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Effective Leadership Behaviors: How One Principal Made Sense of and Integrated Research-Based Behaviors Into His Daily Practice

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EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS: HOW ONE PRINCIPAL MADE SENSE OF AND INTEGRATED RESEARCHED-BASED BEHAVIORS INTO HIS DAILY PRACTICE

by

Heidi Ann Beidinger-Burnett

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 June 2013

Doctoral Committee:

Joseph Kretovics, Ph.D., Chair
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William Armaline, Ph.D.
Unlike the principalship of yesteryear, today’s principals are under great pressure to improve academic achievement for all students. Recent literature describes the need for principals to become instructional leaders whereby they can lead change and improve student achievement. However, a lack of quality principal preparation programs and a shortage of effective principals exist. Thus, principals are often unprepared or underprepared for their role. The purpose of this participatory action research study (PAR) was to follow the process of how one high school principal made sense of and integrated research-based leadership behaviors into his practice to lead the redesign of his school to improve student achievement while using a leadership coach. The Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) was utilized to study research-based leadership behaviors. In this case, I as a researcher served as the leadership coach as well. The PAR methodology allowed the high school principal and me to co-construct, analyze and interpret the process that he went through to effect change in his daily practice. As a result of our nine month study, there were several important findings that resulted in cognitive and behavior growth and changes for both the principal and me. We found that there were several practices that were essential to changing thinking and behavior: (1) a strong and trusting coaching relationship,
(2) unrelenting reflection, and (3) honest and probing professional dialogue. We were successful in making sense of the framework leadership behaviors in the context of the principal’s school and were also successful in translating several of the behaviors into daily practice.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Because of the guidance from my committee members, a high school principal, and the support of my parents, children, and husband, I was able to complete my research and dissertation.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Joseph Kretovics. He was responsible for encouraging me to seek my doctorate. Dr. Kretovics was particularly supportive during the dissertation writing process for which I am very grateful. The writing process was challenging and he was able to jumpstart me with great advice. I would like to thank Dr. Patricia Reeves for serving on my committee. She was responsible for encouraging me to study principal leadership and to use participatory action research as my methodology. I have always been interested in leadership and am ever grateful to Dr. Reeves for recognizing this interest and helping me through the process to refine my study design. And finally, I would like to thank Dr. William Armaline for serving on my committee. Not only did he act as my confidante when I felt challenged, he motivated me to think about the issues from different perspectives which made for a richer dissertation.

I would like to thank Jack Ryan for his willingness to participate in this research. Serving as the focal point of the research, he was honest and forthcoming about his beliefs and behaviors. Jack continues in his role as principal and he continues to call me his ‘coach’. He and I shared a unique experience that required deep thinking and generated deep conversations. Thank you.
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My parents, Frances and Frank Beidinger, have always been supportive of my education and career, and obtaining my doctorate was no exception. I traveled regularly to WMU from Indiana for four years. With three children, this could have proven to be a deal breaker but with the support of my parents it was not. They were always available to fill my shoes going to practices and helping with homework, dinner was often included as well. I could focus on my work at WMU because I knew my children were in the safe and caring hands of my parents.

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Heidi Ann Beidinger-Burnett
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Unlike the principalship of yesteryear, today’s principals are challenged to improve academic achievement for all students. Since the inception of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 (2002), schools are under intense scrutiny to improve performance on standardized tests for all student sub-populations. Although controversial in nature, most will agree that NCLB has illuminated the persistence of the achievement gaps that exists between the sub-populations and has brought about a greater sense of accountability. As such, principals, in particular, are under great pressure to meet the requirements of NCLB.

In addition to the NCLB requirements, the current landscape of education is changing rapidly. While states continue to cut education budgets and dissect teacher unions, school districts are being asked to produce ever greater student achievement with fewer resources and a staff that often feels demoralized and powerless. Principals are learning how to navigate the political, social and financial fallout. However, this does not excuse them from their primary responsibility to improve academic achievement for all students.

In order to improve student achievement, moderate to significant reform of current teaching and learning practices must occur. Recent literature describes the need for principals to become the educational leader of their buildings whereby they can lead change and improve student achievement for all students (Fullan, 2006; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2004). In the past, education had largely been based on the factory model; the high school principal who once operated as a building manager is no longer effective in
the world of school reform where low graduation and high drop-out rates exist. Thus, we now know why principals need to change their practices.

In addition to outmoded principal practices, the literature reveals that principals are often unprepared or underprepared for their role (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). The researchers cited that principals lack the experiences and self-efficacy to be successful. Compounded with the expectation to improve student achievement for all students, principals are likely to fall short of their district’s goals and expectations.

Within the past decade, there has been an upsurge in the literature and research regarding educational leadership, specifically, the leadership behaviors required to lead change in schools that leads to improved student achievement (Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Robinson, 2011; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). These empirical studies identified principal leadership behaviors that were positively correlated to improved student achievement.

We know why principals need to change their behaviors and we know what those behaviors should be to improve student achievement. What we do not know is how principals make sense of and integrate those research-based leadership behaviors into their daily practice so that it becomes a habit of mind rather than something that is attended to for a short period of time and then forgotten.

To understand how principals make sense of and integrate research-based leadership behaviors, I, as researcher as well as leadership coach, will simultaneously use two process interventions: Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 1994). The purpose of these process interventions is to work collaboratively with a principal, Jack Ryan, to develop a mutual understanding and
application of the *Balanced Leadership Framework*, (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003) the content intervention, with the explicit intention of transforming and changing his leadership behaviors in order to lead the redesign of his high school, ultimately to improve student achievement. At the time of publication, there were no studies identified that used PAR and Cognitive Coaching to study a principal’s behavioral change.

**Context**

**The Players**

In 2008, I began working at George Washington High School (pseudonym) to administer a federal high school redesign grant. I came to GWHS with four years of high school redesign experience and many years of public health program development, evaluation and leadership experience. My formal education and work experiences were grounded in Public Health and Administration with the Centers for Disease Control. I had transitioned to the world of education six years before my arrival at GWHS. My lack of formal educational and teacher training made many staff uneasy about my role. I knew that I would need to take steps to create trust and credibility in order for me to be effective in my work.

Also in 2008 a new principal, Jack Ryan, was hired. He started his career in Georgia teaching art. After several years, Jack was hired at GWHS to teach art. After his teaching years, he assumed many roles that included dean of students, guidance director, assistant principal and associate principal. As associate principal Jack assumed the building leadership responsibilities when the principal became seriously ill. By 2007, he was serving as interim principal. With his longevity, service in various roles, and eagerness to be the principal, he was promoted to officially lead the school in 2008.
Jack had aspired to this principal role that had been defined by a 20th Century education model. He was responsible for managing a system that had changed very little during the past 50 years since its opening. The structure was compartmentalized with little communication occurring between them. Caring, hard-working professionals executed their responsibilities well and accomplished what was expected of them. However, given the communication vacuum that existed, there was virtually no coordination to ensure student success and little accountability for graduation rates and test scores. The high school redesign grant and later state legislation would change those expectations drastically.

The Setting

GWHS is a large high school serving approximately 3,500 students. It was considered a great school and still is. Their athletic and fine art programs and academic clubs were very successful and continue to do very well. Student achievement was also a source of pride for GWHS. The newly installed principal often referred to the school as an “85” school; 85% passing state standardized tests, 85% graduation, and 85% going to college. However, underlying these successes was a pervasive culture of polite fiction.

GWHS’ reputation was largely based on the successes of the athletic and fine arts programs and clubs and the successes of a few high achieving students. Teachers operated as independent contractors left to interpret curriculum and create assessments on their own. There was little curriculum and assessment alignment between like courses. The principal referred to this practice as an “educational lottery”; students could receive very different content, teaching and learning depending on who taught the course. But that practice would soon come to an end.
The purpose of the high school redesign grant was to help large high schools create smaller, personalized environments so that all students felt known by at least one adult in their school. GWHS created four broad SLC goals: (a) create a freshman academy and achievement academies (10-12), (b) improve student achievement, (c) improve student behavior, and (d) improve school culture. Although these goals seemed straightforward and morally prudent, there was a tremendous amount of resistance to the changes that were being proposed because many teachers felt that the goings-on at GWHS were fine. They were content.

During the first two years, two major changes were made which largely began with the freshman and sophomore teachers. First, teachers were required to participate in high-quality, job-embedded professional development on various topics. The evaluations of these workshops revealed a great deal about teachers’ self-efficacy and practices. Many teachers were excited about the new information and were eager to try out the new practices and integrate them into their coursework. Other teachers reported that they knew ‘most’ of the information but could ‘tweak’ some of the things they were doing. And finally, there was a small group of teachers who were outright resistant to adopting new practices reporting that the information was not new and the results they got from their current practice was acceptable.

Second, teachers were being required to formally collaborate. Two structures were used to facilitate this collaboration: (a) Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) and (b) Professional Learning Communities (PLC). SLCs came in the form of a Freshman Academy. The purpose of the Freshman Academy was to have a small group of teachers working with a small group of students in order to build relationships between teachers and students so that students felt comfortable, welcomed and connected. These small
groups of teachers represented multi-disciplinary teams and were scheduled so that their plan time was aligned. The purpose of the PLCs was for content area teachers to plan and design assessments and analyze student data to inform practice. Because GW was on an A/B schedule, the content teachers of the freshman academy were scheduled so that their plan time was aligned on the opposite day of their SLC time.

The first two years were very trying and difficult. The principal was newly installed at the time the grant was received. He had no prior experience with a federal grant or redesign efforts. Similarly, the district office had limited experience. There was a great deal of pushback and lack of teacher buy-in. The status quo had become so ubiquitous that few leaders or teachers were willing to challenge it. Although the principal delegated some decision-making to his administrative team leaders and teacher leaders, he often questioned their decision-making and at times flip-flopped on their decisions. Although there were a few teacher leaders who were helping to lead the change, they often did not have prior experiences to guide them nor had they received the type of training that could have helped them to be successful.

**Epiphany**

Nearly two years had passed since receiving the grant. Progress was slow, resistance was appreciable, and support was waning. During a meeting between the principal and me in the spring of 2011, he quietly explained that he realized he had been managing the redesign and that he needed to be leading it. His epiphany demarked a momentous shift in the way he perceived his role in the redesign of his high school. Jack said that he wanted to change the way he was approaching the redesign process but was not quite sure how to do so. We found ourselves faced with an interesting and very unique situation. We decided to use this opportunity as a way to support Jack’s desire to
improve his leadership while at the same time providing an intriguing topic for my dissertation.

I was in my third year of my educational leadership doctoral program and with my background in high school redesign; I was uniquely situated to collaborate with Jack. I proposed we work together to improve his leadership and to use the process and learning as the subject of my dissertation. The principal accepted this proposal and we began the work of planning and formulating our research together.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this participatory action research study (PAR) was to follow the process of how one high school building principal made sense of and integrated research-based leadership behaviors into his practice to lead the redesign of his school to improve student achievement while using a leadership coach. I used the *Balanced Leadership Framework* (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) as the framework to study research-based leadership behaviors. In this case, I as a researcher served as the leadership coach as well. The PAR methodology allowed the high school principal and me to co-construct, analyze and interpret the process that he went through to effect change in his daily practice.

**Research Questions**

This study focused on three research questions.

1. How did the principal and I use the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, the Balanced Leadership Framework and Cognitive Coaching to make sense of research-based principal leadership behaviors and stimulate growth and action?

2. What change was experienced by the participants?
3. What were the important factors that led to growth and change?

Methods Overview

Grounded in the qualitative action research paradigm, a participatory action research (PAR) design has been chosen for this study. The overarching goal of PAR is to improve people’s capacity for learning and engagement that stimulates action creating a desired lasting change in one’s thinking and behavior (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). People who engage in this process are committed to improving their practice and behavior; to generate new ideas and theories about what is happening; and to make a transformative change in their lives.

By definition, the PAR design is a collaboration between the researcher and the subject engaging in a co-facilitated process, hence the term “participatory”; they work together to critically examine the actions of the practice under study and to build a theory about what is happening (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1987). PAR is well suited to studying a personal change process wherein I, as the researcher, also serve as the leadership coach and Jack, as the subject, also serves as co-researcher. This process affords us to co-construct, analyze and interpret the process that he went through to integrate research-based leadership behaviors that are associated with effective principals.

The PAR methodology is focused on a spiral of cycles that includes: plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It forces the participants to engage in critical and self-critical action and reflection (p. 566). Participants will spiral through the cycle often in order to make meaning of their issue or problem, to gain new knowledge about possibilities and to integrate the new knowledge
to create change. The rigor of this design is the commitment of the participants to adhere to the spiral of cycles in an agreeable and credible manner.

Data will be collected primarily through audio-taped leadership coaching sessions, observations, and artifacts. The sessions will utilize the planning and reflecting steps of the PAR cycle. Data will also be collected through audio-taped leadership team meetings. The meetings will utilize the acting and observing steps of the PAR cycle. Additional data will be collected through documents such as staff memos and emails.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework (see Figure 1 below) illustrates the interaction of the major areas of study and the intended outcomes: PAR, Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 1994), Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003), and Improved Leadership Behaviors. PAR and Cognitive Coaching were the methodology and strategies (process interventions) that were utilized simultaneously to facilitate the development of a mutual understanding and application of the Balanced Leadership Framework (content intervention) with the goal for Jack to adopt and integrate into his daily practice (outcome).

The Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) represents 21 principal leadership behaviors that were found to be positively correlated to improved student achievement. The framework served as a foundational tool and resource to deeply understand the research-based leadership behaviors. The tool helped us to frame and deepen our conversations, guide behavioral choices, and challenge the status quo. We utilized

PAR is both a process and research methodology to study an issue or problem. As a process, PAR cycles through a spiral of plan, act, observe, and reflect, that was used by
us to maintain the integrity of the PAR paradigm and achieve our goal to make sense of and integrate research-based leadership behaviors. As a research methodology, PAR guided us, as co-researchers, during the study to create routine and habits. We held ourselves accountable to this methodology in a deliberate way to ensure structure, rigor and adherence to our goals.

Cognitive coaching is an inquiry-based process that facilitates one to become metacognitive. The goal of coaching was to encourage Jack to challenge and think more deeply about his assumptions, beliefs and metacognition. I, as the leadership coach, utilized the principles and strategies of Cognitive Coaching to keep us focused on cognitive processes and reflection.
How does a high school principal make sense of and integrate research-based leadership behaviors daily by utilizing a leadership coach?

1. How did the principal and I use the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, the Balanced Leadership Framework and Cognitive Coaching to make sense of research-based principal leadership behaviors and stimulate growth and action?
2. What change was experienced by the participants?
3. What were the important factors that led to growth and change?
Summary

The purpose of this participatory action research study (PAR) was to follow the process of how one high school building principal made sense of and integrated research-based leadership strategies daily to improve student achievement by utilizing a leadership coach. The literature tells us why principals need to change their leadership behaviors and tells us what their leadership behaviors should be. Interestingly, it does not tell us is how principals make the change to their leadership behaviors. From the outset of this study that began September 2011 and ended May 2012, the principal had a strong, intrinsic commitment to change his leadership behaviors. He came to realize how critical his leadership was to creating and sustaining meaningful change at his high school and in the process create relevant learning to improve achievement for all students.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Principal Leadership Background

Unlike any other time in history, educational leaders are faced with a myriad of complex, challenging issues as politicians, state education officials, analysts, and others design and mandate educational reform. With the inception of No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002), school districts have been under increased pressure to improve student achievement for all student groups. As a result principals are often held responsible for engaging in instructional school reform in order to improve student achievement. Compounded with significant financial shortfalls, changing student demographics, and attendance at sporting events, academic club competitions and fine arts performances, principals are expected to do more with fewer resources. The state of affairs for principals looks bleak as I examined the literature on principal preparation and scarcity and educational reform. However, recent research on effective principal leadership offers promising strategies that can lead to greater student achievement.

Principal Preparation

Principal preparation programs exist in a variety of forms. They can be university-based, district-level, third party or community-level partnership programs (Davis, 2005). There is growing consensus these educational programs are not effectively preparing individuals for the principalship (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Fullan, 2005; Fry, Bottoms, & O’Neill, 2005). Principal preparation programs lack the ability to develop leaders who can develop other leaders, who in turn can impact student achievement, and who can impact teaching and instruction practices (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005).
Researchers from the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute have completed a highly acclaimed in-depth study of principal preparation programs which included an in-depth review of research on developing successful principals (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). There are several key components that exist in principal leadership programs (a) internships; (b) mentoring; (c) cohort groups; (d) tight collaboration between university-based programs and the school district; (e) curricular coherence; (f) problem based instruction with an emphasis on instructional leadership; (g) change management; (h) and organizational development (p. 21). However, the empirical data did little to provide evidence that these components support principal development. Unfortunately, the researchers repeatedly found that university-based and district-level principal training was sorely lacking. The programs lacked the depth to prepare principals to lead teaching and learning.

Other studies of principal preparation programs had similar findings (Fry, Bottoms & O’Neill, 2005; James-Ward & Potter, 2011). The researchers found that internships provided by university-based programs were often poor and lacked authentic leadership opportunities. There were few opportunities to engage in activities that led to improved instruction yielding improved student performance. One study of 434 Maine principals found that after participating in a principal preparation program, the principals reported they felt more comfortable engaged in management issues as opposed to instructional issues (Donaldson & Hausman, 1999). Ultimately, the researchers concluded that for most university-based programs, developing leaders of change was not their focus.

Poor principal preparation programs are costly not only to the school and school district, but also to the principal’s self-efficacy, one’s belief in one’s ability to be
successful given a particular context (Bandura, 1977). Preparation programs play an important role in developing a principal’s sense of self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Principal self-efficacy has been described as a foundational characteristic of an effective principal (Tschannen-Moran & Garies, 2004). Model principal preparation programs should include multiple opportunities and experiences for problem solving and reflection in support of the development and growth of self-efficacy.

The prominent study conducted by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute identified and studied eight exemplary principal preparation programs that provide those types of opportunities and experiences. The researchers found that each of these programs was principal-centered and tightly focused on instructional leadership with an emphasis on developing principals’ capacity to coach and develop teachers, to convey their vision for reform, and to lead their staff to improve teaching and learning (LaPointe & Davis, 2006). All the programs used the following instructional practices: problem based learning, action research, field based projects, journal writing and portfolios (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 6). The researchers describe a process used between instructors and participants that emphasized reflection and feedback as a matter of daily practice.

**Scarcity of Principals**

While the preponderance of research finds that preparation programs are sorely lacking, the problem is further exacerbated by the fact that fewer individuals are choosing to enter into the principalship. National reports, state surveys, and research indicate that schools and school districts are facing an acute shortage of qualified leaders who can perform effectively in the role of principal (Gajda & Militello, 2008; Fullan, 2006; Fry, Bottoms & O’Neill, 2005). The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that about 40% of
principals will retire this decade (2001). There are two primary reasons for this phenomenon: (a) education is a field whose retirement age is set at 55 years of age and (b) the principalship has become increasingly more stressful during the past few years as the position involves more responsibilities (2001). Consequently, fewer persons are willing to assume this role. The national data is confirmed by state surveys and studies. A state-wide study of principals in Massachusetts found that almost half of individuals with an administrator’s license chose not to pursue a principalship (Gajda & Militello, 2008). In the same survey, 63% reported that they planned to leave the position within the next five years (p. 16). In another study of principals in Kentucky, investigators found that principals were spending less than a third of their time on instruction and often they felt that their time was too short and unfocused to yield a positive impact (Samuels, 2008).

With many principals retiring and few prepared to assume the role as change leader, school districts will struggle to attract, develop and retain quality principals. School districts will need to develop improved processes to ensure quality hiring practices and ongoing development occurs. If done well, these activities should be cost effective (Leithwood, 2004; Petzko, 2008). In the meantime, given the immediate demands of the changing role, existing principals will need strategies to improve their leadership in order to impact and sustain authentic reform.

**Educational Reform and Principalship**

Education has seen a great number of reform efforts most of which have resulted in little improvement. After a review of decades of school reform efforts, Elmore (2004) found that change was mostly focused on structural and curricular changes that never impacted the learning environment of the classroom. Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, and Valentine (1999) also found that many school districts that were engaged in school
reform were solely focused on structural changes. For the most part, these organizations made superficial changes that appeared to represent change, but when the organizations continued to engage in old behaviors, the change was short-lived. Thus, this half-hearted attempt to reform actually let schools maintain their status quo (Hallinger, 1992).

The literature is replete with theories and research-based practices that lead to improved student achievement (Marks, & Printy, 2003; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). And yet surprisingly, mainstream education has been reluctant to integrate these findings (Klimek, Ritzenhein & Sullivan, 2008). School districts are often reluctant to seek and implement new ideas for fear of exposing their weaknesses. High schools in particular often worked on reform in isolation, making change that much more unattainable (Kostin, 2006).

Tony Wagner (2008) makes the bold statement that education has refused to embrace change even though the outside world has. He continues that “… our schools are not failing but rather they are obsolete even the ones that score the best on standardized tests” (2008, xxi). His statement presents a dramatic departure in the way failing schools and low student achievement are viewed and may force policy makers and educators to adopt very different ideas and solutions.

As school districts respond to NCLB’s requirements with new ideas and solutions, the principal has been charged with implementation. Until very recently, the primary role of principal was that of administrative manager (Valentine & Prater, 2011). The skills, knowledge and beliefs needed for an administrative manager no longer supplies principals with the leadership skills necessary to implement the brand of educational reform that will yield successful outcomes (Valentine & Prater, 2011). Principals need to be able to quickly adapt in order to survive (Senge, 1994). Unlike anything principals
have experienced before in their profession, the hyper-emphasis on high stakes testing has dramatically changed their role (Wise & Hammack, 2011; Wise 2010).

Although principals understand that their leadership is important to the overall success of the school and their students, they are floundering and overburdened in their attempt to address the demands thus paralyzing not only the principal but the school as well (Walker, 2009; Lovely, 2004). Their work environment has become “fast paced, complexly fragmented, and isolated even more so than the work of teachers” (Lambert, 1987). Working in isolation with little or no support makes principals less secure in their decision-making which contributes to their paralysis making the status quo nearly impenetrable.

In order to meet the changing demands in education today, the role of the principal represents a significant departure from the role a principal played just a short decade ago. Principals must now have the capacity to be visionaries, change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, and consummate problem solvers. This calls for a new type of leader (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Ort, 2007; Cooley & Shen, 2003). Beyond these roles, principals must also adopt a philosophy that allows them to create an authentic sense of urgency to drive reforms (DuFour, 1999; Kotter, 2008). Principals must rethink how they will grow, change, and behave to meet the demands of these new roles and reform as opposed to principals of the past who administered programs. Although the distinction may appear to be subtle, it is not.

**Overview of Leadership Research**

While there has been much written about leadership theory in the past several decades, a landmark report called Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966) also
known as The Coleman Report has eclipsed that literature calling into question the degree to which a school and/or leadership could impact student achievement. The sociologists who wrote the report claimed that student background and socioeconomic status had a greater effect on student outcomes than did school resources. In essence, schools believed they could not overcome the effects of background or socioeconomic status no matter what the investment. For many years following, this claim was accepted unequivocally. Fortunately, the past 10 years have been marked by a tremendous desire to unravel this notion.

There is a growing body of research that says principals matter (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2004; Fullan, 2010b; Schmoker, 2006; Valentine & Prater, 2011). These educational researchers and practitioners have amassed a critical amount of information and research about principals and what impact they have on school culture, instruction, teachers, professional collaboration, staff development, and student achievement. In no way is this meant to be an exhaustive list of their findings but rather a highlight of several ground-breaking findings.

The evolution of the principalship has been slow and steady until very recently. During most of the 20th century, principals focused on managing their schools. With the inception of NCLB 2001 (2002), a short decade ago, principals were thrust into a vastly different school environment of high stakes testing and accountability. As such, principals needed to engage in instruction to ensure positive outcomes. What was once a passing notion among principals, strong instructional leadership is now seen as a fundamental component of the principalship. Principals who engage in the creation and development of the instructional climate create schools that promote powerful teaching

The body of work and research of DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2004; 2008) has contributed significantly to knowledge about the role and impact of the principal on instruction and teacher collaboration. They articulated the difference between focusing on the inputs versus the outputs of teaching. The nuance of this distinction may appear small but it is not. From his work as a high school principal, DuFour (2002) learned how to create change to improve an already highly performing school. He found that he was overly focused on classroom practices (inputs) and that he did not know about the learning outcomes (outputs). Moreover, DuFour (2002) changed the instructional conversation among administrators and teachers from talking about good intentions to discussing actual student achievement results. His experiences as a high school principal and later as a superintendent served as a catalyst to more fully develop professional learning communities.

Although professional collaboration, professional communities and learning communities are terms that have existed for some time, it was the work of DuFour and colleagues that formalized the notion of professional learning communities (PLCs). They stated that PLCs provide structure to teacher collaboration. In doing so, the teachers have a collective responsibility to answer three questions: (a) what do we want our students to know? (b) how will we know when they do? and (c) what will we do when they don’t? (2004).

Fullan (2010b) and Schmoker (2006) have both researched and written how the real reform of education is about getting in the classroom and to change the culture from the inside out. They articulate that schools particularly those at the high school level are
not structured for teacher collaboration. However, they argue that teacher collaboration is the vehicle to improved practice and to improved student achievement. Recognizing the need for teacher collaboration, principals must facilitate this process and provide the structure and resources necessary to do so.

This research is not without its challenges. Many principals know that instructional leadership is vital; however, many do not invest the amount of time recommended in the literature (Camburn, Spillance & Sebastin, 2010). Many principals are unsure about which leadership behaviors to engage in (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Furthermore, researchers and practitioners have struggled to define the effect different leadership behaviors and strategies have on student outcomes (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, 2003). These researchers pose common sense challenges to the principal leadership research that will likely confront this study.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore and present several key areas of my research that will coalesce as a strategy to be used by the researcher and principal in order to change and improve his leadership. These areas include the following:

1. Principal Leadership Theory and Research
2. Leadership Coaching
3. Balanced Leadership Framework

**Leadership Theory**

Because education has become increasingly complex and demanding in the past decade, the role of the principal has become equally complex and demanding. Principals are no longer needed to manage the industrial model of the 1900s; rather leaders are needed to lead and sustain reform (Fullan, 2005). Principals need to seek new solutions
for restructuring and reculturing as they look to reform their schools and improve student achievement (Fullan, 1999; Wise, 2010). Overwhelmingly the literature states that principals need to be focused on instruction, working cooperatively with teachers, and developing teacher leaders (Datnow & Castellan, 2001; Fullan, 1999; Lambert, 2002; Leithwood, 2004; Leithwood, 2012; Robinson, 2011). Schmoker boldly states that principals must engage in “…a tough, honest self-examination of the prevailing culture and practices of public schools, and a dramatic turn toward a singular and straightforward focus on instruction” (2006, p. 2; emphasis added). The idea that the literature conveys what principals should focus on should be helpful. However, the actual behaviors and strategies of specific leadership practices that are required are not always clearly defined (Leithwood, 2012).

Without question, the literature and research agree that effective school leadership is an essential component to improving student achievement. Conventional wisdom tells a similar story. For every industry, business and organization, there is leadership. Leadership is about making change in order to stimulate and sustain improvement. If the leadership is effective, those entities shall grow and thrive; if not, those entities will fail. The same holds true for education. An analysis of educational leadership theory provides insight into the structure of effective principal leadership.

There are several theories that are recognized in the educational leadership research and many more in the business world (Kotter, 2008; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Yukl, 2008). The most common theories includes: (a) transformational, (b) instructional, (c) authentic, (d) situational, (e) trait and (f) transactional. To a certain extent, overlap of ideas and beliefs exists among these theories. Thus practitioners may be conflicted about where their leadership aligns.
Leithwood cautions to “be skeptical about ‘leadership by adjective’ literature” (2004, p. 6). Because at the end of the day, leadership is about two goals: (a) providing direction for the organization and (b) influencing staff to move in that direction (Leithwood, 2004, p. 6). In review of the educational leadership research, it is essentially two leadership theories that rise to the top: transformational and instructional (Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

**Transformational Leadership**

A review of educational leadership literature reveals that transformational leadership theory has a prominent place in the research. In *Leadership Quarterly* from 1990 to 2000, nearly one-third of all articles addressed transformational leadership (Lowe & Gardner, 2001, as cited in Northouse, 2010). Transformational leadership has been studied from many perspectives including private and public organizations.

In his seminal work, *Leadership* (1978), Burns established for the first time the distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. Until this point in time, historians and researchers studied the characteristics of individual leaders. In the simplest of terms, transactional leadership is an exchange between leader and follower. Once the exchange is complete, the relationship is over. A transformational leader identifies with the follower’s needs and works to meet those motivations and then works to bring about a consummate change in those needs and wants that challenges the follower to reach his greatest potential and to act in a moral way. This process transforms both leader and follower.

Based on thousands of surveys, several researchers have extended Burns’ definition of transformational leadership. The following components have been added to expand the definition: (a) model the way, (b) idealized influence, (c) inspirational
motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) individualized consideration, (e) vision setting, (f) social architects of their organization, and (g) willingness to challenge the process (Bass & Aviolo, 1998; Kotter, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 1999). The good news about this model is that it is not about personality and traits. One does not have to be a ‘born-leader’; one can learn to become a transformational leader (emphasis added).

From the definition and components outlined above, transformational leadership is clearly a necessary form of leadership a principal needs given the current educational setting. Education is in the throes of change and reform and transformational leadership has the “ingredients of change” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 391). These ingredients of change are goal orientation, modeling, trust, and influence. There have been at least ten, large scale, quantitative studies that have linked transformational leadership with student engagement (Leithwood & Wahlstrom, 2008a; Marks & Printy, 2003; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

**Instructional Leadership**

The Effective Schools Movement that was led by Edmonds, Brookover and Lezotte began in the 1970s and led to the institutionalization of the term instructional leadership. The Effective Schools Movement studied high achieving, high poverty schools which identified seven correlates that made those schools successful: (a) clear and focused mission, (b) safe and orderly environment, (c) high expectations, (d) opportunity to learn and time on task, (e) instructional leadership, (f) frequent monitoring of student progress, and (g) positive home-school relations (Lezotte, 1991). It was these findings that led to the belief among policymakers and school districts that principals should lead the instructional program of their school. Thus, principal as instructional
leader was born and continues to be an important element in the educational leadership discourse.

Since the 1970s, instructional leadership has had various conceptions. However, the framework developed by Hallinger has been used most frequently (2003). It includes three components: (a) defining the school’s mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school-learning climate (p. 332).

In a review of the school leadership empirical research from 1980-1995, Hallinger and Heck (1996) found that instructional leadership was the most frequently used model of school leadership studied. Following are several conclusions (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996):

1. Evidence indicates that principals indirectly impact student achievement by influencing what happens in the classroom.
2. Principals can influence the school through mission building.
3. Principals can influence the quality of school outcomes by aligning school resources.
4. School context does affect what kind of instructional leader a principal chooses to be.

**Transformational and Instructional Leadership: What’s the Connection?**

The research on transformational and instructional leadership is compelling. Leaders interested in improving their practice and student outcomes would be well advised to understand these theories and their conclusions. Both theories have the same desired end to improve student outcomes. However, each theory has a different approach to reach the same end.
The literature recognizes this conundrum (Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, 2011). The research finds that both approaches may be necessary. Marks and Printy (2003) found that they could not assign effects to either transformational or instructional leadership. They concluded that it was the integration of the two theories that produced the effects thus coining the term integrated leadership (p. 392; emphasis added). Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) found that instructional leadership had a three to four times greater impact on student outcomes than transformational leadership. Although a significant finding, they also concluded that both types of leadership may in fact be necessary to be successful.

Principal Traits

Although particular traits alone do not necessarily lead to effective leadership, successful principals share particular traits and dispositions that allow them to make sense of the recommended practices and engage in the work in a meaningful way. Highly successful principals are open minded, inquisitive, and analytical; they are listeners, risk-takers and challengers of the status quo (Ash & Persall, 2000; Klimek, Ritzenhein, & Sullivan, 2008; Zimmerman, 2006). They are ready to learn from others, and in fact, they seek opinions and guidance from others outside of their organization. Fullan (2010b) states that highly effective principals are on-going consumers and implementers of educational research as opposed to those who passively implement the research. As they grow into their leadership role and learn from the research, their personal values and beliefs systems can evolve; they demonstrate flexibility rather than a strict adherence to a core set of values. (Datnow & Castellan, 2001; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Those who can question their most deeply held assumptions
and find ways to tap the knowledge and creativity of their staff and others are the ones who are more likely to survive and succeed in rapidly changing educational environment.

**Principal Behaviors**

Principals are constantly challenged with a seemingly endless list of mandates for implementing reform. The literature recommends that principals should focus on instruction, work cooperatively with teachers, and develop teacher leaders. In fact, successful principals strike a balance; they must pay very close attention to instructional practices but must also pay close attention to other issues that affect the welfare of their school (Datnow & Castellan, 2001; Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

The literature provides specific examples and constructs about the behaviors of an effective principal. Instruction must be made a priority; improving instruction is the most important job of a principal (Fullan, 2010b; Wagner, 2008). Successful principals develop a shared vision that puts instruction and student achievement at the center of the school community (Lambert, 2002). These principals are well-versed in the teaching and learning theory and research; are present in the classroom; and are engaged in professional dialogue that includes detailed feedback with their teachers in efforts to deprivatize teaching and create professional communities of learners (Ash & Persall, 2000; Costa & Garmston, 2002; DuFour, 1999; Valentine & Prater, 2011; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). By engaging in these behaviors, principals are modeling on-going learning and reflective practice with a resolute emphasis on student learning. As a result they are creating an atmosphere of trust that supports the kind of risk-taking needed to improve student achievement and support sustainable change (Zimmerman, 2006).

There are many other ancillary behaviors principals engage in to improve instruction and welfare of the school. Schools must “confront the brutal facts about
themselves” (Schmoker, 2008, p. 3) by deeply examining student achievement and behavior data. Effective principals make timely disaggregated data internally public this creates a sense of urgency about the need to improve instruction and to use as a method for continual, relentless reflection. (Fullan, 2005; Jensen, 2009; Zimmerman, 2006).

Creating and sustaining a sense of urgency centered on the instructional climate requires tenacity and patience. Principals need to recognize the behaviors and activities that distract their attention and energy from their focus. Principals who allow themselves to be distracted from their focus are engaging in a false sense of urgency (Kotter, 2008; Waters & Cameron, 2007; Wagner, 2008). A false sense of urgency gives the appearance that the principal is busy and engaged. However because the focus is on the wrong activity, the behavior and actions yield little productivity. As a result the principal falls back into the role of manager because of comfort and ease rather than holding firm to the challenging role of collaborative instructional leader (Lambert, 2002).

The research shows that principals struggle to maintain their focus. In a recent large-scale teacher survey conducted by Wahlstrom and colleagues, secondary school teachers reported that they rarely saw their principals in ‘instructional action’ (as cited in Leithwood, 2012, p. 68). Principals also acknowledge that they have not spent adequate time on instructional activities. Cooley and Shen found that principals still spend less than one third of their time on curriculum and instruction (2003). Thus, principals must not only engage in the knowing of what needs to be done but must also engage in the doing as well.

Principal Self-Efficacy

A review of the principal leadership literature inevitably leads to principal self-efficacy. A principal’s sense of self-efficacy is an important construct to better
understand how a principal will behave, persist, and produce desired outcomes. The leadership literature indicates that self-confidence is an essential characteristic of effective leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008b; Tschannen-Moran & Garies, 2004). Self-confidence is defined as the degree of strength in one’s ability (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is defined as the degree of strength in one’s ability and the belief that certain levels can be attained (Bandura, 1997). Given the similarity between self confidence and self efficacy, the authors concluded that more research on educational leaders’ beliefs about their abilities was warranted.

The theoretical underpinnings of principal self-efficacy are built upon the work and research of social learning theorist, Albert Bandura. He articulated that self-efficacy was a belief in oneself and the ability to successfully organize and follow through on a course of action (Bandura, 1977). In turn, these beliefs provided insight and evidence about what individuals were willing to engage in, how long they were willing to engage, and how well they would cope given obstacles and failure. Thus, principal self-efficacy has been defined as a principal’s judgment about his or her abilities to carry out a plan to achieve desired results (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The tenets of self-efficacy hold true for principal self-efficacy.

Studies that investigate principal self-efficacy are relatively recent and few but are a promising new area of study (Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2008b; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The results of three studies on principal self-efficacy yielded persuasive, important results (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The researchers concluded that principals needed a strong sense of self-efficacy to meet the demands of their work and the organizational goals. Further, they stated that it was not enough to just hire good leaders but that they had to have a strong sense of self and beliefs in order to get the job done. In
fact, this strong sense of self serves as an excellent predictor of behavior (p. 574).

Today’s educators are faced with a myriad of problems and obstacles. Bandura (1977) said that those who doubt their ability will likely settle for lesser results or fail. However, those who have a strong belief in their abilities will not succumb, they will seek alternatives to overcome obstacles in order to succeed (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

A lack of self efficacy can negatively impact the school setting as well. Where principals had a low sense of self efficacy, they persisted with a course of action that yielded few results, they could not see opportunity, they were inflexible and they could not garner the needed support from their staff (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). As a result, principals were left feeling less than adequate, more isolated, and less motivated to pursue yet another issue or problem.

A principal’s self efficacy is an important indicator of success and effectiveness. Although this study (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) does not specifically study principal self efficacy per se, this study delves deeply into a principal’s core beliefs about his ability and skills to improve his leadership in order to create and sustain change. Thus, an understanding of self efficacy is essential to this study.

**Principal Leadership Research**

There are a few reasons why researchers want to better understand school effects, particularly leadership and student outcomes. First, there is a gap in the beliefs about what policymakers believe should be accomplished in schools and what actually occurs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Ort, 2007). Second, policymakers are striving to reduce the educational disparities that exist among school districts and students and they believe that school leaders are the critical link in reducing those
disparities (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Third, conventional wisdom says that leaders are important; understanding their role and how they can improve student outcomes “… is itself a worthy goal for research” (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, p. 39).

Research based evidence about educational leadership and student outcomes have grown in quantity and quality during the past 20 years. There are skeptics who challenge the validity of the research generally concluding that the effect size of leadership on student outcomes is small and indirect and is usually done so through teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). However, small and indirect effects should not suggest that nothing of importance is known about successful school leadership (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). In fact, there are important claims about leadership strategies and behaviors and student outcomes that can be made because of the thoughtful contributions of notable researchers and authors and several large scale empirical studies that have been conducted since the 1990s. There have been three major quantitative studies on educational leadership conducted during the past decade. This research has produced verifiable results thus creating greater confidence in what we know to be effective leadership practices.

**Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003)**

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) published a large scale, quantitative meta-analysis on individual principal behaviors and student achievement. The study offered practical guidance for what school leaders could do to impact student achievement. Their study answered Hallinger and Heck’s call for more robust research. From nearly 5,000 studies that were reviewed, 70 studies met the specific criteria to be included in this meta-analysis. At the time the researchers argued that the study was unique because it was
derived from a very large dataset, and that the study moved beyond the abstract to provide concrete tools and strategies for leaders.

Waters and his colleagues concluded that leadership matters and identified a significant, positive correlation between 21 leadership responsibilities and student achievement. Key responsibilities with the highest size effects included (a) situational awareness (.33) the extent to which the principal understands the undercurrents in running the school; (b) intellectual stimulation (.32) the extent to which the principal ensures that staff are aware of the latest in educational research; (c) change agent (.30) the extent to which the principal is willing to question the status quo; and (d) input (.30) the extent to which the principal involves teachers in the decision-making (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Robinson (2011)

Robinson published an important contribution to educational leadership called Student-Centered Leadership (2011). In her book she challenges policy makers, district leaders, principals, and others to be willing to judge leadership effectiveness by its impact on student outcomes (p. 4). Frequently, leaders are judged to be effective on issues unrelated to teaching and learning. While strong school management is an important accomplishment, she cautions that it should not be confused with effective educational leadership. Said another way, strong school management is necessary but does not produce improved student achievement in and of itself. This is a critical distinction in the literature. She concludes: “The more leaders focus their relationships, their work and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater will be their influence on student outcomes” (p. 15).
Her work was grounded in the previous research conducted by Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) exploring the issue of educational leadership and student achievement. They acknowledged that past research has had difficulty isolating the impact of leadership on student achievement given the other mediating variables such as management, relationships, and district-initiated programs. After reviewing hundreds of educational leadership studies, the researchers found only a very small portion actually analyzed the impact of leadership on student outcomes. Just 30 studies were included in their analysis.

As a result of their analysis, Robinson et al. (2008) identified five broad leadership dimensions with varying degrees of effect on student outcomes (a) establishing goals and expectations (0.42); (b) resourcing strategically (0.31); (c) ensuring quality teaching (0.42); (d) leading teacher learning and development (0.84); and (e) ensuring an orderly and safe environment (0.27). They noted that these findings were “unusual in that it does not include the typical distinction between leading tasks and leading people or relationships” (Robinson, 2007, p. 13). The researchers concluded from their analysis that the leadership dimensions positively affected student achievement because leaders who engage in these dimensions are focused on the quality of teachers and teaching (Robinson, 2007).

**Leithwood and Louis (2012)**

Leithwood and Louis have published an important book entitled *Linking Leadership to Student Learning* (2012). These researchers and their colleagues wanted to unravel how leadership at all levels – classroom to state house – impacts student achievement. Knowing that school leadership was second only to classroom teaching as it impacts student achievement (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom,
they sought to investigate how leadership mattered and under what conditions. Their work includes significant implications for policy and practice.

The research that serves as the foundation for this book is grounded in the work of a five-year study on educational leadership (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, 2010). The size of the five-year study increased the significance of its findings; it included 43 districts across 9 states and 180 elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Core leadership practices were identified and organized into four categories: (a) building vision and setting direction; (b) understanding and developing people; (c) redesigning the organization; and (d) managing the teaching and learning program (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 29). These categories outline the work of effective principals and create a framework for developing school leaders.

Delving more deeply into these four categories, there were three specific leadership practices that were the most instructionally helpful as identified by high performing schools: (a) creating school goals that emphasized student achievement, (b) monitoring teachers’ professional development needs, and (c) creating structures and resource to support teacher collaboration (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). There were two behaviors principals engaged in to influence instruction; one works toward developing a culture of professional learning and the other works toward individual teacher growth (Wahlstrom as cited in Leithwood & Louis, 2012). This is an important distinction because these behaviors work together synergistically to change the practices of the school (school vision and expectations) as well as the practices inside of a classroom (teacher growth and development).
Summary of Principal Leadership Research

Early research on educational leadership provided scant evidence that principal leadership had a positive impact on student achievement and the impact was generally small and indirect. However, just in the past ten years, three major studies have provided empirical evidence that principal leadership matters and positively impacts student achievement. Table 1. below provides a side-by-side comparison of the outcomes from these studies. The 21 Leadership Responsibilities as identified by Water, Marzano, and McNulty are listed in the first column. The second column shows the effect size of each leadership responsibility. The third and fourth columns show the major findings from Robinson’s and Leithwood and Louis’ research, respectively.

Table 1.

Major Leadership Studies Compared

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<td>Situational awareness</td>
<td>Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems</td>
<td>E.S.* = .33</td>
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<td><strong>Intellectual stimulation</strong></td>
<td>E.S. = .32</td>
<td>Leading Teacher Learning &amp; Development; E.S. = .84</td>
<td>Improving the Instructional Program; Developing People</td>
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<td>Ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices, and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture</td>
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<td><strong>Change agent</strong></td>
<td>Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo</td>
<td>E.S. = .30</td>
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<td><strong>Input</strong></td>
<td>Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies</td>
<td>E.S. = .30</td>
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<td><strong>Culture</strong></td>
<td>Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation</td>
<td>E.S. = .29</td>
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<td><strong>Monitor/evaluate</strong></td>
<td>Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning</td>
<td>E.S. = .28</td>
<td>Ensuring quality teaching; E.S. = .42</td>
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<td><strong>Table 1—Continued</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Outreach</strong> Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders</td>
<td>E.S. = .28</td>
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<td><strong>Order</strong> Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines</td>
<td>E.S. = .26</td>
<td>Ensuring Safe &amp; Orderly Environment; E.S. = .27</td>
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<td><strong>Resources</strong> Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs</td>
<td>E.S. = .26</td>
<td>Resourcing Strategically; E.S. = .31</td>
<td>Developing People; Improving the Instructional Program</td>
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<td><strong>Affirmation</strong> Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures</td>
<td>E. S. = .25</td>
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<td><strong>Ideals and beliefs</strong> Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling</td>
<td>E.S. = .25</td>
<td>Setting Directions</td>
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<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention</td>
<td>E.S. = .24</td>
<td>Establishing Goals and Expectations; E.S. = .42</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of CIA</strong></td>
<td>Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction and assessment processes</td>
<td>E.S. = .24</td>
<td>Ensuring Quality Teaching; E.S. = .42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline</strong></td>
<td>Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time and focus</td>
<td>E.S. = .24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students</td>
<td>E.S. = .23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility</strong></td>
<td>Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent</td>
<td>E.S. = .22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optimizer</strong></td>
<td>Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations</td>
<td>E.S. = .20</td>
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Table 1—Continued

<table>
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<th>Relationships</th>
<th>E.S. = .19</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates and awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visibility</th>
<th>Has quality contact and interaction with teachers and students</th>
<th>E.S. = .16</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement with Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment</th>
<th>E. S. = .16</th>
<th>Ensuring Quality Teaching; E.S. = .42</th>
<th>Improving the Instructional Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment processes</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contingent reward</th>
<th>Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments</th>
<th>E.S. = .15</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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</table>

* E.S. = Effect Size

There is overlap and agreement between these major studies findings. Since the leadership responsibilities were utilized for this study, understanding the behaviors where there is greatest agreement across studies was important for the researcher and principal so that emphasis could be placed in those areas. The leadership responsibilities where there was agreement across the three studies were: (1) Intellectual stimulation, (2) Monitor/Evaluate, (3) Resources, (4) Focus, (5) Knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment, and (6) Involvement with curriculum, instruction and assessment.
These collective findings provide evidence to principals about how they should focus their efforts and behaviors in order to improve student achievement. Yet few principals spend their time on matters related to student achievement, teacher collaboration and instruction (Leithwood and Louis, 2012). This will be the challenge for this study to change the principal’s behavior so that he is focused on those responsibilities that will lead to improved leadership and student achievement. There is no doubt that the principal will need support and development to become an effective leader as defined by these bodies of research.

**Leadership Coaching**

Leadership coaching is a familiar term that conjures different meanings in different contexts. Whether coaching occurs in business, education, or not-for-profit organizations, the goal of coaching is to enhance practice to reach new levels of success. The following analysis of the history, frameworks and impact of leadership coaching shows promise for supporting and developing effective principal leaders.

Leadership coaching has long been used as a method to improve leadership and effectiveness in the private sector (James-Ward & Potter, 2011; Lubinsky, 2002). The return on investment for executive coaching has been shown to be six times that of the cost of training (McGovern, Lindemann, Vergara, Murphy, Barker, & Warrenfeltz, 2001). Education has been slow to adopt this strategy as a means to develop principals. However, with an increasingly smaller pool of qualified candidates and inadequate preparation programs, school districts need to seek other methods to develop and support principals. There is now evidence of a growing trend reflecting an increased use of leadership coaching for new and tenured K-12 administrators (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003; James-Ward & Potter, 2011; Wise, 2010).
School districts are beginning to recognize that highly effective principals require preparation and on-going development. This type of development is very individual and specific (Lambert, 1987). The learning must take place in the context in which the principal is attempting to make sense of his situation. Principals are often isolated; they need opportunities to discuss their ideas, dilemmas, and experiences (Lambert, 1987; Lovely, 2004). Thus, coaching presents itself as a viable strategy to developing effective principals.

**Coaching Frameworks**

There is a plethora of coaching frameworks grounded in different theories and methodologies that have been developed since the 1960s. An ERIC search with the terms “education” and “coaching” revealed the most prominent frameworks: (a) blended coaching, (b) peer coaching, (c) critical friends, (d) transformational coaching, and (e) cognitive coaching. There are more similarities between these frameworks than there are differences. Common similarities include a focus on improving one’s practice; building a mutually respectful, trusting relationship, reflection, and engaging in professional dialogue and conversation (Knight, 2009).

The goal of coaching is to study and reflect on an individual’s own behavior in order to improve practice to achieve results (Shower, 1985; Wise & Hammack, 2011). In the context of a principal, the goal of coaching is to develop “reflective, courageous leaders capable of creating and sustaining processes that lead to ever increasing student achievement” (James Ward & Potter, 2011). Each of these frameworks speaks to these goals. For example, transformational coaching focuses individuals on the lived reality of their behaviors, forcing them to understand the effects of their behaviors and decisions (Hargrove, 2008). Understanding how their behaviors and decisions affect others and
their schools, principals can change how they operate. Similarly, cognitive coaching focuses on developing leaders to become self-directed by reflecting on their own thinking and practice (Costa & Garmston, 1984). Blended coaching has similar characteristics because it is a process that integrates transformational and cognitive coaching (Hargrove, 2008). Peer coaching and critical friends are important strategies for professional development and growth. The strength of these strategies derives from working with peers which is why these strategies are generally reserved for teachers rather than administrators.

**Cognitive Coaching**

_Cognitive Coaching_ was first written in 1984 by Costa and Garmston; the second edition was published in 2002. Cognitive coaching begins with the premise that the process is about the “self-actualization of others” (Costa & Garmston, 1994, p. 92). This model is about guiding an individual toward greater self-directedness and self-mediation that leads to independent, self-directed learning (p. 61). The process focuses on thinking, decision-making, and perceptions to attain self-directed learning so that the individual can improve effectiveness and be successful without a coach. Put simply, “it takes two to know one” (Costa & Garmston, 1994, p. 18).

This framework has been selected for this study for several reasons. First, cognitive coaching has gained in popularity, use and understanding since its development in 1984. Cognitive coaching has been the subject of many research studies including 29 dissertations, 38 articles, 7 books or book chapters, 11 reports, and 19 presentations (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Second, the cognitive coaching model has universal appeal. This model has evolved from a focus on education to encompass a wide range of applications and disciplines (Blackwell, Brown, Grehan, & Madsen, 2010). Third, the
The cognitive coaching model is grounded in a constructivist epistemology meaning that humans have an innate desire to make sense of their experiences (Costa, 1984; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As such, researchers have found that the cognitive coaching model is well-suited for principals given the highly complex nature of their responsibilities and environment (Blackwell, Brown, Grehan, & Madsen, 2010; Wise & Hammack, 2011). Finally, this model has intuitive appeal. Cognitive coaching speaks not only to the individual but to a larger vision of what could be. In selecting a framework, the reasons listed here are persuasive and compelling.

**Five States of Mind.**

Cognitive coaching relies on the active engagement of an individual’s five states of mind: (a) efficacy, (b) flexibility, (c) consciousness, (d) interdependence, and (e) craftsmanship (Costa & Garmston, 1994). These states of mind are the resources that highly performing individuals access in order to operate in an environment that requires the individual to operate independently as well as collaboratively (p. 141 – 143). Although we cannot see the states of mind, they are there because their effects are observable through language and actions (p. 124). An effective cognitive coach engages each of the principal’s five states of mind to stimulate metacognition and achieve self-learning. A brief description of each follows.

**Efficacy** is the belief or judgment about one’s competence and resourcefulness. Studies on cognitive coaching have found efficacy to have the greatest impact because the more efficacious a person is, the more likely they are to resolve complex problems, persevere, and set more challenging goals and continue in the face of barriers or failure (Costa & Garmston, 1994, p. 127).
Flexibility refers both to a disposition and a set of skills (Costa & Garmston, 1994, p. 129). An individual who exercises flexibility can step outside of himself and view the issue or problem from other points of view. Flexibility is also about having the capacity to assimilate new information and data to determine if a change in one’s thoughts or decision-making is needed. The skills needed to exercise flexibility are complex and are not necessarily innate. Psychologists believe flexibility to be “the highest state of intelligent behavior” (Costa & Garmston, 1994, p. 130).

Consciousness is the act of understanding one’s own thoughts and feelings and the impact they have on others (Costa & Garmston, 1994). Consciousness is the ability to think about thinking, to understand how opinions and decisions are made and to understand what feelings are associated with those actions. Emotions play an important role in forming opinions and decision making (p. 136). Understanding where the feelings are derived is critical to substantiating whether or not thoughts and decisions were made soundly rather than based on a previous experience with similar circumstance and feelings.

Interdependence is associated with belongingness and connectedness (Costa & Garmston, 1994). Humans are naturally inclined to be part of something larger than them. Individuals who engage in interdependence value community and find ways to effectively work with others even when there is goal conflict. They assume positive intent of those around them and seek their input. This state of mind is critical to those involved in educational reform knowing that a collaborative culture is the foundation for successful reform.

Craftsmanship is what humans do when they are unsatisfied about what they are achieving (Costa & Garmston, 1994). The feeling of being unsatisfied is what drives
humans us to improve upon who they are. Humans who engage in craftsmanship set high expectations for themselves, monitor their own progress, and seek information that informs them about their progress.

**Coaching Behaviors.**

To be a coach requires a shift in one’s identity. Frequently, coaches were former, successful central office administrators, principals, or superintendents (James Ward & Potter, 2011). For many of them, their satisfaction came from their ability to problem solve effectively in those roles (Costa & Garmston, 1994). However, as a coach the satisfaction shifts from their individual success to coaching others to achieve success. A coach’s purpose is to help a principal make a personal transformation through the process of inquiry and reflection (Lovely, 2004). The job of the coach is not to problem solve for the principal but rather to help the principal to effectively think about and problem solve for him or herself. The transition from administrator to coach may seem natural; however, there are new behaviors and strategies that need to be mastered in order to be a successful coach.

There are many behaviors and strategies that a coach must learn in order to successfully guide a principal through a personal transformation. For the sake of brevity, some of the most important ones will be offered. Coaching is complex because the coach can be engaged in several behaviors and strategies at the same time. First and foremost, a coach must engage in interactive dialogue steeped in deep questioning (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Hargrove, 2008; Knight, 2009; Wise & Hammack, 2011). A coach has to learn how to ask tough, powerful questions that do not just produce an answer but also produce real insight into the principal’s thinking and actions. By doing so, a coach is able to identify a mismatch between the principal’s intention and his thinking and behavior
(Hargrove, 2008). This learned process does not come easily; the process requires a coach to be systematic and disciplined about his practice (Wise, 2010).

Reflective practice is key to personal transformation and self-directed learning (Costa & Garmston, 1994; James-Ward & Potter, 2011; Lambert, 2002). Reflection leads to creativity and innovation (Lambert, 2002). A coach uses non-judgmental language to stimulate reflection so that the principal thinks about how they do things and the outcomes they get as a result. A coach also offers feedback, again asking probing questions and listening carefully for opportunities to help make connections between thinking and practice. At the same time, a coach has to be sensitive when offering feedback that may be difficult for the principal to hear (James-Ward & Potter, 2011). This practice forces the principal to consider other options yielding new and better ways of decision making and problem solving (Lambert, 2002).

Pacing is a necessary strategy that is a complex and cerebral process (Costa & Garmston, 1994). This strategy is used throughout the coaching session but is particularly useful when the principal feels stuck and unable to think through an issue or solve a problem (p. 194). While carefully listening to the principal’s explanation and reflection, the coach is asking which of the five states of mind is not active. The coach is responsible for asking deep questions in order to activate the inactive state of mind (Costa & Garmston, 1994). This strategy is critical because the five states of mind help principals to assess their own resourcefulness and that of others and then to plan accordingly (p. 143). Pacing also includes silences, appropriate wait times, and leading questions. Pacing reflects what is and then makes visible what is possible.

A coach has to have the presence of mind to monitor his own behavior and avoid the pitfalls of coaching. Inquisitive listening, filtering, solution listening, and
autobiographical listening are natural by-products of conversation but interfere with effective coaching (Costa & Garmston, 1994). For example, the principal may begin a coaching session discussing an issue he is struggling with. The coach may slip into autobiographical listening; he is thinking about the issue in terms of how he behaved when faced with a similar issue. This is normal. However, an effective coach recognizes when this is happening and reverts back to engaging the five states of mind so that the focus is on the principal’s thinking.

**Evidence of Coaching.**

The empirical research on leadership coaching efficacy is limited (Blackwell, Brown, Grehan, & Madsen, 2010; Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003; Leithwood & Wahlstrom, 2008; Simkins, 2005). Because there are many definitions and strategies that are used to describe coaching, researchers have had difficulty unifying the terminology and quantifying the outcomes. Researchers recommend that statements such as ‘coaching is effective’ should be carefully considered as the statement is empty and unqualified (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Given the multiple definitions and strategies, each coaching study has to be judged effective based on the context and type of coaching being conducted.

Notwithstanding, there is growing sentiment that coaching is a means to support new and experienced educational leaders that will be helpful to their growth and goals (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Knight, 2009; Lovely, 2004). There are several coaching studies that surveyed principals who reported increased attention to instructional practices (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003; James Ward & Potter, 2011); improved feelings of courageousness (James Ward & Potter, 2011); and improved learning about coaching competencies and leadership best practices that led to the implementation of best
practices (Wise & Hammack, 2011). Overall, principals reported that they appreciated having a coach to confide, share ideas, and contemplate decisions before implementation. Specifically, principals reported that reflecting on their behaviors and decisions with a coach gave them more confidence about their ability (James Ward & Potter, 2011); thus, improving their self-efficacy as well.

**Balanced Leadership Framework**

The *Balanced Leadership Framework* (2003) was developed by Waters and Cameron and grounded in the research conducted by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2003). The Waters, Marzano, and McNulty research identified 21 leadership responsibilities that were positively correlated to student achievement (2003). The purpose of the framework was to organize the findings in a useful and contextual way so that educational leaders could apply the findings to improve their leadership. The framework authors’ wanted to create something that helped leaders to connect their vision with their actions (Waters & Cameron, 2007).

**Framework Defined**

The Balanced Leadership Framework (see *Figure 2* below) organizes the leadership responsibilities into four components; they include leadership, focus, magnitude of change, and purposeful community. The researchers chose these four components because “effective leaders are continually engaged in focusing the work of the school, leading change with varying orders of magnitude, an developing purposeful community both with the school and the larger community” (Waters & Cameron, 2007, p. 16). Equipped with this knowledge, educational leaders can purposefully choose which responsibilities to engage.
Figure 2. The Balanced Leadership Framework organized by component.

Leadership.

Principal leadership is the foundation for creating and sustaining change that leads to improved student achievement. In order to do so, a leader must engage in the 21 leadership responsibilities that are correlated to student achievement (see Table 2 below). By understanding the essence and importance of the responsibilities, a principal is able to separate what is essential from what is important making the principal’s job more manageable (Lyons, Schumacher & Cameron, 2008).

Focus.

Focus is the ability of the principal to correctly identify what needs to be improved in the school and classroom in order to improve student achievement. The researchers noted that there were strong leaders who actually negatively impacted student achievement because they chose the wrong focus; they refer to this as the “differential impact” (Waters & Cameron, 2007, p. 23). Examples provided evidence how when the
wrong focus is selected and right behaviors applied, the result is less than desirable and often frustrating for the leader and staff.

**Magnitude.**

Magnitude of change is a matter of perception which can be categorized into either first- or second-order change (Waters & Cameron, 2007). First order change is associated with smaller change that is deep-rooted in existing practices and knowledge. Second order change, on the other hand, is a departure from past practices requiring new skills and knowledge; it is a paradigm shift in thinking and teaching. No matter what the initiative may be, it is the perceived change for an individual that will determine the magnitude of change. What may be a first-order change for one teacher may be perceived as a second-order change for another (Waters & Cameron, 2007). Thus, the principal must be adept at determining the magnitude of change for each of his staff. He will have to know when and how to use particular leadership behaviors to advance his staff in the change process. If the principal does not understand the implications of magnitude of change and is not flexible with his or her approach, he or she will fail (Fullan, Cuttress, and Kilcher, 2005; Waters & Cameron, 2007).

**Purposeful Community.**

Purposeful community is described as a school community comprised of administrators, parents, teachers, students, and community members who come together, develop a shared vision and work to solve problems and implement solutions (Waters & Cameron, 2007). This, of course, is not new. It takes a group of compassionate and devoted individuals to create student engagement and stimulate learning. The point the researchers were trying to make is that the creation of purposeful community is essential to both first- and second-order change.
Leadership Responsibilities.

The 21 leadership responsibilities are shown in Table 2. The responsibilities are organized according to the Balanced Leadership Framework components. Again, the authors crafted the framework and responsibilities in this manner to serve as a practical tool for educational leaders.

The top five responsibilities with the highest effect size were Situational Awareness, Intellectual Stimulation, Change Agent, Input, and Culture (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Situational Awareness (r=.33) refers to an understanding of the ‘happenings’ in the school, being sensitive to those ‘happenings’, and considering the implications of the ‘happenings’ when making decisions. Intellectual Stimulation (r=.32) refers to professional learning. Principals and their staff are engaged in dialogue about educational theory and research; it becomes part of the routine. Change agent (r=.30) is the willingness to challenge the status quo and ask the important, powerful questions. Input (r=.30) refers to teacher involvement in decision making. Culture (r=.29) speaks to the ability to create a sense of community and shared purpose.

Table 2.

The 21 Leadership Responsibilities Organized by Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities (Effect Size)</th>
<th>The extent to which the principal…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation (r=.25)</td>
<td>Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (r=.23)</td>
<td>Establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture (r=.29)</td>
<td>Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideals and beliefs* (r=.25)</td>
<td>Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input (r=.30)</td>
<td>Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships (r=.19)</td>
<td>Demonstrates and awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational awareness (r=.33)</td>
<td>Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility (r=.16)</td>
<td>Has quality contact and interaction with teachers and students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities (Effect Size)</th>
<th>The extent to which the principal…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contingent reward (r=.15)</td>
<td>Recognises and rewards individual accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline (r=.24)</td>
<td>Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time and focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement with Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (CIA) (r=.16)</td>
<td>Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Focus  
(r=.24) | Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention |
| Order  
(r=.26) | Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines |
| Outreach  
(r=.28) | Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders |
| Resources  
(r=.26) | Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magnitude of Change</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities (Effect Size)</th>
<th>The extent to which the principal…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Change agent  
(r=.30) | Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo |
| Flexibility  
(r=.22) | Adapts his or her leadership behaviour to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent |
| Ideals and beliefs*  
(r=.25) | Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling |
| Intellectual stimulation  
(r=.32) | Ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices, and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture |
| Knowledge of CIA  
(r=.24) | Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction and assessment processes |
Table 2—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitor/evaluate (r=.28)</th>
<th>Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimizer (r=.20)</td>
<td>Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ideals and beliefs appeared in two components: community and magnitude.

Stabilizing Versus De-stabilizing Responsibilities

In addition to knowing about the leadership responsibilities that impact student achievement and how and when to use them, principals need to also be aware of the effect each of the responsibilities can have. The researchers uncovered a paradox when studying the responsibilities (Waters & Cameron, 2007). They found that certain responsibilities had a stabilizing effect and others had a de-stabilizing effect. Given that all of the responsibilities had a positive statistical correlation to student achievement, this finding was not anticipated.

The researchers provide guidance about how to balance the stabilizing and de-stabilizing effect (Waters & Cameron, 2007). As seen in Figure 3 (Waters & Cameron, 2007, p. 19), the stabilizing responsibilities include culture, discipline, focus and order; these responsibilities have the tendency to normalize patterns and behaviors. The de-stabilizing responsibilities include change agent, flexibility, ideals and beliefs, intellectual stimulation, and optimize. These responsibilities have the tendency to challenge the status quo or what is considered “normal” (emphasis added). The principal is challenged to learn which behaviors are stabilizing and which are not, when to use them, and how long to use them. However, the most critical part is the balancing of these effects. The principal has to create the right amount of tension and support to be successful. If the leader leans too much toward stabilizing behaviors, complacency sets in and the status
quo is solidified. If the leader leans too much toward de-stabilizing behaviors, implementation overload happens and burnout occurs. If there is too much emphasis one way or the other, change will not happen.

**Stabilizing Responsibilities**

- Culture
- Discipline
- Order
- Focus

**De-Stabilizing Responsibilities**

- Change Agent
- Flexibility
- Ideals and Beliefs
- Intellectual Stimulation

**Involvement in CIA**

**Figure 3: “Balancing” leadership responsibilities**

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Framework**

This research is persuasive for several reasons. First, the information is practical and easy to apply. Second, the information is based on 30 years of research and the identified leadership responsibilities are statistically significant. Third, those who have engaged in school reform or change will find this work familiar. There was no new terminology, no new behaviors. The “newness” of this research comes in the form of applicability. It is ready to use. While the authors do not claim that this is all there is to know about educational leadership, they believe it is “… as good a collection as any
available to help principals focus their schools on the right things to do” (Waters & Cameron, 2007, p. 23).

At the same time, this research is not without critics. Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) stated that the effects were dependent on a leader’s ability to improve upon all 21 responsibilities simultaneously. Given that some of the responsibilities are part of one’s character, the critics argue that it is unlikely that this will ever occur. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) stated that the leadership responsibility effect sizes should be carefully considered since a large portion of the Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) research was based on unpublished reports which included theses and dissertations.

This literature review has analyzed three of four major components of this study: principal leadership, leadership coaching and the balanced leadership framework. The next section is focused on participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a qualitative research design that will allow the researcher and participant to co-construct and make meaning of the interactions between principal leadership, leadership coaching and the balanced leadership framework.

**Participatory Action Research**

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is rooted in action research and action science; the terms are frequently used in a synonymous way. Action research was first coined in the 1940’s by Kurt Lewin when he began his work with organizations to study intergroup relations. The idea was to bring groups of people with differing backgrounds together to plan, act, and fact find about the results of the action (Lewin, 1947). Lewin believed that there were two prerequisites for this type of work that the participants were ready to deal with the problem head on and that they were ready to do something about it
He conveyed his passion and discovery in his work. “I could not help but feel that the close integration of action, training, and research hold tremendous possibilities for the field of intergroup relations. I would like to pass this feeling to you” (p. 43). As a result of the work he conducted with the various organizations, Lewin did expect the participants to experience a transformative change (Dickens & Watkins, 1999).

Not much was written about action research until rather recently. Action oriented research literature has seen a surge in the past 20 years. It has only recently been accepted as a legitimate form of research and as such, the body of literature is growing as well as interest in the field (Dick, 2009; Stringer2007). Because action research and the action research dissertation is the “new kid on the block” it is under a great deal of scrutiny (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p.1).

The researchers recommend that steps be taken to provide details about the purpose and process articulating the difference between traditional empirical research and action research. Traditional research has shown preference for “knowing through thinking over knowing through doing” (Bradbury & Reason, 2003, p. 158). Traditional research is about conducting research on others while action research is about conducting research with others (Bradbury & Reason, 2003, p. 157) and for themselves and their work (McTaggart, 1997). In this instance, action research participants can become co-researchers thus, creating the conditions for PAR.

Theoretical Foundations

Building upon what Kurt Lewin began in the 1940s, there are a few pairs of researchers who have contributed significantly to formalizing the definition and methodology of PAR adding different perspectives and emphasis about how to use PAR
in various contexts.¹ In the 1970s, Donald Schon and Chris Argyris collaborated on three important books, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (1974), *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (1978), and *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method, and Practice* (1996). Their focus was on organizational learning and action research that involves practitioners as both subjects and co-researchers resulting in authentic learning and transformative change. Schon and Argyris argued that PAR was a means to build and test theory through information gathering and reflective practice (1989). “The development of the theory is critical to the effectiveness of the intervention (action), and it is the intervention that tests the theory (research)” (Arygris & Schon, 1989, p. 619; emphasis added). From their view, research and action are inextricably linked. They argued that in order for organizations to learn, organizations would have to confront the status quo by studying it and invite those involved to be participants in the research.

> “Human beings are more likely to be valid and enactable when the human beings in question participate in building and testing (theories). Hence (PAR) aims at creating an environment in which participants give and get valid information, make free and informed choices, and generate internal commitment to the results of their inquiry” (Arygris & Schon, 1989, p. 613).

In 2000, Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart co-wrote a chapter entitled *Participatory Action Research* in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.).

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¹ Paulo Freire was an important contributor to the field of participatory research. His work was conducted during the late 1960s and 1970s in Chile after a Brazilian coup and was viewed as a form of social action or emancipatory. Freire’s work was focused on “helping an oppressed group to identify and act on social policies and practices that keep unequal power relations in place” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 9). In doing so, Freire felt that this type of research had two purposes: to improve their literacy while engaging them in social action about a civic topic of importance. Freire’s understanding of the empowering and democratic potential of education has been viewed as threatening by some critics. Ultimately, Freire was advocating for those without a voice that they could assert their rights to participate in the process and not simply allow others to dictate to them.
They define PAR as: “A deliberate process through which people aim to transform their practices through a spiral of cycles of critical and self critical action and reflection” (p. 566). The spiral of cycles (Figure 4) developed by Kemmis and McTaggart expanded upon Lewin’s work; the spiral of cycles now includes: plan, act, observe and reflect (p. 567). This spiral of cycles is seen throughout the literature on action research and PAR.

![Figure 4: Action research spiral](image)

The goal of PAR according to Kemmis and McTaggart is to improve people’s lives and practice by interpreting action and “studying the effects of trying to change” (McTaggart, 1997, p. 183). The idea is to learn from one’s experiences and make that learning accessible to others (McTaggart, 1997).

In 2001, Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury developed *Handbook of Action Research*. They define PAR as:
A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in lived experience. It seeks to reconnect action and reflection, theory and practice in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people (2001, p. 1).

The goal of PAR according to Reason and Bradbury is to increase people’s capacity for learning and engagement in the hopes that action is taken to create a desired lasting change in one’s thinking and behavior (2001). People who engage in this process are working to improve their practice and behavior by acting upon new ideas and trying out new behaviors. Their view of PAR has emancipatory, transformative and social justice underpinnings (Bradbury & Reason, 2003).

While these researchers offer their own perspectives of PAR, there is significant agreement about its characteristics and goals. PAR is a cyclical, iterative and reflexive process that involves planning, acting, observing and reflecting. PAR is a collaborative and democratic inquiry that values the tacit knowledge of an individual, encourages new learning and ultimately leads to changed practice.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity is defined as accuracy; quantitative research is based on reliability and the ability to repeat the procedures and get the same results (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2006). Critics challenge the validity of PAR charging that the research produces little action or action but little research which resembles nothing more than problem solving (Dickens & Watkins, 1999). They cite the following issues: lack of rigor, lack of internal and external control, lack of participant engagement, and lack of generalizability. Moreover, they strike at the core of PAR arguing “The principles of action and research
are so different that they are mutually exclusive so that to link them together is to create a fundamental internal conflict” (Dickens & Watkins, 1999, p. 131). Because PAR is not well understood by the research and academic community these critiques are not surprising. Fortunately, the literature offers alternative views of “validity” in the qualitative paradigm and more specifically PAR.

The PAR literature utilizes the terms “validity” and “trustworthiness” interchangeably. Traditionally, validity is to quantitative research as trustworthiness is to qualitative research. Trustworthiness, a term coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is the ability capture the essence of “authenticity” in a constructivist paradigm. Because it is grounded in the qualitative tradition, PAR operates within the four dimensions of trustworthiness: credibility, reliability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). PAR’s trustworthiness depends on the degree to which (a) the integrity of the process has been triangulated and verified (credibility), (b) the documented procedures exist for others to examine (reliability), (c) the audit trail describes that the process actually happened (confirmability) and (d) building upon the other three criteria, the research outcomes may be transferred to their own lives (transferability) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stringer, 2007, p. 59). A researcher’s interpretation and conclusion of the data should ring true to those who participated in the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and include other perspectives and alternate explanations (Argyris & Schon, 1989). The challenge will be for the researcher to achieve these standards of trustworthiness to ensure a rigorous, systematic study has occurred.

**Why Choose Participatory Action Research?**

Since NCLB 2001 (2002), education has become increasingly demanding. With the added complexities of school district financial shortfalls, student mobility, family
poverty and weakened teacher unions, education has also become stressful and unpredictable. Where policy has failed, research suggests that those closest to the problem are most likely those who can solve it (Stringer, 2007). PAR is about the commitment of individuals who are interested in understanding and describing “what’s going on here” (Guba & Lincoln, 2001, p. 2) and “how do I know it” (Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 2007, p. 130) with the explicit purpose of improving themselves, their work and environment. Inherent to the PAR tradition is a call and commitment to action.

Educational leadership researchers are in agreement that leadership plays a critical role in a school’s success and that how one develops, supports and understands how leaders contribute to a school’s success is the basis for on-going research (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Fullan, 2005; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Simkins, 2009). In some ways, these researchers seem to leave more questions than answers.

The recommendations for future research involve all aspects of the principalship and suggest that more insight and knowledge will be gained. Several researchers suggest that there should be less focus on developing “lists of characteristics” and greater focus on how a leader becomes effective and successful in a particular context (Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Simkins, 2009; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003; emphasis added). Fullan recommends that a greater understanding of how principals make a difference is essential; focusing on the what and how of their jobs (2005a). Tschannen-Moran states that trust is the linchpin to developing school culture (2009). She recommends that more research is needed to gain insight into how a principal builds and facilitates trust. Hoy, Tarter and Hoy have researched and found strong evidence of teachers’ collective efficacy and student achievement (2006). They recommend that future research should
include developing a greater understanding of how a principal builds collective efficacy. Several other researchers have documented that principals spend upwards of 80% of their time in some form of communication (hallway conversation, teacher observation and feedback conversations, teacher meetings, leadership meetings, district meetings (Arlestig, 2008; Garmston, 2001; Lambert, 2002). They recommend that greater understanding of how to integrate school improvement and student learning outcomes into that communication is critical.

Given the recommendations of researchers and Jack’s desire to impact his practice, PAR seems to be well suited to study this issue. The principalship is enormously complex and multi-faceted. And while there are still many questions about how principals effectively impact their schools, more practical information and evidence exists now than ever before. If and how one chooses to engage in the new learning largely depends on the individual’s authentic desire to make the mental and behavioral changes necessary to become an effective leader. PAR will allow us to develop a mutual understanding of the principal leadership research and learning, provide a rigorous process to structure our conversations and work, and finally, to inspire action. After all, improving student achievement for all students is the end game and ensuring principals have the resources, time, and support to become effective leaders has become nothing short of a moral imperative.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Overview of Methods and Rationale

The methodology chapter will provide a detailed description of participatory action research design, positionality, data collection, data analysis, rigor and trustworthiness, limitations and ethical concerns. The purpose of this study was to closely follow the process of how one high school principal makes sense of and integrates research-based leadership strategies daily to improve student achievement. I, as researcher and leadership coach, used Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2004) strategies to build the principal’s capacity to become self-directed in pursuit of changing his leadership behaviors to impact student achievement. To study such a transformative, personal change, I required a methodology that is open, exploratory, flexible, and collaborative yet rigorous and valid.

The participatory action research (PAR) methodology selected for this study met those criteria thus making PAR well suited for studying a transformative, personal change. By definition, the PAR approach is a collaborative inquiry (Dickens & Watkins, 1999) between participants to plan, reflect and critically examine a problem or issue (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1987) with the explicit purpose of generating new knowledge (Bradbury & Reason, 2003) to change themselves, their environment and their practice (McTaggart, 1991). PAR offered a systematic approach to studying the complex interrelationships of changing one’s behavior.

As a new principal, he had been struggling for a few years to meet the demands of the role and of an educational reform grant. He came to realize unlearning old behaviors and learning new behaviors was necessary if he was going to succeed. Steps needed to be
taken to create a means for support and growth which is why he agreed to participate in this study. The principal and I worked closely for one academic school year to uncover strategies to change his behavior. The methodology required us to critically examine his practices within the school context, to challenge each other’s assumptions and thinking, and to engage in a reflexive and reflective dialogue that brings about new learning and practice. If conducted in an authentic, rigorous manner, PAR had the potential for igniting transformative change for both of us.

**Research Design**

The principal and I designed this study together using the PAR framework to plan, act, observe, and reflect. The purpose of the spiral of cycles was that after each spiral, the co-researchers increased their knowledge about the problem. The spiral has often been referred to as the plan-act-observe-reflect cycle of activity (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 2007). Many professionals engage in these steps to solve problems and issues, however, PAR makes these steps more deliberate, collaborative, and regular. As both a participant in the change process in the role of coach and researcher, I captured data on both the collaborative work between coach and principal and the observations I made as participant observer. The principal also made observations and reflections on the work as co-participant and co-researcher.

Table 2 below depicts how we used the PAR framework in a given setting to study the research problem. The principal had several set meetings each month of which two of them involved his administrators and teacher leaders. These individuals represented the distributed leadership of the school and were critical to achieving the school improvement and grant goals. During the teaching and learning and leadership team meetings, the principal was engaged in action because he was facilitating and
carrying out his plans as articulated in the Friday meetings. My role was to observe his behaviors and interactions with the participants. When we reconvened at a Friday meeting, we reflected on our observations and thoughts.

The Friday meetings were created for this research study and were the cornerstone of the study. The purpose of the meetings was to establish a set time for the principal and me to engage in dialogue and intense reflection in order to gain new insight and knowledge to affect change to his leadership behaviors. During the first four months, the focus of the Friday meetings was (a) planning and reflecting for the administrative team and teacher leader meetings and (b) studying leadership behavior framework, cognitive coaching, and PAR. During the remaining months, the focus shifted to integrating research-based leadership behaviors into daily practice and reflecting on the outcomes of that work. The structure for the meetings was guided by in-depth, provocative questions I prepared that led us through a cycle of reflection, generation of new ideas and insights, and improved planning. We met approximately two times per month for an hour during the 2011/2012 school year.

Table 3.

Research Design and the PAR Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>PAR Framework</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday Meetings</td>
<td>Principal Researcher</td>
<td>To engage in reflexive and reflective dialogue using coaching strategies to make sense of “what is going on?” and “how do I learn from that dialogue in order to make changes to my practice?”</td>
<td>2x/mo</td>
<td>Plan Reflect</td>
<td>Interview Transcriptions Field Notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample and Site

A purposeful sampling strategy was employed; this strategy is defined as the intentional selection of individual(s) that will best inform me about the problem being studied (Creswell, 2007). I identified a high school principal who meets the purposeful sampling criteria. The principal is uniquely positioned given his desire to change his leadership behaviors and his willingness to engage in a leadership coaching process. The principal and I have worked together for three years and have developed an effective working relationship which coincided with the beginning of the school’s five year educational reform grant. The leadership demands of the grant crystallized the principal’s view of his role. Confidentially, he expressed his desire to change his leadership to achieve the goals of the grant which centered on improving achievement for all students.

The entire study was conducted on-site at the high school.

Data Collection

Various kinds of data were collected for this study. The primary source of data was generated from transcriptions of Friday meetings, teaching and learning meetings,
and leadership team meetings. I audiotaped and transcribed each meeting to ensure accuracy. With each transcription, I did an intensive read making margin notes that generated insights and deeper questioning. These transcriptions served several purposes. First, they provided documentation about actual events including the principal’s behavior. Second, the transcriptions served as the basis for planning and reflection. We asked ourselves: “How did the principal’s leadership behavior facilitate the school improvement and grant goals?” “How did his behaviors affect his administrators and teacher leaders?” “How did his behaviors help him to achieve the goals of the meetings?” “How are the principal’s leadership behaviors changing?” Third, the transcriptions were evidence that the PAR methodology was utilized in a systematic, rigorous way. Finally, the transcriptions were used for data analysis that generated meaning and evidence about the research problem.

Other sources of data were used as well. Email communication between the principal and his staff and the principal and me were printed, analyzed and discussed. Observations of the principal in his meetings and in his day-to-day activities were conducted. Field notes were maintained; I updated the field notes following observations and Friday meetings. Staff newsletters generated by the principal were collected, analyzed and discussed as well.

During the spring of 2011, I conducted a field test of the methodology and design for this study by carrying out a four week initial pre-study with the principal; I received appropriate HSIRB approval to conduct the field test. During this field test, the principal and I confined our work to step 1 (planning) and 2 (acting) of the PAR process and focused on establishing a working rapport as co-researchers within the PAR process and
a testing of the data collection methods for the full study. The results of the field test were used to inform the full study design.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted within the qualitative paradigm. The focus was to seek answers to the “how” and “why” questions that could not be answered with quantitative research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The volume of data generated from qualitative research is cumbersome and immense which makes the approach to analysis less straightforward and labor intensive. “Analysis is the most mysterious and most difficult part of qualitative research. It is fair to say that the only way to understand the data analysis process is to do it” (Hatch, 2002, p. 54). Further, the process was described as a spiraling, non-linear process (Creswell, 2007), again, making the process complicated. I cycled through several procedures and steps many times to get a sense of the whole before breaking apart the data into discrete texts of meaning and re-assembling them to generate new insights and meaning into the problem.

The data analysis steps I used were adapted from the work of several prominent researchers in qualitative research Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2006); Creswell (2007); Foss and Waters, (2007); Hatch (2002); Saldana (2009); Stake (1995); and Yin (2009):

1. Transcribe the interviews verbatim.
2. Assemble email communications, staff newsletters, and field notes.
3. Read, read, and re-read the data identifying important segments of text that are pertinent to the research questions.
4. Utilize *In Vivo* (verbatim) coding (Saldana, 2009).
5. Sort and combine *In Vivo* codes into piles to generate themes.
6. Develop a conceptual schema using the themes.
7. Question assumptions, consult and gain input from others

8. Synthesize and develop report

A few strategies were used to facilitate the analysis process. To stay focused, I kept the research questions and purpose statement in the forefront at all times. Within the data, there were interesting issues identified that were unrelated to the questions and purpose that will be addressed in Chapter 5. Additional strategies used were coding as a novice and coding with skepticism (Foss and Waters, 2007). Coding as a novice meant to approach data analysis by ignoring bias and assumptions. This was not always easy. Often this required stepping away from the data for a period of time to distract and recalibrate myself. Coding with skepticism meant to question the interpretations being made. Again, this was not always easy. I would ask myself whether or not the data supported the interpretations being made.

Validity and Trustworthiness

As described in chapter two, validity and trustworthiness are used interchangeably in the literature. Validity is defined as accuracy and rigorous. Quantitative research is based on reliability and the ability to repeat the procedures and get the same results (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2006). Trustworthiness is a term coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to capture these similar concepts when conducting qualitative research. Trustworthiness is predicated on credibility, reliability, transferability, and confirmability.

The trustworthiness of the PAR study was derived from the on-going collaborative inquiry whereby the participants can continually identify themselves and their progress in pursuit of their goal to improve. There were several ways to strengthen the trustworthiness of PAR: triangulation, member checking, reflexive journaling, peer
review and *In Vivo* coding. I triangulated the data by confirming or disconfirming the data through multiple sources that included transcriptions, observations, field notes, and documents. This was an on-going, labor intensive process that occurred throughout the study so that topics and patterns could be identified to guide the discussion and problem.

Member checking was used to substantiate the data and minimize bias. This process improved accuracy and credibility of data collection and analysis. Member checking allowed us the opportunity to review each other’s data, ensure intent and meaning were accurately captured in the raw data and the analysis, and to reach consensus on how we collectively captured the meaning experience. During Friday meetings, we routinely discussed our interpretations to check for understanding. When discrepancies were found, we challenged each other’s thinking to ensure we did not settle and accept a weak argument.

Reflexive journaling was done by the principal to document his personal thoughts and reflections. We used those journaling notes during our Friday meetings to determine what changes were occurring and how his thinking and habits were changing. During the analysis phase, peer review was important to ensure that other interpretation or alternate explanations were explored.

Finally, I purposefully chose to use *In Vivo* coding because I believed it strengthened the credibility and transferability of the outcomes and final report. I felt that capturing the principal’s thoughts and meaning making in his own words was vitally important to describing his real-life constructs and actions, thereby minimizing questioning of the interpretations and outcomes. Further, readers of the final report would be able to identify and recognize themselves within a similar context thus making the study increasingly meaningful and useful to others.
**Positionality**

Positionality is an important construct of PAR that forces the researcher to consider how he or she is positioned within the study. The positionality continuum is determined to the degree that the researcher is an insider or outsider (Herr & Anderson, 2005). For my study, I found myself uniquely situated as an insider-outsider (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Because I was new to the school and did not have a teaching background, I was viewed as an outsider. At the same time, because I had an important role administering the reform grant and serving on the leadership team, I was also viewed as an insider.

The literature suggests that the insider-outsider position is ideal for PAR and usually “requires years to establish entry and trust. These are rare instances” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p.39). There are particular benefits that derive from this position. “Our sense is that in making explicit the tensions we experience as researchers in our varying roles and statuses, we have the possibility of crafting uniquely complex understandings of the research questions” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 44) offering a “specialized, subjugated knowledge that provides a unique standpoint on self and society” (Collins as cited in Anderson, Herr & Anderson, 2007, p. 44). The importance of my position and potential contribution to this process has caused me to reflect and focus on my need to ensure rigor, objectivity and the relentless pursuit to improve my own practice as both a researcher and leadership coach.

**Limitations**

As a first time PAR researcher, there were several challenges. Because I was the only doctoral student using this methodology, collegial support and input was not easily found. I invested a great deal of time researching and understanding PAR. PAR is not so
much about methodology as it is about generating knowledge and raising consciousness that leads to action by those involved. Given my existing relationship with the principal, I was initially hesitant about pressing the principal to move from knowledge and consciousness to action. As a result, I felt that progress was slow initially.

As the literature states PAR requires a great deal of time and effort by its participants and seems to have an artificial end date. Although we scheduled Friday meetings twice a month, the principal had to cancel several meetings due to unexpected crises or issues. Thus, we extended our research period from one semester to a full academic year. In the end, we both agreed that we could have continued our work in pursuit of greater change.

**Ethical Issues**

The principal provided verbal and written consent to participate in this research. I ensured confidentiality by keeping all written documentation in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (transcription, reports and other documents) were kept on my home office computer that was password protected. After completion of the project, the electronic data were removed from my computer, stored on a zip drive and filed with the written documentation in the Western Michigan University archives. I established pseudonyms for the participant and location.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Overview of Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this participatory action research study (PAR) was to follow the process of how one high school building principal made sense of and integrated research-based leadership strategies daily to improve student achievement by utilizing a leadership coach. In this case, I as the researcher served as the leadership coach and the Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) as a lens by which to view and understand principal leadership behaviors. The PAR methodology allowed the high school principal and me to co-construct, analyze and interpret the process that the principal went through to effect change in his daily practice. I collected and analyzed data from transcriptions of meetings between the principal and me, field notes, and memos to answer the following questions:

1. How did the principal and I use the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, the Balanced Leadership Framework and Cognitive Coaching to make sense of research-based principal leadership behaviors and stimulate growth and action?

2. What change was experienced by the participants?

3. What were the important factors that led to growth and change?

Working through the data analysis process to answer the research questions, the challenge was two-fold (1) identifying what changes were occurring and determining how they were occurring and (2) capturing the essence of the changes. Initially, we planned a process that included professional learning about research-based principal leadership behaviors followed by coaching sessions to reflect upon whether or not the
leadership behaviors were being enacted and done so with fidelity. However, soon after our nine-month study began, we found ourselves delving into deeply held beliefs about leadership, moral purpose, and our intrinsic desire to improve who we are as leaders. Thus, the changes were not only occurring outwardly through our behaviors but inwardly as well on an emotional level and within our belief system.

The second challenge was to capture the essence of the changes that occurred for the principal and me and of the changes that occurred between the principal and me. In a very straightforward manner, the principal was focused on improving his leadership in order to lead change. I was focused on providing support and guidance as a leadership coach to help the principal improve his practice. Unexpectedly, this process brought about incremental growth for both of us. While we worked to improve the principal’s leadership behaviors, our work also exposed our shortcomings leaving us feeling vulnerable. It was in those moments of humility that allowed us to face the uncomfortableness that comes with change so as to not fear the uncertainty of change but rather to experience the thinking and acting needed to develop new beliefs about change and our practices (Fullan, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

In addition to these challenges, I had several assumptions about this work before the study began. First, I assumed that principals were expertly prepared prior to their assignment as principal. Second, I assumed that the change process would be relatively straightforward. And third, I assumed the change would reside with the principal because I was there to help him with his goal. I understood that I would learn about the research process but did not take into consideration that I would experience growth as a leadership coach and professional. As the study progressed, I soon learned that my assumptions were faulty.
The remainder of this chapter consists of the following sections to guide the reader through the data analysis process:

1. Description of data which includes describing how the data were obtained (coaching sessions, observations, etc) and how the data were analyzed

2. Analysis of themes which includes describing the major themes and sub-themes identified and how they are connected.

**Description of Data**

Multiple sources of data were utilized to answer the research questions developed for this study as well as to strengthen the validity of the data analysis. I collected data from (1) Meeting transcriptions, (2) Documents including emails and principal communications, and (3) Field and analysis memos. I methodically organized my sources into two large binders that contained different sections and sub-sections for each source of data.

**Transcriptions**

A significant amount of time was devoted to transcribing and analyzing our (1) Friday meetings, (2) administrative team meetings, and (3) teacher leader meetings. This kind of meticulous work was necessary to explore the details and nuances of the happenings and outcomes of these meetings. After each transcription was completed, I read each carefully, made margin notes, and found salient meaning that led to deeper questioning.

There were 13 Friday meetings all of which were transcribed. There were 12 administrative team and teacher leader meetings that were transcribed during the first half of our study. During the second half of the study, we decided that the detailed level of
transcriptions of administrative team and teacher leader meetings was not necessary any longer. I continued to participate, observe, and maintain field notes for those meetings.

Documents

Documents such as emails, communications, and reflection questions generated from analysis of transcriptions, were collected throughout the study. These documents provided another avenue to collect information about Jack’s beliefs and behaviors. They provided insight into ways he communicated with his staff, what he chose to communicate about, and how he was making sense of his own beliefs and actions. These documents served to validate whether or not his beliefs and commitments during our Friday meetings were translating into practice.

Field and Analysis Memos

I documented field notes and analysis notes in the form of memos. My field notes were a record of my observations, thoughts, feelings, and opinions throughout the study. I used this writing process to explore what I believed was happening and to deepen my understanding of the data. Further, I used this tool to question myself and the process to ensure I was continually improving as a coach and researcher.

My analysis notes were a record of my thoughts and hunches about the data as I worked through the data analysis process. The actual writing process was instrumental to the analysis process because it allowed me to make connections, to question my hunches, and to interpret the data. With voluminous amounts of data, this process helped me to conceptualize and ground my conclusions to the raw data in order to tell the story.

Description of Inductive Data Analysis

The process of inductive data analysis was a long and arduous one. I coalesced several authors’ recommendations about how to conduct data analysis as outlined in
Chapter 3. Hatch (2002) defines inductive data analysis as bringing selected pieces of data together to create a meaningful whole. This process is a “search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made” (p. 161). The process of finding patterns or themes from the data was tedious and connecting those patterns or themes required intensive, complex thinking. A deep understanding of the raw data was absolutely essential to this process. As such, I immersed myself in the data by literally living with it every day during my analysis and writing.

I began the process by re-reading an entire, clean set of Friday meeting transcriptions to get a sense of what the data were saying and what it was not. As I did so, I kept my research questions in the forefront which served as my units of analysis. I was searching for significant segments of data so that the questions could be answered. I underlined important segments of meaning and wrote in vivo codes in the margin that captured what was literally transpiring. Staying at the surface of the data prevented me from trying to code something I believed was happening or wanted to happen rather than what was actually happening (Foss and Waters, 2007, pg. 289).

After the coding process, I sorted the codes to identify themes. This required that I cut out each segment of meaning and put the coded segments with similar meanings together. During this process, I had to reserve judgments about what I believed was happening so that I was not trying to create something that was not reflected in the data. I then coded each pile with a theme that captured the essence of the in vivo codes. From approximately 500 pages of qualitative data, I ended up with 48 themes.

The next step was perhaps the most difficult and challenging. I reduced the 48 themes into 3 main themes with 8 sub-themes that resulted in my explanatory schema.
(see Figure A on page 80). Foss and Waters described the purpose of an explanatory schema as a way to conceptualize the data that “allows you to tell the story of your data in an interesting and insightful way” (2007, p.196). This step required complex thinking as I worked to reduce the 48 piles of themes. Several schemas were developed before I decided on the final version.

The greatest tool I had to help me decide on the final explanatory schema was the process of writing. Hatch states “writing involves a special kind of thinking that is hard to do except during the act of constructing meaning in text. As writing proceeds, you will likely see relationships, patterns, and themes in new or different ways” (2002, p. 223). So, I began to write as a way to immerse myself in the data in a new way that would hopefully yield new ways to think about the data. I wrote about each of the 48 piles of themes and began to see similar meanings and relationships across those themes. The piles were combined and re-combined numerous times. As I began to solidify the themes and sub-themes, I would cross check my ideas by going back to the original data sources looking for verification and validation. It was the writing process that allowed me to gain confidence and arrive at a final schema.

**References to Time**

In the next section of this narrative, I have described the story of the data through the analysis of the major themes and sub-themes. There were many references to time that require prior explanation to make clearer for the reader.

1. Jack became principal at GWHS in August 2008 and was interim principal from August 2007 to July 2008.
2. I became the project director for the redesign grant at GWHS in August 2008.
3. The study period was September 2011 to May 2012 (nine months).
4. The early part of the study refers to September to December 2011.

5. The later part of the study refers to January to May 2012.

**Analysis of Themes**

The purpose of this section is to describe the story the data is telling as it relates to the research questions. I will describe the explanatory schema (see Figure A. on page 80) with its major themes and sub themes, explain how the themes are interrelated and provide evidence that supports the analysis and outcomes. Following are the three major themes with eight sub-themes:

1. Limited Scope of Leadership Strategies
   - Principal’s characteristics and beliefs
   - Principal’s leadership barriers

2. Growth Process and Shifts in Understanding
   - PAR
   - Balanced Leadership Framework (“21”)
   - Leadership coaching

3. Change in Leadership Orientation
   - Focus change
   - Belief change
   - Behavior change
Figure 5. Explanatory schema

- Principal's Characteristics and Beliefs
- Principal's Leadership Barriers
- Limited Scope of Leachership Strategies
- Leadership Coaching
- "21"
- Growth Process & Shifts in Understanding
- PAR
- Focus Change
- Belief Change
- Behavior Change

CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP ORIENTATION
Limited Scope of Leadership Strategies

The Limited Scope of Leadership Strategies theme is one of three major themes that were identified from the data analysis. In our early Friday meetings, as Jack and I considered the meaning of the Balanced Leadership Framework and the 21 Leadership Responsibilities, we realized that in order to develop a deeper understanding of those responsibilities we needed to place each of them within the context of his work to redesign the high school. In doing so, we had to identify what behaviors and practices were not working and why.

Jack had a set of leadership strategies that he had employed for many years in the various roles he held at the high school including interim principal. Reflecting back, Jack felt that he was well situated to be the principal until the mandates for change came about. In the past, teacher leader meetings were focused on budgets, curriculum, and supplies because that ‘was the way things had always been done’ until Jack began to shift the conversations to student achievement.

Through our ongoing investigation of the ‘limited scope of leadership strategies’ we identified specific areas that needed improvement: (1) facilitating administrative team and teacher leader team meetings, (2) creating a focus, (3) decision-making processes, (4) delegating and (5) communicating. I termed these items as ‘limited scope of leadership strategies’ because Jack was utilizing his ‘old’ repertoire of behaviors and practices that had met his needs prior to the mandates for change. Now, as a result, he was not getting the outcomes he desired.

Facilitation and Productivity of Meetings.

The productivity of the administrative team and teacher leader team meetings was a subject we discussed nearly every time we met because the staff involved was integral
to the redesign given their leadership role in the school and their relationships with the teachers. In our early conversations about those meetings, Jack and I reflected upon and discussed my observations, his impressions and the meeting transcriptions. Overall, we agreed that the meetings lacked concrete planning and meaningful outcomes. The principal summarized one meeting this way: “That’s the shame of it. It would have been better had we not met” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 10.6.11, line 202). Jack was so aggravated with the lack of productivity during one of the teacher leader meetings that he felt the meeting was actually counterproductive and fueled resistance to the redesign.

We also learned through our discussions that his facilitation of the meetings was strong at the beginning to middle of the meeting and waned thereafter. Staff went off topic and engaged in idle chatter while the principal seemed to shut down. At times he said, “I didn’t really care which direction it goes” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 10.27.11, line 83). He expressed frustration because he felt the meetings were not productive (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.16.12, line 540). Jack wanted more productive meetings but was restricted by using a limited scope of leadership strategies.

Creating a Focus.

Jack had been striving to shift the focus to student achievement that included teacher leaders conducting teacher observations and feedback and working with teacher teams to analyze student data to improve their instructional practices. This was no simple task because these were relatively new concepts and there were no prior systems in place to facilitate this new work. Jack needed his administrative team and teacher leaders to help him execute this plan. Not unexpectedly, there was some resistance. This was compounded by confusing communication regarding the leaders’ change in priorities and responsibilities.
As reflected in the transcriptions and archival documents, the teacher leaders shared their frustrations about being over-prioritized and loosing focus. As a result, the teacher leader conversations were often unproductive and included too much discussion about process and too little discussion about outcomes. For instance, teacher leaders often stated that there was not enough time to conduct observations and feedback (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 12.16.11, line 398) and that it was difficult to collect student data (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 12.16.11, line 529). While these were valid issues, Jack was not equipped to move them forward. These conversations were virtually the same for the first half of the school year (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 12.16.11, line 348).

**Decision-Making Processes.**

Another issue that revealed a limited scope of leadership strategies was Jack’s decision-making processes. Some decisions lacked clarity, consistency and transparency. There were times when some administrative team members and teacher leaders were operating under different directives leaving feelings of confusion and frustration. When Jack and I were discussing decision making with regard to academy structure, the conversation was:

H: And where was that (academy structure) decision made? How was that decision made?

J: It was just done.

H: by?

J: by anyone who wanted to do it. It just kind of happened. (J. Ryan & H. Beidinger, Personal Communication, 10.27.11, lines 178-181).
Of course, Jack did not intend to confuse his leaders. However, his decision making process was not always consistent and purposeful. There were times when his decisions reflected the priorities of other people’s agendas. Other times his decisions were made in isolation or with too few individuals. Now, Jack was focusing his decision-making on improving student achievement and was trying to include the opinions of the administrative team and teacher leaders.

**Delegation.**

Being the principal of a large high school with approximately 3,500 students and 170 teachers, Jack had become accustomed to working 6 to 7 days a week. He believed that he could “do everything and do it by myself” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, line 376). This practice was outdated and unproductive in light of the new mandates. He was managing all the responsibilities that were associated with his role prior to the mandates while at the same time trying to manage the new responsibilities that came along with the mandates. Jack was coming in at 6am and leaving at 10pm and yet not getting the outcomes he desired for himself or his leaders. He expressed his frustration: “I’m getting mad when I am planning by myself and I’m doing somebody else’s job” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, Lines 344-345). He began to recognize that if he was going to implement change effectively he would need to delegate some of his responsibilities.

**Communication.**

Underlying all of these issues was the issue of communication. Jack reflected upon his leadership roles prior to his principalship and said that “there was no communication, there were no minutes, and there was no agenda; I still wonder how anything got done” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 10.6.11, line 179). Now,
communication was abundant and had taken on many forms: email, formal memos, faculty meetings, informal and formal meetings, and yet he felt that it was not enough.

As we reflected upon transcripts and archival documents, we came to realize that there was in fact communication overload. The focus had become diluted because there were so many changes happening at once and it was all being communicated without regard to priorities. As a result, this became “excuses for why we can’t do it (implement new changes)” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 10.13.11, line 200).

Some of the limited scope of leadership strategies revealed themselves to us quickly while others coalesced more slowly. Improving upon these topics was of critical importance because they directly impacted the redesign process. We did not quite understand it at the time it was happening but Jack and I needed to uncover why his leadership strategies were limited in scope. This brought us to conversations about his characteristics and beliefs about being a principal and the barriers to his leadership. We needed to understand how he viewed himself as a principal and to understand what was holding him back. We would cycle back through these conversations throughout our nine month study. We realized that we could never leave those conversations behind because if there was going to be real change we had to understand the foundations of his beliefs and his shortcomings.

**Sub-Themes of Limited Scope of Leadership Strategies**

As we worked through the process of identifying behaviors and practices that were not effective, we realized yet again that we needed to delve more deeply into the reasons for utilizing ineffective behaviors and practices. There were two sub-themes that emerged from those conversations regarding Limited Scope of Leadership Strategies: (1) Leadership Barriers and (2) Characteristics and Beliefs. These two areas when combined
created the foundation from which we could understand the beliefs, motives and reasons why Jack was making the choices he made.

**Leadership Barriers.**

During our conversations about behaviors and practices that were holding him back, we began to ask ourselves why that was happening and why did it continue to occur. This led us into deeper conversations about barriers to his leadership. These were probably the most difficult discussions because we were addressing the very personal reasons why Jack was behaving the way he was. At a gut level, we were exploring the details of his behaviors, words, and thinking process. Amazingly, he was open to these discussions. Jack increasingly recognized and owned what he called his shortcomings.

Through observations, transcriptions, and our collective reflection time, we identified behaviors and routines that he was repetitively utilizing not realizing how they created barriers and in turn prevented him from achieving his goals. Jack often talked about how he attended to the critical work that involved instruction and student achievement *after* school hours and on the weekends. He did this because his time during the day was often dictated by other people’s agendas, filled with what we termed non-critical work such as buildings and grounds issues and personnel issues, and finally, he admitted that he felt comfortable that he already knew what needed to be done. As a result, Jack did his planning and decision-making in isolation. I commented to him “you were like an island onto yourself” and he responded “It’s harsh, but true” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, lines 675-676). This conversation crystallized for us that this behavior was excluding the voices, thoughts, experiences, and opinions of his administrative leadership team and his teacher leader team. Even though, there was the appearance of shared leadership and decision-making through leadership meetings, Jack
realized that planning and decision-making in isolation was not helping to build consensus and ownership.

Jack also had a tendency to respond to staff’s questions and thoughts with simple, short responses. Unfortunately, there were times this gave the impression that he was not interested, did not care, or lacked information. Throughout our work together when this occurred, I would reflect back to him what his answer meant to me which sometimes resulted in miscommunication and missed opportunities for greater understanding. Even towards the end of study, Jack continued to acknowledge his struggle to change this behavior. “I gave you my typical short answer and I know you want to draw out of me longer answers but, you know, I’m always short on words” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 5.30.12, lines 119-120).

Reading our Friday meeting transcriptions was important to the learning process we tried to hold ourselves accountable to our words and actions. This was not a pleasant task for Jack because he viewed it as a chore. In a later conversation, he commented how he didn’t like re-living events and re-reading books. He said “I already lived it once and then I have to re-live it” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 10.6.11, lines 235-236). This was illuminating. We ultimately learned that Jack was not a reflective practitioner. He said “I know that reflection is my weakest area” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 10.27.11, line 20). Without reflection, Jack did not have the tools to examine himself and his practices thus holding him back from opportunities of growth and change.

**Characteristics and Beliefs.**

Characteristics and beliefs represent the foundational composition of an individual that provide clues about the way an individual thinks and behaves. This goes beyond one’s ideas about leadership but rather seeks to understand the individual at an
emotional level. Although we did not set out to deliberately identify Jack’s characteristics and beliefs, they were certainly revealed to us during our Friday meetings.

Throughout the entire study, Jack differentiated his first three years as principal from his fourth year. During the first three years, he characterized himself this way:

I’m a puppet and my voice is not there. And what I’m saying is what I’m being fed. And that’s the way I have felt through the last few years. You don’t want me to do what I want to do, so just tell me what to do” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 5.30.12, lines 13-15).

Jack said that he did not have a voice because there was a lack of trust with the district office. Their goals were seemingly different than Jack’s and this created tension. He was charged with redesigning the high school while at the same time being told to keep his teachers happy. He felt as though he would just have to manage things to get through it with no real plan to change his circumstances.

Given the circumstances, Jack’s self-efficacy lessened during those three years. He was less confident about his decisions. “I was always second guessing myself because I would get slapped for my decisions. So I was always thinking to what degree I want to get slapped for this decision. It was constant” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 9.23.11, lines 134-135). He felt unsupported and disempowered to do his job.

At the beginning of his fourth year as principal, a new district administrator was hired. Jack noted immediately that the new administrator showed a great deal of support for him and the goals of the redesign. This had an immediate effect on him. Jack frequently talked about how he felt increasingly supported and validated. He was now involved in decision-making at the district level, thus providing him the confidence to
make decisions at the building level. He no longer felt fearful; he felt self-assured that he was doing the right things.

Now that Jack was operating with an increased sense of self efficacy, he wanted to articulate his vision and his message about the redesign and effectively use opportunities to communicate that vision and message. Up until this point, he had not realized how much weight his words could carry with his staff. Because he had not spoken with his own voice in the past, his words had not carried much weight with him either. He came to realize the importance of planning and sharing his vision and message with his staff.

My words have a whole lot of weight and I have to take those opportunities to talk with staff very seriously. I need to craft those words very carefully because I have few opportunities to do that. It means a lot more coming from me instead of reading that in a memo. Just a whole lot more. So I think I also need to plan for those (faculty meetings) throughout the year and put those in the year at strategic times. (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 12.6.11, lines 97-101).

Intertwined within this conversation, we learned more about Jack’s personal characteristics and his beliefs about leadership. He described himself as a visionary and not a detail-oriented person. Jack said he was often overly patient when accepting delays in completion of important tasks related to curriculum, instruction and assessment. At the same time, he said he was too impatient to be involved in the curriculum, instruction and assessment development process because of how slow and tedious the process was. We attempted to examine and perhaps resolve this conflict. The important first step was recognition of the conflict within him and the second step was recognition that perhaps he had to delegate the “detail” work to others.
Jack grew up and practiced with a strong sense of servant leadership\(^2\) that was instilled in him by his father and mentor, both of whom were former school administrators. He felt that if he maintained an open door policy and responded to each and every teacher, student, and parent that he would keep everyone happy and that would be enough. Jack’s beliefs about the importance of servant leadership shifted. Knowing it was still important, Jack realized that servant leadership alone would not help him achieve his goal (Transcriptions, 12.16.11, lines 627-629). This was a major shift; this recognition opened him to the possibility to explore other ways to think about and engage in leadership. He said he wished that he had made the leap from management to leadership four years ago when he was first promoted. Jack was engaged in a deep examination of his beliefs about leadership and was accepting the growth and shifts that he was experiencing.

**Summary of Limited Scope of Leadership Strategies**

The identification of Jack’s characteristics and beliefs and his leadership barriers, collectively termed Limited Scope of Leadership Strategies, emerged as a result of our work together and proved to be especially critical to stimulating change. We were constantly challenging ourselves to understand more deeply how Jack’s leadership behaviors had evolved and why. We did not set out to examine Jack’s behavior in such a critical and personal way. We believed that we could study research-based leadership behaviors and integrate them into his daily practice. This was simplistic and faulty thinking.

\(^2\) Jack’s interpretation of servant leadership was consistent with Greenleaf’s definition that leaders should “be attentive to the concerns of their followers and should empathize with them; they should take care of them and nurture them” (as cited in Northouse, 2010, p. 385).
By delving more deeply into Jack’s background and beliefs about leadership, we could begin to understand why Jack engaged in certain leadership behaviors. The detail and understandings grew over the course of our nine month study. Each time we met, we talked about and analyzed his leadership behavior in the context of his leadership team meetings and teacher leader meetings. Thus, Jack came face-to-face with the realization that the leadership behaviors he had at his disposal were falling short. He was not getting the response and outcomes he expected and needed from his leadership team. These realizations created new thinking and solidified the idea that adopting new leadership behaviors would be essential to his success as a principal.

**Growth Process and Shifts in Understanding**

The growth process and shifts in understanding were the result of our conversations during our Friday meetings and the independent work we each did between our Friday meetings. For the purpose of assisting Jack with adopting and integrating effective leadership behaviors, our work was centered on three essential components: (1) Participatory Action Research, (2) Leadership Coaching, and (3) Balanced Leadership Framework.

Through the synergistic use of these three essential components, there was growth and shifts in understanding that occurred with Jack as an individual and leader and with me as a researcher and coach. At the same time, our coaching relationship evolved from one that was focused on “fixing” Jack to one that was focused on helping one another to evolve into better practitioners. The purpose of this section is to describe each of the three essential components and how we used these components to facilitate the growth process and shifts in understanding.
**Participatory action research.**

The participatory action research (PAR) was the methodology that facilitated this study. Spiraling repeatedly through the PAR steps of plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) forced us to critically examine our reality and assumptions so that we could learn from our thinking and behavior in order to change it. The changes were incremental and led to new ways of thinking and behaving.

In order to study and understand our reality, we met regularly at our Friday Meeting to discuss the administrative team leader and teacher leader meetings. We focused on these meetings for two reasons. First, during our initial meeting we were discussing how Jack utilized his day and he said if you looked at his calendar, it was all meetings. So, we agreed that making sure his meetings were necessary and productive was essential. Second, the leadership meetings were his primary avenue for communicating his vision and ensuring his leaders were carrying out that vision. At our Friday meetings, we also studied the transcripts from those leadership meetings. These transcripts became the evidence of our growth process and shifts in understanding.

We used an inquiry-based approach to review the transcripts and drive our discussions. After reading the transcripts, open-ended reflection questions were generated that challenged our thinking and decisions as it related to his leadership, my leadership coaching, our collective decision-making, and our process for studying his leadership. These questions were used as the basis for discussion during our Friday meetings. This process forced us to have difficult, honest, and sometimes quite personal conversations which allowed us to engage and view our reality from different perspectives. For both of us, it created opportunities for new thinking and behaving.
PAR and leadership meetings.

The goal of the redesign was to improve student achievement through teaching and learning. At our first Friday meeting, Jack said how important it was that he needed to focus on building capacity for the leadership team, keep them focused on our goals and hold ourselves accountable to those goals. And although Jack was focused on this goal, his administrative and teacher leader teams were not. In sum, the leaders did not have a collective understanding about the goals of the redesign nor their role in the redesign.

The PAR process was instrumental in identifying the disconnect between what Jack’s words and behavior were communicating about the redesign and what the leaders were hearing and understanding and how they translated that into action. A careful review of the leadership meeting transcripts allowed us to recognize that in those instances Jack was utilizing a limited set of leadership behaviors that seemed to be sufficient for another time. However, now, it was clear that new leadership behaviors would be necessary to facilitate the redesign.

In order to see new leadership behaviors being used, we needed to add two additional steps to our current process. Up until this point, we reviewed the leadership meeting transcripts, developed reflection questions, and discussed them. We added planning and observation to our process. We collaboratively planned for the meetings. During the meetings, I would observe him to capture information on his facilitation, staff impressions, and non-verbal behavior and Jack would make notes about important moments and thoughts. As a result, our conversations deepened. By infusing our conversations with this additional information, we analyzed the meetings with greater insight from different perspectives that yielded a growing understanding of how Jack
needed to plan and augment his behavior to generate productive leadership meetings. This is when positive changes began to occur.

During the next few months, there were positive changes. Jack had established a primary focus for his teacher leaders: the completion of teacher observations and feedback. The teacher leaders were instrumental in improving teaching and learning by observing teachers in their classrooms and providing feedback and coaching. Jack reflected on this change and the reasons for the change during a Friday Meeting. “I think we have a huge success with the last teacher leader meeting and that’s because we discussed it and because we planned for it and I made everyone go and do an observation (as part of the meeting) and now we are sharing observations” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, lines 21-23). Prior, teacher leaders were not prepared to discuss their observations and feedback. Now, Jack had a plan to ensure those conversations would occur. Our Friday Meeting process that was grounded in PAR methodology was yielding positive results.

PAR and leadership behaviors.

The purpose of this study was to adopt and integrate research-based leadership behaviors into Jack’s daily practice. PAR provided structure and rigor by which to examine his leadership behavior in context, our assumptions, and the research-based leadership behaviors. Moreover, PAR provided the process to critically reflect and generate a complex understanding about what we were doing, planning, and observing.

At the beginning of our study, we adhered to the PAR’s cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect because that was the methodology. We recognized that the cycle did not necessarily have to be linear but that all the steps were necessary to generate understanding of an issue or behavior we were struggling with. By the end of the study,
we both came to recognize the power of PAR. During one of our Friday Meetings, I asked Jack how he would summarize how we had used PAR to stimulate change. He articulated,

I think it’s both people being committed to the methodology. If you don’t have that you are not going to get anywhere with that … it’s both people being committed to the cause as well. You have to have a very strong moral ethical belief in what you are doing and that what you are doing can make a difference but that there is a process and you can learn through that process and get better through that process (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 4.13.12, lines 401-413).

Jack’s response captured the essence of our work together. We were both committed to the new learning and the desire to change our beliefs and behaviors about our practice especially Jack’s practice.

Although Jack was not thrilled about his reflection time, he came to have a deep appreciation of it because he now understood what reflection time could do for him. The following excerpt illustrates his beliefs about reflection.

H: How does this process assist you to achieve your goal to become this more dynamic, effective leader?
J: The forced reflection (laughter), yes, it’s forced. It’s time I had not set aside for reflection. I always will do now for the rest of my life.
H: How do you know that?
J: Because it has dramatically improved what I can do
H: And how do you know that?
J: Because I see the school becoming what I see in my mind, we are getting there. Because before we were just going through the motions.
H: How has your leadership impacted that?

J: So that is because of all the emphasis we have put on what is happening in the classrooms and all the emphasis on teaching and learning and emphasis on student achievement. What we talk about has changed in this building.

H: and you as a leader have affected that conversation, how are you making that happen?

J: through my priorities, saying that this is what is important and sticking to that.

Jack believed that reflection would now become a lifelong habit. The above excerpt reveals that the process of planning and reflecting was improving his meetings and there was evidence that his behavior was having a positive effect in the classroom. Again, Jack was experiencing a great deal of satisfaction with his leadership which solidified his belief that reflection was an important tool for effective principals.

**Leadership coaching.**

To facilitate and improve my coaching, I was using *Cognitive Coaching* (Garmston & Costa, 2002) as my reference. A cognitive coach operates within three processes to explore thinking and behavior: (1) planning, (2) reflecting, and (3) problem-solving. These processes are similar in nature to the participatory action research process that includes planning, acting, observing and reflection. During the planning, reflecting and problem-solving processes, a coach uses the following tools: (1) rapport, (2) meditative questioning, (3) response behaviors, and (4) pacing and leading (p. 73). Although I knew what the text was describing, coaching was not coming as naturally as I thought. My role felt forced and prescribed.
Leadership coaching in the early Friday meetings.

In the first few meetings the progress seemed slow and there were not many salient segments of meaning which reflects both my inexperience as a coach and the newness of our coaching relationship. Further, I came to recognize that the important meaning was found between the lines of the transcript; what was not being said. Our behaviors could be summarized as:

Jack

1. Quiet
2. Less engaged
3. Not reflective about his practice, behaviors and actions
4. Planning was done in isolation

Heidi

1. Doing all the talking
2. Trying to tell him what to do
3. Carrying the workload
4. Trying not to be an imposition

I was trying to adapt to the coaching described in Cognitive Coaching but it still felt awkward. I understood that I was supposed to help him think through his own thought process, I was not there to problem solve for him. He needed to examine his own thinking to get at the root of why he made the choices and decisions he did and whether or not he achieved the outcomes he intended.

We were both committed to this work but our behaviors were not reflecting this commitment. The reason we were not yet really engaged in the process was that we were talking around the difficult issues related to his day-to-day decision-making and
behaviors. This was done to be polite and not be an imposition which became a barrier to our progress. During those first few meetings we stayed comfortable by engaging in what I call “surface questioning”. This type of questioning made us feel that we were busy talking about something important. For example, we talked about unproductive teacher leader meetings and were frustrated by them but we were not improving them. We stayed at the surface of an issue because we feared where the conversation might lead and how that might make us uncomfortable.

I had to really challenge myself to reflect on my practice as a coach. My uneasiness and anxiety about our slow progress and not achieving our goal was palpable. It was reflected by the way I continued to ask too many questions in a row or answered my own questions. Jack’s responses also indicated the lack of depth in my questions. When he gave me one or two word answers I knew I was staying at the surface of an issue. There were also instances when Jack’s responses told me he did not want to discuss a particular issue; he would politely and simply not answer the question and change the topic. I was frustrated.

*Leadership coaching evolving.*

As a result of this reflection, I began to change my approach to our Friday meetings. In the few first meetings, I would transcribe our teacher leader meetings and Friday meetings and forward them to Jack to read. We would then discuss them the next time we were together. Our discussion usually focused on what did not go right. Realizing that our discussions were not yielding the meaty discussions I had hoped for I began to send reflection questions along with the transcriptions. I explained my reasons for changing the format and my coaching.
I am still talking too much. I want to answer my own questions and that is not my role. My role is to be asking the questions and to be thought provoking. I think I have done some of that but I think I could be a whole lot better at it. So I actually brought questions today (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 12.6.11, lines 12-13). I generated those questions based on what I called “an intensive read” of the transcripts. I was trying to discern what Jack’s thinking and behavior was in the meetings and how his teacher leaders were responding. Further, I wanted to find evidence that revealed changes he and I were making.

The reflection questions became essential to our process. Jack often commented on how important the questions were for him. “I appreciated your questions that you shot back to me cause it really made me go back and think about what I really want to accomplish” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, line 688-690). Reflection was becoming part of his vocabulary and slowly becoming part of his practice. I was feeling better about the process that was evolving.

The reflection questions were slowly changing me as well. Although I was changing my practice to ask deeper, more focused questions, I was still not probing deeply enough. This was apparent to me when I would do my intensive read of the Friday Meeting transcripts. I would ask what I thought to be a good question centered on Jack’s thinking and behavior, but would not ask good follow-up questions. He would answer the question, I would accept his response, and move on. I found two things about myself; I was not always listening effectively and I was perhaps still fearful of probing too deeply.

**Leadership coaching in the later Friday meetings.**

I was resolved to overcome these barriers and fears in order to be a more effective coach. I revisited *Cognitive Coaching*, utilized resources on
and studied the 21 leadership responsibilities again.

However, now, I was using a different lens to re-learn this information because my experiences from the past few months had created a foundation for my coaching that would allow me to engage with these resources in a deeper way. Before, I missed the nuances of listening, thoughtful questioning, and pacing and leading. Now, I could approach those concepts with a deeper level of understanding which allowed me to evolve into a stronger coach.

The following excerpt exemplifies the growth that both Jack and I were experiencing. There is an easiness about the conversation that also reveals that our relationship had evolved as well.

H: right. I’m gonna go back to something you said, how has your leadership impacted those conversations and it’s because of your priorities, because you have changed priorities? Or you are more focused on your priorities?

J: because the weekly reflections and meetings with you have caused me to go back and reconsider, am I achieving what I value? Are my priorities being carried out? Where in the past few years, it’s all this stuff comes at you, I get mad … It was whoever was screaming at me that got me to move. Where the reflecting all the time, is ok, what’s getting done, what’s not getting done? Is it getting done with fidelity?

H: got it.

J: it’s been nice. It’s been a good year. I’m getting much closer to that balance of everything is good.

H: I want to go into the reflection, you feel like this is a lifelong habit now, I asked how are you moving your learning so that it is becoming a habit of mind?
And how are you … what were your old routines and behaviors that you didn’t like about yourself, how are you unlearning your old routines and behaviors? Because there is something that you unplugged to create time for reflection.

J: right. And in the past it was whoever, I let other people dictate the sense of urgency. Because the priority here is teaching and learning. And I know from your coaching and from my weekly reflection that if I let that interrupt it I will let everything interrupt me.

H: wow.

J: and that was my work life before. That’s why I was here until 10 every night. Come in at 6 and work until 10 every night. Cause so much was happening. Now I hand it (day-to-day tasks) off to (administrative leaders).

H: ok, So how are you moving your learning into habit of mind? How are you unplugging the old routines? So it’s the constant reminder of your priorities based on what you value?

J: right.

H: how did you develop that value?

J: that value was always there but I hadn’t established it as a work habit. I still need to do more work on that, because you go back to bad habits, but I see more change happening and I see evidence of that now and I don’t want to slide back to where we were. (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 4.13.12, lines 223-256).

Our thinking was shifting and behaviors were changing. Jack had become more focused by keeping his priorities in the forefront of his work by not letting others derail him. He had come to value reflection time and coaching sessions. Finally, Jack recognized that his own development was itself an on-going process. I had developed more effective
coaching skills such as effective listening and thoughtful, deeper questioning. I learned to analyze my own shortcomings in order to improve my practice and to recognize that my own development was itself an on-going process.

The awkwardness and slowness of the early meetings was gone. We both felt that we were making progress. In the later meetings when I had become more confident in my coaching role, I would often ask what else I could do to support Jack in my coaching role or how had a particular meeting been helpful or not? Jack responded “I think the leadership coach helps to make the learning evident. So you have made me stop and reflect. And then our conversations together has made my behavior evident and whether or not my behaviors lead to reaching my priorities” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 4.13.12, lines 424-426). This type of response reinforced my notions of being a more effective coach because Jack also believed and verbalized that I was in fact being an effective coach for him.

**Balanced Leadership Framework.**

We selected the Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2002) as a lens through which to learn about effective principal leadership behaviors. The framework behaviors were identified through a meta-analysis of 70 studies; the analysis identified 21 leadership behaviors that demonstrated a strong positive relationship between leadership and student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2002). The leadership framework fit the focus of our study which was to improve leadership behaviors to improve student achievement.

During the past three years, we had been through professional development as a result of our redesign grant. Although this professional development did not include leadership training per se, the workshops did include literacy, differentiated instruction,
working with professional learning communities, building common assessments, and planning for response to interventions. The combination of this work set the stage to delve deeper into the leadership framework given the common language and common focus. Thus, the leadership framework was an appropriate springboard to set our study in motion.

**Early use of the leadership framework.**

As I prepared for our first meeting where we would discuss the leadership framework, I searched for ways to implement the framework. I predominantly searched the internet and the WMU on-line library searching for reports that would suggest practical ways that others had used the leadership framework. I was not particularly successful. Although I had a good understanding of the framework, I felt a little unprepared to discuss implementation. However, Jack came with a plan for usage.

At our first meeting, we discussed each of the leadership behaviors. While I was feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the list of behaviors, Jack was comfortable:

For me, it’s just being very conscious of all these different leadership behaviors and then very purposefully choosing the leadership behaviors that fit the situation. I find myself acting like that in some ways. Marzano has that School Leadership that Works and I’ve read and re-read that and it has this really long checklist of what you need to do. This feels much more manageable (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 9.23.10, lines 11-15).

He went on to discuss the behaviors that he felt he was using already: input, monitor/evaluate, visibility and focus and those that he felt he was minimally engaged in or not at all: order, discipline, involvement in curriculum, instruction, assessment, contingent rewards and affirmation.
By the end of the first meeting, we talked about setting a goal and how we would monitor the progress.

J: I think my goal for this year is to keep these responsibilities in front of me and purposefully pick out things when different challenges arise that I use them appropriately. That I become more comfortable with that. That it just becomes part of what I do. I don’t have to read about, I just know it.

H: So it really becomes about training yourself. And recognizing when you are in the moment, you know when to use which responsibilities.

J: Then I want to reflect with you about the ones I picked and why and whether or not it worked.

As a way to support Jack’s goal, I laminated the leadership framework to serve as a prompt. During subsequent meetings, he would show me how he chose and marked certain behaviors when planning for a particular meeting or event such as an individual teacher meeting. We would reflect together on his choices and outcomes of his behaviors.

Jack was trying to be very mindful of these behaviors. And while he was certainly learning about the behaviors, I was concerned that we were satisfied with “checking off behaviors” rather than deeply understanding them and how to apply those behaviors given different circumstances. I needed to seek additional resources to help allay my concerns.

**Conversations with Dr. McNulty.**

Dr. McNulty was one of the authors of the Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). I emailed him in October 2011 seeking advice about the practical use of the leadership framework. We had several opportunities to discuss the leadership framework during the length of the study including one face-to-
face meeting. These conversations were immensely helpful. Since co-authoring the leadership framework, Dr. McNulty continues to work with state departments of education in improving district and school leadership.

Dr. McNulty’s recommendations helped us to create a more refined approach to our work. He asked what our focus was for the redesign and in answering that question he said that the principal’s behaviors needed to reflect that focus constantly (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 10/11). For us, Jack’s focus was improving student achievement through teaching and learning and observation and feedback. Dr. McNulty validated our focus saying that coaching is one of the most powerful activities to engage in because when specific feedback is given, it increases the frequency of use. This was reassuring as well as clarifying because we were now confident that Jack’s behaviors and language had to exemplify his focus for his staff.

Dr. McNulty also discussed the need to review the new literature on principal leadership from Leithwood and Seashore (2012) and Robinson (2011). These two large, quantitative studies identified leadership behaviors that were positively correlated to student achievement. I had reviewed these studies as part of my doctoral work but now I was going to revisit those studies with a different perspective given my experiences thus far and my desire to deepen my understanding of effective leadership behaviors. He stated that in light of these two new studies, focusing on fewer leadership behaviors would be prudent.

Two things happened as a result of those conversations. First, I created a table of leadership behaviors from the leadership framework, Leithwood and Seashore’s study and Robinson’s study (see Table 1). I wanted to see where the overlap was between the studies to ascertain where the emphasis should be placed. The overlap existed on the
following five leadership behaviors: (1) intellectual stimulation, (2) monitor and evaluate, (3) resources, (4) focus, and (5) knowledge of and involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment (CIA)\(^3\). Second, Jack was reluctant to give up the other behaviors from the leadership framework. Although we had now identified which behaviors had the greatest effect, he also wanted to hold on to the other leadership behaviors. Jack still felt this was manageable.

*Later use of the leadership framework.*

The practical use of the leadership framework became more evident as we reflected on Jack’s behavior. He was using the framework as a way to frame his meetings. “I want to tie those behaviors to the redesign and change the culture … it’s really more than just setting the agenda. It’s creating a purpose and tying that purpose to everything we do and it makes the meeting more meaningful and better prepared” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, lines 476-479). He was also using the framework as a way to refine his language. “I like that (framework) because it really helps frame what I *need* to say not just what I want to say and select certain words to make sure that comes across” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.16.12, lines 118-119). This is just what Dr. McNulty had recommended; we needed to keep the focus on the forefront and Jack was deliberately behaving his way into doing so.

Jack and I were both experiencing growth and understanding as it related to effective leadership behaviors. He was using the framework as a way to clarify his role as principal and keep his focus and I was using the framework as a way to monitor where his emphasis was being placed so that I could tailor my coaching to meet his needs.

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\(^3\) I combined Knowledge of CIA and Involvement in CIA from the Balanced Leadership Framework because Leithwood & Seashore (2012) and Robinson (2011) describe these components as Ensuring Quality Teaching and Improving the Instructional Program, respectively. They did not make the distinction between knowing and involvement.
Jack had adopted new language and was regularly using it in our meetings. As he planned and reflected, he would draw upon the behaviors that fit best with the issue he was dealing with. This was coming more naturally now and was discussed routinely. The following excerpt shows how our study of the leadership framework had served to focus Jack’s behaviors and adopt new ones and in the process changed his beliefs about his role as a leader.

H: The teacher leader meeting really reflected your engagement, you are really listening and acknowledging. You are listening, you are hearing it and you are turning out this great question that forces everyone to think more deeply. And then it reflects your instructional leadership.

J: I have been very mindful of that at the meetings.

H: Anyway, I think that speaks volumes … it’s amazing how one moment can touch off on all these different things (behaviors), the different messages it can send.

J: and I’m so aware of that as these meetings are taking place now.

H: that’s amazing.

J: that’s a change in the mentality of a leader. Attending to these different things (behaviors) as its happening. (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.16.12, lines 460-478).

I still had concerns about manageability. McNulty’s comments and the study table emphasized five important leadership behaviors. Jack was still confident that the leadership framework was indeed manageable (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.16.12, line 466). He alleviated my concerns when he used an example from our literacy professional development. We had been given an extensive literacy assessment tool that
was overwhelming and at times felt as though it was written in a foreign language. Eventually by re-reading and utilizing the tool frequently, we had deepened our understanding of it. We understood its purpose and the nuances of the behaviors that provided evidence of literacy in the classroom. Jack remarked that he realized the same thing about the leadership framework. In the beginning, it was overwhelming and not well understood. However, when we re-read and discussed the leadership framework and then reflected on Jack’s behaviors, the leadership framework was coming into sharper focus with greater meaning. We were solidifying our understanding of the nuances of the behaviors and how to utilize each to get the greatest effect.

**Summary of Growth Process and Shifts in Understanding**

The combined use of leadership coaching, the Balanced Leadership Framework and participatory action research (PAR), allowed us to systematically engage in a complex process of learning. PAR served as the methodology by which to generate collective knowledge and action. Through the cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect, PAR served as a systematic foundation for our study. The leadership framework taught us about effective leadership behaviors and provided us a tool by which to monitor how we interpreted the behaviors and enacted them in specific contexts. Leadership coaching was the process that sought to maintain the focus on thinking, decision-making and reflection to enhance self-directed learning. Through the simultaneous use of these three components, we had constructed a process to make meaning out our reflections and experiences which raised our level of consciousness and prompted us into action to make change.

By the end of our study, Jack and I each experienced growth and our coaching relationship evolved as well. He had become a more confident, focused, reflective
principal. Jack was willing to engage in the sometimes difficult, honest conversations that come with examining one’s thinking and decisions. He was adopting and modifying leadership behaviors with his administrative team and teacher leaders in order to improve teaching and learning. And although he slipped back into old behaviors from time to time, Jack was willing to discuss and try again.

My view of my leadership coaching changed throughout the study. In the beginning, I wanted to “fix” the problems that Jack was working to solve. I quickly learned that that approach might work in the short term but it would never work for the long term. True change had to be generated from within. So, I continually sought input from resources to enhance my coaching so that I could become more effective for Jack. While there were times I, too, fell into old behaviors, my coaching had evolved into a process where I effectively listened and used open-ended questions to stimulate reflection and new ways of thinking.

Our coaching relationship evolved during this process from one that was polite and perhaps artificial to one that sought to support the other’s growth and development. Given the growing depth and sensitivity of our conversations, I became a confidant and an advocate for Jack and I wanted him to succeed. Through this process we made mistakes and learned from them. As a result, a deep, mutual respect for each other’s roles emerged that gave us greater insight and perspective into humanity and humility.

**Change in Leadership Orientation**

We began this study with a singular goal of helping Jack to make sense of and integrate effective principal behaviors into his daily practice to improve student achievement. As our study evolved so did our goal which is the essence of action research. By gathering and reflecting upon data from our transcripts, observations, and
documents, we were exploring and generating new understandings about the choices and decisions Jack was making about his leadership and why.

These new understandings led us into different directions with deeper conversations where we explored how choices and decisions were being made at the emotional and conscious level. Jack was experiencing changes in his leadership orientation that we could not ignore. His beliefs and focus about leadership in the context of his behavior was changing, thus we expanded the focus of our study to deepen our understanding about principal leadership behaviors.

**Focus change.**

The goal of the Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) grant was to create structures and improve teaching and learning to increase student achievement for *all* students. According to Jack, being awarded the SLC grant was the most significant event to happen at GWHS in its history. Like many other high schools throughout the country, GWHS had experienced many program and curricular changes, add-ons, and removals. For most of the staff, the SLC grant was seen in the same manner. Staff believed they did not have to be fully engaged in the process because in the end, this program, too, would pass. At the same time, the administrative team and teacher leaders were working hard but toward different ends because they were overprioritized and were experiencing change fatigue. Jack’s challenge was not only to ensure that he stay focused on changing his behavior but that he create a singular focus on improving student achievement for himself and his staff.

**Link between leadership and student achievement.**

In order to create focus on student achievement, we came to understand that a principal had to take responsibility and ownership for student achievement outcomes and
keep that focus at the forefront. I began to frame our conversations through a question I posed frequently: “How does your leadership impact student achievement?” realizing that the impact was largely indirect. This question became a guidepost to keeping the focus on Jack’s leadership beliefs and behaviors and how they impacted his staff in order to improve student achievement. He would have to create a sense of ownership for student achievement among his staff.

Although GWHS was a relatively high-performing school, staff was largely unaware of student outcomes as a whole. Teachers were well informed of their individual classrooms and their students’ achievement. However, because they did not readily access achievement data outside their class there was little knowledge of whether or not students were succeeding beyond their own class. In the past, Jack used to ask close-ended questions about assessments and testing such as: “are we ready for state testing next week?” The problem with such a question is that if we were not ready, what could realistically be done one week prior to testing. This allowed for abdication of responsibility. We worked to change the vocabulary and structure of questions to make them more direct and powerful such as: “what are you going to do to ensure your re-testers are prepared for testing next month?” Initially, this type of question generated emotions, frustration and stress with his administrative team and teacher leaders. However, after working through a process in a transparent, non-threatening way, Jack was able to convey his sense of ownership for every student’s individual achievement thereby stimulating a sense of ownership among his leaders.

We expanded this leadership and student achievement conversation to include classroom observations and feedback. At the teacher leader meetings, Jack required his leaders to report on their observations and feedback. Upon reflection, we found the
reports were generally lacking; they provided descriptions about what they saw. We were “sharing for the sake of sharing rather than for the sake of improving the school” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 4.16.12, line 184). We recognized that in order to improve the quality of the observation and feedback process, two significant pieces of information would be needed: (1) a description of the feedback and coaching session following the observation and (2) a description linking the observation to student achievement data.

Jack was emphatic about our need to improve this process and to link the teacher leaders’ leadership to improving student achievement. He stated that “the consequences of not following up on the observations with feedback, well, we don’t grow. Our teachers don’t grow as teachers. We are not leading; we are just describing what is happening in and around us” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 4.16.12, lines 147-148). This was a significant paradigm shift; until this year, the link between leadership and student achievement did not truly exist. We had viewed a student’s individual achievement as their own responsibility rather than the collective responsibility of the principal and staff.

**Link between student achievement and teacher leader meetings.**

There were two teacher leader meetings scheduled each month. Jack worked through several structural meeting changes during the study period. As we reflected upon the meeting transcripts, we identified areas for improvement and enhancement. Most notably, Jack changed the focus of the teacher leader meetings. In previous years, these meetings were discussions focused on logistics, events, testing, scheduling, and budgets. During the study year, Jack changed the focus to teaching and learning. He wanted his teacher leaders to focus on observing classroom instruction, coaching for improvement and linking the instruction to student achievement data. Jack wanted his teacher leaders to
validate what good classroom instruction was with achievement data. Infusing data into conversations at the meetings and conversations between teacher leaders and teachers was key to ensuring the link between instruction and achievement.

Another important advancement of the meetings was the change in the depth of conversations. Jack was feeling more comfortable and assured about his role and facilitation and it showed. At one of our meetings, a teacher leader was describing her observation. She observed students doing group presentations. While she thought the presentation content was good, the rest of the class was unengaged. Jack followed up by asking two questions: how else could group presentations be done? And how did you know the students were learning what they were supposed to be learning? (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.16.12, lines 452-456). In the past, we would have been satisfied that group presentations were happening and that the content was good. Now, Jack was pushing the teacher leaders to think more deeply about student engagement and student learning.

Belief change.

There were several significant belief changes that revealed themselves to us during the study. These included: (1) being a leader of redesign, (2) becoming a reflective practitioner, and (3) making data public. Many of these changes evolved from our exploration and conversations about the barriers to his leadership and success. As we discussed the reasons why the barriers existed, we were able to construct new ways to eliminate those barriers.

Leader vs. manager.

The leader versus manager conversation was in the foreground of all of our conversations; this was what set this study in motion. Jack felt that although there were
sure signs of progress with the redesign there were still too many missteps. He recognized that he was not leading the redesign but managing it. At first pass, this may not seem like a big distinction but in fact it was.

Jack was not aware of the Balanced Leadership Framework previous to this study. In his prior administrative roles, the focus was on management and servant leadership. He came to believe differently about leadership given the context of his work. “That’s not the type of leadership GWHS needs right now. And I think that’s the other thing we failed to see as educational leaders as a whole that there are different leadership (behaviors) that have to take place depending on what the needs are. There is way too much change going on now to just be a servant leader” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 5.30.12, lines 277-281). This was a significant change; Jack was embracing the idea that a leader needs to modify their behaviors to meet the needs of the changes that were going on in his school. His understanding about leadership and management was deepening and changing.

Jack was realizing that different leadership behaviors were needed and that his focus should be on leading the redesign. He was accustomed to being involved in all school business even though his involvement caused him to stretch himself thin and become overly focused on issues unrelated to the redesign. He recognized this conundrum and was seeking solutions “I think that’s the rub with everything. If I let go then what will happen? But I can’t do it all so it’s holding others accountable for that instead” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.16.12, lines 69-70). Further, Jack was changing his ideas about the need to be engaged in all school business. He said “I don’t need to know everything, and I don’t have to” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, line 351). This was a significant shift in his beliefs. Jack had come to realize that a
principal could delegate responsibilities to his administrators so that he could sharpen his focus on the critical work of redesigning instruction.

**Reflective practitioner.**

As discussed in the barriers to leadership section, Jack had not been a reflective practitioner. In the past he believed he had to respond to other’s agendas and solve issues quickly. This practice left him little time to gather input from others and think through the possibilities and consequences. Since our work was grounded in the PAR methodology and coaching principles, reflection had quickly become part of our vocabulary. The next step would be to adopt the practice, but more importantly to believe that reflection was a valuable tool that could improve his practice.

During our early Friday meetings, although Jack thought reflection was a chore, he often voiced that after we had met and reflected together he felt good and more confident about his role. We talked about ways to sustain the important learning and changes he had made after the study was over. He said he needed to “establish those behaviors that lead to learning, so making time for reflection, making time to talk to other people, and sticking to your priorities rather than other people’s priorities” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 4.13.12, Lines 335-336). Jack made an important connection; he understood that there were specific behaviors that he could engage in that would lead him to greater insight about the choices and decisions he made.

Jack had come to value the practice of reflection. During the later part of our study, he began to schedule time into his weekly calendar, Friday afternoons, for the express purpose of reflection and planning. He wanted to be mindful and monitor what his planning yielded. Jack came to believe that “You can’t lead change without dedicated time to plan for that change” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 5.30.12, lines 272-273).
This declaration was a major shift in understanding and beliefs. Jack had already recognized that the leadership framework behaviors were essential to the redesign at GWHS. He knew he could no longer just choose a behavior, act on it, and move on. Jack realized the necessity of reflecting upon those behaviors and examining whether or not he was getting the results he expected.

Making data public.

Jack believed that in order to redesign GWHS, he and his staff would have to engage in honest conversations about student achievement data. While PLCs were meeting to some extent and student data were being reviewed, this practice was largely done in private. Jack wanted his staff to delve more deeply into the data to understand whether or not students were learning the content and skills that they were supposed to be learning. This was no easy task because he was deprivatizing a practice that had existed for a long time and this was making some staff very uncomfortable.

Jack developed a belief that he and his staff had a collective responsibility for student achievement. He believed if he was going to lessen their feelings of discomfort and raise their level of consciousness to adopt a similar belief, he would need to make student achievement data and process public. During the next few months, there were several outward changes that I observed.

1. Data Pyramid: Jack had a GWHS Data Pyramid developed. This document outlined the student data points that were collected, by whom they were collected, and how often. This document was distributed to every teacher and was laminated and posted in department offices and conference rooms.

2. Observation and Feedback: Jack had a database developed to electronically capture and monitor observations and feedback completed by his
administrative team and teacher leaders. This data were discussed at each teacher leader meeting.

3. Graduation Cohorts: Jack re-purposed an administrative staff’s position to focus entirely on graduation cohorts with the express purpose of monitoring cohorts student-by-student to ensure they had met the necessary graduation requirements. This staff assistant attended administrative team meetings to provide specific updates on students and problem-solve barriers to graduation.

4. Posting of Data: Jack posted state testing results by sub-groups and course grade data in the main conference room. Data were regularly updated as new information was obtained. These data were often referenced during administrative team and teacher leader meetings.

To solidify that commitment to a collective responsibility, Jack believed that he and his staff couldn’t just present or post the data but had to “make meaning from that data and act on the data” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 12.16.11, lines 212-213). By creating these changes, he was moving student achievement data to the center of conversations and consciousness making it difficult to keep private.

**Behavior Change.**

Behavioral change was perhaps the most difficult change to make. Our study began on the premise that we would study the leadership framework in order to adopt and integrate the behaviors into his daily practice. As described throughout this narrative, Jack was making strides to adopt new behaviors that were grounded in effective leadership research. There were times when he was successful and there were times when he had less success using the behaviors. By the end of our study, Jack had adopted new behaviors some of which were still being tried out and others that had become integrated
into his practice. As a result, the new behaviors allowed him to expand his scope of leadership strategies so that he could overcome his leadership barriers and effectively lead the redesign. I chose to focus on the five leadership behaviors from the leadership framework that had also been identified as significant in Leithwood and Louis’ (2012) and Robinson’s (2011) research. They are:

1. Focus
2. Intellectual stimulation
3. Monitor and evaluate
4. Resources
5. Knowledge and involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment

*Adopted behaviors.*

There were two leadership behaviors that Jack adopted into his practice: (1) monitor and evaluate and (2) involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment. We defined adopted behaviors as those behaviors that were recognized as being important and yet were not fully integrated into his daily practice. Monitor and evaluation related behaviors were defined as “monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning” (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2002). His ability to effectively execute these two behaviors depended on his ability to ensure his administrative team and teacher leaders were carrying out their responsibilities as it related to classroom observations and feedback and developing curriculum, instruction and assessment. The administrative team and teacher leaders were reluctant, and in some cases defiant, about completing classroom observations and feedback. Some of them were using the issue of curriculum, instruction and assessment development as justification for not completing classroom observations and feedback.
At nearly every meeting, Jack engaged the administrative team and teacher leaders in discussion about classroom observations and feedback. This was a significant departure from years past. Jack wanted the teacher leader meetings to focus on instruction and learning rather than reporting on managerial tasks. There was evidence from our transcriptions that the observation and feedback conversations were generating a common understanding and collective responsibility for student achievement. However, the frequency of the observations and feedback was sorely lacking and the quality of them waned over time.

There was an on-going dance between Jack and his administrative team and teacher leaders with regard to observations and feedback. He would discuss their importance, cite research, and set benchmarks for completion, however, he was not getting the outcomes he expected. Jack recognized the progress that had been made since the beginning of the school year but also acknowledged that the conversations had stalled out.

“The talking and sharing of observations in (teacher leader meetings) went well for about two months and I felt like our conversations became deeper and certainly more detailed about teaching and learning. There was more focus on whether or not learning was happening and how do we know when learning is happening. And I think a lot of good synergy, energy, and shared thought came out of that. And then it got glossy again” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 4.13.12, lines 37-40).

The conversations about observation and feedback returned to where they had been at the beginning of the year. The administrative team and teacher leaders were sharing the ‘glossy’ side which was a non-specific account of what they saw in the classroom. There
was little discussion about student engagement and virtually no discussion about the post-
observation feedback.

Knowing how critical teacher observations and feedback was to improving
teaching and learning, Jack was frustrated that his administrative team and teacher
leaders were half-heartedly committed to this particular responsibility. And yet, he did
not want to confront the issue. Jack approached each meeting as though the observations
and feedback had been done thereby allowing the dance to continue.

The same sort of situation existed with regard to behaviors involving curriculum,
instruction and assessment (CIA). Given the size of his school, we recognized that Jack
would probably not be personally involved in the development of CIA, however, he
wanted to be knowledgeable about it. He wanted to create an avenue for discussing CIA
at the teacher leader meetings. Jack believed that we could have “…the same
conversation we are having about our observations, we could certainly have about the
common assessments” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, lines 793-794). As
evidenced from our transcripts there was little if any discussion about CIA during teacher
leader meetings. Jack was again frustrated with the lack of progress being made on CIA,
however, he did not address the issue during those meetings.

So while Jack was trying to adopt these two behaviors, he did not integrate them
into his daily practice. Jack knew cognitively that these were critically important
behaviors and openly discussed their importance at our Friday Meetings and teacher
leader meetings frequently. However during this study, he would not integrate these
behaviors. For an unknown reason, Jack was reluctant to fully engage with these two
behaviors and require specific outputs from his teacher leaders.
Adopted and integrated behaviors.

There were three leadership behaviors that Jack adopted and integrated into his practice: (1) focus, (2) intellectual stimulation, and (3) resources. We defined adopted and integrated behaviors as those behaviors that were purposefully and effectively being utilized. Focus related behaviors were defined as “establishing clear goals and keeping those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention” (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2002). As previously described, Jack experienced growth and change within his belief system. He shifted his focus from being a manager to being a leader and created a singular focus for his staff on student achievement. Jack took hold of his new beliefs and allowed them to translate into a behavior change.

A new school effectiveness grading system aided Jack in establishing goals for student achievement. The grading system was referred to as the “90-25-90” plan; 90% or greater graduation rate, 25% or greater advanced placement passing rate, and 90% or greater pass the state tests for English 10 and Algebra I. Jack kept these goals in the forefront of the staffs’ minds in several ways. He had a large visual created for the main lobby that tracked our progress toward meeting the goal. Jack’s weekly email communication included a paragraph on our progress. He created individual committees that he chaired to address each of the three components of the grading system. And finally, Jack took many opportunities during teacher leader meetings and faculty meetings to connect the work being done through PLCs and curriculum, instruction, and assessment development to the goal of meeting or exceeding the “90-25-90” plan. Jack was behaving his way into creating focus for his school and staff.

By late winter, provisional student achievement results revealed that progress was indeed being made. Jack speculated “I hope to link our new behaviors to better results.
Graduation rate is up and people could say that we are just getting kids to graduate and making things easier. But state test results are also up and more students are learning what we want them to learn than ever before” (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.16.12, lines 262-265). In the past, GWHS had focused on improving course grades to reduce the number of students failing courses and therefore, improve student achievement. However, we came to realize how flawed this practice was given grade subjectivity. Now, staff had solid evidence that their efforts were in fact improving student achievement.

Intellectual stimulation was defined as “ensuring that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture” (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2003). Delving more deeply into understanding this behavior, we found that Jack needed to lead the new learning he was expecting from his teachers and to model the behavior for acquiring new learning. We came to realize that the difficulties we experienced with the previous three years of staff professional development was grounded in this particular behavior.

In the past, Jack would attend staff development workshops as his schedule allowed. He generally opened each session with a welcome and words of encouragement. Jack would remain at the workshop for about 30 to 120 minutes. This year marked a significant change. Jack flipped his past practice; he scheduled the workshops into his calendar and required everything else to work around the workshops. He committed himself to the entire length of the workshops that were generally seven hours long. I observed Jack sitting alongside and engaging in the learning with his teachers. Our consultants often remarked to me that his behavior and level of engagement during the workshops exemplified what it meant to be an instructional leader.
Resources were defined as “providing teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs” (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2002). Jack and I came to understand that resources encompassed all the support and materials provided in order to develop staff and improve instruction. In February 2012, we scheduled a strategic planning meeting to discuss plans for next year, utilization of resources and expansion of the leadership structure. We believed we needed to expand the teacher leadership structure if we were serious about continuing to improve and enhance the instructional program.

This was an important meeting because significant decisions were going to be made. We were inviting district administrators as well the administrative team and teacher leaders. We purposefully planned the meeting agenda together invoking the new behaviors we had been studying. We agreed that I would participate as well as observe the meeting so that we could reflect on the outcomes. The following excerpt highlights our reflection of the meeting and how Jack had come to value collective planning and thinking in order to achieve the desired outcomes which in this case were to expand teacher leadership.

J: yeah, I have really come to value (collective planning). It’s funny I started this year with needing to keep these people on specific tracks and do their jobs.

H: you did. You were very much a manager.

J: I think we even started with no meetings it was like just go do this and this. But now I really value the time that we get together. Just making sure that time is structured and is tied back to the redesign.

H: ok, so the SLC strategic planning meeting

J: yeah.
H: so, when you reflect on that meeting, when you planned that meeting, think about your behaviors, did you meet your goal? Did you get what you wanted?  
J: ah, many of the same behaviors, making sure everybody is heard. Keeping key points (out front) and kind of expressing my own thinking especially about the (teacher leaders), making sure what other people knew what I was thinking during the meeting. I think that was an excellent meeting. We got a lot accomplished.  
H: yes.  
J: so I met with (district administrators) with my notes from that meeting and just kind of strategized, ok, we are all on the same page, we all agreed even after a week later. We want to do all of this, so where are all of the roadblocks and how do we sell this … that was also a very good meeting. I would not have done that a couple of years ago. I would have just taken (an idea) to cabinet and  
H: got shot down  
J: yep, shot down (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 2.3.12, lines 383-400).  

Within two months of those meetings, he expanded his teacher leadership from 8 teacher leaders to 14. He crafted new position descriptions and provided each of them with additional plan time. Furthermore, we modified our professional development plan in order to begin leadership training in the current year rather than delaying until the following year. Jack’s strategic approach to resourcing proved to be effective.  

Summary of Leadership Orientation  

Through our collaborative process, Jack and I co-constructed a new and enhanced understanding of effective leadership behaviors. In doing so, we came to believe and know that improving leadership behaviors was not just about swapping low-yield leadership behaviors for high-yield leadership behaviors. We needed to deeply
understand the underlying assumptions about why Jack was choosing certain leadership behaviors over others. Collectively, our conversations, actions and reflections led us to recognize that changes were in fact occurring with his behavior but with his beliefs and focus as well.

Prior to our final meeting, I asked Jack to reflect and answer several questions about our work together. I wanted us to explore the leadership changes he felt he had made and what his future plans were for sustaining those changes. A sampling of those questions follows:

Q1: How has your leadership evolved through the integration of new behaviors?
A1: I now have a much better understanding of how my behaviors and my intentional use of behaviors will help guide GWHS through change.

Q2: What are your future goals as it relates to your leadership behaviors?
A2: Scheduling reflection time. Scheduling group planning time. Continue to review, select and act with specific leadership behaviors.

Q3: What do you know about yourself now that you didn’t know a year ago?
A3: Reflection is key to success. I can’t plan and act alone. My intentional selection of behaviors is instructional to guiding change.

Q4: What supports will you need to continue this work?
A4: Time and team. Very careful scheduling and management of other systems so that I have more time for leadership (Artifact. 5.25.11).

Jack tied together a few key elements that underscored his new more complex understanding of being an effective leader. He knows and believes that he has to be intentional about choosing his behaviors and scheduling reflection and collaborative
planning time. I was delighted to read Jack’s responses but was even more so when he shared a reflection with me that translated his written words and beliefs into action.

During our final Friday meeting, Jack shared a reflection with me that captures the essence of several important changes that he made during the study. He reflected on a meeting he scheduled with English 9 teachers about some important curricular changes that needed to occur. He recognized during the meeting that because he had not planned the meeting appropriately it lacked focus and productive outcomes. This was an important realization because he had similar meetings scheduled with the other grade level English teachers as well and was going to purposefully take steps to ensure the other grade level meetings were productive. Furthermore, Jack embraced the idea of sustaining the changes he had made as part of his professional responsibility.

H: so in that email, you said that the meeting with the English 9 teachers that there was an opportunity, but you hadn’t planned, you didn’t have a message and it fell apart as soon as it got started.

J: and I knew that half way through the meeting. So I was thinking about what I was going to do differently (with the other English teachers) … I just went back to my notes and went back to the leadership behaviors … recognizing these are the ones I need to hit to make this work.

H: that’s awesome. And you did that all by yourself.

J: well I did that because we have been working together for a year.

H: what I meant was we didn’t have a meeting to say, let’s talk about your next meeting and what you need to do … that was something that came up naturally.

J: well, I do have to be self sufficient now

H: yes, of course, that is part of the Now What. Right?
J: I can’t have you for the rest of my life, right? … I have to be intentional about continuing that work. It is part of my professional responsibility (Pause) and although I won’t have you as a resource there is no reason why I can’t work with my administrators (to do this). And maybe that’s the single biggest change in just leadership style, philosophy, outlook is that I wouldn’t think to do this stuff by myself anymore. And I think most principals see themselves as doing that in isolation rather than doing that as part of a team, a team effort. (J. Ryan, Personal Communication, 5.30.12, lines 148-180).

The above conversation exemplifies the growth and shifts in understanding that were happening for Jack. Almost simultaneously, he was reflecting on his behaviors while in the meeting, recognizing that he was responsible for the poorly executed meeting and intentionally planning to engage different leadership behaviors in order to achieve a positive outcome with the other meetings. Jack had internalized the new knowledge and understandings that resulted in changes to his leadership orientation.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this participatory action research study (PAR) was to follow the process of how one high school building principal made sense of and integrated research-based leadership strategies to strengthen and improve his leadership behaviors as he led the redesign of his high school. Jack Ryan, the principal, was charged with implementing a newly awarded federal grant that included redesigning the structure of the high school as well as classroom instruction with the goal to improve student achievement for all students. The principal was often overheard saying that this grant was the most significant event to happen at the high school since its opening 50 years ago. Not unlike many other large high schools (George Washington had approximately 3600 students), teachers operated as independent contractors. They were left to their own devices to teach their courses and there was little or no monitoring of their activities. The redesign proposed formal teacher collaboration and extensive professional development to strengthen classroom instruction. Given the reach and complexity of the grant, strong and effective leadership would be needed.

The first few years of the grant were very trying and difficult. Jack was newly installed as the principal at the time the grant was received in August 2008. There was little or no prior experience with federal grants or redesign efforts among the building or district leaders. There was a great deal of pushback and lack of teacher buy-in. The status quo had become so ubiquitous that few leaders and teachers were willing to challenge it. Jack often questioned his leadership team’s decision-making and at times flip-flopped on decisions. Although there were a few teacher leaders who were helping to lead the
change, they often did not have prior experiences to guide them nor had they received the type of training that could have helped them to be successful. We were struggling with implementation and change.

In my capacity as the grant project director, Jack and I met frequently to assess our progress, make modifications and plan. During one such meeting, he quietly explained that he realized something very important about his role in the redesign. He said that he recognized that he had been managing the process rather than leading it. Jack said that he wanted to change the way he was approaching the redesign process but was not quite sure how to do so. We found ourselves faced with an interesting and very unique situation. We decided to use this opportunity as a way to support Jack’s desire to improve his leadership while at the same time providing an intriguing topic for my dissertation.

**Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis**

To create a learning environment and relationship that would allow for inquiry and reflection, Jack and I decided that we would meet twice a month on Fridays for an hour. Initially, our idea was simply that we would work together to improve his leadership by learning about research-based leadership behaviors, discussing them in the context of his principalship, and finding ways to adopt and internalize the new behaviors. Soon after we began our nine month study, however, we came to realize that we would need to delve more deeply into our beliefs about leadership, moral purpose and our intrinsic desire to improve who we were as leaders. Thus the changes were not only occurring outwardly through our behaviors but inwardly on an emotional level and within our belief system.
Our Friday Meetings were an opportunity for Jack to focus on his leadership and for me, as the leadership coach, to focus on providing support and guidance so that we could co-construct meaning from our learning and experiences. Transcriptions from our Friday Meetings, Leadership Team Meetings and Teacher Leader Meetings served as the primary source of discussion. After transcriptions were completed, I generated reflection questions that we used as a springboard for our Friday Meeting discussions. The reflection questions became an essential component to our process. The questions forced each of us to examine our beliefs and thinking and to question our behaviors and actions. Our conversations brought forth insights that we may not have seen without the other’s input. So, what began as a somewhat oversimplified process resulted in a collegial process that allowed for critical self reflection and personal and professional growth.

I used inductive data analysis to process the huge volume of qualitative data I had amassed. Hatch (2002) defines inductive data analysis as bringing selected pieces of data together to create a meaningful whole. Multiple sources of data were used to answer the research questions as well as to strengthen the validity of the data analysis. I collected data from (1) Meeting transcriptions, (2) Documents including emails and principal communications, and (3) Field and analysis memos.

The analysis process was tedious, challenging, and complex. I used *in vivo* (Saldana, 2009) coding to code the data for important segments of meaning, then I combined codes to identify themes. The next step was the development of my explanatory schema (Figure A); it was perhaps the most difficult of the data analysis process. Foss and Waters described the purpose of an explanatory schema as a way to conceptualize the data that “allows you to tell the story of your data in an interesting and
insightful way” (2007, p. 196). This step required complex thinking as I developed a way to tell the story of my data that was both intriguing and compelling.

**Major Findings**

This study was designed to follow the process a principal, Jack Ryan, went through when utilizing a leadership coach to adopt and integrate research-based leadership behaviors into his daily practice. We developed three research questions for this study:

1. How did the principal and I use the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, the Balanced Leadership Framework and Cognitive Coaching to make sense of and translate research-based principal leadership behaviors into daily practice?

2. What change was experienced by the participants?

3. What were the important factors that led to growth and change?

**Research Question 1**

This study found that the combined, simultaneous use of Cognitive Coaching, the Balanced Leadership Framework and PAR created a dynamic and effective process that allowed us to co-construct meaning and understanding from our beliefs and experiences that empowered change. I, as the leadership coach, utilized the principles and strategies of Cognitive Coaching to keep us focused on cognitive processes and reflection. By including this coaching component, a mutual expectation was established that I would push and challenge Jack to critically reflect on his thinking and behaviors with the purpose of achieving self-directed learning so that he could be successful without a coach.

PAR was the methodology that provided a systematic structure for our study by spiraling us through the plan, act, observe and reflect cycle (McTaggart & Kemmis,
over and over. We held ourselves accountable to this methodology in a deliberate way. By doing so, we challenged each other’s thinking and generated mutual understandings about our beliefs and research-based leadership behaviors that caused us to act and change.

The Balanced Leadership Framework served as a foundational tool and resource to deeply understand the research-based leadership behaviors. We reviewed, discussed, and scrutinized this tool each time we met and during reflection time throughout the study. We did this because we wanted to keep these leadership behaviors at the forefront of our learning and discussion. As a result, the tool helped to frame and deepen our conversations, guide behavioral choices, and challenge the status quo.

This study showed that these three tools, coaching, PAR and the leadership framework, worked together in a unique, synergistic way that guided and forced us to explore, expose and reconsider some deeply held beliefs about ourselves and leadership. When designing the study we knew we needed each of these components but we really did not know how these tools would work together. In fact, our early meetings felt clunky and prescribed because we were not yet familiar with all the facets of these tools. We were engaging with each of the tools independently.

After those early meetings, however, we soon learned the power that existed in using multiple tools to pursue behavioral change. Again, the leadership framework served as the foundational tool by which to learn about effective leadership behaviors. Coaching and PAR were the processes that forced us to engage with the framework. The goals of coaching and PAR were quite similar. Both processes are intended to create new learning that inspires one to take action to improve behavior. With our study, coaching focused us on creating self-directed learning for Jack and PAR focused us on a method by which to
achieve self-directed learning. Said another way, the leadership coaching occurred within the PAR cycle of plan, act, observe and reflect. Cognitive coaching strategies were used to understand and deepen our understanding of the leadership framework during each step of the PAR cycle.

As a result of this process, knowledge and confidence were built to stimulate growth and inspire action. We learned about effective research-based principal leadership behaviors and discovered how those behaviors might look in the context at GWHS. We learned how coaching can be an effective tool in the development of principal leadership. Further, both of us developed a much greater sense of confidence with regard to our roles as principal and coach. We used leadership and coaching research and our experiences to learn how to assess our behavioral choices to ensure we were getting the outcomes we desired. Of course there were a number of misfires and missteps along the way where we fell short or even failed. However, because we had experienced the shortcomings and failed attempts we felt compelled to push onward to improve our behavioral choices. When we began to experience success as a result of planned behavioral choices, our confidence grew as well. This was an empowering process that enabled Jack and me to achieve something quite worthwhile.

The PAR, coaching and framework tools represented unique and necessary components to our study. I would be remiss, however, if I did not emphasize the critical need to establish an effective coaching structure and relationship. Not unlike any other desired behavioral change, weight loss for instance, a structure or routine has to be established that focuses attention on the desired change. An interesting dynamic resulted from this structure that required us to hold ourselves accountable and hold each other accountable if we were going to make this study work and achieve change.
There was no doubt that if we had not created a coaching structure by which to meet regularly and discuss the details of our thinking and actions, little progress would have been made. The leadership coaching gave me license to probe Jack’s thinking and bring forward the details of his beliefs and behaviors. Essentially I was holding a mirror up to Jack’s leadership beliefs and behaviors which many times created tension. While at first, we did not address the conflict nearly ignoring it we came to realize that it was the conflict that actually helped the process and relationship to become more dynamic. Jack and I had built a trusting, collegial relationship whereby we could explore the tension and it was in those moments where the real learning occurred. Again, if we had not structured our relationship and met regularly to engage in professional dialogue we would not have created an environment that could stimulate action and growth.

**Research Question 2**

This study found that both Jack and I experienced change and growth. Jack experienced remarkable change and growth with his leadership beliefs and behavior that also yielded important changes for his staff and the redesign. Initially, Jack and I were solely focused on learning research-based behaviors and implementing them. We soon came to realize that this was short-sighted and could not be sustained in the long term because we were not engaged in the deep thinking needed to create and sustain change. We had several examples of behavioral misfires and missteps that frustrated, and at times, angered us. We had to explore why our process was not working. When we began to ask *why* Jack chose the behaviors he did and *why* he made the decisions he did, our paradigm shifted. The *why* questions allowed us to delve more deeply to explore and change our beliefs about leadership.
Jack was experiencing more than just behavioral changes. He was experiencing growth and change at an emotional and cognitive level. We did not expect to have these personal conversations about deeply held beliefs about leadership and ourselves. I knew we were at a pivotal point in a conversation when I was formulating the next question in my mind but was apprehensive about asking it. There was uneasiness in the moment because the next question was set to probe more deeply into Jack’s beliefs and behaviors. In a split second, I contemplated whether to proceed because Jack could have reacted negatively. However, I felt that if I did not ask the deeper questions I would have allowed us to fall short of our goal to inspire action and growth.

Fortunately, I did proceed and did so because I was confident that our professional relationship was strong enough to handle the tough conversations. We engaged in powerful conversations that led to changes in our beliefs and thoughts. A great deal of courage and humility was needed as well. Had we not engaged in this hard work, we would have remained at the surface of the issues and would have never gotten to the underlying reasons for which the issues existed.

I experienced growth and change that improved my role as a leadership coach and professional, some of which was unexpected. I have always believed that there are opportunities for new learning through my work, relationships and experiences. So, quite frankly, I had the expectation that I would learn and grow from this experience. However, after analyzing the data and re-reading the literature on coaching behaviors, I was surprised to find just how much I had changed.

During the early part of the study when we were not making the progress I wanted, I had to challenge myself to reflect on my practice as a coach. I found that I too experienced misfires and missteps; I was not always an effective listener, I spoke too
much and did not always ask good follow-up questions. I worked diligently to change those behaviors and made my intentions transparent to Jack as he had been doing with me.

I was resolved to overcome my shortcomings to ensure we could be successful. I revisited my resources on leadership coaching and did so from a very different perspective. I now had the benefit of experience and could engage with my resources in a deeper way taking full advantage of the strategies and techniques offered. My coaching had evolved into a process where I effectively listened and used open-ended questions to stimulate reflection and new ways of thinking.

By the end of the study, I had become a stronger, more empathic coach. The literature on coaching behaviors validated my finding. Initially in the study, I was finding satisfaction by trying to solve Jack’s problems. Upon reflection of my behaviors, I realized I had to shift my thinking and move away from being a problem solver to helping Jack to solve his own problems. This was a real departure from my past experiences. The literature says that a coach’s purpose is to help a principal make a personal transformation through the process of inquiry and reflection (Lovely, 2004). I created new strategies to support that purpose. A day or two prior to each Friday Meeting, I re-read sections of Cognitive Coaching to reinforce my learning of effective coaching strategies. I also created coaching cheat sheets and brought them to each Friday Meeting to remind myself of my shortcomings (i.e., stop answering my own questions). The most important strategy I created to support the learning was the development and use of reflection questions. These questions were generated from a close reading of the transcripts. These questions provided the opportunity to probe more deeply into an issue that we had not fully explored and discussed. These strategies significantly contributed
to my growth as a coach and as such, my satisfaction shifted from focusing on my success to focusing and celebrating Jack’s success.

**Research Question 3**

There were several factors that led to growth and change for Jack and me. The most important factor was the professional dialogue that we engaged in at every Friday Meeting. Because our conversation was focused, engaging and dialogic, it led us to new paths of thinking resulting in growth and shifts in understanding about principal leadership. My favorite quote from *Cognitive Coaching* (Costa & Garmston, 1994) was “It takes two to know one”. This absolutely rang true for Jack and me. We came to know ourselves and each other far more deeply because our dialogue included deep questioning that provided insights into our individual and collective thinking and decision making.

Deep questioning was critically important to our growth; however, developing the skills to engage in deep questioning was an on-going, deliberate process. My ability to ask good questions evolved over time. In the beginning, I tended to use close-ended questions which I quickly learned was a barrier to my coaching because I was too frequently getting one or two word answers or answers with little content. After studying my coaching resources again, I began to use open-ended questions which yielded a good deal more conversation; yet, the insight being shared was still not yielding the meaty conversation I knew we needed to have. We were still saying at the surface of the issues. Finally, my open-ended questions moved into more meaningful, deep questions. I accomplished this by re-reading transcriptions and reflection questions and consciously looking for opportunities to probe more deeply into Jack’s decision-making and thinking.

Trust was also essential to our work. We trusted each other’s judgment and trusted that our conversations would be confidential. By creating a trusting environment,
we created a safe space where we could take risks with our thinking to try out new ideas and to explore what was not working without fear of being judged. The literature on transformational leadership behaviors discusses the need for a principal to create an atmosphere of trust for his or her staff in order to create and sustain change (Zimmerman, 2006). Jack and I definitely experienced the importance of creating trust and in turn, he was trying to create an atmosphere of trust for his administrative team and teacher leaders.

Reflection was an equally essential component to the change process. The literature is replete with research that describes the importance of reflection for principals (DuFour, 2002; Fullan, 2005; Jensen, 2009; Zimmerman, 2006). The authors describe the need to engage in continual, relentless reflection in order to improve and sustain change. Conventional wisdom tells us this is an important practice and yet, too frequently, the demands of the job leave too little time and energy for educators to reflect on their practice and behaviors. Initially, Jack was reluctant to partake in reflection. He often commented that in order to be prepared for our Friday Meetings he had to force himself to reflect on his behaviors and meetings. However, as the study progressed Jack began to see the positive outcomes from his reflection time. In fact, he began to schedule reflection time into his calendar to ensure he would do so. Jack’s scheduled reflection time provided private, quiet time to think and contemplate whether or not his behaviors were resulting in the outcomes he wanted.

**Unexpected Findings**

Interestingly, there were several unexpected findings of this study. One of the most important of these was learning how to make sense of and utilize the leadership framework. As I have explained beforehand, Jack and I initially approached this study in
a simplistic, mechanical way. We believed that we could study the leadership behaviors, implement them, and wait for the positive results. Effectively, we were using the framework as a list from which Jack could choose behaviors and implement them and, I would function as a clinical supervisor rather than a true coach. We soon learned that this was faulty thinking because neither of us was not getting the positive feedback and results that we were hoping for. We learned that we needed to change our approach to the framework; we needed to engage in the learning and thinking about the nuances of the behaviors in our context in order to use them effectively. By interacting with the behaviors, utilizing the behaviors and then reflecting on the behaviors, we made the significant change from a mechanistic approach of learning to a more instinctive, inquiry-based process that allowed us to make fundamental changes to our beliefs and behaviors.

The data analysis revealed that Jack’s confidence was an important theme as it was discussed at nearly every Friday Meeting. Although this was not necessarily our focus during the study, it became an important outcome. Jack frequently made references to his “lack of voice” but ultimately declared that he “found his voice”. Confidence and self-efficacy are very closely aligned and are often used interchangeably. Self-efficacy is a foundational characteristic for effective principal leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008b; Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Garies, 2004) because it helps to better understand how a principal will behave, persist, and produce desired outcomes. In order to improve self-efficacy, the degree of strength in one’s ability and the belief that certain levels can be attained has to be assessed (Bandura, 1997).

Throughout the study, Jack was engaged in a process where he was examining and learning about effective leadership behaviors and the effects of his own behavior. During the study, he stated candidly that he knew he could be an effective leader but
really did not know what behaviors led to effective leadership. Thus, Jack had met one of the two criteria to improve his self-efficacy and confidence. He believed throughout the study that he could grow and change.

The goal of our study unintentionally aligned directly to the second criterion of self-efficacy to strengthen one’s ability. Over the course of the study, Jack had become acutely aware of effective leadership behaviors and worked to adopt and integrate them. Of the five leadership behaviors we focused on (see Table 1), Jack adopted and integrated three of the behaviors into his practice: (1) focus, (2) intellectual stimulation, and (3) resources. We defined adopted and integrated behaviors as those behaviors that were purposefully and effectively being utilized. There were two leadership behaviors that Jack adopted into his practice: (1) monitor and evaluate and (2) involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment. We defined adopted behaviors as those behaviors that were recognized as being important and yet were not fully integrated into his daily practice. Jack was adopting and modifying his leadership behaviors with his administrative team and teacher leaders in order to lead the redesign. And although he slipped back into old behaviors from time to time, he was willing to discuss and try again. Jack did succeed in strengthening some important leadership abilities. As a result of this work, he met the two criterion for strengthening and improving his self-efficacy.

Our working relationship produced an unexpected finding as well. Jack and I had been working together on the redesign for three years prior to this study, thus we had a good working relationship. We had a mutual respect for each other’s responsibilities but most importantly we had an equal desire to achieve our redesign goals. However, we did not always agree upon the best way to approach problems we were facing with the
redesign. Given his authority as principal, I provided my opinion but often deferred to his judgment.

This study provided a unique opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of each other’s roles which translated into a more effective, collegial working relationship. Instead of the traditional role of principal as head of the school and project director as subordinate to the principal, the study placed us on equal footing with each other. Jack was the study participant and I was the leadership coach and we were both researchers. This dynamic allowed us to step outside of our traditional roles. We could challenge each other’s thinking, ask direct and honest questions, and call each other out when needed. However, we reserved these conversations for our Friday Meetings. We had an understanding that these privileged conversations were for our purposes only and we did not display this level of familiarity in front of staff. Instead we used our working relationship to help each other grow and achieve.

During our study, we created a safe environment whereby we could talk about and discuss our own shortcomings. The idea that we could talk freely about what we believed and what we did not like about ourselves was powerful. In life, there are not many opportunities to explore your inner being that produces these types of outcomes and change. Ultimately, we developed a genuine, deep respect for each other that created a relationship that will continue beyond the duration of this study.

**Literature Versus Reality**

A significant disconnect exists between the concreteness of the literature and the messiness of reality. Principals everywhere face increased challenges as politicians, parents, communities, policy makers and others demand better educational outcomes. In recent years, there has been a marked upswing in headline-making stories decrying the
lack of quality education in America highlighting students’ low performance on national and international tests. With significant financial cutbacks and changing student demographics, principals are under significant pressure to improve outcomes with fewer resources.

Two major issues compound the pressures principals face today. The literature reveals that principal leadership programs are largely ineffective (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Fullan, 2005; Fry, Bottoms, & O’Neill, 2005) and that there is an acute shortage of qualified leaders (Gajda & Militello, 2008). These two issues go hand-in-hand. Because principal leadership programs are ill-equipped to prepare principals for leadership roles to lead the teaching and learning at their school, it is not surprising then that there are few principals who are ready and capable of meeting the new, challenging demands of the principalship.

Paradoxically, the literature on principal leadership is quite clear on the leadership behaviors that are necessary to be an effective leader who is focused on raising student achievement and sustaining change (Leithwood & Seashore, 2012; Robinson, 2011; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Essentially, Jack and I identified five behaviors from the research that principals ought to focus on if they want to effectively lead their school (I used the terms from the Waters, Marzano & McNulty framework): (1) intellectual stimulation, (2) monitor and evaluate, (3) resources, (4) focus, and (5) knowledge of and involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment.

We studied each behavior and interpreted each in the context Jack’s responsibilities. The purpose of intellectual stimulation was to ensure the on-going development of teachers. For Jack this meant that he was not only responsible for
planning professional development but most importantly, was actively engaged in the learning alongside the teachers. In essence he was modeling and leading the learning.

The purpose of *monitor and evaluate* was to ensure the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning. Jack developed and led the process to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning for every teacher. In order to do so, he needed to elicit the assistance of his administrative team and teacher leaders to complete classroom observations and feedback.

The purpose of *resources* was to ensure that teachers have the materials and professional development to be successful teachers. There were many instances where Jack had to make choices about how to use resources effectively but two of them were most crucial. He made decisions to shift resources in order to expand his teacher leadership (providing additional common plan time) and to ensure professional development occurred (providing substitutes and opportunities to attend workshops).

The purpose of *focus* was to establish goals and to keep those goals in the forefront. For Jack, creating focus meant he had to create focus for himself first so that he could be clear and sure about his focus for his school. He shifted his focus from being a manager to being a leader; he became less involved in the minutiae of the day-to-day activities and more involved in the leading and planning of the redesign. As this came into sharper focus for him, Jack was then able to create a singular focus for his staff on student achievement.

The purpose of *knowledge of and involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment* was to be directly involved in the design, development and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment. The primary reason Jack expanded the teacher leadership was to assist with this process. He placed his teacher leaders in charge of the
PLCs where this work was being done. Given the size of his teaching staff, it was not possible for him to be directly involved in all the facets of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The reason these five behaviors were selected was two-fold. First, there is a great deal of overlap between the three major leadership studies conducted by Leithwood and Seashore (2012), Robinson (2011), and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003). These five behaviors are evident in each of the three studies and were shown to be positively correlated to student achievement. Second, although Waters, Marzano and McNulty had identified 21 research-based behaviors in their framework, it was these five behaviors that continued to be at the forefront of our Friday Meeting discussions thus becoming our central focus. This represented a convergence of truth for Jack and me. We were learning about research-based effective leadership behaviors while at the same time learning from our own experiences that these behaviors were in fact critical to effective leadership, redesign and student achievement and could not be dismissed and forgotten.

There is a leadership behavior that Jack and I found to be critical to our work that is not mentioned in any of the three major leadership studies: Leithwood and Louis (2012), Robinson (2011) and Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003). Reflection proved to be an incredibly useful tool to both Jack and me. We needed to understand and reflect upon the behavioral choices and decisions that were being made and why. If we had not given ourselves this privilege to reflect quietly on our own and together, we would have missed opportunities to ponder why we were behaving the way we were, what outcomes we were getting and what adjustments needed to be made to improve ourselves. I believe the omission of reflection in the three major leadership studies does a disservice to any principal who desires to improve their leadership and practice. I recommend that
reflection or the act of reflecting has to be considered a critical behavior for those who want to improve their practice.

So, if we know what behaviors to adopt and practice, why are we not focused on improving principal preparation programs and why are we not focused on helping existing principals to improve their practice? I believe there are three answers. First, policymakers are so intensely focused on teachers that they have overlooked the need to improve educational leadership. Teachers are indeed the number one factor in student achievement. However, without effective educational leadership improving student achievement can be fleeting. Second, once principals are hired, little, if any, support and training is provided to principals. Assumptions are made that they are equipped with the knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors to carry out their responsibilities. And finally, although we now have solid research about effective principal behaviors, there exists little information about how principals actually translate those behaviors into daily practice.

I found that translation can only occur through reflection, deep questioning, professional dialogue that resulted in an inquiry-based process. Combining these practices proved to be powerful for Jack and me. We had time to reflect privately and together through one-on-one professional dialogue. We created a relationship and environment that allowed for deep and honest questioning that many times led to tough conversations. Without this type of questioning and professional dialogue, we would have never uncovered deeply held beliefs that were holding us back. These conversations led us to powerful conversations and change. It’s one thing to read about effective behaviors and an entirely different thing to bring about change and actually implement the behaviors. I believe that changes at the district and building level can be made that
would value the collective learning of its leaders ultimately improving principal leadership.

**Recommendations**

To underscore the importance of these recommendations, I need to revisit once again the reason for which this study began. After serving in various administrative roles, Jack was promoted as principal of George Washington High School; a large school with 3500 students. He was excited and proud of his new role. Jack attended a state sponsored principal preparation program for nearly a year; attending one-day workshops nearly once a month. At the same time, GWHS was awarded a redesign grant to improve student achievement for which he was charged with implementation. Jack soon surmised that the leadership behaviors that had been modeled for him and adopted by him were no longer getting the results he wanted.

Jack’s story is not unlike many other educational leaders. Well-intentioned professionals find themselves in demanding situations for which there was little preparation and little follow-up support and training. Grounded in the outcomes of my research and expertise on principal leadership, I believe there are practical, low-cost strategies that can be implemented at the building and district levels that can provide the support and training needed to improve principal leadership.

**Building Level**

Principals who are interested in their own development can infuse some strategies that would deepen their understanding of principal leadership and improve their own practice as well as that of their administrative leadership team. First, I recommend that principals schedule reflection time into their weekly schedule. Principals should schedule the reflection time on the same day each week and for at least one hour. Creating a
routine will stave off interruptions and will more likely bring about a habit of mind. Jack found this practice so helpful that he committed himself to making this a lifelong practice.

Second, I recommend choosing a principal leadership framework. We selected the Balanced Leadership Framework; however, I would suggest considering the research offered by Robinson (2011) for three reasons. First, her research is more current and included more participants than that of the Framework. Second, her research identified five effective leadership behaviors rather than the 21 behaviors identified in the Framework making the learning and implementation more manageable. And third, Robinson’s research is user-friendly, easy to understand, and identified fewer leadership behaviors which may prove to be more manageable and attainable.

Third, I recommend that principals evaluate their own behaviors and time in the context of their chosen principal leadership framework during their reflection time. For instance, Robinson’s framework discusses the need for principals’ to lead the professional learning of their school. Principals’ could ask themselves: How am I leading the learning of my staff? What behaviors do I exhibit when I am leading the learning of my staff? What does professional learning for my staff look like? How often are we engaged in professional learning? What do I need to do to modify or adopt behaviors to improve my leadership of professional learning?

Finally, I recommend that principals’ journal during their reflection time to chronicle their journey. Although Jack did not make use of journaling, in the end, I felt it was a missed opportunity for him to bear witness to his own voice. Journaling provides a unique method to hold oneself accountable to one’s thinking and commitments.
This process would yield new learning and insight into the principals’ thinking, behavior and choices. A one-hour reflection time would be quiet time to focus on research-based leadership behaviors in the context of their own behaviors to reflect and contemplate whether or not their behavior is achieving the outcomes they desire. Additional online resources could be obtained to supplement the learning. This process requires discipline and a willingness to think critically and deeply about one’s behavior in order to improve upon it.

Overall, this process could lead to remarkable new learning and outcomes by engaging in regular self-reflection of one’s leadership thinking, behavior and choices. The process is both simple and demanding. It is simple because it does not take a lot of time and the resources are readily available at no cost. It is demanding because it requires one to think critically about their own thinking and behavior which requires one to question and be accountable to themselves.

**District Level**

The outcomes of this study have implications at the district level as well that I believe may prove to be more powerful and sustaining than those at the building level. Knowing that there is a scarcity of qualified principals and a lack of effective principal preparation programs, district administrators would be wise to foster and formalize the professional learning of their principals so their schools can become learning organizations. Learning organizations are those that shift to a more organic, interconnected way of thinking and learning that fosters ownership and commitment (Senge, 1994). Districts are under pressure to improve outcomes and to be competitive as students increasingly have choice to choose schools and courses. Thus, schools need to engage in a process that values and facilitates the collective learning of their leaders.
Just as there are professional learning communities for teachers, I would recommend that district administrators establish principal learning communities. Similar to the process I recommended for individual principals’, district administrators would facilitate a learning process that involves all the principals in their district\(^4\). The principal learning community would: (1) choose a leadership behavior framework, (2) create a principal learning community meeting schedule, (3) utilize the PAR cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect to explore thinking and behaviors, and (4) encourage (perhaps require) journaling as a way to engage in reflection.

There are several other components that I would recommend district administrators to consider. First, a leadership coach could be hired to create and facilitate the principal learning community. This could be a short- or long-term commitment which would be based on the needs of the principals and districts. The leadership coach could also be used to provide one-on-one coaching to individual principals. Second, building-level student achievement data should be incorporated into the learning. Although at first it may create uneasiness, making data public creates a sense of openness and urgency and grounds the conversations in reality to avoid unqualified statements. Third, I would recommend that attendance and active participation is required. Building a culture that values and focuses on on-going professional learning cannot be voluntary. Mandatory participation sends a strong message that on-going learning and improving practice is vital to improving schools.

Given the current state of educational reforms and mandates, I believe that professional learning for principals is the missing link to creating and sustaining meaningful change. I submit that the creation of principal learning communities could

\(^4\) Given the size of the district, it may be prudent to have principals grouped according to building type.
yield powerful results similar to those found with professional learning communities (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2004). I further submit that this would be an area for further study and research. Principals, too, need a collaborative environment whereby a shared vision can be developed, the status quo can be challenged in pursuit of ongoing improvement, decisions made are based on actual student outcomes, and reflection is used as a tool to improve oneself and the school.

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study included the omission of staff feedback on Jack’s behavior and the inability for me to gain a greater understanding with regard to Jack’s reluctance to follow-up on self-imposed mandates. This study was grounded in our interpretations of what was happening with Jack’s thinking and leadership behaviors. I worked to triangulate the data through document collection, observations and field notes; however, I think that the triangulation could have been made stronger had we solicited a 360 degree evaluation from Jack’s superiors, peers, and subordinates. This type of feedback would have provided good information about how Jack’s leadership behaviors were being perceived by others.

Second, this study sought to understand how Jack would adopt and integrate leadership behaviors. In doing so, we explored Jack’s beliefs about leadership and his thinking and decision-making. Jack was very forthcoming with information except with regard to one major question: Why would he not follow-up on self-imposed mandates he asked of his administrative leaders and teacher leaders? Jack mandated that his leaders conduct observations and feedback yet seemed to lack the wherewithal to get them to follow through. So while great access to information was afforded to me as a researcher, I could not gain access to this important question.
I believe there are two reasons why Jack was not forthcoming with information related to his self-imposed mandates. First, given the pressures the redesign was having on the building, I believe Jack needed the support and approval of his administrative team and teacher leaders. Many teachers were vocal about their disdain for the changes being made, in fact, some teachers by-passed Jack and shared their opinions directly with the District office. In turn, there were times that he received less than helpful support from the District office. Jack just needed to feel like he had a group of people in the building he could count on.

The second reason I believe Jack would not discuss his reluctance to follow-up on his mandates with his administrative team and teacher leaders was an extension of the District office’s reluctance to openly support Jack and redesign. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), Robinson (2011), and Leithwood and Louis (2012) all found that effective principals lead the learning of their teachers and staff. I believe the same idea should be held true for the district administrators. Jack and his teachers had gone through significant amounts of professional development not to mention the professional learning and growth Jack was experiencing from our work together. The district administrators had not engaged in the new learning being experienced by Jack and his teachers, thus a significant gap in knowledge and experience began to grow. If the district administrators did not engage in the new learning how certain could Jack be that the redesign could be sustained? Or perhaps more importantly, how could Jack be certain that he would continue to have their support? On this point, I believe that when a district engages their principals and teachers in professional development, *they* must lead the new learning just as Jack learned to lead the learning of his teachers.
Final Thoughts

This study was both easy and difficult. In the beginning, I thought this quest to help Jack would be fairly easy. We would study leadership behaviors, try them out, and voila, Jack would be a shiny, new principal who utilized research-based leadership behaviors. Of course, this was a gross oversimplification resulting in a mechanistic approach that made it extremely difficult to change behavior. I found that changing behavior was far more difficult and complex than I could have imagined. Making the right choices and choosing the right behaviors seemed intuitive when we know what those choices and behaviors should be. However, our own beliefs and behaviors acted as a barrier and prevented us from changing ourselves. Our work together allowed us to overcome those barriers and yielded very practical, powerful outcomes. We both grew into being reflective practitioners who worked collaboratively to improve our practice. I have a strong sense of urgency about the need to develop and support principal leadership.

I believe that our work during this study and the completion of this dissertation helps to bridge the gap between the concreteness of the literature and the messiness of reality. For many professionals making use of the literature and research in a practical way is often the challenge. Jack and I created a dynamic process that was focused on reflection, deep questioning and professional dialogue that led us from studying the leadership behavior framework, to understanding the behaviors in the context of leading a school, to trying out different behaviors, and finally, adopting and integrating behaviors that achieved the results Jack wanted. Of course, it was not always so straightforward, in fact, it seldom was. However, even given the missteps and misfires, Jack did find success
which led me to conclude that our process was indeed a powerful one and could yield powerful results.

I have a profound sense of urgency to support and develop principals given the superhuman demands of their positions. Principals often feel isolated and are left to their own devices to solve the problems they face. Conversely, we teach our students every day that teamwork, collaboration and lifelong learning are the essential skills for success. So, why do we, as educators, pay lip service to these teachings? Why do we not own our own words? We all have to engage in the on-going learning in order to continually hone our craft and expertise As Albert Einstein famously once said, “You can’t use the same thinking that created the problem, to solve the problem”. Thus, inaction is unacceptable. As individual professionals and as a community we have to embrace the learning in order to act, reflect and grow.
REFERENCES


Petzko, V. (2008). The perceptions of new principals regarding the knowledge and skills important to their initial success. NASSP Bulletin, 92(3), 224-250.


Date: August 18, 2011

To: Joseph Kretovics, Principal Investigator
    Hekli Beidner-Burnett, Student Investigator for Dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 11-07-15

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “From Managerial Leadership to Transformational Leadership: One High School Principal’s Journey” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: August 18, 2012