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Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize to Increase Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful Michigan Elementary Schools

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DAILY PRACTICES ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS UTILIZE TO INCREASE STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL MICHIGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

Susan L. Johnson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology
Advisor: Van Cooley, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 2010
This case study examined three K-5 schools, one 3-5 school, and two K-2 schools that implemented Michigan’s Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) and showed improvement trends in third grade reading achievement as measured by MEAP results over four years. Each of the six schools completed the three years of MiBLSi training and are currently in their fourth, fifth or sixth year since beginning the program.

A wealth of studies have been conducted on effective leadership responsibilities for principals (Beck & Murphy, 1996; Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Fullan, 2008b; Lambert, 2003; Lashway, 2002; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008). Similarly extensive work has been completed on differentiating between types of change and key factors in leading second-order change and how fidelity is key in implementing school reform. What remains to be studied is how effective principals synthesize this information and translate it into daily practices resulting in increased student reading achievement. Data were collected through interviews with principals, focus groups with teachers and coaches, observations of principals, and document collection.
Analysis of the data provided six dominant themes related to the research questions: Behavior/Positive Behavior Support, Visibility, Professional Development, Team/Distributed Leadership, Data, and Deliberate/Focused. The dominant themes were cross tabbed with the theoretical frameworks from Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a). Connections were made to both Marzano et al.'s Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-order Change and 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader as well as to four of Fullan’s Six Secrets of Change.

This study supports previous research and adds to the literature by providing a deeper understanding of how principals translate broad responsibilities and strategies into daily practices, which they utilize to successfully implement a Michigan school improvement initiative. Principals appear to balance first- and second-order change associated responsibilities with their sense of how staff are experiencing change. They integrate the use of various strategies and behaviors to leverage the impact on the process of implementation.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family for believing in me. Without their support, I could not have completed this program. My husband, Ken, and my children, Sarah and Scott, are the reason for everything that is good in my life. They loved me enough to let me learn and grow. They were patient and understanding and often had to make sacrifices in order for me to accomplish this task. They allowed me the time I needed to read, think, write, and reflect and never complained about the long nights I was on the road to and from class or weekends spent in my office.

My parents, Del and June, provided me with values that made me into the person I am today. Integrity and commitment were foundational values of my childhood. My love of learning is a direct result of my mother’s role in my life. Bob and Marian modeled the values of independence and perseverance for me as an adult. My life is greatly blessed because of all of you.

I would also like to thank my committee members who provided guidance and support throughout this process: Dr. Van Cooley, Dr. Patricia Reeves, and Dr. Sandra Standish.

Susan L. Johnson
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study Topic

With the accountability era firmly in place and significant research available to guide school improvement and reform, it is disconcerting to realize that students are still being left behind. Layers of studies on school reform and raising student achievement have produced important findings on principal effectiveness, on the process of leading change and on designing and delivering effective reading programs; yet, schools and school leaders are still struggling with the work that actually turns a low performing school into one that is high performing (Fullan, 1993, 2008b; Reeves, 2002, 2009; Schmoker, 2006; Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008). This is true even in the area of reading achievement, despite the proliferation of research that supported whole school literacy models.

Overwhelming evidence indicates that the principal can and does make a difference in changing the achievement profile of a school. No Child Left Behind (United States Department of Education, 2007) requires principals to be responsible for increased student achievement in a relatively short period of time. The Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) added additional responsibilities for principals because it “required general education to monitor and measure a student’s response to an individualized intervention in the general education classroom” (McCook,
A solid body of research has provided guidance for increasing principal effectiveness in transforming low performing schools into high performing ones, but principals must translate the research into action that results in the systematic implementation of reform models. "The skills and knowledge that matter in leadership... are those that can be connected to, or lead directly to, the improvement of instruction and student performance" (Elmore, 2000). This appears to be easier said than done and may be part of the reason that school reform has been slow and we are not seeing significant results on a large scale even when that reform is guided by well articulated and strongly research-supported strategies and initiatives.

Most states have endorsed one or more reform models for significantly raising reading achievement; yet schools are still finding the implementation of these models challenging and slow. In Michigan Reading First, Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) and Instructional Consultation Teams (ICT) are common reform models focused on reading. MiBLSi is an IDEA Mandated Activities Project funded by the Michigan Department of Education. It is a response to intervention model focused on increased student achievement in reading and positive behavior. "MiBLSi is in the on-going process of creating a sustainable and scalable statewide system of support" (Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, n.d.[d]). MiBLSi was the initiative examined in this study.

Reading achievement has received significant attention due to the challenges encountered by illiterate adults. Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, and Fletcher (1996) found that 74% of children who read poorly in third grade continue to be poor readers in ninth grade. The problem of adult literacy is accentuated in that in 2007, 33%
of fourth grade students in the United States read below basic level on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). This places a focus and a sense of urgency on elementary teachers and administrators to develop and maintain an effective school reading program. The overarching question of this study was, with all we know today about leadership and reading, why aren’t more children meeting reading proficiency standards?

Due to the high stakes placed on schools to increase school effectiveness and student achievement, research has begun to focus on the principal’s role in instructional leadership. A significant amount of research has been summarized in Marzano, Waters and McNulty’s (2005) book, School Leadership That Works. Marzano et al. conducted a meta-analysis of research studies and found 21 categories of behaviors or responsibilities related to effective principal leadership.

Fullan’s (2008a) work on change identified key factors leaders can use to guide and monitor their leadership and supervision. These factors provide support and suggestions for principals leading meaningful change in their buildings that is sustainable. Successful implementation of school reform requires fidelity related to the initiative or program (Foorman & Moats, 2004; Levin, Catlin, & Elson, 2007). Elmore (2000) describes improvement as:

change with direction, sustained over time, that moves entire systems, raising the average level of quality and performance while at the same time decreasing the variation among units, and engaging people in analysis and understanding of why some actions seem to work and others don’t. (p. 13)

The American Institutes for Research report supported the comprehensive implementation of improvement models: “it is faithful implementation of a model that we
have found to be associated with positive outcomes” (Aladjem et al., 2006, p. 188).

Research on implementation of school reform has identified “essential supports” and key recommendations principals can utilize (Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

A wealth of studies have been conducted on effective leadership responsibilities for principals (Beck & Murphy, 1996; Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Fullan, 2008b; Lambert, 2003; Lashway, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; Stronge et al., 2008). Similarly extensive work has been completed on differentiating between types of change and key factors in leading second-order change and how fidelity is key in implementing school reform. What remains to be studied is how effective principals synthesize this information and translate it into daily practices that result in increased student reading achievement.

The research conducted to date provides a wealth of information for principals. Drilling down into the actual day-to-day work of the principal to see how the broader research findings play out is the next step. This micro-investigation attempted to identify specific actionable behaviors principals engage in to successfully implement school reform, specifically MiBLSi, which results in increased student reading achievement. This information would be a great benefit to practicing and inspiring principals.

Problem Statement

The importance of being able to read in American society cannot be overlooked. Reading equals success in our society. The demands of literacy are increasing, which widens the economic gap for those unable to read well enough to meet basic workplace demands (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). “A person who is not at least a modestly skilled
reader by the end of third grade is quite unlikely to graduate from high school” (Snow et al., 1998).

Principals implement programs and retain the responsibility of leading substantive school reform initiatives like MiBLSi in schools with unique characteristics and varying levels of staff, parent, and central office buy-in and support. The broad roles and areas of focus and attention indicated by previous research provide the principals a general road map for guiding and achieving successful implementation of a major school reform, but each principal must still translate those broad understandings into actionable work on a day-to-day basis in their school. Moreover, implementation of whole school literacy initiatives may have enough unique features that the principal’s work may need to be further tailored to the elements of that reform. For these reasons, the contextual nature of leading change, the need for principals to translate broad understandings into day-to-day action, and the particular challenges of implementing a whole school literacy initiative, we need to know more about how principals actually shape their day-to-day work to achieve high fidelity and successful (in terms of improved student results) implementation of major reading and literacy school reforms. The limited research related to the impact of daily, actionable principal behaviors is unfortunate because principals must understand, monitor, and promote a wide range of pedagogical concepts designed to increase student achievement.

The Research Questions

To gain a deeper understanding of the daily actionable practices principals utilize, schools that have implemented MiBLSi for a period of at least 3 years under the
leadership of the same principal and have achieved increasing reading achievement scores for third grade students were studied. The broad question for my case study was: How do principals translate what is known about effective leadership, leading change and implementation of school reform into daily, actionable practices to increase student reading achievement? With this broader question in mind, several subquestions guided the investigation:

1. What do principals do on a day-to-day basis related to the MiBLSi initiative?
   a. What actions or procedures helped principals lead MiBLSi implementation?
   b. In what ways, if any, do principals and teachers link the work of the principal using MiBLSi to student reading achievement and what was most significant?

2. What challenges do the principals encounter in trying to lead the implementation of MiBLSi and how do they respond?

Additional questions may develop as a result of an “increased understanding of the problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 43).

A case study involving principals of schools that participated in MiBLSi which demonstrated rising reading achievement scores helped to discover if and how the principal translates what is known about effective leadership responsibilities into daily practices which lead to successful implementation. The purpose of this study was to examine how principals interpret their own work and how other school personnel interpret the work of the principal in order to learn more about the contextual nature of
principal leadership and how this leadership plays out in deep implementation of MiBLSi over a short period of time.

The Rationale/Significance

With the existence of research on effective instructional models for reading and on effective principals, why isn't increased reading achievement more widespread? By discovering and sharing how principals translate what is known about reading instruction and leadership into day-to-day practices that result in increased student achievement, more students can be affected. According to Ballard (2008), "evidence suggests that individual principals actually behave quite differently depending on the circumstances they are facing and the people with whom they are working" (p.13).

Results of this study will provide leaders with strategies that principals use daily to successfully implement MiBLSi resulting in increased student reading proficiency. There may be implications for principal preparation programs, professional development, and other initiatives designed to increase reading proficiency. Principals engaged in leading the MiBLSi initiative in their school may also gain insight into ways to make the initiative more successful and sustainable.

Methodology

A critical multi-case study approach using qualitative methods was used to answer the research questions. When a detailed understanding of an issue is needed, qualitative research methods are used (Creswell, 2007). A case study involves systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to
permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions (Berg, 2004). According to Yin (2009), “how” research questions favor the case study methodology. A case study is undertaken to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for the participants (Yin, 2009).

Principals, teachers, and building staff at schools which participated in MiBLSi for a minimum of 3 years and experienced increased reading achievement participated in this study. The principal must have begun the training during the initial training year and attended professional development sessions provided by MiBLSi. These are the critical attributes of the study. The principal is the unit of analysis. The purpose of the investigation was to increase the knowledge base related to principal leadership in MiBLSi schools that impacts reading achievement scores. Case study allows a researcher to “describe an intervention and the real life context in which it occurred” (Yin, 2009, p. 19).

Multiple-case designs allow for the selection of multiple cases based on knowledge of the outcomes (Yin, 2009). In this study, the outcome of increased reading achievement was known, and critical cases were selected which demonstrated the outcome. “Selecting such cases requires prior knowledge of the outcomes, with the multiple-case inquiry focusing on how and why the exemplary outcomes might have occurred and hoping for literal (or direct) replications of these conditions from case to case” (Yin, 2009, p. 59). By selecting multiple cases, the conclusions drawn were more powerful than if a single case was used. “Multiple-case designs should follow a replication, not a sampling logic” (Yin, 2009, p. 61).
Limitations/Delimitations

The following limitations/delimitations affect this study:

1. Case studies are limited in scope and cannot be used to make generalizations to larger populations (Yin, 2009). In this case study, I used cross-case analysis of critical cases to provide insight into the daily practices of elementary principals at buildings with increasing reading achievement that might be examined in future research. This study was limited to principals of MiBLSi buildings with increasing reading achievement scores. The principals must have begun participating in the initiative at its beginning and participated in MiBLSi professional development.

2. Because the initiative is based in Michigan, the cases were within the geographic boundary of the state.

3. In 2007 there were 250 elementary schools participating in MiBLSi and that number has increased since then. However, in order to show increasing reading achievement trends, the schools selected had to have been a part of the initiative for at least 3 years and had the same principal for that time. This limited the schools selected to those beginning MiBLSi in 2004, 2005, and 2006, Cohorts 1, 2 and 3. Thirty-seven Cohort 1, 2, or 3 schools continued MiBLSi implementation according to the 2008 MiBLSi outcomes available on the MiBLSi website.
Definitions and Terms

MiBLSi – Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative is a project funded by the Michigan Department of Education. It is designed to assist schools in developing a school wide support system in reading and behavior. It is a Response to Intervention (RTI) model.


IDEA 2004 – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal law regulating programs and services for disabled students.

NCLB – No Child Left Behind is federal legislation mandating that all students are proficient in math and reading by 2014.

Second-order change – deep change that may fundamentally alter the system, requiring thinking in new ways and shifting directions (Marzano et al., 2005).

Organization of the Study

Chapter II includes a review of the literature relative to effective leadership, leading second-order change, and implementing school reform. The methodology used in this investigation is discussed in Chapter III. In Chapter IV, findings are presented under each of the research questions. Chapter V includes implications, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study examined the daily practices of principals to explore how they move from the broad strategies in the literature to actionable behaviors resulting in successful implementation of Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) and increased student achievement in reading. The literature review examines work in the education field relevant to the role of elementary principals in terms of the implementation of school improvement or reform initiatives resulting in increased reading achievement of their students. It begins with a review of information available regarding current educational accountability requirements principals face. “We are in the midst of the second serious attempt at large-scale educational reform in the past half-century” (Fullan, 2000b, p. 5). Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) will be described as an initiative designed to meet the additional accountability requirements and improve student achievement. Response to Intervention models will be explored. MiBLSi is a Response to Intervention (RTI) model. This section moves into examining ways principals move their buildings toward systematic change related to accountability standards and use of data.

Next, the review explores the principal in the role of an instructional leader of a building. This includes creating a professional community which includes distributed leadership and leadership capacity. The roles of principal are many and varied and in this...
study those roles that most directly relate to student achievement are explored. According to Izumi, Coburn, and Cox (2002), “the principals who head these [successful] schools are strong leaders who have a clear vision of what works and does not work in the classroom” (p. 55). Marzano et al. (2005) identified responsibilities of effective school leaders.

Implementation of school improvement or reform initiatives with fidelity is difficult to achieve. This section will examine the literature related to implementation issues. In a case study of an inclusion model in Florida, Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey, and Liebert (2006) found that strong principal leadership was one of the keys to successful sustainability. Other factors included effective teacher training and adequate resources.

The nature of change has also been explored in the research. Fullan (1993) describes change as complex. “Leaders for change get involved as learners in real reform situations” (Fullan, 2000a, p. 158). Change can be defined in terms of first or second order. First-order change can occur step-by-step. Second-order change “involves dramatic departures from the expected” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 66). The change that accompanies the implementation of MiBLSi can be described as second-order change requiring different leadership responsibilities than first-order change (Marzano et al., 2005). The leadership required for second-order change was specifically related to 7 of Marzano et al.’s 21 responsibilities of effective leadership. There is a difference between the impact on teachers of first- and second-order change. The type or nature of change directly affects the implementation of programs and leaders are wise to consider it. This section
will explore second-order change and what school principals should prioritize in order to successfully lead the change.

Finally, instructional reading models are examined and a summary of the evolution of reading instruction in classrooms is provided. Different programs and methods exist. Many programs include “scientific-based research.” Selection, implementation, assessment, and outcomes using these programs vary from district to district. Much is known about effective instruction. Teacher professional development to build individual capacity makes a significant impact on student achievement. Izumi et al. (2002) found that there is a “no-nonsense quality to the professional development” (p. 56) at successful schools. The final section will also look at providing learning opportunities and increasing individual capacity of teachers.

Accountability for Student Achievement

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the importance of accountability in schools increased dramatically. Under this act, schools are accountable for the achievement of all students and subgroups of students including ethical/racial, economically disadvantaged, limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. It is important to remember “that the purpose of accountability is to improve student achievement” (Reeves, 2002, p. 156). No Child Left Behind requires all students to be proficient in reading and math no later than the 2013-2014 school year.

Michigan is required to provide a state report card as well as district and school report cards annually. EducationYes! – a Yardstick for Excellent Schools is the Michigan accreditation program, which assigns a letter grade to schools and districts based on
academic achievement and indicators of school performance. Annual assessment results, graduation rates, and percentage of students tested are all included. Schools are required to self-assess 40 or 90 performance indicators of school improvement. States are required to report any Title I school that does not meet the state's definition of adequate yearly progress for 2 consecutive years.

Schools that do not make sufficient progress are subject to severe penalties. These may include having to offer supplemental services (tutoring or after-school assistance) and corrective actions. If not making adequate yearly progress in 5 years, they face major changes in how the district is run. The goal is for districts and schools to use their data to highlight areas needing improvement and to focus the district or school resources on these areas.

No Child Left Behind requires 100% of elementary students to be proficient in reading by 2013-2014. In Michigan, 86% of third grade students scored proficient on the reading portion of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) assessment in 2007. This percentage fell from 87% proficient in 2005 and 2006 (Michigan Department of Educational Assessment and Accountability, 2007). An additional difficulty in achieving 100% proficiency in reading by all third graders is the fact that since 1977 the number of students identified with learning disabilities has risen by 150-200% (McCook, 2006). This raises the concern of over-identification of students with learning disabilities. The most common reason a student is referred for assessment of a learning disability in the elementary grades is due to difficulties in the area of reading (Lyon et al., 2001). The earlier a reading intervention is implemented the more likely it is to be successful. This creates an urgent need on the part of principals to ensure that all students not achieving at
proficient or benchmark levels are identified early and provided effective interventions (Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education [MAASE], 2007).

Response to Intervention (RTI)

No Child Left Behind has increased the number of students taking state's standardized assessments including students with learning disabilities. The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 no longer requires that states use the discrepancy model to identify learning disabled students (McCook, 2006). Response to Intervention (RTI) was a direct result of the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). This reauthorization states that:

> a local educational agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability . . . In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to a scientific, research-based intervention. (McCook, 2006, p. 3)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a "scientifically research-based approach that identifies students not achieving at benchmark and provides a collaborative problem-solving framework to address their learning needs as well as the needs of all students" (MAASE, 2007). Many of the components of RTI have been around for years in varying degrees in special education. IDEA 2004 and its final regulations, effective in October 2006, shift the responsibility to monitor and measure a student’s response to intervention from special education to general education (McCook, 2006). RTI can help as many as 94-98% of all students reach benchmark (MAASE, 2007). An RTI model allows a proactive problem-solving process to occur prior to failure, rather than waiting for children to fail.
Six critical components of an RTI model include: universal screening, identification of problems in measurable terms, establishment of baseline data, development of individual accountability plans, system for progress monitoring, and continuing evaluation of the plans (McCook, 2006). The RTI model and simultaneous move away from the discrepancy model fit well with No Child Left Behind and the goal of 100% proficiency. This model allows the effectiveness of instruction for each child to be reviewed and the instruction revised until an effective match of instruction and curriculum is found for the child. This is done by frequent collection and evaluation of data.

**Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi)**

Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) states as its mission the development of support systems along with sustained implementation of a data-driven problem-solving model which enables students to become better readers (Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, n.d.[a]). MAASE (2007) cites MiBLSi as an “excellent resource for schools . . . who wish to move to a data-driven multi-tiered model to support student learning” (p. 122). “The critical feature of successful implementation of an intervention model such as RTI is effective leadership” (MAASE, 2007, p. 123). The MiBLSi website states “the building principal is probably the most influential person in providing direction and promoting the success of the school-wide project” (Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, n.d.[b]).
MiBLSi’s Measurement Manual (Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, 2008) describes effective school-wide reading support as “a three-tiered approach to prevention of reading problems in schools” (p. 3). Teams are trained in strategies to prevent reading problems, methods to support children with the most reading difficulty, and ways to effectively integrate academic and instructional systems. Critical to this approach is the use of strong research-based initial instruction that addresses the needs of the majority of the students, a valid assessment system including screening and progress monitoring and intensive interventions for struggling readers that are of high quality.

MiBLSi is a school-wide multi-tiered system of Response to Intervention. This initiative engages a systems approach to address reading and behavior needs of students using a three-tiered model. A research-based core reading program is the basis of tier one (Universal Supports). This tier is proactive and preventive and is intended to get most students to grade level in reading. All students are assessed using a screening assessment three times a year. The second tier (Secondary Supports) is designed to support students who have difficulty with reading using only the core program. Students at tier two receive additional instructional time in the specific area of need/skill. These students are also assessed at least monthly using progress monitoring to determine if the instruction is working. The third tier (Tertiary Supports) meets the needs of a few students who continue to experience difficulty. These students are progress monitored weekly. Instruction for this group of students focuses on acceleration of their learning so that they may catch up with grade level peers. “The purpose of the multi-tiered model is to provide
responsive intervention based on student performance to promote increased successful outcomes” (Goodman, 2006, p. 4).

MiBLSi uses Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as the assessment system for reading screening and progress monitoring at the elementary level. These are standardized measures of early literacy development that are administered individually. Benchmark assessments are administered to all students three times a year using grade level materials. Progress monitoring assessments are administered weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly as determined by the needs of the students. All schools participating in MiBLSi are required to administer the assessments and enter the data into the DIBELS database. The DIBELS database allows buildings to print assessment results for use in data meetings. Data can be reported at the student, classroom, grade level, building, or district level.

Successful implementation of school reform requires fidelity related to the initiative. Building teams are required to engage in the process of planning, implementing, assessing, and acting on a cyclical basis (National Association of State Directors of Special Education [NASDSE], 2006). Leadership, along with district and state policy and teaching and classroom factors, is related to sustainability of classroom reform (Sindelar et al., 2006). MiBLSi places an emphasis on the development of implementation capacity and support systems that can be sustained over time. The MiBLSi website lists key factors for successful implementation including establishing a commitment, a team, and information systems. Other key factors include the need for conducting an audit and developing an action plan. After the plan is implemented, the use
of data to revise the action plan is also required (Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, n.d.[c]).

Prior to being selected as a MiBLSi school, a building must provide written documentation of commitment from at least 80% of staff to participate in MiBLSi over the next 3 years. Commitment from building and district administration is also required. The commitment required from building administration includes attending the trainings and meeting at least monthly with the building team.

Creation of a building leadership team is a key factor to the success of MiBLSi. The team provides guidance and coordinates the school-level implementation efforts. The building leadership team attends all trainings, conducts audits, and creates action plans using the Planning and Evaluation Tool (PET) for Effective Schoolwide Reading Programs. The PET is a self-assessment addressing seven areas that are key to effective school-wide reading programs. The seven areas include: Goals and Objectives, Assessment, Instructional Practices, Instructional Time, Differentiated Instruction/Grouping, Administration/Organization/Communication, and Professional Development. The team also uses DIBELS data and the Reading Implementation Checklist to monitor progress and revise the action plans. The building principal is a key member of the building leadership team.

MiBLSi building principals participate in completing the Planning and Evaluation Tool (PET) and Reading Implementation Checklists for their building. This information is used to evaluate the implementation and guide planning for implementation success. The PET (Kame'enui & Simmons, 2003) has a section specifically addressing Administration/Organization/Communication. The description of this section states
“strong instructional leadership maintains a focus on high-quality instruction, organizes and allocates resources to support reading, and establishes mechanisms to communicate reading progress and practice.” The building leadership team assesses the administrator or principal on the following areas: knowledge of state standards and priority reading skills; assessment and instructional materials; plan for reading instruction and implementation to achieve goals; ability to maximize and protect reading time and provide resources to support reading goals; creation of teams to analyze data; coordinate general, special education, and Title instruction; and communicate results. The areas are evaluated as either not in place (0), partially in place (1), or fully in place (2), and 12 total points are possible.

Use of Data

No Child Left Behind and Education Yes! provide opportunities to use data to improve student achievement. Schools can compare results with previous years to determine progress. Schools can also compare themselves with similar districts and measure their progress toward 100% proficiency. In order for successful change to occur, data must be used for improvement. Fullan (2008a) states that “transparency is not about gathering reams of data or measuring things that are not amenable to action. Information overload breeds confusion and clutter, not clarity” (p. 94).

Data-driven decision making is a common phrase in today’s schools. It refers to looking analytically at how students are doing in targeted areas over time. No Child Left Behind requires schools to show progress over time. Analyzing the data allows schools to link how students are doing with the instructional strategies being used. This is a key
component of Response to Intervention as well. It implies that teachers will examine
multiple sources of data to focus and refine their teaching in order to meet student needs
(Robbins & Alvy, 2003).

Data allow individuals to have a clear, unbiased picture. When teachers are aware
that what they are doing in the classroom is not working, it creates the recognition that
change is necessary. This raising of awareness of current conditions and dissatisfaction of
the current condition will allow teachers to demand change to occur (Calabrese, 2002).

Data can be used to gauge student progress and to customize curriculum and instructional
programs. Data inform schools and classroom teachers of when and where interventions
may be needed. They allow teachers to get to the heart of a particular student’s
weaknesses, to evaluate the teaching methods and materials used, and to apply new skills
and strategies to improve, while continuously monitoring the effectiveness of these new
materials (Gamble-Risley, 2006).

Monitoring and evaluation by continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of a
school’s curricular, instructional, and assessment practices on student achievement is one
of Marzano et al.’s (2005) 21 responsibilities of the school leader. Teachers must be
given opportunities to analyze their achievement data, set goals, and meet to use the
assessment results to improve the quality of instruction (Schmoker, 2006). Improvement
will come from using “measures that give people immediate and understandable
information about how they need to act” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, p. 156).

Decisions about what to do in schools should be based on evidence. This evidence
can come from discrete data as well as information and systematic observation. Data must
be collected and analyzed in order to know whether each student is making progress. Data
must be thoroughly understood in terms of both strengths and weaknesses in order to use them to make effective decisions (Danielson, 2006). "Measurements should be guides helping to direct behavior but not so powerful that they substitute for the judgment and wisdom that is so necessary to acquire knowledge and turn it into action" (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, p. 153).

Principal as Instructional Leader of a Building

Instructional leadership has become a dominant part of the job of a principal. This requires a focus on curriculum and instruction (Lashway, 2002). The role of principal as instructional leader has been reaffirmed by the growth of standards-based accountability systems. The American Association of School Administrators claims that administrators must have a thorough understanding of the learning process (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1985). They further state that administrators need skills in developing school curriculum, instructional management, staff evaluation, and staff development. Administrators need collegial relationships with staff to "facilitate, support, and assist teachers" according to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (Klauke, 1990).

A study of 22 school superintendents in Tennessee and Georgia examined qualities they expect in principals (Lease, 2002). Knowledge of learning theory and curriculum development were "most important." The superintendents desired, above all else, principals who understand teaching and learning and can lead faculties in school improvement. They felt that in order to lead the school to improved learning, the principal must understand every facet of instruction. In short, the superintendents seek strong educational leaders to improve their schools academically. Additionally, Wheelan and
Kesselring (2005) found that “the manner in which faculty members work together as a group is influential” (p. 329).

A principal needs to be able to know when lessons are aligned with standards, that assessments are consistent with standards, and be able to evaluate student work to determine if the standards have been achieved (Jamemtz, 2002). Instructional leadership has climbed back to the top of critical leadership skills due to accountability. Today’s instructional leader is more involved in the “core technology” of teaching and learning, professional development, and data-based decision making. Some are calling them “learning leaders” rather than “instructional leaders” (Lashway, 2002).

With the increase in accountability, teachers and principals have searched for the magic bullet that does not exist. In the Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership, Fullan (2000a) states, “giving up the futile search for the silver bullet is the basic precondition for overcoming dependency and for beginning to take actions that do matter” (p. 158). The principal needs to serve as the instructional leadership of the school. “Programs are only as good as the teachers who teach them” (Hall, 2008, p. 112). Principals set the focus, develop and sustain the culture, align resources and manage the learning, communicate with and enlist the support of the school community, and demonstrate ethical behavior. Common effective principal responsibilities or behaviors include a knowledge of curriculum; monitoring, using data, and giving feedback; and providing adult learning (Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Lashway, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2003).
Leadership Capacity and Distributed Leadership

The job of the principal continues to become increasingly complex. Principals must lead teachers to produce tangible results not just encourage teachers’ efforts (Lashway, 2002). The principal is responsible for increasing progress on multiple measures of educational achievement while simultaneously facing frustration from lack of time, resources and external pressures (Grubb & Flessa, 2006).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals list six steps principals can take that will result in improved test scores: balancing the role of leader and manager, setting high expectations, requiring rigorous content and quality instruction, building an adult learning culture, using data, and working with parents and community groups. Adult and student learning should be the central focus of a principal. Delegation of administrative tasks is recommended so that principals have more time to be instructional leaders (NAESP, 2001).

The literature on effective schools has contributed to the concept of a strong principal carrying all the burdens of running and improving a school because of the conclusion that effective schools have effective leaders. Efforts focusing on recruiting and preparing strong principals are positive; however, they do not consider alternatives to the traditionally structured principalship. One alternative is distributed leadership in which leadership is distributed among administrators, teachers, and staff.

Distributed leadership refers to the balance of decision-making power between administrators and teachers. It involves the allocation of responsibilities. Instructional leadership can be dispersed across the school community and involve principals,
superintendents, teachers, and policymakers. When describing the roles of the school community in terms of reform, Elmore (2000) identifies policymakers, who synthesize political interests into a viable system; researchers and program developers, who identify and create strategies and structures for success; superintendents and central office staff, who frame coherent goals and support systems district-wide; principals, who design and implement focused school improvement plans; and teachers, who translate the curriculum into meaningful learning for students. Each role creates a different kind of expertise that requires leaders’ respect and cultivation. “In a classroom the teacher may affect the lives of a few hundred students; the principal of a building has the opportunity to affect thousands through the teachers he or she leads” (Malone & Caddell, 2000). Distributed leadership requires a delicate balance between mandate and empowerment. Leaders must model being open to new ideas, being driven by results, and being persistent in adversity.

**Effective Instructional Leadership**

Six roles define instructional leaders: making student and adult learning the priority, setting high expectations for performance, gearing content and instruction to standards, creating a culture of continuous learning for adults, using multiple sources of data to assess learning, and activating the community’s support for school success (Lashway, 2002). In a study describing behaviors of principals, Joseph and Jo Blasé (2000) found specific behaviors that had a positive influence on student learning. Included in these behaviors were providing suggestions and feedback (to teachers), modeling effective instruction, seeking opinions, providing support for collaboration, arranging professional development opportunities, and praising effective teaching.
In a study of over 800 public elementary, middle, and high school teachers, the teachers were asked what principal behaviors influenced classroom instruction (Blase & Blase, 1999). The teachers described principals who are effective instructional leaders as those willing to talk openly about teaching and learning with teachers. They further listed the following traits of effective instructional leadership: provide time and encourage peer connections, empower teachers, embrace the challenge of teachers’ professional development, and lead. Ineffective principal behaviors included control and criticism or disinterest and abandonment regarding instructional matters.

Fink and Resnick (2001) described core strategies for developing instructional leaders: nested learning communities, principal institutes, leadership for instruction, peer learning, and individual coaching. The principal should remind teachers that they are engaged in practicing, studying, and refining the craft of teaching. Organizations that have been successful in “turning knowledge into action . . . often had leaders who were intimately involved and knowledgeable about the work process” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, p. 58)—leaders who were instructional leaders. The principal should be the lead learner.

Professional Community

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) describes instructional leadership as leading learning communities. Professional learning communities have been described as the most promising strategy for sustained, meaningful school improvement (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). Professional learning communities reflect substantial changes in relationships, culture, roles, norms,
communication patterns, and practices (Huffman, 2001). Eaker et al. (2002) describe the conceptual framework of professional learning communities (PLC) as:

- grouped into three major themes evident in policies, programs and practices of the school or district. The themes are: (1) a solid foundation consisting of collaboratively developed and widely shared mission, vision, values, and goals, (2) collaborative teams that work interdependently to achieve common goals, and (3) a focus on results as evidenced by a commitment to continuous improvement. (p. 3)

The fundamental purpose of a school is learning and the principal needs to review with staff the impact of the practices, programs, and procedures of the school on learning. Building leaders should monitor each student’s learning on a timely basis, respond systematically to those students who are not learning with additional time and support, require teachers to work together collaboratively, and ensure that teachers are given useful data (information) on his/her student assessment results (Eaker et al., 2002). A PLC is an ongoing process that never ends rather than a program.

Implementation of School Reform Initiatives

The history of school reform is full of unsuccessful attempts to adopt reforms. Often the failed attempts were accompanied by lack of leadership, commitment, and resources (Levin et al., 2007). Historically, school decision makers often began to look for results too soon, often within a few months of implementation. When results were not produced, the reform was judged a failure and on to the next one. Levin et al. (2007) provide two reasons why school adoption of school reform in such a way persists. First, “change strategies must take account of the unique features of the school situation, including previous school experience with reforms, school leadership, commitment to
change, staff capacity, student characteristics, and available resources” (p. 62). This refers to the context of the change. The second reason relates to the fact that a school has the agency and wherewithal to reshape the reform, even to neuter it completely. In fact, the failure of school reforms has been largely attributed to the capacity of the schools to swallow external interventions without allowing the reforms to fundamentally change school directions. (p. 63)

Prior to beginning a reform initiative, leaders should spend considerable time planning for the system’s needs (Brown & Spangler, 2006). In their review of five urban districts who were implementing various models for school reform, Brown and Spangler found that two schools required some form of internal monitoring to ensure effective implementation. In a case study of an inclusion model in Florida, Sindelar et al. (2006) found that strong principal leadership was one of the keys to successful sustainability. Other factors included effective teacher training and adequate resources.

The Florida Center for Reading Research had defined three critical elements for an effective elementary reading program:

1. High quality initial classroom instruction and follow-up small-group instruction that is consistently implemented and well-differentiated.
2. Use of data on student performance to guide instruction and determine resource allocation.
3. Resources to provide interventions for readers that are struggling.

Implementation seems to be the key. “How the reform is implemented will contribute heavily to its probability of success or failure and its costs” (Levin et al., 2007, p. 65). Three principles of effective organizational change can be used by principals to successfully implement reforms: “(a) organizations and people must be ready to make
change; (b) key stakeholders must be engaged in making decisions about changes to be made; and (c) self-assessments that measure progress toward key goals must be used to define success” (Deshler, Deshler, & Biancarosa, 2007, p. 99). School leaders need to promote change and monitor progress toward implementation of school change (Berends, Bodilly, & Nataraj Kirby, 2002; Desimone, 2002; Fullan, 1991, cited in Rowan & Miller, 2007).

Rowan and Miller (2007) created a framework for evaluating comprehensive school reform. They included three types or models for promoting instructional change. The type of reform that will be examined in this case study of MiBLSi elementary schools would be classified as “professional control.” Professional control “provided teachers with considerable instructional guidance” and “expected school leaders to work intensively with teachers to foster faithful implementation of its instructional model” (Rowan & Miller, 2007, p. 258). Rowan and Miller found that standardization of instruction and intensive leadership produced changes in instructional practice that were both real and measurable. They also state that the operative element in such changes in instructional practice result from increased instructional guidance and standardization rather than from intensive instructional leadership. This appears to be contradictory to the research of many other scholars such as Marzano et al. (2005), Fullan (2008b), and Lambert (2003).

Beck and Murphy (1996) found that principals must be up-to-date on best practices and seek out professional development opportunities for themselves. The accountability era has created multiple reading instructional models from which schools or districts can select. The need for improvement requires
in addition to possessing the more traditional personal attributes, administrative effectiveness, and organizational leadership associated with successful schools, principals and other leaders are expected to possess skills, competencies, and expertise that aid them in effectively planning, organizing, and sponsoring school reform efforts. These skills have been dubbed “change mastery skills.” (Deshler et al., 2007, p. 110)

Leading Change

The increased accountability schools and districts now face will require change. Unfortunately, mandates do not generally result in change. In order for change to occur, a change in educational philosophy must occur (Fullan, 2000b). “Systems thinking provides a different way of looking at problems and goals—not as isolated events but as components of larger structures” (Senge et al., 2000, p. 78). This requires studying the system structure and its behavior. It requires looking at the entire landscape rather than just snapshots (Senge, 1990). Focus needs to be on long-term goals and objectives rather than short-term fixes, which generally simply reduce the symptoms rather than resolve the underlying issues. A thorough understanding of the system, system components, system culture, and system members is required to be successful (Calabrese, 2002).

According to Fullan (2005), systems thinking includes discovering the whole picture and long-term trends so that the system can be understood and changed for the better. It also requires individuals and organizations to engage with others from the outside in order to change the system. Systems thinking must involve everyone rather than be limited to a small group. Systems thinking “in action” can be the key to sustained change. “In a would-be sustainable world, ‘leadership to the fore’ means the proliferation of systems thinkers in action” (Fullan, 2005, p. 44).
Senge’s call for systems “thinking” is contrasted with Fullan’s (2008a) six secrets of change in which he calls for systems “doing.” Fullan’s six secrets—love your employees, connect peers with purpose, capacity building prevails, learning is the work, transparency rules, and systems learn—can assist organizations to manage effective change. According to Fullan, when an organization fully implements the first five secrets, the system can learn but continuous learning may still not occur. For continuous learning to occur, many leaders must work together and approach complexity with humility and confidence.

Reeves (2002) describes systemic change as an “illusion.” Leaders, in his opinion, may achieve “systemic compliance” rather than actually changing the practices of all the individuals within a system (Reeves, 2002). Successful change begins more like a “pebble in a pond,” making a few ripples around it after being thrown in. “The impact of successful change is not unidirectional; it expands in multiple directions with unintended and unnoticed impact” (Reeves, 2002, p. 46).

The nature of change has also been explored in the research. Fullan (1993) describes change as complex. “Leaders for change get involved as learners in real reform situations” (Fullan, 2000a, p. 158). The change that accompanies the implementation of MiBLSi can be described as second-order change, which requires different leadership responsibilities than first-order change (Marzano et al., 2005). The leadership required for second-order change was specifically related to 7 of the 21 responsibilities identified for effective school leaders (Marzano et al., 2005).

First-order change may be described as an obvious next step. According to Waters and Grubb (2004), it is consistent with current values, beneficial for those involved, and
able to be implemented without requiring new knowledge or resources. Second-order change alters the system fundamentally. It can be described as the type of change occurring when stakeholders “are unclear about how it will make things better for them . . . must master new knowledge, practices, or approaches to implement the change; or feel the change conflicts with prevailing personal values and organizational norms” (Waters & Grubb, 2004, p. 4).

Different strategies or responsibilities are needed during second-order change than are needed in first-order change. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment was ranked first of seven leadership responsibilities necessary for second-order change such as lasting school improvement. The remaining six leadership responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) include optimizer (“being the driving forces behind the new innovation” [p. 72]), intellectual stimulation (“being knowledgeable about the research and theory regarding the innovation” [p. 72]), change agent (“challenging the status quo and being willing to move forward on the innovation without a guarantee of success” [p. 72]), monitoring/evaluating (“continually monitoring the impact of the innovation” [p. 72]), flexibility (“being both directive and nondirective relative to the innovation as the situation warrants” [p. 72]) and ideas/beliefs (“operating in a manner consistent with his or her ideals and beliefs relative to the innovation” [p. 72]).

Second-order change is difficult and the leader may not be successful in certain other responsibilities such as culture or team spirit, communication, order and routine, and input from all staff members. These responsibilities were negatively affected when a factor analysis was done by Marzano et al. (2005) on second-order change. Waters and Grubb (2004) state, “recognizing which changes are first and second order for which
stakeholders can help leaders select leadership practices and strategies appropriate for their initiatives” (p. 4). This increases the likelihood that the initiative will be impactful and sustainable. Marzano et al. (2005) refer to leading second-order change as requiring one to “ratchet up his idealism, energy, and enthusiasm” (p. 75). Such work is frustrating and takes a toll on school leaders. It may explain why many initiatives or promising practices are abandoned.

Models for Developing High Levels of Reading Success

The “reading wars” refers to the swinging back and forth between teacher-directed and child-centered instruction, phonics and comprehension instruction, and decoding to whole language instruction (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999). Best practices can be defined as “meaningful literacy activities that provide children with both the skill and the will they need to become proficient and motivated literacy learners” (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999, p. 13). Phonics education had been dying since the 1930s and Flesch, in his 1955 book *Why Johnny Can't Read*, was calling for its return to solve the problem of not being able to read (May, 1994). The 1930s-1950s saw the arrival of the “look-say” approach which focused on learning whole words rather than letters. Jeanne Chall called for a return to phonics in the 1960s as a method that produced better results. Marilyn Adams, in the 1990s, described reading as the interaction between four processors: orthographic, phonological, meaning, and context.

In 1986, Kenneth Goodman published *What’s Whole in Whole Language*. This book described the philosophy of whole language in which language is kept whole rather than fragmented into skills and literacy skills and strategies are developed in the context
of whole texts. Whole language is also referred to as an authentic literacy philosophy (Weaver, 1990).

Four models for reading success are often referred to in the literature. They include the balanced literacy model, the school change model, the literacy framework model, and the school-wide model. A balanced literacy model promotes reading instruction based on the stages of reading (early, emergent, developing, fluent, and independent). Instruction may include whole-class and small group lessons based on students’ learning needs. Balanced literacy includes read aloud/modeled reading, shared reading, guided reading, interactive reading, and independent reading as well as write aloud/modeled writing, shared writing, guided writing, interactive writing, and independent writing (Booth & Rowsell, 2002).

Literacy-based school change models are usually the result of work by researchers or theorists working in policy or school change. Fullan’s work with the National Literacy Strategy in the United Kingdom is an example of a school change model. Literacy framework models are generally led by theorists in literacy as well. Success for All and The Four Blocks are two examples of such programs (Booth & Rowsell, 2002).

More recently a great deal has been written about comprehensive, core programs or school-wide models. The term comprehensive reading program refers to a set of commercial materials for instruction and intervention for all students at all grade levels. A core program refers to a set commercial materials used by all students at a particular grade level. School-wide models use personnel, time, materials, and assessments to meet the needs of the students (Walpole & McKenna, 2004).
Five stages are described for schools desiring to create a school-wide reading model: (a) describe the current situation thoroughly, including curriculum instruction, assessment, and interventions; (b) use the data to form groups for instruction; (c) coordinate all instruction and adopt or design new materials if needed; (d) set and evaluate goals using data collection and change instruction if goals are not being achieved; and (e) evaluate the success of the school-wide program for all children annually and adjust as needed (Simmons, Kuykehdall, King, Cornachione, & Kame’enui, 2000).

School-wide models include: measureable goals; regular assessment and monitoring; curriculum that is research-based and direct, explicit, and systematic instruction; reading instruction time that is protected; small group instruction based on skills; principals in leadership roles; and training on curriculum and assessments (Paglin, 2004). The school-wide model as described by the Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement at the University of Oregon (2003) integrates scientifically based reading research with effective reading practices. It requires goals, assessment, and instruction for each and all students. This model is designed to “help individual schools build capacity, communication and commitment to support the adoption and sustained use of research-validated practices while still acknowledging and honoring their unique and characteristic differences” (Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement at the University of Oregon, 2003, p. 4). This model is based on the following premises: “(1) teaching reading is both essential and urgent, (2) teaching reading is complex, (3) teaching reading requires expertise, and (4) teaching reading
should be guided by a scientific knowledge base” (Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement at the University of Oregon, 2003, p. 5).

Learning Opportunities

Every student should have adequate opportunities for learning. Even with high quality classroom instruction, some students’ needs will be unmet.

The diversity of talent and preparation for learning to read is so great that some students will require *four or five times* the amount of instruction an average student requires. . . . Research has shown that we must provide reading instruction for diverse groups of students along a *continuum of intensity*. (Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, & Kosanovich, 2007, p. 4)

According to the Partnership for Reading (2004), schools should offer: a comprehensive scientifically-based reading program; instructional materials for the specific student needs; training for teachers that is of high quality and ongoing; uninterrupted, sufficient time for reading instruction; regular, reliable, and valid classroom assessment system; use of classroom, school, and district data to make instructional decisions effectively; and targeted intervention instruction when student progress is inadequate.

RTI language was part of 2004’s IDEA Public Law 108-446. This language indicates that states could not be required to use the discrepancy model or “wait to fail” model to identify a learning disability. The law requires that students be provided with appropriate instruction and research-based interventions before learning disabilities can be diagnosed. “The term appropriate refers to instruction in the classroom that matches a student’s skill level. The descriptors scientific or research-based indicate that interventions should be based on practices that have produced verifiable results through research studies” (Mesmer & Mesmer, 2008, p. 281).
In order to increase the quantity and quality of instruction for struggling readers, Mesmer and Mesmer (2008) list five steps RTI takes to ensure that students suspected of learning disabilities have had appropriate learning opportunities: Step 1—use of universal literacy screenings; Step 2—implementation of scientifically valid reading interventions for small group instruction with targeted students including documentation of the who, what, when, where, and how of the intervention; Step 3—progress monitoring of targeted students to determine effectiveness of the interventions; Step 4—implement individualized interventions for targeted students who continue to struggle; and Step 5—use a decision-making process to determine eligibility for special education services after a sufficient amount of time and as a last step.

**Individual Capacity – Teacher Skills and Knowledge**

Quality teachers provide quality instruction. According to Allington (2002), good classroom teaching has six common features he refers to as “the 6 Ts of effective elementary literacy instruction” (p. 2). The six Ts include time, texts, teach, talk, tasks, and test. Exemplary teachers asked children to read and write for up to half of the school day, exceeding even the 90-minute reading block recommendation. Students with these teachers read many books, including “easy” texts with a high level of comprehension, accuracy, and fluency.

These teachers used active strategy instruction such as modeling, demonstration, explicit explanation, and direct teaching and knew how to teach children to transfer such learning to independent use. Talk in these classrooms was valued and was purposeful. Students engaged in tasks over longer time frames, worked on group projects, integrated
topics, and were given choice. Student effort and improvement were valued by exemplary teachers and they often used rubrics to assess student work and provide students with a target of excellence. The six Ts are integrated in the best classrooms rather than being found in isolation and are described as being "responsive to children’s needs" (Allington, 2002, p. 747). Leaders need to make a thorough, evidence-based case for effective instruction, for monitoring to ensure high-quality curriculum in every classroom (Schmoker, 2006, p. 134).

*Scientifically Research-Based Programs and Methods*

In order to be included in the 2000 report of the National Reading Panel, research had to meet the following standards: address achievement in one or more skills in reading, be generalizable, examine the effectiveness of an approach, and reflect high quality research (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2003). Learning First Alliance in 2000 identified nine components of effective, research-supported reading instruction: “phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and concepts of print; alphabetic code; phonics and decoding; fluent, automatic reading of text; vocabulary; text comprehension; written expression; spelling and handwriting; screening and continuous assessment to inform instruction; and motivating children to read and developing their literacy horizons” (pp. 2-3). These link well with the National Reading Panel’s essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

Beck and Murphy (1996) found that principals must be up-to-date on best practices and seek out professional development opportunities for themselves. The accountability era has created multiple reading programs and instructional models from
which schools or districts can select. Many different RTI models exist which share core principles. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education defined eight core principles:

1. We can effectively teach all children.
2. Intervene early.
4. Use a problem-solving method to make decisions.
5. Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction.
6. Monitor student progress to inform instruction.
7. Use data to make decisions.
8. Use assessments for three different purposes: screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring (NASDSE & CASE, 2006).

Conclusion

Principals face great pressure to improve student achievement in this era of accountability. They are often described as instructional leaders or learning leaders engaged in instructional improvement. Togneri and Anderson (2003) found that principals in successful districts

provided instructional leadership, used data to guide their decision making and fostered the use of data among their staffs and observed classroom instruction, provided teachers with non-evaluative feedback, created structures and time for teacher collaboration, partnered with cadres of teacher leaders to strengthen instructional supports, transmitted and operationalized the district vision into the school and refocused professional development to meet district principles. (pp. 38-39).
Many different reading models currently exist. How can principals effectively implement these models in order to increase reading achievement? Togneri and Anderson (2003) offer 10 lessons for principals seeking to improve instruction and achievement. “Districts can make a difference” (p. 49) when willing to provide a coherent framework for instruction. “Let truth be heard” (p. 49) refers to reviewing and owning poor achievement and accepting the challenge to improve. “Focus on instruction to improve student achievement” (p. 49) involves improving the quality of instruction. “Improving instruction requires a coherent, systemwide approach” (p. 49) requires a clear vision, outcomes, curricula, data, and strategies. “Make decisions based on good data” (p. 49) involves using multiple sources of data and using it effectively. “Rethink professional development” (p. 49) and use research-based strategies guided by what students need. “Everyone has a role to play in improving instruction” (p. 49) refers to shared leadership required to succeed. “Working together takes work” (p. 49) cautions that collaboration must be more than superficial to help children. “There are no quick fixes” asks that leaders understand that student success is a long-term commitment. Finally, “current structures and funding limit success” reminds leaders that creative thinking will be necessary to fund and staff in order to achieve improved instruction over time. Instructional improvement may “depend more on how skilled managers [leaders] are at turning knowledge into action than on knowing the right thing to do” (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000, p. 243).
Summary

Increased accountability resulting from No Child Left Behind and IDEA has created a sense of urgency for schools to improve student reading achievement. The dire consequences faced by adults who are unable to read provide a moral imperative to successfully instruct all students. The leadership required to lead and sustain a school improvement initiative is accordingly more important than ever. How do principals turn knowledge into action? How does the principal translate the research on effective leadership practices, key factors of leading change, and implementation of school reform into daily practices that lead to successful implementation of MiBLSi and increased student achievement?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Data exist regarding effective elementary principals. Data exist regarding effective reading models. Data exist regarding how elementary principals effectively deal with implementation of school reform initiatives and lead change. A knowing-doing gap appears to exist. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) state that a knowing-doing gap occurs when “knowledge of what needs to be done frequently fails to result in action or behavior consistent with that knowledge” (p. 4). How do effective principals overcome the knowing-doing gap to successfully implement MiBLSi resulting in increased student reading achievement? This chapter will describe the methodology selected to complete this study and why it was chosen. It addresses qualitative research in general and case studies specifically. The subjects, sampling procedures, and method of gaining access will be described. This will be followed by a discussion of the methods, protocols, and procedures utilized. How the data obtained in the study were analyzed is described next, followed by the limitations and delimitations of the study. Finally, the researcher will be described to avoid bias or influence.
Research Design and Methodology

This study sought to explore this issue by using a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative research is used when seeking a deeper view of a phenomenon. Yin (2009) describes case study as a method that allows the researcher to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of actual events. I was seeking to learn how principals translate what is known about effective leadership, leading change, and implementation of school reform into daily, actionable practices that increase student reading achievement. The interpretations of the work of the principal by the principal himself/herself and other school personnel will shed light on the contextual nature of principal leadership and how it is involved in full implementation of Michigan’s Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) over a minimum of 3 years.

Creswell (2007) suggests a single, overarching question with several subquestions. The study begins with a broad general question, which is further refined in the subquestions. How do principals translate what is known about effective leadership, leading change, and implementation of school reform into daily, actionable practices to increase student reading achievement? What do these principals do on a day-to-day basis related to the MiBLSi initiative? What actions or procedures helped principals lead MiBLSi implementation? In what ways, if any, do principals and teachers link the work of the principal using MiBLSi to student reading achievement? What challenges do the principals encounter in trying to lead the implementation of MiBLSi and how do they respond? Case studies of buildings involved with the MiBLSi initiative with increasing
reading achievement scores will provide information and insight to allow other principals to become more effective. According to Schulman (1983),

One major virtue of a case study is its ability to evoke images of the possible. . . . The well-crafted case instantiates the possible, not only documenting that it can be done, but also laying out at least one detailed example of how it was organized, developed, and pursued. (p. 495)

A critical multi-case study design was utilized to strengthen the evidence discovered and make it more robust. The cases were bounded by the school reform initiative, MiBLSi, and increasing reading achievement trends. Additionally, the principal was involved in the initiative from its beginning. This study involves qualitative research, which views the researcher as the instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Sampling, Subjects, Access, and Setting

Critical cases were selected by using criterion sampling. Critical cases provide the most information and impact on the development of knowledge. They are cases that are “particularly important in the scheme of things” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). Critical cases allow application of the information learned to other similar cases (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet predetermined criteria deemed important (Patton, 2002). Participation in MiBLSi Cohorts 1, 2, or 3 and increasing reading achievement scores on third grade MEAP reading exams were used initially as the criterion. Criterion sampling allows the researcher to understand cases “that are likely to be information rich because they may reveal major system weaknesses that become targets of opportunity for program or system improvement” (Patton, 2002, p. 238).
The MiBLSi website and MEAP database on the Michigan Department of Education website were utilized to select the pool of potential cases. Next schools were sought in which the principal remained constant throughout the initiative. Such multistep sampling procedures are recommended by Heath and McLaughlin (as cited in Borko, Wolf, Simone, & Uchiyama, 2003). Thirty-seven elementary schools that participated in MiBLSi Cohorts 1, 2 or 3 exhibited increasing reading achievement trends over the last 4 years (2005-2008) and met the criteria set for principal involvement were located. A letter or email (Appendix A) describing the research project and inviting participation was sent to superintendents of these 37 districts. A follow-up phone call (Appendix B) was made to the district superintendent. With the superintendents’ permission, letters or emails (see Appendix C) regarding what would be involved in participating in the study were sent to elementary building principals. A follow-up phone call (Appendix D) was made to any principals not responding. Meetings were scheduled with interested principals to review and sign the consent document and conduct the interview. All principals who agreed to participate in the study were placed in the pool. From these sites, six were selected by convenience selection (the first received) for the study. Fewer than 4 cases reduce the ability of the researcher to see interactivity, while more than 10 provide more than the researcher may be able to understand (Stake, 2006).

After communicating with the principal to explain the study and gain his/her signature on the consent document (Appendix E), all teaching staff, the reading coach, and the behavior coach or school psychologist at each building were sent a letter or email (Appendix F) explaining the study and extending an invitation to those individuals to participate in a focus group. If the principal preferred, he or she made the initial contact
with the staff members and arranged a time for the focus group to meet. Interested staff met with the researcher and the consent document (Appendix G) was signed prior to the focus group. All individuals who agreed to participate and signed the consent form participated in the focus group. A broad variety of participants were sought for the focus groups. Focus groups assist the researcher in understanding different perspectives between groups of people and help reveal factors that “influence opinions, behavior or motivation” (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 19). When possible, the focus group consisted of teachers and coaches. Focus groups ranged in size from 3 to 12 participants.

The focus groups provided multiple perspectives regarding the principal in addition to his/her own self-perspective. Through the interaction and resulting synergy of the focus groups, new ideas came from the group, which allowed for the portrayal of different views (Stake, 2006).

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Data collection occurred during visits to the school sites. All data were collected between November 30, 2009 and March 8, 2010. The duration of this study was 8 months. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with principals and focus groups with teachers, coaches, and staff. Observations of the daily practices of the principal occurred by shadowing the principal for a day when school was in session. Documents were also collected as artifacts of practice.
**Phase I**

Interviews with the principal occurred in the first phase of data collection (Appendix H). The interview was combined with the principal observation in three cases. The interview provided the principal's self-perception in relation to the implementation of MiBLSi. Document collection occurred at this visit. Principals were asked to provide any documents from the MiBLSi training or implementation that they felt may be helpful to the researcher. Documents requested included the school improvement plan, annual report, PET, their reading implementation plan checklist conducted each quarter, and original MiBLSi application.

**Phase II**

A 60-90 minute focus group session occurred on the second or third visit to the sites (Appendix I). The focus group discussed the staff's perception of the principal's behaviors in relation to the implementation of MiBLSi. After discussion and recording descriptors of the behaviors, the participants were asked to identify the behaviors most representative of the principal on a regular basis using a modified Delphi technique. Two theoretical frameworks were then presented and discussed with participants and they placed the descriptors under one or more of the elements of the frameworks. This process allowed for co-construction of meaning.

During this phase, principal observations occurred if they did not occur on the first visit to the site. School was in session when the observation was conducted. The
purpose of the observation was to shadow the principal during a regularly scheduled school day. Field notes were taken during the observation (Appendix J).

Interviews were described as “a conversation with a purpose” by Kahn and Cannell (as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient and comfortable for the interviewees. A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized to gain the principal’s perspective. “Combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 102). The interviews were documented by the researcher’s field notes. They were also audio-taped and transcribed. The interviews with the principals explored their beliefs about the reasons for their success in student reading achievement, implementation and sustainability. The interview protocol was created from the conceptual framework and literature review. The questions that were asked of each interviewee can be found on the Interview Protocol (see Appendix H).

“The more standardized the interview protocol . . . the less an expert interviewer is needed” (Stake, 2006). In addition to these predetermined questions, I also probed the interviewees’ answers to gather or clarify information. After audio recordings were transcribed, principals were given a transcript and a page for them to respond. Response to the data collected included clarifications or additions to the information.

Focus groups were conducted with teachers, coaches, or staff. Each focus group consisted of 3 to 12 people and was audio-recorded. Focus groups allow researchers a way to “explore people’s perspectives on issues to which they have previously given little thought (Barbour, 2007, p. 8). Participants in the focus groups were given an opportunity to review the focus group transcript and provide a one-page written response clarifying or
adding to the information. This created a situation where the participants could work with the researcher to furnish additional explanations (Barbour, 2007). The questions asked in these focus groups can be found in Appendix I.

Focus groups took place in five of the six schools. In the sixth school, teachers were unavailable to meet as arranged. Individual teachers were interviewed in the sixth school using the focus group questions. There was not an opportunity for co-construction of meaning at that site with the theoretical frameworks and participants were not able to work together to determine the behaviors most representative of the principal on a regular basis.

Observations take place in the natural setting of the research and are a “firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 1998, p. 94). Principals were observed in their schools during a regular day of school. The researcher attempted to shadow the principal and observe rather than participate, thus assuming the role of “observer as participant” (Merriam, 1998, p. 101). The observation took note of the physical setting and actions, interactions, and conversations that occurred. Field notes were used to record observations. An observation protocol (Appendix J) consisting of two columns, “descriptive notes” and “reflective notes,” was utilized (Creswell, 2007, p. 135-136).

“The review of documents is an unobtrusive method, rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 107). Documents such as the buildings’ school improvement plans, annual reports, PET, MiBLSi reading implementation plan and checklists, and initial MiBLSi application were collected and analyzed. Not all buildings were able to provide all the documentation
requested. In analyzing the content of the artifacts Marshall and Rossman (2006) state, "care should be taken, therefore, in displaying the logic of interpretation used in inferring meaning from the artifacts" (p. 108).

Interview and focus group protocols were pilot tested in a local school district to ensure their effective and efficient use. According to Yin (as cited in Creswell, 2007), pilot tests "refine data collection plans and develop relevant lines of questions" (p. 133). The protocols were then reviewed to address questions that were confusing, didn’t get at the idea desired, or were leading. The pilot testing also helped me to know myself as a researcher and made me more comfortable with the protocols and equipment (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Data Analysis

"The analytic process demands a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to those data, and an openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life" (Marshall & Rossman, p. 158). The data analysis occurred in a sequential process that is documented and verifiable by a trail of evidence (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The interview and focus group data were fully transcribed. All the data from interviews, focus groups, field notes, and collection of documents/artifacts were organized. “Case studies rely on historical and document analysis, interviewing, and typically, some forms of observation for data collection. . . . Case studies take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 164).
The data were read and reread. Next, categories emerged. The categories “become buckets or baskets into which segments of text are placed” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 159). The analysis of data is the search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes. This process was an inductive one, in which themes were discovered. Inductive coding allowed the researcher to analyze the data from specific instances to general principles. After utilizing an inductive process, I used a deductive process by comparing the data to two theoretical frameworks based on work by Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a). Deductive coding applies general principles to specific instances. I looked at the data through the lens of Marzano et al.’s (2005) seven responsibilities of school leaders facing second-order change and Fullan’s (2008a) key factors (secrets) of change.

Coding was conducted manually initially by reading and rereading the transcripts looking for salient points or, as Merriam (1998) describes them, “bits of information” (p. 179). Codes highlight meaningful segments or salient points in the transcribed text. I then utilized HyperRESEARCH software as a validation of the themes or categories that emerged from the manual coding and linked to the theoretical framework of Marzano et al. (2005). During the data reduction process, I wrote interpretive memos to myself and kept a log to maintain an audit trail.

Each case was analyzed as a single case at first. Then a cross-case analysis was used. Cross tabs help a researcher see within and across case similarities. This method requires the researcher to display the data in a uniform framework (Yin, 2009). An analysis of this data can allow the researcher to see “processes and outcomes that occur across many cases . . . and thus develop more sophisticated descriptions and more
powerful explanations” (Merriam, 1998, p. 195). Krueger and Casey (2009) describe the constant comparative analytic framework as one that allows for the identification of patterns and relationships. It proceeds from grouping similar data, to naming the similarity and establishing it as a category, and finally to arranging the categories in relationship to each other.

Member checking provides feedback about the data. At the conclusion of the transcription stage, the text was shared with participants. Participants were allowed to create a one-page written response to clarify or add to the data. These responses are included in Appendix L. The original data were not changed. When the analysis process was complete and the data had been coded, it was shared with the participating principals for their comments and feedback. No principal feedback was received. Member checking strengthens my interpretations.

The Researcher

As the researcher in this case study, I am aware of biases I have as a school principal and Language Arts Coordinator. My background consists of having a master’s degree in reading and training and experience as a Reading Recovery teacher. I also currently work in a Cohort 5 MiBLSi school. I considered these biases when interviewing, observing, and analyzing the cases. I attempted to remain a neutral observer and collector of data. In order to address this bias, I used triangulation of data. Data from multiple sources “can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question” (Rossman & Wilson, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 202). Member checks were also conducted and the themes that emerged from the data were validated by
using software following manual coding. The schools selected were schools outside of my local Regional Educational Services Area.

Limitations and Delimitations

Delimitations relate to narrowing the scope of the study and limitations may be potential weaknesses of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Case studies are limited in scope. This study was narrowed to 6 elementary schools participating in MiBLSi. In order to address this, multiple sources of data from each school were triangulated. Using six cases provided for a "rich and holistic account" in a real-life context (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

A limitation of using audio recording of interviews and focus groups is using a transcriptionist. I transcribed all focus group and interview audio recordings personally. As a member of the group and participant in the interview, I could address the accuracy lost when a transcriptionist who was not present transcribes. This also improved the analysis by creating "a more intensive experience with the data" (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 131).

Interviews and focus groups have been criticized due to participants "intellectualizing" about past behaviors. This is addressed in this study by using multiple strategies of inquiry, and systematic procedures (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Care was taken to listen carefully and respectfully so that participants felt comfortable sharing honestly. Member checks were also conducted to gain perspective on my interpretations.

Qualitative research in general, and the case study method in particular, face the same concerns in all research regarding validity, generalizibility, and reliability. These
were addressed by paying careful attention to the study design, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Internal validity in qualitative research is described by Mertens (2005) as credibility. "The credibility test asks if there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints" (Mertens, 2005, p. 254). Credibility was addressed in this study by the use of multiple sources of data (triangulation), member checks, repeated data gathering at the same site, and examining my personal bias.

External validity relates to the ability to generalize the findings of the research to other situations (Merriam, 1998). Mertens (2005) describes this as transferability in qualitative research. Qualitative data cannot be generalized to other populations (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Instead, reader or user generalizibility is possible and involves providing readers with enough description of the context of the cases studied. Firestone (cited in Merriam, 1998) stated, "It is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?" (p. 211). The use of multiple cases also increases the ability of readers to apply the case study results to other similar situations. "The task of learning from other people in other contexts is an active one of analyzing similarities and differences, adapting what makes sense, and leaving behind what doesn’t" (Elmore, 2000).

Reliability refers to being able to repeat the study and get the same results. It is described in terms of dependability in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 2005). The question becomes, do the results make sense? Are they consistent with the data? (Mertens, 2005). Dependability was addressed in this case study by explaining my background, by describing case selection procedures, by
triangulating data by using multiple data collection methods and using coding software following manual coding when analyzing the data, and by maintaining an audit trail by writing memos and maintaining a dissertation log.

"Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policies, practice and future research" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). It is my hope that themes or lessons that emerged will assist other principals in translating effective leadership responsibilities into daily practices that lead to successful implementation of MiBLSi and increasing student reading achievement. "By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, it is hoped research can lead to better understanding of the way things appear to someone else and through that insight lead to improvements in practice" (Barritt, as cited in Creswell, 2007).
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify daily practices principals use while successfully implementing a reading school reform initiative. The methodology used to conduct this study included case studies of 6 sites located in Michigan. Each site participated in Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) for a minimum of 3 years (Cohorts 1-3) and demonstrated an increased reading achievement trend from 2005-2008 on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) third grade reading assessment.

Data for the study were collected using five different methods that included principal interviews, principal observations, focus group sessions, individual teacher interviews, and document collection. Multiple data collection allowed the perspectives of various participants in the study to be investigated. The multiple methods of data collection also allowed for triangulation of data to increase the validity of the study.

This chapter contains the results from interviews, observations, focus groups, and document analysis categorized into emerging themes. The chapter begins by describing the research sites to provide the reader the context for the study. The next section of this chapter provides a narrative discussion of each data collection method. The emerging themes from the interview data are presented next with support from principal observations, focus groups, and individual teacher interviews where appropriate. The

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chapter closes with a presentation of the results of cross tabbing the emerging themes with the work of Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a). Three of the data collection methods—principal interviews, observations, and focus groups—were cross tabbed with the Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change from Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan’s Six Secrets of Change (2008a) and the results of that analysis presented. Interview data were also cross tabbed with the 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader (Marzano et al., 2005).

The data are presented based on the results of inductive coding using the four research questions and emerging themes. The four research questions represented categories “reflecting the purpose of the research” (Merriam, 1998, p. 183). This involved the researcher transcribing and reading and rereading the transcripts until “themes, concepts, or dimensions of concepts arise from the data” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 350). To be classified as an emerging theme, the criteria I set required that the data appear in 50% of the schools. In Chapter V, dominant themes are presented. In order to be considered a dominant theme, a theme must have been evident in the interview data from all six principals or present in all three data collection methods (interviews, observations, and focus groups).

The interviews, observations, focus group sessions, and documents collected attempted to address the following questions and subquestions:

Primary Research Question: How do principals translate what is known about effective leadership, leading change, and implementation of school reform into daily, actionable practices to increase student reading achievement?
Subquestions:

1. What do principals do on a day-to-day basis related to the MiBLSi initiative?
   a. What actions or procedures helped principals lead MiBLSi implementation?
   b. In what ways, if any, do principals and teachers link the work of the principal to student reading achievement and what was most significant?

2. What challenges do the principals encounter in trying to lead the implementation of MiBLSi and how do they respond?

Participant Overview

Thirty-seven elementary schools met the criteria for participation in this study. Following identification of the schools, each superintendent was contacted. Eleven superintendents gave consent to contact the elementary principal. Of these 11 sites, 5 principals agreed to participate. One site was a third through fifth grade school determined eligible based on MEAP data for third grade reading scores. Upon visitation to the site, the kindergarten–second grade feeder school principal also agreed to participate, resulting in 6 different school sites. A brief summary of each of the sites follows. The schools are identified by number to protect their confidentiality.

School 1 (MiBLSi Cohort 1)

The population of this building was 431 students in grades Young Fives through 5th grade for 2008-09. There were 55 full- and part-time faculty and staff, which included
31 teachers. Their parent/teacher conference attendance was 88.73%. Free and reduced-priced lunch percentage was 38%. The building was a Title I building in a suburban area. They made adequate yearly progress and received an Ed YES! Report Card Grade of an “A.”

School 2 (MiBLSi Cohort 2)

The population of this building was 260 students in grades PreK-5th in 2008-09. There were 24 faculty and staff. Their parent/teacher conference attendance was 95.5%. The building was a Title I building in a suburban area. They made adequate yearly progress and received an Ed YES! Report Card Grade of an “A.”

School 3 (MiBLSi Cohort 3)

The population of this building was 323 students in grades K-5 in 2008-09. There were 35 faculty and staff. Their parent/teacher conference attendance was 88.5%. The building is a Title I building in a rural area. They made adequate yearly progress and received an Ed YES! Report Card Grade of a “B.” This building was reconfigured to a K-2 building for 2009-10.

School 4 (MiBLSi Cohort 3)

The population of this building was 630 students in grades K-5 in 2008-09. There were 60 faculty and staff. Their parent/teacher conference attendance was 90%. The building is a Title I building in a suburban area. They made adequate yearly progress and received an Ed YES! Report Card Grade of an “A.”
School 5 (MiBLSi Cohort 3)

The population of this building was 515 students in grades 3-5 in 2008-09. There were 47 faculty and staff. Their parent/teacher conference attendance was 97.5%. The building is a Title I building in a rural area. They made adequate yearly progress and received an Ed YES! Report Card Grade of an “A.”

School 6 (MiBLSi Cohort 3)

The population of this building was 450 students in grades K-2 in 2008-09. There were 43 faculty and staff. Their parent/teacher conference attendance was 99%. The building is a Title I building in a rural area. They made adequate yearly progress and received an Ed YES! Report Card Grade of an “A.”

Presentation of Findings

The presentation of the findings of this study utilized direct quotations that were taken from the principal interviews or focus groups. Schools and principals are identified by number and any teacher referenced is identified only by the generic term TEACHER and the school they were from. Any specific interventions, programs, or competing initiatives were listed generically as well. In order to analyze the data, four broad categories—Day to Day, Actions/Procedures, Challenges, and Linking to Student Achievement—were used. These categories represented the research questions.
Interviews

Interviews were held at each school building and the semi-structured interview conversation was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcript and provide clarifications or additional information as a method of “member checking” (Creswell, 2007). The information received through member checking is presented in Appendix L. Table 1 contains a description of the participants as self-reported in the interview.

Table 1

Principal Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4*</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years as a principal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years as a teacher</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What level?</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} &amp; 3\textsuperscript{rd} 7\textsuperscript{th} Math &amp; Science</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} 6\textsuperscript{th} Math &amp; Language Arts</td>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} &amp; 5\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th}</td>
<td>Elem.</td>
<td>Elem.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees obtained</td>
<td>Bachelor Master's-Reading &amp; Ed. Leadership</td>
<td>Bachelor Master's-Ed. Leadership</td>
<td>Bachelor Master's-Ed. Leadership</td>
<td>Bachelor Master's-Ed. Leadership</td>
<td>Bachelor Master's-Reading</td>
<td>Bachelor Master's-Ed. Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assistant Principal
The interview transcripts were read and reread assigning quotes or salient points in the text to one of the categories representing the research questions. In order to be considered an emerging theme, the data had to appear in at least 50% of the principal interviews.

Analysis began with the interview data. From this, data themes began to emerge. Tables 2-5 present the emerging themes listed by category or research question. In the Day to Day category (Table 2), Relationships were mentioned by 4 principals. In the Actions/Procedures category, three emergent themes were mentioned by all 6 principals in Table 3: Behavior/PBS, Professional Development, and Team/Distributed Leadership. In terms of Challenges (Table 4), four themes emerged with Resources occurring most often. Finally, in the category Linking to Student Achievement, of the four emergent themes, Deliberate/Focus was evident in the interviews of all the principals as can be seen in Table 5.

Table 2

*Interview Day to Day Behaviors Thematic Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.0 Day to Day</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Visibility</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Relationships</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>4/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Behavior</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Interview Actions/Procedures Thematic Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.0 Actions/Procedures</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Behavior/PBS</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Professional Development</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Process/Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Team/Distributed Leadership</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Data</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Communication/Expectations</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

*Interview Challenges Thematic Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.0 Challenges</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Coaching</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Change the System</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Resources</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Communication</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations

In order to analyze the observation data, I again used the four broad categories representing the research questions as I did for the principal interviews. The observation notes were read and reread, assigning salient points in the text to one of the categories representing the research questions. It became apparent that most of the observation data fell into the categories Day to Day or Actions/Procedures, which were observable. Behavior/PBS, Visibility, and Discipline occurred the most frequently. Data appeared both in Linking to Student Achievement and in Actions/Procedures. Nothing was found to be a specific Challenge, although some of the day-to-day tasks could represent challenges in terms of the amount of time they consume. The data from the observations supported the emerging themes from the interviews (present in at least 50% of the interviews). This can be seen in Table 6 below.
Table 6

Observation of Principal Behaviors Manual Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day to Day</th>
<th>Actions/Procedures</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Linking to Student Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visibility 16x</td>
<td>Behavior/PBS 11x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Data 3x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents 6x</td>
<td>Data 4x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline 7x</td>
<td>Teams 3x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Intervention 5x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships 5x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement 3x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with Teachers/Others 6x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Groups

The four broad categories representing the research questions were again used to analyze the focus group data. The focus group questions directly related to three of the four research questions. After asking participants to answer question 1, in which they describe what the principal does on a regular (day-to-day) basis related to MiBLSi, the participants used a modified Delphi technique (Mertens, 2005). Each participant was given colored dot stickers to place on three or four focus group responses generated by the group and listed on chart paper. This indicated which behaviors the participants believe occurred most often or were most representative of what their principal does.
Results from the five focus groups revealed that the most frequent or representative behaviors for each school are presented in Table 7 below. It is interesting to note the similarities and differences of the responses.

Table 7

*Most Frequent/Representative Behaviors by School – Focus Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enters data into SWIS</td>
<td>Daily announcements with mission statement</td>
<td>Walk-throughs</td>
<td>Behavior expectations</td>
<td>Includes all staff (transportation &amp; paras too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible outside and in classrooms</td>
<td>Fun Fridays (Rewards/PBS)</td>
<td>Students practice correct behavior</td>
<td>Collects SWIS data</td>
<td>Looking at data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in grade level meetings</td>
<td>Classroom visits</td>
<td>Support person to teachers/children</td>
<td>Checks in at Grade level meetings</td>
<td>Expectations for students, staff, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade level meetings</td>
<td>Secured resources</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Liaison or cheerleader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher feedback</td>
<td>Outside for recess and at end of day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meets with Title staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes expectations visible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All-school behavior plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these behaviors received at least two dots when teachers applied the modified Delphi technique.
For the sixth school, at which I interviewed individual teachers using the focus group questions because a group could not be scheduled, the behaviors most frequently mentioned in the data were: Power Paws (PBS), Use of DIBELS, and Follow up on major referrals. The results from all 6 schools were then reduced to 16 behaviors shown in Table 8 below.

Those 16 behaviors were then further reduced to those occurring at 3 or more schools resulting in 7 behaviors. Information from the focus groups supported the emerging themes from the interview data.

Document Analysis

The following list of documents was requested from each elementary principal involved in the study: (a) Annual Report, (b) School Improvement Plan, (c) Planning and Evaluation Tool, (d) Reading Implementation Plan and Checklist, and (e) Initial MiBLSi application. While the researcher received a wide variety of materials consisting of 33 different documents, the only document common to all 6 schools was the Annual Report for 2008-09. The Annual Reports listed School Improvement Goals for all but one school. Five of the 6 buildings had a goal related to reading. These goals ranged from a broad goal of “All students will increase their ability to read using a variety of contexts across the curriculum” to a more specific goal, “Increase the percentage of students performing at Benchmark [DIBELS], score above district average.” Only 1 of the 5 buildings with reading goals listed a strategy that included MiBLSi.
### Table 8

*Focus Group Results Most Frequent/Representative Principal Day-to-Day Behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visibility (outdoors/classrooms, (walk-throughs)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in Grade Level Meetings</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Announcements/Mission</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides Teacher Feedback</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets with Title Staff, Behavior Specialist, Paraprofessionals, Transportation</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support – Universal</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Practice Correct Behavior</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support to Teachers/Students</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secures Resources</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses Data (SWIS or DIBELS)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison/Cheerleader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follows-up on Major Referrals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Leadership-Teams</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversees Reading Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the next section, the emerging themes from the interview data are presented by research question. Support from the observations and focus groups is also included.

Research Question 1: What do principals do on a day-to-day basis related to the MiBLSi initiative?

Emerging Theme 1.1—Day to Day: Visibility

Principals were asked to describe what they do on a regular basis related to MiBLSi. The principals’ references to visibility were expressed in terms of being present in the classrooms, other areas of the school, and for bus and/or recess duty. According to the principal from School 1:

Truly they’re so used to me going into classrooms, the kids are so used to having me on the playground, in the cafeteria, I don’t sit around in my office very often. I think that’s one of those things—I mean you have to be out there, they have to see you.

The principal from School 2 provided additional explanation:

I try to go around to every classroom first thing in the morning. . . . I always tell my secretary I’m making rounds and it’s just so people see me really, honestly, so the kids see me, the teachers see me. Hey you need anything? How’s it going?

Principals from 5 schools were observed making visits to classrooms to observe, speak with teachers, or speak with students. The observation data also included the principal supervising bus areas, car traffic, the lunchroom, or the playground. Principals from 4 of the 6 schools supervised bus loading or unloading or car traffic generated by picking up or dropping of students. Five principals supervised during the lunch periods, with 3 also supervising the playground. This supports the emerging theme of Visibility from the principal interview data. Additionally, principals from all the schools also had
impromptu or scheduled meetings with parents, other than IEP meetings, during their school day. In all but one instance, the parents simply dropped in to see the principal. The principals all accommodated the parents’ desire to meet.

Focus groups at 4 of the 6 schools indicated that principal behaviors related to visibility occurred regularly. This included classroom visits, bus and parking lot duty, playground supervision, and walk-throughs.

_Emerging Theme 1.2—Day to Day: Relationships_

Principals in this study described the ways they formed relationships with teaching and support staff and fill the role of cheerleader for their buildings. School 5’s principal put it this way:

I also think I have to be a cheerleader. I mean I’m a major cheerleader. Great job. You know they need to hear that. So and I think as a leader you have to have relationships with your staff. If you don’t have a relationship then it isn’t going to work. They’re going to find fault.

Providing feedback to teachers can strengthen the relationship between the teacher and the principal. School 2’s principal described how she provided support and feedback:

I’m trying just to give people... feedback when I go in their room, even just a quick little email like I noticed such and such was doing this or I like how that was going on or did you try this? I’ve been trying to be better about that this year.

Developing and maintaining relationships with individual students and trying to positively influence their behavior was observed at 3 buildings. This focus on the student relationship supported the emerging theme Relationships, which appeared in 4 of the 6 principal interviews.
Emerging Theme 1.3—Day to Day: Behavior/Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

Behavior, specifically positive behavior support, is a major part of the MiBLSi initiative. Understanding behavior and getting it under control can significantly impact a student’s reading achievement. According to the MiBLSi website, “Unless discipline issues are at a minimum, instruction will be interrupted and teaching time will be lost” (Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention, n.d.[e]). School 4’s principal described the daily work involved in the behavior component of MiBLSi. “I spend time keeping the SWIS system updated. I enter all the information. I was having my secretary do that but I want to do it so I know what’s going on with all of the kids.”

Observation data revealed that all of the principals at the 6 elementary schools engaged in interactions with individual students related to student behavior (Discipline and Behavior Intervention). Observations supported the emerging theme of Behavior/Positive Behavior Support (PBS) from the principal interviews. All of the principals spoke to one or more children related to a behavior incident or referral including bus referrals. Three principals additionally had to either restrain a child or were called to a room in a crisis prevention capacity.

Focus groups from 4 of the schools, and my coding of the transcripts from the teacher interviews at the sixth school, indicated that the principal engaged in daily activities related to their School-wide Positive Behavior Support Plan.
Research Question 1a: What actions or procedures helped principals lead MiBLSi implementation?

Interview data were analyzed next focusing on the actions or procedures that helped principals lead the MiBLSi implementation. This analysis produced six emerging themes related to the actions or procedures the principals found helpful in leading MiBLSi: (1) Behavior/PBS, (2) Professional Development, (3) Process/Structure, (4) Team/Distributed Leadership, (5) Data, and (6) Communication/Expectations. Behavior related actions appeared 23 times in the interview data by principals from all of the 6 schools. Professional Development was articulated 12 times by all of the 6 principals. Process/Structure, referring to the process and/or structure of meetings and conversations, appeared 12 times by 5 of the 6 principals. Team/Distributed Leadership was mentioned 9 times by all 6 of the principals. Data were mentioned 6 times by 3 of the principals. Actions or procedures related to Communication/Expectations were mentioned 6 times in the interview data by 5 of the 6 principals. Table 9 below details which schools provided information that led to these themes.

Emerging Theme 2.1—Actions/Procedures: Behavior/Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

Principals were asked to describe actions or procedures that helped them lead the MiBLSi implementation; principals most often reported things related to behavior. School 3’s principal described how procedures for behavior have been influenced:

Then in terms of student behavior because of the SWIS form and kind of formalizing what kind of behaviors we’re trying to act on and what consequences would be and what steps would follow. So you have . . . this flow and that that really helped quite a bit.
Table 9

*Interview Actions/Procedures Thematic Distribution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.0 Actions/Procedures</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Behavior/PBS</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Professional Development</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Process/Structure</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Team/Distributed Leadership</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Data</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Communication/Expectations</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School 4’s principal explained the procedures resulting from using SWIS and SWIS generated reports:

SWIS is our data collection. We use it, we make adjustments, we plan positive behavior supports out of it. We identify times a year that are bad that we need to focus on and you know one of our things is everybody thinks that before break is the worst time of year. Ours is after, two weeks after’s [the] worst time of the year.

The impact of behavior on student achievement often results from a student being out of the classroom due to discipline issues and missing instruction. School 5’s principal changed procedures as a part of MiBLSi to reduce that

We changed the way behavior referrals came to the office. Before, they just sent them to the office. Now they have to write the discipline referral before they are
sent and they have to contact the parent unless it is something major, then I do. We had to—I really had to work with staff on not sending kids to the office for punishment because they didn’t do their work. That was something I kept saying you know what? You’re just forcing them out of the room and less time to do work.

Positive Behavior Support is a large part of the MiBLSi initiative. Understanding and improving student behavior can improve student reading achievement. “Reducing the number of incidents of problem behavior allows quality instruction to occur more often and with fewer distractions” (Bohanon, Goodman, & McIntosh, 2009). Analysis of the principal observation data revealed that 5 of the 6 elementary principals observed led schools where the universal, schoolwide behavior plan was visible as evidenced by banners and posters reminding students of expectations.

At School 2, a poster in the office and hallways stated: *Stay on the right track at SCHOOL 2. Be Respectful: follow directions, be cooperative, use kind words, be a good listener, use good manners. Be Honest. Be Safe: hands/feet and objects to yourself.* School 4’s cafeteria was full of reminders about the schoolwide behavior expectations. The walls and even the radiators were painted with their school expectations. A banner also hung in the cafeteria pronouncing their school a “MiBLSi Award Winning School.” Reteaching specific behavior lessons was being provided to a small group of students who needed additional support at School 6. These observations in 5 of the 6 schools support the emerging theme from the interviews.

*Emerging Theme 2.2—Actions/Procedures: Professional Development*

Professional development for teachers can take many different forms. Principals reported professional development 12 times in response to what actions/procedures
helped them lead MiBLSi implementation. The principal of School 1 mentioned book studies. At School 2, the principal employed peer collaboration:

So when it was time for her to learn, I would go in and watch her class so she could take an hour to work with TEACHER again. You know to work with TEACHER, to do that program. And then TEACHER might go in and do a lesson and she would watch and things like that.

Scheduling and targeting specific building professional development was described by the principal at School 4:

We try to tailor all of our professional development around school improvement goals basically is what we will go back to. Our conversation is focused on meeting those goals. So we spend time at this meeting, at grade level meeting, we need to talk about this. Steering committee with our leadership team . . . our main focus is what we need to have disseminated or addressed in professional development.

During the observation of the principal of one school, teachers who had participated in a book study role played incidences of inappropriate student behavior and how they would respond.

Emerging Theme 2.3—Actions/Procedures: Process/Structure

Many of the principals described how MiBLSi provided them with a structure or process for holding meetings and conversations. This structure enabled them to successfully implement MiBLSi. School 3’s principal described how the procedures helped, “Well the procedures—working, having the staff work through the MiBLSi process was a huge thing because it enables you to do other things and you know how to do it.” When describing his team meeting he said, “That’s much more robust now than it was before MiBLSi.”
School 5 moved away from regular grade level meetings to discuss data and plan interventions. Grade level meetings are a structure used in MiBLSi. This school now uses them for professional development and the principal had this to say:

We are going back. We need to as a group get together to do the data because when they go into those grade levels it is 40 minutes of PD time and she's just presenting, presenting, presenting . . . we've kind of lost something that we really need. So we are going to start having half day grade levels maybe once every two months.

Focus groups and individual teacher interviews revealed that at 3 of the 6 sites the principal participated in the grade level meetings structure on a regular basis. That behavior provided additional support to the emergent theme Process/Structure.

Emerging Theme 2.4—Actions/Procedures: Team/Distributed Leadership

Several principals commented on the leadership of the MiBLSi team and how the procedures used by the team helped to implement the initiative. The principal at School 4 explained the role of the team:

We wanted to make sure we incorporated staff members not just the leadership of the building, the core team so that way our whole goal is to create buy in and if your staff doesn’t buy in you’re not going to get anywhere with it.

At School 3, the principal reported that members of the team helped with the procedures and requirements. The Title I teacher (School 3) enters all the DIBELS scores, prints all the reports, and schedules the grade level meetings to review the data. At School 2, the principal shared that her counselor enters all the minor referrals on the SWIS system and then reports to the principal:

I don’t know about every minor [referral] but my school counselor who puts all that information in, she runs reports every once in a while and says this one is
kind of creeping up, what should we do? Well maybe this one needs a Check In/Check Out, maybe this one just needs a little bit of goal setting.

At School 1, the principal is nearing retirement and planning for leadership transition. His staff decided to “revitalize” MiBLSi and a new revitalized leadership team has formed:

I talked about [it to] staff and said we’re revitalizing and they said okay we’re on, we’re on. In fact, I was just making up my list and we have—I have six people who want to join it again. . . . I’m going to try to keep it at eight or ten you know how you do.

**Emerging Theme 2.5—Actions/Procedures: Data**

Using data on reading and behavior to make instructional decisions is a significant part of the MiBLSi initiative. The principal at School 1 describes how they identify students by using the data:

Here’s number one child for this month and guess what? He’s the same one . . . you know and it is eye opening once you put in your data and look at it and then they, the leadership team, will make recommendations.

This principal goes on to discuss how the data are shared:

I give them [teachers] everything and they get to look at it and they get to examine it and it’s presented every staff meeting, just about every staff meeting. Yeah, at least once a month that’s the part where . . . kids start to stand out and we go what are we going to do about that? What will we do about him, you know? . . . I mean what exactly are you going to do and that’s where we sort of are now.

Data provide an impartial way of determining which children have needs that may need to be addressed. At School 3 the principal said:

It’s more apparent how far behind a kid is. Before it was just more you know they’re sort of behind but you don’t know. But when they see the graph and this kid is way down here. Well, we’ve got to do something.

Referring to behavior data from SWIS, he stated:
So you can go back and look at [it] and you can count. You can see if the space between incidents has increased, if the intensity . . . [has seen an] increase or decrease and things you want to find and it pays off when we go to teaming because we can open it up and say we’ve seen this.

Again, describing behavior data the principal at School 4 indicated:

We just use the same language, benchmark, strategic and intensive for behavior. I have a flow chart there and I try to do monthly reports where I sit down I see where kids are at and I actually pull that up and I’m talking to my behavior coach, have you talked to the teacher? What are we doing? . . . I’m involved sometimes too with that and so we know who those kids are and what’s being done.

Again, my analysis of the individual teacher interviews for School 6 and the results of the focus groups using the Delphi Technique resulted in 5 of the 6 schools supporting the finding that the principal uses procedures related to data regularly.

Emerging Theme 2.6—Actions/Procedures: Communication/Expectations

Communicating with staff, which included providing timelines and goals, was mentioned 6 times by principals. The principal of School 3 explained, “I think I’ve really improved communicating back with the staff you know what’s going on.” School 4 gathered input from staff:

Throw it out to the staff, get their buy in or get their insights and then say okay we’re going to run with this rather than sit down come up with something, test it . . . what do you think? Does it work? Little steps at a time.

The principal from School 6 explained that she was very intentional about timelines, “so that the teachers could see that this is what the timelines were. This is what we’re doing and this is why we have to do it.”

Focus group data from 3 of the 6 schools indicated that the principal regularly uses communication related to the MiBLSi initiative. Meets with Staff (all) referred to the
principal meeting with school staff in addition to teachers. This further enhances communication and, if combined, represents one additional school so that 4 of the 6 sites exhibit these data. Additionally, when Expectations are considered, the same 4 schools are referred to in the data.

Research Question 2: What challenges do the principals encounter in trying to lead the implementation of MiBLSi and how do they respond?

The data from the interviews were then analyzed based on the challenges the principals encountered in trying to lead the implementation of MiBLSi. Four themes emerged: Coaching, Change the System, Resources, and Communication. Coaching was mentioned 5 times by principals from 4 of the 6 schools. Change the System was referenced 5 times by 3 of the 6 schools. Resources were reported 5 times by principals from 5 of the 6 schools. Communication appeared 5 times from 3 of the 6 schools.

Emerging Theme 3.1—Challenges: Coaching

The buildings participating in this study were from Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 of MiBLSi. All described the coaching piece as a challenge. Many had coaches from the intermediate school districts as opposed to local coaches who were part of their staff. One of the challenges was learning along with the coach, as described here by the principal from School 2:

I felt that we got the short end of the stick a little bit because of just not having that outside person that had really been through it to help us with that but I think we muddled along and learned.

The principal at School 3 describes a different challenge with coaches:
We had problems with that because it didn’t take very long to build some resentment of some of the staff. They just didn’t want to put up with [outsiders] and there’s a disconnect even though those people are working and they’re good people, they’re solid and they represented this is how you implement, but they [neglected] that step to what’s the reality in the classroom.

The principal at School 5 explained how they moved beyond their coach:

The third year we really moved beyond where our, it’s kind of an unusual situation, but we moved beyond where they were and we had our MiBLSi representative from the ISD [coach who] wanted us to stay on her track and we were way past that. So that third year she really wouldn’t meet with us.

Emerging Theme 3.2—Challenges: Change the System

Principals commented on the challenge of trying to change the existing system and way of doing things at their buildings. In terms of changing the school’s behavior plan, the principal from School 1 commented:

So the challenges were one, changing a system that was well established. I mean it was in stone. Well established. [We had to move] from the assertive discipline to something that was more of the positive behavior.

The principal of School 2 provided commentary on changing instructional practice:

This has been a big challenge and I feel like we’re finally getting there, having my teachers take the lower groups, the intensive kids. That has been a challenge. That has been a long process to get them to say guess what? You’re the certified teacher you have the bigger tool [kit]. But we don’t know the programs or the thought of [a] direct instruction program is sort of beneath them, so to speak.

Another challenge was the reading assessment required in MiBLSi which was DIBELS:

That was an interesting process because I went through the DIBELS and . . . there was a lot of resistance, like why is he doing this? They got the data and they sat down and they started working with the data and now I go down and they come in and they show me the DIBELS data because they’re proud of it.

Another challenge mentioned was scheduling. MiBLSi stresses the importance of 90-minute uninterrupted reading blocks. Building principals must attempt to achieve this
block of instructional time while working with shared auxiliary staff and many other factors that limit flexibility. The principal at School 3 explained:

The work for me then goes back to scheduling. Trying to work out a schedule that optimizes the amount of time we have for the parapros to work with the kids and the times that we need them. And so we’re still working in music, art, PE and the breakup of the day and trying to preserve some large chunks of time for ELA time. So that’s been a huge challenge and it is—it’s a tough job. It’s just, it’s like I said, it’s three boxes of puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, and you throw away half the pieces and you put something together because that’s how it works.

Emerging Theme 3.3—Challenges: Resources

When schools are accepted into the MiBLSi initiative, some funding is provided to buildings for 3 years. These funds can be used to pay for substitute teachers, conference attendance, or materials. School 2’s principal described the challenge:

It came with a lot to get us—a lot to start but the more we get into things, like for example we’re doing INTERVENTION. Everybody is doing INTERVENTION. First and second graders are doing INTERVENTION. Well they come with these little . . . books, well to buy [the] books for everybody you know is a bunch of money or to get this is a bunch of money. So money, money is an issue.

School 3’s principal expressed concern about the difficulty of funding substitutes so that teachers can participate in grade level meetings:

It was a bit easier then [with grant money] because I was able to schedule that and we had money to call subs. So we did a half day with each grade level and we’d do that maybe three times a year and that’s slowly grinding to a halt.

Emerging Theme 3.4—Challenges: Communication

The principal at School 6 described the communication piece as “really critical.” She went on to say, “When we first started doing that, nobody wanted to talk to each other.” At School 4 the principal described:
We spend a lot of time saying how can we get better? What do we need to focus on? . . . Those committees need to disseminate it so we are all on the same page. We still need to get better at that but we are getting better, the communication piece.

In terms of challenges, in analyzing the observation data, no specific challenges were observed. However, the fact that 3 principals were called to meetings outside their buildings could be viewed as a challenge. This was also mentioned as a challenge by 1 principal in the interviews as she described how she wanted to be in classrooms more often, “I’m in a ton of meetings.” According to Stronge et al. (2008), “Ultimately, many principals spend too little time in classrooms.”

Focus group question 2 directly related to the challenges the principal faced in trying to lead the MiBLSi initiative and how he/she responded to the challenges. From the focus group transcripts, Getting buy-in from all staff (above the 80% required to receive the grant) was the most frequent challenge reported. The focus group at School 3 indicated that this challenge was overcome by looking at the data: “I think we overcame that quickly when we could look at the data.” An individual interview, using the focus group questions, of a teacher at School 6 revealed:

I think our challenges were getting the buy in from people. I think that was probably our number one challenge and I think she responded well to that. . . . She was really positive, you know, really tried to explain and as a committee we really tried to explain, here this is going to affect not only just the behavior it’s going to make a better climate but it’s also going to affect the reading scores.

The workload was also reported as a challenge whether spread among the team or limited to the principal. As a teacher from School 2 explained in the focus group, “Well, the same challenge of trying to find the time in the day to do the extra things and really targeting those kids that were struggling.” The workload challenge for a principal was
described by a teacher at School 6 as “She’s getting overwhelmed too” and “I mean she wants the best but you know I just think they [Administration] throw so much at her.” As noted by a teacher at School 6 one way the principal responded to the workload issue was: “I think she was very supportive as far as if they needed extra time . . . if they [teachers] missed a special she’d give them extra—she’d come in and take their class so they could have their specials time.” Similarly, a teacher from this school stated, “. . . she put in a ton of extra time . . .” It is interesting to note in the table below that Schools 1 and 2 reported more challenges than the other schools with the exception of School 6. Schools 1 and 2 were involved in the early stages of MiBLSi and were a part of Cohorts 1 and 2, respectively. Table 10 below provides all the challenges articulated by the focus groups.

Research Question 1b: In what ways, if any, do principals and teachers link the work of the principal to student reading achievement and what was most significant?

Interview transcripts were analyzed based on those things that potentially impact student achievement. Four themes emerged from this data appearing in at least 50% of the interviews: Deliberate/Focused, Using Data/Data Meetings, Support, and Instructional Leadership. Deliberate/Focused was mentioned 17 times by all of the 6 schools. Using Data/Data Meetings appeared 6 times by principals representing 4 out of the 6 schools. Support appeared 4 times by principals from 3 of the 6 schools. Instructional Leadership surfaced 5 times, representing 4 of the 6 schools.
Table 10

Challenges Reported by Focus Groups (School 6 was reported in individual teacher interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
<th>School 4</th>
<th>School 5</th>
<th>School 6</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making sure everybody understood</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow through</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work load</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being consistent</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing expectations for staff</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting buy-in</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches – behavior or reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emerging Theme 4.1—Linking to Student Achievement: Deliberate/Focused

A clear focus on improving reading achievement was described by 5 of the principals as key to improving outcomes. The principal from School 2 stated that “we need to be specific so I think that was the shift.” When describing the reading coach of the building, the principal of School 4 stated “she knows everything about every kid that we need help with starting K-5 she has a history of them.” When explaining the focus on
reading at her building, the principal from School 5 shared, “we were rolling along . . .
one nice thing about MiBSLi is that it has changed the conversations that we have in
regards to students.” The principal at School 3 told me how he searched for the correct
match between student and curriculum, “So there’s a lot of pushing into what other
alternatives do we have for the kids and let’s try something else. And I’m open to there
are no borders.”

_Emerging Theme 4.2—Linking to Student Achievement: Using Data/Data Meetings_

Using data and having time to meet to hold data meetings is explained by the
principal of School 2:

If we didn’t have grade level instructional meetings, I think it could fall to the
wayside. . . . Our district pays for the subs for that and it’s three times a year, um I
I think because you absolutely have to have the time to talk about what’s going
well what isn’t going well, where’s this kid at, where do we need, I mean if you
don’t have that time to have those discussions, then it would fall to the wayside.

The buildings all continue to use DIBELS data. At School 4 they had begun using
DIBELS prior to participating in MiBLSi. The building principal of School 4 describes
using it a little differently:

I would say our philosophy was it was more of an end all when we started and as
time has changed it’s an indicator and it’s a guide it’s not an end all. Your kids are
going to be able to read or not. So we kind of changed our philosophy with
DIBELS and how we use it but we still use it as an indicator, we still do the
benchmark meetings. We still do progress monitoring, we spend grade level
meetings talking about the progress monitoring, where kids are at. We talk about
other accommodations and interventions if a kid is not meeting their growth, their
projected growth . . . we do our benchmark meetings still. We look at our
effectiveness of programs still based off of DIBELS.

The principal at School 4 summarized the use of data stating:
I think that just that accountability piece is huge if you can hold them accountable. Those are some of the things, I’d say if you feel strongly about it you’ve got to hold them accountable you know as a leader. . . . If you feel strongly about it then you better make a point to monitor it.

The observation data were analyzed in terms of work the principal did that may link to impacting student achievement. One emerging theme was supported in the observations: Using Data/Data Meetings. Two principals actively engaged in use of data and data review for both reading and behavior data during the observations. One principal entered progress monitoring data on student reading and was aware of the progress, or lack thereof, of the individual students. This principal reviewed the SWIS data on student behavior prior to talking with students regarding behavior referrals. The principal also reviewed each student’s report card. Two other principals were observed reviewing the benchmark data available after the January (mid-year) DIBELS assessments. SWIS data were posted outside the office of another principal.

_Emerging Theme 4.3—Linking to Student Achievement: Support_

Support as described by the principals took many forms including providing materials and time and being willing to listen and adjust when possible. When asked if he believed his leadership has had an impact on increasing student reading achievement, the principal of School 3 responded:

. . . as far as knowing like could I go down there and teach the reading group? No, I would need to get retrained to do that. I haven’t practiced doing that but I think what I’ve done is supported it and worked hard to get the resources they need and worked hard to get the training they need and tried as issues come up, tried to get answers.

At School 4, the principal explained:
We’ve given, through our modeling, we’ve given the staff tools to be more successful in the classroom and we listen to them. I’m trying to [ask] what do you guys need to get better? Because you are the only reason we’re going to get better. . . . We have to find out what’s not working, get rid of it or improve on it, but we can’t just keep adding on and that was one of the mantras that was the start of MiBLSi . . . we’re not going to keep adding to you, we’re going to get better at what we do.

Emerging Theme 4.4—Linking to Student Achievement: Instructional Leadership

All 6 principals were asked if they felt their leadership had made an impact on increasing student reading achievement. Five of the 6 principals stated that they hoped their leadership had made a difference but that they did not do it alone. Each of the 5 principals were quick to also credit their staff. The principal at School 1 stated, “It’s hard to say because I tend to give the momentum to the staff . . . I believe it has in that there are certain prescriptions for instruction such as everybody’s going to small group.” At School 2 the principal included, “That has really been kind of my mantra, you know we have to be deliberate, we have to.” At School 3 the principal explained that while it is “a hard one to put a handle on . . . [the expectation is that] this is the way we do business and so that’s the way I provide that leadership.” The principal from School 5 further explained that, “I think that with any initiative you have to be right in the trenches with them.” Another principal felt that her leadership definitely had an impact due to the nature of trust and her level of expertise in the area of reading. “You have to talk deeply enough on their [teachers’] level because if you don’t there’s no credibility and there’s no way to move them.” Three of the 6 principals either have a master’s degree in Reading or their undergraduate degree included Language Arts. A fourth principal previously worked as a Reading Coach in the Reading First grant.
Focus group participants, who included teachers, coaches, or behavior specialists in the schools, engaged in a discussion of questions described in the focus group protocol in Appendix I. After responding to all of the questions, the participants were involved in co-construction of meaning with the researcher. First, the two theoretical frameworks used for the study, Marzano et al.'s (2005) Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change and Fullan’s (2008a) Six Secrets of Change, were presented and discussed. The participants then reviewed their responses to the first question regarding the day-to-day activities their principal engages in on a regular basis related to MiBLSi and linked those to the Marzano et al.’s and Fullan’s frameworks. This process helped to ensure credibility and authenticity of the results (Creswell, 2007) by allowing for all participants voices to be heard and presented in an accurate account of the meaning they created.

Focus groups impressions as related to Marzano et al.’s (2005) framework are presented in Appendix K. Participants worked as a group to determine if any day-to-day principal activities matched with Marzano et al.’s Responsibilities for Second-Order Change and, if so, which ones. The curriculum (Marzano et al., 2005) include: (1) Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; (2) Optimizer; (3) Intellectual Stimulation; (4) Change Agent; (5) Monitoring/Evaluating; (6) Flexibility; and (7) Ideals and Beliefs.

Participants linked three behaviors with Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Shares DIBELS/MAP Data; DIBELS Scores Entered; and Looking at
Data. Two schools linked these principal behaviors. Optimizer was linked to principal behavior at 5 schools and included: Fall Assembly – Behavior; Makes Expectations/Rules Visible; School-wide Behavior Plan; Daily Announcements with Mission Statement; Walk-throughs; Raised bar – Vision; Support; Positive Parent Relationships; and Liaison/Cheerleader. Participants at 2 schools linked Intellectual Stimulation with the following principal behaviors: Grade Level Meetings; Teacher Feedback; Behavior Expectations Reviewed; School-wide Assistance Team; and Check in at Grade Level Meetings. Change Agent was linked at 3 schools with the following principal behaviors: School-wide Behavior Plan; Raised bar – Vision; and Cheerleader.

Principal behaviors were linked to Monitoring/Evaluating at 4 schools and included behaviors such as Meets with Title Staff; Teacher Feedback; DIBELS Scores Entered; Walk-throughs; Collects SWIS Data; Check in at Grade Level Meetings; Checks in with Students/Teachers; Meets with Behavior Specialist; and Looking at Data. Behaviors were linked with Flexibility by focus group participants at 4 schools. These behaviors included: Visible Outside/Classrooms/Playground; Shared Leadership of Team; Secured Resources – Team Input; Support Person; Meets with Behavior Specialist; Communication; and Includes All. Ideals/Beliefs was linked to the following principal behaviors at 4 schools: Grade Level Meetings; Teacher Feedback; Makes Expectations/Rules Visible; Daily Announcements with Mission Statement; Students Practice Correct Behavior; Raised bar – Vision; Multi-dimensional; and Expectations–Students, Staff, Parents.

The codes that emerged from the principal interviews were cross tabbed with Marzano et al.’s Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change.
This cross tabulation is presented in Table 11. Instructional Leadership corresponded to Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Relationships, Support, and Buy-in corresponded to Optimizer. Professional Development and Training Other Employees corresponded to Intellectual Stimulation. Behavior/PBS, Process/Structure, Scheduling, Action Planning/Documentation, Change the System, Behavior Issues, Support, and Instruction in Class all corresponded to Change Agent. Visibility, Accountability, Data, Feedback, and Using Data/Data Meetings were matched with Monitoring/Evaluating. Team/Distributed Leadership, Leadership Team Put Things in Place, Flexibility of Interventions, Coaching Issues and Team were all linked to Flexibility. Communication/Expectations and Deliberate/Focused were connected to Ideals/Beliefs.

After utilizing an inductive process, I used a deductive process comparing the emergent themes to two theoretical frameworks (Fullan, 2008a; Marzano et al., 2005). Deductive coding applies general principles to specific instances. Those data were viewed first through lens of Marzano et al.'s Seven Responsibilities for School Leaders facing second-order change, and then Fullan's (2008a) key factors (secrets) of change. The emergent themes from the principal interview data were cross tabbed to the Seven Responsibilities.

The Day to Day category included three emergent themes that were successfully linked to the Seven Responsibilities: Behavior/PBS was linked to Change Agent, Relationships was linked to Optimizer, and Visibility was linked to Monitoring/Evaluating. Behavior/PBS appeared in all 6 principal interviews, while Relationships appeared in 4 of the 6 and Visibility appeared in 3 of the 6 interviews.
### Table 11

*Interview Data and Marzano et al.'s (2005) Seven Responsibilities for Second-Order Change*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marzano</th>
<th>Day to Day Behaviors</th>
<th>Actions/Procedures</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Linking to Student Achievement</th>
<th>Total References (not including Challenges)</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional Leadership 5x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Optimizer (15)</td>
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<td>Support 5x</td>
<td>Buy-in 2x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation (11)</td>
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<td>Professional Development 12x</td>
<td>Training other employees 4x</td>
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<td>Behavior/PBS 6x</td>
<td>Process/Structure 12x</td>
<td>Change the System 6x Behavior Issues 3x</td>
<td>Support 4x Scheduling 2x Instruction in Class 2x</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring/ Evaluating (14)</td>
<td>Visibility 8x</td>
<td>Accountability 4x Data 6x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback 2x Using Data/Data Meetings 6x</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility (7)</td>
<td>Team Put Things in Place 1x</td>
<td>Team/Distributed Leadership 9x Flexibility of Interventions 5x</td>
<td>Coaching Issues 5x</td>
<td>Team 2x</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideals/ Beliefs (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Communication/ Expectations 6x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberate/ Focused 17x</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When considering the 21 Responsibilities for the School Leader, I linked three emergent themes: Behavior/PBS was linked to Order, Relationships was linked to Relationships, and Visibility was linked to Visibility.

Emerging themes in the Actions and Procedures category had more links with Marzano et al.'s (2005) Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order change: Professional Development was linked to Intellectual Stimulation, Process/Structure and Behavior/PBS were linked to Change Agent, Data was linked to Monitoring/Evaluating, Team/Distributed Leadership was linked to Flexibility, and Communication/Expectations was linked to Ideals/Beliefs. Professional Development, Behavior/PBS and Team Distributed Leadership each appeared in the interview data from all 6 principals. Process/Structure and Communication/Expectations occurred in the data from 5 of the 6 principals. The emerging theme of Data appeared in interviews with 3 of the 6 principals. When considering the 21 Responsibilities for the School Leader (Marzano et al., 2005), Professional Development linked with Intellectual Stimulation; Process/Structure linked with Order; Team/Distributed Leadership linked with Input; Communication/Expectations linked with Communication; Data linked with Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; and Behavior/PBS linked with Order.

The category linking to Student Achievement resulted in one emergent theme mentioned by all 6 principals. When cross tabbing with the Seven Responsibilities for the School Leader for Second-Order Change, Deliberate/Focused linked to Ideals/Beliefs; Using Data/Data meetings linked with Monitoring/Evaluating; Support linked with Change Agent; and Instructional Leadership linked with Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Deliberate/Focused appeared in all 6 principal interviews.
Using Data/Data Meetings and Instructional Leadership appeared in 4 of 6 interviews and Support appeared in 3. Cross tabbing with all 21 Responsibilities (Marzano et al., 2005) revealed Deliberate/Focused linked to Focus; Using Data/Data Meetings linked with Monitoring/Evaluating; Support linked with Resources; and Instructional Leadership linked with Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

HyperRESEARCH software was used as a validation of the emergent themes resulting from manual coding. After the cross tabs were completed, the principal interviews were then reviewed using HyperRESEARCH. The transcripts were entered and coded using the software. The interviews were coded using the 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader (Marzano et al., 2005) only. The frequency distribution of the codes using HyperRESEARCH resulted in the following appearing most often (limited to seven): (a) Order, (b) Monitoring/Evaluating, (c) Input, (d) Focus, (e) Resources, (f) Communication, and (g) Change Agent. The results from the frequency distribution using HyperRESEARCH presented in this study were limited to seven in order to compare them to the Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-order Change (Marzano et al., 2005). The results from both the cross tabulation and the use of HyperRESEARCH are compared to each other and to Marzano et al.'s Seven Responsibilities for the School Leader for Second-Order Change in Table 12.

The manual coding of the interview data and the subsequent coding using HyperRESEARCH produced five areas of agreement with the emerging themes among the top seven. Of these five, only one, Monitoring/Evaluating, was listed as one of the Seven Responsibilities described by Marzano et al. (2005) for second-order change.
Table 12

Comparison of Emerging Themes–Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross Tabulation Results 21 Responsibilities</th>
<th>HyperRESEARCH Results</th>
<th>Seven Responsibilities for Second-Order Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>Optimizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Input</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Change Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>Change Agent</td>
<td>Ideals/Beliefs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When cross tabbing the Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change (Marzano et al., 2005) with the themes that emerged from manual coding of the interview data by the researcher, the order of the top seven was slightly different from that of Marzano et al.: (1) Change Agent; (2) Monitoring/Evaluating; (3) Ideals/Beliefs; (4) Flexibility; (5) Intellectual Stimulation; (6) Optimizer; and (7) Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Table 13 below illustrates the differences in rank order between Marzano et al.’s (2005) order based on the relationship with second-order change and the results of this cross tabulation based on number of occurrences in the data.
Table 13

Comparison of Order of Seven Responsibilities for Second-Order Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marzano et al. (2005)</th>
<th>Principal Interview Data (Number of Occurrences)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>Change Agent (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimizer</td>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Ideals/Beliefs (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Agent</td>
<td>Flexibility (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Optimizer (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the analysis of the day-to-day activities of the principal as observed in the principal observations were cross tabbed to the Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change (Marzano et al., 2005); three themes were successfully linked (Table 14): Visibility was linked to Monitoring/Evaluating. Relationships (with students) and Behavior/PBS (Discipline and Behavior Intervention) were matched to Change Agent. When considering the actions/procedures the principals were observed to engage in, two emerging themes were linked to Marzano et al.'s Seven Responsibilities for Second-Order Change. Behavior/PBS was linked to Change Agent and Data was linked to Monitoring/Evaluating. Finally, in considering observations that could be linked to increasing student achievement Using Data/Data Meetings was linked again to
Monitoring/Evaluating. The Table 14 compares the data from interviews, observations, and focus groups. The columns are listed in order from most to least frequently occurring. The Marzano Seven Responsibilities column is listed in rank order.

Table 14

Seven Responsibilities for the School Leader for Second-Order Change: A Comparison of Interview, Observation, and Focus Group Data with Marzano et al. (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Focus Groups (Participant cross tab)</th>
<th>Marzano Seven Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change Agent</td>
<td>Change Agent</td>
<td>Optimizer</td>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, &amp; Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>Monitoring/ Evaluating</td>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>Optimizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimizer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Change Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change Agent</td>
<td>Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction &amp; Assessment</td>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six Secrets of Change (Fullan, 2008a)

The emergent themes were then viewed through the theoretical lens of Fullan and his Six Secrets of Change (2008a). Emerging themes linked with Fullan’s work as follows: Relationships with Love Your Employees, Behavior/PBS with Capacity Building
Prevails, and Visibility with Transparency Rules in the Day to Day category. In the Actions/Procedures category, Process/Structure was linked with Connect Peers with Purpose, Professional Development with Learning is the Work, Data with Transparency Rules, and Team/Distributed Leadership with Capacity Building Prevails.

Finally, Deliberate/Focused linked to Connect Peers with Purpose, and Data Meetings with Transparency Rules in the Linking to Student Achievement category. The complete results of the links made between the emergent themes and Fullan’s (2008a) Six Secrets are depicted in Table 15.

Table 15

*Principal Interviews Cross Tab with the Six Secrets of Change (Fullan, 2008a)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fullan</th>
<th>Day to Day</th>
<th>Actions/Procedures</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Linking to Student Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love Your Employees</td>
<td>Relationships 8x</td>
<td>Support 5x</td>
<td>Communication 7x</td>
<td>Support 4x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect Peers with Purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>Process/Structure 12x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberate/Focus 17x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Building Prevails</td>
<td>Behavior/PBS 6x</td>
<td>Team/Distributed Leadership 9x</td>
<td>Behavior Issues 3x</td>
<td>Team 2x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is the Work</td>
<td>Professional Development 12x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change the System 6x</td>
<td>Training Others 4x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency Rules</td>
<td>Visibility 8x</td>
<td>Data 6x</td>
<td>Accountability 4x</td>
<td>Data Meetings 6x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Learn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When cross tabbing the principal observation data to Fullan’s (2008a) Six Secrets of Change, Behavior/PBS was linked to Capacity Building Prevails in the Actions/Procedures category.

The work completed by the focus group participants to link the day-to-day behaviors to the Six Secrets of Change (Fullan, 2008a) resulted in 4 schools connecting behaviors of the principal with Connect Peers with Purpose (six behaviors), Capacity Building Prevails (six behaviors), and Transparency Rules (seven behaviors). Focus groups at 3 of the 5 schools also linked principal behaviors to Learning is the Work (five behaviors) and Systems Learn (five behaviors). Love Your Employees had the fewest connections. Two schools linked 3 principal behaviors with Love Your Employees.

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to discover the daily practices that principals use to employ research supported responsibilities and strategies to achieve high fidelity and successful implementation of MiBLSi in schools where the reading achievement trend is going up. This chapter presented information regarding the six participating sites from which data were collected, an analysis of the data, and a discussion of the findings. The participants’ responses to interview and focus group questions, field notes collected during the principal observations, and the documents collected from which themes emerged were analyzed. Focus group participants at 5 schools cross tabbed their responses to the first question regarding daily practices the principal engaged in on a regular basis with the theoretical frameworks of Marzano et al.’s Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change and Fullan’s (2008a) Six Secrets of
Change. The data were cross tabbed from the interviews and observations with the theoretical frameworks presented to the focus groups.

Through analysis, the categories of Day to Day, Actions/Procedures, Challenges, and Linking to Student Achievement were used to categorize the emerging themes. Emerging themes that emerged from the interview data were Visibility, Relationships, Behavior/PBS for the Day to Day category. Behavior/PBS, Professional Development, Process/Structure, Team/Distributed Leadership, Data, and Communication/Expectations emerged as themes for the Actions/Procedures category. Emerging themes in the Challenges category were Coaching, Change the System, Resources, and Communication. Finally, the emerging themes revealed in the Linking to Student Achievement category were Deliberate/Focused, Using Data/Data Meetings, Support, and Instructional Leadership.

The findings related to these emerging themes were presented as they related to the four categories that tie them to the research questions. Some of the emerging themes were supported in only one type of data collected, while others appeared across interviews, observations, and focus groups as seen in Table 16. Those appearing in all six schools or across all three data collection methods are considered dominant themes.

The emerging themes from the interview data were cross tabbed with Marzano et al.'s Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change and the 21 Responsibilities for the School Leader. The focus group participants utilized only the Seven Responsibilities when creating their links between Marzano and their responses to the question. Themes that emerged from the interview data were cross tabbed with the 21 Responsibilities and were compared to those resulting from the use of
HyperRESEARCH. In Chapter V, a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for additional research are presented. The final section includes references and appendices.

Table 16

*Emergent Themes and Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Total Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Visibility</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>12/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Relationships</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>7/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Behavior/PBS</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>14/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Behavior/PBS</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Professional Development</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Process/Structure</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>8/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Team/Distributed Leadership</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Data</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>10/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Communications/Expectations</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>9/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Coaching</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Change the System</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Resources</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Communication</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Deliberate/Focused</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Using Data/Data Meetings</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Support</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with an overview of the study, problem statement, and findings in relation to the research questions. The final section includes implications of findings and recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with a brief commentary on the study.

Overview of Project

Elementary principals strive to increase student achievement and to make a difference in the lives of the students they serve. The current era of accountability and focus on results has heightened the importance of this aspect of the principalship. Successfully leading a school reform initiative is not an easy task and sustaining the initiative over time is even more difficult. The purpose of this multicase study was to examine the daily practices of 6 elementary principals involved in the MiBSLi school improvement initiative. All participating sites exhibited increased third grade MEAP reading achievement trends from 2005-2008. What actions or procedures did these principals use and what challenges did they face? Finally, strategies that were used by principals to impact student reading achievement were identified. The goal of this study was to discover what principals who have led successful school improvement initiatives synthesized from the research and put into place.
Research is abundant on effective principal leadership (Fullan, 2008a; Reeves, 2009; Schmoker, 2006; Stronge et al., 2008). The study reviewed the data from the perspectives of the principal and the teachers at each of the 6 sites. Interviews with the principals, observations of the principals, focus groups with teachers at the schools, and collection of documents occurred over a period of $3\frac{1}{2}$ months. Data were organized and analyzed for emerging categories or themes.

Theoretical frameworks from the work of Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a) were cross tabbed with the interview, observation, and focus group data in this study. Marzano et al.'s Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change and Fullan’s Six Secrets of Change were considered in the process of analyzing the data. Themes emerging from principal interview data were also cross tabbed with Marzano et al.'s 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader and compared to the results of coding using HyperRESEARCH.

Findings

The central research question that guided this study asked, how do principals translate what is known about effective leadership, leading change, and implementation of school reform into daily, actionable practices to increase student achievement. Findings from the interviews, observations, and focus groups suggested that, while the principals engage in many research-supported practices, they also engage in practices less frequently mentioned in the research. Such practices appear to be based on principals’ own experience. Principals in the study were found to engage in some of the 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader that Marzano et al. (2005) did not find to be as
strongly correlated to leading second-order change. Similarly, the findings from this study showed that principals engage in behaviors or actions that align with some but not all of the Six Secrets of Change (Fullan, 2008a). In the following discussion, particular attention is allocated to the dominant themes emerging from this study. To be considered a dominant theme in this study, a theme must have been evident in the data from all 6 principals or present in three data collection methods (interviews, observations, and focus groups).

Findings by Research Question

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, what do principals do on a day-to-day basis related to the MiBLSi initiative. Overall, considering interviews, observations, and focus group responses, the dominant themes related to the day-to-day practices of principals were Behavior/PBS and Visibility. Of the 6 principals interviewed, 3 responded with daily practices related to behavior. All 6 principals engaged in daily practices related to behavior during the observations. Five of the 6 principals were described by their staff as implementing practices related to behavior regularly. These activities ranged from speaking with students regarding discipline referrals, to participating in the positive behavior support program reward activity.

Focus groups from 5 schools indicated that the principal was engaged with the Positive Behavior Support Plan at the school on a regular basis. Teachers from one school told me “we have a [reward] assembly every week that she implemented.” Other schools’
teachers noted, “the behavior expectations are reviewed a lot” and “a nice job she’s done of posting all the rules and the main rules around the building.”

Visibility was the other dominant theme in the day-to-day category, resulting from 3 of 6 principals discussing it in the interviews and 5 of 6 principals being observed engaging in it. Focus groups mentioned visibility during 4 of the 6 focus groups. Visibility included classroom visits and parent, student, and teacher contact, as well as supervision of areas within and outside of the school. Five of the 6 principals were observed supervising students at some time during the day, e.g., bus and car traffic at school start and end times, lunch room or recess supervision. One principal who was outside by 8:15 a.m. at the latest every morning greeting students and parents said, “When the kids come I’m outside. I’m you know visible immediately. . . . I touch base with as many as I can.”

A conclusion to be drawn from these two findings is that principals spend a portion of every day engaged in behaviors related to student behavior. It is interesting to note that while my focus or lens for completing this study was on increasing reading achievement, one of the dominant themes related to the day-to-day practices of successful MiBLSi principals was attention to student behavior. The MiBLSi initiative focuses on integrating behavior and reading support to better meet the needs of children. In this time of reduced school budgets, 4 of the 6 schools did not have a school counselor or behavior specialist on staff. The importance of addressing the underlying behavior needs when addressing reading needs for some children is becoming more well researched (Bohanon et al., 2009). This additional duty appears to fall on the principal or leadership team in MiBLSi buildings. The leadership teams of MiBLSi had ceased to function in 3 of the
buildings due to the loss of resources, particularly funding they had received during the 3-year implementation period of MiBLSi. The funding made it possible to hire substitute teachers so the team could meet. Many behavior coach positions were also eliminated. Reading coaches were still in place in all the buildings in some form due to Title I funding. The difficulty in maintaining the resources to support release time for the leadership team to monitor and respond to student behavior may explain the prominence of this responsibility in the work of the 6 principals studied.

The second finding of this study was that principals were visible in the schools every day. A conclusion can be drawn that principals make a conscious effort to be visible to students, teachers and staff, and parents. According to Marzano et al. (2005), visibility “communicates the message that the principal is interested and engaged in the daily operations of the school; second, it provides opportunities for the principal to interact with teachers and students regarding substantive issues” (p. 61).

Research Question 1a

The next research question asked what actions or procedures helped principals lead MiBLSi implementation. Behavior/PBS, Professional Development, Team/Distributed Leadership, and Data were the dominant themes. Principals were most often observed to be using procedures based on the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support plan for their building. In addition, the school’s expectations for behavior were prominently posted, using large posters and banners, in 4 of the 6 buildings. Behavior expectations were also included in the morning announcements at 3 of the buildings.
Professional Development emerged in the data as principals described providing focused professional development including opportunities for book studies, conference attendance, and time for teachers to observe and work with other teachers. Teachers from 5 of the 6 schools reported the principal used the DIBELS or SWIS data systems to record, track, and analyze student reading and behavior data including benchmark and more frequent progress monitoring data. Team/Distributed Leadership was a dominant theme as all the principals discussed the importance of creating a strong leadership team and the role the team played in the MiBLSi implementation.

A conclusion can be drawn from these findings that the procedures the principals and MiBLSi teams learned during the MiBLSi training were sustained after the on-going training had ended. Behavior/PBS, Professional Development, Team/Distributed Leadership, and Data are all part of the MiBLSi training model. Building teams, which include the principal, learn about Positive Behavior Support and how to create a schoolwide behavior plan. The teams are also trained in using data, both for reading (DIBELS) and behavior (SWIS). The role and function of the team and team members is taught during training, including structures for holding grade level meetings and behavior support team meetings. Professional development is not only provided during the MiBLSi grant period, but teams are taught the importance and value of quality, on-going, professional development.

*Research Question 1b*

In seeking to answer in what ways do principals and teachers link the work of the principal to student reading achievement and what was most significant, the data
collected from Question 1a regarding what actions or procedures helped had to be considered. Overwhelmingly, most of the data for this question came from the principal interviews in which a specific question related to increasing student achievement was asked. The dominant theme related to increasing student achievement was Deliberate/Focused. As one principal observed, “There’s not enough intensity and enough intentionality so we had to get it. There were a lot of things we had to get done.” Another explained, “We have discovered that we’re not moving our students enough.”

A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that the MiBLSi training as well as the literature on effective reading instruction and interventions stress the need for explicit and systematic instruction. This training appears to be sustained in these successful schools even after the MiBLSi grant had expired.

Research Question 2

What challenges the principals encountered in trying to lead the MiBLSi implementation and how they responded to those challenges was the next research question. The themes that emerged in this category came predominantly from the principal interviews. The emergent theme, Resources, was the most prevalent. The Resources theme was mentioned in 5 of the 6 principal interviews, but this was not a dominant theme. In order to be considered a dominant theme, the theme must have appeared in all 6 principal interviews or appeared in the interview, observation, and focus group data. Many principals discussed the impact of reduced funding as a result of completing the 3-year grant funding period as well as general reductions in state funding. One principal described a challenge to sustainability related to his leadership: “In order to
sustain our behavioral system I have to let off the reins.” He went on to say, “The sustainability of our reading program I think is ingrained and it’s natural. I think that would be fine.”

Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change (Marzano et al., 2005)

After the examination of each research question, a comparison was made of the dominant themes emerging from the research with the Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change (Marzano et al., 2005). When these dominant themes were cross tabbed with Marzano’s Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change, connections were made to Change Agent, Monitoring/Evaluating, Intellectual Stimulation, Flexibility, and Ideals/Beliefs. It was noted that all seven Responsibilities surfaced in the data when cross tabbing the emerging themes. When using all 21 Responsibilities of the School Leader, connections were made to Order; Intellectual Stimulation; Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Input; Visibility; and Focus. It was more difficult to link the themes to the 21 Responsibilities because of the sheer number and smaller distinctions.

The only Responsibilities not connected with any emerging themes were Contingent Rewards, Affirmation, Culture, Discipline, Outreach, and Situational Awareness. As Marzano et al. (2005) state, “When involved in second-order change initiatives that are dramatic departures from the past, the leader must emphasize the 7 responsibilities” (p. 75). This fits with the findings that, while not all seven are dominant themes emerging from my research, all seven can be linked with some of the emerging
themes. Considering that not all 21 appeared in the emerging themes, I refer again to Marzano: “Additionally, the leader might have to endure the perception among some staff members that behavior relative to 4 of the 21 responsibilities has eroded” (p. 75). I would suggest that this may explain why 5 of the 21 responsibilities did not appear as emerging themes based on the participants’ perspectives.

Six Secrets of Change (Fullan, 2008a)

Four of the Six Secrets of Change (Fullan, 2008a) were connected to the dominant themes found in this study. Overlapping occurred resulting in two Secrets linking to some dominant themes when cross tabbing to Fullan’s Six Secrets of Change. The dominant themes linked to Capacity Building Prevails, Learning is the Work, Transparency Rules, and Connect Peers with Purpose. All six Secrets linked to at least one emerging theme in the data reduction phase.

Fullan (2008a) describes the Secrets as being “synergistic—each of the six feeds on the other five” and “heavily nuanced—that is, it takes a lot of thought and application to appreciate their meaning and use” (p. 10). He also states that “the secrets are so intertwined that working on any one means working on several simultaneously” (p. 124). The researcher believes this is why there is overlap among the Secrets when linking them to the dominant themes and why the focus groups described them as more difficult to work with.

A conclusion can be drawn from these comparisons between the data from this study and the theoretical frameworks of Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a) that while the principals utilized many of the responsibilities and strategies in the current
research, they also used some considered as less likely to achieve success when leading second-order change and relied on their own experience. As one principal put it, “I draw on experience every day.”

Implications

This section will look at two sets of implications of the findings from this study. First, this section will discuss the implications of the dominant themes from this study as they relate to the way principals adapt their focus, attention, and behavior to support implementation of a major school improvement initiative, in this case, the MiBLSi literacy and behavior initiative in Michigan. Second, this section will discuss the implications of findings that reflect on the MiBLSi initiative itself and upon the ways in that districts support such comprehensive reform efforts at the building level.

The dominant emerging themes from this study illustrate that there is variability in how principals adapt their focus and behavior for supporting implementation of a major school improvement initiative. For instance, the 6 principals in this study were illustrative of some, but not all, of the Marzano et al. (2005) principal behaviors correlated with supporting second-order change: Change Agent, Intellectual Stimulation, Monitoring/Evaluating, Flexibility, and Ideals/Beliefs. On the other hand, the dominant themes characterizing the work of the 6 principals included in this study did align with some of the 21 responsibilities that Marzano et al. (2005) found to be positively correlated with raising student achievement, but not through second-order change: Order; Visibility; Input; Focus; and Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.
The finding that the dominant themes from this study align best with a combination of Marzano et al.'s (2005) seven correlates with second-order change and 21 correlates with raising student achievement may have several implications. First, any major school improvement initiative can have characteristics that are both first- and second-order change for any given individual involved in the change (Marzano & Waters, 2009). The fact that these principals demonstrate a combination of attention to responsibilities both positively and negatively associated with second-order change could represent the principals' efforts to balance their work based on the needs of their staffs. Order and Input, which were two of the 21 responsibilities that had dominant themes linked to them, both have negative correlations with second-order change. This could represent the principals' efforts to balance their work based on the needs of their staffs.

Second, large-scale school improvement initiatives often focus on a combination of student success areas rather than just one. In the case of MiBLSi, this combination centers on two key areas, literacy and behavior, with an assumption that positive behavior management will increase on-task and active learning behavior, both strong correlates with raising student achievement (Bohanon et al., 2009). In the case of MiBLSi, the focus is on using positive behavior supports to engage students more productively in literacy learning and using research supported literacy strategies to improve literacy instruction. Part of the implementation strategy involves using literacy coaches to assist teachers with the employment of the literacy strategies and behavior coaches to assist with positive behavior supports. Another part of the implementation strategy is to carefully monitor both incidence of behavior distractions and the evidence of reading success.
The fact that the principals in this study were found to focus most on the structures and monitoring associated with student behavior in their change agent behaviors may reflect an attempt to focus their change efforts on the learning environment while supporting their teachers in focusing their efforts on the actual learning. Other prominent areas of focus, such as monitoring the data that reflects how students are doing in the area of behavior while teachers monitor the data for how students are doing in the area of reading proficiency, suggest that principals may have a highly situational way of allocating their attention and focus depending on the nature of the school reform and the needs of their staff. This distribution of responsibility is also illustrative of the theme of distributed leadership to achieve implementation.

Third, the principals in this study focused on adapting the systems and structures of the school to support the school improvement initiative. They made changes to the focus of staff meetings, the way behavior is monitored, and the ways they engaged staff. These illustrate how principals matched their strong focus on communicating about the change initiative with the structural supports needed to implement the change. Additionally, the emergent themes within each data source and across all data sources offer several illustrations of how principals are linking their work in one area to work in another: (a) monitoring, visibility (attention to student behavior), and the use of data; (b) change agent, monitoring, and structure (changing structures and systems as needed to support the change; (c) flexibility (use of staff time and resources), distributed (team) leadership, coaching, and systems supports (use of staff meeting time and coaching/professional development; and (d) ideals/beliefs, communication and focus, using data to keep the focus on behavior and literacy results with students.
The interconnectedness of principals’ work relating to implementation of a major school reform initiative is even more evident when examined through the lens of Fullan’s Six Secrets of Change (2008a). When examined through Fullan’s lens, the emergent themes from the data in the study reveal very distinct patterns of connectedness in the principals’ work: (a) relationships, communication, and support; (b) focus, purpose, and structure; (c) capacity building, distributed (team) leadership, and attention to behavior; (d) the work of learning, professional development, and changing the system; and (e) transparency, monitoring, and the use of data (Table 15).

In summary, the findings of this study have implications for understanding how principals utilize the responsibilities, behaviors, and secrets of effective leaders. The findings related to the principals in this study suggest that principals balance the use of first- and second-order change associated responsibilities with their sense of how staff are experiencing the change related to a given school reform or improvement initiative. Additionally, the findings from this study suggest that principals integrate their use of various strategies and behaviors, thus leveraging the impact on the process of implementation. Finally, the findings suggest that principals emphasize the application of responsibilities through their day-to-day actions based on their read of both the status of the implementation process and the needs of their staff and students as it related to the goals of the school improvement initiative.

The results of this study have implications for (a) current or future principals, (b) district leadership, and (c) MiBLSi or other school improvement initiatives. Two principals commented on the value of participating in MiBLSi. One recommended MiBLSi “if for nothing else but the training and process.” He explained that “it is the
most amount of gain for the least amount of effort.” Another principal shared “you have
to do what is best for your school . . . it’s gonna be the littlest thing that’s going to make
the biggest difference . . . so we haven’t totally taken MiBLSi structure.” He went on to
say, “We have to find out what’s not working, get rid of it or improve on it. But we can’t
just keep adding on and that was one of the mantras that was the start of MiBLSi.” This
principal was attempting to address initiative fatigue and identify things they could stop
doing (Reeves, 2009).

Finally, principals need to be able to adapt any initiative after full implementation
to meet the continuing needs of their students: “Good teaching, effective teaching, is not
just about using whatever science says ‘usually’ works best. It is all about finding out
what works best for the individual child and the group of children in front of you”
(Allington, 2005, p. 462). Current or future principals can use the dominant themes from
this research along with the current research from Marzano et al. (2005), Fullan (2008a),
Reeves (2009), Stronge et al., (2008) and others to use as guideposts and to consider
against their current practices.

For district administration, this study made it clear that the district needs to
support any major school reform initiative and make sure that schools avoid Reeves’
“initiative fatigue” (2009). Marzano et al. (2005) remind us that “second-order change is
so complex that it is best not entered into lightly” (p. 68). As they explained earlier in
their 2005 work, “schools are quite willing to try new things—perhaps too much so”
(p. 50).

When schools apply for MiBLSi grants, they are asked to commit to a minimum
of 3 years and to develop a 5-year district plan to support implementation in the district.
School districts are also asked to submit with their applications a letter from the Superintendent agreeing to protect school building administration and staff from competing district/school initiatives. This commitment did not appear to be kept at two sites. New initiatives had been undertaken during or immediately after the conclusion of the third year of MiBLSi. This limits the amount of focus and time a principal and staff can devote to any initiative. As Marzano and Waters (2009) observed, “High-performing districts ensure that the necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials, are allocated to accomplish the district’s goals” (p. 8). They stated further that “resources must be allocated to fund activities such as professional development, scheduling changes, and the like” (p. 71).

Additionally, the research indicates that quality indicators of instructional leadership include: monitors the implementation of curriculum standards and makes sure they are taught, models behaviors that he or she expects of school staff, and spends time in classrooms to effectively monitor and encourage curriculum implementation and high-quality instructional practices (Stronge et al., 2008). These are pitfalls for leaders when they are pulled in too many directions. District leaders should understand that principals cannot spend time in classrooms when they are called out of their buildings for meetings or assigned other duties. This was a concern that principals brought up in the interviews and teachers brought up in focus groups at two buildings.

While a dominant theme did not emerge from the research question relating to challenges, the emergent themes may provide MiBLSi or other school improvement initiatives with areas to consider. Principals reported resources, communication, coaching, and making changes to the system as challenges. The most commonly
occurring challenge from the principals’ perspectives was Resources. Resources included funding as well as time for things such as grade level meetings, intervention materials, and opportunities to meet for professional development and problem solving.

Recommendations for Future Research

This multicase study sought to discover daily practices principals used to employ research supported responsibilities and strategies to achieve high fidelity and successful implementation of MiBLSi in schools with increasing reading achievement trends. While themes resulting from the study of 6 individual sites cannot conclusively determine what principals leading school reform initiatives do in order to be successful or how they do it, it provides insight to consider what the research presents compared to what happened in these six schools. Additional research should be conducted to expand upon this study. Additional sites would provide a greater volume on which to evaluate the themes presented in this study. Additionally, inclusion of more sites that participated in MiBLSi Cohorts 1 and 2 would allow the opportunity to compare the data from each Cohort. Finally, a longitudinal study of each site for the next 3 to 5 years could be undertaken to more fully address sustainability.

This study attempted to capture the perspectives of principals and teachers. Larger focus groups and the addition of non-teaching staff such as paraprofessionals could provide additional depth to the focus groups. It would also be interesting to ask the principals to indicate which of Marzano et al.’s (2005) Seven Responsibilities of the School Leader for Second-Order Change they perceive themselves engaging in most often. This study originated from the lens of reading school reform. The interrelationship
of reading and behavior in the MiBLSi initiative could also be explored more fully in a study asking specific questions related to each.

Finally, beginning in the 2011-2012 year, MiBLSi applications will become district applications to address some concerns with implementation and sustainability as well as to move to a research-supported top-down and bottom-up model. That would allow for further study and comparison between original cohorts and those under the new process. This move is supported in Marzano and Waters' (2009) research: “the computed correlation between district leadership and student achievement was .24 and was statistically significant at the .05 level” (p. 4). In all of the options discussed for further study, it would be of value to examine how raising the awareness of and situational use of effective leadership frameworks such as those offered by Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a) could further advance the effectiveness of principals’ leadership for deep implementation of school reform initiatives, and thus, their effectiveness in leading their schools to better student outcomes.

Conclusions

“Although we can comfortably identify the major components of the principal’s work, interestingly, ‘we know much less about how—or how much principals carry out these functions on a daily basis’” (Lashway, 2002, p. 2; also, see Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, as cited in Stronge et al., 2008, p. xii). This study sought to explore how principals translate what is known about effective leadership, leading change, and implementation of school reform into daily, actionable practices to increase student reading achievement.
This research adds to the literature base on responsibilities and strategies principals engage in when leading a successful school improvement initiative. It illustrates how principals translate what is known about effective leadership, leading change, and implementation of school reform into daily, actionable practices to increase student reading achievement. The principals in this study appeared to use Marzano et al.'s (2005) Responsibilities of Change Agent, Intellectual Stimulation, Monitoring/Evaluating, Flexibility, and Ideals/Beliefs most often. It also appeared that the least used Responsibilities were Contingent Rewards, Affirmation, Culture, Discipline, Outreach, and Situational Awareness. The principals appeared to use Fullan's (2008a) Secrets of Capacity Building Prevails, Learning is the Work, Transparency Rules, and Connect Peers with Purpose most often, but also used the other two as indicated by their connections to smaller emerging themes in the data reduction phase. The principals in this study also relied on their own experience in leading a school.

A significant finding was the prevalence of the dominant theme of Behavior/PBS in the interviews, the observations of the principals, and the focus groups. A concern raised was the amount of time it takes on the part of the principal to successfully implement, monitor, and revise the Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support Plan. While originally created and implemented by the MiBLSi leadership team in each building, as resources dwindle more of the responsibility for this plan is placed on the principal. Resources, which was the most frequently mentioned challenge found in this study, currently hamper MiBLSi leadership teams’ efforts to meet in 3 of the schools. One school felt like the focus group provided them an opportunity to reflect on the success and status of their team and their plan. Another school is embarking on a process to
“revitalize” the team because it has waned in the last year and the principal would like to involve the teachers actively again as he prepares for the transition to new leadership upon his retirement. It is worth noting that the school that appeared to have the most fully functioning leadership team also had an assistant principal and behavior specialist.

When the principals were first approached to explain this study and seek their participation, 4 initially expressed that they were “not actively doing MiBLSi” or had “moved away” from MiBLSi. It was apparent that they did not identify the processes and structures being used in their districts as a result of participating in the MiBLSi initiative as MiBLSi. Instead they identified participating in the formal training and receipt of the funding as MiBLSi. MiBLSi was identified as an external program rather than the internalization of training, processes, and structures as a result of the MiBLSi grant. While these buildings did not consider themselves to be “doing” MiBLSi, they all utilized specific procedures such as grade level meetings, collection of DIBELS and SWIS data, and a schoolwide positive behavior plan that resulted from MiBLSi. As one principal stated, “So once they’ve [teachers] learned the processes then you can apply the processes to other things.”

The two buildings that considered themselves to be still engaging in MiBLSi while no longer part of the grant were from Cohorts 1 and 2 and had been out of the grant the longest. The buildings which considered themselves no longer “doing” MiBLSi had just completed their third year of the grant, and this year was the first year without the support of training and funding.

Key to any school reform initiative is implementation and sustainability. The principals and teachers at the 6 sites were asked about both. Overwhelmingly both agreed
that they had reached full implementation or were almost there, and most felt they could continue to sustain the initiative. The principal at one building described the initiative as "pretty sustainable [because] so much of it is now just part of the culture." When questioned about describing the school as "not doing MiBLSi" this year, he explained that "they [teachers] they're doing the important part . . . a substantial part of it." The teachers at this same school reported, "We are doing characteristics of MiBLSi. We're not reporting to MiBLSi."

At one building, the teachers didn’t feel like they had gotten quite all the way to full implementation of MiBLSi but they believed the new “revitalization” plan for their building would get them there and they would be able to sustain it with the newly created leadership team. At this building, the principal was actively engaging teachers to take on more leadership responsibilities related to the initiative prior to his retirement and transfer of leadership. This was all intentional on his part so that the work of MiBLSi could be sustained.

Another principal felt like they could sustain the initiative as long as resources continued to be provided by their district for the grade level meetings: “. . . if you don’t have that time to have those discussions, then it would fall to the wayside.” The teachers in this building felt that the behavior plan may need to be revisited and updated, but that they could sustain the initiative. Another principal stated that the initiative could sustain itself because it has become the philosophy of the school. The teachers at that building described it as sustainable by saying, “it’s become part of the fiber.” The principal at another building felt that the initiative was sustainable because teachers “know the procedures and we’re pretty consistent.” The teachers at this school stated that they
thought they “hit full implementation but then we kind of relaxed it.” The teachers were looking forward to getting full implementation again as part of their school improvement process and saw it not as a challenge to sustainability but rather a part of a cyclical process of constant review and revision.

Finally, the principal of the last school in the study reported that they had achieved full implementation and that sustainability was good. The teachers at this building had perspectives that differed from that of the principal with all reporting that the building had achieved full implementation but that since last year sustainability has become a problem. As one teacher described it, “I would say last year we did a really good job sustaining it. This year like I said it’s really, it’s almost been quite a dive.” Another teacher explained her frustration regarding the loss of sustainability: “I really feel frustrated this year and feel that really that all of our focus is now on testing and on NEW INITIATIVE.” This building appears to be suffering from what Reeves (2009) refers to as “initiative fatigue—attempting to use the same amount of time, money, and emotional energy to accomplish more and more objectives” (p. 14). The principal of this school explained the few past years: “We’ve come through second-order change just about every year, every year and they’ve [teachers] come along the whole time. Which is, that in and of itself, is hard to sustain.” The teachers in this district also felt that central administration did not buy into the MiBLSi initiative:

I just think there’s a lack of resources and lack of support this year. We’ve struggled a little bit with support from the administration. Not from PRINCIPAL. . . .they [district administration] really didn’t buy into it and so you know it’s been more of on an individual building level.
This study confirmed that while principals utilize the wealth of existing research regarding leadership responsibilities and strategies by synthesizing them into actionable practices, they also use their own experience and adapt responsibilities and strategies to fit both the nature of the school reform or improvement initiative and the needs of their school. The dominant themes found in this study were Behavior/PBS, Visibility, Professional Development, Team/Distributed Leadership, Data, and Deliberate/Focused. These were connected to the work of Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a), specifically. While the dominant themes may differ in terminology from some of the research, they fit well. The one exception may be Behavior/PBS, due to the integrated nature of literacy and behavior in the MiBLSi grant. The research related to the impact student behavior has on achievement is more recent and may prove to be a valuable focus for leadership that focuses on improved student outcomes in other areas as well as literacy.

Ultimately, this study suggests that principals adapt their responsibilities and actions to their perceptions about what is needed to reach successful implementation, drawing upon multiple facets of a principal’s work and leveraging their efforts through the connectedness of their strategies. Even with a school reform initiative likely to involve significant levels of second-order change for individuals, effective principals seem to be able to integrate responsibilities and behaviors that support second-order change with others that can be associated with improving student outcomes in varying combinations and degrees. This study suggests that the combinations and degrees of emphasis principals place on specific principal responsibilities and behaviors (actions) is
a reflection of their perceptions of the situational requirements associated with both the
nature of the initiative they are leading and the needs of their staff and students.
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Appendix A

Letter Requesting Participation – Superintendents
Letter Requesting Participation – Superintendents

Dear Superintendent:

I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University in the Educational Leadership Department. I am writing to ask your permission to allow me to interview principals and conduct a focus group with selected staff and teachers at A, B and C Elementary schools. The data collection is for a qualitative research study on the daily practices elementary principals utilize in increasing student reading achievement while participating in the Michigan Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi).

Participation in the study will include:

An interview conversation with the principals that should last approximately 90 minutes and that will be conducted at their convenience in a private location in the school building. This conversation will be recorded by an audio tape recorder and I will be taking written notes as well. Participants will be given an opportunity to review the interview transcript and clarify sections or respond in writing, limited to one page. Documents such as the building school improvement plan, MiBLSi application, PET, and MiBLSi reading implementation plan and checklist, etc. will be collected during the principal interview.

I will also be observing the principals during a regularly scheduled school day. I will not interrupt his/her work but quietly shadow his/her daily routine. This observation will be scheduled at the principal’s convenience.

Teachers and staff members in each building will be asked to participate in a focus group. I will be requesting the names of staff members and teachers in each building from the principal. One teacher at each grade level kindergarten through fifth will be selected randomly from the pool of willing teachers. The school reading coach, special education teacher and behavior coach or psychologist will also be asked to participate. The focus groups would take place at the teachers’ and staff members’ convenience, before or after school hours at a location convenient for them. The focus group conversation will also be audio tape recorded. The written transcript of the focus group will be mailed to participants and they will also be allowed to clarify sections or respond to the written transcript by completing a one page written response.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing from the study. If you agree to allow A, B and C to
participate, the identity of the school, principal and staff will be kept strictly confidential. Their interviews and conversations will be referenced by pseudo names. All transcripts will be kept on a CD-ROM in a secured office in my home.

If you are interested in learning more about participating, please contact me by replying by email to johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us or by mail to 404 Country Walk Circle, Midland, MI 48642.

Sincerely,
Susan Johnson
Appendix B

Superintendent Follow-up Telephone or Email Protocol
Superintendent Follow Up Telephone or Email Protocol

Name of person ____________________________________________

Phone number ____________________________________________

Time called ______________________________________________

Better time to call _________________________________________

My name is Susan Johnson and I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University. I am following up on a letter I sent to you on __________________________ (date) seeking your permission to contact principals and staff members in your district to participate in a qualitative research study focused on the daily practices elementary principals utilize in increasing student reading achievement while participating in Michigan’s Behavior and Learning Support Initiative.

Your district was selected because of the success you’ve demonstrated in increasing reading achievement scores of your third grade students. I believe other principals and districts could learn from your staff.

I would like your permission to send your principals a letter inviting them to participate in an interview and an observation. Both would be scheduled at their convenience. If the principal agrees to participate, I would also be asking for the names and addresses of all teaching staff, the reading coach and behavior coach or school psychologist. These staff members will be asked to participate in a focus group at their convenience, before or after school.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing. If you agree to participate, your identity and that of your principal, teachers and school will be kept strictly confidential. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept on a CD-ROM in a secured office in my home.

Do you have any questions regarding the study or the requirements to participate? If you agree to allow me to pursue the participation of your principals and staff members and engage in the study, I would like your written permission (letter or email) by __________________________. You may contact me at 404 Country Walk Circle, Midland, MI 48642 or johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us.

Thank you for your time.
Appendix C

Letter or Email Requesting Participation – Principals
Letter or Email Requesting Participation

Dear Principal,

My name is Susan Johnson and I am the principal of Mills Elementary School in Midland, Michigan. I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University in the Educational Leadership Department. I am writing to ask if you are interested in participating in a qualitative research study on the daily practices elementary principals utilize in increasing student reading achievement in MiBLSi schools.

Participation in the study will include:

An interview conversation that should last approximately 90 minutes and that will be conducted at your convenience in a private location in your school building. This conversation will be recorded by an audio tape recorder and I will be taking written notes as well. After the audio tape is transcribed, a copy of the written transcript will be mailed to you. You will be allowed to provide clarifications, additional information or respond to the written transcript by completing a one page written response. Documents such as your building school improvement plan, MiBLSi application, PET and MiBLSi reading implementation plan and checklist, etc. will be collected during the principal interview.

I will also be requesting a regularly scheduled school day to observe you. I will “shadow” your activities during the day but will not interfere or interrupt in any way. This observation will be scheduled at your convenience.

I will also be requesting the names of all of your staff members to request their participation in a focus groups. Seven to ten teachers and staff members in your building will be selected to participate from the pool of willing staff. One teacher at each grade level kindergarten through fifth grade will be drawn randomly from the pool. Your reading coach, special education teacher and behavior coach or school psychologist will also be asked to participate. The focus groups would take place at your staff members’ convenience, before or after school hours at a location convenient for them. The focus group conversation will also be audio tape recorded. A written transcript of the focus group will be mailed to participants. Focus group participants will be allowed to clarify sections or respond to the written transcript by completing a one page written response.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing from the study. If you agree to participate, your identity and that of your teachers, staff members and school will be kept strictly confidential. Your
stories will be referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept on a CD-ROM in a secured office in the researcher’s home.

If you are interested in learning more about participating, please contact me by replying by email to johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us or by mail to 404 Country Walk Circle, Midland, MI 48642.

Sincerely,
Susan Johnson
Appendix D

Principal Invitation Follow-up Telephone or Email Protocol
Principal Invitation Follow-up Telephone or Email Protocol

Name of person ____________________________________________________________

Phone number ____________________________________________________________

Time called __________________________________________________________________

Better time to call __________________________________________________________________

This Susan Johnson and I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University. I am
following up on a letter/email I sent to you on ____________________________ (date) seeking
your participation in a qualitative research study focused on the daily practices elementary
principals utilize in increasing student reading achievement initiatives, specifically,
MiBLSi.

Your building was selected because of the success you’ve demonstrated in increasing
reading achievement scores of your third grade students. I believe other principals and
districts could learn from you and your staff.

If you agree to participate, it would involve an interview (not to exceed 90 minutes) and
an observation during a school day with students in session. Both would be scheduled at
your convenience. Documents such as the building school improvement plan, MiBLSi
application, PET and MiBLSi implementation plan and checklist, etc. will be collected
during the principal interview.

I will also be asking for the names and email and U.S. mail addresses of all teaching
staff, the reading coach and the behavior coach or school psychologist. These staff
members will be asked to participate in a focus group session at their convenience, before
or after school.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not
participating or withdrawing. If you agree to participate, your identity and that of your
teachers, staff members and school will be kept strictly confidential. Your stories will be
referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept on a CD-ROM in a secured
office in my home.
Do you have any questions regarding the study or the requirements to participate? If you agree to participate, please contact me by telephone or email by _________________. You may call me at (989) 923-7345 or email me at johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting you.
Appendix E

Consent Document – Principals
You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize to Increase Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful MiBLSi Elementary Schools." This project will serve as Susan L. Johnson’s dissertation for the requirements of the Ph. D. in Educational Leadership program. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this case study is to examine the daily practices principals utilize in successful implementation of the MiBLSi initiative in schools where the reading achievement trend is going up. The broad roles and areas of focus and attention indicated by previous research provide principals a general road map for guiding and achieving successful implementation of a major school reform, but each principal must still translate those broad understandings into actionable work on a day to day basis in their school. Moreover, implementation of whole school literacy initiatives may have enough unique features that the principal’s work may need to be further tailored to the elements of that reform. For these reasons, the contextual nature of leading change, the need for principals to translate broad understandings into day-to-day action, and the particular challenges of implementing a whole school literacy initiative, we need to know more about how principals actually shape their day-to-day work to achieve high fidelity and successful (in terms of improved student results) implementation of MiBLSi.

Who can participate in this study?
Data collection for this case study will begin by identifying the pool of participants from the schools in MiBLSi Cohort 1 and 2 with increasing reading achievement scores on the
third grade reading portion of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). The MiBLSi website and MEAP database on the Michigan Department of Education website will be utilized to select the pool of potential cases. The next step will be to seek cases in which the principal has been a part of the initiative since the beginning and attended all of the professional development provided by MiBLSi. This information will be obtained from the MiBLSi staff. Twelve elementary schools participating in MiBLSi that exhibit increasing reading achievement trends over the last three years and the criteria set for principal involvement will be identified. Elementary building principals from the twelve selected schools will be invited to participate. All principals agreeing to participate in the study will be placed in the pool. From these sites, six will be selected at random for the study.

**Where will this study take place?**
All data collection will take place in the six selected MiBLSi schools. Principals may select a location in his/her school that is most convenient for them.

**What is the time commitment for participating in this study?**
Data collection will occur during three visits to the school sites. Two visits will involve the principal directly. Each building principal in the study will consent to one interview of 90 minutes as well as an observation to occur during regular school hours. Documents related to the MiBLSi initiative will be collected at the conclusion of the principal interview. Teachers in each elementary building will spend up to 90 minutes participating in a focus group.

All data collection will occur between July 15 and November 30, 2009. The entire study will be completed by July 2010.

**What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?**
If you decide to participate you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting up to 90 minutes. The interview will be audio tape recorded to ensure accuracy of the collected information. All interviews will be transcribed into transcripts that you will be able to review and respond to. You would be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at anytime during the interview. Documents such as the building school improvement plan, MiBLSi application, PET and MiBLSi reading implementation plan and checklist, etc. will be collected during the principal interview. You will also be asked to allow the researcher to observe you during a regular school day at your convenience. The researcher would simply shadow you for the day and would not interrupt or interfere with your work.
What information is being measured during the study?
The interview and focus group data will be fully transcribed. All the data from interviews, focus groups, field notes and collection of documents/artifacts will be organized. The data will be read and reread. Next themes or categories will emerge. This process is an inductive one, in which themes are discovered. After utilizing an inductive process, I will use a deductive process by comparing the data to two theoretical frameworks based on work by Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a).

At the conclusion of the transcription stage, the text will be shared with participants. Participants will be allowed to create a one page written response to clarify or add to the data. These responses will be included in the data. The original data will not be changed. When the analysis process is complete and the data has been coded it will be shared with the participating principals for their comments and feedback.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
The audio transcripts will be destroyed once transcribed and the researcher and participant are confident that they accurately reflect the participants’ comments during the interviews. All individual names and school names will be kept confidential. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participation in the study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
Results of this study may provide principals with strategies used to successfully implement MiBLSi resulting in increased student reading proficiency. Principals engaged in leading the MiBLSi initiative in their school may gain insight into ways to make the initiative more successful and sustainable. There are no other known benefits to participating in this study.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There are no costs associated with participating in this study. Interviews will occur before or after school hours so that no loss of work time will occur. The observation will not impede the principal’s ability to do his/her job that day.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
Principals consenting to an interview, an observation, the collection of documents and allowing a focus group of teachers/staff in his/her school will receive a Starbuck’s gift card. The gift card will be sent to the principal when the transcription of the data has been completed.
Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Steps will be taken to protect each participant’s identity. Pseudonyms will be used for each participant such as “Teacher A”, “Principal B”, etc. Gender and grade level will not be identified. The identity of the schools participating will also not be disclosed. “School 1”, “School 2”, etc. will be used. The student investigator as well as the members of her Dissertation Committee at Western Michigan University will have access to the information collected.

Results of this case study will be disseminated through a dissertation completed by Susan Johnson. A PowerPoint presentation will be developed which will be shared with the dissertation committee during the oral defense. Results may also be shared in a future journal article or presentation.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty or prejudice for not participating or withdrawing from the study at anytime for any reason. You will experience NO consequences if you choose to withdraw from this study. The researcher can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the student investigator, Susan L. Johnson at (989) 835-7855 or johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us or the primary investigator, Dr. Van Cooley at (269) 387-3891 or van.cooley@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant’s signature                                      Date
Appendix F

Letter or Email Requesting Participation – Staff
Letter or Email Requesting Participation

Dear Staff Member:

My name is Susan Johnson and I am the principal of Mills Elementary School in Midland, Michigan. I am a doctoral student at Western Michigan University in the Educational Leadership Department. I am writing to ask if you are interested in participating in a qualitative research study on the daily practices elementary principals utilize in increasing student reading achievement in MiBLSi schools.

Participation in the study will include:

One focus group consisting of teachers at each grade level, kindergarten through fifth grade, a special education teacher, the reading coach and the behavior coach or school psychologist from your school. The focus group session would take place at your convenience, before or after school hours at a location convenient for you. By participating in the focus group, you will receive a $5 Starbuck’s gift card. Snacks and beverages will also be provided for your comfort during the focus group.

The focus group conversation will be audio tape recorded. After the audio tape is transcribed, a copy of the written transcript will be mailed to you. You will be allowed to provide clarifications or respond to the written transcript by completing a one page written response.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing. If you agree to participate, your identity and that of your principal and school will be kept strictly confidential. Your stories will be referenced by a pseudo name. All transcripts will be kept on a CD-ROM in a secured office in the researcher’s home.

If you are interested in learning more about participating, please contact me by replying by email to johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us or by mail to 404 Country Walk Circle, Midland, MI 48642.

Sincerely,

Susan Johnson
Appendix G

Consent Document – Teachers
Consent Document – Teachers
Western Michigan University
Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Van Cooley
Student Investigator: Susan L. Johnson
Title of Study: Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize to Increase Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful MiBLSi Elementary Schools

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize to Increase Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful MiBLSi Elementary Schools." This project will serve as Susan L. Johnson’s dissertation for the requirements of the Ph. D. in Educational Leadership program. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this case study is study is to examine the daily practices principals utilize in successful implementation of the MiBLSi initiative in schools where the reading achievement trend is going up. The broad roles and areas of focus and attention indicated by previous research provide principals a general road map for guiding and achieving successful implementation of a major school reform, but each principal must still translate those broad understandings into actionable work on a day to day basis in their school. Moreover, implementation of whole school literacy initiatives may have enough unique features that the principal’s work may need to be further tailored to the elements of that reform. For these reasons, the contextual nature of leading change, the need for principals to translate broad understandings into day-to-day action, and the particular challenges of implementing a whole school literacy initiative, we need to know more about how principals actually shape their day-to-day work to achieve high fidelity and successful (in terms of improved student results) implementation of MiBLSi.

Who can participate in this study?
Data collection for this case study will begin by identifying the pool of participants from the schools in MiBLSi Cohort 1 and 2 with increasing reading achievement scores on the
third grade reading portion of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). The MiBLSi website and MEAP database on the Michigan Department of Education website will be utilized to select the pool of potential cases. The next step will be to seek cases in which the principal has been a part of the initiative since the beginning and attended all of the professional development provided by MiBLSi. This information will be obtained from the MiBLSi staff. Twelve elementary schools participating in MiBLSi that exhibit increasing reading achievement trends over the last three years and the criteria set for principal involvement will be identified. Elementary building principals from the twelve selected schools will be invited to participate. All principals agreeing to participate in the study will be placed in the pool. From these sites, six will be selected at random for the study.

When the six MiBLSi sites have been identified and the principal’s agree to participate (interview, observation and document collection), all teaching staff, the reading coach, and the behavior coach or school psychologist at each building will be asked to participate in a focus group. All individuals who agree to participate and sign the consent form will be placed in a pool. Focus group participants will be selected from the pool based on criterion sampling and random sampling. Each focus group will consist of one regular education teacher from each grade K-5, a resource room teacher, the reading coach and the behavior coach or school psychologist. The classroom teachers and the resource room teachers (if more than one) will be placed in a pool and selected using random sampling. The coaches and resource room teacher, if only one, will be selected using criterion sampling.

Where will this study take place?
All data collection will take place in the six selected MiBLSi schools.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
Data collection will occur during three visits to the school sites. Two visits will involve the principal directly. Teachers and staff members in each elementary building will spend up to 90 minutes participating in a focus group.

All data collection will occur between July 15 and November 30, 2009. The entire study will be completed by July 2010.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
If you decide to participate you will be asked to participate in a focus group lasting up to 90 minutes. The focus group will be audio tape recorded to ensure accuracy of the collected information. All focus group sessions will be transcribed into transcripts that
you will be able to review and respond to. You would be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at anytime during the focus group.

What information is being measured during the study?
The interview and focus group data will be fully transcribed. All the data from interviews, focus groups, field notes and collection of documents/artifacts will be organized. The data will be read and reread. Next themes or categories will emerge. This process is an inductive one, in which themes are discovered. After utilizing an inductive process, I will use a deductive process by comparing the data to two theoretical frameworks based on work by Marzano et al. (2005) and Fullan (2008a).

At the conclusion of the transcription stage, the text will be shared with participants. Participants will be allowed to create a one page written response to clarify or add to the data. These responses will be included in the data. The original data will not be changed. When the analysis process is complete and the data has been coded it will be shared with the participating principals for their comments and feedback.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
The audio transcripts will be destroyed once transcribed and the researcher and participant are confident that they accurately reflect the participants’ comments during the interviews. All individual names and school names will be kept confidential. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participation in the study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
Results of this study may provide principals with strategies used to successfully implement MiBLSi resulting in increased student reading proficiency. Principals engaged in leading the MiBLSi initiative in their school may gain insight into ways to make the initiative more successful and sustainable. There are no other known benefits to participating in this study.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There are no costs associated with participating in this study. Focus groups will occur before or after school hours so that no loss of work time will occur.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
Teachers participating in a focus group of teachers/staff in their school will receive a Starbuck’s gift card and snacks and beverages during the session. The gift card will be sent to participants when the transcription of the data has been completed.
Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Steps will be taken to protect each participant’s identity. Pseudonyms will be used for each participant such as “Teacher A”, “Principal B”, etc. Gender and grade level will not be identified. The identity of the schools participating will also not be disclosed. “School 1”, “School 2”, etc. will be used. The student investigator as well as the members of her Dissertation Committee at Western Michigan University will have access to the information collected.

Results of this case study will be disseminated through a dissertation completed by Susan L. Johnson. A PowerPoint presentation will be developed which will be shared with the dissertation committee during the oral defense. Results may also be shared in a future journal article or presentation.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty or prejudice for not participating or withdrawing from the study at anytime for any reason. You will experience NO consequences if you choose to withdraw from this study. The researcher can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the student investigator, Susan L. Johnson at (989) 835-7855 or johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us or the primary investigator, Dr. Van Cooley at (269) 387-3891 or van.cooley@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant’s signature ___________________________ Date ________________
Appendix H

Interview Protocol
Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point of the interview.

1. Please describe your involvement with the implementation of MiBLSi in this school from the initial year up to this year.

2. Please describe your typical week this year and what you do on a regular basis. What part of what you do on a regular basis is related to MiBLSi? How has this changed over time?

3. What challenges did you encounter in trying to lead the MiBLSi initiative and how did you respond to those challenges?

4. What actions or procedures helped you lead the implementation of MiBLSi?

5. Where do you think your school is in the process of getting to full implementation and sustainability of MiBLSi? If you think that you are not there yet, what do you plan to do to get your school all the way there?
6. Do you believe your leadership has had an impact on student reading achievement?

7. What else would you like to tell me about your role in the implementation of this initiative?

Questions that the subjects will be asked include:

Participant’s background:

Years as a principal _________

Years as a teacher _________

What level? _________________

Certification as a teacher _______________________

Degrees obtained _______________________

Please provide me with copies of your building school improvement plan, MiBLSi application, PET and MiBLSi reading implementation plan and checklist, etc. or any other documents you feel will provide additional information.

Thank you for participating in this interview.
Appendix I

Focus Group I Protocol
Focus Group I Protocol

Project: Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize in Increasing Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful MiBLSi Elementary Schools

Time and Date of Focus Group: ____________________________________________

Location: ________________________________________________________________

Participants: ______________________________________________________________

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the focus group so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point during the session.

1. Please describe what your principal does on a regular basis related to MiBLSi? How has this changed over time?

2. What challenges did your principal encounter in trying to lead the MiBLSi initiative and how did he/she respond to those challenges?

3. What are some things that your principal did that helped you implement MiBLSi?

4. Where do you think your school is in the process of getting to full implementation and sustainability of MiBLSi? If you think that you are not there yet, what do you think are the reasons?

5. What else would you like to tell me about your principal’s role in the implementation of this initiative?

Thank you for participating in this focus group.
Appendix J

Observation Protocol
Observation Protocol

Person being observed: ___________________________________________________________

Observer: _______________________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________________________________

Place: _______________________________________________________________________

Beginning Time: _______________  Ending Time: _________________________________

Elements to observe: physical setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors

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<th>Reflective Notes (Observers comments)</th>
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Appendix K

Focus Group Connections and Marzano et al.'s (2005) Seven Responsibilities for Second-Order Change
Focus Group Connections and Marzano et al.'s (2005) Seven Responsibilities for Second-Order Change

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<tr>
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<th>School 3</th>
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<td>Ideals/Beliefs (9)</td>
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<td>x</td>
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</table>
Appendix L

Member Checking Documents
Response to Transcribed Interview
Teacher B School 6

Please provide clarifications, additional information or respond to the written transcript by completing this one page written response.

The general meaning of the interview was correct but there were quite a few typographical errors (I am thinking you might have used an automatic transcription program?) that might affect the understanding or interpretation of the interview. I hope I am not being too picky but I listed the ones I noticed below. If you have any questions for me, please let me know. Thank you.

Line 6 – extra “we”
Line 21 – extra “it” and “I”
Line 42 – extra “that’s”
Line 56 – should be “she was usually the one to contact if”
Line 104 – drop “okay”
Line 135 – extra “I”
Line 138 – “what’s” instead of second “that’s”
Line 160 – drop “we”
Line 164 – extra “that’s”
Line 175 – extra “and”
Line 267 – extra “the”
Line 268 – extra “I was”
Line 272 – extra “and I”
Line 273 – extra “and”
Line 338 – extra “I”
Response to Transcribed Focus Group
Teacher A School 1

Please provide clarifications, additional information or respond to the written transcript by completing this one page written response.

Return to johnsonsl@mps.k12.mi.us

It sounds like we all need to work on our conversational skills!! Not yours, however 😃 Thank you for attempting to organize us! You gave every effort to make our time with you well spent, sorry there wasn’t a larger turnout, but I loved all the treats!!
Appendix M

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Approval Letters
Date: July 15, 2009

To: Van Cooley, Principal Investigator
   Susan Johnson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 09-07-05

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize to Increase Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful MiBLSi Elementary Schools” has been reviewed under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

Before final approval can be given please address each of the following concerns. We expect that you will find the revisions requests to be productive and that you will revise your protocol according to our suggestions or in similar ways. If you think a particular revision is not in the best interest of the human subjects in your study, or you think an entirely different approach to the issue is best, please provide a written explanation and/or call us for consultation.

1. Application form, part XI. CERTIFICATION/SIGNATURE: Please provide Van Cooley’s original signature.

2. Dissemination section of the protocol outline: Might the results also be disseminated in presentations and publications?

3. Appendix A, Letter to Superintendent:
   - In paragraph 3, please change the word “asked” to “invited” to emphasize that research participants are volunteers.
   - Will offer a letter introducing the study to be given to teachers and then the teachers can contact you or will you present the study at a staff meeting? Please clarify.
   - Please clarify the last paragraph on page 11. Is this a request to contact principals at schools A, B and C?
   - You say, “If you are interested in learning more about participating,...” We are confused because we do not think superintendents are participants. Please clarify.

4. Appendix B, Superintendent follow-up telephone or e-mail protocol: As above, please change the word “asked” to “invited” in the last sentence of paragraph 3.

5. Appendix C, Letter or e-mail requesting participation: Explain to principals what you will be asking in focus groups. Essentially you are collecting information about them in these staff focus groups, and they (the principals) should be informed about this and consent to it.
6. Appendix E, Consent Document:
   - In the “What will you be asked to do ...” paragraph, please include that they are agreeing to have staff provide information about them and their leadership.
   - In the “costs” paragraph, please say, “The only cost associated with participating in this study is the time you will devote to it.”
   - Compensation for participating section: Both here and in the protocol, state the value of the Starbuck’s gift card.
   - In the “Who will have access to the information ...” section, please change the last sentence to, “Upon closure of the study all documents will be stored in the University Archives for at least three years.”
   - In the “What if you want to stop participating” section, clarify if they will still receive the incentive if they withdraw.

7. Appendix F, Letter or email requesting staff member participation: Provide more detail about the study (as in the other introductory letter).

8. Appendix G, Consent Document:
   - Please clarify that this is the consent document to recruit staff to participate in focus groups.
   - Who can participate section:
     - The first paragraph in this section seems cumbersome. Please revise so it clearly describes who is eligible to participate in this portion of the study.
     - In the first paragraph on page 24 you say principals will be invited. At this point, the principals have already agreed to participate. Please revise this document so it is only for staff consent.
     - Where will this study take place section: Please change to, “All data collection will take place in your school.”
   - Time commitment section: Only include information about what you are asking of these specific participants. Otherwise it is too confusing.
   - What information is being measured section: There is too much information in this section. Please revise for clarity.
   - Risks section: It seems there may be potential social and professional risks to both staff and principal participants. Staff will be sharing information/opinions about principals that could be critical. Principals could respond negatively and this could impact relationships, lead to retribution, etc. if teachers are identified. Please address this potential risk in the protocol and in your consent materials.
   - Benefits section: Discuss benefits for educators and for society in general.
   - Compensation section:
     - State the value of the Starbuck’s gift card.
     - Why not give the gift card to participants at the focus group?
     - What if you stop participating section: Explain if subjects will receive the gift card if they withdraw.
     - Please include a confidentiality clause to impress upon subjects that what others say in the focus group is confidential and should not be repeated outside the focus group. (e.g., “All information discussed in the focus group is confidential and I will not discuss the contents of the discussion or information about other participants outside of the focus group”; or “My signature below indicates that I agree not to discuss outside of this...
focus group any comments made by the other participants."") This clause should come after the signature line for the consent document, and a second signature line should be provided for this statement.

In a cover letter to the HSIRB, indicate whether you have made the requested change; addressed the issue in a different way than the one the reviewers suggested; are directing the reviewers to the pages in your protocol that address the issue; or are providing a justification for not making the requested change.

Please submit your cover letter and one copy of the revised protocol with the changes highlighted within the document to the HSIRB, 251W Walwood Hall (East Campus). Remember to include the HSIRB project number (above).

Conducting this research without final approval from the HSIRB is a violation of university policy as well as state and federal regulations.

If there is anything you don’t understand about these comments, you are welcome to call the research compliance coordinator (387-8293) for consultation.
Date: July 21, 2009

To: Van Cooley, Principal Investigator
    Susan Johnson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 09-07-05

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize to Increase Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful MiBLSi Elementary Schools" 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: July 21, 2010
Date: October 23, 2009

To: Van Cooley, Principal Investigator  
    Susan Johnson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 09-07-05

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project titled "Daily Practices Elementary Principals Utilize to Increase Student Reading Achievement: A Case Study of Successful MiBLSi Elementary Schools" requested in your memo dated 10/19/2009 (expand participant pool, extend data collection period through Dec 2009, recruitment and consent processes modified to reflect these changes) has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

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

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

Approval Termination: July 21, 2010