The Use of Principal Feedback from Teachers to Create Effective Leadership

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THE USE OF PRINCIPAL FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS 
TO CREATE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

by

Kevin Richard Macina

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College 
in partial fulfillment of the requirements 
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy 
Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology 
Western Michigan University 
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Doctoral Committee:

Patricia Reeves, Ed.D., Chair
Brett Geier, Ed.D.
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I would like to take a moment to reflect on this amazing journey. I knew from the beginning that this would be a process that would take time, and not only be an intellectual challenge but also a test of fortitude and a willingness to stay the course.

Along the way, I would not have been able to do this without the support of some very key people. I first want to thank Dr. Pat Reeves, my chair and guide throughout this entire process. She has been by my side since day one and has always been there to support. She both pushed and pulled when needed. For that I am very thankful. I would also like to thank Dr. Rick Geisel and Dr. Brett Geier for being part of my committee. I have appreciated both of their guidance and support to help with all that goes into an undertaking such as this.

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Kevin Richard Macina
In the past decade, K-12 education has undergone many changes, often brought about by national and state policymakers putting a higher emphasis on student outcomes. There are enhanced accountability expectations for all levels of education that have added to the responsibilities of principals. Research can be found on many different areas regarding effective educational leadership. Studies abound to reinforce the need for principals to lead their schools through decisions and actions that are evidence based and data informed. In that body of work, there is a growing attention to the importance of staff, student, and even parent feedback as an important part of the total evidence and data informed decision-making process. There are limited studies, however, that create a current picture of how feedback from the most directly impacted stakeholders actually informs how principals’ performance is assessed and how principal learning, growth, and actions are informed.

The purpose of this phenomenological research was to understand how principals were using teacher feedback to create effective leadership. I was able to interview 10 current principals who are using teacher feedback and investigate how they use such data to be included in the evidence to inform their evaluations. In order to get a thick, rich description of how principals use teacher feedback in a state that does not provide explicit guidance on that process, this study was conducted qualitatively with a focus on common patterns in the data that might suggest an
emerging theory of action or lack thereof. Responses from interview questions were put into major themes and sub themes to show a clear organization of the data.

This study captured a deeper understanding of how principals are using teacher feedback to show evidences of leadership. Through extensive interviews, it was concluded that, although it was a state requirement to gather feedback, the principals found great value in collecting the feedback and would continue even it was not required. It was found the principals were able to use the feedback to create both building-wide goals and personal goals. Both goal areas had a focus on educational instruction and on the climate of the building. It was also found in my research that principals valued written comments from staff which allowed them to dive deeper into areas of focus. All principals in the research reviewed their feedback with teachers as a whole group or small focus groups to keep teachers informed of areas they were targeting as goals. This study determined that there was great value in asking for teacher feedback as it relates to increasing effectiveness as a building level administrator.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, K-12 education has undergone many changes, often brought about by national and state policymakers putting a higher emphasis on student outcomes. There are enhanced accountability expectations for all levels of education that have added to the responsibilities of principals. There was a time, not long ago, that the principal could simply be a good manager, keeping a building successful by handling the normal duties of the job such as discipline, bus issues or lockdown drills (Fink & Rimmer, 2015). This is not the case anymore.

Principals must continue to take care of day-to-day issues, and now also have increased responsibility when it comes to instructional leadership. There are real consequences for teachers, principals and schools as a whole if progress in student achievement is not made, yet time is valuable in the life of a principal and the challenge becomes where to find additional time for enhanced instructional leadership. It is also important to understand if the time principals spend on instructional leadership is making a difference to teachers. Specifically, it is important to know if those who are with students each day feel that their principals are focused on the right areas to help teachers experience success within their individual classrooms, as well as meet school goals.

Research can be found on many different areas regarding effective educational leadership. There have been multiple studies conducted on effective principals through the lens of instructional leadership (e.g., Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008; Price, 2012; Streshly &
Gray, 2008). There are other studies that have examined qualities of effective leadership by focusing on the specific characteristics of principals (e.g., DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Studies abound to reinforce the need for principals to lead their schools through decisions and actions that are evidence-based and data-informed. In that body of work, there is a growing attention to the importance of staff, student, and even parent feedback as an important part of the total evidence and data-informed decision-making process. There are limited studies, however, that create a current picture of how feedback from the most directly impacted stakeholders actually informs how principals’ performance is assessed and how principal learning, growth, and actions are informed.

**Background**

The principal’s role in instructional leadership has been a focus of research for many years. The need for strong instructional leadership has been the foundation for an effective principal and the success of schools. As the accountability and the rigors of high stakes testing increase, the need for a strong instructional leader continues. The demands placed on teachers today are heightened due to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), Race to the Top (RTTT, 2011), and new teacher evaluation procedures that focus on student growth. The increased pressures on teachers, from an instructional standpoint, continue to help define what a principal must do given the enhanced demands of student rigor. This rigor is based on the now added pressures of such statutes of ESSA (2015), RTTT (2011), and NCLB (2001). A principal in today’s educational climate has to be a “ringmaster, organizing the whole show so their talented troupes can deliver their best performances” (Cummins, 2015, p. 26).
The increase in student accountability and performance has clearly raised the expectations for school districts (Rammer, 2007). This means there is a higher responsibility for school principals to foster the culture of instructional leadership, whereby principals are “pivotal in dealing with the challenges of student achievement and expectations of the school community” (Rammer, 2007, p. 68). More than ever, principals must have a certain skill base to be an effective leader far beyond the competencies needed to master the managerial components of running a school. Expectations are now set by statewide assessments, National Common Core Standards, and ESSA (2015). This is critical in understanding that a principal must almost be a superhero to ensure success of a school, students and teachers as well.

Enhanced pressures for individual teacher success came sharply into focus at the time the NCLB Act (2001) was placed into law. The law’s focus was on high results from the classroom that are the direct result of effective teaching and instructional methods. In response to this act, the state of Michigan followed with Public Acts 123 and 124 in 2006, which focused on four core areas to increase instructional practices in the classroom: (1) students and schools having academic success, (2) graduates being college and career ready, (3) teachers using teaching methods that are research-based, and (4) providing multiple avenues for students to learn. With these acts came a strong emphasis on learning that was directly results driven, with consequences for schools and staff alike for those not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Under the NCLB Act (2001), accountability was measured using AYP to show if students were meeting the pre-determined growth established by states in the areas of math and English language arts (Porter, Linn, & Trimble, 2005). Schools that could not meet the growth of students were placed on a plan of improvement to achieve the necessary needs of their students. One of the most dramatic changes from the past was the individual accountability of educators that came
from this. Under NCLB (2001), schools that were not meeting AYP had to take corrective action to improve. An example of this would be new curriculum or replacing ineffective staff with new staff to improve standardized achievement from the students (Cowan, 2003). This increase in accountability from NCLB (2001) led to teachers turning to principals for help with classroom instruction and support.

Common Core State Standards (2009) added to the intellectual challenge that lawmakers were seeking (Chenoweth, 2010). Historically, each state has had its own version of standards used to help guide student achievement. Along with these standards, each state also defined what proficient meant and to what level a student had to reach to be ready for post high school graduation success. The basis behind the Common Core Standards is to provide a solid framework of consistent standards to help prepare students for the workforce and college. Beginning in 2009, lawmakers—using input from representatives such as teachers, principals and parents—began to put together standards that would have a common thread among all states choosing to adopt these standards. As soon as 2011, states like Michigan were having discussions with local school boards about the implementation of the Common Core Standards (2009). Like others, Michigan moved quickly on the adoption and implemented the Common Core Standards for the 2012-2013 school year. Along with Michigan, a total of 45 states adopted the Common Core Standards, moving quickly to a different focus on instruction and accountability in the classroom.

The new Common Core Standards further increased expectations in the classroom, including rigorous content and application of knowledge and higher order thinking skills (Conley, Drummond, de Gonzalez, Rooseboom, & Stout, 2010). Individual accountability for the teacher became even greater as the principal looked to each classroom to “define the knowledge and skills students should achieve in order to graduate from high school ready to succeed in entry
level, credit-earning academic college courses and in workforce training programs” (Chenoweth, 2010, p. 2). Using these evidence-based standards, teachers and principals are to have students ready for increased work and college expectations.

Race to the Top (RTTT, 2011) was another significant national education initiative developed to quickly move education reform forward in the United States. The premise behind RTTT was for “districts to close achievement gaps and get more students into college by supporting reform strategies” (Boser, 2012, p. 2). The main reform strategies once again were rigorous standards and assessments that would lead to recruiting, evaluating and keeping highly performing teachers. RTTT put large funding behind these reforms by having states apply for grants that would support changes in instructional practices leading to increased rigor and outcomes from the local classroom level.

Accountability to adopt standards and expectations for high quality teacher evaluations was one of the significant reforms that RTTT required of states competing for federal funding under the RTTT initiative. As an example, the Michigan Legislature passed Public Act 173 (2011) as a comprehensive teacher evaluation reform that had a clear and specific focus on substantive and procedural requirements for teacher and administrative evaluations (Thrun Law Firm, 2015). The law was revised in 2015, outlining detailed performance measures such as a teacher must be rated highly effective, effective, minimally effective or ineffective each school year, with the rating being 25% tied to student growth and assessment data until 2018. Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, the growth measure will change to 40%, with 20% of this 40% based on state assessments. Other significant changes included requirements for administrators to provide teachers with feedback within 30 days of a classroom observation and complete training on the teacher evaluation tool. Additionally, school districts are required to post assurances that
the evaluation tools and processes used for both teacher and administrator evaluation meet all state requirements. These assurances must be posted to the district website.

One of the most dramatic changes with Public Act 173 (2015) is the consequence for ineffective teachers in the classrooms. The parents of students in a classroom of a teacher who is rated ineffective for two years must receive a letter explaining why the teacher is ineffective, and that the students have the right for reassignment. A teacher who has a rating of ineffective for three consecutive years must be dismissed. This means that the principal is not only reflecting on what they see in classrooms, but also looking at state and local tests to determine if teachers are effective. This has led to creating goals for each individual student to show growth from the start of the school year to the end. There are also overall school performance goals which are specifically impacted by each individual teacher’s success in the classroom. Both teachers and administrators must receive a student growth rating based on student growth targets and principals are additionally responsible for overall progress on school improvement targets.

As the classroom continues to change for the individual teacher, schools also have changed dramatically for the building level principal. In 2004, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty of the Mid Continent Research in Education Laboratory (McREL) conducted a meta-analysis of extant studies on the qualities of effective school leadership. Their work led to defining 21 key responsibilities of leadership that have a direct connection to student and school success. These 21 key responsibilities were based on previous studies going back to 1978. Although their meta-analysis was comprehensive and defined principal responsibilities as demonstrated by research up to that time, the authors acknowledged that their findings were not to be considered a finite checklist for assessing the work of a principal. They did, however, find that seven of the twenty-one characteristics that emerged from their meta-analysis were particularly associated with the work
that principals do to lead a school through second order, or fundamental change (Waters et al., 2004).

Subsequent to the McREL (Waters et al., 2004) findings, additional studies—many of which were funded by the Wallace Foundation—further explored, defined, and organized the findings from several decades on principal effectiveness research (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). As a result of major private and governmental investment in the study of effective principal practice, the yield from those studies now informs both programs that prepare and certify principals and many newly developed (between 2008-2017) evaluation systems districts can use to assess principal development and effectiveness. Under Race to the Top (RTTT, 2011), rigorous research-based performance evaluation systems for both teachers and school leaders became a new policy focus and, through the competition for federal education funding, became a focus for statutory requirements that would help states show that they are attending to this issue with integrity by adopting well vetted and research based principal evaluation systems. In some states, statutes require all districts to use one designated teacher and one designated administrator evaluation system. Some states worked with one of the major educator evaluation researchers or research teams to adapt a research-based evaluation system to that particular state. Still other states, like Michigan, established a set of standards and requirements for approving teacher and administrator evaluation systems and a process for vetting systems against those standards and requirements.

In Michigan (as in a number of other state school improvement and accreditation systems), teacher, parent, and student feedback are required components of evidence to assess the school’s—and by extension, a principal’s—performance. While the use of stakeholder feedback to inform, guide and monitor performance at the school and district level are commonly established
practice, the current Michigan statute does not designate exactly how such feedback should be collected, interpreted or used to inform principal evaluation ratings. Principals can find some guidance on the practice of using feedback data to inform their work through various administrator performance evaluation systems (e.g., Marzano et al. [2011] and School ADvance [2009]), but to date, how principals are actually using feedback data has not been systematically studied.

Principal evaluation ratings can be informed by a combination of performance evidence the principal provides to supervisors, direct observation evidence the supervisor is able to collect, feedback from staff, students, and parents, and student data that the schools use to establish student growth ratings for teachers (Marzano et al., 2011; School ADvance, 2009), but again, there has not been a systematic study of how, in what combination, and to what degree these different forms of evidence are actually being employed in states where there is a statutory requirement for the use of rigorous, research-based performance evaluation systems to evaluate principal and other school administrator performance. Feedback can mean a wide variety of things, and there is little guidance in the Michigan statute or similar policy frames from other states that have adopted educator evaluation requirements.

Feedback can be direct feedback on the nature of the principal’s work through multi-rater instruments, such as VAL-ED (Vanderbilt University, 2011), the McREL Balanced Leadership instrument (McREL International, n.d.), and the School ADvance staff feedback instrument (Reeves & McNeill, 2016). Such instruments are or are in the process of being validated for the purpose of principals eliciting feedback from their teachers on principal behaviors or strategies that positively correlate to student achievement. There is usually a cost for using such instruments, but the principal can receive valuable feedback from teachers along with guidance on how to interpret this feedback. Such instruments are designed for providing principals feedback from
those who are in a position to directly observe and experience the impact of the principal’s work, i.e., teachers. Since there is a cost, however, schools may not invest in validated instruments, and may instead use free non-validated tools, or even try to meet the intent of the statutory requirement for teacher feedback through less systematic and less direct means—e.g., feedback on teacher trainings, anecdotal feedback, and other school or principal developed means.

There are numerous survey instruments that allow principals to collect data tangentially to their performance. For instance, the independent school accreditation system, called Advanced Ed (formerly called North Central Accreditation), calls for districts to regularly collect feedback and use that feedback to inform the school improvement and accreditation process. Advanced Ed also provides a compendium of survey instruments that assess how stakeholders perceive the status of (some validated and some not) such things as school climate, parent involvement, student safety and security, and other school-based factors that have some research-based association with student achievement. Again, however, there has been limited study of how schools identify the need for, select, utilize, and interpret the data from such perception instruments and not studies on how the yield from such perception instruments is used to inform principals’ performance assessment and ratings.

This leaves a hole in the current research relating to how principals use teacher feedback from multi-rater instruments, perception surveys, or other forms of feedback to create a school environment for effective leadership. Much of the research that informed the McREL (Waters et al., 2004) and Wallace Foundation (2007) studies are derived from studies that include teacher identified factors or characteristics, but most of the studies stopped short of asking teachers to prioritize the principal characteristics most critical in helping teachers become effective or successful in meeting their classroom goals. In other words, the current research helps frame the
work of principals in a general sense, but falls short of considering what elements of the principal’s work teachers rely on most to support their work. Where principals are collecting feedback from teachers using multi-rater instruments aligned to the research findings on principal effectiveness, principals have an opportunity to drill down into the data to discover many important things:

1. How do the teachers’ perceptions of the principal’s performance compare to the principal’s own self-assessment of performance?
2. How do teachers’ perceptions of various school processes and conditions compare to the principal’s assessment of those processes and conditions?
3. What are the reasons for any differences between the principal’s self-assessment and assessment of the school’s status and the teachers’ perceptions?

With their Balanced Leadership multi-rater feedback system, McREL provides the comparative data to answer the above questions and provide guidance to principals on how to investigate discrepancies between the principal’s and teachers’ perceptions. It is not clear, however, the extent to which principals actually receive and use such feedback data to assess teacher needs and guide their own performance development accordingly.

**Problem Statement**

Even before the changes with NCLB (2001), RTTT (2011), and the implementation of the Common Core Standards (2009), there has always been a consistent message to principals that they must be instructional leaders for the school. In 2004, Waters et al. summarized over 25 years of research that revolved around leadership and making a difference in the schools. Over
the next decade much research was completed in the area of effective leadership to help create a leadership framework that focused on the core areas for effective leadership growth.

In 2009, Reeves and McNeill cross-analyzed multiple bodies of principal research, meta-analyses, syntheses of the literature, and existing principal evaluation instruments in use by states across the U.S. and found some significant overlap and, also, some significant differences in the way the essential work of a school principal is framed. They also compared the yield of their analysis with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and state standards from those states with statutory requirements for rigorous, research-based administrator evaluation. Again, they found some overlap and some meaningful variation (2009). From that work, they developed a formative principal rubric that captured the nuanced differences among common elements in the yield from their review. Then they collapsed the formative rubric with its nuanced detail into a set of 25 principal practice areas under four domains of responsibility.

Finally, the authors went back to the literature seeking a reliable construct for establishing performance levels for each of the performance characteristics. This examination led to the creation of a rating key that helps principals and their supervisors discriminate different performance levels (Reeves & McNeill, 2016). Subsequent to vetting by the Governor’s Michigan Educator Effectiveness Council in 2011, approximately 80% of Michigan districts adopted the School ADvance system and completed two days of training to implement the system. This training included the use of staff, student and parent feedback to inform performance assessment and ratings. Thus, the wide adoption of the School ADvance system in Michigan creates both a context for and a need for studying just how stakeholder feedback is actually used in a state that requires it to inform performance evaluations. Moreover, since teachers are the one stakeholder with the greatest opportunity to directly observe the work of the principal, the
Michigan context is a perfect environment in which to better understand how principals are actually collecting, analyzing, interpreting and using teacher feedback to inform their own work and better understand the needs of their teaching staff and their school.

School ADvance incorporates the use of staff feedback for evidence and documentation, but how principals are using that feedback to make changes in their own leadership remains unclear. Are there some characteristics that teachers perceive as more important than others? Are there some key behaviors that teachers would want to see a principal have to help them succeed individually? Does the feedback principals collect help them answer those questions and other similar questions that would inform their work to support teachers? School ADvance and the Marzano principal evaluation systems both stress the work of principals to develop and support the work of teachers. Teacher feedback could play a key role in helping to inform that work, but little is known at this time about the role that such feedback plays in principals’ decision making, performance assessment, and performance development.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of my research is to identify how teacher feedback is collected, analyzed, and used in the state of Michigan. This study will investigate the current state of affairs in a state that specifically requires such data be included in the evidence to inform administrator evaluations. In order to get a thick, rich description of the state of affairs with principal use of teacher feedback in a state that does not provide explicit guidance on that process, this study will be conducted qualitatively with a focus on maximal variation as well as common patterns in the data that might suggest an emerging theory of action or lack thereof. In order for any common patterns that emerge from this study to be interpreted within some consistent common context, this study will
engage a sample of principals from school districts that have adopted the Reeves-McNeill School ADvance Administrator Performance Development and Assessment System adopted by approximately 80% of Michigan districts as of the time of this study. This study seeks to understand how principals describe and reflect on the current way they are interpreting the statutory requirement for collecting staff feedback to inform the principal’s performance evaluation with a particular focus on the following questions:

1. How do principals understand the statutory requirement to collect and use staff, student, and parent feedback to inform their performance evaluation?
2. What specific instruments or processes do they use to elicit and collect staff feedback? How were those choices made and by whom?
3. How do the principals describe the data they derive from staff feedback and how do they analyze and interpret that data?
4. What do the principals do with the information they derive from analyzing the data?
5. How is that information used to develop the principal’s performance ratings?
6. As principals reflect on the use of staff feedback, what conclusions do they reach on the practice of using that feedback to (a) inform their work and (b) inform their performance review?

**Conceptual Framework**

My study will examine how principals are collecting, analyzing, interpreting and using feedback to increase effective leadership and support teachers, given the increased individual accountability that both teachers and principals experience under current state and federal accountability systems. My study takes into account the School ADvance principal framework
that was developed by Reeves and McNeill (2009) through researched based studies that were
determined essential for a highly effective principal. My study will be based on a conceptual
framework as shown in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Conceptual framework for Macina (2019) study.
The left-hand box of Figure 1 represents the work that Reeves and McNeill (2017) have done. These are the 5 Domains of the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System. The box also depicts that these 5 domains were research-based and supported by data from an extensive meta-analysis in multiple leadership models (Reeves & McNeill, 2017). The two arrows going to the box labeled teacher perspectives of principal practices, represent that when this research was done, it took into account teachers’ perspectives as part of the research that informs much of the effective principal findings and, thus, the elements in several of the currently validated, research-based principal evaluation systems—e.g., Marzano et al. (2011), School ADvance by Reeves and McNeill (2009), and Reeves Leadership Matrix (2011), etc. The two arrows going to the box labeled essential principal practices show that the research was used to identify the practices currently in the 5 domains of the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System.

The right-hand side of the framework shows the new perspective that should be added to previous research, which is the focus of my study. The circle labeled Principal’s Use of Feedback to Increase Effective Leadership has one arrow going from the box labeled teacher perspectives of principal practices. This arrangement in the graphic is intended to signify the focus for this study, which is to discover and describe how principals are interpreting and acting upon the requirement to capture and use feedback as part of the evidence that informs their performance assessment and evaluation ratings. This will be the view of principal feedback and the principal leadership practices they feel are most essential given the current accountability expectations. The box going from the bottom of the figure labeled essential principal practices to the circle labeled principal’s use of feedback to increase effective leadership, is what principals are doing right now in regards to gathering feedback from teachers. For a principal, this is the practice they
are using per the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation Model that relies heavily on research-based practices.

**Methods Overview**

For the purpose of this study, I will use a qualitative approach to directly engage a sample of practicing principals whose districts are using the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System in exploring and describing the way they understand and are responding to the teacher feedback requirement specified in both Michigan statute and the training for using the School ADvance Evaluation System. I will employ an inductive thematic approach to identifying common patterns in the data from a maximal variation sample of Michigan principals who meet the study criteria to identify where there may be an emerging theory of action among principals whose districts are complying with the statutory requirement for using teacher feedback to inform principal evaluation ratings. Additionally, this study is also interested in examining what the principals are doing with the data they receive from teacher feedback to inform their own professional growth, their school improvement work, and their efforts to support teachers.

Chapter III will expand on the methodological approach, but inductive thematic analysis is an established approach for studying how a process or issue is playing out in a given context, in a study design where data will only be collected from the perspective of one party to the process—i.e., the principal. This study will not attempt to complete an entire grounded theory methodology, but the use of inductive thematic analysis will allow this study to determine if there is sufficient strength in the emerging patterns in the data to call for a continuation of the study as grounded theory work through theoretical sampling in subsequent work. Also, this study aims to engage a sufficient sample of principals to achieve some level of saturation, so I will leave it to
subsequent studies to expand upon my findings through extended case studies where the data can be gathered and cross-analyzed from multiple perspectives (e.g., principal, teacher, other staff, etc.) and multiple sources (e.g., interview, observation, focus group, document analysis, etc.). The data source for this study will be limited to in-depth, semi-structured interviews and any documents or artifacts the principal participants can offer to help illustrate their points of discussion.

Chapter I Summary

This study will look at the behaviors of principal leadership and how specifically principals are using feedback given the demands of increased accountability in education today. This study will build on the work of School ADvance and focus on how teacher feedback is being used to increase effective principal leadership. With NCLB (2001), RTTT (2011), ESSA (2015), and other major reforms to the evaluation of teachers, there is a new accountability that comes with these increased demands. With that new accountability comes an expectation from the teachers for a highly effective principal. To be highly effective, principals must use feedback from staff to understand the changes that may need to occur. My study will identify how teacher feedback is used to be a highly effective principal in the changed educational landscape.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter I, the role of the principal was identified as extremely important in the academic success of schools. Not only is the principal a key part of the instructional methods that take place in a building, but there have also been key responsibilities identified by studying past research (Waters et al., 2004). This research was then used to create a school administrator evaluation system, that allows for school and district leaders to reflect and grow in their practice (Reeves & McNeill, 2016).

This literature review will focus on the responsibilities for effective principal leadership and how that has an impact on teacher accountability and school performance outcomes. It will also review the traits that were determined as effective leadership responsibilities of successful principals. The review of literature will lead us into the issue of principal feedback from the vantage point of the teacher in the high stakes accountability of education.

**Best Practices of Successful Principals**

Waters et al. (2004) completed research reviewing over 5,000 published studies, looking for attributes that connected principal effectiveness with student achievement. Narrowing the studies down to 300, the authors were able to identify 70 that met the requirement for “quantitative student achievement data, student achievement measured on standardized, norm referenced tests or some other objective measure of achievement, student achievement as a dependent variable and teacher perceptions of leadership as the dependent variable” (p. 5). From this meta-analysis
they were able to identify 21 “responsibilities of effective school principals and correlated each of the responsibilities to student achievement” (Rammer, 2007, p. 69). They found a correlation between the 21 responsibilities they determined for effective leadership and an increase, by a .25 standard deviation on student achievement gains, for those principals who were using the responsibilities in practice. This meant that the student achievement gain would increase from the 50th percentile to the 60th percentile based on the effective principal leadership practice. It also enhanced the premise that the need for an effective principal was essential for improvements in academic achievement.

This research from Waters et al. (2004) defined what it meant to have effective principal leadership. Although some characteristics are interrelated, each one has the unique characteristic that allows for its ability to stand alone. The following is a list of the identified responsibilities of effective principals: (1) culture, (2) order, (3) discipline, (4) resources, (5) curriculum instruction and assessment, (6) knowledge of curriculum and assessment, (7) focus, (8) visibility, (9) contingent rewards, (10) communication, (11) outreach, (12) input, (13) affirmation, (14) relationship, (15) change agent role, (16) optimizer role, (17) ideals and beliefs, (18) monitoring and evaluation, (19) flexibility, (20) situational awareness, and (21) intellectual stimulation.

From this work, Waters et al. (2004) were able to identify two primary variables to determine the impact of leadership. The first is the focus of change, whereby change only took place if the leaders have correctly been able to identify the areas that needed to be the focus of change. Principals need to put into action a “guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals, effective feedback, parent and community involvement, a safe and orderly environment and collegiality and professionalism” (p. 50). Principals have always been a big part of the
education process but recent increased awareness of all students has heightened the true impact a principal can have (Rammer, 2007).

The second key variable identified by Waters et al. (2004) was the order of change, or defining the ability of the leader to adjust the leadership practice accordingly to have a positive result. It was found that leaders knew what to do in certain situations, but struggled when it came time to implement in other areas. Second order changes make a real shift from what has been done in the past and what the group feels is a deviation from their current way of doing things. It has less to do with what the change is, but more with how the change is being viewed by the stakeholders.

Such change is part of the transformational process that has taken solid shape over years of studying effective leadership in schools (Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, 2010). Transformational change is seen as a positive response to the demands in the education field and as a way to implement innovation in schools. Although there are many different theories of leadership in the literature, transformational change is seen as a true component for understanding innovation and school improvement. Burns (1978) began the real work on transformational change, with a strong tie to political leadership. He focused on the ability to get all stakeholders involved in the area of change and start the process of buy-in with all that are involved.

Through transformational change, there is an increase in performance outcomes and the real potential for teachers to create their own leadership and skills (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Teachers become part of the process and help create the organizational conditions. What transformational principals are able to do is influence staff and stakeholders that the goals of the group are more important than any self-interest of an individual. Principals who have been able to be successful have three specific aspects that lead to school leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994).
The first is building vision; this is the shared vision of all that are part of the group. The mission and goals follow the plan for the organization. The second is individual consideration; this allows for teachers to feel like they are individuals and work to meet their needs. This often means attending to personal feelings and making sure that in some way their view is heard. The last one is intellectual stimulation; with the support of professional development the chance for teachers to build on the craft they use each day (Moolenaar et al., 2010).

Transformational leaders who have built a vision are able to create innovativeness and serve as inspirational leaders who are willing to implement programs to help clarify the challenges that may be set up for the school’s future (Shalley & Perry-Smith, 2001). These leaders can set the mission of the school along with other stakeholders and allow for goals to support the vision. It also allows for all teachers within the school to understand what the end purpose is and work toward accomplishing that goal.

**Instructional Leadership**

Lezotte (1992) determined that there is a direct correlation between effective schools and instructional leadership. For the past 25 years, research has pointed to effective schools that have instructional practice at the core of what is happening in the school. Schools with effective leadership believe that learning is available to all and that others can communicate this vision with the stakeholders in the school. The principal is responsible for belief in this democracy by hiring teachers who are going to help implement this mission. Effective principals must have an understanding of the instructional knowledge that students will need to perform and set this knowledge as the priorities for the school.
Studies in effective schools have school principals who have created a vision that is focused on commitment to learning (Lezotte, 1992). Effective schools have key components that learning is inclusive to everyone and that individuals in the school can communicate this vision and mission to everyone who is part of the school environment. The principal is responsible for creating this instructional environment where all feel part of this academic success and share in this goal of student learning (Rammer, 2007). Edmonds (1982) used the following characteristics to describe an effective school that relates to effective leadership:

(1) The principal’s leadership and attention to the quality of instruction; (2) a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus; (3) an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning; (4) teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery; (5) the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation (p. 4).

Another way that principals can be viewed in terms of instructional leadership is through a clear set of characteristics for the school (Rogus, 1983). Such areas as instructional outcomes, direct instruction, skilled teaching, and time on task all lead to improved instructional outcome in a school setting. The principal leads this charge by allowing the focus to be on instructional practices that foster success. This is important as principals have the increased demands of accountability in their buildings. Zigarelli (1996) conducted a study that reviewed six effective variables on student achievement with data from the Department of Education. Zigarelli (1996) then used the six constructs to correlate them to student achievement. At the completion of the study, he found three characteristics that determined the importance of principals in effective schools: (1) principals who established an achievement-based school culture, (2) the ability of the principal to hire teaching staff, and (3) creating a staff of high teacher morale. These three attributes allowed the principal to set the tone and academic success of the school.
Leithwood (1994) continues along this same path with key behaviors that describe instructional behavior that ultimately impact classroom instruction. Through these key behaviors, principals must continue to infuse new learning into the classroom. This new learning must rely on updated educational strategies, technologies and tools that impact direct instruction (Quinn, 2002). Historically, quality leadership used to be defined by clear expectations, discipline and high standards. Over time, however, this began to change with a shift to instructional leadership defined by quality instructional practice and student engagement. A principal’s key role under instructional leadership is to impact classroom management by being directly connected to that classroom. “Structured learning environments with few disciplinary problems characterize successful schools where students are engaged actively on tasks” (Valentine & Prater, 2011, p. 1).

The role of instructional leadership continued to take on a more enhanced role when No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top policies went into place (O’Donnell & White, 2005). With the introduction of these reforms in education, there is an even larger focus on how instructional leadership impacts an environment that is “politically driven as the current assessment-based educational system” (O’Donnell & White, 2005, p. 56). With the reforms in place, principals now must have specific behaviors in so many areas of leadership to really get at the importance of improving student achievement. There is still the need for the overall climate of the building and teachers working together, but there is also a strong importance on being able to help each teacher individually to get each student to reach their academic success.

There must now be deliberate focus for the instructional leaders in the building to improve teaching and learning (Louis & Robinson, 2012). The regulatory framework that is given to states is a broad policy that impacts teaching, learning and assessments at the local school
level. Instructional leaders must take this broad knowledge and put it into a manageable and workable practice within the classroom. Principals are now faced with the issue of balancing all that comes along with these new demands for achievement with the day-to-day work of managing a building.

Culture

Effective leadership is one of the key elements to positively determine an effective learning environment (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005). Effective leaders correctly “envision future needs and empower others to share and implement that vision” (p. 17). Principals have the knowledge and the complexity to lead the change in the area of school improvement (Fullan, 2001). With the increased pressure from accountability standards and No Child Left Behind, the leadership in a school is an important factor to keep the focus on student achievement. The building leader is responsible for establishing the climate that will lead to the academic success that is expected.

There needs to be a balance between management and leadership. Organizations that have a charismatic leader will soar temporarily, but shortly crash if there is no vision and commitment (Bolman & Deal, 1991). There are correlates to effective schools that include strong leadership, climate of expectation, and effective communication. The climate of a school rests upon the school leader to set the tone and understand leadership theory. Blake and Mouton (1985) found that leaders who have a knowledge base regarding leadership theory are able to reduce employee frustration and negative attitudes regarding the work environment.

Through a positive school climate there is an enhanced staff performance, higher morale, and marked improvement in student achievement (Freiberg, 1998). The climate sets the founda-
tion and allows for behaviors to create a sense of belief. Bulach and Malone (1994) found that school climate is a significant factor in creating successful school reform. Urban (1999) concluded, “unless students experience a positive and supportive climate, some may never achieve the most minimum standards or realize their full potential” (p. 69). This is created by behaviors of the principal and their leadership interactions with the staff. This leadership is crucial to effective communication, teacher support, and the decision-making process.

Leadership practices that have a shared power lead to creating greater motivation, trust, risk taking and building a sense of community (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Shared leadership helps to create a climate that allows for self-worth that promotes teachers affecting what is happening with their core instruction. Shared leadership has a large impact when teacher isolation is reduced and there is an increased commitment in working together (Pounder, 1999). Principals help facilitate this culture, by allowing teachers to act as a co-principal, giving certain powers to the teaching staff. When using a shared leadership model, principals must be ready for “actions that are initiated by the teachers” (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008, p. 461). This is a delicate balance when the accountability ultimately is the responsibility of the principal.

Louis (2007) identified key elements that impact trust and are closely linked to shared leadership. Key areas such as principal respect, personal regard for teachers, competence in core responsibilities, and personal integrity help create trust within the school setting. High trust schools exhibited more collective decision making and the likelihood of reform was greater (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). High trust in schools allow for teacher professionalism to be a large factor in determining what is important in regard to student initiatives and academic gains in the classroom. In a high trust environment, schools make greater gains because they are focused on a common goal to help improve student instruction.
Many times, within schools there is not an overall accepted definition of what culture is or what it looks like (Deal & Peterson, 2010). Often, school culture is based on instructional leadership of the principal and a building that creates a “reflective, equity driven, achievement-based culture of learning focused upon academic success for every student” (Fink & Rimmer, 2015, p. 41). The principal must create an environment where both the teacher and the student feel a comfort level to reach the highest level of academic success. This means that the leader must keep each individual teacher and student at the forefront as decisions or a mission are put into place. Principals must account for the individuality of each staff member or student, and get both of them to function as a high performing and collaborative team.

The Wallace Foundation (2007) defined cultural principals as “transformers”—principals who were committed to walking the halls each day to keep in contact with staff and students and the happenings within each classroom. The impact that this has on the culture of the building is defined by how the principal interacts with conflict, discipline and how they are engaged in instructional practices. Transformers of school culture do not see walking the halls as a luxury but rather an integral part of setting the tone in that building. This, again, helps the culture and the group to feel connected as a team. It supports the teachers by simply being in the classroom and supports the students by letting them see that the principal understands what is happening on a day-to-day basis in their school.

When the principal is not engaged in the culture of the building, they begin to become isolated from the staff and students, there is a disconnect, and autonomy increases and even more isolation takes place (Blase & Kirby, 2000). It is the principal’s leadership that becomes very important to keep all staff engaged. There must be a balance of praise and feedback to get the teachers involved in all aspects of the school. This helps to create an environment of non-
isolation where all staff feel they have a voice in helping all kids learn and achieve—one where teachers feel they are part of the established climate and are integral in making the most effective art of change in conjunction with the principal.

**Leader Efficacy**

Efficacy is a belief in one’s ability or collective group of colleagues and their belief. Bandura (1997) stated that “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (p. 118) is an important contribution to how one will function as a leader. This efficacy leads to an increase in student outcomes because of the feeling of self-worth.

Leadership self-efficacy leads to self-confidence, which also leads to understanding how organizations perform and the effect that they have. Leadership self-efficacy and confidence is a key component in functioning in a dynamic environment (McCormick, 2001). This self-confidence is a major part of a successful leader focusing on the ability to believe in themselves and the mission that they carry forward. Self-efficacy has a direct impact on how people cope with the activities that pertain to leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). The school principal has to be confident in what they are trying to accomplish in their building each and every day. This self-assuredness is the ability to bring efficacy out in a successful way.

There are three dimensions of self-efficacy that have been researched closely over time: complexity, generality, and strength (Bandura, 1997). These dimensions are often organized by the difficulty of the task. Self-efficacy plays an important part in specifying how someone will take on a task that is part of an organization. These lead to strong cognitive aspects of self-efficacy which is the “inherent capacity or acquired skill” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 502) for
completing the task. Oftentimes the leader will take on tasks that they feel are successful to keep promoting self-efficacy. This could lead to issues as more difficult tasks come about and how they are dealt with. There is a very strong chance that self-efficacy could begin to erode and the problem solving becomes more erratic which lowers the aspirations and the performance in the organization (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Motivation of leadership is also supported through self-efficacy and the influences that leaders have (Locke & Latham, 1984). There is a strong determining factor on how much time leaders will spend on an obstacle before giving up or moving on to something else. With the challenges that administrators now face with increased accountability, the amount of stress that is taken on by that administrator depends on their self-worth and what they believe they can accomplish. The challenges that come from the increased accountability have a strong influence on what is given much attention and what is not. Efficacy is the ultimate goal when determining how a principal looks at their own self-worth and what it means to the organization or school that they are leading.

**Principal Affirmation**

Waters et al. (2004) defined principal affirmation as a way to “celebrate school accomplishments and acknowledge failures” (p. 49). This is an important component to being an effective principal when leading a building. There is a balance between creating an atmosphere that has a focus on learning and creating a climate that influences the school effectiveness. This atmosphere is created through trust, shared vision, and an openness to create a positive experience (Price, 2012). The principal and the interactions with the staff are a vital part of setting that tone and cultural experience to help facilitate a place to learn. The relationships that principals
have with staff bring a sense of cohesion and satisfaction that leads to effective instruction in the classroom. The increase in classroom instruction allows a principal to have “positive work relationships that improve job satisfaction, cohesion perceptions and commitment levels” (Price, 2012, p. 40). There is a strong correlation between the relationships of principals that directly impacts teacher attitudes that define school climate.

For teachers in the school setting and the relationship of positive affirmation, there is a direct impact on the personal health, happiness and job devotion (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Teachers in the work place have a feeling of success when they continue to feel good about what they are doing and see an impact on the teaching and the value they are adding to the school. When teachers begin to have individual affirmation, it spills over to improve the work climate and work quality (Price, 2002). This confidence allows for teachers to begin to show their personal beliefs and improve the quality of instruction. The positive affirmation of the principal allows for the teacher to have a self-assuredness about their own self-worth in the school setting. It allows them to understand the added value they bring to the group, which allows for more productivity.

Trust within an organization is an important part of how individual teachers bring student success into the classroom (Cook, Hardin, & Levi, 2005). There is a sense of connectedness when staff are allowed and willing to share among one another. This trust leads to staff being willing to try new ideas and not worry if there is a sense of failure or what that will mean. Trust is able to take away the vulnerability that starts when new concepts or new ideas are being tried. This trust within a building begins to help form culture where a principal can use affirmation to increase the goal and mission of the school. It allows for not only successful endeavors to be rewarded, but allows for the confidence of colleagues and principals, to point out areas that are the most in need of improvement. Interpersonal confidence will be gained by working with
others allowing for individual accomplishments. The “willingness to accept risk on behalf of another then feeds back and enhances the relationship and relational trust between both workers” (Price, 2012, p. 48).

There is a great deal of literature that shows the great affirmation that is given by distributive leadership (Price, 2012). This shared power among teacher and principal allows for the influence of positional power to be minimized and more togetherness to take place. It begins to take away the principal effect and allows for positive attitudes to “increase as principals balance the school power by sharing more decision-making powers with their teachers” (p. 50). This once again allows for teachers to take the ownership of what is happening in the building and be a part of the decision making. This approach gives the teachers the ability to agree on what is important and what should be the focus related to teaching and learning. When there is a shared power of decision making, the exchanges between the principal and teachers become more frequent. This increased dialog allows for more trust to be built over time. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) suggested that when common sharing between teachers and principals is in place, professional interactions allow for more inclusion of job satisfaction and being part of the increased cohesion.

Visible Leader

Sergiovanni (2007) described five forces of leadership. They include technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural. Two of these are a focus on what would be considered a visible principal. A symbolic leader focuses on making sure that everyone’s thoughts are valued and heard (Tomlinson, 2014). A cultural leader is one who creates community around something that matters the most to those involved. Both of these areas “draw people’s attention to more compelling concerns” (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 90). Traditionally, the leadership of the principal has
been to create mutual trust and shared norms to create a positive and productive educational environment (Griffith, 2004). As educational standards and expectations began to change, an even more in-depth review of detailed behaviors of school leadership became identified. Blase (1987) began to study teachers’ descriptions of effective school principals. These descriptors were clear and articulate but still were broad in the sense of specific traits a principal had to acquire to make a significant impact on student achievement. Areas such as shared decision making, problem solving, treating staff fairly and providing staff support in difficult situations were highlighted as important factors based on teachers’ feedback.

Transformational leadership is an approach that advocates a shared leadership with school administration and school faculty to have the most impact on curriculum development and instruction in the classroom (Sergiovanni, 2007). This approach allows the principal and the teachers to work together to create a shared vision. The leader is able to encourage the staff to work together on the shared purpose of the school (Pepper, 2010). In a transformational setting, the leader has more interest in the results of the students than the process on how to get there. The effective leader must nurture and trust the collaborative process and encourage others to take a leadership role (Lezotte & McKee, 2006).

Leadership has a positive impact on teachers’ perceptions of school conditions, their commitment to change and the organizational learning that takes place (Pepper, 2010). Using this as a foundation allows for the perceptions of teachers to understand what is needed in an effective leader. Using Waters et al.’s (2004) 21 indicators of leadership creates a reference to establish the most effective attributes. Research has also proven that effective school leadership makes a substantial difference in school achievement. Effective leaders know what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and why it needs to be done (Waters et al, 2004).
The importance of academic achievement is crucial but the focus on what staff value or need is just as important. The “success or failure of leadership behaviors are predicated upon the strength and clarity of the leader’s assumptions about the workplace and its members” (Davis & Leon, 2014, p. 5). Principals must have an understanding of what the core values are of a group of teachers. They must also have an understanding of the assumptions of a staff as they relate to planning, decision-making, problem solving and other day-to-day activities that shape or impact a teaching staff. There will come a time with teachers, where a program or policy will come into play and it will begin to divide the staff. This division comes from the core beliefs of the teachers and staff where things of equal importance begin to get in the way of other preferences and beliefs (Davis & Leon, 2014). Effective leaders must then have a true understanding of what these core beliefs of the staff are and establish the boundaries that will continue to inspire the staff (Pink, 2009).

One such area that has different philosophies in schools that affects leadership is discipline. The principal must be able to create and foster an environment where all students feel they are in a safe environment and discipline can be handled to create a nurturing and productive workplace (Richard, 2000). Teachers have many different views when it comes to discipline and how different cases should be handled. This is ultimately created by the school climate that begins to set the tone for the need for discipline (Williams, 2012). The interpersonal relationships that a principal, staff and students have are key factors in climate. The effective leader must have a clear view of how others feel when it comes to implementing changes or new changes as it might relate to discipline or other such areas within the school. Having the ability to share the knowledge of change or policy corrections is an essential skill for an effective administrator (Parkes, 2007).
Day (2005) states that effective principal leaders have the ability to cultivate teaching and learning practices but allow the focus to also include school culture that leads to increased student achievement. This is a unique blend to be able to focus on the clear objectives of the school, but also take into account the traits that teachers and staff feel are important to accomplish the goals of the school. This would be the balance that Waters et al. (2004) highlight in the effective principal behaviors of high achieving leaders.

By using multiple behaviors, principals begin to maintain credibility to motivate teachers to reach identified goals within a school (McKinney, Labat, & Labat, 2015). Highly effective principals use all the resources in their power to take away daily challenges so that teachers can focus on the task at hand of student achievement. Vroom and Jago (2007) suggest a contingency theory that decision making in the building that is shared by teachers and the principal leads to being able to adapt to any issue that may arise. Vroom and Jago (2007) contend that there are 6 strategies that principals must use to fully carry out the contingency theory: (1) reward staff for obtaining goals, (2) facilitating and fostering student achievement, (3) active involvement of instruction, (4) clear expectations, (5) reduction of academic obstacles, and (6) performance-based incentives for teachers meeting academic goals. The effective principal, by focusing on these strategies, allows for staff to feel accepted into the school and allows for them to take pride in the workplace. It allows each teacher to feel that they are bringing something unique and special to the building and allows them, as an individual, the ability to fulfill goals that are important to the school (McKinney et al., 2015).
Teacher Evaluation

Waters et al. (2004) discuss evaluation as a key behavior of highly effective principals. They state that evaluations monitor the effectiveness of school practices and the impact on student achievement. In 2010, the Obama administration launched a federally funded grant program entitled Race to the Top. One key aspect of this program was the rapid and dramatic changes to the teacher evaluation system. It was determined through this program that many of the teacher evaluation systems that were being currently used nationwide were not rigorous enough and did not meet the needs to improve teacher effectiveness (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). With this increased pressure for accountability, the evaluation systems were changed and moved quickly to implement by the start of the 2011-2012 school year. This quick turnaround time, along with higher stakes accountability, added increased pressure to school districts and had extreme implications on school leadership (Derrington, 2014).

One of the most important areas that many districts failed to take a close look at when developing or implementing the new evaluation tool was the area of an environmental scan (Patrick, 2014). The environmental scan is used to determine the district’s context on the issue of teacher evaluation. Each school district has its own contextual knowledge if the system “provides a safe enough environment where they can take risks without fear” (Patrick, 2014, p. 15). Although some districts had a fear of the change, for the most part, teachers and principals were in favor of a new evaluation system that provided a way to increase student growth and effective teaching in the classroom. However, teachers and administrators alike believe that it needs to be more than just a checklist to improve the outcomes in a classroom.
Teacher evaluations should center on measuring teachers and developing teachers with the administrator stance that it helps convey what is happening in that teacher’s instructional environment (Marzano, 2012). Teacher evaluations can no longer be a dog and pony show in which a lesson is rehearsed and unrealistic (Patrick, 2014). Evaluations must use observation tools that identify evidence that better determines if students are engaged, if they have a level of understanding and shows evidence that leads to effective teaching. Effective leaders must keep evaluations at the forefront of what they show as an importance each and every day. Leaders who use evaluations in the appropriate way are using researched based practices that have a direct impact in the classroom and instruction. Principals must take the time to be in classrooms and evaluate the instruction to ensure that the teaching staff is focused on the correct areas of student achievement (Mendels, 2012).

Streshly and Gray (2008) state that the most common tool for effective principals to use is direct teacher observation, which includes formal and informal classroom observations. Although this is very time consuming, it has been found to be effective due to the amount of feedback that a teacher is receiving in both the pre-observation and post observation conversations (Mendels, 2012). These observations of teachers come in many different forms with multiple ways of collecting data along the way. With the time commitment that this takes, many principals have moved to an informal process with walk-throughs and more spontaneous visits to the classroom. Even if the visits are brief and there is a quick turnaround on feedback, Marzano (2012) concludes that the information about the teacher’s ability to create clear learning objectives, differentiate instruction, communication and sustaining a safe classroom can be seen.

The introduction of multiple observations has led to evaluations that have gone from a more end of the year checklist or narrative to a more sophisticated process and involved teacher
models (Kersten & Israel, 2005). This sophistication has led to more of an in-depth knowledge that principals have to acquire to be able to complete an effective evaluation. Not only do principals need to be in the classrooms more often and multiple times, there is a higher accountability placed on student achievement.

**Administrator Evaluation**

Murphy, Goldring, Cravens, Elliott, and Porter (2011) created a focus on learning-centered leadership which begins to describe a process for leaders in the educational setting. They determined that leadership has three key components to the process. The first part of the process describes how the act of leadership is not about a personal characteristic, but rather the steps that a principal must follow to increase principal traits. They also determined that leadership involves influence. This is the ability for the principal to have multiple interactions and relationships with people. The last area of learning-centered leadership supports that leadership has a purpose. It defines that schools must have a tangible goal to work towards and have high expectations when setting that goal.

In examining a learning-centered leadership, Murphy et al. (2011) focused on six core competencies that define this process. The following six competencies were determined to be at the heart of the components needed for a principal to be successful in a school: (1) high standards for student learning, (2) rigorous curriculum, (3) quality instruction, (4) culture of learning and professional behavior, (5) connections to external communities, and (6) systemic performance accountability. Each one of the areas of focus gives teachers an “opportunity to improve their instruction and student learning” (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 4).
Research from the past two decades has supported the notion of high standards for student learning; therefore, the recent changes in rigor in public education have made the definition of high standards even more important. Murphy et al. (2011) are clear to point out, however, that this is not “the mere presence of goals for student learning, but specifically emphasize the quality of the school goals, namely, the extent to which there are high standards and rigorous learning goals” (p. 5). High expectations with defined goals are important and it is the specific definition of that goal that makes it worthwhile. High grading standards for high school students were found to yield better test results on 12th grade test scores (Betts & Grogger, 2003). This helps explain that the goals must be defined so that they continue to support academic success.

Murphy et al. (2011) define rigorous curriculum as “ambitious academic content provided to all students in core academic subjects” (p. 6). Many states have determined what the curriculum standards are, but it is up to the principal to maintain the high level of curriculum at the building level. This means that teachers and students must take into account what needs to be monitored and completed regarding student experiences at the building level. This continues to be a struggle with principals due to the time that is required to complete all the necessary classroom observations. Grissom, Loeb and Master (2013) found that it is often thought the principal is the instructional leader, but it is quickly determined that most principals spend less than 13% of their time actually working on best instructional practices. Although this continues to be an issue, highly effective principals must take the time to create a culture and atmosphere where they are getting into classrooms and setting the expectations for teachers and rigorous outcomes.

Quality instruction is a key component for keeping the focus on rigorous instruction and principals must advocate this high standard of excellence in the classrooms with teachers on a
consistent basis (Hallinger & Heck, 2000). Quality instruction must happen at the classroom level with teachers implementing standards in such a way that all students are able to find success. This instruction “provides students with many examples in which the same concept is at work using ongoing assessments designed to make students’ thinking visible to both the teacher and the student” (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 8). This is the heart of what is taking place in the classroom each day and being supported by the building principal. This is the real work the effective principal must be part of and encourage by supporting the teaching staff.

The culture of learning and professional behavior is the delicate balance of communities that foster students in their academic needs as well as their needs for social learning. Crone and Horner (2003) have spent time researching school-wide positive behavior support programs and their impact on student engagement and learning. They have found that when school-wide curriculum has a deeper focus on supportive and responsive interventions there are fewer discipline referrals and increased engagement in academic areas. This professional community and behavior is a direct result of the effective leader and their ability to foster a culture that promotes student success on all levels, both academic and social (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996).

Making connections to the outside community and external sources serves as a way to create a linkage to people or institutions to promote advancement in social and academic learning (Murphy et al., 2011). This has been found in low performing schools or specifically with students who are low performing. When teachers or principals reach out to parents for support at school or communicate when their student is beginning to show signs of behavior or academic issues, there is an increase in student achievement. This type of communication helps create a bridge or a link to what is happening in school and out of school. The two are no longer seen as separate, and are viewed as simultaneously creating a strong system of support.
Learning leaders and effective principals establish this relationship with the community to show the importance of extending the school out to the neighborhoods and families that education impacts the most (Murphy et al., 2011). This extension is built by effective principals to show the importance to the staff and teachers how this connection is crucial to the success of the school goals and the outcomes that make the difference in students’ lives. This takes work on the part of the learning leader. This is not something that comes without the time investment of working with the community on many levels to create sound relationships to develop a support network (Goldring & Hausman, 2001).

Systematic performance accountability is the “individual and collective responsibility among leadership, faculty, and students for achieving the rigorous student academic and social learning goals” (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 11). It is the goal of the learning leader to create a system that determines how students will perform on state standards and the high expectations that come with them. Elmore (2005) found that schools that have a higher level of internal accountability show greater success when it comes to performance measures and making key decisions on curriculum and development. This accountability is a need that the effective leader must put into place to continue to hold staff responsible for the standards they must teach. Effective leaders “enhance accountability by offering individualized support to staff, challenging teachers to think critically about their teaching and promoting an atmosphere of collaboration in the school (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 12).

Reeves (2004) found that school districts must begin to think differently on how they are using principal evaluations to create effective feedback and a meaningful evaluation. More often than not, schools are reflecting on ambiguous, demoralizing and destructive evaluation tools to try
and “help” principals focus on the right areas of work. Although many different leadership evaluation systems have been put into place, they tend to have a position on tolerating mediocrity.

As Reeves (2004) continued to study leadership evaluations, there were common threads that were found throughout that led to some clear outcomes. Douglas Reeves (2004) began by studying over 500 practicing administrators, yielding some interesting findings. More than 18% of the administrators had not even been evaluated. They had been left with no feedback to determine if they were doing well or not doing well. Also, of the current leaders roughly only half of them were even asked about student achievement and another 50% weren’t even clear on the standards. It was also found that the “higher level of leadership responsibility, the lower satisfaction with leadership evaluation instruments” (Reeves, 2004, p. 53).

Sustainability is a key part to administrator success and longevity. Principals find that when they are supported with contextual relevance, professional development, staff buy in, data based decision-making, and shared vision making, they find sustained leadership (Strickland-Cohen, McIntosh, & Horner, 2014). These factors, however, can be ambiguous and hard for evaluators to understand and may have a different meaning for all those that are part of the evaluation. Reeves (2004) identified 10 leadership dimensions: (1) resilience, (2) personal behavior and professional ethics, (3) student achievement, (4) decision making, (5) communications, (6) faculty development, (7) leadership development, (8) time/task/project management, (9) technology, and (10) personal professional learning.

Reeves (2004) refers to these 10 dimensions as the Multidimensional Leadership Assessment (MLA), which gets away from meaningless performance levels such as “meets expectations”, “above average”, or “progressing toward standards”. Each of the dimensions can be vague in nature; they take into account the detailed standards that have been adopted by many states and
the narrowly explained assessments that many districts are using. One of the areas that helps to empower districts with the MLA, is the developing of detailed descriptions for each of the dimensions that allow for districts to take ownership into their own meaning and vision for the standards. The MLA “encourages proactive evaluation—starting the evaluation process before the first day on the job rather than as a reaction to disappointing performance” (Reeves, 2004, p. 57).

Mendels and Mitgang (2013) continue this support of developing better ways to assess principals by stating that districts must “diagnose principals’ strengths and weakness and tailor professional development to identified needs” (p. 24). Through a fair and reliable assessment, districts will be able to retain principals to facilitate, focus on change and enforce the overall goals of the school. Clarity is needed to have effective principal feedback and create an atmosphere that is a more “constructive alternative than do the vast majority of existing leadership evaluation systems” (Reeves, 2004, p. 58).

Marzano (2013) also began to look at literature on leadership evaluation from the research that was present on multiple approaches to creating a model that would be effective in practice. Marzano specifically looked at work coming from the Wallace Foundation that studied the relationship between school administrator behaviors and student achievement levels. Louis et al. (2010) looked at the student achievement data for literacy and mathematics in elementary and secondary schools. During this investigation of principals, data was collected from teachers, parents, and students to determine the impact principal leaders had on academic success.

From the studies, Marzano (2013) concluded that there were specifically 5 domains that were the major categories for principal behaviors: (1) data-driven focus on student achievement, (2) continuous improvement of instruction, (3) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, (4) cooperation
and collaboration, and (5) school climate. Under each domain there are specific categories that define the actions and behaviors of the principal. There is a total of 24 elements that are considered action items by the principal to identify what they must do to be considered high performing.

Each of the 24 elements within the 5 domains are accompanied by “scales” that developed with an evidence of success (Marzano, 2013). The scales are innovating, applying, developing, beginning, and not using. Innovating is when the school leader is associated with exceptional or excellent performance. Applying is considered the level of performance that indicates proficiency. This would be a full understanding from the principal that the staff and students understand the goal. Developing is below that of applying and represents an area that needs improvement. Beginning is when the school leader attempts to make things clear and have a focus on improvement of the school but does not because they either refuse to, or they do not know what to do. Not using is when the school leader shows no attempt for improvement with the school. This would be considered a level of unsatisfactory.

**School ADvance**

In July of 2013, the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) developed key recommendations that would satisfy local statutory law that specifically addressed teacher and administrator evaluation (MCEE, 2013). Under the MCEE recommendations, two administrator evaluations were initially chosen to be the choices local districts would have for implementing a research-supported evaluation with fidelity. The two evaluation systems were the Reeves and McNeill School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System (2009, which was been re-issued as School ADvance 2.0 in 2017) and the Reeves Leadership Performance Rubric (2004). For clarity,
the two systems are authored by different people who, coincidentally, have the same last name—Patricia Reeves is the co-author and principal researcher for School ADvance and Douglas Reeves is the author and principal researcher for the Leadership Performance Rubric. In response to the MCEE recommendation for authorizing districts to adopt one of four teacher and two administrator evaluation systems, the State Legislature allocated base funding for training costs if local districts chose one of the approved models. In subsequent statute, the Michigan Legislature also approved the Marzano School Leader Evaluation System and included a provision for the Michigan Department of Education to approve other teacher and administrator evaluation systems not specifically cited in statute, as long as the proposed alternative met the rigorous standards established by law for vetting and approving educator evaluation systems (Revised School Code Act 451, 2003).

The statutory requirements for approving alternative teacher or administrator evaluation systems were rigorous enough that most districts did select from among the four teacher and three administrator evaluation systems officially recognized by statute. Additionally, School ADvance had the advantage of compatibility with two of the most widely adopted teacher evaluation systems. As a result, over 80% of Michigan school districts have chosen the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System (Ball et al., 2013). Under the effective educator statute, enacted by the state of Michigan, both local education agencies (LEAs) and educational service agencies (ISDs or ESAs) must conduct annual performance evaluations based on both demonstration of effective teaching and administrative practice and measures of student growth as part of the evaluation process. The Michigan statute also requires evidence-based administrator performance ratings including, but not limited to, student growth measures and other evidence-
based measures in such areas as attendance and student, parent and teacher feedback (Revised School Code Act 451, 2003).

Reeves and McNeill (2009, 2017) are co-authors of the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System, which they created in preparation for the Michigan effective educator legislation that would qualify the State to compete for Race to the Top (RTTT) funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of (2009). The initial Michigan statute establishing requirements for school districts to have an administrator evaluation tool in place for the 2016-2017 school year also authorized the formation of the MCEE in order to advise the Legislature on further provisions of the effective educator law to comply with RTTT requirements. Once the MCEE completed their report and recommendations, the Legislature passed revisions to the effective educator statute to require districts to adopt and train their supervisory personnel on evaluation researched based administrator evaluation tools with ratings that are evidence-based, utilize the same student growth measures as those the district uses for teacher student growth ratings, incorporate stakeholder feedback, and focus on teaching and learning and capacity building at the school and district levels (Revised School Code Act 451, 2003).

The work of Reeves and McNeill (2009, 2017) took into account different researched based approaches to performance assessment and evaluation to determine the most effective model for the School ADvance. Dr. Reeves began her work in the area of assessing leadership practice with the principal investigators of a grant from the Wallace Foundation to examine the evidence-based decision-making of school leaders. She assisted Dr. Jianping Shen and Dr. Van Cooley in developing and validating a multi-rater instrument based on the eleven school level factors that Dr. Robert Marzano isolated through a meta-analysis of school conditions that correlate with student achievement (2003). This instrument was used widely by Wallace Foundation
funded school leadership projects and validated as a means for collecting teacher ratings about the degree to which the school makes evidence-based decisions in all eleven of the “What Works in Schools” factors (Marzano, 2003). The validation of this instrument illustrates how teacher assessment of school leadership can provide authentic and meaningful insight into the leadership of the principal.

Dr. Reeves worked with these same principal researchers (Shen and Cooley) on two additional successive grants from which another instrument for assessing school leadership conditions at the school level was developed, validated and used to show positive correlations between specific school leadership factors and student achievement. This instrument, titled Orientation of School Renewal (Shen et al., 2012), uses teacher ratings to create a school profile of leadership practices that support school renewal and are positively correlated to student achievement. Again, Dr. Reeves’ work with the Learning Centered Research team, led by Dr. Shen and Dr. Cooley, convinced her and School ADvance co-author, Patricia McNeill, that teacher feedback can be a reliable barometer for understanding the leadership conditions in a school. Thus, when they developed the guidelines for implementing the School ADvance administrator evaluation system, they stressed the importance of teacher feedback as a source of evidence for establishing principal performance ratings. Reeves and McNeill concluded that teacher feedback can be a reliable source of understanding the current state of leadership practice in a school (2017).

Reeves and McNeill also examined the research base for multiple building and district level leader frameworks and cross-referenced them with “What Works Clearinghouse” studies on the relationship between school and district leadership and student learning. The authors utilized this many layered approach to establish five domains of leadership influence and practice
for both school level and district level leaders. The five domains are (1) leadership, which addresses vision for learning and achievement, culture and leadership behavior; (2) systems, which includes high quality and reliable instructional programs, safe, effective, efficient programs and services; (3) processes, which include community building and evidence based improvement; (4) capacity, which includes human development and technology integration and competence; and (5) results, which is dedicated to four different ways school leaders can demonstrate influence on student and school success indicators (Reeves & McNeill, 2017). Each of the five domains has performance factors that align to the major areas of responsibility guided by research for building level administrators.

Also through their layered analysis, Reeves and McNeill (2016) were able to drill into findings from studies linking school and district leadership to specific practices within each of the four practice domains and convert those practices to performance factors and characteristics for each domain, both at the formative and summative levels. To facilitate performance ratings, the authors used a developmental frame for creating rubric ratings that correspond to the development and impact of the administrator on each characteristic. The authors collected and analyzed user ratings and feedback to critique the ability to distinguish between performance levels. This resulted in the issuance of School Advance 2.0 (Reeves & McNeill, 2017), the version most widely in use at the time of this study.

The School ADvance Evaluation System also aligns with the Learning Centered Leadership Dimensions (Shen & Cooley, 2012) and the 2008 ISLLC standards as follows: (1) a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community; (2) an educational leader promotes the success of every
student by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth; (3) an educational leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment; (4) an educational leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; (5) an educational leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner; and (6) an educational leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to and influencing the political, social, economic, legal and cultural context (Reeves & McNeill, 2016).

Finally, Reeves and Aramath (2009) conducted a meta-review of studies on performance assessment and feedback practices and processes that positively correlate to learning, growth, and adaptation. Through this review, they were able to isolate six characteristics that Reeves and McNeill used as the framework for developing the School ADvance implementation guidelines. The six research supported principles of implementation are:

(1) Authentic: the system recognizes and rewards the use of evidence-based practice to achieve better student outcomes.

(2) Professional: the system builds personal commitment and efficacy for growth and improvement.

(3) Purpose Driven: the system is driven by measurable improvement targets for student success.

(4) Adaptive: the system fosters exploration, action research, self-assessment, reflective practice and innovative ways of getting better student results.
(5) Evidence Based: the system uses multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data/evidence tied to student achievement and research practice.

(6) Inclusive: the system serves all, with alignment between student, teacher, administrator, and board evaluation goals, strategies and process.

When Reeves and McNeill (2016) began their work on the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System (2009, 2017), performance rubrics were just starting to emerge as an alternative to Likert or other similar scaled rating systems for assessing performance characteristics. Reeves and McNeill chose a rubric format because it supported a more developmental and growth oriented approach to performance assessment (2017). The School ADvance authors found that most of the practices school leaders use that correlate positively with student achievement are practices that focus on teaching and learning and support teacher development. That correlation led the authors to create a developmental frame for principal performance around the work principals do that engage, enlist, empower, and support teachers (2017). Again, the evidence supports the importance of teachers as providers of feedback and evidence of principal effectiveness.

School ADvance 2.0 provides 27 performance characteristics for rating a principal’s performance. Reeves and McNeill suggest that some of those characteristics may be more important than others within any performance review cycle based on the many complex factors that influence the effectiveness of a school or district. In other words, school leaders might be more effective by focusing on a sub-set of performance characteristics at any given time based on the highest priority needs and the stage of development of the school or district. For this reason, the School ADvance Implementation Guide (2017) advises users to maintain a performance profile of the school and develop priority performance targets for the principal or district leader based
on the most critical needs that the school or district performance profile reveals. To create this school performance profile, the authors recommend the use of multiple forms and sources of data, including data from teacher responses on validated instruments that assess school and school leadership conditions in areas that research findings suggest influence student success. This recommendation is in line both with the statutory requirement for teacher feedback to be used in administrator evaluations and the evidence that teachers can provide valid and reliable insights into the current state of the school and the leadership of that school.

**Chapter II Summary**

Although there is research on how to perform as an effective principal, much has changed in education that now makes it even more difficult to perform as an effective leader. Waters et al. (2004) identified behaviors for effective leadership that were based on a meta-analysis of research that was completed before the age of high stakes accountability. Reeves and McNeill (2016) then took the research even further by creating the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System. The evaluation model took into consideration the research regarding effective principal practices with an “adaptable system of rubrics, descriptors, processes and protocols to guide districts in the key work of evaluating and developing the performance of all school administrators” (Reeves & McNeill, 2016, p. 1).

After completing a thorough literature review of effective leadership regarding principal behaviors, it leads to a hole in the research on principal leadership and how principals are using feedback for effective leadership in the increased age of high stakes accountability. How does a teacher’s perception of the principal’s performance compare to the principal’s own self-assessment of performance? How does a teacher’s perception of various school processes and conditions
compare to the principal’s assessment of those processes and conditions? What are the reasons for any differences between the principal’s self-assessment and assessment of the school’s status and the teacher’s perceptions? This research will attempt to draw conclusions based on responses from principals through the use of feedback. It will also help to create a better understanding of effective principal leadership based on their feedback.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The fabric of education has changed dramatically over the past decade. There has been an increase and demand of higher expectations revolving around student growth and teacher accountability in the classrooms. The majority of this change came from national education reform with legislation such as No Child Left Behind (2001), Race to the Top (2011), and most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). These national reforms trickled down into individual state levels, putting new pressures on classroom teachers.

The new pressure in student outcomes led to increased demands on student performance based on what teachers were doing in the classroom. In the past, teachers would turn to the building level principal for guidance and support. Leading up to this time of teacher reform, there were multiple research studies that were completed to look at behaviors of effective principal leaders. In 2004, Waters et al. completed a meta-analysis that reviewed quantitative research dating back to 1978 to determine characteristics that led to principal success.

Since that time, Reeves and McNeill (2016) created an administrator evaluation tool that was able to focus on the performance of school administrators. Their work had three essential components for success. It first focused on meeting Michigan state standards for compliance, but more importantly the tool was results driven to “stimulate learning, growth and adaptation” (Reeves & McNeill, 2016, p. 1). It also helps the district target specific areas of focus to develop
both school and district capacity. Finally, it uses the GrowthPLUS system, which allows districts to adapt this model to their own specific needs for learning and continued growth.

There is a significant body of research on the traits teachers describe or rate as important in a principal. As described in Chapter II, there are also numerous studies that identify traits demonstrated by principals of high performing schools or schools that out perform their demographic peers. These studies have informed the development of principal evaluation systems, which in many cases call for principals to show evidence of their performance against specific criteria. The one area that presents a hole in the research is how principals are using feedback to create effective leadership.

One common source for performance evidence called for in principal evaluation systems is teacher feedback (Marzano et al., 2011; Reeves & McNeill, 2009). In Michigan, the requirement for principals to collect and use teacher feedback to support and inform their performance assessment has been codified into the educator evaluation statute (PA 173). Since this requirement for informing principals’ performance assessment is a relatively new, but common feature of major performance evaluation systems, studies are needed to explore how principals are actually collecting and using the feedback to impact their performance.

This chapter will focus on the areas of research design, population, sample size, and instrumentation used for studying how teacher feedback is being used in principal evaluation. Much of the chapter will also focus on data collection and how to analyze the data that is collected. It will conclude with limitations of the study along with my own personal reflections as the researcher and my connection to the study.
Research Design

For the purpose of my qualitative research I relied on personal interviews with current Michigan principals who are using feedback to gather information to improve leadership capacity. Creswell (2009) states that interviews are an informative way to get information about a specific topic or get into specific details. It is also a way to create sub questions that allow for a deeper understanding of a topic. Qualitative research allows for an understanding of the meaning that people have constructed and how they make sense of the experiences they have had on that given topic (Merriam, 2009).

While this study is not a classic phenomenology, I used an interpretative phenomenology design to focus specifically on how principals are experiencing and making sense of the statutory requirements to collect teacher feedback to inform their annual performance review. I also used an inductive thematic approach to achieve the interpretative nature of this research (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). The inductive thematic analysis helped elicit both the nature of principals’ experience collecting and using teacher feedback and the actions they took as a result of that experience.

This approach consists of “reading through textual data, identifying themes in the data, coding the themes and interpreting the structure and content of the themes” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 8). With my primary source of data collection, this approach was most appropriate because it allowed me to review text from the conversation and look for patterns or themes within the conversation. I was able to review each line of text created, allowing for relationships to be determined from the multiple codes.
Qualitative research is the essence of this study because I worked in “collaboration with the participant, to help create a narrative that is rich, has depth and informs the overall study objective” (Guest et al., 2013, p. 12). There is little that is known on how principals are using feedback during their evaluations. Qualitative research allowed me to explore what and how principals are using this data. The data that was collected from these interviews was used to answer the questions on how principals are using feedback to increase effectiveness as a leader.

**Population, Sample and Participants**

The sample for this qualitative research was K-12 principals in both public and private schools in the state of Michigan. I worked through the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA) to recruit participants for this study. The authors and developers of the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System have formed a partnership with MASA to distribute and provide training for School ADvance to Michigan school districts. They have a database of school administrators from over 80% of Michigan school districts that have adopted School ADvance. This helped get my interest in interviewing principals out to a large number of school districts. By using the database of School ADvance districts, it allowed for a finite search with only the districts who are using School ADvance. Since this is the administrator evaluation system most consistently adopted in Michigan, I was able to verify how the trainers addressed the incorporation of teacher feedback in their training for principals; I was also able to recruit from a pool of principals who have had the same general training for administrator evaluation and the same training regarding the use of staff, student, and parent feedback.

I emailed principals from the verified list of trained School ADvance users in Michigan and provided them a recruitment letter with a descriptive paragraph explaining the interview
process and how it is for research purposes only. In this email (see Appendix A), it clearly stated that the interview will take place at their district location or through an interview process that they are comfortable with. I reassured them that all individual responses will remain confidential. There will be a monetary gift card given to each principal who is part of the interview process. As a result of the email communication to principals, I was looking for 10 to 15 administrators who were willing to participate in my study. I was seeking to create a deep understanding of how principals who were trained under the School ADvance system are actually collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using the data from teacher feedback to inform their work; thus, I was looking to achieve saturation in the data. Guest et al. (2013) state that qualitative research is “primarily guided by the need to understand or help resolve problems in the real world” (p. 11). The problem of interest for this study is important since all Michigan districts are required to collect and use staff feedback to inform principal evaluations, yet there is little guidance outside of the specific training administrators receive when they adopt an evaluation system. The pool from which I recruited participants all have received that specific training, so the sample of 10 to 15 from that pool helped me achieve saturation around a picture of how this statutory requirement is actually translating into practice.

The recruitment email stated the criteria for participating in this study in terms of the additional criteria that principals need to meet if they are in the pool of Michigan principals whose districts have adopted the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System. The principal participants must:

1. Have completed formal training with an authorized School ADvance trainer (which ensures that all participants have had training that includes the State requirements for using teacher feedback to inform evaluation ratings for principals);
2. Have completed, at least, one full annual evaluation cycle using School ADvance Evaluation System (which ensures that all participants have real experience using their current evaluation system, which calls for the use of teacher feedback as part of performance evidence);

3. Can actually provide examples or artifacts of how they collect and use teacher feedback (which ensures that all participants can actually discuss the phenomenon of interest to this study).

If a principal meets the above criteria, the following will serve as exclusionary criteria:

1. Principals who have collected teacher feedback, but not actually used it to inform their evaluation process.

2. Principals who were rated as ineffective in their last performance review and may be on a plan of assistance for targeted improvement (which ensures that this study does not put a vulnerable principal at greater risk or collect data tainted by any emotional or political issues that might be in play).

After approval was received from the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB—see Appendix B), I proceeded to recruit participants. As principals responded to the recruitment email, I set a time to talk with them via phone or in person to explain the study and answer their questions. If they indicated that they wanted to participate, I reviewed the consent form (Appendix C) with them at that time. After reviewing the consent form, I again verified their interest in participating and set a date, time, and place to get their signature on the consent form and conduct the interview. I accepted the first 10 to 15 principals who met the study criteria and signed the consent form as participants for this study.
Data Collection Procedures

The primary source of data collection was through interviews with the principals. Interviews allowed for central questions to explore a phenomenon that allowed for associated sub questions to create a deeper understanding of the study (Creswell, 2009). This allowed principals to expand on their use of teacher feedback and give them an opportunity to bring any artifacts they may have pertaining to how they collect, analyze, interpret, and use that feedback.

After the 10 to 15 administrators were chosen, the following research questions were used for the focus of the interviews. The interview protocol was designed to foster a conversation through a semi-structured questioning approach that closely follows the research questions.

1. How do principals understand the statutory requirement to collect and use staff, student, and parent feedback to inform their performance evaluation?
2. What specific instruments or processes do they use to elicit and collect staff feedback? How were those choices made and by whom?
3. How do the principals describe the data they derive from staff feedback and how do they analyze and interpret that data?
4. What do the principals do with the information they derive from analyzing the data?
5. How is that information used to develop the principals’ performance ratings?
6. As principals reflect on the use of staff feedback, what conclusions do they reach on the practice of using that feedback to (a) inform their work and (b) inform their performance review?

Appendix D provides the interview protocol. This protocol uses main questions that correlate to each of the research questions to guide the conversation and probes to drill down into the
essence of what I am seeking to learn relative to each research question. Probes allowed for follow-up questions and allowed for the principal to “explain their ideas in more detail and elaborate on what they have said” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes at a location that was convenient to the principal being interviewed. In most cases, I used another teleconferencing application that was available to participants if distance and other circumstances made it difficult to connect in person. This allowed me to include principals who were not able to participate if logistics were a problem for scheduling. This also ensured that my sample was not limited to a specific geographic area within the participant pool locations. During the interview, I was able to use open-ended questions to allow for more than just a fixed response. Guest et al. (2013) suggest that, comparing interviews to a survey, the researcher is able to elicit from the responder an answer that is more from their own perspective and experience. This allowed the responder to add detail to a question that may have only had a yes or no on a survey. Additionally, I was able to use probes as follow-up questions to pursue any area of interest to this study for a fuller and deeper understanding (Creswell, 2009).

At the time of the interview, I asked each principal if there were any artifacts that they would like to share. Such artifacts included examples of instruments principals use to collect teacher feedback data, sample data analysis, protocols for data collection, reports, and other means by which the principal provides the data to the person who conducts their evaluation, and other items that illustrate how the principal and the principal’s supervisor use the data to inform the evaluation ratings or guide the growth of the principal. By asking each principal to share their artifacts they receive for feedback, it was another way to look for common themes throughout the research.
The interview questions were formulated ahead of time and the same questions used for consistency of questioning. The interview started with some basic questions about the principal that made them feel comfortable before the interview took place. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) describe interviewing as being a traveler to a foreign country. The interviews are needed to get a detailed map of the terrain so the traveler can create a working knowledge of the terrain to best navigate when they move about a foreign country.

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with all personal identifying information pertaining to the participant redacted or replaced with pseudonyms. The audio recordings were date stamped and labeled with a pseudonym for each participant. All transcription and codes were linked to the participant pseudonyms and only I had access to the actual names of participants. Audio recording devices were checked prior to and once during the interviews to ensure that the recording was working properly and that audio was able to be heard in playback mode. Creswell also suggests to continue to take “notes in the event that the recording equipment fails” (2009, p. 183).

Once the interview was complete, the audio was saved to a password protected, encrypted external hard drive so that it was safely maintained until transcribed. After the transcription, the audio recordings were destroyed and the transcriptions maintained on the hard drive as the permanent record of the data. When transcribing the audio, line numbers were used along with page numbers in order to ensure that all codes derived from the transcript are linked to the proper participant in the data record.
Data Analysis

One of the most compelling reasons to use qualitative research is the “ability to probe into responses or observations as needed and obtain more detailed descriptions” (Guest et al., 2013, p. 12). Although this is a great advantage to a phenomenology, it does take specific planning and creating a process to analyze the statements to determine a significant pattern of those statements. The use of in-depth interviews along with probes was an important part of my research. It allowed for rich conversations and a deeper exploration into how principals are using feedback.

The ultimate goal of the data analysis is to answer the research questions set forth in the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). By asking questions that are focused on my six research questions, it allowed for more information to be collected on the limited knowledge there is about how principals are using the feedback. There was also a distinct possibility that it could lead to other areas that are yet to be understood about how this feedback is impacting the principalship.

For the purpose of my study I used analytic procedures that helped with both data reduction and data interpretation for my data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Data reduction is reducing down the large amount of data I received from the interviews into manageable chunks. Data reduction allowed for a more concise way of bringing all the information into one area that was easier to use and understand. Data interpretation is the “meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants of the study” (p. 217). I used the phases as outlined by Marshall and Rossman (2016) to create the analytic procedures to manage the collected research in a competent manner. The following phases were used: (a) organizing the data, (b) immersion in the data,
(c) coding the data, (d) offering interpretations through analytic memos, (e) generating case summaries and possible themes, and (f) searching for alternative understandings.

To begin the analysis, I spent time organizing the data collected in the research so that it is manageable and not overwhelming (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This was the area where I took all the field notes and performed minor editing to make the data more retrievable. This included log entries such as the date, time, and for whom the interview took place.

The next step in the data analysis was to immerse myself in the data. Marshall and Rossman (2016) state that researchers should “think of data as something to cuddle up with, embrace and get to know better” (p. 217). During this phase I read, reread and listened through the data again to have a full understanding of what each principal had said. This was a large task in the process. With each interview lasting 45 minutes and with follow-up probing questions, the amount of information was daunting. Although this at times seemed to be overwhelming, it was a crucial part as I created an accurate picture of the field notes that I collected.

With solid organization and immersion into the data, I then begin to code the data from the real-life experiences that had been compiled. These real-life data were in vivo codes that were built off theory generated codes, in relation to the experiences the principals are living in their daily work. This relationship for the purpose of my study related back to the principal evaluation model and the use of feedback that needs to occur per the Michigan statute. From these in vivo codes, themes emerged to help create clusters that appeared. Clusters were generated from a main topic and pull information that was relevant to that main topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

According to Wolcott (1994), the transformational process in the analytic process is when the researcher begins to write. Writing notes and memos allows for the researcher to tap into their creative side of qualitative studies. With the coding complete, I began to write my thoughts
about how the data is starting to connect from the clusters or themes. This was the part of my analysis that helped “identify gaps and questions in the data” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 221). Using memo writing created a structure for a constant pattern that helped avoid distractions or tangents that I may otherwise go on in my own writing.

Generating themes and case studies is the next step that will allow for a quality analytic process. Writing a brief case study allowed for themes, ideas or patterns of belief to bring the principal’s ideas together. One way of generating these themes was through clustering. Clustering as stated by Marshall and Rossman (2016) is a way of forming outlines according to what is most overarching in the research. As I reviewed the data from the interviews, I began to look for concepts that have been supported in the literature review. From these categories, I began to place concepts from parts of my interview into buckets. As I continued to organize these buckets, I began to find relationships within the categories.

Once I dug thoroughly into the data and began to develop ideas around the research I collected, I then took a moment to ask myself if I am getting it right. Marshall and Rossman (2016) call this part of the process searching for alternative understandings. This is where I reviewed my data with a critical eye to make sure that I looked suspiciously at my own observations, making sure I did not create a bias in my research. The most effective way I accomplished this was by member checking. I reviewed my information with each principal to check for validity in what they stated in the interview.

**Trustworthiness**

In qualitative studies the validity of the research is determined by the trustworthiness that is built into the study and research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria to be used when
completing a qualitative study. The four criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each criterion allows for a systematic approach to trustworthiness that allows for the positivist investigator to establish credibility in the study.

**Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the foundation to trustworthiness is the credibility of the research and the researcher. For this study of determining how principals are using teacher feedback, I used the following methods for determining credibility:

1. **Member checking** – After I completed the interviews, I asked the principals who were interviewed to check for accuracy and the correct interpretation. The biggest intent of member checking was to verify that the principal’s “words match what they actually intended, since, a tape recorder has been used, that articulations themselves should have been accurately captured” (Shenton, 2004, p. 68). Member checking also allowed the interviewee to add anything more to the questions that have been asked. It was a reliable way to make sure that the meaning of the interview was correct.

2. **Reflective commentary** – As the interviews were taking place, I recorded and documented initial reflections looking for the “patterns appearing to emerge in the data collected and theories generated” (Shenton, 2004, p. 68.) Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this progressive subjectivity when the researcher creates their own developing thoughts as the interviews are taking place.
**Transferability**

Transferability is when the qualitative study can be applied to other similar situations and a broader number of individuals (Shenton, 2004). Although many qualitative studies are finite with a small number of those participating at times, it will be hard to gauge how this will transfer to other populations or situations. I had a picture of transferability once I had a clear picture of the principal profile and the profile of the school. A key importance was the description of the phenomenon under investigation to allow readers to have a proper understanding of it, thereby enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their own situations. (p.70)

Creating a detailed description of the interviews will help the reader draw conclusions to areas that are relevant to them.

**Dependability**

The dependability of qualitative research is the concept that if the research was repeated in another study, similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). My study addressed dependability by having a set process for the individual interviews. Having the same interview questions, served as a model that can be used over and over again. The key to dependability in my research is the report of the findings that will allow the reader to understand the exact method that was completed during the research.

**Confirmability**

Shenton (2004) states that “steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work’s findings are the result of the experience of the informants, rather than the characteristics
and preferences of the researcher” (p. 72). As the researcher, I allow the reader to have a clear understanding of my connection to the interviews that are taking place. The ability for the principals to bring in artifacts and to review the transcription notes was a key part to allowing for confirmability. Also, the description is detailed in the methods section, as it pertains to coding and creating themes also help in creating a non-bias approach to the research and the reporting of the interviews.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological research was to have a better understanding of how principals are using teacher feedback during their annual performance review. There are such areas that are delimiting where I have limited the depth and the scope of my study. One such area that is delimiting is the research is only looking at Michigan principals. This research did not take into account principals from other states that may be using feedback as part of their evaluation model.

Another delimiting factor is that only principals who are using the School ADvance Evaluation System are being considered for my research. Although 80% of schools in the state of Michigan are using School ADvance, that still leaves 20% who are using another model requiring the use of feedback per the state law.

The limiting factors in my research are the areas of my research that are out of my control. What I could foresee as possible limiting factors are time constraints to get principals who are willing to be interviewed for an hour. A principal has very limited time and I could see it being hard to have current principals find the time to give for this research. Principals receive many requests to be part of different studies and tapped for their feedback on areas of their expertise.
Due to the number of requests that principals receive it may be hard to get them to participate in my study. However, with 80% of Michigan School districts using School ADvance, there was a higher percentage of principals that my recruitment email went out to.

Chapter III Summary

This methods chapter was to review the qualitative study that I used to gather data about how principals are using feedback from teachers for effective leadership. This chapter was used to explain the interpretative phenomenological design that was used to yield the highest results. With the extensive interviews with principals who are using the School ADvance Evaluation System, I was able to go in-depth with questions on how they specifically are using the feedback they are receiving. I also had the opportunity for principals to share any artifacts in the interview that helped them explain how they are using the feedback and show how they are getting the feedback.

Once I completed the interviews, through the use of transcription I was able to create themes on how the feedback was being used. The detailed use of Marshall and Rossman’s (2016) analytic process will be crucial to create a plan for interpreting and organizing the transcriptions and field notes. This allowed for a clear understanding of the meaning behind emergent themes.

Chapter IV will focus on analyzing the data from these in-depth conversations.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

Chapter IV will focus on the results of this qualitative study that will take a thematic approach to identify how principals are interpreting and using staff feedback. Common patterns in the data from a maximal variation sample of Michigan principals will be studied. In this chapter, I will give an overview of the purpose and restate the research questions. I will also give the demographics behind the principal participants. I will interpret the open-ended interviews that were conducted with each principal and complete a data analysis and explain the results. Also during this chapter, I will explain my approach to coding and creating the emerging themes from the interviews to describe how I have developed common themes from my research.

Overview of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of my research was to identify how teacher feedback is collected, analyzed, and used in the state of Michigan. This study investigated the current state of affairs in a state that specifically requires such data be included in the evidence to inform administrator evaluations. Specifically, this study focused on principals who are using the Reeves-McNeill School ADVANCE Administrator Performance Development and Assessment System. The study was to understand how principals describe and reflect on the current way they are interpreting and collecting staff feedback to inform their own performance evaluation.
Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to address the following research questions:

1. How do principals understand the statutory requirement to collect and use staff, student, and parent feedback to inform their performance evaluation?
2. What specific instruments or processes do they use to elicit and collect staff feedback? How were those choices made and by whom?
3. How do the principals describe the data they derive from staff feedback and how do they analyze and interpret that data?
4. What do the principals do with the information they derive from analyzing the data?
5. How is that information used to develop the principals’ performance ratings?
6. As principals reflect on the use of staff feedback, what conclusions do they reach on the practice of using that feedback to (a) inform their work and (b) inform their performance review?

Description of Unit of Analysis

For the purpose of this study, I used a qualitative approach to directly engage a sample of practicing principals whose districts are using the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System in exploring and describing the way they understand and are responding to the teacher feedback requirement specified in Michigan statute (2011). I employed an inductive thematic approach to determine common patterns in the data from a maximal variation sample of Michigan principals who met the study criteria to identify where there may be an emerging pattern of action among principals whose districts are complying with the statutory requirement for using teacher
feedback to inform principal evaluation ratings. Additionally, this study is also interested in examining what the principals are doing with the data they receive from teacher feedback to inform their own professional growth, their school improvement work, and their efforts to support teachers.

**Participants**

All the participants were K-12 public school principals in Michigan whose districts adopted the School ADvance Principal Evaluation System. I used a criterion sampling approach to recruit a sample of 10-15 principals based on the number needed to reach saturation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). All the principals met the following criteria: (1) completed formal training with an authorized School ADvance trainer; (2) had completed, at least, one full annual evaluation cycle using School ADvance Evaluation System; and (3) able to provide examples or artifacts of how they collect and use teacher feedback.

In a partnership agreement with the authors and developers of the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System, I was able to use the database of School ADvance districts for a finite search with only the districts who were using School ADvance.

I emailed principals from a verified list of trained School ADvance users in Michigan and provided them a recruitment letter with a description of the study purpose, the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria, and the interview process. In this email (Appendix A), I also indicated that I would be able to conduct the interview at either the participant’s school or district or through a web-based conferencing tool that was available to them and/or comfortable for them to use.

Once the principals began to respond to my recruitment email, I was able to set up interview times with each. Of the 10 interviews that I conducted, 3 of them were face-to-face
interviews that took place in their office. The remaining 7 interviews were conducted through a phone interview. Of the 10 interviews that were conducted, 6 of the participants were female and 4 of the participants were male. There was a variation as to the level at which each was an administrator. Six of the principals that were interviewed were elementary principals, 3 were high school principals, and 1 was a principal of a 9th grade building. There was no principal who was a current middle school administrator although 4 had been at one time in their career.

This was a very experienced group of administrators. The principal with the lowest number of years being a principal was 3 and the highest of number of years being a principal was 20. The average number of years as a building administrator was 10.5 years. All of the principals who were interviewed for this study had previously been teachers before moving into the role of administration.

For the purpose of this study and to keep confidentiality, each principal was given a number to correspond to their interview. The following is a brief overview of each principal with more specific information regarding their demographic:

**Principal 1.** Principal 1 is an elementary principal who has spent 14 years as both an elementary general education teacher and special education teacher. She has been an elementary principal for the last 5 years, but this was her first year in her current building. Her current building services students in grades K-5.

**Principal 2.** Principal 2 is an elementary principal who has taught at the middle school level before becoming a principal. He has been an administrator for 15 years and has been an elementary principal currently for 6 years. He is the principal that serves a K-5 student population.
**Principal 3.** Principal 3 was a middle school math teacher before becoming a principal. She has been a principal for 14 years of a high school that serves a 9-12 population. All 14 years have been at the same building.

**Principal 4.** Principal 4 has been a principal for 12 years with the last 7 being in his current position. Currently, he serves as high school principal for 9-12 students. He taught at the high school level for 7 years before becoming an administrator.

**Principal 5.** Principal 5 was a special education teacher before becoming an administrator. She has been an administrator for 5 years with 3 years being in her current role. She serves a K-5 elementary building and was the assistant in the building before becoming the principal.

**Principal 6.** Principal 6 serves a 9th grade freshman building and has been principal for 4 years. She was a high school teacher before becoming an administrator. She has served as an administrator for 9 years.

**Principal 7.** Principal 7 has been an administrator for 15 years. She currently is a principal of an elementary that serves a K-5 student population. She has watched the building transform over the years from a K-8 building back to its current configuration. She has been the principal there for 8 years.

**Principal 8.** Principal 8 has been in the same high school for 25 years. He spent 5 years as a teacher in the building and has been the principal for the last 20 years. The configuration of the high school is 9-12.

**Principal 9.** Principal 9 was a teacher at the elementary and middle school level for 13 years and taught in both the state of Michigan and Indiana. She worked part time as an educational technology specialist, but then transitioned into the principalship within a year. She has been a principal for 7 years in her current building.
**Principal 10.** Principal 10 has had a career of movement, starting out as a middle school teacher outside the state of Michigan but eventually coming back to the state to take a job as a high school teacher. He then moved to three different districts as an administrator before landing in his current role. Currently, he is an elementary level principal and been in his current role for 3 years.

Table 1 is a summary of the research participants.

### Table 1
**Research Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Building Level</th>
<th>Number of Years in Administration</th>
<th>Number of Years in Current Role</th>
<th>Years Using School ADvance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis and Results

Data Collection

Once the principal reached out that they were interested in the research, I quickly emailed the principal back. I found this to be the most effective. If I let a few days go past without emailing them back quickly, they often did not respond back to the email. Through email, I was able to confirm that they met all the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. Once we determined that they met the criteria, we set a time to either meet or complete the interview on the phone.

I used an iPhone to complete the recording of the interview. For the reassurance that the interview was being recorded, I frequently checked to make sure that all audio and recording was accurately being measured. Before we started each interview, the principal had emailed me a signed consent form. I reviewed that consent form with them to make sure it was understood and the criteria for the research was clear.

At the completion of each interview, the audio was saved onto a password protected device to protect the privacy of each interviewed participant. Once the interview was transcribed and it was determined the transcription was accurate, the audio portion of the interview was destroyed. At the completion of each interview, I asked each participant to share with me their artifact. All did this through email which allowed me to review the document as I reviewed each transcription.

Interview Analysis

By using an interpretive phenomenology design, I was specifically able to look at how principals are experiencing and making sense of statutory requirements to collect teacher
feedback to inform their final summative evaluation each year. Completing interviews for each of the principals was the most appropriate form of data collection because it allowed me to look for patterns and themes throughout the conversation. With all the interviews and data that was collected it is often considered a rich description of ordinary events. The interpretive act “brings meaning to those data and displays to the reader through a written report” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 217).

I used a 6-step process as outlined by Marshall & Rossman (2016) to create an analytical process to manage all the research that was collected. The phases were (1) organizing data, (2) immersion in the data, (3) coding the data, (4) offering interpretations through analytical memos, (5) generating possible themes, and (6) searching for alternative understandings. Completing this 6-step process allowed me to show that the research was managed in a proper and systematic way.

The first step was to transcribe the data from each of the interviews. Once the recording was completed, I listened to the recording within 24 hours while it was fresh in my head. By doing this, I was able to create the transcriptions easier with much greater accuracy. Once the transcription was complete, I listened to the audio of the interview and followed along with the transcription. This was done to make the next steps of managing the data and analyzing easier (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Once the transcription was complete, I listened to each interview again, but this time from a perspective of descriptive and conceptual comments. This was to begin to look for differences or similarities in how principals were explaining and viewing the collection of feedback from teachers. I then was able to read through each transcription and begin to underline descriptive
comments and conceptual comments. I did this each time I read the transcription with a minimum of 3 reads per interview. This allowed me to dive deeper into the data before I began to code.

The coding of the data was the most time-intensive and one that was the most rewarding in the end. My goal at the end of coding was not only to be ready to look at emerging themes, but to have a solid hypothetical process and be able to apply it to my new research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). By working through each transcription, I first looked for codes that were grounded in concept from my literature review. I then began to create *in vivo* codes that were emerging from the interviews themselves. These codes were the most beneficial as I began to write analytical memos to connect the research.

I began writing memos to myself on the margins of the transcriptions, but quickly changed to my computer, often writing down questions as I began to look for connections to coding. Marshall and Rossman (2016) described this process as “identifying linkages among coded data” (p. 221). I was beginning to assemble the story that was unfolding and looking for connections and what the meanings were. Creating the memos allowed for an easy transition into looking for themes within my research.

Once I went through writing the memos after reading each transcription, I then went back and listened to the interview again. I took a different approach to this. After writing the memos I did not take notes when I listened to the recording. I have about a 30-minute commute to work. During this time, I would simply listen and try to pick up themes or common trends with the data that I may have missed before. That night, after listening to recording, I would then go back and complete more memos with the transcriptions.

Using clustering, I was able to take the coding categories and begin to organize them based on how they were related (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This was done by typing major
categories using my computer and then sub categories that were supported and found commonly within the major categories. I was able to move them around to determine commonalities and outliers. Along with this, I began to go back and look for quotes in the interviews that were supporting these major categories and sub categories. I initially had between 10-15 coding categories but was able to get that down to 6 categories that best represented the essence of common elements from the data. By immersing myself in the data so frequently and early on in the process, I was able to have a strong interconnectedness to the text which allowed for quality analysis.

The last step in the process was to search for alternative understandings. This was a way for me as the researcher to make sure that my bias was not shaping the research questions and the answers that I was looking for. Marshall and Rossman (2016) describe this as a researcher who “looks suspiciously at his own observations, asking where he might have applied his own biases and interpretations” (p. 228). To make sure that I did not create something that was not there, I immersed myself in the data one more time.

This time at the conclusion of my findings, I created themes and sub themes that best brought out the essence of the research. These themes and sub themes became the way that I engaged in the work and research. Marshall and Rossman (2016) explain themes as recurring ideas or language and patterns of a belief that link people and settings together as the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis. I was able to do this by not only writing but possibly more importantly, listening with an open mind and not tying it back to my notes.

**Emergent Themes**

By using the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data, the following major themes were formed:
1. Principals explained how culture and climate feedback is as critical as instructional feedback.

2. Principals explained how teacher feedback had a small influence on their supervisor’s performance rating.

3. Principals described how open-ended questions are the most informative form of teacher feedback.

4. While principals use a formal survey to collect teacher feedback, they follow up in a variety of ways to get a deeper understanding.

5. Principals use teacher feedback in both formative and summative ways.

6. Principals use teacher feedback to set both personal and school goals.

See Table 2 as a summary of the emergent themes gathered through the research.

**Emergent Theme 1: Principals explained how culture and climate feedback is as critical as instructional feedback**

As the data was collected, there was a clear emergent theme that no matter how principals collected their data, culture and climate of the building was an important part of the feedback they were looking for. All ten principals addressed this in their interview discussing in various forms about how critical this was. Principal 7 stated the importance of this as follows:

I look at the instructional piece as far as support they need in the classroom, you know, that is a piece. To me, what is important, probably the most important, is the climate, the culture, the feel. Because I feel if the teachers are relatively happy and they feel confident, then they feel it is a safe place.

This theme was supported by sub themes that were common among the principals that were interviewed. The following sub themes were identified as well (a) Pulse of the building, (b) Soft skills, and (c) Negative to a positive.
## Table 2
Emergent Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals explained how culture and climate feedback is as critical as instructional feedback</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals explained how teacher feedback had a small influence on their supervisor’s performance rating</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals describe how open-ended questions are the most informative form of teacher feedback</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While principals use a formal survey to collect teacher feedback, they follow up in a variety of ways to get a deeper understanding</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals use teacher feedback in both formative and summative ways</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals use teacher feedback to set both personal and school goals</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Pulse of the Building

Principals explained that the feedback they receive can be described as the pulse of the building. The feedback not only told them specific areas of concern but it showed what the staff was feeling. Principal 5 stated how this pulse impacts the type of feedback that she receives:

The feedback ebbs and flows based on the culture or the temperature within the building. If the building as a whole is feeling positive, then you get more positive feedback. If staff are feeling really frustrated or that their hands are tied or they are angry about something or angry about something that doesn’t have anything to do with the building, then it will be reflected in the survey.

Principal 6 went even further to describe how the comments made by staff give her a clear picture of how the staff feels:

The anonymity is nice because that is where you get some comments that just really help us to understand what themes are out there amongst the staff. What are some frustrations or what are points of pride or different areas like that.

This feeling is not always a focus on the negative. It can have a very positive feel as feedback is shared that allows for direct insight to what the current culture of the building is.

Principal 2 stated:

Within the context of our building, the feedback is more meaningful. An example is affirmations and recognizing and celebrating school accomplishments. If I get, 89 percent feel things are satisfactory and outstanding, that is great and I am happy to get that kind of feedback. But, honestly, I want everybody in the building to feel like that is the case. So where is that 11 percent and what are types of things that are given as examples of both how I am doing well and potentially what could improve.

Principal 7 sums up getting the pulse of the building the best by completing check-ins after she gets her survey results:

I still do what I call a check in, where I will do 4 or 5 questions on how’s it going? I ask them what supports do you need? What can I do to help you? How are you feeling with the climate and culture of the building? I like that there are areas of celebrations, but what are the areas that we need to work on?
Soft Skills

Another sub theme that emerged from culture and climate was the ability to understand the soft skills that were important to a building. Principals explained this was the area they had to work hard to decipher from the feedback because these seemed to be the underlying feeling of the staff that they may not fully explain when they gave their feedback. Principal 9 described it as follows:

I would say it really is just those areas I feel, that maybe, they are kind of the soft skill things. Sometimes I feel like go, go, go and I need to slow down because I may not think something is important, but they still do. I have been doing this for seven years and we know each other and they say, yeah we are fine. Then I get back the results and those are one of the soft skills they want or need me to do.

Principal 9 goes a step further to describe how from her feedback she made changes in her practice that has a direct impact on the culture of her building:

So then I make changes to my practice. For example, this year every month, I am doing something fun with the staff. We do something funny or fun things like give them chocolate or thank you cards. If somebody is doing something great, we recognize that. This is where I reflect and say okay, I see that is what is what they need so I will do that for them.

Principal 1 dives even deeper and explains that this may be the most important part of her job as leader of the building:

I look first at culture and I guess it is leadership, respect and trustworthiness, so maybe more personal soft skill components. I think of my role sometimes as a buffer on how teachers view me dealing with them as teachers, teachers to other colleagues and teachers to students. I first want them to know what kind of leader they see me as. I think culture, trust and relationships are key.

Negative to a Positive

Each principal described that from the feedback even it came back as an area of concern, they were able to use this information to create a culture that focused on the positive and give
affirmation to the areas that were going well in the building. Principal 2 explains how just giving a rating does not help him but more in-depth feedback supports what his action plan will be:

Just giving an unsatisfactory or needs improvement rating gives me only one piece of the puzzle. It’s similar to students and needing to use evidence to support their response. Give me some evidence of how I can improve or what I am doing well so that I know what to continue doing or start doing.

Principal 4 gives a clear example of how a negative was turned into a positive after receiving feedback from teachers in his building:

Two years ago, as an example, we wanted to know more about stressors in the school day for students and staff. That was one of the questions about anxiety and feeling stressed and what triggers that in our school environment. So a focus group was put together over this area that we identified through the survey. I wanted to formulate a focus group to tell us the anecdotal data not just the responses to the data. So it was not just a response to the survey, but the experiences around that issue.

Principal 8 sums up the importance of teacher feedback by stating how important it is for understanding culture of the building:

Our teacher feedback is the most important thing that we use as an administrative team to make sure we are straight. I can’t say strongly enough how much I rely on that. Again, I have been here a long time. Many of these colleagues are friends of mine. I’d like to believe that all of these colleagues, whether I am doing rounding or talking to them at a volleyball game last night, I’d like to say they always tell me exactly what’s on their mind, but frankly having a confidential survey where there’s no way for them to know who’s writing it has been really good for me to get an unvarnished perspective as to whether they see things going well or see things not going well.

See Table 3 as a summary of emergent theme one.
Table 3
Emergent Theme One: Principals explained how culture and climate feedback is as critical as instructional feedback

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Emergent Theme 2: Principals explained how teacher feedback had a small influence on their supervisor’s performance rating

One of the most resounding areas that was supported by all the principals interviewed was how feedback from staff was not used for their overall effectiveness rating. Out of the 10 principals who were interviewed, only 1 principal stated how it was used in his final evaluation. In fact most principals were able to use the results of feedback in any way they felt useful. Through this emerging theme, the following three sub themes were determined: (a) Principals not part of School ADvance process, (b) No impact on evaluation from evaluator, and (c) Feedback from evaluator to principal is unclear.

Principals Did Not Play a Role in Selecting Evaluation Instrument

Of all ten principals interviewed, not one of the principals was part of the process to choose the School ADvance rubric in their district. All of the final decisions made to determine which school administrator evaluation tool was to be used, were made at the central administration
of the district. Principal 2 explained what was a common pattern amongst the principals interviewed:

We did have some administrative discussions around it collectively and provided an opportunity but then we moved forward with School ADvance. As the statutes came from the state, we started looking but obviously the majority of our time was spent talking or looking at our teacher evaluation. Our administrative team came with the recommendation to go with School ADvance and then at that point we started going through the training for School ADvance.

Principal 6 added to this theme by stating: “I know very little, truthfully, about what the law is. I know we all went through some School ADvance training the year prior, but don’t really have a strong recollection about how it was picked.”

Principal 3 explained that this was not an ultimate issue for her not choosing the evaluation instrument. She stated how her biggest area was that she wanted it to be connected to the teacher evaluation model that they were using:

I mean, we were given the opportunity to listen to what we may be doing, but at the end of the day there was no formal vote in that respect. I didn’t really ask the question, I just do whatever I am told to do. It was already chosen so I can’t change it. But I did have an understanding that it aligned to 5D so therefore that is how we ended up with it.

**There is a Small Influence on Evaluation from the Evaluator**

Nine out of the ten principals stated there was no direct correlation between the final evaluation for the year and the results of the feedback that was received by staff. Principal 10 was the only principal that had a specific use of the feedback that was given for his final evaluation. Principal 10 explained the process as follows:

So when we meet we go and look through the School ADvance pieces and he will go through and tell us what he marked for us as an administrator and some of the questions have specific feedback in them and some don’t. I remember towards the end that’s when you look at your data over the year. Your student data and your staff survey data. I
remember our superintendent, he was like, staff rated you 83 percent in your survey and then he would place that in the comment box.

Although this was very specific to principal 10 and how the superintendent used the survey data for the final overall evaluation, this was very unique compared to the other principals interviewed. Principal 4 gave a general overview regarding how he was using the data from feedback:

There’s not a real clear way for me to link the survey data to a performance rating given the way we are using the tool. I think I would say collectively as an admin team we’re using the survey data almost intuitively to feel like we are on the right track. Not necessarily does that translate to a highly effective or effective rating.

Principal 1 goes onto to explain in even more detail the lack of follow up as it pertains to her own individual evaluation regarding feedback:

I share with the superintendent exactly what the staff give back to me in my google survey. They have access to it to see everything that a teacher is putting in there. Even in the comment section. The superintendent will just be like you are awesome, but you have more data than I need. I would just send it all to him, like, I never wrote anything up like, I think I’m highly effective. He would just send me by email my final evaluation and then it would all be done and he’d say let’s meet and that was it.

Principal 4 continues to describe how the feedback is not used for evaluation purposes but rather the overall practice of being an administrator:

It’s a very gray area of administrator performance. While the requirement is that we have to collect the data, there’s not a clear rubric on how it is used and how that translates to an effectiveness rating. It’s just that we are required to collect feedback from our stakeholders, including students, staff and parents. So that’s my understanding of it. Its intention is to inform our practice not necessarily evaluate our practice.

**Feedback to the Principal from the Evaluator is Unclear**

After the principal shared the feedback from teachers to their evaluator, there is a lack of continuity of how that feedback is then used with each principal from their evaluator. Other than
Principal 10 who had a clear follow up with his superintendent regarding the feedback from staff, there was no consistent use of the feedback to any of the other 9 principals.

Principal 2 stated this lack of consistency best when he stated:

I think at first I may have shared the data, just so they can have an idea of what I was doing, not as much for them to evaluate me. More for my administrator so they knew I was soliciting feedback and what tool I was using. So, I may have shared it with them once. It does not have any impact on my evaluation.

Principal 6 also stated that the results of the feedback were shared with district administration and there was no clear understanding of what was done with the results: “I presume that people review it at some point in time. It’s just that the process of what is done has not been made clear. It has not been communicated.”

Although it was clear that the feedback was not commonly discussed amongst the superintendent and the principal, the principals still found the positive in using feedback. Principal 9 affirmed this in her statement regarding the superintendent sitting down with her to review the results:

We have not yet done that, which I think would probably be a good thing, but I think it helps me kind of pinpoint some areas of focus for myself. So I can say, you know staff feels this and I can see what they are thinking. We have not sat down to review the results one on one or anything like that. I wonder if we will get to that point with our Director of Elementary.

See Table 4 as a summary to emergent theme two.
Table 4
Emergent Theme Two: Principals explained how teacher feedback had a small influence on their supervisor’s performance rating

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Emergent Theme 3: Principals described how open-ended questions are the most informative form of teacher feedback

An area that came clear through the interviews was that principals relied heavily on open-ended questions to inform them of not only practice with instructional leadership, but the climate of the building. All 10 principals who were interviewed used a survey to gather feedback from their staff. Also, for every survey that was sent out to the staff, each of the principals had a section on the survey for teachers to write comments on either areas of the survey or other areas that were not mentioned. There were three very clear sub themes that supported this overall emergent theme regarding open-ended questions. The three sub themes were (a) Anonymity is key, (b) Comments create a feel of the building, and (c) Relationships are formed.
Anonymity is Key

Each principal stated how it was important for the survey to be anonymous. They felt this was an important part of the process so that teachers were able to feel safe in giving unbiased feedback as it related to the leadership in the building. Principal 1 stated:

I used a survey because I wanted it to be unanimous across the board, but also I want it to be anonymous so that they can give me their true heart and soul of their opinions. There needs to be a feeling that there are no ramifications tied to it and I wanted there to be ease of getting the information to staff and getting it back to me.

Principal 2 went on to say the importance of the survey and receiving feedback:

Ever since I was an Assistant Principal I have used Marzano’s 21 leadership responsibilities most relative to successful schools and positive student achievement. I have historically used that tool to elicit feedback from my staff annually. I give it in a survey format so I can analyze the data both quantitatively and qualitatively. So I provide an opportunity for staff to not only rate me using this scale but also to provide comments. I am looking both at the rating and the perceptual feedback that is more qualitative. There is a qualitative nature to the data. And so I look at the quantitative data but then I disaggregate it into the areas where I have scored the lowest on. So that becomes the first factor I take a look at. Then I look at the qualitative feedback comments on all 21 of them because I really encourage my staff to make comments in there because that really helps guide me the most.

Although being anonymous is key, when sharing results back with staff some comments are left out if it seems hurtful or they don’t have a full understanding of personal issues that are taking place.

Principal 8 stated this on how he gives results back to the staff regarding his team of administrators:

Basically, we have been doing this since the 1990s. All of our team results are for our administrators. We give all the results back to our teacher colleagues so they can see the raw scores. They can see almost everything that we see. The only things they don’t see is some of the comments. So like some of the things, like comments, I would hold back that are specifically pointed toward an administrator and personal troubles. Teachers see pretty much everything we see unless there are just things that in our relationship I am not prepared to share.
Comments Create a Feel for the Building

Comments were an important part of each survey for the principals. They each spoke about how this created the tone for the building and allowed them to get a pulse of what was happening.

Principal 6 stated:

So again, you have anonymity which is nice about survey monkey. It just gives our staff the opportunity to answer some closed-ended questions that we can kind of turn around into data for us to use. But then there are also some open-ended questions and that is how you get some of the comments that just really help us to understand what themes are out there amongst our staff. And what are some frustrations or what are some points of pride or different things like that.

Principal 6 went on to say how important comments were in the survey, to understand the culture of the building:

In our school, I feel safe in…and we would list it, the staff lounge, the hallway, the bathroom…all of that. One of the interesting things, we actually had somebody who put “no” for the staff lounge. We were like, oh my gosh, we have to have a conversation about this. How do we have a staff member who doesn’t feel safe in the staff lounge? So probably I think six were like that, close ended and then three were more open ended. Like what ideas do you have that you would like to see flourish in our building? That kind of thing. So those aren’t necessarily directly related to our evaluation in any way, shape or form, but it definitely gives us a good idea of where our staff is at in terms of their feelings about the building.

Principal 2 went on to say how he encourages the comments to get the real feel for what is going on in the building:

Ultimately I encourage that because it is more specific to what we are doing as a building. It is better feedback for when it is specific to us as a building because then I know. It is sort of their opportunity to say keep going on this or stop doing this. So it is just within the context of our building. That feedback is more meaningful.
The open-ended comments allow principals to get to the heart of what is happening in the building. It allows for an emphasis to be placed on what is current and how that is being perceived at the building level. Principal 1 shared her thoughts on how it brings out direct feelings:

I can tell you that in the open-ended responses I get way more “meat and potatoes.” So it’s about a very specific topic, which is still really important data. But the minute you open it up, you get data from all over the place that might not have been on your radar. Like I will give you some examples. “I very much appreciate the behavior plan that has been put in place.” “I am very thankful you have implemented the policy that students cannot play on the playground before school.” “I also appreciate that you have spoken to the custodians about all the small talk in the classrooms.” So that is why I like the open-ended questions, because it brings attention to the little things that you do that you don’t even realize.

**Relationships Are Formed and Strengthened**

Each of the 10 principals stated how the comments that were received from the surveys were important in forming relationships within their building. It allowed for an understanding of what was important to the staff and to get the feedback to understand how they were feeling about certain areas of the building.

Principal 9 explained how she viewed her results and what it meant for her to help with relationships with her staff:

The teachers take the survey. They can tell you if they strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree or strongly disagree. They fill those in and then there’s some open-ended questions as well that they can do. That data is compiled and that is provided to us with our results. They also give us our Top Box score, which is a percentage of the strongly agrees and the strongly disagrees. I gotta look at my top highest 3 scores and then I have to look at my lowest 3 scores. So what is going well and then where some opportunities for improvement are. It provides me with a good process and resource to do my job. They have a genuine concern for my welfare. They recognize good performance.

Principals really connected that comments were a great way to have a clear understanding of what teachers in the building were looking for. They described how it helped them understand
how they would work with teachers to create programs that would help them support the teachers. This ultimately helped the relationships in the building.

Principal 10 described it in this manner:

We looked through the survey together and we talked about why we thought some of these things were rated the way they were and some of the things we could do to adjust. For example, two years ago the staff had some things to say about discipline in the building and the support that teachers needed. So I created with my assistant principal an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) team with my social worker and a couple of other staff members. They meet twice a month to look at which students are getting discipline referrals and to help to create behavior plans and meet with teachers. All of that came from what I read in the survey and why we needed to go that way.

See Table 5 as a summary to emergent theme three.

Table 5
Emergent Theme Three: Principals described how open-ended questions are the most informative form of teacher feedback

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**Emergent Theme 4: While principals use a formal survey to collect teacher feedback, they follow up in a variety of ways to get a deeper understanding**

All 10 of the principals who were interviewed use a survey to gather feedback from their teachers. The survey was the formal way that principals collected the data, but 8 out of the 10 principals then went on to use the data to gather information in an informal way. This was done
through both structured and unstructured conversations that allowed for a deeper understanding of the information that was collected.

Principal 1 explained the informal information gathered as follows: “Teachers evaluate me the same time teachers evaluate students. So I just put it out there that as you are grading your students here is your chance to grade me.”

The following sub themes were found for receiving feedback: (a) Creating conversations, and (b) Meeting with staff to discuss.

**Creating Conversations**

The survey for all the principals allowed for conversations to occur between the principal and the teacher. It created a nexus to allow for open dialog with the principals to start that discussion. Principal 4 described how he allows the survey to move into conversation:

The surveys that I have done in the past have included a question of, would you care to discuss any of these items further? If so, would you like please provide us with your contact information. So while the survey is anonymous, if they do want to be part of a focus group we ask them to identify themselves.

Principal 5 explained how she takes the results back to her school improvement team and specifically discuss the results:

It goes to our school improvement team. We have representatives from grade level, subject areas, specialists, elective teachers, school board members and myself. I am looking for misunderstandings of things that are put in place but teachers aren’t fully aware of.

Principal 1 creates a follow up meeting after her survey is complete to talk through anything that they would like to discuss in more detail. She puts a formal method to an informal process in the following way:
I call it chocolate and coffee. It is not a requirement, but every teacher has done it no matter where I have been at. They come in and have coffee and I have chocolate and it’s just a time for me to kind of share my goals with staff, we get to meet and have them see if they have questions about my leadership style. What they feel are my strengths and weaknesses.

Principal 8 also has a similar process that he refers to as Rounding:

Rounding is basically four questions and we do twice a year in September and then in March or April time. The questions are basically, What’s going well? What needs to be improved? Who would you like to recognize? What kind of support or resources could you use to do your job better? So that is where we sort of flush things out that we have read in the survey.

Meeting With Staff to Discuss

Even though principals used an informal process to review the survey results directly with teachers, all 10 principals used some type of full staff meeting to review results with their staff. Each principal found that it was important to be transparent with the staff and discuss what came from the feedback. There was a clear theme that the principals used this staff forum to have a focused understanding of the feedback. Principal 2 described it in this manner:

I use staff meetings to summarize feedback into key points and don’t use people’s specific comments, but look for themes and patterns. The conversations I have with staff are where I am listening to thoughts or ideas they have in regards to a decision that I have made or a direction we are heading as a building.

Principal 8 described a similar process called Roll Out:

Basically what you do is look at your break down of the survey. A percentage of people that rated you very successful in those areas. Then you look at your bottom five or six low areas. Then we do what we call a Roll Out, which is basically you meet with your teacher colleagues in the context of a staff meeting and you just walk it through. Then you get your teacher colleagues in small groups. They talk about what are some ways that we can improve in those areas. At a follow up staff meeting, we put up all those nuts and bolts ideas about how do we improve. We then count them up and we pick three top vote getters for areas we work on.

See Table 6 as a summary to emergent theme four.
Table 6
Emergent Theme Four: While principals use a formal survey to collect teacher feedback, they follow up in a variety of ways to get a deeper understanding

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Emergent Theme 5: Principals use teacher feedback in both formative and summative ways

One of the areas of my study that was clear with all 10 principals, was that all the principals used the feedback they received in both a summative and formative way. All the principals suggested that they made immediate changes to instruction or culture depending on what type of feedback they received. They also discussed how the feedback was used to create a summation on how they were doing overall. Although there was not the use to drive overall scores within their evaluation, they did use the feedback to make adjustments to what was happening in the building. Using both summative and formative feedback for assessment, the following sub themes were clear: (a) How are we doing?, (b) Did we meet our goals?, and (c) looking for outliers.

How Are We Doing?

One of the most clear ways that principals use formative data is by using feedback to determine if the building is meeting its needs for success. Principals rely heavily on the feedback as a half time score to get an idea of what is happening.
Principal 1 supported this sub theme by stating:

The feedback tells me if there is a problem out there that I don’t know about. I am going to hear about it especially since they don’t have to tie their name to it. I think it is like a checks and balance for me.

Principal 2 went on to explain further:

Ultimately there are multiple points of data that a principal needs to use to measure their impact or growth in a system. Clearly student achievement data is one of those pieces that principals are required to utilize. We also use perceptual feedback, more of the subjective or qualitative feedback. We have gotten perceptual feedback from our stakeholders with our school improvement process.

This check in on how we are doing is not just based upon random or unique areas that staff give feedback on, but more specific to what is happening with the progress that the building is making. Principal 4 talked about the importance of getting feedback from the staff in the middle of the year and how that impacts the second half game plan. Principal 4 talks in depth about what exactly that looks like:

So there is two things I look for. One is how I am communicating and relaying the vision. The other is, are we actually following through and making progress towards our goals. So based on the survey I get a really good sense if I am communicating enough or are people responding in a certain way because they don’t know the work we have done, the work that students have done or have we done a good enough job of communicating that? So I have had to work on communicating that vision more frequently in the past two years and using intentional purpose to create some staff accountability in making progress on goals.

Did We Meet Our Goals?

The other area in regard to goals was the summative approach that principals are taking to determine if they are succeeding with goals that have been set forth from a building level. The principals are using the feedback at the end of the year to determine if they were able to meet
their overall goals for the year. The feedback they receive is crucial to determine if the objective was understood and successful.

Principal 9 clearly states this process in her own building:

We basically have a slide deck prepared ahead of time. It is nice because this is from the district level and we’ve got a generic one ready to go. Then we are able to put in our own building results and pop those in. So it is, here’s where we are at, here is why we are doing this and talking about the importance with our stakeholders. What it is, how did we do and what I am going to do to make it better. We go through all of that together.

Principal 3 went on to explain: “We pride ourselves in taking care of each other and noticing if something is not going well. With the information we have been able to address the needs and the things we need to look at.”

Ultimately the use of summative feedback comes down to see if there was a clear understanding of what they were working on and how it was perceived by the staff. Principal 6 describes the use of the summative data at the end of the year:

I would just look for those things that stand out to me or those comments, whether I agree or disagree with them, that if you get them repeatedly, you know that you have to take stock in that and recognize that is an important thing to address.

**Looking for Outliers**

One of the unique perspectives that was given by the principals was looking for outliers when they assess the feedback that is given to them. There are clear areas that they want to review and study from their survey results but they are also looking for the outliers—something that is so unique that they had not thought about it before and then begin to determine if this is an area that they need to focus more on.

Principal 2 describes how he looks at outliers:
So I provide an opportunity for staff to not only rate using a scale, but also provide comments. So I first go through all the results and just review all the results. At that time, I look for outliers, whether those are poor or strong.

Principal 10 confirms this by explaining how he uses the outliers to support the teachers that are giving him feedback:

I am here to support staff and I welcome that feedback for growth and you know the specific things that staff members are recognizing that can be adjusted to them more in school. I am all about trying to make our school better. So I am a little nervous when I have to send out that survey in the spring because I know that things are going to come back and of course there are going to be nice things, but you are not going to please everyone. Sometimes those are hard to read but I feel like if they took the time to write them, then that’s something I need to be mindful of and I adjust.

See Table 7 as a summary to emergent theme five.

Table 7
Emergent Theme Five: Principals use teacher feedback in both formative and summative ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are We Doing?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did We Meet our Goals?</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for Outliers</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emergent Theme 6: Principals use teacher feedback to set both personal and school goals**

A resounding theme that was gathered through my study was principals using feedback to set both school and personal goals. No matter how the principals gathered the feedback, all 10 of them used the data they receive to set some type of goal. Each principal felt that by doing this,
they were able to involve all stakeholders in the process and focus on what was most important. It was also a way to follow up on their goals and to determine if there was a need to change or focus on a different area. There were three sub themes that came from principals using feedback to set personal and school goals. The sub themes are: (a) Principals use feedback for their own self-evaluation, (b) Principals use teacher feedback to keep priorities in check, and (c) Team approach found relevant through the research.

**Principals Use Feedback for Self-Evaluation**

It was determined through the course of my study that the results of the feedback were not used for the final summative evaluation except for one principal. However, each principal in my study used the feedback to create their own self-evaluation on how they were doing. They used the evaluation to determine if they were meeting not only the school’s top priorities but if they were meeting the mark for themselves personally. It was clear that the feedback was a determining factor to their focus.

Principal 4 explained it this way:

I use the data from the survey to guide my own self-assessment. I use it as indicators for the areas that I am not performing at a high quality or a highly distinguished level. If I am not distinguished, I am using my self assessment in those areas along with where the district is headed to formulate my own personal goals for the year.

Principal 10 explained how he used the feedback to create S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound) goals that were part of his School ADvance rubric:

We come up with S.M.A.R.T. goals and then we submit them electronically and we meet with the Superintendent. We have a general conversation around why I chose those goals, what I am hoping to accomplish and then he grants approval or he will push back a little asking me to add this or adjust that. I then use the data from the survey to measure myself on the goals.
The principals are using the self-evaluations to assess how they are doing to make sure they are on the correct path for themselves and the school. They use the feedback to determine how they are doing in their own building.

Principal 1 describes this relationship between feedback and the goals that she has established:

It tells me the time that I am spending establishing relationships and creating policy is important. Making sure I am visible and consistent and say what I do and do what I say. That it is a benefit because they do trust me and they are willing to trust me even if they don’t agree. They are willing to trust and say I will give her the benefit of the doubt. That is essential.

**Principals Use Teacher Feedback to Keep Priorities in Check**

Within the study, all 10 principals were common that using feedback from the staff helped to keep their priorities in the right place. Knowing that they were going to ask the teachers for feedback kept them focused on what they had established as important. Each felt in their own way that knowing they were going to ask for feedback kept them focused on the task at hand.

Principal 6 explained in great detail how she kept her priorities in focus:

I pay real close attention to things that I am doing well and things that I am not doing as well. I will always explain to them what my plan is. An example for me is visible decision making. That was something that came up. Like when we were making decision about who we are referring to truancy or what kind of discipline was issued or different things like that. I know what has caused me to make a particular decision, but I want to make sure staff understands the why behind the what. I send out communication to make sure everybody understands I am very confident in making decisions but I also know that there is power in knowledge. I can share with them what I have learned, and whether you agree or disagree with me at least you know I made a decision based on something other than how I felt that day. So I use it to affirm the way that I am spending my time in some regards, but also and most importantly, the better you get at your craft the more holes you see in your craft, because it is huge work if you really want to be great.

Principal 9 goes on to say how she uses the feedback to develop her top priorities:
I give them the opportunity to go through a protocol to rank areas and ask which one would you say is an area I can put an action step around. So once they give me the feedback, we talk about where I could take some action and they kind of pick one that’s a priority for the school. Then I go back and basically say this is what I heard, let me see what I can do based of their feedback to make that a goal.

**Team Approach**

To help create goals and areas of focus for principals, 7 out of the 10 principals used a team approach to formulate the important areas to focus on. Some of the teams were created through common teams that were already developed like a school improvement team but others were formed solely based on the feedback that was received. Principals found that it was important to keep all involved so that they felt their voice was heard through the feedback they gave.

Principal 4 explains the unique way he used focus groups to create a positive approach to creating goals for himself and the building:

I don’t want to get just the survey. After we get the results from the survey, I want to formulate focus groups to discuss common themes that we see. So the focus group was coming together over this area that we identified through the survey and need to address. The focus group can inform a little bit more about the data. So it’s not just a response to the survey but a let’s talk about experiences around that issue.

Principal 8 has a set team in place just to look at the results of the feedback and decide what action needs to be taken:

We have a team called the School Effectiveness Team (SET). It is a group of teacher colleagues who basically make all policy decisions at our place. So they will take the feedback and for something like staff meetings, create a time table for them. How many minutes set aside for each topic. This is just to try and keep us more focused. It is a small example but what it looks like for the SET team.

Principal 5 went on to describe how she takes the feedback to her school improvement team made up of teachers and specialists. During this meeting she summarizes the data and talks about the strengths and weaknesses:
We talk about our strengths and weaknesses and I summarize that information into a PDF and attach it to an email. One of the areas was curriculum. We then made curriculum decisions and took it to the school board to get approval for implementing a new curriculum. This year was the new implementation of a reading curriculum. That is what drove that new curriculum.

See Table 8 as a summary to emergent theme six.

Table 8
Emergent Theme Six: Principals use feedback to set personal and school goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
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<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals Use Feedback for Self-Evaluation</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals use Teacher Feedback to Keep Priorities in Check</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Approach</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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Chapter IV Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how principals describe and reflect on the current way they are interpreting and collecting staff feedback to inform their own performance evaluation. This chapter described the methods which I used to collect data from principals who were collecting teacher feedback. Through discussion and illustrative quotes, I provided the specifics for each emergent theme and sub theme and examples to bring out the actual voices of the principals who participated in the study. A full summary of these themes and sub themes are found in Table 10: Summary of Themes and Sub Themes (Appendix E). In Chapter V, I will draw upon the themes and sub-themes I detailed in Chapter IV to examine the
insight they provide on the six research questions that guided this study. The implications and importance of these emergent and sub themes will be also be discussed in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of Key Findings

The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to determine how principals are using teacher feedback to create a school environment of effective leadership. The research studies from McREL and the Wallace Foundation (2007) identify factors and characteristics that teachers identified as key attributes for principals, but that is where studies came to a halt. Waters et al. (2004) completed an extensive meta-analysis study that examined qualities of effective leadership. From that study, they defined 21 key responsibilities that had a direct connection to student and school success. They also acknowledged that this was not a finite checklist for principal work.

The work of Waters et al. (2004) did identify two primary variables that had a consistent impact on leadership. The first was the focus on change within a school. It was a key determining factor that principals had to identify the specific areas that needed to be changed to make the greatest impact. Rammer (2007) went on to support this area of change by explaining that principals must have an awareness of the needs of students and staff alike.

The second variable determined by Waters et al. (2004) was the order of change, with the principal being able to change leadership practice accordingly to have an impact on the climate and culture. This would result in second order changes that allow for the principal to implement new areas of focus at the building level to create the impact that is needed. This transformational
change has an increase in performance outcomes and creates a platform for teachers to be part of the process (Moolenaar et al., 2010).

Over the past 25 years, extensive research has been completed that determined there is a correlation between effective schools and instructional leadership (Lezotte, 1992). Through this research it was determined that the principal is responsible for this leadership. It is their leadership that sets the vision for the school and their responsibility to communicate what this vision looks like. It was also determined that the vision must go deep into determining updated educational strategies that would have a direct impact on the instruction that was taking place (Quinn, 2002). Through a full understanding of the most meaningful instruction, the principal who is able to make decisions that are based on strategies will be the most impactful.

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) went further to explain this as a shared leadership model by describing how teachers were a valuable resource in helping with change in a building. With this shared leadership with teachers, principals have to be ready to listen and adapt to the voice of the teaching staff. This model allows for there to be less isolation and foster a work environment where teachers are working together with the principal to make the change happen. There is, however, a fine line as to what is the responsibility of the teacher and what is the ultimate responsibility of the principal.

The Wallace Foundation (2007) describes principals as transformers who have a deep commitment to keeping in contact with staff and the impact that culture and instruction is having in the classroom each day. The principal who is seen as a transformer does not take this role lightly and gathers information from the staff to make the best decision and create the vision for the school. Blase and Kirby (2000) go on to show that isolation happens in a school when, the
principal is not engaged with the staff or students and they are not seeking the feedback that is necessary to prevent autonomy from taking place.

**Interpretations on Key Findings**

Although there were previous studies that aligned to my research, there were areas of this study that added to existing studies and there were new findings that brought value and insight to this area. These new findings are a value due to the infancy of using feedback as a determining factor for the principal evaluation. This is still a very new concept for many administrators and it is still being determined what the best method of delivery should be. These new findings give more insight as to what is important for the principal and the superintendent as the evaluation is completed.

The first new finding was turning negative comments or feedback into positive results for the school or principal. In my research, all 10 principals put a strong value on how they use constructive feedback to create a turnaround in their school or their own professional goals. They described this as a guide to make sure they were focused on areas the teachers felt were important to help them perform in the classroom. One principal described this as hard to hear at times, but it made them a better and more effective leader. They did not take this feedback as complaining, but as a way to have an understanding of what they could do better. Each principal described significant growth once they accepted the difficult feedback and made it into an area of focus.

Another new finding in my research was that the feedback back given to each principal was unclear on exactly how it was received by the superintendent. Only 1 principal in the 10 who were interviewed had a formal way of receiving the feedback. There was a lack of consistency on how the superintendent wanted the feedback presented or if they even wanted the feedback at
all. It was found through the research that the superintendent left it up to the principal to determine how the feedback was gathered and how it was then given to them. One principal went into detail on how the data was given to the superintendent, but there was no follow up to the data. This, however, did not stop the principals from using the feedback to create a plan for their building. Even though there was not a clear plan in place, each principal found value in soliciting the feedback and using it to develop their own personal goals.

Another new finding was how principals would focus on the outliers of the feedback. Specifically, they were looking for unique feedback they had not thought of before. They were looking for data that would push their thinking and force them to adapt their leadership style. It was often tied into the culture of the building and helped them develop a stronger climate and understanding of their staff. Principal 10 stated that it was one of the best ways to support his teachers because it got to the heart of what some of their issues were. He felt it was the best way to support them in the classroom and support their profession as well.

The last new finding that gave insight to the area of study was the concept of the team approach. Using professional learning communities, it is common to look at data together to determine the best way to help each other succeed. It was found in the research that 7 of the 10 principals were going back to their staff to help them create goals for their own personal evaluation. One principal went as far as to create focus teams. These were teams that would help the principal create a positive approach to determining his goals. This principal also stated that it helped with accountability. His staff had an understanding of what his goals were and they helped hold him accountable as the year went on.

Table 9 is a summary of the key findings in Macina’s (2019) research.
### Table 9
Key Findings of Macina’s (2019) Research and the Relation to Previous Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macina (2019) Key Findings</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Theme 1**: Principals consider culture and climate feedback as critical as instructional feedback. | Aligns with previous research by Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty (2005) who found that culture is one of the key elements to positively determine an effective learning environment.  
Aligns with previous research by Freiberg (1998) that positive school culture marked student achievement. |
<p>| <strong>Sub Theme</strong>: Pulse of the Building                                                       | Aligns with previous research by Wallace Foundation (2007) that transformational leaders connect with staff each day.                                                                                                                                               |
| <strong>Sub Theme</strong>: Soft Skills                                                                 | Aligns with previous research by Lezotte &amp; McKee (2006) that nurture and trust are key to the collaborative process.                                                                                                                                          |
| <strong>Sub Theme</strong>: Negative to a Positive                                                       | New finding that Macina (2019) adds value and insight to this area of study.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <strong>Theme 2</strong>: Principals consider teacher feedback an influence of their supervisor’s performance rating. | Adds to previous research by Reeves &amp; McNeil (2016) that the school administrator evaluation system allows for district leaders to grow their practice.                                                                                                      |
| <strong>Sub Theme</strong>: Principals did not play a role in selecting the evaluation instrument.       | Aligns to previous research by Reeves (2004) that using a principal evaluation creates effective feedback and meaningful leadership evaluation.                                                                                                             |
| <strong>Sub Theme</strong>: There is a small influence on evaluation from the evaluator.                  | Adds to previous research by Moolenaar et al. (2010) that principals need to be a part of the improvement process.                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                                                           | Adds to previous research by Leithwood &amp; Jantzi (2008) that there is a direct impact on how leaders cope with feedback and the influence that has on the staff.                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                           | Aligns with previous research by Reeves (2004) that 18% of 500 principals had not been evaluated and had no formal feedback regarding if they were doing well or not.                                                                                 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macina (2019) Key Findings</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Theme:</strong> Feedback to the principal from the evaluator is unclear.</td>
<td>New finding that Macina (2019) adds value and insight to this area of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3:</strong> Principals rely on open ended questions as the most informative form of teacher feedback.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research by Waters et al. (2004) that affirmation is a way to celebrate school accomplishments and failures. Aligns with previous research by Price (2012) that atmosphere is created through trust, shared vision and openness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Theme:</strong> Anonymity is key.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research by Brief &amp; Weiss (2002) that relationships have a direct impact on personal health, happiness and job devotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Theme:</strong> Comments create a feel for the building.</td>
<td>Adds to previous research by Leithwood &amp; Jantzi (2008) that common sharing between principals and teachers are in place to allow for professional interactions that allow for job satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Theme:</strong> Relationships are formed and strengthened.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research by Sergiovanni (2007) that principals and teachers need to work together to create a shared vision. Adds to previous research by Griffith (2004) that principals create mutual trust and shared norms to create a positive educational environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4:</strong> While principals use a formal survey to collect teacher feedback, they follow up in a variety of ways to get a deeper understanding.</td>
<td>Adds to previous research by Patrick (2014) that environmental scans are used to determine contextual knowledge of staff and how they are feeling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Theme:</strong> Creating conversations.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research by Pepper (2010) that discussion around leadership has a positive impact on teacher perceptions of school conditions for quality learning to take place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Theme:</strong> Meeting with staff to discuss.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research by Davis &amp; Leon (2014) that leadership is predicated upon the strength and clarity of leaders’ assumptions regarding the workplace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 — continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macina (2019) Key Findings</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 5:</strong> Principals use teacher feedback in both summative and formative ways.</td>
<td>Aligns with previous research by Murphy et al. (2011) that describes a core competency as creating a culture of learning and professional behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme: How are we doing?</td>
<td>Adds to previous research by Louis, Marks &amp; Kruse (1996) that a principal’s ability to foster a culture that promotes student success has a correlation to the principal’s ability to make needed adjustments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme: Did we meet our goals?</td>
<td>Adds to previous research by Waters et al. (2004) that created 21 indicators to measure if there is evidence of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme: Looking for outliers.</td>
<td>New finding that Macina (2019) adds value and insight to this area of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 6:</strong> Principals use teacher feedback to set both personal and school goals.</td>
<td>Adds to previous research by Mendels &amp; Mitgang (2013) that there needs to be better way to determine a principal’s strengths and weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme: Principals use feedback for self-evaluation.</td>
<td>Aligns to previous research by Reeves &amp; McNeill (2016) that developed 6 guiding characteristics to show effective correlations to learning growth and adaptation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme: Principals use teacher feedback to keep priorities in check.</td>
<td>Aligns with Marzano (2013) the 5 domains accompanied and developed to show evidence of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Theme: Team approach.</td>
<td>New finding that Macina (2019) adds value and insight to this area of study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion of Research Questions

Through the multiple studies that have taken place it was clear that receiving and gathering feedback from staff was an important part of creating change at the building level (Waters et al., 2004). However, there was no research on how principals were collecting this feedback and then taking it even further on how they were then using it to create effective leadership.

The purpose of my research study was to determine and identify how teacher feedback was collected and used by principals in the state of Michigan. Michigan has a statutory requirement for administrator evaluations that feedback is gathered from staff. My study specifically was designed to understand how principals collected and interpreted the feedback. The following qualitative research questions were used to determine the use of feedback:

1. How do principals understand the statutory requirement to collect and use staff, student, and parent feedback to inform their performance evaluation?
2. What specific instruments or processes do they use to elicit and collect staff feedback? How were those choices made and by whom?
3. How do the principals describe the data they derive from staff feedback and how do they analyze and interpret that data?
4. What do the principals do with the information they derive from analyzing the data?
5. How is that information used to develop the principal’s performance ratings?
6. As principals reflect on the use of staff feedback, what conclusions do they reach on the practice of using that feedback to (a) inform their work, and (b) inform their performance review?
Research Question One

Research question one was “How do principals understand the statutory requirement to collect and use staff, student, and parent feedback to inform their performance evaluation?” The findings from theme two help to understand what principals understood of the requirement.

Each principal who was interviewed did have an understanding that some type of feedback was part of the requirement to inform them of the evaluation process. After that, however, the similarities ended. Each principal had only a base knowledge that feedback was required, but there was only one principal that explained how it was part of his final evaluation. Nine of the ten principals clearly stated that there was no correlation between what feedback was given and their overall evaluation.

All the principals in the research study used the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation tool, but none of them were part of the process. Only one principal was part of the decision to decide which tool to bring on for evaluations, but they were not part of any of the final decision making. All ten principals talked more about how they were involved with the teacher evaluation in more detail than their own.

Principal 4 described how the feedback is such a gray area and how it was not used for any type of evaluation process. Principal 4, like all the other principals, submits the feedback that is given to them to their evaluator, but nothing is done with the information that they know of. Principal 1 uses a Google format which allows the superintendent to see the information as the teachers are completing the survey. Although the superintendent has access to it as the teachers are giving the feedback, he never reviews that data specifically with her.
Each of the principals expressed how they like this component of the law and none of them saw it as detrimental that they had to gather this information. Each principal valued the information that was given and used it as a personal opportunity to grow and get better as a leader in their building. Principal 9 described the value of feedback the best by discussing how sometimes hearing the feedback that is given is hard to hear, but it ultimately helps to hone your craft and make you a better leader.

**Research Question Two**

Research question two stated “What specific instruments or processes do they use to elicit and collect staff feedback? How were those choices made and by whom?” The findings from theme four and theme five answer this question.

All ten principals stated that they used a survey to receive feedback from the staff and 7 of the 10 principals stated that they were able to choose their own types of questions when conducting the survey. Principal 4 stated that over time his questions have changed based on what is happening in the building. He discussed how at one time he used to use questions that came from different surveys that he found online, but then over time, he changed the questions so they were more relevant to what was important for his own staff. Being able to choose his own questions allowed for him to look specifically at what his building was going through and the feedback that would be the most important.

There was a great deal of discussion on how the survey information led to both formal and informal processes for collecting the information. All 10 principals discussed how each of the surveys were anonymous, which allowed for staff to give feedback in a safe way. This formal part of the survey was consistent with each of the principals and all 10 stated that being anonymous
was an important part of successful feedback. Having a formal survey was a way to control the type of information that was given.

Consistent with all 10 principals interviewed was the importance of having open-ended questions that allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the results. This allowed for follow-up conversations and dialog to happen on multiple levels with each of the principals. This process occurred in multiple ways, with principals using staff meetings, focus groups or one-on-one discussions to understand the feedback that was given.

The informal part of the survey came from the discussions that took place once the data was collected. Each principal took the results back to their staff in one form or another. Principal 4 described a method for putting a question on his survey that if they wanted to discuss any question in more detail, there was a place to put your name so he could follow up. He also created focus groups from the information that was consistent within the survey. Creating focus groups around a topic that came from the feedback allowed decisions and goals to be set.

Theme 5 from the findings also explained in great detail how there was both a summative and formative process in collection of the feedback. Each of the principals who were interviewed explained how they used the feedback to discuss what could be fixed or addressed immediately and what could be used to be more of a focus for the future building goals.

Principal 4 described the formative feedback as “how are we doing?” This was a quick way to determine what was taking place in the building and if there was something they could do to help. Each of them discussed how there are things that they could do immediately to have an impact based on the feedback. This formative feedback was used to help with the culture and the climate of the building.
The summative process from the feedback was more about how implementation of programming was at the building level. Principals would use the data to determine if there were areas that could be changed to help the staff. Principal 9 uses the feedback to take a final look at the goals of the building and determine if a difference is being made. She takes the feedback back to her staff to review together on the next steps from a summative perspective. She then takes that information to create the plan to make the building the most successful that it can be.

**Research Question Three**

Research question three was to determine “How do the principals describe the data they derive from staff feedback and how do they analyze and interpret that data?” This question was specifically studying the process of how the principals disaggregate the data and make sense of the information that they are receiving. Theme 3 helped to answer this question about how principals were using open-ended questions to help have an understanding of the results. Theme 6 also was able to explain how principals analyze the data when they use the feedback to set personal and school goals.

The use of open-ended questions was a common way to analyze the data that was given to the principals. All 10 of the principals had a portion of their survey that allowed for staff to write in feedback they thought was relevant or important to the topic of the survey. Principal 1 described this as the meat and potatoes of what was happening in the building. The comments that were made allowed the principals to drill down further into the survey results. The comments often gave more detail to what was happening and allowed for the discussion to take place with staff.
The research also found that there were often outliers that took place with the feedback that was given. By looking at the data closely, the principals often found that there were common themes that they could pick up based on the responses. The principals also found, however, that they would look for outliers. These were areas that were so unique that it drew their attention and they would then dive deeper into that data.

As principals analyzed the data, they used the feedback to create teams or groups to also look at the data. Theme 6 explained what they did to interpret the data and how that led to discussions around the data. Principal 4 described how he would use focus groups to determine what to do and help understand the data that was collected. As he reviewed the data, if he found areas that were common among the feedback he would share that data with his staff. After sharing with his entire staff, he would then ask specific staff to be on a focus group that dealt with the data that he received. They would then as a team look at the information in more detail to determine if there were areas to improve.

The interpretation of the data was taken a step further by Principal 8. Before the feedback is given by the teachers, they created a School Effectiveness Team (SET). This is a special team made up of teachers that help determine policy and help with decision making at the building level. The principal oversees this team, but as a team they analyze the information that has been given in the survey. Principal 8 explained how this information is extremely valuable to help keep her focused on what the staff feels is important.

**Research Question Four**

Research question four was to determine “What do the principals do with the information they derive from analyzing the data?” This was a crucial part of my research because it got to the
heart of what they did with all the feedback that was given to them by the staff. Theme 5 and theme 6 were able to describe what the principals would do once they interpreted the results.

Theme 5 emphasized this clearly when they used the feedback in the most simplistic way to ask how they were doing? This simple question was often one of the biggest data points that principals took from the feedback. It allowed them to use a formative approach to make decisions in their own leadership. They were able to look closely at the data to determine if the adopted mission and vision of the school was indeed the overall mission and vision that the staff felt was the same. Principal 2 described this as perceptual data that was extremely important. He explained how he uses multiple points of data to determine how goals are being met. One data point is standardized tests and how academically the students were doing, but he felt that overall it was the data from the feedback that allowed him the full scope of evaluation of his school improvement process.

Theme 6 explores not only how school goals, but also personal goals, are derived from the feedback that is gathered. The principals explained how all the stakeholders were a part of the process which allowed for authentic input to create goals. Principal 4 explained how he uses feedback to guide his self-evaluation around his own effectiveness. Although it is not used for his overall evaluation, he uses feedback to guide and determine the indicators that he is not performing at a high level. Principal 10 uses the information to determine SMART goals that he will use to focus his practice throughout the school year. Both principals characterize this as a self-check to help them make sure they are on the right path throughout the year. It helps them create the areas that are most important and keep that as the focus.

Principals used the feedback to make sure that their priorities were kept in check. Each principal knew that they were going to survey staff for feedback each year, so they used the
survey questions and comments to make sure they were working on the right areas. Principal 6 described this process as visible decision making which is one of her priorities. Once she made this a goal for herself from the feedback, she would then go back and ask them again on how she was doing. She used the feedback as an accountability measure to keep her on the mark. This allowed for her to determine if she was paying close attention to the things that are important.

**Research Question Five**

Research question five asked how is the information used to develop the principal’s performance ratings? The most simple answer is that it was not used to develop principal ratings. Of the 10 principals who were interviewed, only 1 principal used the feedback to determine a portion of his overall evaluation. This, however, did not stop the principals from feeling this was valuable information to have. On the contrary, they often felt it was more precious, because it allowed them to focus on the areas that were most important. Theme 2, however, does explain the research question in more depth.

It was found in 9 of the 10 principals that it was not really clear what happened with the data once it was given to the principal’s evaluator. Principal 4 explained that he felt this information was used intuitively to make sure that he as a principal was on the right track. There was never specific follow-up as to what the principal was supposed to do with the feedback once they gave it to the evaluator. Principal 1 went on to explain how the information was shared but the Superintendent would only simply give a generic response of encouragement with no formal review of the data.

Other than Principal 10 who had his results placed in his evaluation, all the other principals were not sure exactly what happened with the results from the feedback. Each did state
that they gave the information to their evaluator but many times there was no follow-up to what they were supposed to do with it. Even though they did not receive feedback from their evaluator, all 10 of the principals felt the feedback from staff was extremely valuable. Principal 9 expressed this by saying that she would love to show her Superintendent what she was doing with the results and would welcome a sit down anytime to discuss in more detail. She described how she wanted to explain how she uses her feedback to pinpoint her focus for herself.

**Research Question Six**

Research question six was to determine “As principals reflect on the use of staff feedback, what conclusions do they reach on the practice of using that feedback to (a) inform their work, and (b) inform their performance review?” Both theme 1 and theme 6 had direct findings to answer this research question.

The findings from theme 1 were clear regarding the importance of the survey to inform the work of the principal. Principals described how one of the most important areas of feedback was in the area of culture and climate. Principals described this as the pulse of the building—that they were able to determine the ebbs and flows of what was happening day in and day out. Principal 5 explained that this greatly impacted the feedback and the type of data she receives. She explained how if the staff may be upset about something, then she will take that into consideration as she looks at the data. Principal 6 explained how she interprets the data to understand how the staff is feeling.

The principals went on to explain how it informs them of the soft skills they need to have to manage the building. Principal 9 uses the feedback to slow her leadership down and begin to focus on the areas that are the most important to the staff. She is able to look at the results and
make determinations on what is her areas of practice. She uses this information to help create change within the building around the areas that staff feel are important.

Theme 6 went on to support how principals use feedback to inform their work and performance review. All 10 of the principals used feedback to set personal and school goals. Even though only one principal used the feedback as part of his official review, all used the information they received to create a plan moving forward based on feedback. Principal 10 creates SMART goals based on his feedback. These are specific and measurable goals to allow him to be successful in the school. He then shares this with his staff to make him accountable for his own goals. It is this transparency that shapes his performance as a principal.

The principals also explained how it helps with keeping their priorities a focus for what they are doing well and what they need to improve in. The principals describe this by how they ultimately rank areas that they need to work on. Putting the importance into a list and then making action steps create a way for the principal to stay focused on that area. Once again, even though this is not tied into their performance review, it allows them to have a goal area that they can work towards and one that is relevant to the staff.

**Implications of the Study**

With more than 80% of Michigan School Districts using the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System, there are multiple implications to the importance of this study. There are three main areas through this study that have current and future implications. First is the practitioners and users of feedback and the direct connection between principals and superintendents. Second is the policy decisions that can be understood by the completion of this study.
and lastly, the possibility for further research that would allow for even a deeper understanding of how teacher feedback is used by principals for effective leadership.

**Practitioners**

All the principals that were part of this study were using the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation system as well as collecting feedback from teachers. What became apparent through the research was that principals and superintendents were using the feedback collected in different ways. From a principal point of view, all but 2 of the 10 principals interviewed were able to use their own survey to collect feedback from the teachers. This allowed them to have great autonomy when creating the survey. It did not, however, give a consistent way for the superintendent to receive the data in an organized form.

Through the research of Reeves and McNeill (2016), there are many resources that are part of the School ADvance system that allow for a more streamlined approach for both the principal and superintendent. Creating a set process for how the principal will gather the feedback from the teachers would allow for more specificity when it comes to reviewing the data. Through this more organized approach, the principal and superintendent can have a true understanding of what is happening at the building level and make the connection to the district level.

Establishing time to meet is also an important part of reviewing the feedback that was given to the principals. This study clearly shows that all the principals shared the feedback with their superintendent but they did not have an established process for this. When a principal was able to sit down with the superintendent and spend time reviewing the data, it created a focus on areas that were most in need for the building. Many times, the feedback was shared but there was no follow up in reviewing the data and making the changes based on that data at the district
level. The principals were making the changes based on their own beliefs at the building level, but having a true understanding from central office would be extremely important for district wide change.

This study showed that principals were using the feedback to establish goals for themselves and their own building. This was typically done in isolation without a full understanding from central office on how those goals were determined. By creating a process where the principal and superintendent were regularly sitting down to review the feedback, would allow a formation of goals that were understood by all. It would also be an important way for the principal and superintendent to agree that the goals were the correct areas of focus. They would be able to review the feedback together to determine the importance of each goal.

**Policies**

The changes in recent years that have brought legislation changes such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), Race to the Top (RTTT, 2011) and most recently the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) continue to show that accountability is going to always have a strong importance in education. With the current legislation in the state of Michigan that requires the gathering of teacher feedback for educational leaders, policy becomes a key area to have set procedures and process in place.

Through the course of this study, it was clear that all principals were receptive to gathering feedback from staff. It was also very clear that there was not set procedure on how this was done within a district. It was often left up to the principal to gather the information, but also to create what the template or questions would look like. One of the first areas to determine for a district would be to set a process on what that looks like for the principals. Included in this
process would be what instrument is used for collecting the data, how will the data be collected, and how will the data be reviewed with the superintendent. It was found through the research that principals were looking for clarity in this area so they knew exactly what to expect in the process. By creating a set procedure, principals could then determine clearly what the superintendent was looking to determine from the survey and how that could be communicated back to the staff.

A district-wide policy on how feedback is going to be gathered would also be an important part of retrieving the data. Districts often create a common vision and mission that allow for continuity so that there is a seamless transition as students navigate through the K-12 system. Having a district-wide plan on how to administer, gather and deliver feedback would allow for a succinct model to incorporate the core values of a district. This also allows from a central office perspective a way to keep the areas of focus in check. It allows for celebrations in areas that are going well, but also creates avenues for change that need to occur.

Lastly, one important area that needs to be part of policy changes is how principals study and validate what comes back from the feedback. It was determined in this study that feedback is extremely important and many changes are made based on the feedback that is given. However, it is also just as important to validate the information that is received. Bringing the information back to the staff in some form with focus groups, school improvement teams and whole staff meetings was seen as a positive because it allowed for discussion to happen around what was found from the feedback. This was an extremely important part of the process as principals could check for understanding.
Further Research

This study clearly showed that principals valued the feedback that they received from staff and made significant changes due to the feedback that they received. It was also clear that each principal used the results to affect the culture and instructional vision of the building. Based on the research from this study I would propose the following topics as possible areas of further research:

1. Research in the area of how superintendents are using the feedback gathered to create goals and focus areas for principals. As stated in this study, there was not a clear method on how supervisors are using information to provide direction to the principals. Research specifically with superintendents and how they are creating a method to review the feedback with principals would deepen the study.

2. Another area of study would be how goals are written by principals or superintendents using the feedback they receive. This would be a valuable study to principals as practitioners so they would be able to understand ways to implement change based on the feedback.

3. Additional research on how principals are being mentored based on the feedback they are receiving. All the principals in this study were using the feedback to create some type of goal or focus area to improve on. Further research on how principals are being mentored to support them in their goals would help with a deeper understanding how feedback is used specifically to support principals.

4. Principals in this study were using feedback to help determine their self-evaluation. Further research on how their self-evaluation affected the goals of the school would
be valuable to see if their own personal leadership plan was impacting the direction of the entire building. Research to determine if their personal goals tied into the success of the building would be important based on the number of studies that show how much of an impact a high-quality leader can make.

5. One area that this study explored in the literature review was the extreme demands that are placed on principals in education today. Further study of the feedback received helps to make a difference in prioritizing these extreme demands. This would help create an understanding around prioritization and using feedback to rank the importance of these demands and the appropriate focus.

6. Additional research would also be important in the area of how principals who are marked lower than effective in their overall evaluation are using the feedback to change their practice as a principal. There would be extreme value in exploring how they adapt to the feedback and what is expected of them from the superintendent as a result of the feedback received.

7. The last area of further research would be the additional tools that School ADvance Evaluation System uses to train and prepare leaders and principals. As a criterion for this research, principals had to be trained in using the School ADvance evaluation. It would add to this research by further exploring how principals are using the additional resources that are available to them in the training and how they are bringing that back to make an impact at the building level.
Chapter V Summary

With the recent changes to the evaluation law in the state of Michigan that now requires the use of staff feedback to be present in a principal evaluation, the importance of this research was very relevant and timely. In my current role as Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, I found the research very important to the work that I do each day with principals. There are some key areas to the research that I found very helpful as I continue to implement changes and support in the area of evaluations in my current district.

First of all, I really enjoyed my conversations with the principals in the research study. As I began to determine my method for research, I was challenged to look at different methods of research finally landing on qualitative as the most effective. Through the extensive interviews with principals, I was able to drill down into what the true meaning of teacher feedback looked like. This was also the most effective way for me as the researcher to gather the information. It fit my style of learning and exploring as I added to the research that was already existing in the area of evaluation.

For me, one of the biggest surprises was how much the principals valued the feedback that was given by the teachers. At times it was hard for them to read, but it also allowed for a lot of growth to take place. No matter how they used the data they received, each principal felt that it was an important part to help them be the best leader possible. It was also refreshing for me to hear how they each took this back to their staff in some way or another. I believe that this open communication allowed them to be transparent with the staff but also built a form of trust. This trust then built what was important foundation for the teachers to work with the principals to create a well-balanced school and learning environment.
Also with my role as Assistant Superintendent, it did open my eyes to how valuable the conversation and awareness to what is happening with principals at the building level. From the research it is so important to stay connected with principals and keep dialog going on how to help and support. Each principal in the study was eager to have conversation with their supervisor and welcomed the feedback to get better. I believe this is the same as how teachers feel when they want feedback from their principal after visiting them in the classroom. This is such an important part of growing collaboration and working together. Principals feel no different with their supervisor and wanting to have dialog and rich conversation on what is taking place at the building level.

The study also showed that principals wanted a clear structure of how the feedback was given. They were interested in having continual conversations around the feedback so they could make the necessary changes. I found this to be very refreshing, especially with the number of principals that I interviewed that had many years of experience. This meant that they were always willing to change and grow as leaders as the fabric of education continues to grow and change. This is truly an area to celebrate. Being able to self-reflect as a leader and make changes that you might not have seen is extremely important. It also makes me excited as someone in the education field to see so many professionals willing to hone and develop their craft.

My biggest take away is that education is a great field to be a part of. It is filled with individuals who are in the business to make changes for kids and impact student learning. It was refreshing to see principals be able to check their own pride and do what was best for their building and the teachers that are influenced by them as a leader. It was clear to see how they impact their building by listening to the teachers they lead each day. This in turn impacts the learning that takes place and the quality of education that all students receive.
Appendix A

Recruitment Email
School ADvance Feedback

Kevin Macina <kmacina@bcpsk12.net>
To: Kevin Macina <kmacina@bcpsk12.net>

------- Forwarded message -------
From: Kevin Macina <kmacina@bcpsk12.net>
Date: Sun, Oct 14, 2018 at 6:40 PM
Subject: School ADvance Feedback
To: Kevin Macina <kmacina@bcpsk12.net>

Hello!

As you know and understand, the demands on evaluations have increased due to the many changes in educational policy. One of the areas that has changed the most in recent years is principal evaluations and the use of stakeholder feedback as required in the state of Michigan.

There has been much research regarding effective principal evaluation, but there is little research on how principals are using teacher feedback for their evaluation and further implementation from the feedback. I understand your time as a school leader is extremely valuable, but would like to ask for your assistance in conducting research in the area of teacher feedback.

You are being asked to participate in this study because, as principal, you use School ADvance for your evaluation system. I am asking for no more than 1 hour to discuss with you how you use feedback for your evaluation. This interview can be in a method that is most convenient for you. As a thank you for your participation, you will receive a $30 dollar Visa gift card.

I thank you for your interest in this important research. I can be contacted at kmacina@bcpsk12.net for more information and more specifics regarding the interview.

Kevin Macina
kmacina@bcpsk12.net
616.878.6102
PhD Candidate
Western Michigan University
Appendix B

Western Michigan University HSIRB Approval
Date: July 23, 2018

To: Patricia Reeves, Principal Investigator
    Kevin Macina, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Daryle Gardner-Bonneau, Ph.D., Vice Chair

Re: IRB Project Number 18-07-26

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Principal Use of Teacher Feedback in Informed Leadership Practice” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). 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 to 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 IRB 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: July 22, 2019
Appendix C

Informed Consent Document
Informed Consent

Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Reeves, Ed.D.
Student Investigator: Kevin R. Macina
Title of Study: Principal Use of Teacher Feedback to Inform Leadership Practice

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Principal Use of Teacher Feedback to Inform Leadership Practice". This project will serve as Kevin Macina's dissertation for the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education. 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 please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of my research is to identify how teacher feedback is collected, analyzed, and used in the state of Michigan. This study will investigate the current state of affairs in a state that specifically requires such data be included in the evidence to inform administrator evaluations. In order to get a thick, rich description of the state of affairs with principal use of teacher feedback in a state that does not provide explicit guidance on that process, this study will be conducted qualitatively with a focus on maximal variation as well as common patterns in the data that might suggest an emerging theory of action or lack thereof.

Who can participate in this study?
You must be a current K-12 public school principal who is using feedback as part of your evaluation process in the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation System. You must also have been using School ADvance for one full cycle and not have rating of ineffective. Also, to be part of the study you must have completed the training for School ADvance evaluations.

Where will this study take place?
You will have a choice on where you would like this study to take place. This choice will be what is most comfortable for you. This may be in your district office or another location that is to your liking. The location should have easy access to any artifacts that you would like to share during the interview. This may also take place over teleconferencing using technology such as Skype or Zoom. As the lead investigator, I will conduct each interview.
What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
You will be asked to participate in an initial interview that will take approximately 60 minutes. After each interview, the recording will be transcribed and you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy. At this time, you will also be able to add to your interview for clarification. This additional clarification may take up to 60 minutes, but can be done on your own time if you so choose. The total amount of time needed for this study will be no more than 120 minutes.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
If you choose to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in one to two interviews as described above. You will also be asked to bring any artifacts to the interview that help explain how you use feedback from teachers.

What information is being measured during the study?
Through the interviews and artifacts, I will seek a deep understanding of how you are collecting and using teacher feedback as part of your evaluation process. I am also interested in other ways you are using teacher feedback.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
Your only risk will be the expenditure of your time to participate and the potential loss of confidentiality.

To protect you from these risks, safe guards will be put in place. Once the interview recordings have been transcribed the recordings will be destroyed. Copies of the transcriptions will be kept in a locked file cabinet for confidentiality. At the completion of the study all transcriptions will be destroyed. In the study itself, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and any personally identifying information will be excluded.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
With the law in the state of Michigan stating that administrators must use feedback as part of their evaluation, this study is very practical. The purpose of this study is to identify how principals are using feedback in the most purposeful way. The results of this study will allow principals to see what themes and patterns can be found in others who are using the feedback.

This study will add to the limited research that is currently available on this topic. Evaluations at the K-12 education level have changed dramatically. This study will allow for a better understanding of how principals are using this feedback.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There are no costs that are associated with this study other than the value of your time.
Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
For your participation in this study, you will receive a $30 gift card at the completion of the interview.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
The results of this study will be stored and published by ProQuest in the form of a dissertation. Results may also be reported in research journals, books or conference presentations. Other doctoral students may reference the findings if they are completing research work in the same area. During the conduct of the study, no one but the principal researcher and student researcher will have access to the any data collected from you. All data collected will be maintained in a secure and locked file with only access by the researchers.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You can choose to stop participating in the study at any time 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, Kevin Macina at 616.878.6102 or kmacina@bcpsk12.net. In addition, you may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Patricia Reeves at patriciareeves@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 D

Interview Instrument
Introduction:

I appreciate you taking the time to be a part of my research work at Western Michigan University. Your responses will be valuable in determining my research on how principals are using staff feedback to impact their performance as a principal. This interpretative phenomenological study will focus on current principals in Michigan who are using the School ADvance Administrator Evaluation Model. All of your information that you share will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Before I begin, I would like to ask your permission to record this conversation on my Iphone. This will allow me to review your responses at a later date in more depth and look for commonalities between those who have agreed to this study. The total time for this interview will take around 60 minutes to answer a set of pre-constructed questions. Before I proceed, are there any questions that you have for me?

Background Information:

1) Tell me about your experience in being a building level principal?
   
   a. Probe 1: How many years have you been a principal?
   
   b. Proble 2: What levels have you held a principalship?
2) What is your understanding of the statutory requirement for collection and use of student, staff and parent feedback to inform you as a principal about your performance?
   a. Probe 1: What did you do in the past before there was an official change in the statute?
   b. Probe 2: Did you look at other administrator evaluation systems other than School Advance for meeting the statute? Which ones?

3) What specific instruments or processes do you use to elicit and collect staff feedback?
   a. Probe 1: How did you decide to use that instrument?
   b. Probe 2: Did you use other instruments before settling on your most current method?
   c. Probe 3: Is that a local decision or does your district provide you with the method?

4) How do you describe the data that you derive from staff and how do you analyze the data that you receive?
   a. Probe 1: What specific data are you looking for?
   b. Probe 2: What are the ways you categorize the data once you receive it?
   c. Probe 3: How is the data given back to the staff for authenticity?

5) What do you do with the data once you receive it?
   a. Probe 1: Do you share the results with the staff?
   b. Probe 2: Do you share the results with parents?
   c. Probe 3: Do you share the results with district administration?
6) How is the information and data that you receive used for your overall performance rating?
   a. Probe 1: Do you give the data in a certain format to your district administration?
   b. Probe 2: Does the district require you to submit data as a certain percentage of your overall evaluation?

7) As you reflect on the feedback that you gather from staff, what conclusions do you reach about your practice?
   a. Probe 1: How do you use the feedback to inform your work?
   b. Probe 2: How do you use the feedback to inform your overall performance rating?

Conclusion:

I want to thank you for your time today. Your experience and your candid responses will benefit my research greatly in the area of how principals are using staff feedback to shape their instruction. As a thank you for your time, you will receive a $30 gift card. Once my research is complete, I will contact you to share the results and the themes that have been found in this study.
Appendix E

Table 10: Summary of Emergent Themes and Sub Themes
Table 10
Summary of Themes and Sub Themes

**Emergent Theme 1: Principals explained how culture and climate feedback is as critical as instructional feedback**

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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative to Positive</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emergent Theme 2: Principals explained how teacher feedback had a small influence on their supervisor’s performance rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals did not play a role in selecting evaluation instrument</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a small influence on evaluation from the evaluator</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback to the principal from the evaluator is unclear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emergent Theme 3: Principals describe how open-ended questions are the most informative form of teacher feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anonymity is key</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments create a feel for the building</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships are formed and strengthened</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emergent Theme 4: While principals use a formal survey to collect teacher feedback, they follow up in a variety of ways to get a deeper understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating conversations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with staff to discuss</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emergent Theme 5: Principals use teacher feedback in both formative and summative ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
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<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are we doing?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did we meet our goals?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for outliers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emergent Theme 6: Principals use teacher feedback to set both personal and school goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
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<th>P2</th>
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<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals use feedback for self-evaluation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals use teacher feedback to keep priorities in check</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team approach</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Conley, D. T., Drummond, K. V., de Gonzalez, A., Rooseboom, J., & Stout, O. (2011). *Reaching the goal: The applicability and importance of the common core state standards to college and career readiness*. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center (NJ1).


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