationships with the staff and empower their autonomy to lead the school decisions and plans	-P1 "The superintendent shares responsibilities and trusts the principals. I'm trying to share responsibilities and trust the staff" -P2 "The superintendent has influenced me to let others take on the role of being a leader and give them a lot of authority to take on that role"

Table 5—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quote
3. Supports leaders working together as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community	a) Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning	-P1 "The events like the conferences that normally a superintendent would go to by himself; he takes me along and invites me to go with him" -P2 "I'd say professional development among the three of us, we have done a workshop in law"
	b) Influences principals to involve teachers in team professional development and engage them in shared learning and practices	-P2 "We've got a great ISD. There are so many great opportunities for professional development, and the superintendent encourages that"
	c) Encourages principals to format teamwork with teachers and RC and provide professional opportunities in which to share expertise	-P2 "The reading coach (RC) is stronger in the literacy area and then the superintendent is supportive and gives me the openness to work with her to share expertise"
	d) Participates in teams with the principals as co-observers in teacher observations	-P1 "the superintendent does visit classrooms as often as he can" -P2 "He helps me out with observation and especially if there are some teachers who I may have concerns about... He is more than happy"
	e) Encourages principals to be involved regularly with teacher observations and work with teams to share professional information	-P1 "We try to make these visits to teacher's classroom at least once a week or two." -P2 "It's really about being in the classrooms and providing timely, feedback, questioning and working together with teachers for the best interest of students"
	f) Shares professional information with principals and teachers to encourage lifelong learning	-P1 "He reads a lot of articles…If he comes across something he thinks is important for a new way of teaching, he will send it out to me and the teachers too" -P2 "He sends out different articles to read. There are different things that he made accessible for us to develop our educational information"
	g) Uses collaborative team building in daily meetings to develop principal leadership capacity	-P1"I talk with my superintendent two, three or four times a day which is more effective to support developing my leadership capacity than it is for me to wait for a formalized meeting"

Table 5—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Quote
		-P2 "He is available, and that has been huge for me in helping me to become a better principal"
4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school	a) He is hands on and regularly visible in and out of the school	-P1 "He is very visible; he is always out and in the school. He very rarely sits in his office for long periods of time" -P2 "He really genuinely wants to know what's going on in his district from the students. He is visible because I see my superintendent every morning"
	b) He maintains an open door policy	-P1 "He has open door policy, so the community can talk to him or call him" -P2 "He knows a lot of people and he has an open door policy, so people can get in touch with him"

Findings from Observational Notes and Quotations

In addition to the interviews, I conducted some direct observations by attending several leadership team meetings of the superintendent, principals, and others and by following the superintendent in the district and the schools. I found evidence that supported the four major themes that emerged from the interview data, and these four major themes were also supported by the observations. The four major themes that have emerged from the observational notes and quotations are that this superintendent:

1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain a shared vision of academic achievement for all students.

2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy.

3. Supports leaders working together as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community.

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4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school.

Theme 1: Engages in Communication and Substantive Conversations with Stakeholders to Share Leadership Responsibility and Sustain a Shared Vision of Academic Achievement for All Students

Engaging in communication and substantive conversations is the first major theme to have emerged from the quotations and observational notes as a definite approach used by the superintendent to share leadership roles with principals and stakeholders and motivate them to move in the same direction as the district's vision of academic growth for all students. The first major theme contains two strategies in relation to communication and conversation. These two strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding developing curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues. During the observation, I saw the superintendent regularly hold both formal and informal communications with the principals and others. These communications happened daily without a set time, or monthly and weekly at a set time, in order to share conversations and listen carefully to stakeholders' input prior to making the district decisions.

Uses formal communication to invite stakeholders' voices in curriculum development and instruction. I attended a formal meeting of the superintendent and the principals in May 2018. The superintendent held this formal meeting with each principal as an individual in their own office to share conversations and involve their voices in the new initiatives of student assessment and how to implement the "Third Grade Reading Law" for achieving the district vision of academic achievement for all students. During the meetings with each principal, the superintendent allowed the elementary school principal to lead the conversations about the Third

Grade Reading Law and how to set a plan for using it. The superintendent's approach began with his saying, "We'll do whatever you and the high school principal think will work out."

In addition, I observed the superintendent's encouragement of the principals not only to lead the conversations, but also to address the situation of the new student assessment and make a decision together for how to use it. During these meetings, I heard the superintendent constantly support the principals to work as a team regarding the implementation of the Third Grade Reading Law by using inclusive language, such as "we" "we're" and "our."

Even when one principal was not in the room, they were still part of the conversation. I heard the superintendent constantly refer to the elementary school principal and involve her voice in a decision when he met with the middle and high school principal, and vice versa. The superintendent said, "The elementary school principal mentioned in our last meeting…" and "The state will pay for one or three assessments, according to the elementary school principal."

At the conclusion of the meeting, when teachers were not present, I heard the superintendent ask the elementary school principal to include them. He told her, "Let's take that information back to your teachers and get some feedback, and then bring it back to me."

Uses formal communication to invite stakeholder input when addressing school issues. In April 2018, I observed a monthly leadership meeting, or formal meeting, that involved the superintendent and the principal team on teacher evaluation for the next year. The superintendent met with the principal team to obtain their input and empower them to lead this tough decision of teacher evaluation together.

During this meeting, I observed the superintendent ask questions to get the conversation started and encourage both principals to share ideas in order to figure out what would be the best fit for teacher evaluation prior to making a final decision. In the meeting, the superintendent

asked questions like these: "How can we do this? What would it look like if we do this? How can we make something like this?"

The superintendent not only asked questions to encourage the principal team's sharing of ideas but also to encourage clarifications and suggestions. The superintendent allowed the elementary school principal to ask questions for clarification of some points when she was in doubt about the topic, and he answered and supported her before moving the conversation toward a final decision. For example, elementary school principal asked the superintendent, "Can I do this?"

Also, I observed that the superintendent concluded the meeting by saying that "The ball's in our court," which clearly showed teamwork through dealing with difficult problems/situations.

During this meeting, I noticed that the superintendent did not make a decision by himself; rather, he shared it with the principal team. He discussed the issues with them to understand their perspectives and to be on the same page prior to reaching consensus and making a major decision in the interest of the district.

Additionally, I attended one other monthly leadership team meeting in April 2018 that involved the superintendent, principals, transportation, technology, and food service employees. During the meeting, the superintendent clearly allowed the members to lead the meeting discussions as a team and invited multiple voices to address safety issues about the bus stop area and cafeteria and work together to achieve a positive and safe learning environment for students.

Uses informal communications. I shadowed the superintendent in the schools and district on several days between April and June 2018. During these observations, the superintendent performed daily walkthroughs within the schools to share leadership activities, for example, he helped kids from cars and greeted parents with the elementary school principal.

He also shared one-on-one conversations with the principals, school staff, and students as he passes them in the hallways.

I observed the superintendent perform, not only daily walkthroughs, but also daily meetings, or informal communications, with the principals to discuss students, curriculum or safety issues and address them right a way. One of these daily meetings (which was largely unscheduled in terms of content) I attended in May 2018, was about student graduation. This meeting was held between the superintendent and the middle and high school principal in the district office, and they talked about a specific student who will not graduate this year rather than talking about the general student population or percentages. During the observation, I noticed the conversations included five levels of collaboration comprising the superintendent, principals, teachers, student, and parents to handle this situation. Both the superintendent and the principal talked about the student who will not graduate with possible solutions. The superintendent encouraged the principal to communicate with teachers and the parents and bring them together in a face-to-face meeting to explain this issue and find a way to address it in order to support this student to graduate next year.

Subtheme B: Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings. During the observation and meetings that I attended, the superintendent not only shared substantive dialogue, or meaningful conversation, with the principals and stakeholders but also fostered a dialogue by using various ways to improve the school are: 1) encouraging two-way substantive conversations, 2) supporting others' ideas, and 3) encouraging an atmosphere of open communication.

The superintendent encourages substantive two-way conversation to develop stakeholders' understanding of school issues/plans. I saw this kind of dialogue during the

observations. In the meeting, I watched the superintendent support the principal teams to have a better understanding of teacher evaluation before making a final decision for which teacher they needed to lay off for the next year because their enrollment numbers had fallen. The superintendent began the conversations by clarifying the issue and encouraged the principals to express their viewpoints and all positives, negatives, or fears related to a decision. This approach led to a dialog based on thoughtful reflections that they shared and allowed them to go deeper in the issue, and ultimately make a better decision for teacher evaluation.

I also noticed the superintendent encouraged the principal team to share data and information to support their understanding of teacher evaluation and make the best decision in the interest of the district. They all shared conversation, ideas, resources, materials, and strategies on teacher evaluation prior to making a final decision. The middle and high school principal stated that, during the meeting, "I have these worksheets…" / "In my school, I do this…." Their ideas and experiences seemed valued by the superintendent, as well as each other.

The superintendent is supportive and respects others' ideas in a meeting. The superintendent encourages the principals to bring ideas to or try new things in the school. During the meeting on new student assessment, the superintendent supported the elementary principal's idea to bring a STEM specialist in to increase science scores and meet students' needs. The elementary school principal sought to have support and advice from the superintendent and she stated that "I really want to have a STEM specialist to increase science scores."

Also, during the meeting, the superintendent not only encouraged the principals to bring new ideas but also respected their ideas. I watched as he actively listened to the elementary school principal's ideas/concerns about new teacher evaluation, provided feedback, and reassured her that what she had been doing was correct. To assure her, he stated, "We've done

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our homework. There's no doubt that you and the high school principal have you done your homework."

Also, in the meeting of student graduation, I noticed how the superintendent has influenced the principal to share and accept new ideas from the school community and make a visible change in the school. I heard the middle and high school principal reference that he accepted parents' new ideas about walkthrough of student graduation in the two school buildings from elementary school to middle and high school as the two buildings are connecting together. The good thing about the small district is the parents are highly engaged in and known, according to the middle and high school principal.

The superintendent creates an atmosphere that encourages open communication. Throughout the meetings that I attended, I mainly noticed that the atmosphere was easy-going, calm, conversational, and friendly. The conversation was not tense at all; there was humor/jokes and a sense of working through problems together as a team.

Also, the superintendent respected the principals when they spoke. He never interrupted or overpowered the principals' voices; rather he distributes the power during the meeting so that everyone can share ideas, but he does not play a role as king or micromanager.

Through this behavior, I believe the superintendent has created trust and reassurance within the meeting. He has promoted a more positive relationship for more effective conversations. Also, he has provided a more approachable environment in which the principals can share and communicate their thoughts without feeling nervous.

Theme 2: Supports Leadership Development by Trusting Others to Use Their Expertise and Empowering their Autonomy

Trusting others to use their expertise and giving them autonomy for leading their own work is the second major theme that emerged from the quotations and observational notes as an

explicit approach that the superintendent uses to support leadership development. The superintendent empowers the principals and teachers to have authority/autonomy in leading their own work. This is because he trusts their expertise and wants to develop their leadership.

For example, in the meetings I attended, the superintendent showed that he empowers the principals to have autonomy for leading own their decisions. This is because the superintendent trusts both the principals to be professional in making decisions and wants to support their leadership development to take responsibility in leading their own work.

In the leadership team meeting, I saw the superintendent shares discussions with the principal team on teacher evaluation. He trusted in the principals' expertise and knowledge about their subjects and profession and eventually allowed them to do their jobs and make own decisions without micromanaging the decision of which teacher needed to be laid off.

Also, during the individual meeting with each principal on new student assessment, I observed the superintendent's trust of the elementary school principal's expertise when he gave her the autonomy to make decisions and come up with new ideas for improving student learning. The superintendent encouraged the elementary school principal's idea to do things on her own, including reaching out to other principals to see how their schools had been handling the new student assessment and then inform him of her decisions. I heard the elementary school principal say, "There's a regional principal meeting coming up. I can ask around there to see how they use new student assessment."

Another example of his supportiveness happened when the superintendent urged the high school principal to feel confident in his expertise and show ownership toward his work and his students' needs. He allowed the high school principal to decide to measure students' growth in reading before implementing the new assessment. I heard the high school principal say, "We can

probably find a different option. I just need a way to measure growth in reading and put kids in groups."

In addition, during this meeting, the superintendent constantly supported and trusted the high school principal's expertise about a new student assessment when he admitted that there were areas in which he was not up to date and deferred to the principal's knowledge. I heard the superintendent say, "I don't understand this/that… I'm going to read up on MSTEP …"

Theme 3: Supports Leaders in Working as a Collaborative Team to Enhance a Learning Community

The third major theme that emerged from the observational notes and quotations is a significant approach that the superintendent uses to enhance a learning community by working as a collaborative team in meetings or professional development activities to interact and share learning and expertise. This third major theme includes two strategies in relation to enhancing the learning community. These two strategies are presented as sub-themes in the following descriptions.

Subtheme A: Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning related to law and school regulations. During the meeting I attended on new student assessment, the superintendent illustrated that he works with the principals as a colleague learner by participating with them in external team professional development. I noticed that the superintendent did not either send or order the principals to go to particular conferences; instead, he took part as a learner himself in the professional development to promote shared learning among them. During their conversation, the superintendent referenced an upcoming conference as he met with the high school principal, as a proof that the professional development is shared between the three of them. I observed the superintendent say, "We'll meet the elementary school principal [at the conference]…" Also, in a separate meeting,

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the elementary school principal referred to share team professional development when the superintendent met with her individually by saying, "That day the high school principal and I had that conference…"

Subtheme B: Shares professional information with principals and teachers to encourage lifelong learning. I noticed that the superintendent models to share professional information with the principal teams and encourages them to share informational resources among themselves to develop their skills and knowledge for implementing a new student assessment. I watched as the superintendent took part as a volunteer to find information regarding evaluation software and shared it with the principal team. The superintendent conveyed, "I'll try and find out more…I'm going to read up on MSTEP…." The superintendent seeks the knowledge out to become more informed and then to share that knowledge if he does not have it.

The middle and high school principal was encouraged to share ideas, resources, materials, and strategies on teacher evaluation to help others learn and have a better understanding of the topic at the encouragement of the superintendent.

Theme 4: Is Actively Engaged and Highly Visible in and out of the School

The last major theme that emerged from the observational notes and quotations include two significant leadership characteristics of the superintendent to support stakeholders achieving the district vision. These two sub-themes are: a) he is hands-on and regularly visible in the school, and b) he maintains an open door policy.

Subtheme A: He is hands-on and regularly visible in the school. When I shadowed the superintendent in the district and schools, I witnessed that he was highly visible within and

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around the schools. He shared one-on-one conversations with principals, teachers, staff, and students in passing.

Also, I observed that the superintendent rarely stays in his office for only length a period of time. He performs walkthroughs in the district and two buildings and participates in leadership activities with staff. Every morning, he is outside with the elementary principal to help kids out of cars and greet them for the school day.

The superintendent is highly visible in the school community and participates in its events. During the conversation between the superintendent and the middle and high school principal on student graduations, I learned that the superintendent participates in a Senior Night and brings the community members together in the school event. He welcomes the school members, senior, parents, students, and siblings to attend this event to share a story, honor seniors and celebrate their achievements.

Subtheme B: He maintains an open door policy. I observed that the superintendent is indeed accessible and the school staff can come to his office and talk to him most of the time via phone or face to face. While I sat in the superintendent's office, I watched him answer phone calls and e-mails right away. Also, I noticed that one of the staff came to the superintendent to discuss some concerns/issues in the school, and the superintendent worked with him immediately.

Summary of Findings from the Observation Data

Table 6 provides a summary of the themes and sub-themes from the multiple observations I did as I shadowed the superintendent through typical work days and observed scheduled meetings and events. The notes provided are from my extensive field notes.

Table 6

Findings from Observational Notes and Quotations

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Notes & Quote
1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain shared vision of academic achievement for all students	a) Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding developing curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues	- Holds a formal meeting with the principals to involve their voices in the new initiative of student assessment and how to implement it. Allows the principals to lead the conversations by saying, "We'll do whatever you and the high school principal think will work out." -Uses formal meetings to share the tough decision with the principals on teacher evaluation. The superintendent stated in the meeting "The ball's in our court" which clearly showed teamwork in the face of difficult situations. -Holds daily/informal meetings with the principals to discuss school issues and address them right away, such as talking about a specific student who will not graduate this year.
	b) Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings	-Encourages the principal team to communicate their thoughts without feeling nervous and share data and information to support their understanding of teacher evaluation. One principal stated "I have these worksheets…" / "In my school, I do this…."
2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy	a) Trusts principals' expertise and empowers their autonomy for leading and making important decisions for the school	-Trusts the principals to have the initiative to do things on their own to reach out to other principals to see how their schools are handling new assessment, the principal said, "There's a regional principal meeting coming up. I can ask around there to see how they use new student assessment."
3. Supports leaders working as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community	a) Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning	-Participates with the principal teams in professional development as a learner. The superintendent stated, "That day the high school principal and I had that conference…"
	b) Shares professional information with principals and teachers to encourage lifelong learning	-Takes part as a volunteer to find information regarding evaluation software and shared it with the principal team to develop their knowledge about this assessment. The superintendent conveyed, "I'll try and find out more…I'm going to read up on MSTEP…."

Table 6—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Notes & Quote
4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school	a) He is hands on and regularly visible in and out of the school	-Rarely stays in his office for only length a period of time. The superintendent performs walkthroughs in the district and two buildings and participates in leadership activities with staff to support them. He is also highly visible in the school community and participates in its events.
	b) He maintains an open door policy	-Is accessible and the school staff and parents can come to his office and talk to him most of the time via phone or face-to-face.

Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes from Each Data Source

Four major themes have emerged from all data sources, including the superintendent's interviews, the two principals' interviews, and observational notes and quotations, as the most significant strategies that the superintendent has used to promote instructional leadership and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership with principals and stakeholders. These major themes are the superintendent:

1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain shared vision of academic achievement for all students.

2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy.

3. Supports leaders working together as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community.

4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school.

In this study, the subthemes and/or elements that have emerged in one data source are labeled *weak* while the subthemes and/or elements that have emerged in two data sources are

labeled *average*. The subthemes and/or elements that have emerged in three data sources are labeled *strong*. If the subthemes and/or elements have emerged in all data sources, they are labeled *the strongest*.

In Table 7, below, S represents the superintendent, P1 represents the middle and high school principal, and P2 represents the elementary school principal. These codes help identify where support for each theme and sub-theme shows up in the data. The term, Observer, refers to where my observations directly support the themes and sub-themes.

Table 7

Summary of Results of Cross-Data Source

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Elements	Data Source				Frequency
			S	P1	P2	Observer	
1. Engages in communication and substantive conversations with stakeholders to share leadership responsibility and sustain shared vision of academic achievement for all students	a) Uses various ways of communication to embrace collaboration and elicit stakeholders' input regarding developing curriculum and instruction or addressing school issues	El.1 Uses formal communication to develop curriculum and instruction	✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest
		El.2 Uses formal communication to address school issues	✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest
		El.3 Informal communication	✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest
	b) Uses various ways to foster substantive dialogue in meetings	El.1 Encourages two-way substantive dialogue	✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest
		El.2 Encourages an atmosphere of open communication	✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest
		El.3 Supports and respects others	✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest

Table 7—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Elements	Data Source				Frequency
			S	P1	P2	Observer	
		ideas					
	c) Influences the principals to elicit the stakeholders' input when making decisions on school			✕	✕		Average
2. Supports leadership development by trusting others to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy	a) Trusts principals' expertise and empowers their autonomy for leading and making important decisions for the school		✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest
	b) Trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy needed to exercise their roles as instructional leaders	El.1 Encourages the principals to exercise their instructional leadership in the classroom and meetings	✕	✕	✕		Strong
		El.2 Encourages the principals to exercise their instructional leadership in organizing professional development	✕	✕	✕		Strong
	c) Influences the principals to build trusting relationships with the staff and empower their autonomy to lead		✕	✕			Average

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Table 7—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Elements	Data Source				Frequency
			S	P1	P2	Observer	
	the school decisions						
	d) Trusts and counts on teachers' expertise to lead the school meetings and supports them to become leaders		✕		✕		Average
	e) Trusts teachers' expertise to lead the classroom and develop students to be leaders and independent learners		✕	✕			Average
	f) Empowers both teachers and students to be leaders and embrace lifelong leadership		✕	✕			Average
3. Supports leaders working as a collaborative team to enhance a learning community	a) Participates with the principals in team professional development activities and shares learning		✕	✕	✕	✕	Strongest
	b) Influences principals to be involved with teachers in team professional development		✕		✕		Average

Table 7—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Elements	Data Source				Frequency
			S	P1	P2	Observer	
	c) Encourages principals to format teamwork with teachers and the reading coach (RC) in meetings and provide professional opportunities in which to share expertise				X		Weak
	d) Participates in teams with the principals as co-observers in teacher observations and collaborates in sharing personal practices		X	X	X		Strong
	e) Encourages principals to be involved regularly with teacher observations and work with teams to share professional information		X	X	X		Strong
	f) Shares professional information with principals and teachers to encourage lifelong learning			X	X	X	Strong

Table 7—Continued

Major Themes	Sub-Themes	Elements	S	P1	P2	Observer	Frequency
	g) Uses collaborative team building in meetings to develop principal leadership capacity		×	×	×		Strong
4. Is actively engaged and highly visible in and out of the school	a) He is hands on and regularly visible in and out of the school	El.1 Is highly visible in the school	×	×	×	×	Strongest
		El.2 Is highly visible outside of the school	×	×		×	Strong
	b) He maintains an open door policy	El.1 Is accessible for the school members	×	×	×	×	Strongest
		El.2 Is accessible for the community members	×	×	×		Strong

Summary of Communication Theme

The superintendent uses three strategies related to engaging in communication and conversations as a tool to develop relationships with stakeholders, so he can share leadership with them and motivate them to move in the same direction as the school vision. In doing this, the stakeholders are able to create a shared vision and everyone shares the responsibility in achieving the shared vision that ensures academic success for all students. According to the data, the superintendent, principals and observations acknowledged that there was formal conversation around developing curriculum and instruction and addressing school issues. In addition, there was informal conversation on a more frequent basis that addressed the development and

implementation of plans for improving curriculum, teaching and learning, and school issues. Because of the emphasis placed on open communication in sharing vision and leadership from all data sources, open communication is an extremely important element in developing shared leadership. This superintendent is able to use open, ongoing and informal communications and engagements with principals, staff, and other stakeholders effectively because of the small size of the district and the intimacy that affords the internal and external stakeholders in their engagements with the schools and each other.

Open conversation is important, but to strengthen this, the subtheme of substantive dialogue was shared during interviews by the superintendent and principals, and also observed during school visits. This dialogue was noted to be two-way and encouraged an atmosphere of open communication that supported and respected the ideas of others no matter the point of view. Because of the strong affirmation by all data sources on the importance of substantive dialogue, these conversations can be instrumental in supporting stakeholders to express all points of views related to a decision in order to go deeper in the issue and develop a plan for addressing it.

One factor that the principals considered important, but was not shared by the superintendent and observation, was that the principals followed the modeling of the superintendent when making decisions in their schools. In other words, the principals valued that the superintendent would inform and include them when making district decisions, and in turn, the principals would include teachers, specialists and staff in conversations when making decisions in their schools. Therefore, it became apparent that the open communication and sharing of responsibilities of leadership that the superintendent modeled were valued by the principals enough that they used it successfully with their own staffs and made it a priority in their own leadership development.

Overall, open communication that includes substantive dialogue sends a signal to all stakeholders that their voices are valued as being active in the success of reaching the common vision. By establishing an environment of open communication, the superintendent demonstrated that he respected what all stakeholders wished to share, and that this was a safe environment for them to express their points of view. What was shared during these conversations was used to develop a more realistic plan for achieving the school district's vision. In the end, the superintendent was willing to share leadership roles and responsibilities with many in order to achieve the goal to improve student achievement.

Summary of Trust and Autonomy Theme

The second major theme that emerged from the data analysis is an explicit approach used by the superintendent that centers on establishing trust to support leadership development in the principals and stakeholders. The data of the first subtheme from the superintendent and the principals demonstrated that the superintendent trusted others to use their expertise and encouraged autonomy to make important decisions and try new strategies that would lead to achieving the shared vision, and this was observed during meetings and walk-throughs of the buildings. Other sub-themes related to trust and empowerment were difficult to observe, but all participants shared that the principals were encouraged to exercise their instructional leadership in whatever ways would achieve academic goals, which included the organizing of professional development to meet the needs of their students.

One factor that the principals considered important, but was not shared by the superintendent and my observations, was that the principals followed the modeling of the superintendent regarding building trusting relationships with the staff. In other words, the principals acknowledged that they have a similar leadership style to the superintendent in terms

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of trusting and empowering staff autonomy in the schools. The superintendent has influenced the principals to trust staff's expertise to run their work and to use new strategies when these might meet their schools' and students' needs.

Related to the developing of trust and autonomy were the sub-themes that the superintendent trusts and relies on principals to utilize teacher expertise in leading school meetings, that the superintendent trusts the principals to utilize teachers' expertise to be classroom leaders and develop students as leaders and independent learners, and that it is important to empower both teachers and students to become leaders and to embrace lifelong leadership. Though the superintendent voiced all three subthemes related to trust and autonomy, only one principal voiced the building of trust and counting on teacher expertise while the other principal voiced ideas of trusting students to lead in the classroom to develop student leadership skills and to empower both teachers and students to become leaders and embrace lifelong learning. Therefore, though the superintendent felt that all five sub-themes for developing trust and autonomy were important, the principals had varying views as to how this would be demonstrated in the schools. This may be why the high school principal focused on building leadership skills for students who would soon be going out into the world and take leadership positions in their careers or in their communities while the elementary principal was not looking this far in the future.

Once open communication that encourages substantive dialog was established, and there was trust that everyone could develop leadership skills for making decisions that would achieve a shared vision, each school staff member was empowered to examine data and needs, then develop professional development activities. In short, schools were trusted to use their autonomy to meet the needs of their own staff and students. The superintendent started this process with the

principals, and this was strongly supported in the data collected from the superintendent, principals and observations.

Summary of Collaborative Teamwork and a Learning Community Theme

Supporting leaders to work in collaborative teams is the third major theme that has emerged from data analysis as a significant approach used by the superintendent to enhance a learning community. Working as a collaborative team with the school principals and staffs in meetings or professional development activities supports the goals of the superintendent. He uses that collaborative team to develop leadership capacity in which everyone can interact and learn from each other as mutual learners.

To illustrate, the data was strong with information concerning working in collaborative teams in professional development activities. All participants and observations confirmed that the superintendent develops the principals by highly engaging with them as co-learners in team professional development (PD) and promoting shared learning by holding follow-up meetings with the principals after PD to share and discuss professional information. Also, all participants acknowledged that the superintendent participates with the principals as a co-observer in teacher observations and collaborates in sharing professional information and experience to address student and teachers needs. However, the subtheme of teamwork to observe classroom activities was not observed during the meetings. In order to build the knowledge and skills of the principals, all participants confirmed that the superintendent utilizes administrative and daily meetings with the principal team to examine concerns and issues, and help them develop their leadership skills as well as personal practices that they use when they work in their own schools.

The superintendent has influenced the principals to follow his path regarding the high level of interaction and engagement with the teachers in the classroom, during meetings, and

through professional development in order to enhance a learning community. According to the data, the superintendent and elementary school principal confirmed that the superintendent has influenced the principals to not only send teachers to professional development but also to participate with them as a learner. This participation helps develop a community of learners who share learning and practices to support both the principals and teachers to become effective leaders for addressing teaching and learning needs. Also, all participants acknowledged that the superintendent encouraged principals to be involved regularly in teacher observations and to work with teams to share professional information, but these subthemes were not observed during the meetings. Therefore, the strong support from data regarding working as a collaborative team in professional development activities, classrooms and meetings suggest that this superintendent uses this strategy effectively to develop the principals and staff's leadership capacity as everyone interacts and learns from each other.

At the same time, the superintendent did not voice the sharing of professional information and articles with principals and teachers to encourage lifelong learning, but both principals shared the importance of lifelong learning, and this was observed during meetings. Therefore, the idea of building lifelong learners was important at the building level to enhance learning community work, so that the principals and teachers can have team meetings to share information around these articles to better acquire effective leadership practices.

One piece that was shared by the elementary principal, but not by the superintendent or middle and high principal, was the hiring of a reading coach. Reading coaches can be extremely important at the elementary level when students are learning to read but not as important in the middle or high schools when students are expected to use their reading skills to learn content materials. What the data does demonstrate is that the elementary principal and teachers feel that

they need to work with the reading coach as a team on data and the needs of their students in order to develop a plan for student academic improvement that would meet their needs. According to the data, working with the reading coach helps the principal and teachers to share expertise and learn from her to improve teaching and learning in classrooms. This would be consistent with the overall theme of working in collaborative teams to enhance a learning community.

When examining the data on developing collaborative teams to empower principals and teachers to work together to make decisions related to their staffs and students, all participants and observation notes confirm that this superintendent believes it is important to share learning and expertise to develop leadership capacities. The superintendent's ability to trust principals, teachers, and staff members to work as a team in PD or meetings that shares the analyzing of data, identifying of needs or issues and building of plans to address issues is demonstrated in the data as being instrumental for establishing an environment of shared leadership.

Summary of Visibility and Engagement Theme

The last major theme that emerged from the data analysis includes significant characteristics of the superintendent that enhance shared leadership throughout the schools and community to better meet academic growth of all students. The superintendent recognizes the importance of being regularly visible by making regular visits to the schools in order to interact with both the principals and all staff members. This practice was highly supported by the principals and observation data. Along with being visible in the schools, the superintendent voiced the importance of having an open door policy where the school members could drop into his office to discuss concerns or just chat. The practices of visibility and an open-door policy were confirmed by principals and observations.

Related to this, but not confirmed by all participants, were the elements of being highly

visible outside the school and being accessible to community members. Although the

superintendent, the high school principal, and observations confirmed visibility outside of the

school, the elementary principal did not voice this. The elementary and high school principals

did confirm that the superintendent had an open-door policy for community members, but this

did not show up in the observation data.

Not only does the superintendent perform walkthroughs in and around the school but also

inside the classrooms. Visibility in the schools was highly recognized by the data. Visibility in

the community was considered important, but confirmed by data from the superintendent, the

high school principal and observation. Equally important as visibility was the subtheme of

having an open-door policy. Not only do stakeholders see the superintendent outside his office,

but they feel welcome to visit to have conversations. The data shows that the elements of

visibility and openness contribute to creating an environment of shared leadership.

Chapter IV Closure

In this chapter, the findings of this study were presented. These findings are based

primarily on the analysis of data that was collected through interviews with the superintendent,

interviews with the two principals, and observation notes and quotations. Four major themes

have emerged from all data sources. Data in the first theme focused on communication and

conversations. The strongest elements that showed up in all data sources were formal and

informal communication and encouraging substantive dialogue.

 In the second theme, which focused on trust and autonomy to support leadership

development, the strongest subtheme was trusting principals in a way that empowers them to use

their autonomy to make important decisions in schools. In the third theme, which concentrated

on collaborative teamwork to promote a learning community, the strongest subtheme was participating with the principals in team professional development activities to share learning. In the last theme, which focused on visibility and engagement, the strongest elements were being visible in and around the school and being accessible for the school members.

In Chapter V, the findings of this study are discussed and interpreted as connected to research questions and in light of the existing studies. Recommendations for future study and the implications are presented and discussed as they correspond with this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Many children in the United States today are living in poverty, which negatively influences academic achievement (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2015). Although many studies showed that principal leadership capacity plays an important role in bringing about school improvements over time and increasing academic achievement of students (Fullan, Hill, & Cre ́vola, 2006; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2008), the challenges in high-poverty schools are complex, and many studies of school development argue that school leaders cannot achieve the responsibility of educating all students alone (Noguera, 2003; Warren, 2005).

School improvement, through strong empowerment of collaborative leadership teams that include district leaders, principals, and other stakeholders has emerged from recent studies as a successful strategy for developing the leadership capacity needed to turn a low-performing school into one that outperforms its demographic peers with improved student success (Botha, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Suber, 2012). In particular, studies on superintendent leadership have identified building principal instructional leadership capacity as a factor associated with improving student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Williams, Tabernik, & Krivak, 2009). While some studies have examined how superintendents can develop and support principals' ability to function as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Thompson & France, 2015; Williams et al., 2009), further research is needed to explore how the superintendent and principals work together to develop a culture of shared and collaborative leadership across the school district and within each of the schools, particularly, in schools that serve high-poverty student populations.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how superintendents build school principal leadership capacity by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. The overarching research question that guided this study were: How does the superintendent work with the principals, in general, and principals of high-poverty schools, specifically, to increase instructional leadership and shared, collaborative leadership capacity? The four sub-questions included:

1. What specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?

2. What specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop shared, collaborative leadership between all district leaders as well as between district leaders and teachers, students, and parents?

3. How is the superintendent working with school principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?

4. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high-poverty schools?

This chapter reviews, discusses, and interprets, as connected to research questions and in light of the existing studies, the findings of this study. This chapter also draws the implications of the findings for this study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for Saudi Arabian schools and future research.

A Key Element of the Findings

The conceptual framework for this study views the way to improve student achievement in high-poverty schools through building a principal's instructional and collaborative leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Maxfield & Klocko, 2010; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) (see page

14). Indeed, the superintendent in this study exhibits this view of my conceptual framework in which he works to empower a culture of shared and collaborative leadership and develop instructional leaders to improve student achievement. This superintendent builds collaborative teams with central office teams, the principals, teachers, parents, students, and community members, and invites them to take roles in team decision-making for developing school plans and improving instruction. He also uses a team problem-solving approach for school issues that positively affect the schools. Through working as collaborative teams at the district level, the principals can learn and better reflect on developing their leadership capacities for working as a collaborative team with teachers to improve instruction. The superintendent in this study uses the strong empowerment from collaborative teams as a successful strategy to develop stronger principal leadership capacity for turning schools that serve high-poverty populations from low-performing to high-performing schools with improved student achievement.

Discussion of Major Results As Connected to Research Questions
Research Question 1

The first research question asked: What specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop the principals' instructional leadership capacity? Data analysis revealed that the superintendent uses several strategies to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity.

First, the superintendent places the focus on student learning by establishing the district vision centered on meeting the learning needs of all students. According to the data, the superintendent engages the principals in discussions about holding high expectations so teachers and students are capable of meeting the schools' goals. The superintendent believes if the correct tools are provided and if the leadership is held accountable, students will achieve high academic levels. Because the superintendent has become a servant to his vision of success for all students, he is able to convey his vision to the principals by his actions and constant interaction with them.

Second, the superintendent provides direct support to the principals and gives them time to be effective instructional leaders. According to the data, the superintendent provides daily interaction with the principals in the schools and has an open door policy so the principals can receive support or professional development when they need to develop their instructional leadership capacity. This support can be advice on issues, but can also be additional support that directly impacts teaching and learning. One principal explained how the superintendent allowed the hiring of a reading coach and another principal shared the hiring of a dean of students. Through these specialists, the superintendent gave the principals human tools who would work with teachers and students to improve the learning environment and implement instructional strategies in order to reach school goals. Because of these types of interactions between the superintendent and principals, the principals are able to be more effective in their instructional leadership and work with teachers to develop their teaching skills to influence the educational process in classrooms.

Third, the superintendent supports leadership development in his principals. According to the data, the superintendent empowers principal autonomy and challenges them to use their expertise to do their work and try new things in order to develop their instructional leadership capacities. The superintendent encourages principals to put staff in leadership positions, which helps the principals develop teachers' leadership skills and embrace shared leadership. Because the superintendent trusts the principals' expertise, and they trust the superintendent, everyone feels empowered to find the best methods and strategies to identify and meet the needs of all students. For example, the superintendent trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy in making important decisions in school including how they work with teachers to meet student needs in the classroom. He also trusts principals to plan and organize professional

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development with the school staff that they think will meet the needs of teachers and improve student success.

The superintendent trusts not only the principals' expertise, but also teachers' expertise in taking leadership roles. The superintendent encourages the principals to develop teachers' leadership skills in sharing conversations, planning for instructional improvement on the basis of data, and using more challenging strategies to help students become leaders and be more responsible for their own learning. The superintendent acknowledges that coaching and mentoring principals to tap into the expertise of teachers and empower them to be leaders throughout the school improvement process can increase the success of teaching and learning in the classrooms. I see that because the superintendent shares authority among the principals and encourages the principals to share leadership with their staff, this contributes to making sustainable school improvements and turns schools from low-performing to high-performing schools that effectively foster student learning.

Fourth, the superintendent supports a learning community among a collaborative team to develop principal instructional leadership. To illustrate, according to the data, the superintendent develops the principals by highly engaging with them as co-learners in team professional development (PD) and conferences. He holds daily and informal meetings to provide extra support, participates with the principals as a co-observer in teacher observations, and collaborates in sharing professional information and experience by holding follow-up meetings after observations and PD. I see this strategy of direct and ongoing engagement of the superintendent with principals in professional development, meetings, and classroom support as methods for teaching principals how to reflect on developing their own instructional practices and better meeting teachers' needs to improve teaching strategies in the classroom.

The superintendent has influenced the principals to follow his path regarding high levels of interaction and engagement with the teachers in the classroom, during meetings, and through professional development. According to the data, the superintendent expands learning opportunities by encouraging the principals to bring an external expert to the school to work with teachers on the curriculum development and training. Also, the superintendent provides the principals and teachers opportunities to work together, not only within the school district but also with schools in other districts, which helps develop a community of learners who share professional information.

The superintendent encourages this type of professional engagement with experts and other professionals to support both the principals and teachers to become instructional leaders for addressing teaching and learning needs. For example, the superintendent has encouraged the principals and teachers to participate in monthly professional development that involves visiting other schools in the Reading Now Network (RNN). The principals indicated that this engagement with other schools in the RNN has helped them share professional information and develop their leadership capacity for acquiring specific strategies on how to improve reading achievement. The superintendent also encourages both the principals and teachers to regularly gather and meet after the professional development and classroom observations to discuss the quality of the curriculum, teaching practices, and determine strategies and resources that could better support the identified learning needs of students.

In addition, the superintendent provides conditions that encourage a strong learning community among the principals and teachers. According to the data, the superintendent consistently shares professional information and articles with both teachers and principals to enhance professional learning development so that the principals and teachers can have team

meetings to share information and ideas to better acquire effective instructional leadership practices. By supporting the principals and teachers as they work as teams in meetings and professional development in which everyone can interact, share expertise, and learn from each other as mutual learners, the superintendent is developing their capacities to function as instructional leaders for selecting the most effective strategies to meet the learning needs of all students, and in particular, struggling students.

The data supports that the superintendent implements strategies that develop the instructional leadership capacity of principals in ways that encourage principals to develop leadership capacities in teachers. Because the superintendent concentrates on developing the shared leadership with the principals, he serves as a model of shared leadership. The principals follow this modeling, and in turn, focus on developing shared leadership with teachers. As the culture of shared leadership expands throughout the district, the superintendent, principals, teachers, and other stakeholders are able to translate the district vision into the reality of meeting the academic growth of all students and of influencing schools to operate as learning communities. The mentoring and coaching strategies used by the superintendent contribute to the development of the principals so they can function as instructional leaders with teachers to gather and assess data to determine learning and teaching needs while monitoring curriculum and instruction to see if student needs are being addressed.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked: What specific strategies does the superintendent use to develop shared, collaborative leadership between all district leaders, as well as between district leaders and teachers, students, and parents? Data analysis revealed the superintendent uses several strategies to develop shared, collaborative leadership with all district leaders, as well

as between district leaders and teachers, students, and parents.

This superintendent has played a significant role in getting the school off the state priority list when he focuses on developing school capacity through building a culture of collaboration to support change. He has developed collaboration with the school community because he has recognized that the schools cannot succeed without the participation of all stakeholders. According to the data, the superintendent empowers all members of the community, including the principals, teachers, students, and their parents, to share a common vision of academic growth for all students, and together they set goals to achieve the district vision.

To achieve the vision of high academic success for all, the superintendent strives to facilitate open communication in both formal and informal settings in order to develop strong relationships with the school staff and stakeholders and to attain the district vision to assist all students in reaching their academic potential, so they feel successful in school and in the community. He shares leadership by keeping lines of communication open with stakeholders to inform them about school issues or plans and elicit their input prior to making important decisions so that they are all moving in the same direction toward the district vision and goals.

Because of strong relationships and shared leadership, collaborative teams have been developed to address student needs and implement plans for improvement. The superintendent builds collaborative teams with the principals, teachers, parents, students, and community members and invites their voices in decisions about developing curriculum and instruction and in addressing school issues that positively affect the schools. The involvement of multiple voices from the school community in the decision-making and problem-solving process encourages them to share the leadership roles and buy into the vision for school improvement, which can add to more vitality and strength of the school.

In the shared leadership structure where the decisions are made in a collaborative team to improve curriculum and instruction, the superintendent, principals, and teachers have worked closely together to develop and select instructional materials and learning strategies to meet the learning needs of all students and help the school achieve its goals. The superintendent has built collaborative teams with principals in the district level and has influenced the principals to build high functioning teams with teachers. According to the data, the superintendent encourages the principals to meet with teams of teachers who work together to improve instructional practices, rather than working in isolated classrooms without interacting with their colleagues. The principals and teams carefully monitor achievement data and discuss teaching practices and the quality of curriculum to identify where students and teachers need additional support. The superintendent also encourages both the principals and teachers to meet regularly to involve their voices in addressing issues discovered in data and in planning for instructional and assessment improvement. I see when the principals and teachers have a positive part in making decisions and planning for instructional and curriculum improvement, they all become committed to achieving the district vision and play an important role in the reforms that the schools must undertake.

In addition to working as a collaborative team to improve curriculum and instruction, the superintendent encourages the principals and teacher teams to regularly hold professional learning community (PLC) gatherings that promote collaborative work. According to the data, holding a meeting of the PLC encourages the teacher teams to work as colleagues in analyzing students' academic progress, using data to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, and practicing ongoing action research in which the principals and teacher teams can work together toward instructional improvement. Investing time and effort in the collaborative work of the PLC

is important in leading teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and developing deeper insights into successful teaching and learning strategies for improving student learning.

The superintendent also has created partnerships with both the schools' staff and with the school community to communicate the shared vision for improving student learning and encourage participation in school reform. According to the data, he uses open communication to share parents' voices in the decisions about instructional development associated with increasing academic growth of all students. For example, the superintendent encourages the principals and teachers to share curriculum expectations and achievement data with parents during formal parent/teacher conferences and to elicit feedback from parents around the challenges that affect their students' learning in order to address these issues and work toward instructional development. Also, the superintendent has built an organizational structure that encourages the parents to join collaborative teams of teachers in meetings to discuss the academic needs of students and to identify educational programs that address student needs. The superintendent also has shared voices of the principals, teachers, parents and students during the team meetings on school improvement planning that has led to decisions regarding district initiatives on the ways to use technology for developing instruction. I see that the superintendent builds the principals' and stakeholders' sense of shared leadership responsibility and commitment to achieve the school vision when he involves them in important decisions.

The superintendent also builds a collaborative team with the principals and stakeholders to address important school issues. According to the data, the superintendent rarely acts by himself in tough decisions, and he communicates daily with the principals and stakeholders to solve problems and elicit their input. He meets daily with a collaborative team of principals regarding small or large issues that occur in the schools pertaining to curriculum, students, and

safety issues. Collaboratively, they address issues right away rather than waiting for a monthly meeting, so immediate issues do not become lost. The superintendent also meets daily with the central office staff on student, staff, or curriculum issues and reemphasizes that daily communication is a foundation in his small district that enhances shared leadership with the principals and stakeholders. The superintendent has influenced the principals to follow his path with regard to sharing tough decisions with teachers and staff to address school issues and elicit their input. I see that district collaborative teams help develop principals' leadership capacity which in turn supports the principals and teachers to continuously become a collaborative team through working together to solve problems and make decisions in order to support one another in achieving the team's collective goals and vision. This school-level collaboration ultimately leads to increased student success.

The superintendent sets norms in meetings to build a trust relationship between members of collaborative teams and create a safe atmosphere that influences the effectiveness of their work. According to the data, the superintendent encourages everyone to share two-way conversation, equally participate in meetings, and bring new ideas to make a visible change in the schools. The superintendent actively listens to stakeholders and respects their viewpoints even when there is disagreement. This is because he deeply believes that differences of viewpoints are necessary to understand an issue, explore different assumptions, reach the root of an issue, and make the right decisions in order to move the district schools forward. Through this behavior, I believe the superintendent has created trust and reassurance of the stakeholders. He has promoted a more positive relationship for better conversations and the communication of thoughts without fear of negative consequences. This positive and trusting relationship encourages the collaborative team to feel comfortable in sharing professional information, to

learn from each other, and broaden knowledge that strengthens their skills to work together toward achieving the school vision. Thus, this superintendent has used a variety of strategies to develop shared and collaborative leadership among all stakeholders in the school district.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked: How is the superintendent working with school principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning? Data analysis revealed that the superintendent is working with the school principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning but in an indirect way. The superintendent uses an approach to meet the needs of all students, whether they are poor or rich, which is an indirect way to minimize the impact of poverty on students' education. Although the superintendent acknowledges that poverty is an issue, he does not use it as an excuse when evaluating student achievement.

According to the data, the superintendent sets and communicates explicit expectations with all staff and parents that all students are capable of success if all needs are met regardless of their socio-economic status. I observed and heard from the superintendent, principals, and teachers that the superintendent wants to hold the staff and parents accountable for providing the support needed to meet student needs. The superintendent has adopted three strategies to meet the needs of all students that indirectly assist in minimizing the impact of poverty on student learning and getting the school off of the State's priority school list (i.e. low-performing).

First, he has focused on meeting all students' academic needs, in particular for students who are struggling in education, no matter their economic status. According to the data, the superintendent works with the principals to support teachers in acquiring essential skills on how to challenge students to become independent learners. This strategy will help these students search for information, debate, give opinions, and justifications in order to become effective

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critical thinkers and leaders. The superintendent also expects principals and teachers to communicate these expectations to parents on a regular basis so that they too can challenge their students to be independent learners. Because the socio-economically disadvantaged students were performing lower on state tests, when the school was on the priority list, the superintendent encouraged the principals to bring in an external expert to work with teachers in training related to the curriculum. During the work with the expert, team leadership among teachers and principals was strengthened as they collaborated in implementing the Multi-tiered Support System (MTSS) model that provides an additional 30 minutes of educational support during the school day. According to the superintendent, the MTSS model is a team effort of the principals and teachers to support all students who need more learning assistance.

In addition to supporting all students' learning, the superintendent has facilitated the implementation of the initiative called the Reading Now Network that gives teachers strategies to address curriculum needs and to use MTSS to build student literacy. According to the superintendent, the Reading Now Network is a powerful initiative to develop student academic reading achievement. The superintendent has also provided additional support throughout the regular school day with extended hours after school and during a summer school program. From my perspective, the strategies of meeting academic needs of all students has contributed to a learning environment that does not focus on only the economically deprived students, but allows all students to learn and achieve together.

Second, in addition to supporting students' learning in the schools, the superintendent has recognized the important role of parents to provide their students with sufficient support in the home and at school. According to the data, the superintendent has included all parents in the school vision of success for all students. He regularly involves parents in meetings to

demonstrate how it is important to read to their children at home and encourages them to participate in the classroom to give their kids additional support. The superintendent further works with the principals and teachers to regularly share school information and student achievement data with parents. He uses different ways of communication to share school information and student achievement with parents in an effort to be transparent. According to the superintendent, the teachers and staff use a system called Power School to send e-mails and voice recordings to all parents. He sends texts of weekly announcements and newsletters so all parents can receive information. The district website includes announcements about school activities. Informing parents about their students' academic achievement and inviting them to participate in school activities and decisions lets parents know that they are valued and the superintendent acknowledges that value.

Finally, the superintendent works with the principals to enhance a positive school environment that facilitates an equal education for all students because a positive learning environment is considered to be the foundation that supports student learning and teacher quality. According to the data, the superintendent enhances school safety and provides healthy food to support a positive school environment for student learning. For example, the superintendent regularly holds meetings with the principals, teachers, and parents to discuss and address student discipline or school safety issues. In addition, in order to improve learning for all students, including the economically disadvantaged, the superintendent creates a positive school environment by encouraging the principals to provide students with healthy food during and after the school day in order to improve attendance and the potential for better grades.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked: How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high-poverty schools? An analysis of the data revealed that the superintendent is working with other district leaders and the board of education to support the work of principals serving this high-poverty school in several ways.

First, the superintendent works to support the principals by being highly visible in the school and engaging in the school events and activities. These contacts allow the superintendent to interact with the principals in their environments. According to the data, the superintendent rarely sits in his office for long periods of time. He daily performs walkthroughs in and around the schools and shares leadership activities with the principals on a regular basis. There are regular visits to classrooms with the principals to observe how teachers are managing and engaging students in learning. Also, the superintendent participates in the school events with the principals, such as Senior Night. He supports the principals in welcoming the school members, seniors, parents, students, and siblings to attend these events, share stories, honor the graduating seniors, and celebrate student and staff achievements. Also, the superintendent works to support the principals when he consistently participates with them in school activities, like professional development to promote shared learning and support professional growth. I see this high interaction and contact with the principals in the schools and professional development as vital in providing principals with the support needed to perform effective instructional leadership in the schools and work with teachers toward improving instruction.

A second important aspect of the superintendent's support is his accessibility, which enables the working and supporting of the principals. According to the data, the superintendent

has an open door policy in order to be available for discussions with the principals who take advantage of this easy access to the superintendent to receive needed support. The principals can go to the superintendent's office, call him, email, or text, if they have questions, concerns, or get lost, and the superintendent is available to provide support and advice.

Finally, the superintendent supports the principals when he gives them autonomy in the schools. According to the data, the superintendent trusts that principals are professionals in leading their own work. He does not micromanage, but he does model, mentor and coach, then trusts principals to use their autonomy/freedom to run the schools in ways that they feel will work for their teachers and students. If the principals need assistance, the superintendent is available to provide them the support and guidance needed.

Relationship of Results to Existing Studies

Literature related to the role of a superintendent's impact on student achievement in a school district has identified that, not only can a superintendent impact student achievement, but can also develop a culture that involves everyone in academic achievement efforts. District leaders play an important role in empowering collaborative leadership teams that include principals and other stakeholders to bring about school improvements over time and increase the academic achievement of students (Honig & Rainey, 2014; Olivier & Huffman, 2016). The power of the literature comes when the theory is turned into practice, and this superintendent has worked to create a district culture where relationships have been built with all stakeholders to share the school vision and leadership roles. To achieve the school vision, his focus has been on communication, empowerment through professional autonomy of principals and teachers, development of leadership skills, and construction of collaborative teams to share learning, consistent visibility and engagement, and collaboration. Together, the superintendent, principals,

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teachers, and other stakeholders overcome roadblocks through sharing responsibility for the

success of all students and developing the belief that all students can learn if the correct tools are

provided. The findings of this study are aligned and contrasted with literature in several areas as

indicated by the references in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison of Al Ramel Research with Previous Research Findings

Al Ramel Research (2019)	Previous Research
Theme 1: Communication	
1. The superintendent holds both formal and informal meetings to develop strong relationships and involve stakeholders' voices in the district decisions for school improvement on an ongoing basis.	-Affirms and adds to the superintendents holds formal meetings to involve stakeholders' voices in district decisions (Brazer et al., 2010; Schechter, 2011; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2011).
2. The superintendent strengthens open communication/meetings by substantive conversations to participate in discussions and listen respectfully to one other.	-No previous research found.
Theme 2: Trust and Autonomy	-Affirms and adds to the superintendent empowers the principals to use defined
1. The superintendent trusts the principals' and teachers' expertise and empowers their autonomy to make important decisions and try new strategies to meet the needs of all students, which in turn support their leadership development.	autonomy to lead their schools in ways that align with the district goals and use resources for professional development to improve student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

Table 8 —Continued

Al Ramel Research (2019)	Previous Research
Theme 3: Collaborative Teamwork and a Learning Community 1. The superintendent has a direct impact on developing principal instructional leadership with professional development. Also, this superintendent is involved with the principals in professional development to support their professional growth as well as holds follow-up meetings to promote learning.	-Affirms and adds that the principals are involved in PD activities with teachers to support their growth (Hilton, Hilton, Dole, & Goos, 2015). -Affirms and adds that the superintendents have a direct impact to support the principals with professional development to develop their instructional leadership practices (Barnes, Camburn, Sanders, & Sebastian, 2010; Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2015). -Affirms the superintendent is involved with the principals in professional development to support their professional growth (Honig, 2012; Mendel & Mitgang, 2013).
2. The superintendent has a direct role in establishing and supporting district initiatives for developing both the teachers and principals in which the principals participate with teachers in team professional development to promote learning.	-Affirms the superintendent has a direct role in establishing initiatives for developing both the teachers and principals in which the principals and teachers participated together in professional development (Williams et al., 2009).
3. The superintendent supports the work of the principals and teachers in PLC. However, because the superintendent has daily meetings with school principals and staff, the PLC is always active to enhance the learning environment for improving school staff leadership capacity (informal PLC).	-Affirms and adds to the superintendent supports PLC among principals and teachers, and even is involved in these activities (Honig & Rainey, 2014; Olivier & Huffman, 2016).
4. The superintendent has an important role in encouraging the principals to make frequent classroom observations and hold discussions with teachers to develop and meet their needs, and even shadows and involves with them during their daily rounds.	-Affirms and adds to the principals make frequent classroom observations and work with teachers to develop and meet their needs (Grissom et al., 2013; Ing, 2010).

Table 8 —Continued

Al Ramel Research (2019)	Previous Research
Theme 4: Visibility and Engagement 1. The superintendent makes himself available/accessible "open door policy" to the principals and others to discuss issues and support them to achieve the district vision.	-Affirms the superintendent makes himself available/accessible "open door policy" to principals and others to discuss issues and support them to achieve the district vision (Cudeiro, 2005).
2. The superintendent model visibility in and out the school with the principals and teachers to share leadership activities and support them.	-Adds to the principals modeling visibility in the schools and the classrooms to support teachers in addressing issues around instructional improvement (May & Supovitz, 2011).
Theme 5: High Expectations of Student Learning 1. The superintendent works with the principals to communicate the high expectations with the internal and external community that all students could learn to gain greater support for their students.	-Adds to the school principals communicating high expectations with the school staff that all students could learn and holding them accountable in meeting the expectations (Timperley, 2011).
Theme 6: Roadblock for Shared Leadership 1. Overcomes roadblock for shared leadership that develops shared responsibility for the success of all students.	-No previous research found.

Theme 1: Engages in Communication and Substantive Conversations with Stakeholders to Share Leadership Responsibility and Sustain a Shared Vision of Academic Achievement for All Students

The superintendent has played a significant role in getting the school off of the state priority list and making significant improvements in student learning by building a culture of shared and collaborative leadership, which empowers stakeholders to become leaders and involves them in collaborative teams for school decision making and problem solving to work toward academic achievement for all. The superintendent has been purposeful in his practice of using strategies such as communication in formal and informal settings to continuously share

decision-making and mentor the school principals in order to involve the diverse voices of stakeholders in decision-making, which is a fundamental way to sustain a shared vision by developing leadership responsibility.

This superintendent strives to facilitate substantive conversations in meetings with stakeholders to uncover the deeper roots of issues and identify solutions regarding students, safety, and curricular issues that are more likely to be successful to achieve the district vision of academic growth for all students. Also, during meetings, this superintendent creates an atmosphere that encourages open communication. The superintendent supports collaborative conversation where all present speak freely, bring new ideas, actively listen to each other, and respect others' opinions. This environment encourages everyone to be willing to share in substantive conversations and become part of school solutions and plans.

There are a number of studies that support this type of participation by stakeholders in school decision making to improve student learning. Brazer, Rich, and Ross (2010) studied three superintendents in U.S. school districts who were charged with addressing lower student achievement. Brazer et al. found that all three superintendents responded to expectations for improving student achievement by supporting principals and stakeholders as they participated collaboratively in formal decision-making meetings, which led to shaping educational strategies that were more appropriate for student learning.

Involving stakeholders in decision making and addressing school issues to meet student learning is also supported in research done by Schechter (2011) that explored how superintendents work to make robust decisions linked to increasing student learning. Schechter emphasized that when making important decisions in school districts, the superintendents should encourage school leaders and stakeholders to continuously be involved in the process of

deliberate problem solving and collaborate to make the right decisions that will affect student learning.

Another study conducted by Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2011) showed that the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making contributed to not only improving student learning but also rebuilding schools as a whole. Touchton and Acker-Hocevar found that the superintendents of small school districts gave a voice to and shared leadership with stakeholders by involving them in decision-making strategies that resulted in positive outcomes for schools that had to increase student learning for the coming year or close their schools. The superintendents, therefore, established three groups: the business community, teachers, and parent groups in order to obtain input from the school community's stakeholders in decision-making. Based on the information yielded from the stakeholders involved in these groups, the decision was made to relocate the classrooms and move forward on school reconstruction.

Brazer et al. (2010), Schechter (2011), and Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2011) indicated in their studies that the superintendent has influence on the improvement of student achievement and rebuilding schools by bringing multiple stakeholders' voices to the problem solving and decision-making process. On the other hand, the superintendent in this study emphasized that he uses not only formal meetings but also informal meetings, which are held daily in order to directly interact with and develop strong relationships with all school and community stakeholders. He also considers their input and voices when making important decisions or addressing school issues on an ongoing basis rather than waiting for a formal, monthly School Board meeting.

However, there are no studies to discuss how the superintendents' behavior supports shared leadership by encouraging substantive conversations in meetings. In this study, the

superintendent facilitated open communication that was not only collaborative in bringing together the voices of all stakeholders in decision-making and problem solving, but also substantive in developing stakeholders' understanding of the district issues. The superintendent encourages stakeholders to express all points of view, whether positive or negative, and general fears or disagreements while he listens respectfully to their opinions and ideas. This is because he deeply believes that differences of viewpoints are necessary to understand an issue and get to the deeper root of an issue.

Theme 2: Supports Leadership Development by Trusting Others to Use Their Expertise and Empowering their Autonomy

The superintendent recognizes the importance of empowering principals and teachers to use their expertise for leading their work and trying new and challenging strategies in order to help them become more effective leaders. The superintendent indicated that he trusts the principals' expertise and gives them the autonomy to make important decisions in their schools, which includes working with teachers to support them in classrooms and meetings, and organizing their own and staff professional development that will meet identified needs for assisting students in reaching higher levels of achievement.

The superintendent trusts not only the principals' expertise but also teachers' expertise in taking leadership roles in the classroom and during meetings. He acknowledges that tapping into the expertise of teachers and empowering them to be leaders can increase the success of teaching and learning in the classrooms. In examining the influence of school superintendents on student achievement, Waters and Marzano (2006) found that when the superintendent provided principals defined autonomy to lead their schools in ways that align with the district goals and use resources for professional development, this practice had a positive correlation of .28 with student achievement. While Waters and Marzano (2006) found that empowering the principals to

use defined autonomy contributes to improving student achievement, the superintendent of this study also found that empowering autonomy of principals contributed to developing their leadership skills, so they felt confident to try challenging strategies in order to identify the best methods for meeting the needs of all students and move their schools forward. However, Waters and Marzano did not demonstrate the importance of the superintendent to trust and count on the expertise of the principals and teachers to lead their work and improve students learning.

Theme 3: Supports Leaders to Work as a Collaborative Team to Enhance a Learning Community

The superintendent articulated his strategy for developing staff capacities in the schools by encouraging them to work in collaborative teams whether in meetings, professional development or classroom observations during which everyone can interact, share expertise and become mutual learners. He emphasized that shared leadership takes place even in professional development when school staff work in collaborative teams to share learning associated with developing their leadership capacities.

To promote shared learning in a collaborative team, the superintendent stated that he not only sends the principals to professional development but also models how to be a collegial learner by participating with the principals in team professional development and by holding follow-up meetings to discuss the information obtained, which supports the principals in becoming effective instructional leaders. This finding is aligned with Honig (2012) and Mendel and Mitgang (2013) in their studies of why it is important for district leaders to be involved with principals in team professional development. Both Honig (2012) and Mendel and Mitgang (2013) found that making training available for principals alone is not enough to assure training success, but the impact of training on assisting principals to become effective instructional

leaders increases when central office leaders set the example by participating with principals as co-learners in professional development.

The superintendent also influences the principals to participate with teachers as a learner in team professional development to enhance learning and augment teachers' professional growth. This superintendent supports the district's initiative of the "Reading Now Network" and encourages the principals to participate with teachers in the district trainings, which involves visiting other schools to give both the principals and teachers new strategies on how to address curricular needs and improve student achievement. The significant role of the superintendent to establish district initiatives for developing both the teachers and principals is supported by a Williams, Tabernik, and Krivak (2009) study. They found that that the superintendents drove improvements in student achievement in math and science when they led and supported "the SMART consortium" in which principals and teachers participated together in professional development to build practices and knowledge in order to provide them with effective teaching tools and methods that led to increased student math and science achievement.

In a study of superintendents' practices in supporting a professional learning community (PLC) to promote learning among the principals and develop schools, Olivier and Huffman (2016) said that the superintendents have a significant role in supporting the implementation and sustainability of the PLC process within schools. These superintendents provided opportunities for participation of all school members in monthly meetings. Participants included the central office staff, principals, assistant principals, and teachers who formed collaborative groups for sharing school planning and decision making, which contributed to school improvement. Honig and Rainey (2014) added that when the district leaders are involved and interact with principals in the PLC, it contributed to building collegial relationships, which enable principals to work

with the district leaders as professionals by sharing expertise and knowledge for instructional improvement.

Likewise, the superintendent of this study supports the work of the principals and teachers in collaborative teams in PLC by providing professional opportunities to discuss the high quality of curriculum and best practices, which helps everyone to share expertise for improving teaching skills and strategies. However, because the superintendent has daily meetings with school principals and staff, the PLC is always active. The superintendent enhances the learning community in the district through daily meetings and open communication with the principals and staff to discuss the district issues and address concerns, which helps share personal practices and provides strong support to develop leadership capacities on an ongoing basis.

Another strategy to develop leadership skills is working as collaborative teams in promoting classroom observations and follow-up discussions. The superintendent discussed his encouragement of the principals to be involved regularly in classrooms with teachers to not only evaluate them but also help meet their needs, particularly with those who are struggling. To promote learning, the superintendent has also influenced the principals in holding follow-up meetings after classroom observations to discuss with teachers information related to instructional practices. Through discussions as collaborative teams, teachers are better able to reflect on and develop teaching practices to meet the needs of all students. The superintendent also confirms that he not only encourages the principals to be involved in the classroom, but he also participates with the principals as a co-observer during teacher observations and collaborates in sharing personal practices and professional information at follow-up meetings with the principals and teachers. Several studies support the superintendent's strategy about his

encouragement of principals to regularly be involved in classroom observations and follow-up discussions. Some of these studies done by Ing (2010) and Grissom, Loeb, and Master (2013) agree that principal observations in classrooms plus sharing specific feedback with an individual teacher can contribute to greater improvement in classroom instruction, which leads to improved student achievement. Grissom et al. added that principals should not only spend time observing teacher performance, but also coach them based on their identified needs.

Ing (2010) and Grissom et al. (2013) showed that school leaders who are regularly and directly involved in the classroom with teachers not only evaluate teachers but also coach and meet their needs, influence teachers' instructional practices and improvement. Knowing that higher levels of academic achievement are reached when principals are engaged with teachers in classroom observations and follow-up discussions, this superintendent added that he encourages principals to make frequent classroom observations and hold discussions with teachers and even shadow them during their daily rounds.

Theme 4: Is Actively Engaged and Highly Visible in and out of School

May and Supovitz (2011), in their study of principal efforts to improve instruction, examined the extent to which principals delegate some their instructional-oriented work to teachers. Through conducting surveys to collect data from 51 schools, May and Supovitz found that the principals who model visibility in schools and have the greatest amount of direct interactions with teachers around issues of instructional improvement contribute to increasing teachers' ability to improve instruction. The superintendent in this study models for principals and school staff the leadership characteristics related to visibility and engagement to achieve academic growth. He daily does a walkthrough and shares leadership activities with the principals. Also, the superintendent highly engages with the principals in school events and

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activities to consistently support professional growth. He always communicates with staff and

teachers and he has an overall positive vibe with them. The high level of interaction and contact

with the principals in the schools are vital for developing the principals' leadership capacities to

become more effective instructional leaders who work with teachers to improve instruction

associated with the academic growth of all students.

The superintendent models accessibility because of his open door policy. In this way, he

makes himself available to principals and others to discuss issues and support all district

stakeholders. The principals can go to the superintendent's office, call, email, or text, if they have

questions, concerns, or "get lost," and the superintendent is available to provide support and

advice. This finding is aligned with Cudeiro (2005), who studied the effect of superintendents on

instructional improvement through their strong relationships with principals, and found that the

superintendents become more responsive and accessible for the principals when they moved

some offices to school sites, so the principals can go directly to the superintendent and ask for

greater support to do their job as instructional leaders.

Theme 5: Sets and Communicates Expectations That All Students Are Capable of Success Regardless of Their Socio-Economic Status

The superintendents placed the focus on student learning by holding high expectations

that all students are capable of success if all needs are met regardless of their socio-economic

status. He also established the district vision and goals centered on these expectations to meet the

learning needs of all students. He has worked with the principals to communicate high

expectations not only with the school staff but also with the school community, including

parents, to hold all stakeholders accountable for providing their students with the support they

need, especially those who are struggling with learning whether or not they are living in poverty.

These high expectations empower the school community to be accountable in selecting the most

appropriate strategies to meet the needs of these students and achieve the district vision of academic growth for all students. Timperley (2011) studied five elementary school principals' practices that showed their student achievement improved threefold over the expected rate of progress. He found that one strategy these principals practiced was to establish a school vision and goals based on high expectations for student learning. These principals extended the high expectations of students to include themselves and teachers who provided the learning environments in which all students could learn. In this way, all principals and teachers held themselves accountable for the learning achievement of all students.

Timperley (2011) showed the important leadership practices of the principals to hold high expectations for student learning and for staff accountability in meeting these expectations contributed to improving student achievement. The superintendent in my study works directly with the principals to hold the high expectations that all students could learn and communicate this belief to both the school staff and the larger school community, including parents to gain greater support for students, both at school and at home.

Theme 6: Overcomes Roadblock for Shared Leadership That Develops Shared Responsibility for the Success of All Students

Because shared leadership involves everyone, the superintendent wanted initially to understand stakeholders' needs, expertise, and expectations for their students, but this took time. The superintendent builds trusting relationships with stakeholders by daily communicating with them to know them and collaborating to involve their voices in school decisions. He encourages stakeholders to work in collaborative teams to analyze data and discover student issues. By doing this, the superintendent encourages everyone to feel they have a role and are responsible to address issues identified in data without telling them to do that. While the studies I reviewed for this dissertation did not specifically address the challenges superintendents encounter in

developing shared leadership, this superintendent uses multiple strategies in order to develop shared responsibility for the achievement of all students. Through modeling, communicating, building trust, honoring all voices, and maintaining multiple informal ways to provide stakeholders with access to him and the decision-making process, the superintendent in this study overcomes potential challenges to shared ownership, responsibility and leadership to address the needs of all students.

In summary, the analysis of the outcomes of this study demonstrates that, according to the study of participants and observations, the superintendent has developed strong relationships with stakeholders through using a variety of strategies, such as daily meetings and communications, to encourage all stakeholders to work toward school improvements on an ongoing basis and achieve the district vision. Using daily communication to develop trusting relationships, everyone in the school feels that they are empowered to use their expertise to lead and make important decisions to achieve the district vision for meeting the learning needs of all students. There are a number of studies that support the superintendent's strategies to bring multiple stakeholders together through formal meetings in order to be active in successfully reaching the common vision for academic growth of all students (Brazer et al., 2010; Schechter, 2011; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2011). However, these studies did not emphasize the importance of informal communication that would include substantive conversation on a more frequent basis to address school issues and develop plans for improving curriculum, teaching and learning. The superintendent in this study serves a small, rural district and uses a wide variety of informal means to engage both internal and external stakeholders and ensure they all have a voice in shaping the direction of the district as long as that direction results in serving all students well regardless of economic status.

The superintendent promotes a learning community when he participates with the principals in professional development activities and teacher observations, and then holds meetings to share experiences and address issues and concerns. According to the data, the principals emphasized that working and meeting with the superintendent provides them with an ongoing PLC environment as school leaders. In turn, the principals recreate this PLC environment with their school staffs. This effective strategy enables them to learn from the superintendent and develop their leadership capacity. While there are some studies that have shown an effective role of the superintendent to be involved with the principals in professional development activities and a PLC to promote learning, these studies did not discuss the importance of close engagement and interaction of the superintendent with principals in classroom observations and meetings to improve their leadership capacities toward instructional development (Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014; Mendel & Mitgang, 2013).

The superintendent models visibility and accessibility to provide the stakeholders with the support they need to attain the district vision. By modeling visibility, the superintendent is able to communicate his high expectations that all students are capable of success and that, by sharing responsibility, teachers and students can overcome roadblocks to assure the success of all students. While there is a study by Cudeiro (2005) that has shown the importance of the superintendent having an open door policy so principals can receive support as needed, that study did not discuss the importance of the superintendent being visible in and around the school to share leadership activities with the principals. Using this strategy, this superintendent in the present study works with the principals and communicates high expectations for student learning with the larger school community, which includes parents and other members, so they feel knowledgeable and able to share responsibility in achieving success of their students.

Implications and Recommendations

This research was conducted to obtain a better understanding of the position of a superintendent, and how a person in that position can impact the success of other district leaders and teachers as they work to improve academic achievement for all students. The superintendent in this study strived to turn low-performing schools that educate a high-poverty student population into schools that outperform their demographic peers through building a strong culture of shared and collaborative leadership. The superintendent acknowledged that the schools could not be improved without wide participation of stakeholders that include district leaders, principals, teachers, parents, and their students. He initially developed strong and trusting relationships with the principals and stakeholders by using strategies such as formal and informal communication and visibility in schools and the community. Daily, he communicates and meets with the stakeholders one-on-one and in collaborative teams to involve multiple voices and work hand-in-hand in addressing school issues or developing educational plans and strategies before implementing them. In this way, he has demonstrated that he values their opinions and wants to incorporate their ideas in major decisions.

Through daily communication to develop trusting relationships, everyone in the school feels that they are empowered to use their expertise in order to make important decisions and try new strategies that improve academic growth for all students. The superintendent shared in many ways that he trusts his principals and teachers to use their autonomy to achieve the common goals of the district, which would lead to student success. This superintendent models visibility, engagement, and accessibility to provide the ongoing support that the stakeholders need for achieving the district vision.

Through this research, I have learned that a superintendent can be vital to the interactions and communication in a school district. As he interacts with all stakeholders, he is able to build trusting relationships and a common goal; then, empower all stakeholders to work in collaborative teams to achieve that goal. These teams of individuals develop a feeling of shared responsibility for ensuring that the district goal to educate all students is achieved. The position and roles of a superintendent can make a difference in the success of all students in a district. There is a strong link between the superintendent's leadership and developing strong leadership capacity at the school levels.

Figure 2, below, provides a summary of the major themes that have emerged from all data sources. To achieve the vision of high academic success for all, the superintendent in this case study established an environment of open communication and substantive conversations to develop trusting relationships with the principals and stakeholders and empower their autonomy in the district. Because of strong relationships and shared leadership, the superintendent was able to build collaborative teams with stakeholders. Through the collaborative team he formed with the two principals, he helped them share leadership responsibilities with him, each other, and their staffs to achieve a shared vision. Together, they developed their skills and knowledge and used their collaboration to develop collaborative teams within and across the staff. The superintendent not only promotes shared learning among collaborative teams to develop their capacity so they become effective to meet student needs, he also models leadership characteristics related to visibility and engagement to support them to achieve the district vision of academic growth of all students. By modeling visibility and engagement, he is able to have daily conversations and close interactions with the principals and stakeholders, listen to their

ideas and input on an ongoing basis, and use their input in the district decisions to achieve the district vision.

Also, Figure 2 encapsulates the approach this superintendent uses to accomplish strong instructional and shared leadership in his district. It is noteworthy that this superintendent takes advantage of the small size of his district to engage heavily in open communication and substantive conversations as his overarching strategy for building shared vision and fostering the trust, autonomy, and collaborative teamwork that drives change and progress for this district. He maintains high visibility and direct engagement with principals, staff, and stakeholders in order to create an intimate level of engagement with the entire instructional program, process, and staff. While superintendents of larger districts may not be able to achieve such a high level of visibility and engagement, this superintendent's approach suggests that larger districts might consider ensuring that there are people at the district level who can engage with principals in similarly intensive and supportive ways.
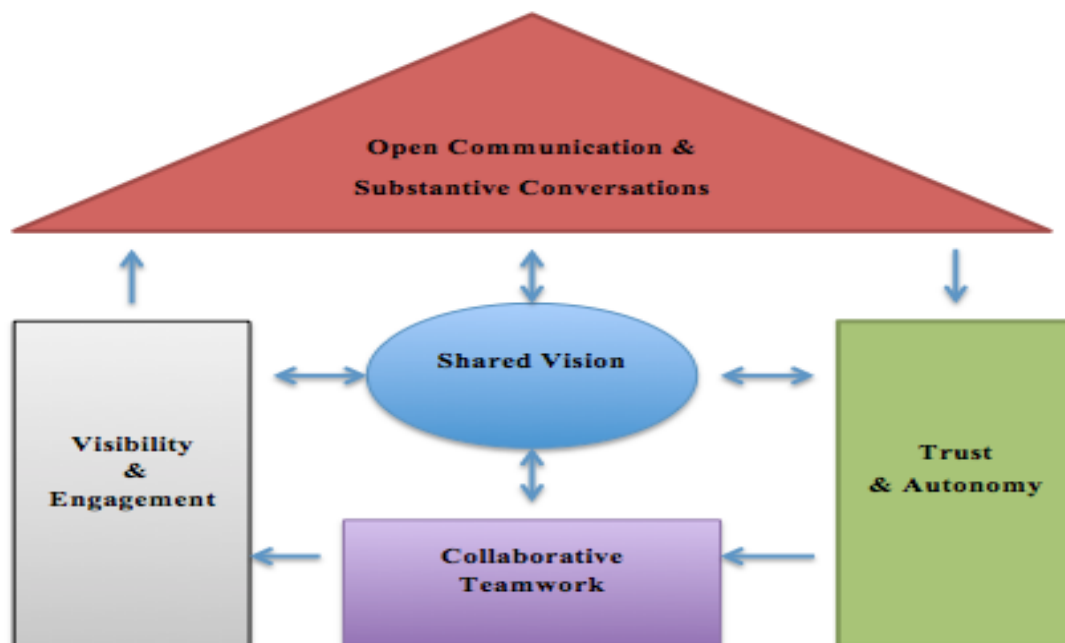

Figure 2. Building Instructional and Collaborative Leadership in the School District

Implications for Saudi Arabia

Before beginning this study, I contacted several Saudi Arabian principals to gather information about how collaborative and instructional leadership is implemented in Saudi Arabian schools.

In Saudi Arabia, there is no position that is exactly related to the role of superintendent in the United States, however, each region/city has supervisors that have been assigned by the Ministry of Education to that region/city. A supervisor of school leadership is assigned to work with the principals in a region. The main duties of these supervisors are to guide, supervise, and evaluate the school principals' performance, develop the principals if they need training, discuss the educational issues facing schools, look at educational strategies that address the learning skills of students, and transfer the new educational decisions from the Ministry of Education to the school setting. The supervisors contribute to preparing programs and workshops that improve principal performance and their schools, but they do not directly participate in developing educational strategies and activities inside the school system.

The regional supervisors conduct formal visits to each school two to four times a year, which means one to two times each semester. During these visits, the supervisors meet with each principal in the school to look and discuss low academic achievement of some students, but not to address or improve the learning issues of students, and require that the principals create and implement plans to address academic issues and evaluate the improvement of low-achieving students. Sometimes, the supervisors may contribute suggestions or ideas, but mainly the principals are responsible for addressing these issues. The supervisors also meet with the principals to discuss some new decisions, but not all that have been made by the Ministry of Education.

Almannie (2015), in his study about leadership roles of school superintendents (supervisors) in Saudi Arabia, found that the supervisors influenced school leaders to a low degree. More specifically, Almannie found that 58% of participants expressed a low degree of supervisor participation in a district's vision and mission and of communication with the school principals. Also, he found that 69% of participants expressed a low degree of agreement that the supervisor participated in decision-making or involved staff feedback regarding the development of learning in the schools. Almannie recommended that there should be an investment in professional training for both school supervisors and principals in the five areas of the leadership role that are vital for educational development. This suggested that, although attempting to develop instruction and learning in the schools, the Ministry of Education has delegated limited responsibility to the supervisors to work closely with the principals regarding demands for educational development in Saudi schools.

The principals have limited autonomy/authority to practice their roles as academic leaders in their schools and make decisions that are appropriate to meet the needs of their teachers and students, such as planning workshops or student activities, developing teaching and learning strategies, and evaluating and developing the performance of teachers in the classrooms. Algarni and Male (2014), in their studies about developing leadership in Saudi schools to encourage collaborative learning among students, concluded that in order to achieve collaborative learning to support student academic development, the Ministry of Education needs to implement pedagogical leadership that focuses on providing the Saudi principals with more autonomy to exercise their skills in order to be creative and appropriately influence the collaborative learning development and change demanded in the schools. By empowering principal autonomy in schools, principals would be able to design, plan and evaluate the

effectiveness of instruction. Also, they would be able to make their own decision to solve their school issues and build their training programs according to goals that would be more appropriate to meet their students' identified needs.

More recently, Meemar (2018), in his study of the principals' new authority in Saudi Arabia, found that Saudi principals perceived a limited amount of authority, but agreed that if they received more empowerment, they would be better able to affect the achievement of desired outcome within their schools. This suggested that empowering the principals to use their autonomy would encourage them to be more creative and able to handle the continuously changing demands related to learning. This would include not only teachers and schools, but also acknowledging that parents play a major role in the development of the performance levels of their students and schools in Saudi Arabia. At this time, the Ministry of Education has created regulations for developing partnerships between schools and parents, but these regulations have not been widely active yet. The supervisors do not have an active role in communicating with the parents, but mainly the principals communicate with parents to encourage their participation in improving the school performance by increasing their students' attendance and learning, and encouraging their students to participate in school and classroom activities.

When examining the roles of the superintendent in United States schools and the regional leadership supervisors in Saudi Arabia, there are similarities and differences. Both positions offer the superintendent/supervisor the ability to interact with the principals in schools and to have conversations regarding the learning achievement of students. Both must be knowledgeable of the laws and regulations for education that are set by the government while knowing the achievement levels of the students in the schools in their areas. In this study, the superintendent was responsible for only two schools in a small community and created many opportunities to

have conversations and close interactions and direct engagements with principals, teachers and other stakeholders. With high visibility and opportunities for conversation, he could listen to ideas and opinions related to many issues in the district and help to create and implement common goals and vision. In Saudi Arabia, a supervisor of leadership may be responsible for many schools, which limits their ability to have one-on-one conversations or create collaborative teams that include all stakeholders.

Recommendations for Saudi Arabia

Based on the findings, I would recommend the following to the K-12 Ministry of Education and the school heads in Saudi Arabia:

Hire More Regional Supervisors and Develop Their Leadership Capacity

The Ministry of Education needs to hire more regional supervisors who will be responsible for a smaller number of schools. Once they have hired these supervisors, the Ministry of Education can use the results of this study to prepare the supervisors for an effective leadership role that focuses on their relationships with the principals to build stronger leadership in schools. The Ministry of Education needs to train supervisors in order to increase their knowledge of the components of shared leadership in schools, and how shared leadership can engage more stakeholders in conversations to share information and allow them to voice their opinions, so they can be active in leading change or making school improvements together to increase student achievement.

Support the Collaborative Teams among Supervisors

Regional supervisors who are trained in shared leadership and listening techniques will be better able to build collaborative teams among themselves. These collaborative teams of supervisors will be able to create training modules for the development of stronger leadership in

school principals. In addition to helping the regional supervisors to build high functioning teams between themselves, it would be vital to coach the supervisors on how to bring school leaders together in order to coach them and give them a chance to build collaborative teams between themselves, and, then, use those collaborative teams to help the principals develop their leadership capacity. In turn, the empowered principals can involve their school staffs and other stakeholders in collaborative teams to work together toward academic achievement.

Increase the Communication with the Principals

By increasing the number of supervisors and developing their leadership capacities, these supervisors will have an opportunity to increase engagement in schools and closely interact with the principals to work hand-in-hand for adopting a clear vision and educational goals that achieve their vision. This includes increasing the number of visits to the schools, for example two times a week instead of two to four times a year. During these multiple visits, the supervisors can increase one-on-one conversations with the principals. The supervisors and the principals can regularly review new regulations, discuss teaching and learning issues in the classrooms, use data to analyze the potential reasons behind these issues, and put together action plans and strategies to accomplish the specified improvements. Through working together, they can also determine specific workshops that principals may need. To provide the ongoing support that the principals need, the supervisors should have an open door policy so the principals can contact them at any time when they need support or have concerns and issues in the schools.

Empower the Principals' Autonomy in Schools

By increasing interactions and developing stronger relationships, trust will be built between the principals and supervisors. Through this trust, supervisors will feel comfortable empowering principals to carry out the identified educational strategies, which will allow

principals to have a greater influence in leading school development. The supervisors can encourage principal autonomy in schools in order to effectively exercise their leadership roles and make important decisions to meet student needs. Leadership role development may include planning for their own workshops with staff, developing student activities and educational strategies, and developing teacher performance.

By developing leadership skills and allowing principals to exercise their autonomy, the principals will feel confident and empowered to be creative when developing strategies and activities they believe are necessary to meet their students' identified needs. Also, Saudi Arabian schools should use developmental evaluation tools to ensure that principals and supervisors use that autonomy in an environment of personal growth, so they are constantly self-assessing themselves and how they use autonomy. To encourage authentic principal self-assessment would require increased interaction between principals and supervisors, both as the supervisors do a performance review and as part of an ongoing series of supportive interactions. That way principals could exercise their autonomy and demonstrate how they use that autonomy during both informal interactions with supervisors and formal reviews. By encouraging principals to use self-assessment, supervisors would be supporting principals to develop and use autonomy effectively in leading their schools.

Develop Collaborative Teams of Teachers for Instructional Improvement

By developing stronger principal leadership, the supervisors can encourage the principals to build collaborative teams within their schools. Though the supervisors will not be an active member on the collaborative teams, they may shadow principals during their site visits at the schools to demonstrate support. The principals and teachers can gather regularly in meetings, for example professional learning community (PLC) gatherings or studies, to discuss the major

school issues they face, examine learning and teaching practices, discover effective educational strategies, and practice ongoing action research. These meetings can provide opportunities for principals and teachers to work together towards instructional improvement. Also, the strategy of collaboration may include the encouragement of principals and teachers to visit other high-performing schools in Saudi Arabia to acquire additional leadership skills on how other successful principals lead and influence their schools. During visits, principals can be particularly mindful of what is happening inside the classrooms and how the national curriculum is being implemented.

Increase the Involvement of Stakeholders in School Improvement

Addressing the learning issues and planning for school improvement can be expanded through involving all stakeholders in order to share multiple voices in decision-making. This study found that involving diverse stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students in school planning contributed to sustainable improvements in schools. The supervisors and principals can encourage the wider participation of all stakeholders who would have effective roles in the development of school performance and classroom activities. The supervisors and principals must encourage teachers to regularly communicate student achievement data with parents, and elicit parents' input about the learning issues that their students might face. This extended participation by all stakeholders in instructional planning and development can build an organizational structure that allows time for teachers and parents to meet and discuss the academic needs of students and to identify educational programs and activities that address student needs. In this way, the supervisors and principals can build a stronger partnership with the stakeholders and increase their commitment to achieve the school vision for improving student learning.

Incorporate Leadership Programs in Higher Education

For future Saudi leadership preparation, the Ministry of Education can collaborate with Saudi universities and other educational institutions to plan courses and allocate the required budgets for preparing special programs that address effective, collaborative leadership that can increase the involvement of supervisors, principals, teachers and parents in bringing about higher student achievement. These programs may refer to the findings of this study in order to have a better concept of strong school leadership practices that adequately prepare Saudi students in higher education for leadership positions in the district and school level.

Anyone who is interested in effective leadership practices is welcome to review this research and to take action in developing strategies such as those displayed by this superintendent. By exploring the findings recorded in this study, leaders can become more knowledgeable about this topic and guide the implementation of practical strategies to develop effective school leaders. Taking action to develop school leaders who could expand a principal's capacity to lead and support changes and improvements in schools would be instrumental in insuring higher student achievement.

Future Research in Saudi Arabia

This study focused on how successful school superintendents carried out effective leadership strategies to develop instructional leaders and build a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. The study incorporated semi-structured interviews plus observations to include the insights of stakeholders regarding the successful leadership strategies implemented by the superintendent. After applying the above recommendations for Saudi Arabian schools, I would recommend future research in Saudi Arabia.

A worthwhile study would be conducting qualitative research to investigate the perceptions of the Ministry of Education leaders, principals, teachers and other relevant stakeholders regarding initiatives and strategies implemented for and by supervisors to develop a principal's capacity for shared, collaborative and strong instructional leadership in Saudi Arabian schools. Interviews could be conducted with participants concerning how they perceive the ways supervisors are carrying out the successful leadership strategies discovered in this study. The resulting descriptive data could be compared with the findings of this study for similarities and differences between supervisors and superintendents.

Another worthwhile study would be a quantitative study to explore the links between developing a principal's capacity for instructional and collaborative leadership and improved student achievement in Saudi Arabian schools. The survey could be developed to ask the supervisors to rate how often they employ particular practices and initiatives that are the most important to improving school principals for instructional and collaborative leadership and its relationship to increasing student achievement.

Also, it might strengthen this study to conduct a qualitative study around the challenges that the school supervisors are facing when developing shared leadership that would improve the roles and responsibilities of principals in Saudi Arabian schools, and how supervisors respond to these challenges.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, the results of this study highlight the initiatives and strategies of the superintendent to develop the instructional leadership of principals and a culture of collaboration in schools in order to improve student success. After conducting this study, I have learned that a superintendent can impact student achievement by being directly involved with the principals in

developing and using both instructional and collaborative leadership skills and strategies. In turn, the empowered principals can involve their school staffs and other stakeholders who work to engage in academic achievement efforts. Through high engagement and daily communications, the superintendent is able to create an environment of collaborative teams with the principals and stakeholders who work together on an ongoing basis toward school improvement to achieve their common vision. Therefore, I have learned that the strong empowerment of collaborative teams through daily communication and engagement is a successful strategy for developing the principal's collaborative leadership capacity needed for turning schools from low-performing to high-performing student achievement. Indeed, there is a strong link between the superintendents' leadership and developing the leadership capacity of principals. Also, with close engagement and interaction in the schools, the superintendent is able to work hand-in-hand with principals and teachers in collaborative goal setting that addresses expectations for student learning, and gives strong encouragement for the work of both school principals and teachers.

Another important take-away from this study is that I have learned that the superintendent has a direct impact when supporting the leadership development of both principals and teachers by trusting them to use their expertise and empowering their autonomy to lead their work and try new and challenging strategies in the schools. This is because the superintendent wants them to be creative and feel confident that they are able to achieve the common goals of the district, which can lead to student success. Also, I have learned that the superintendent not only empowers the principal and teacher autonomy to lead their own efforts toward student achievement, but also models accessibility and visibility in the classrooms and around the schools in order to provide school staff with the support and assistance they need to complete their work.

The information from this research's data collection, analysis, and discussion will aid me in my professional work in the future to better understand the effective role of the superintendent and to develop leadership capacity at the school level. When I go back to Saudi Arabia and play an important role in education, I plan to disseminate the findings from my study to increase the insights of school leaders and policy makers who can build important relationships between district and building leaders of schools in order to encourage them to operationalize the behaviors of superintendents that can influence leadership capacity among principals and within the school culture. This may include holding multiple presentations, workshops, and courses, or publishing articles of my dissertation that highlight the significant leadership role of the superintendent to impact direct involvement in efforts that develop the capacity of principals for building stronger instructional and collaborative leadership in schools in order to make significant improvements in student learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Superintendent Initial Interview Protocol

Appendix A

Superintendent's Practices and Initiatives for Developing Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity

Superintendent Initial Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to let me conduct my case study research in your district. As you know, I will be talking with you, your principals, other central office leaders, and any other stakeholders you suggest to learn how you are working with your principals to develop their instructional and collaborative leadership capacity. I also want to know how you are working with your administrative team to build a culture of shared, collaborative leadership and to develop better understanding of how to best serve students who come from poverty or disadvantaged circumstances.

Today's conversation will focus on your specific strategies for developing principal capacity and some of the specific activities and engagements you use to carry out those strategies. I will ask you some specific questions, but will also ask you to offer any information and points of discussion that you believe will help me understand your approach to developing principal capacity. In other words, I will try to follow your lead to learn as much as possible in this first conversation.

To get the conversation started, let's focus first on shared leadership.

1. What are your goals for shared leadership in your district?

2. Why is shared leadership important in your district?

3. How would you describe the current state of shared leadership in your district?

4. How do you work with principals, central office staff, and your board of education to build shared leadership in your district?

5. Have you needed to work with specific principals to improve their ability to develop shared leadership or increase collaboration? If so, what strategies did you use to foster those improvements?

6. What challenges have you experienced in building shared leadership and how have you addressed those challenges?

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7. What has helped you develop the level of shared leadership you have achieved so far?

1. What else would you like to say about building shared leadership in your district?

Now, I would like us to turn to your work to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity.

2. What is vision for how principals function as instructional leaders?

3. What strategies, resources, and processes have you used to help principals develop as instructional leaders?

4. How do you know how effective your principals are at providing instructional leadership?

5. What interventions have you used to develop stronger instructional leadership with principals? Can you give me some examples?

6. How do you work with other district leaders and building principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?

7. How do you work with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high poverty schools?

8. Can you think of anything I did not ask that you would like to address?

Now, that we have had our initial conversation, please help me with the following:

1. Please provide me a list of meetings, professional development activities, PLC work sessions, or other work or leaning sessions occurring in the next three weeks where I would be welcome to come and observe. I would sit off to the side and quietly observe in a non-obtrusive way.

2. Please also work with your staff to identify any documents or artifacts of your work relating to any of the topics we discussed today. You can either provide me copies or

simply have one of your staff gather them in one location where I might spend some time

reviewing them and making notes.

3. Also, please let me know if there are specific central office personnel or other

    stakeholders I should interview. These would be people who have been directly involved

    in your work to develop principals' collaborative and instructional leadership capacity.

I will begin scheduling interviews with the principals who have agreed to participate in this study, and work those interviews and interviews with others you suggest into my schedule over the next three weeks. Thank you for your time today and assistance in conducting this case study of your district. I will transcribe this interview and provide you a copy to review. I will also provide you a copy of the full case description after I complete all my data analysis. I will be seeking your input to refine the case description wherever needed to make sure that I produce an authentic case analysis.

Cross-Reference Table for Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Questions
1. What specific strategies is the district using to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?	1. What is vision for how principals function as instructional leaders? 2. What strategies, resources, and processes have you used to help principals develop as instructional leaders? 3. How do you know how effective your principals are at providing instructional leadership? 4. What interventions have you used to develop stronger instructional leadership with principals? Can you give me some examples?
2. What a specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop shared, collaborative leadership between all district leaders and between district leaders and teachers, students, and parents?	1. What are your goals for shared leadership in your district? 2. Why is shared leadership important in your district? 3. How would you describe the current state of shared leadership in your district? 4. How do you work with principals, central office staff, and your board of education to build shared leadership in your district? 5. Have you needed to work with specific principals to improve their ability to develop shared leadership or increase collaboration? If so, what strategies did you use to foster those improvements 6. What challenges have you experienced in building shared leadership and how have you addressed those challenges? 7. What has helped you develop the level of shared leadership you have achieved so far? 8. What else would you like to say about building shared leadership in your district?
3. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and building principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?	1. How do you work with other district leaders and building principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?
4. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high poverty schools?	1. How do you work with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high poverty schools?

Appendix B

Observation Protocol

Appendix B

Observation Protocol

Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing, High-Poverty School

Person being observed:

Observer:

Date:

Place:

Beginning Time: Ending Time:

Elements to observe: physical setting, particular activities and interactions, discussions, and the researcher's own reactions.

Descriptive Notes	Interpretive Notes (Observers' comments)	How this relates to specific interview questions

Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol
Focus on shared and instructional leadership
***What is the superintendent doing and does it have any influence on the principals?

(Get to know the principal)   **Please tell a little about why you became a principal and what are your most important roles and goals as a principal?**
_____

1. **What is your understanding of the importance of your role in shared leadership? What are your goals for shared leadership?**

2. **How has your superintendent influenced your goals and the way you build shared leadership in your school?**

   Please give me some specific examples.

3. **How does the superintendent share leadership with you?**   (Superintendent modeling)

   What kinds of leadership activities has your superintendent shared with you as an individual?

   Please give me some specific examples…

4. **How does the superintendent share leadership with the principal team in your district?** (Total team)

   Please give me some specific examples so I can better understand.

5. **Considering the past questions, how has the superintendent influenced the way you work with your school staff in the area of shared leadership?**

   Please share some things your superintendent suggested that you share with your staff… and how you carry out the suggestions in your school…

   _____
6. **How important is your role as an instructional leader? How do you do instructional leadership in your school?**

   Please give me some specific examples.

7. **How does the superintendent influence your instructional leadership role and goals?**

   Please give me some example of what the superintendent does.
8. **How does the superintendent influence the principal leadership team to use instructional leadership?**

9. **How does the influence of the superintendent impact what you do with your teachers in the area of instructional leadership?**

   _____

10. **What are the most important things that the superintendent has done to influence your goals to be a better instructional leader and share leadership with others?**

Appendix D

Superintendent Follow-up Interview Protocol

Appendix D

Superintendent Follow-up Interview Protocol

Superintendent's Practices and Initiatives for Developing Principal Instructional and
Collaborative Leadership Capacity

I wrote the follow-up interview questions based on analyzing the interview data, and these
questions also correspond to my research questions

5. What specific strategies is the district using to develop principals' instructional leadership

    capacity?

    The last time we met, you talked about things that you do to develop shared leadership.

    This time I would like to dig deeper into the development of instructional leadership and

    how it impacts students who have socio-economic situations.

    A. At the district level, how do the Board or Education and its policies and procedures

        help develop a principal's capacity for instructional leadership?

        Do any of the policies and procedures (guidelines) assist you as you guide principals

        in becoming better instructional leaders? Can you give some examples?

    B. Through the district's policies and procedures or from your guidance, are there

        opportunities for principals to receive special training to gain skills and/or strategies

        that she/he can use with the teachers so they can better meet the **instructional** needs

        of low achieving students and/or students who live in poverty?

6. What specific strategies is the superintendent using to develop shared, collaborative

    leadership between all district leaders as well as between district leaders and teachers,

    students, and parents?

    It was interesting when I reviewed the responses from the principals and compared their

    responses with your responses. I would like to clarify some points.

A. You have done a nice job of modeling shared leadership. In order to get off the priority lists, everyone seemed to have the mission of getting off that list. How does a district or school get off the priority list?

How have you seen the principals use shared leadership strategies to get off the priority list?

Please give me some specific examples of when the principals use shared voice with teachers, students, parents…?

B. Have you seen the principals used shared leadership to improve instruction that helped get the district off the priority list?

C. Have you used shared leadership in financial planning to improve instructional achievement?

D. What leadership teams do you see the principals using on a regular basis? What is each team's focus/mission? (Did the teams improve instruction?)

Do you feel that some of the leadership teams influenced getting off the priority list? Can you give examples?

(…When did principals make decisions with their teachers or their parents or the students? Have the principals shared data with the Board, with other leaders in their schools, with students, with parents? Have they asked others for input or suggestions?

7. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and school principals to address issues of poverty that influence student learning?

A. How do you and your principals and teachers identify the issues of students who live in poverty or who are economically disadvantaged? What characteristics of poverty

have you seen in your district? Have these characteristics changed since you came to the district?

B. When students who are economically disadvantaged are identified, what do principals do to make sure they receive the assistance that is needed so they reach a high level of academic achievement?

C. How do you (superintendent) assist the principals in addressing issues of the economically disadvantaged students?

8. How is the superintendent working with other district leaders and the board of education to support, reward, and recognize the work of principals serving high poverty schools?

A. When we last spoke, you said that you support your principals when they serve students with issues related to poverty. Could you tell me more about how you support your principals when they work to address the needs of these students?

B. Have your principals ever received any recognition or rewards for doing a good job of assisting children with economically disadvantaged needs? Has the district? Has the state of Michigan?

Appendix E

Participant Recruitment Letter

Appendix E

Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Fatemah Al Ramel and I am Ph.D. student in Western Michigan University. I am writing to invite you to learn more about participating in a qualitative research study entitled "Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing High-Poverty School."

As part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Education Leadership, I am interested in studying how superintendents work to build a collaborative culture, instructional leadership, shared decision making or other activities to develop principals' instructional and/or collaborative leadership practices

To participate in this study you must be a full-time superintendent actively involved in developing instructional and collaborative leadership among and between principals and other district leaders.

The study will include several interviews and observations that will take approximately 2.5 hours over a two week period.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact me by replying by email to fatimahalim.alramel@wmich.edu or by mail to 750 South Drake RD,
AP G9, Kalamazoo, MI 49009. Or you may feel free to contact me by phone at (269) 873-0184.

Sincerely,
Fatemah Al Ramel

Appendix F

Superintendent Invitation Letter

Appendix F

Participant Invitation Letter

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Fatemah Al Ramel and I am Ph.D. student in Western Michigan University. I am writing to invite you to learn more about participating in a qualitative research study entitled "Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing High-Poverty School."

As part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Education Leadership, I am interested in studying how superintendents work to build a collaborative culture, instructional leadership, shared decision making or other activities to develop principals' instructional and/or collaborative leadership practices

The study will include several interviews and observations that will take approximately 2.5 hours over a two week period.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact me by replying by email to fatimahalim.alramel@wmich.edu or by mail to 750 South Drake RD,
AP G9, Kalamazoo, MI 49009. Or you may feel free to contact me by phone at (269) 873-0184.

Sincerely,
Fatemah Al Ramel

Appendix G

Principal Invitation Letter

Appendix G

Participant Invitation Letter

Dear principals,

My name is Fatemah Al Ramel and I am Ph.D. student in Western Michigan University. I am writing to invite you to learn more about participating in a qualitative research study entitled "Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing High-Poverty School."

As part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Education Leadership, I am interested in studying how superintendents work to build a collaborative culture, instructional leadership, shared decision making or other activities to develop principals' instructional and/or collaborative leadership practices. The study will include one interview that will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact me by replying by email to fatimahalim.alramel@wmich.edu or by mail to 750 South Drake RD, AP G9, Kalamazoo, MI 49009. Or you may feel free to contact me by phone at (269) 873-0184.

Sincerely,

Fatemah Al Ramel

Appendix H

Informed Consent—Superintendent Participant

Appendix H

Informed Consent Document —Superintendent Participant
Western Michigan University
The Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Reeves
Student Investigator: Fatemah Al Ramel
Title of Study: Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing, High-Poverty School

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing, High-Poverty School." This project will serve as Fatemah Al Ramel's Ph.D. Dissertation for the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely, and ask any questions if you need more clarification.

The following information is being provided for you to determine if you wish to participate in this study. In addition, you are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at anytime without affecting your relationship with the researchers or Western Michigan University.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this study is to explore how the superintendent, in an instrumental case study district with one or more improving or out-performing high-poverty schools, builds leadership capacity of principals by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. A particular focus for this study is the ways in which superintendents work with their central office administrators and principals to build shared leadership capacity to turn low-performing schools that educate high-poverty student populations into schools that outperform their demographic peers. This study will describe the activities and strategies that characterize the ways that superintendents build a strong collaborative leadership team with their school principals and, then, use that collaborative team to develop individual principal's capacity in a district with poverty levels above average for their state.

Who can participate in this study?
You can participate in this study if you are a superintendent. The population for this study is superintendents and other district personnel in school districts. The number of subjects I want to complete this study is one superintendent plus 1-4 other district personnel in one K-12 School district to be recruited from the southwest section of a Mid-western U.S. state. The exclusionary criteria of the study are the superintendent has served the district for less than one year. The inclusionary criteria of the study are the following:

1. The superintendent and other participants must be from a district with at least one school

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that has 48% or more of its students (the State average) of total students, and of students at least one of its schools, qualifying for free/reduced lunch for any period between 2015-18.

2. One full-time superintendent and at least one other central office administrator in addition to the business official and/or operations directors.
3. At least one of its schools placed on the State's Priority Schools list or has been in stage 3-4 of the NCLB AYP process over the last 7 year period and has made adequate enough academic progress to be removed from the Priority Schools list or to meet AYP.
4. District and/or school level state assessment results in math and/or English language arts for the most recent three-year period fall in the top quartile of a State level peer group of demographically similar districts.
5. The superintendent is actively involved in developing instructional and collaborative leadership among and between principals and other district leaders.

Where will this study take place?
The interviews and observations will take place in your school at a location specified by you.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The entire case study will be conducted over a two-week period between March and June 2018. The expected time of involvement will be divided in two phases. You will be asked to participate in multiple interviews of 30-45 minutes in length, over 3 to 5 sessions, over the two-week period for a total of 2.5 hours time commitment.

You will be asked to allow the student researcher to observe your meetings with principals, teachers, and/or other stakeholders on such area as building a collaborative culture, instructional leadership, shared decision making or other activities that develop principals' instructional and/or collaborative leadership practices, which is part of your regular work schedule.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
1. You will be asked to participate in multiple interviews of 30-45 minutes in length, over 3 to 5 sessions, over the two-week period for a total of 2.5 hours time commitment.

2. You will be asked to allow the student researcher to observe your meetings with principals, teachers, and/or other stakeholders on such area as building a collaborative culture, instructional leadership, shared decision making or other activities that develop principals' instructional and/or collaborative leadership practices, which is part of your regular work schedule.

3. You may be asked to participate in follow-up interviews to debrief observation. *To help in your preparation, you will be given the interview questions for you to reflect upon prior to the interview*. All interviews will be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected information. All interviews will be transcribed that you will be able to review and edit.

4. You will be asked to provide documents including district agendas, workshop materials, professional development materials, copies of communications, or artifacts of your work

with principals on the area of interest for this study.

What information is being measured during the study?
All data will be descriptive to get complete descriptions what the superintendent and other district personnel do to develop principals' instructional and/or collaborative leadership practices.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There are no known risks associated with this study. The only possible risk associated with the potential for loss of the confidentiality. However, the researcher will take steps to protect your identity. The researcher will protect your identity by using pseudonyms. *Participants' names or school name will not be used in the dissertation dissemination process; rather it will only be known to the researcher*.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There are several potential benefits from participating in this study. This study seeks to understand how superintendents work with school principals to build a culture of shared and collaborative instructional leadership capacity at the school level. By developing a detailed description of how superintendents and other district leaders work with principals in one district with schools that outperform high-poverty demographic peers, this study will produce examples of practices and behaviors other similarly situated school and district leaders can employ to increase both instructional and shared, collaborative leadership in order to maximize growth in student achievement.

The findings from this study may add to the specificity of leadership development practices that the superintendent and other district leaders can use to support the growth of school principals and maximize productivity in their schools that serve economically disadvantaged student populations. The study may provide the superintendent further insight into the important relationship between central office leadership and building instructional and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership in schools that serve high-poverty populations. Finally, the results of the study may help researchers, policymakers, and district leaders more specifically operationalize the behaviors of superintendents that influence leadership capacity among principals and within the school culture. This study may assist superintendents to evaluate their abilities to what extent that they can support principal leadership capacity for turning schools from low performing to high-performing schools.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There is no cost for participating in this study. The only cost associated with participating in this study is the participants' time.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Only the investigators will have sole access to data collected in this study.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Fatemah Al Ramel at 269-873-0184 or fatimahalim.alramel@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

------------------------------------   --
Participant's signature   Date

Appendix I

Informed Consent—Principal Participants

Informed Consent Document —Principal Participants
Western Michigan University
The Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Reeves
Student Investigator: Fatemah Al Ramel
Title of Study: Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing, High-Poverty School

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing, High-Poverty School." This project will serve as Fatemah Al Ramel's Ph.D. Dissertation for the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely, and ask any questions if you need more clarification.

The following information is being provided for you to determine if you wish to participate in this study. In addition, you are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at anytime without affecting your relationship with the researchers or Western Michigan University.

What are we trying to find out in this study?

The purpose of this study is to explore how the superintendent, in an instrumental case study district with one or more improving or out-performing high-poverty schools, builds leadership capacity of principals by developing (a) principal capacity to function as instructional leaders and (b) a culture of shared and collaborative leadership. A particular focus for this study is the ways in which superintendents work with their principals to build shared leadership capacity to turn low-performing schools that educate high-poverty student populations into schools that outperform their demographic peers. This study will describe the activities and strategies that characterize the ways that superintendents build a strong collaborative leadership team with their school principals and, then, use that collaborative team to develop individual principal's capacity in a district with poverty levels above average for their.

Who can participate in this study?
You can participate in this study if you are a principal where you work with the superintendent at the same school district to develop instructional and collaborative leadership. You must complete at least two years as a principal of your current school.

Where will this study take place?
This study will take place at a K-12 School district located in the southwest portion of the State. The interview will take place in your school at a location specified by you.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

You will be asked to participate in one interview of 20-30 minutes.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face 20-30 minute interviews about how the superintendent is working with you to develop your instructional leadership capacity and/or a culture of shared, collaborative leadership in the schools. *To help in your preparation, you will be given the interview questions for you to reflect upon prior to the interview*. The interview will be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected information. The interview will be transcribed into transcripts that you will be able to review and edit.

What information is being measured during the study?
All data will be descriptive to get complete descriptions what the superintendent does to develop principals' instructional and/or collaborative leadership practices.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
There are no known risks associated with this study. The only possible risk associated with the potential for loss of the confidentiality. However, the researcher will take steps to protect your identity. The researcher will protect your identity by using pseudonyms. *Participants' names or school name will not be used in the dissertation dissemination process; rather it will only be known to the researcher*.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
There are several potential benefits from participating in this study. This study seeks to understand how superintendents work with school principals to build a culture of shared and collaborative instructional leadership capacity at the school level. By developing a detailed description of how superintendents and other district leaders work with principals in one district with schools that outperform high-poverty demographic peers, this study will produce examples of practices and behaviors other similarly situated school and district leaders can employ to increase both instructional and shared, collaborative leadership in order to maximize growth in student achievement.

The findings from this study may add to the specificity of leadership development practices that the superintendent and other district leaders can use to support the growth of school principals and maximize productivity in their schools that serve economically disadvantaged student populations. The study may provide the superintendent further insight into the important relationship between central office leadership and building instructional and a culture of shared and collaborative leadership in schools that serve high-poverty populations. Finally, the results of the study may help researchers, policymakers, and district leaders more specifically operationalize the behaviors of superintendents that influence leadership capacity among principals and within the school culture. This study may assist superintendents to evaluate their abilities to what extent that they can support principal leadership capacity for turning schools from low performing to high-performing schools.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There is no cost for participating in this study. The only cost associated with participating in this

study is the participants' time.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Only the investigators will have sole access to data collected in this study.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Fatemah Al Ramel at 269-873-0184 or fatimahalim.alramel@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

_____

Please Print Your Name

------------------------------------   --
Participant's signature   Date

Appendix J

HSIRB Approval Letter

Date: June 28, 2018

To: Patricia Reeves, Principal Investigator
        Fatemah Al Ramel, Student Investigator for Dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 18-02-34

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project titled "Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing High-Poverty School" requested in your memo received June 26, 2018 (to revise recruitment to only include superintendents and principals of high poverty schools) has been approved by the WMU Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: **March 12, 2019**

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Date: March 13, 2018

To: Patricia Reeves, Principal Investigator
          Fatemah Al Ramel, Student Investigator for Dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair   *AmyNaugh*

Re: HSIRB Project Number 18-02-34

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Superintendent Practices and Initiatives for Building Principal Instructional and Collaborative Leadership Capacity in a High-Performing High-Poverty School" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., *you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study").* Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: **March 12, 2019**