SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP
PRACTICES BY FOUR SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father: Donald Lee Mathis (1936-2000). Without my Dad’s constant love, guidance, and inspiration, I would not have accomplished any of the things I have done in the past 57 years. He instilled in me—and my four brothers and sister—that I could do or accomplish anything that I set out to do, and I have. He encouraged my love of reading and instilled a sense of wanderlust that led me to be widely travelled and to have experienced all that comes with that travel. I owe everything that I am to my father, and I have missed him every day for more than 14 years.

I still pick up the phone to call and share some special events in my life with him.

This dissertation is only possible because of you, Dad.
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES BY FOUR SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

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This study moves beyond the discussion of the esoteric description of the characteristics, traits, skills, and strategies of effective principals who lead successful schools—found in the professional literature—to the practical and then reports what these principals do to actually affect their leadership of their respective schools. Through the use of multiple case-study research, this study looks at what the principals in four high schools—two in Texas and two in Montana—actually do in their day-to-day leadership practice. After a careful examination of the professional literature that identifies the school leadership characteristics, traits, skills, and strategies common to successful principals, the study moves to the practical aspects of school leadership: What high school principals actually do in their day-to-day activities to lead effective high schools with academically successful students. A framework is developed based on the research of Day, et al., (2010) and is used to analyze and interpret data that reveals that these effective principals also share many of the same actions taken to lead their campuses to be effective and to foster the academic success of their students. The study concludes with an appeal to consider the creation of a “clearinghouse” to consolidate the research on the “best practices” of school principals that focuses on the practical aspects: What school leaders actually do. Qualitative research that focuses on the “how’s” and “whys” of effective school leaders is paramount in order to provide “real world” insight to aspiring school leaders.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Scratch the surface of an excellent school and you are likely to find an excellent principal. Peer into a failing school and you will find weak leadership (Williams, 2006). Capable school leaders are essential for high-quality education (Zigarelli, 1996). School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning and acts as a catalyst without which other good things are not likely to happen (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Because school leadership matters, an effective school leader can make a positive difference in the overall success of the students, teachers, and school that he or she leads (Lambert, 2006). Principals with strong leadership skills and a willingness to participate actively in the classroom create better schools (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

Empirically, it has been shown that building-level principals can impact the areas of student achievement, accountability of the faculty and staff, and school climate and culture in part by being a visible presence in classrooms, during passing periods, and while interacting with students and parents in less formal settings (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003). Hallinger and Murphy (1987) characterize an effective principal as one who evaluates instruction, monitors progress, selects and participates in professional development activities, and maintains high visibility. Principals who model the behaviors of an active learner and who see their own learning as an important part of their professional work are modeling the beliefs and behaviors they espouse for others in schools (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). What is it that these school leaders actually do to cause a positive difference in the schools they lead?

Statement of the Problem

Schools have always needed strong school leadership. But in recent years, expectations
of “strong” leaders have changed significantly, as has the level of attention focused on which principals are and are not meeting them. As Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) point out, “the role of principal has swelled to include a staggering array of professional tasks and competencies” (p. 4). Effective school leaders are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, and facility managers. In addition, school leaders are expected to serve the often conflicting needs and interests of many stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, district office officials, and state and federal agencies (p. 4).

Effective school leaders are proactive (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). They initiate action, anticipate and recognize the changes in their environment that will affect their schools and challenge the status quo—the established way of operating—that interferes with the realization of their school’s vision. Deal & Peterson (1994) argue that effective school leaders must be well-organized managers, as well as artistic and passionate in their practice of school leadership. Starratt (1995) says school leaders must wear two hats—those of leader and administrator. As school leaders, principals nurture the vision that expresses the school’s core values; as administrators they develop the structure and policies that institutionalize the vision (Starratt, 1995).

The type of leadership needed to successfully lead the rapidly changing schools has changed, just as the role of the principal has dramatically changed over the last decade. These changes have presented many new challenges for principals. Ferrandino (2001) alluded to some of the changes being longer working hours with supervision of an increased staff, and managing larger and more diverse student populations. In spite of these factors, principals are expected to find ways to ensure that all children, regardless of race or ethnic background, are accepted,
supported, and educated. Leadership traits and practices have been examined by researchers from various perspectives (see, e.g., Bass, 1985; Bryce, 1983; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Mendez-Morse, 1992; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). These analyses of school leadership differentiated between leader and follower characteristics, and finding that no single trait or combination of practices fully explained a school leader’s effectiveness, researchers then began to examine what influence an individual leader’s experience with the application of leadership skills had on student achievement and school success (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Zigarelli (1996) suggests that principals with strong leadership skills and a willingness to participate actively in the classroom create better schools. So, while school leadership has been studied extensively, many researchers come away from the subject feeling as though it is still a vague and misunderstood phenomenon (Bennis, 1989; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marks & Printy, 2003). Despite the elusiveness of a thorough understanding of what makes a school leader effective, it is an essential subject—worthy of more intensive research and study—for understanding what leadership practices help to make a school, and its students, successful. It is not definitively known what exactly constitutes effective school leadership. In other words, what are the actual actions and/or behaviors of principals who are considered successful?

**Purpose of the Study**

Leadership skills have been examined by researchers from various perspectives. Early analyses of leadership differentiated between leader and follower characteristics (Barnard, 1938; Fayol, 1949; McGregor, 1957b; Burns, 1978). Finding that no single trait or combination of traits fully explained leaders’ abilities, researchers then began to examine what influence leaders’ skills had on different situations. Subsequent studies attempted to distinguish effective from
non-effective leaders (Williams, 2006). The purpose of this study was to identify the actions that are common to principals who lead successful high schools.

Much research on school leadership focuses on identifying the esoteric school leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and leadership strategies employed by principals who lead successful and effective schools (Bolman & Deal, 1994; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Lambert, 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Sergiovanni, 1984; Silins & Mulford, 2002). The purpose of this study was to not only identify the school leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and leadership strategies common to successful and effective school leadership, but to identify what these high school principals actually do to implement these strategies within their school leadership practices and how school leadership styles, traits, and characteristics manifest themselves in what successful high school principals actually do, every day, as they lead their schools.

**Research Questions**

This study examines the school leadership actions that are common among four high school principals, who lead successful and effective high schools, through the investigation of the following overarching research question:

What are the manifestations of the common school leadership strategies employed by successful and effective high school principals as they carry out their practice of school leadership?

And, these two underlying research questions:

1. What are the school leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and leadership strategies
common to successful and effective high school principals?

(2) How are common school leadership strategies implemented by successful and effective high school principals?

**Methodology**

This study incorporates qualitative methodology to determine if there is a commonality in what successful and effective school leaders actually do to implement their leadership strategies and how these actions affect the academic achievement of the school, and for its students. A multiple case study model was used. The study focuses on four successful high schools. The schools are rural, urban, and suburban; large, medium, and small; headed by males and females of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

**Participant Selection**

For this study, interviews and observations were conducted with the principals of four high schools—one 4A, suburban high school in south-central Texas; one 3A, rural high school in south-central Texas; one Class AA high school in a large city in Montana; and, one small-town, Class B high school in north-central Montana—that are deemed as successful high schools using multiple measures—standardized test results, accountability ratings, graduation rates, attendance rates, SAT results, teacher turnover rates, and college readiness measures. The schools are considered successful in numerous areas including: State accountability scores and ratings, academics, school attendance rates, graduation rates, and teacher turnover rates. The four schools studied were: one rural, 3A high school in Texas; one rural, Class B high school in Montana; one suburban, 4A high school in Texas; and, one Class AA high school in a large city in Montana. The high school principals are three males and one female, one principal is a Hispanic male, and all have headed their respective schools for at least five years.
Data Collection

Three types of data collection methods: interviews, document reviews, and direct observation were used in this study. According to Burton (2000), triangulation is defined as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior” (p. 298). The use of several different types of data sources within the same study adds to the validity of research results (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The three data collection methods that are incorporated in this study enable the researcher to select the participants, triangulate the data, and assist to ensure the trustworthiness and usefulness of this study.

Interviews. According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), interviews can be particularly effective when the topic involved is “complex and emotionally loaded” (p. 152). Generally, there are three types of interviews: structured, open-ended, and focused (Yin, 2009). In order to accurately describe the actions taken by these principals, which are vital to school success and student academic achievement, a series of open-ended questions was used to interview the four high school principals. Interviews are appropriate for this study due to the nature and scope of the research.

Document review. The second type of data collection method used in this study is document review. Document review takes written or visual artifacts and examines them for data collecting purposes. Documentation can be in many forms including letters, memoranda, travel logs, calendars, communiqués, progress reports, internal documents, personal journals, and meeting agendas (Yin, 2009). “The texts and objects that groups of humans produce are embedded with larger ideas those groups have, whether shared or contested” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 286). Several types of documents were analyzed for the purposes of this study; most specifically, the Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports for the
school years between 2005 and 2011, the “measurement and accountability data” collected by
the Measurement and Accountability Division of the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
(Montana’s State Education Agency), curriculum documents, campus improvement plans (where
available), and the student and faculty handbooks for each high school in the study. Documents
from the AEIS and documents from OPI were used to select participants for this study.

**Direct observation.** The final data collection method used in this study is the direct
observation of the subject. According to Robson (2002), data from direct observation can
contrast with and can often complement information obtained by virtually any other data
gathering technique. A major advantage of observation is the ability to eliminate attitudes and
feelings. Similarly, observation is also advantageous due to the relatively unstructured nature of
the observation instrument. Watching what the subject does and listening to what he or she says
enabled the researcher to get a true picture of the actual practices of the subject as he relates to
the study (Rueter, 2009).

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions apply to this study:

**Accountability:** Accountability is the assignment of responsibility for conducting
activities in a certain way or producing specific results. A primary motivation for increased
accountability measures is to determine how to improve the system or aspects of it. To have a
workable accountability system, there must be a desired goal (e.g., compliance with legal
requirements, improved performance), ways to measure progress toward the goal (e.g., indicators
of meeting legal requirements, indicators of performance), criteria for determining when the
measures show that the goal has or has not been met, and consequences for meeting or not
meeting the goal. Each of these aspects of an accountability system can vary in a number of
ways (Goldschmidt, Roschewski, Choi, Auty, Hebbler, Blank, & Williams, 2005).

**AEIS:** Academic Excellence Indicator System. The database developed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to report educational data—standardized test results, graduation rates, attendance rates, demographic data, etc.—for each school and school district in the State of Texas (for more information on the AEIS, please see http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/).

**Effective leadership:** Leaders of successful schools who define the success of their schools not only in terms of standardized test results, but also in terms of personal and social outcomes, pupil and staff motivation, engagement and wellbeing, the quality of teaching and learning, and the school’s contribution to the community. Also, effective school leaders improve student outcomes through who they are—their values, virtues, dispositions, attributes and competencies—as well as what they do in terms of the strategies they select and the ways in which they adapt their leadership practices to their unique context (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, & Brown, 2010).

**Impact:** The power of an idea or event to produce changes or move feelings.

**Implementation:** How specific leadership practices are carried out, put into action, or performed.

**Instructional leadership:** Instructional leadership involves developing and sharing a common vision of sound instructional practices; building relationships with faculty and students; and empowering teachers to be innovative in developing and presenting instruction, providing feedback, and encourage the sharing of best instructional practices (Marks & Printy, 2003).

**MontCas:** Montana Comprehensive Assessment System. A collection of assessment data collected by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. The data collected includes assessment results from the Montana Criterion Reference Test (CRT), the National Assessment of
Educational Progress (NAEP), and the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium assessment implemented as part of Montana’s adoption of the “Common Core” curriculum.

**Principal**: Organizational, operational, and instructional leader of a school.

**TAKS**: The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills is a criterion-referenced assessment given to students in grades three through eleven in Texas. As per state mandate, students must pass a part of the assessment in grades three, five, and eight in order to be promoted to the next grade, and must pass an exit exam in grade eleven in order to graduate high school.

**Transactional leadership**: The core of transactional leadership lies in the notion that the leader, who holds power and control over his or her employees or followers, provides incentives for followers to do what the leader wants. Consequently, the notion that if an employee does what is desired, a reward will follow and if an employee does not, a punishment or withholding of the reward will occur (Burns, 1978).

**Transformational leadership**: The transformational leader, in collaboration with those he/she leads, develops and communicates a shared vision for the organization. He or she acts as a role model, mentor, facilitator, or teacher to bring followers into a cohesive group, shows passion for the vision and the plans of the organization, acts to inspire motivation and inspiration among those lead, and develops an adaptable plan for attaining the organization’s vision (Bass, 1998).

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in several ways. Primarily, the study contributes to the literature on the actual leadership practices and implementation strategies of effective high school principals. Limited research has been done on what school leaders actually do to implement
effective school leadership practices. While the bulk of the research points to the conclusion that effective and successful schools must have effective and successful principals to lead them, this study reports what high school principals actually do, in their capacity as school leaders, and how these actions contribute to effective schools and enhanced levels of student academic achievement. While there is an abundance of scholarly literature that describes the traits, styles, characteristics, and strategies of effective high school principals (see, e.g., Bass, 1998; Burns, 1978; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; 1999; 2002; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Sergiovanni, 1984), there is only limited information on what these school leaders essentially do as they implement their leadership practices. This study focuses on what the high school principal actually does to implement leadership practices and describes how effective school leadership practices are manifested in the daily work of the high school principal. This study can be used as a guide for other high school principals to understand what effective school leaders actually do to implement effective school leadership practices.

**Limitations**

The use of the qualitative research paradigm and a multiple case study analysis innately limits the study due to the preconceived bias on the part of the researcher. Hatch (2002) states that reliance on subjective judgments of the researcher virtually assures a lack of objectivity in a study. Even though the methodology involves a multiple case study of four different high schools, the results may not be able to be generalized to all high schools.

**Delimitations**

As stated, the study focuses on four high school principals who lead effective high schools and whose leadership advances student academic achievement. This study enables the
researcher to delve deeply into the implementation of leadership practices of four successful high school principals and focus on what the principals actually do as they lead their schools.

**Assumptions**

In conducting this study, it is assumed that participants within the high schools studied spoke openly regarding their effectiveness as principals and what they do to implement their leadership practices. It is further assumed that participants were able to identify their specific actions, as principals, that are associated with effective schools and academically successful students. Additionally, it is assumed that this study was conducted objectively, keeping in mind that the possibility of researcher bias could infringe on the analysis of the data collected.

**Organization of Dissertation**

Chapter One provides a brief summary of the problem to be studied, the main research question that guides the study, definition of terms used throughout the study, and a synopsis as to the significance the study has in the continued research of school leadership practices. In Chapter Two, the researcher offers a review of the scholarly literature on school leadership: beginning with defining school leadership and then turning to focus on the origins of school leadership, the characteristics, skills, practices, and paradigms of effective school leaders, and then concludes with a review of what it means to lead an effective school with successful students. Chapter Three discusses and establishes the research methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter Four presents the findings from the multiple case studies conducted to collect the data for this study. Chapter Five presents a discussion of the data collected, conclusions recognized by the researcher, and recommendations for further study.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presents an overview of a study that identifies, examines, and analyzes
what effective high school leaders actually do to implement their leadership practices. This introductory chapter includes the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the research methodology, the significance of the study, limitations and delimitations, and assumptions associated with the study. This study now turns to the scholarly literature in the field of school leadership and how these school leaders impact effective school operations and student achievement. The literature review also examines perspectives on school leadership; the traits, styles, characteristics, and strategies of good school leaders; and lays the foundation for the study of what effective high school principals actually do to positively affect school success and student academic achievement.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Effective school leaders believe that students come first. They believe in meeting the instructional needs of their students. Effective school leaders are proactive (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008); they initiate action, anticipate and recognize the changes in their environment that will affect their schools and challenge the status quo—the established way of operating—if it interferes with the realization of their school’s vision. Deal & Peterson (1994) argue that effective school leaders must be well-organized managers, as well as artistic and passionate in their practice of school leadership. Starratt (1995) says school leaders must wear two hats—those of leader and administrator. As school leaders, principals nurture the vision that expresses the school’s core values; as administrators, they develop the structure and policies that institutionalize the vision (Williams, 2006).

Scratch the surface of an excellent school and you are likely to find an excellent principal. Peer into a failing school and you will find weak leadership. Capable school leaders are essential for high-quality education (Zigarelli, 1996). Principals with strong leadership skills and a willingness to participate actively in the classroom create better schools (Williams, 2006). School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning and acts as a catalyst without which other good things are not likely to happen (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). And because school leadership matters, an effective school leader can make a positive difference in the overall success of the students, teachers, and school that s/he leads (Lambert, 2006).

This review of the scholarly literature begins with defining school leadership, then
presents an overview of the classical and neo-classical theories of organizational leadership, and then looks at the predominant school leadership paradigms that currently inform the practices of most school leaders. The remaining sections of this literature review focus on school leadership practices and strategies, the role school leaders play in shaping and defining school culture, and concludes with what it means to have an effective school and successful students.

Schools have always needed strong leadership. But in recent years, expectations of “strong” leaders have changed significantly, as has the level of attention focused on which principals are and are not meeting them. As Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) point out, “the role of principal has swelled to include a staggering array of professional tasks and competencies” (p. 4). Effective school leaders are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, and facility managers. In addition, school leaders are expected to serve the often conflicting needs and interests of many stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, district office officials, and state and federal agencies (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 4).

Any investigation of leadership, and school leadership practices, must begin with a definition of leadership as it applies to the study. There are as many definitions of leadership as there are leadership styles, but basic leadership can be defined as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 186), and “the use of non-coercive influence to direct and coordinate the activities of the members of an organized group toward the accomplishment of group objectives” (Jago, 1982, p. 315). Leithwood and Riehl (2005) define school leadership as “the work of mobilizing and influencing others to articulate and achieve the school’s shared intentions and
goals” (p. 14). School leadership can be accomplished by principals, teachers, or even students. The formal leaders of a school are bona fide leaders only to the extent that they fulfill their defined roles. School leadership functions may be carried out in many different ways, depending on the individual leader, the context, and the nature of the goals being pursued (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Becoming a high school principal is a new and different type of leadership challenge. The nature of the job is different. The expectations for, and the responsibilities of, the school leader are different, regardless the size of the school.

**Defining School Leadership**

The concept and definition of school leadership has been a topic of debate among scholars for many years. Simple concepts are easily defined but complex concepts such as leadership must be defined more vaguely (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Defining the practice of leadership is difficult because it involves a multitude of follower interactions which take place in many different types of organizations and environments (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Stewart, 2006). Yukl (2006) states that the concept of leadership has fostered many definitions, with no one definition becoming universal because the concept of leadership is so arbitrary and subjective.

The definitions for school leadership have gone through multiple iterations over the past century. Principals, beginning in the 1920s and continuing to the 1960s, were perceived as administrative managers who supervised the day-to-day aspects of the school (Hallinger, 1992). Principals in the 1960s and 1970s began to become more involved in the management of programs, especially federally funded programs such as special education and bilingual education, which, in turn, shifted part of the principal’s role toward curriculum reform (Hallinger, 1992). This new role pushed principals from being school leaders who maintained
the status quo during the 1920s to the 1960s to agents for school change in the 1960s and 1970s (Hallinger, 1992). Principals in the 1960s and 1970s were concerned with making changes but not necessarily about the effectiveness of change (Hallinger, 1992). Regardless of the outcomes, the shift toward being a change agent and being more involved in curriculum issues within the school laid the groundwork for the instructional leadership movement.

Though leadership is difficult to define, three major areas common to most definitions have been identified. The first is that leadership is based on organizational improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Leaders are people within an organization attempting to improve the organization in some way. Another commonality in leadership definitions is about direction-setting within the organization (Jacobs & Jaques, 1990; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Yukl, 2006). Direction-setting is linked to organizational improvement because for leaders to improve an organization they must have a direction toward which they are taking the organization. Without this direction, organizational improvement is not likely to occur. The final commonality to leadership definitions is the importance of leader influence (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Yukl, 2006). Influence is important regardless of who is exerting it, how much is exerted, the purpose of exerting it, or its outcome (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Leaders intentionally exert influence on organizational members in order to affect the organization (Yukl, 2006). Yukl’s (2006) definition of leadership encompasses these three commonalities into one definition: “Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 8). Yukl fails to mention, however, the role and impact of followers in his definition of leadership, a concept common to other leadership definitions.
Burns (1978) explains the interconnectedness of leaders and followers when he describes the nature of leadership. Other scholars (Meindl, 1995; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995) explain this notion further by describing the significance of the relationships created between leaders and followers. These relationships are critical because leadership cannot and does not occur without followers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Meindl, 1995).

Other scholars (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Meindl, 1995) take the idea of a follower’s place in leadership even further when they explain how a follower’s perception is the key to leadership. This notion is justified because individuals’ perceptions are their reality (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Individuals who perceive a person as a leader are more likely to become followers and therefore allow themselves to be influenced by this leader (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996).

Leaders, knowing this information, need to focus on the perceptions of followers if they are going to be effective (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Followers are influenced not only by their own perception of the leader, but also by the perception of the leader as held by other organizational members (Meindl, 1995). Knowing the importance of the perceptions of organizational members as individuals and collectively means leaders must interact in positive ways so followers work toward reaching organizational goals (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). Leaders could find themselves without followers, making them unable to accomplish anything, if they do not take into account the perceptions of others (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). The growing focus on the impact of followers has led to a less leader-centric view of leadership in many recent leadership models (Marks & Printy, 2003; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).
**Classical and neo-classical organizational leadership theories**

Classical and neo-classical theories of organizational leadership include: being able to develop a vision and to inspire others to follow; continuing efforts to motivate and inspire others to succeed through their own efforts; and listening to, as well as, being available and visible to those one would lead (Fayol, 1916; Gulick, 1937; Selznick, 1948). These principles have guided the leadership practices of the effective school principal and have resulted in effective, successful, and systemic school operations. Organic systems will try to reshape themselves to address new problems and to tackle unforeseen contingencies. These systems are fluid organizations that can facilitate flexibility, adaptation, and job redefinition (Burns & Stalker, 1961). But probably most importantly, as it relates to the faculty and staff that operate a school, Burns and Stalker argue that the people in organic organizations are personally and actively committed beyond what is normally expected, or required of them (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Organizational leadership theories and theorists have suggested that the leadership practices that drive systemic change include leaders who can lead by example, who can get the right people in the right place, and who will work to ensure that the people within the organization are involved in originating and carrying out plans for the organization (Collins, 2006; Fayol, 1916; Gulick, 1937; Taylor, 1911). A leader who can make decisions and effectively direct people; who is able to coordinate the various parts of the work to be done; who continuously makes efforts to motivate and inspire others to succeed through their own efforts; who is available, visible, and listens to those s/he would lead; and who can develop and carry out a plan of action is the integral driver of the leadership support element and the catalyst for systemic improvement (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2011; Fayol, 1916; Gulick, 1937; Selznick, 1948).
The overall organization of the school, and the district, is reflected in many ways by the organizational model developed in Henry Mintzberg’s work, *The Structure of Organizations: A Synthesis of the Research* (1979), wherein he describes an organizational model of five basic parts: A strategic apex, a middle line, and an operating core that are bound together by a support staff and a technostructure (Mintzberg, 1979). The Mintzberg model places the top management in the strategic apex of the organization, which in the context of most school districts would be the superintendent. But, if one considers only the organizational structure of the high school, the school principal occupies this spot. Mintzberg places middle managers in the middle line position of his model. In schools, teachers would occupy this position. Continuing down on Mintzberg’s organization chart, the operating core is responsible for organizational operations and operational process. In most schools the students and parents of the school occupy this position and are directly responsible to ensure that the actual work (learning) of the school is accomplished. Mintzberg describes the technostructure and support staff as outside support systems that hold the organization together and are responsible for designing systems and processes for the organization (Mintzberg, 1979). In schools, these capacities are filled by personnel in the central office and by support staff at the school. Mintzberg’s model provides a good description of the organizational structure found in many schools.

“If subdivision of work is inescapable, coordination becomes mandatory” (Gulick, 1937, p. 5), is the foundation for the need of organizational leadership. If work is to be organized—planned, divided, assigned, monitored, and assessed—then there must be a central figure to direct these organizational functions—the manager (Fayol, 1916; Gulick, 1937; Taylor, 1911). The manager must be a leader who can make decisions and effectively direct people; who is able to coordinate the various parts of the work to be done; who continuously makes efforts to
motivate and inspire others to succeed through their own efforts; and who is available, visible, and listens to those he or she would lead (Fayol, 1916; Gulick, 1937; Selznick, 1948).

For the neo-classic theorists, effective leaders foster cooperation; that is, they promote the idea that when members of an organization work together, they can accomplish far more than individuals working alone (Barnard, 1938). Leaders must offer tangible incentives of monetary and material inducements, personal opportunities for distinction, and desirable work conditions to obtain the cooperation in meeting the goals of the organization. If the organization cannot afford adequate incentives, the leader must be able to exercise adequate forms of persuasion in order to secure the cooperation of individuals within the organization (Barnard, 1938; Selznick, 1948). The neo-classicists also describe the organizational leader as the source of stability for the lines of authority and communication, the stability for informal relations within the organization, and as the source for maintaining the unity of outlook and continuity of policy with respect to the meaning and role of the organization (Selznick, 1949).

As the role of the organizational leader expanded beyond command and control functions, human resource theorists became interested in the leader’s interaction with personnel in the organization, and the focus for leadership became the “situational” leader and how leadership should work to motivate personnel. Follett (1926) advised leaders to “depersonalize” the giving of orders in order to exercise a more participatory and situational leadership style that would enable the leader and workers to cooperate in the assessment of the circumstances and to work together to decide how to resolve the situation (Follett, 1926). McGregor (1957) reminds leaders that subordinates respond better to leadership that is not focused on the external control of their behavior, but to leadership that gives workers more freedom to direct their own activities, delegates responsibility for the work to be accomplished, and allows more
participative and consultative opportunities for workers to direct their energies towards the accomplishment of organizational objectives (Bernard, 1938; McGregor, 1957). The changing relationship between leaders and those that they would lead became more pronounced as the “modern” theorists turned their attention to organizational structure.

The “organic” organizational model proposed by “modern” organizational structural theorists, such as Burns and Stalker (1961) and Mintzberg (1979), suggested that an “organic” structure that was less rigid, and had more inter-connected relationships than the “mechanistic” organizations of the past, and would encourage a more participatory work environment that is more supportive of innovation (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Mintzberg, 1979). They posited that organic systems will try to reshape themselves to address new problems and to tackle unforeseen contingencies. They further characterize organic systems as fluid organizations that can facilitate flexibility, adaptation, and job redefinition and that the people in organic organizations are personally and actively committed beyond what is normally expected or required of them (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Mintzberg, 1979).

Paradigms of School Leadership

The primary responsibility of a school leader is two-fold: to ensure that students are provided with a top-quality educational program and teachers have all of the resources necessary to deliver this program. The educational leader sets the stage for excellence by communicating a vision to the staff, students, and parents in such a way that it becomes a common vision (Barnard, 1938; Cert & March, 1959; Follett, 1926; McGregor, 1957). School-site leaders must set high standards and expectations for staff and students and hold them [staff and students] accountable for all they do, or fail to do (Fayol, 1916; Gulick, 1937). For many school leaders, their basic leadership philosophy can be summed up as: Lead by example (Fayol, 1916). While
this may seem to be a very simple philosophy, it has enabled many school leaders to be successful and effective leaders in very diverse school leadership situations. Leading by example has helped many school principals to be the firm, fair, and consistent leader called for in many educational studies. This philosophy has also helped many school leaders to be able to define and describe the missions of the schools they lead; to motivate the people who work with them to develop a shared vision, and to encourage them to realize the mission (Fayol, 1916; Gulick, 1937; Selznick, 1948). As school leaders, many principals have been able to learn, develop, and put into practice the innovation, flexibility, creativity, problem solving skills, intellectual capacity, and the ability to communicate effectively that are the essential skills of the effective school leader (Barnard, 1938; Fayol, 1916; Follett, 1926; Gulick, 1937; McGregor, 1957; Selznick, 1948; Taylor, 1911).

A school-site leader must be able to think of things in different ways, apply new ways of thinking to old situations, and encourage his/her staff to be creative and to think about different ways to accomplish a task (Taylor, 1911). Successful school leaders share a common core of essential school leadership practices that lead directly and indirectly to higher student achievement and more successful schools (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). These practices are drawn from the elements of the instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership models that apply directly to school leadership.

Instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership have been the predominant leadership models that have guided the school leadership practices of principals, at all levels, for more than 40 years. The leadership literature of the 1970’s, 1980’s, and 1990’s focused on effective leaders and revisited personal attributes as determinants of
leadership abilities (Leithwood, & Duke, 1998). This research has primarily contributed to understanding the impact of personal characteristics and individual behaviors of effective leaders and their role in successful school leadership. The studies differentiated between leaders and managers and introduced “vision” as a new leadership characteristic. Along with having vision, effective leaders are said to facilitate the development of a shared vision and value the human resources of their organizations (Mendez-Morse, 1992).

This mode of shared instructional leadership provides for learning and working with other teachers, students, and parents to improve instructional quality (Marks & Printy, 2003). Hallinger (1989) further states that it is the principal’s responsibility to create a strong school culture, enabling teachers to collaborate with them in redesigning the instructional program so that all students can learn. Edmonds (1979) cited the characteristics of an effective school leader as: Competent to lead in the development of a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus; able to establish and maintain an orderly and safe school climate that is conducive to teaching and learning; adept at putting into place and sustaining high teacher expectations for students; and skilled in the development and implementation of program evaluations based on varied assessment measures of student achievement.

Instructional leadership of the 1980s was principal-centered, often accompanied by images of heroic leaders single-handedly keeping the school on track (Marks and Printy, 2003). Glickman (1985) and Pajak (1989) conceptualized what responsibilities and activities were broadly referred to as instructional leadership. Glickman (1985) defined the five primary tasks of instructional leadership as being: Providing direct assistance to teachers, group development, staff development, curriculum development, and action research. Pajak’s research on what functions should be a part of instructional leadership generated a similar list of tasks, but also
included planning, organizing, facilitating change, and motivating staff.

Hanny (1987) states that “effective principals are expected to be effective instructional leaders … the principal must be knowledgeable about curriculum development, teacher and instructional effectiveness, clinical supervision, staff development and teacher evaluation” (p. 209). Bryce (1983) and Fullan (1991) agree with this holistic view of the principal’s leadership. However, Fullan expands this holistic definition of leadership to be an active, collaborative form of leadership where the principal works “with teachers to shape the school as a workplace in relation to shared goals, teacher’s collaboration, teacher learning opportunities, teacher certainty, teacher commitment, and student learning” (p. 161).

This collaborative nature of leadership is often stressed in the literature. Bernd (1992) states that “increased teacher involvement in school decisions are effective tools for focusing the staff on student outcomes” (p. 68). Hallinger (1989) writes of leadership teams at the secondary level to help carry out the critical functions of curriculum and instructional coordination and supervision. Cooper (1989) and Marks and Printy (2003) assert that schools need to create models of shared leadership which incorporate the talents and energy of principals, teachers, students, and parents.

The idea of transformational leadership was first developed by James McGregor Burns in 1978 and later extended by Bernard Bass and others (Williams, 2006). The studies conducted by Burns and Bass were based on the work of political leaders, Army officers, and business executives. The impact of transformational leadership on education, and how it would affect schools, is discussed in Bass’1998 book, *Transformational Leadership—Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact*. There have been a number of studies of transformational leadership in schools, and their findings point to similarities in how this leadership is practiced, whether it is in
a school setting or in the business environment (Leithwood, 1992).

Bass (1985, 1998) saw the transformational leader as one who motivated followers to do more than they were originally expected to do. “The transformational leader induces additional effort by further sharply increasing subordinate confidence and by elevating the value of outcomes for the subordinate” (Bass, 1985, p. 22). According to Bass, such a transformation can be achieved in any one of three interrelated ways:

1. By raising our level of awareness, our level of consciousness about the importance and value of designed outcomes, and ways of reaching them;
2. By getting us to transcend our own self-interest for the sake of the team, organization, or larger polity;
3. By altering our need level on Maslow’s hierarchy or expand our portfolio of needs and wants. (p. 20)

According to Avolio and Bass (1987), transformational leaders exhibit these three leadership attributes: charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Charisma describes leaders who instill pride, faith, and respect; have a gift for seeing what is really important; and have a sense of mission (or vision) which is effectively articulated. Individualized consideration is representative of leaders who delegate projects to stimulate and create learning experiences; pay personal attention to followers’ needs, especially those who seem neglected; and treat each follower with respect and as an individual. Intellectual stimulation is leadership that provides ideas, which result in a rethinking of old ways, and enables followers to look at problems from many angles and resolve problems that were at a standstill (Avolio & Bass, 1987).

Northouse (1997) described a fourth leadership attribute that transformational leaders
exhibit—that of inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation is descriptive of a leader who inspires followers to be committed to and share the vision in the organization. This is achieved through the use of symbols and emotional appeals to followers that will focus their attention on the goals of the organization. The leader, thus, “encourages followers to transcend their own self interests in order to pursue organizational goals” (pp. 135-156).

Marks and Printy (2003) found that “transformational leadership is a necessary but insufficient condition of instructional leadership,” (p. 370) but when transformational and instructional leadership practices are integrated, there is a substantial, positive influence on school performance and the achievement of students. They also found that effective school leaders believe students come first, and that school leaders believe in meeting the instructional needs of the students (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) make seven “strong” claims about successful school leadership related to the transformational leader. They are:

1. School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.
2. Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.
3. The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices—not the practices themselves—demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.
4. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.
5. School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.
6. Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.
7. A small handful of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness. (pp. 27-28)

The elucidation of these “claims” can help to make clear the effort of school principals as they put into practice the strategies that are unique to school leaders.

Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, and Brown (2010) offer an updated version of Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008). Day et al. advance ten “claims” about school leadership that include:

1. Headteachers (principals) are the main source of leadership in their schools.
2. There are eight key dimensions of successful leadership.
3. Headteachers’ values are the key components in their success.
4. Successful heads use the same basic leadership practices, but there is no single model for achieving success.
5. Differences in context affect the nature, direction, and pace of leadership actions.
6. Heads contribute to student learning and achievement through a combination and accumulation of strategies and actions—making judgments, restructuring, use of data.
7. There are three broad phases of leadership success.
8. Heads grow and secure success by layering leadership strategies and actions.
9. Successful heads distribute leadership progressively.
10. The successful distribution of leadership depends on the establishment of trust. (p. 3)

While there is some overlap with Leithwood, Hopkins, and Harris (2008), Day, et al., (2010) introduces some essential detail in two areas: eight dimensions of successful leadership and three broad phases of leadership success.
Figure 2.1. Analytical framework suggesting the movement of leadership practices from theory to what school leaders actually do to implement their leadership practices. Adapted from “10 Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership,” by C. Day, P. Sammons, D. Hopkins, A. Harris, K. Leithwood, Q. Gu, and E. Brown, 2010. Professional development presentation published by: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services, p. 4. Copyright 2010 by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services.
The eight dimensions of successful school leaders include: (1) defining their values and vision to raise expectations, set direction, and build trust; (2) reshaping the conditions for teaching and learning; (3) restructuring parts of the organization and redesigning leadership roles and responsibilities; (4) enriching the curriculum; (5) enhancing teacher quality; (6) enhancing the quality of teaching and learning; (7) building collaboration internally; and (8), building strong relationships outside the school community (Day, et al., 2010, p. 4). When the three phases of school leadership success: i.e., foundational phase, developmental phase, and enrichment phase are added to the attributes of effective school leadership, we begin to move beyond the esoteric ideals to a more concrete understanding of what school leaders must affect in order to provide effective school leadership. The eight dimensions of leadership and the phases of school leadership offered in the research by Day et al. (2010), suggests a framework by which the data collected in this study may be analyzed and interpreted (Figure 2.1).

**School leadership practices and strategies**

As school leaders, principals nurture the vision that expresses the school’s core values; as administrators they develop the structure and policies that institutionalize the vision. Recent research has suggested that most successful school leaders share a common set of practices and strategies (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). These practices and strategies are the extensions of four core assumptions about school leadership, i.e., that school leaders: (1) build a vision for their schools and set the school’s direction (Transformational/Transactional); (2) make it a priority to understand and develop the people working for them (Transformational); (3) are proactive at redesigning their school organizations (Transformational); and (4) actively manage the academic and instructional programs of their schools (Instructional) (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). These school
leadership practices have also been shown to have direct and indirect positive impact on student achievement and school success (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

Every school principal is faced with the task of finding the best way to organize his or her school/staff so that it is most conducive to a high level of student success. School leaders choose to employ many different styles of influence in their respective organizations. In fact, every principal’s leadership style and the set of leadership tools he or she has in their educational toolbox can have an effect on the overall school environment and student achievement. A substantial body of research exists in the area of school leadership. Principals must make choices as to which school leadership practices they think are most important to make use of when it comes to ensuring the effectiveness of the educational program of their school.

Leadership traits and practices have been examined by researchers from various perspectives (Bryce, 1983; Bass, 1985; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Mendez-Morse, 1992; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). These analyses of school leadership differentiated between leader and follower characteristics, and finding that no single trait or combination of practices fully explained a school leader’s effectiveness, researchers then began to examine what influence an individual leader’s experience with the application of leadership skills had on student achievement and school success (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

School leadership practices that spring from the first of the four core assumptions about school leaders—developing a vision for the school, and setting the school’s direction—include: Building a shared vision among all of the school’s stakeholders, fostering the acceptance of group goals, and the setting and demonstration of high expectations for students, faculty, and administration (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). To identify
and articulate the school’s vision, the school leader must be a skilled and effective communicator, make clear what the vision holds for creating a more effective school, and establish school-wide responsibility for attaining the shared vision. Once the vision is clearly articulated and accepted, the school leader must demonstrate commitment to effecting the changes necessary and explicitly communicate the expectations required for success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).

Schlechty (2000) states that one of the greatest barriers to school reform is the lack of a clear vision. Excellent schools have a clear vision (Sergiovanni, 1984), whereas ineffective schools lack one (Matthews & Sammons, 2005). A vital school leadership practice for successful schools is for school leaders to create and communicate this vision (Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Hallinger and Heck (2002) describe vision as the moral and spiritual values which underlie a leader’s view of the world and provide the inspiration for the leader’s life work. The adoption of a school vision is meant to create a fundamental sense of purpose and guide the activities of a school over a number of years (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Successful leaders must be able to create a vision which others will follow or facilitate the collaborative creation of a vision (á Campo, 1993; Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 1994). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) believe creating a vision through a collaborative process is far more beneficial for the school because more individuals will support an idea they helped create. The school vision also needs to be student-centered to help unite the faculty (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Lambert, 2006; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). It is important to periodically revise the vision because it guides the direction of the ever-evolving organization (Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Lambert, 2006; Senge, 1990). Developing and
articulating a vision is imperative to the establishment of the direction for a successful school, but goals must also be set to realize this school vision (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Goals are more precise, whereas the vision is more overarching (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Goal-setting can be done by the principal or through a collaborative process, which encourages organizational members to be more invested in the goals set by the school (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The gap between current practices and desired practices in a school are identified when schools create goals (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Goals must be achievable and are usually quantifiable so there is more accountability (Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). The implementation of both a vision and goals helps increase student achievement by setting a consistent direction for the school (Stolp, 1994). School leaders can help faculty, staff, and students accomplish school goals by setting high expectations (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). High expectations help motivate teachers and students to work toward goal-attainment by comparing current performance to future success (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). A school leader must be willing to challenge and change the school culture so the vision will be fulfilled (Bass, 1998). A positive culture and an environment that is conducive to learning are fundamental to fulfilling the school vision (Deal & Peterson, 1999). A strong and positive school culture also helps to ease the adjustment between current practices and future goals, which is essential for goal achievement (Sergiovanni, 1984). A strong and positive school culture plays a vital role to enable the school leader to set the direction for his school (á Campo, 1993).

The second of the four core assumptions for effective school leadership is that school leaders make it a priority to understand and develop the people working for them. The practices
underlying this assumption are that school leaders seek to provide individualized support for the professional development of staff; encourage the intellectual stimulation and development of teachers; and lead by example (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). The professional development of the faculty and staff leads to an expansion of knowledge about the school’s “technical core”—teaching and learning. Meaningful professional development ensures continued intellectual stimulation and creates opportunities for in-depth conversations—among faculty and staff—about effective teaching and schooling practices. School leaders must take a personal interest in supporting their staff’s professional growth and must set the example, not be an example (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).

People are the organization (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Effective school improvement comes from the improvement of the people who are members of the organization (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). It is a vital practice of effective school leaders to create and share knowledge in order that the faculty and staff of the school are engaged in on-going professional development (Day, 2000; Fullan, 2002). Intellectual stimulation can be used to provide ideas that result in a rethinking of old ways, enables followers to look at problems from many angles, resolve problems that were at a standstill and help promote intelligence, rationality, and problem solving skills among the faculty and staff (Bass, 1998). Effective schools must be able to solve problems, and the intellectual improvement of faculty and staff empowers them to look at old problems in new ways and to support the consideration and solution of complex issues that can arise during school improvement initiatives (Bass, 1998; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). Professional development is another way to improve the problem solving capacities of teachers (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Intellectual stimulation through professional development leads to collaboration and the promotion of
collective action to reach school goals (Poplin, 1992).

Another avenue to improve a school is for the leader to provide individualized support to faculty members (Hay, 2006). School leaders must know their organizational members well to be successful at providing individualized support (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Individualized support can be provided in a variety of ways including giving personal attention to teachers (Bass, 1998), assisting individuals when they are struggling personally or professionally (Bass, 1998), and showing concern about staff members’ needs and feelings (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). A principal is able to create greater motivation by supporting teachers emotionally and professionally (á Campo, 1993; Bass, 1998). Direct contact by the principal provides personal motivation, thus creating a feeling of support for the necessary work of successful school change (Brown, 1993; Hallinger & Heck, 1999).

A final means to develop people within an organization is through the modeling of behavior. Modeling behavior allows the principal to lead by example; demonstrating how one should act in order to facilitate the accomplishment of the school vision and goals (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). While reflected in the school vision, the principal’s beliefs must also be supported by action (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Schlechty, 2000). It is essential that the organization’s members see actions taken by the principal to model behaviors that are in line with the school’s vision (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Developing people in the organization can have an overarching effect on the culture of the school (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Norris, 1994; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Principals who meet the needs of their staff members socially and emotionally, encourage them to take risks, and help them grow professionally, help change the culture of their schools (Norris, 1994). Modeling of appropriate behaviors by the principal can also have a positive effect on shaping the
According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), the third of the four core assumptions about effective school leaders is that they are proactive when they recognized that a redesign of their school organizations may be necessary. The practices that provide evidence of this core assumption include: Building collaborative school cultures, recognizing the need for restructuring in the school organization, and building productive relations with parents and other stakeholders as well as working to connect the school to the community. School leaders influence their school’s culture through the development of shared standards, values, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, customs, and a trusting and caring school environment. Restructuring of the school’s schedule, changes in staff assignments and responsibilities, alteration of routine procedures, and the reassessment of technology and instructional material requirements all play a part in enhancing the school’s performance. School leaders are receptive to suggestions for effective and efficient changes, no matter the source (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).

Leithwood and his colleagues added the category of redesigning the organization to transformational school leadership theory in the late 1990s. Numerous scholars (Barnett, McCormick, & Conners, 2001; Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Stewart, 2006) described the effect a transformational leader has on a school culture. Leaders who impact school culture are able to foster change (Huber & West, 2002). Principal actions, including creating a vision and modeling behavior, impact the culture of the school (Barnett & McCormick, & Conners, 2001). The school culture creates the conditions which allow for the accomplishing of school-wide goals (Richards & Engle, 1986). Shared decision-making and community relations impact school culture; vision building, goal setting, high performance expectations, intellectual stimulation, individualized support, and modeling also have a strong influence (á Campo, 1993; Leithwood &
Jantzi, 2006). Shared decision-making becomes a part of the school as the principal builds consensus for school reform (Silins & Mulford, 2002). Structures and processes, both formal and informal, draw on the strengths of teachers and allow for shared decision-making to occur within a school (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Shared decision-making becomes part of the culture, promoting increased teacher motivation and commitment to the school vision (á Campo, 1993; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). The final piece of the Leithwood and colleagues’ (2006) definition of school transformational leadership is building productive relationships with families and communities. A principal must be connected to the community because what is happening outside of the school impacts the performance of students (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Connecting to the wider environment allows the school to use new ideas from the community and helps resources flow into the school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). It is no longer possible for schools to ignore the impact the family and community have on the school (Fullan, 2002). Schools must build relationships with outside stakeholders to ensure school change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

The fourth core assumption about effective school leaders is that they actively manage the academic and instructional programs of their schools (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). The essential school leadership practices connected to this assumption are: Careful consideration of school staffing decisions, positive support for teachers, ensuring uninterrupted classroom instructional time for students and teachers, and maintaining a careful balance of school programs and extra-curricular activities. Collins (2001) found that effective leaders “first got the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats, and only then did they figure out where to drive the bus” (p. 13). An effective school leader will build a team of teachers dedicated to the school’s instructional program, and then provide them
with the necessary support to ensure they remain with the school, contributing to the school’s vision for success.

The shift toward instructional leadership started in the 1980s and was a response to the public’s desire that schools raise standards and improve the academic performance of students (Hallinger, 1992; Stewart, 2006). The principal who was an instructional leader became the primary source of educational expertise in the building (Hallinger, 1992; Marks & Printy, 2003). The principal became responsible for managing the school and improving the teaching and learning in the building (Leithwood, 1994). The nature of instructional leadership was typically top-down because most principals set school goals (Hallinger, 1992; Marks & Printy, 2003). The principal “led” the faculty toward attainment of the goals as a means to school improvement. According to Marks and Printy (2003) however, the practices which defined an instructional leader were not achieved. Educational researchers have noted reasons and limitations of instructional leadership which help explain this failure to change schools.

One major area of concern for scholars is the top-down nature of instructional leadership. Implementing school improvements is a complex and diffuse process, so top-down leadership is not an effective mechanism to accomplish school change (Hallinger, 1992). The school improvement process is particularly difficult in secondary schools because the many specialized subject areas mean the principal lacks the curricular knowledge to impact the teaching and learning (Leithwood, 1994). Another flaw in instructional leadership is that sometimes great leaders are not always great classroom teachers (Liontos, 1992). The principal who is an instructional leader must have a solid grounding in teaching and learning (Liontos, 1992). Some leaders do not have a vast knowledge base about teaching and learning but are still able to improve schools (Liontos, 1992). In addition to these flaws in instructional leadership, the top-
down approach of this leadership style did not blend well with the shift in the 1980s toward schools becoming more democratic institutions (Marks & Printy, 2003; Stewart, 2006).

These issues with instructional leadership provided a type of foundational grounding for one of today’s more prevalent perspectives on leadership. That theory is transformational leadership. Leithwood (1992) predicted that transformational leadership would subsume instructional leadership as the dominant leadership philosophy in schools during the 1990s. Hallinger verified this prediction in his writings in 2003. One of the major driving forces in the rise of transformational leadership was its ability to assist principals in coping with unplanned actions which are necessary for school reform (Hallinger, 1992).

Of course, effective school leaders will not demonstrate all of these essential practices every day, and the manner in which they employ these practices will vary from school to school (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Because successful school leaders also share a small number of personal traits, that may explain how they are able to effectively apply the essential leadership practices identified by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), Marks and Printy (2003), and Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008). Among the personal traits shared by successful school leaders are: Flexible thinking, persistence, resilience, and optimism (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins explain, “Such traits help explain why successful leaders facing daunting conditions are often able to push forward when there is little reason to expect progress” (p. 36).

School Leaders and School Culture

Over the last three centuries, American public schools have developed their own stable organizational culture, which has resisted change (Parish & Aquila, 1996). Every school has a unique culture (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Scholars (Maher, Lucas, & Valentine,
2001; Saphier & King, 1985) state a school’s culture is the foundation for successful school improvement. The concept of school culture has been borrowed from the field of anthropology (Smircich, 1983). There is no agreed upon definition of culture in this field of study (Smircich, 1983). The definition of culture is also unclear in the field of education (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Gruenert, 2000; Gruenert, 2005). The definitions of culture vary, but some of the following words have been used to describe the phenomenon: assumptions, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, ceremonies, covenants, dress, expectations, fairy tales, heroes, history, ideology, knowledge, language, laws, myths, norms, practices, purpose, rewards, rituals, stores, structure, symbols, traditions, and values in a school (see, e.g., Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1997b; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Norris, 1994; Peterson & Deal, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1984; Stolp, 1994).

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) and á Campo (1993) explain that no matter what the definition of culture, a culture exists as a natural by-product of people working together. The concept of culture as a product is also part of Bolman and Deal’s (2003) definition; culture is a product and a process (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Culture is a product because it has been produced by those previously in the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Culture is a process because it is being renewed and recreated as new members enter the culture and make the old ways their own (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The impact of new organizational members on a school’s existing culture means a school’s culture is not static (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998). In his study of culture, Schein (1992) created three levels of analysis for culture. Each level is based upon how visible the culture is to observers (Schein, 1992). The lowest level of culture, artifacts, is easily visible while the highest level, basic assumptions, is difficult to recognize by those inside and outside the organization (Schein, 1992).
Schein’s (1992) first level of culture is the artifacts of the organization. Artifacts are things a person sees, hears, and feels. Schein cautions that this level is easy to see but should not be the sole criterion for analyzing an organizational culture because an individual’s personal interpretation of artifacts will affect the findings (Schein, 1992). The second level of culture according to Schein (1992) is espoused values. These are the vital values of the organization that have been established and discussed as being part of the organization’s past and present success (Schein, 1992). Espoused values do not have to be in line with Schein’s (1992) final level of cultural analysis, basic assumptions. It is far more likely, however, that the organizational values that are put into action, not just assumed, are in line with the basic assumptions of the organization (Schein, 1992). Basic assumptions are the actions which are taken for granted and usually not confronted or debated within the organization (Schein, 1992). If this level of the culture is changed it will create anxiety which must be addressed if a change is to become permanent (Schein, 1992). Basic assumptions are such an integral part of culture that individuals who do not believe in these basic assumptions are considered outsiders (Schein, 1992). Deal and Kennedy (1982) made their definition of culture concise, stating it as “the way we do things around here” (p. 4). Other scholars have taken this concise approach but included how members of the organization interact with each other (Gruenert, 2000). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) describe culture in a school as the guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations evident in the way a school operates.

Scholars have not only disagreed about the meaning of culture, but also about the different types of school culture. Leithwood (1992) and Brown (1993) created a dichotomous view of school culture by describing it as being either rigid and top-down with teachers working in isolation or as being collaborative, where members work together to create change. Hopkins,
Ainscow, and West (1994) expand on this dichotomous view with four categories including stuck, wandering, promenading, or moving. Stuck schools are low achieving and are characterized by teacher isolation and blame being placed on external stakeholders (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994). Wandering schools are those which are experiencing too many innovations, creating fragmentation and a lack of overall direction for the school (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994). Promenading schools are living in their past achievements and not changing quickly and in any major way (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994). The final type of school, according to Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994), is a moving school where there is a healthy balance of change and stability as the school improves. No matter how culture is described or appears in schools, the culture of a school impacts educational stakeholders (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Peterson & Deal, 2002). People learn from the culture how to act and often times what to feel and think (Gruenert, 2000; Peterson & Deal, 2002; Stolp, 1994). A negative culture guides people in the wrong direction and puts strong pressure on organizational members to conform (Kilman, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986). The presence of a weak culture may be due to the lack of a transformational leader (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998). Literature reviews find principals affect school culture which in turn effects student achievement (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Research findings support the notion that the presence of a transformational leader and a strong school culture positively impact student achievement (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Lucas & Valentine, 2002). The findings from studies investigating school culture’s impact on student achievement are consistent regardless of time, research design, instrumentation, and achievement variables. This variation suggests solid evidence of the strong connection between school culture and achievement. These relationships are consistently statistically significant that school culture can be used as a mediating variable
when research is focusing on the impact of leadership on student achievement (Maher, Lucas, & Valentine, 2001). The research suggests that a transformational leader can help create strong cultures which will improve the school. Conversely, weak cultures hinder school improvement and are characterized by teachers working to solve problems alone instead of collectively (Brown, 1993; Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998). While a weak and negative culture can divide a school, a strong and positive school culture can unite a school for change (Firestone & Louis, 1999). A positive culture guides the actions of members in the right direction and puts pressure to conform on those working against the culture (Kilman, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986). A common direction in a school leads to the overall growth of the organization (Norris, 1994). The journey to create a strong, positive culture is long, but worthy of the effort put forth by organizational members (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). School culture is one aspect of a school which a leader can influence (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Principals want to positively affect the culture of the school because it is a major factor in the school improvement process (Gruenert, 2000). However, principals can only impact the school culture if they understand it (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Saphier & King, 1985; Stolp, 1994). Effective leaders understand the culture so they are able to push for the necessary changes without destroying the school culture (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Large scale change usually requires changing cultures, which is a difficult task and cannot be completed by altering a few small things (Yukl, 2006). A weak school culture can be changed easier than a strong school culture (Kilman, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986). Most cultures, however, are deeply entrenched and to change them is to fundamentally alter the character and identity of the organization (Deal, 1990; Kilman, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986). A leader cannot accomplish change without the support of the teachers (Saphier & King, 1985). A critical mass of teachers is necessary to change a
culture. Enough organizational members must be willing to let go of the old and adopt the new if a change in culture is to become permanent (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Deal, 1990). A culture can change much more quickly if the members want a change to occur (Fiore, 2004). Cavanaugh and Dellar (1998) explain that if change is desired, it can occur in as little time as one year. Gruenert (2000) disagrees with this notion and believes fundamentally changing a culture takes five to seven years.

School success depends on culture (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Saphier & King, 1985), so culture cannot be ignored and must be a focus of the school (á Campo, 1993; Maher, Lucas, & Valentine, 2001). Numerous literature reviews (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Stolp, 1994; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) link strong, positive, collaborative school cultures and student achievement. School leaders need to see school culture and student achievement on the same end of the educational spectrum because they are complementary (Gruenert, 2005).

Schools in the United States are under tremendous pressure to improve. School leadership and school culture are research avenues which must be extensively explored with the anticipation that the findings will confirm or expand existing knowledge. A more thorough understanding of these factors can enhance existing practices and thus improve student achievement.

**Effective Schools and Successful Students**

There are many factors that influence student success. The strongest effects on student performance are shown to be present due to individual student characteristics such as family background, intellectual ability, and motivation for learning (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, & Weifield, 1966; Jencks, 1977; Van de Grift & Houtveen, 1999). Factors
related to the school environment account for a smaller percentage of the effects on student achievement, but are certainly worthy of study. The greatest effect on student achievement attributable to the school environment is found at the classroom level. High-level instructional techniques, a robust and focused curriculum, formal teacher training and certification in the areas of both academic content and pedagogy, and the use of active teaching strategies provide the strongest effects on student achievement (Edmonds, 1979; Marks & Printy, 2003; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2011). The next highest effect on achievement is attributed to school leadership. “School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning” (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, p. 27).

Student success must be the basis for all decisions made by school leaders. Until August of 2013, most schools in the state of Texas used information generated by the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) to assess student performance. School leaders who understand the importance of the AEIS have used this information to plan instruction, for remediation, and to prompt class structure. The information is also used to develop both the campus improvement plan and the budget. The AEIS was designed to bring a more varied look at the academic progress of students in Texas public schools. It is a great source of school-level data for just about any aspect of Texas public schools that a researcher might want to probe. It is from the data provided by the AEIS that I identified two of the high schools to include in this study.

The origins of the AEIS go back to 1984, when the Texas Legislature for the first time sought to emphasize student achievement as the basis for accountability. That year, House Bill 72 called for a system of accountability based primarily on student performance. Prior to that, accountability focused mostly on process. That is, districts were checked to see if their schools
had been following rules, regulations, and sound educational practices. Since the first year of the AEIS (1990-91), it has developed and evolved through legislation, recommendations of advisory committees and the commissioner of education, State Board of Education actions, and final development by Texas Education Agency (TEA) researchers and analysts.

The level of detail on the AEIS was possible thanks to the extensive amount of school data collected in Texas. Through its Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), the TEA annually collects a broad range of information on over 1,200 districts (including charters), more than 8,000 schools, 320,000+ educators, and over 4.9 million students. Additionally, testing contractors provide the agency with scores on standardized tests which are administered statewide (e.g., State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness [STAAR], Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills [TAKS], Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT], ACT college readiness assessment, Advanced Placement [AP], and International Baccalaureate [IB]). Other state agencies provide information such as tax rates and property values.

The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) pulled together a wide range of information on the performance of students in each school and district in Texas every year. This information was put into the annual AEIS reports (now TAPR – Texas Academic Performance Report), which are available each year in the fall. The performance indicators for 2011-12 were:

- Results of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)
- Exit-level TAKS Cumulative Passing Rates;
- Progress of Prior Year TAKS Failers;
- Attendance Rates;
- Annual Dropout Rates (grades 7-8 and grades 9-12);
- Completion Rates (4-year and 5-year longitudinal);
• College Readiness Indicators;
  o Completion of Advanced/Dual Enrollment Courses;
  o Completion of the Recommended High School Program or Distinguished Achievement Program;
  o Participation and Performance on Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) Examinations;
  o Texas Success Initiative (TSI) – Higher Education Readiness Component;
  o Participation and Performance on the College Admissions Tests (SAT and ACT), and
  o College-Ready Graduates.

Performance on each of the indicators compiled by the AEIS is shown disaggregated by ethnicity, special education, low income status, limited English proficient status (since 2002-03), at-risk status (since 2003-04, district, region, and state), and, beginning in 2008-09, by bilingual/ESL (district, region, and state, in section three of reports). The reports also provide extensive information on school and district staff, finances, programs and student demographics. The accountability rating is visible, as well, on every AEIS report; however, the AEIS report is not the "accountability report." No accountability ratings were released in 2012.

Unlike Texas, Montana does not have the comprehensive data collection and accountability system similar to that found in the AEIS report. Nor, do they have a high stakes testing regimen such as the TAKS or STAAR tests, which are required for high school graduation in Texas.

Instead, the State of Montana maintains several, distinct data bases on the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) website (www.opi.mt.gov). The OPI website maintains a
“Reports & Data” section, which provides current and archived resources and information about OPI's data collection tools, formats, and schedules. This section of the website also links to reports on student achievement, such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act Report Card and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The Reports and Data section provides demographic and financial information reported by school districts, data concerning graduation and dropout rates, “at-risk” student data, student discipline data, school staffing information, and school improvement plans. The “Curriculum & Instruction” section of the OPI website provides resources and information regarding academic standards, standardized assessments (including the Montana Criterion Referenced Test [CRT], the National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], and the ACT college readiness assessment), professional development, and best practices. It was from the Montana Office of Public Instruction website that I was able to collect data analogous to the data found on Texas’ AEIS and to identify the two Montana high schools that were used in this study (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2014).

Improving education was one of the cornerstones of Governor Bush’s platform for his initial run for the presidency. Borrowing the “leave no child behind” mantra from Marian Wright Edelman of the Children’s Defense Fund, George Bush promised to improve the nation’s schools if elected. He touted the improvement of education in Texas schools resulting from the use of high-stakes tests, especially the narrowing of the gap between the scores of white and minority students. After his successful election, President Bush used his influence to encourage Congress to pass educational reform legislation. A bipartisan effort resulted in The No Child Left Behind Act.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act is having a tremendous impact on public schools, particularly schools that utilize Title I funds. U.S. Department of Education Title I Director, Dr.
Caryl Burns stated the “Key requirements of the law are closing the achievement gaps, holding schools accountable for all students performing at a high level, and having qualified teachers in every classroom” (Shuford, 2004, p. 1). The 40th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (Bushaw & Gallup, 2008) found that the NCLB Act represents the greatest federal incursion into K-12 education to date. NCLB represents a major new departure from a long history of state- and local-based control over key education decisions.

According to Nichols and Berliner (2007), NCLB is the reason for the present spread of high-stakes testing. For the first time in history, the federal government has set requirements that beginning with the 2005-06 school year, all students be tested in math and reading annually in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in grades 9 through 12. Schools that meet the 37 required criteria are labeled as meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); those that do not are labeled Not Meeting AYP. AYP refers to the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year as they progress toward the ESEA goal of having all students reaching the proficient level on state tests by 2014. Thus, the federal government is mandating high-stakes standardized tests for all United States students (Nichols & Berliner, 2007).

Schools failing to meet AYP risk not receiving Title I funds and other sanctions. Before NCLB, many schools systems only concerned themselves with average scores; thus, gaps in achievement between ethnic, income and disability subgroups were of limited concern. As a result of NCLB, districts must pay attention to the achievement gaps of these subgroups. While the No Child Left Behind Act makes significant changes to raise academic standards, increase student testing and provide information to parents and communities, the law also imposes new sanctions on schools based on how students perform on state tests. While this Act may provide
assistance to schools that fall behind, it also levies sanctions such as allowing students to transfer to other schools, funding private tutoring programs, and shifting control of local schools to the district, state, or private contractors. The authors of this legislation are certain that setting high academic standards for students, testing students on these standards, and holding schools and educators responsible for reaching those standards will significantly improve public education in American schools.

According to Jones, Jones, and Hargrove (2003), the shift in control of what is taught, of how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction is perhaps the most severe consequence of NCLB and the accountability movement for the education community. States that once provided only curriculum frameworks and outlines, are now dictating the content of instruction. This shift in control from local communities to policy makers at the state and national levels has quietly occurred with little discussion or recognition (Jones, Jones, & Hargrove, 2003). The supporters of educational reform using high-stakes testing such as President Barak Obama, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and other legislators at both the state and national level, continue to shift the loci of control away from the classroom teachers, district leaders, local school boards, and state educational agencies towards the mandate and control of school standards to federal agencies and policymakers. The case for standards-based accountability has been supported by a host of powerful voices ranging from Bill Gates, CEO at Microsoft; to Michelle Rhee, former Superintendent of Schools in Washington, D.C.; to Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers and others.

According to Wong and Nicotera (2007), the standards-based movement’s central new expectation is that all children should receive the high level of education once reserved for a fraction of our nation’s students. This paradigm shift has radically changed expectations for the
poor and previously excluded and is having a tremendous impact on educators, lawmakers, and students (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). This study validates the supporters’ belief that high-stakes tests have helped identify and focus attention on low-achieving students, particularly in designated minority subpopulations or those attending low performing schools. Accordingly, this study supports the position that increased attention to special education students and the corresponding increase of access to on-grade-level instruction is a direct result of high-stakes testing. The third implication derived from the supporter’s position is that inclusion, not exclusion, is the new mantra of education. All students, including poor, minority, and special education students, must be successfully provided with a post-secondary preparatory based education.

According to a study conducted by Nichols & Berliner (2007), testing and accountability are intended to improve achievement and motivate staff and students. This study brings into question the supporters’ tenet that high-stakes testing is motivating students to apply more effort into their work and to study harder. Further, this study finds strong opposition to the position that failure on a test will increase student effort to learn. This study suggests that while the students recognize that high-stakes tests are obstacles they will need to surmount, this knowledge is not motivating them on a daily basis. Further, failure on high-stakes test often leads to negative reactions on the part of unsuccessful testers and may prompt some students to give up.

The purpose of the United States Department of Education (USDE) Blue Ribbon Schools Program is to honor public and private elementary, middle, and high schools that are either superior academically or that have experienced dramatic gains in student achievement (No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program: Purpose, 2009). These schools also serve as models for other schools throughout the nation. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes schools
that have at least forty percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance in accordance with state assessment systems; and it rewards schools that score in the top ten percent on state assessments. Of the schools nominated by each state, at least one-third must be schools that have students from disadvantaged backgrounds (No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program: Eligibility, 2009).

School leaders can help faculty, staff, and students accomplish school goals by establishing and maintaining high expectations (Leithwood, & Riehl, 2005). High expectations help to motivate both teachers and students to work toward goal-attainment by comparing current performance to future success (Leithwood, & Riehl, 2005). A school leader must be willing to challenge and change the school culture, as needed, in order to realize the vision (Bass, 1998; Norris, 1994). A positive culture and an environment that is conducive to learning are fundamental to fulfilling the school vision (Deal & Peterson, 1999). A strong and positive school culture also helps to facilitate the adjustment between current practices and future goals, which is essential for goal achievement (Sergiovanni, 1987). A strong and positive school culture plays a crucial role to enable the school leader to set the direction for his school (á Campo, 1993).

A principal’s actions, including creating a vision and modeling behavior, have a direct impact on the school culture (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). The school culture produces the conditions that allow for the accomplishment of school-wide goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Shared decision-making and community relations have an impact on school culture; vision building, goal setting, high performance expectations, intellectual stimulation, individualized support, and modeling also have a strong influence (á Campo, 1993; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).

The school leader must be connected to the community because what is happening
outside of the school can have a direct impact on the performance of students (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Being connected to the school community allows the school to seek out new ideas from the community members and helps additional resources flow into the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). School leaders can ill afford to ignore the impact family and community has on the school (Fullan, 2002). Schools must actively engage in building relationships with outside stakeholders to ensure school change and support (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).

School leaders continue to search for answers to improve the academic achievement of high school students and to continually move their schools toward improvement, while at the same time contending with state (TAKS and STAAR) and federal (NCLB and AYP) mandates outlined by their accountability systems. The process of educating students is much different than managing a production line in a factory. The “inputs” are not simple raw materials to be assembled or molded into a finished “product.” Our children enter school with such varied and diverse backgrounds and skill levels, that there is no “standard” assembly process; each student requires individual attention. At a minimum, improved academic achievement is going to require a commitment to academic excellence, regardless of the circumstances they may find themselves in, by: families and communities, students, teachers, schools, and school leadership for every student, in every classroom, every day.

Conclusion

The basic conclusion drawn from this review of scholarly literature is this: Effective schools must first have an excellent school leader. A first-rate principal will display school leadership characteristics drawn from the instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership paradigms. The main traits displayed and practiced by effective school leaders include: building a vision for their schools and setting their school’s direction;
making it a priority to understand and develop the people working for them; being proactive at redesigning their school organizations; building, or re-building, a culture in their school that is focused on student academic success; and, actively managing the academic and instructional programs of their schools (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). These school leadership practices have been shown to have direct and indirect positive impact on student achievement and school success (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

The role of the principal continues to evolve each and every day. Successful school leadership is no longer confined to merely being able to effectively manage both the children and adults who arrive at the schoolhouse on a daily basis. The distinction between management and leadership is of critical importance to the success of any principal. It is this concept of school leadership that it is at the heart of educational administration’s knowledge base. School leadership takes many forms, but certainly depends greatly on the context of each individual school and community. The remainder of this study is dedicated to the discovery and revelation of exactly what effective school leaders—from two high schools in Texas and two in Montana—do to lead their campuses to produce academically successful students.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Purpose of the Chapter

The review of the literature presented in Chapter Two addresses the context for this study on effective school leadership practices and how the actions of high school principals affect school success and student achievement. The purpose of this study is to identify the actions that are common to principals who lead successful high schools in Texas and Montana. This study examines the school leadership actions that are common among four high school principals who lead successful and effective high schools in Texas and Montana, through the investigation of the following general research question:

What are the manifestations of the common school leadership strategies employed by successful and effective high school principals as they carry out their practice of school leadership?

And, these two underlying research questions:

(1) What are the school leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies common to successful and effective high school principals?

(2) How are common school leadership strategies implemented by successful and effective high school principals?

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methodology and specific procedures and protocols undertaken by this study, including research design, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study incorporates a qualitative methodology. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006)
write that “qualitative research produces both exploratory and highly descriptive knowledge while deemphasizing the solely causal models and explanations that have historically dominated the research process” (p. 5). Therefore, qualitative methodology lends itself well to the study conducted and includes a number of specific characteristics.

**Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

According to Creswell (2008), qualitative research:

- Takes place in the natural setting, enabling the researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual and to be highly involved in actual experiences.
- Uses open-ended observations, interviews, and document review.
- Uses methods that are interactive and humanistic, involving active participation by participants.
- Involve participants in data collection.
- Involves the researcher’s interpretation of the data.
- Views social events in their totality within a larger context.

**Characteristics of Qualitative Researchers**

Characteristics of qualitative researchers include:

- An open and inquiring mind, being a good listener, general sensitivity and responsiveness to contradictory evidence (Robson, 2002).
- Sensitivity to their own biases and how they shape the study (Robson, 2002).
- Acknowledgement that personal-self is inseparable from researcher-self representing honesty and openness to the research (Creswell, 2008).
- Inductive reasoning that is multi-faceted, iterative, and simultaneous (Creswell, 2008).
- Gathering data to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories (Merriam & Associates, 2002).
• Understanding that the researcher is the primary research instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

**Data Collection in Qualitative Research**

According to Creswell (2003), data collection includes “setting the boundaries for the study, collecting information through unstructured (or semi-structured) observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials, as well as establishing the protocols for recording information” (p. 185). Examples of data collected are “detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 159). The specific goals of the data are to determine “what people’s lives, experiences, and interactions mean to them in their own terms” (p. 159).

**Researcher as instrument.** Creswell (2003) writes that the researcher is:

Typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants. This introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the qualitative research process. Therefore, it is imperative that the researcher identify biases, values, and personal interests about the research topic and process. (p. 184)

In this study, the researcher brings insight to the research due to his involvement in education for the past eighteen years as a teacher and school leader. The researcher must guard against innate bias that has evolved over time. As an observer, interviewer, and document recorder, the researcher had access to the case albeit in the capacity of an outside entity. Functioning as the instrument of research in this study, the researcher encountered advantages and limitations inherent in the qualitative methodology (Rueter, 2009).
Qualitative Approach Advantages

An innate advantage of qualitative research is that it encompasses experiencing, inquiring about, and examining everyday life (Rueter, 2009). Qualitative data focuses on “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a handle on what real life is like” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). The data are validated throughout the process of qualitative research (Creswell, 2008). Another characteristic of qualitative data is the “richness and holism with strong potential for revealing complexity” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). These data provide a strong ring of truth that has an impact on the reader. The flexibility of qualitative research lends confidence that the researcher fully understands the circumstances of the study.

Qualitative Approach Limitations

According to Creswell (2008) the sampling procedure, being purposive, could decrease the generalizability of the research findings. There are also choices that must be made regarding the structure of the instrumentation. Patton (2003) offers three limitations that are possible in qualitative research:

1. Limitations in the situations (critical events or cases) that are sampled for observation;
2. Limitations from the time periods during which observations took place; and/or
3. Limitations based on selectivity in the people who were sampled either for observation or interviews, or selectivity in document sampling (p. 563).

Case Study

Case study is defined as “development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single ‘case,’ or of a small number of related ‘cases’” (Robson, 2002, p. 89). Typical features of case studies include: selection of a single or multiple case(s) of a situation, individual, or group interest of concern; study of the case in its context; and collection of information via a range of
data collection techniques including observation, interview, and document analysis.

This study used case study as the specific qualitative research strategy. Stake (1995) writes that case studies are bounded by time and activity and are appropriate when the researcher is exploring a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. A multiple case study research design was used to identify the actual, real-world approaches used by principals to lead successful high schools and to explore the theory to practice aspect of school leadership practices. A multiple case study research design of four successful high school principals: a small, 3A rural Texas high school; a 4A suburban Texas high school; a small, Class B rural Montana high school; and an urban Class AA Montana high school was used to investigate the research questions.

**Case study strengths.** Case sampling adds confidence to findings. The evidence from in-depth case study is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is regarded as being more robust (Yin, 2009). The elements of trustworthiness and transferability of the findings can be strengthened by following a replication strategy (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009).

Yin (2009) further elaborates that “carrying out a case study is like carrying out multiple experiments” attempting to replicate an initial investigation, building upon a previous study, or taking the investigation into an area suggested by the previous study. When the findings from subsequent, complementary case studies support each study, the study is further validated. In addition, Yin (2009) states that some facets of case analysis can be generalized to other cases.

**Case study limitations.** Case studies also have some limitations as described by Merriam and Simpson (2000):

- Case studies can be expensive and time consuming.
• Case study narratives tend to be lengthy documents.

• Findings from case studies cannot be generalized in the same manner as findings from random samples; generalizability is related to what each user is trying to learn from the study. (p. 111)

**Unit of Analysis**

For the purposes of this study, the unit of analysis is the principal of each of the four high schools chosen to be a part of this study. This study will incorporate two Texas high schools and two Montana high schools of varied size and demographics in order to ascertain common themes of school leadership and then to describe the actions that principals who lead successful schools use to promote the academic success of their students. For the purposes of this study, it was imperative that the researcher identify four schools, which met the established participant selection criteria, allowing for a thorough study that will be of future use.

**Procedures and Data Collection**

This study involves perceptions of individuals as well as documentation of the actual practices used by the high school principal to implement leadership practices that result in effective academic programs and focus on student success. Therefore, the data collection methods were designed to solicit a true picture of actual practices of school leaders and vivid descriptions of the impact that the principal has on the effectiveness of a school’s academic program and student success as a result of the academic program. Prior to any action affiliated with conducting the study, the researcher obtained the necessary approvals from The University of Texas at San Antonio, including Institutional Review Board approval.

Upon completion of the research proposal and prior to conducting the study, a request for Institutional Review Board approval was submitted to the University. In addition, signed letters
of consent from the high school principals involved in the study were obtained.

This approval was obtained via letters of introduction to the principals of the high schools selected for the study. The letter included the purpose of the study, and included permission to conduct the study. Included in this letter was a form indicating the principal’s approval and his/her consent to participate in the study.

Upon university approval and approval of the high schools involved, the study incorporated three methods of data collection: interviews, direct observation, and document review. The use of multiple forms of data collection allows the researcher to triangulate the data to obtain a more accurate picture of the practices implemented by high school principals as they lead successful high schools.

**Participant Selection**

The four high schools, two in Texas and two in Montana, selected for the study were those that were identified as “successful” based on the following criteria established for this study:

- **Texas high schools** - The high school received accountability ratings not less than “Academically Acceptable,” according to the AEIS accountability system, during the years the selected principal served at the school.
  - Passing rate for students on the TAKS test was 70 percent, or higher.

- **Montana high schools** - The high school received overall satisfactory accountability ratings during the period the selected principal served at the school.
  - Passing rate for students on the Montana CRT was 70 percent, or higher.

- Attendance rates exceed 93% for four of the six school years between 2005 and 2011.
- Graduation rates exceed 90% for four of the six school years between 2005 and 2011.
• Four Year Completion rate exceeds 90% for four of the six school years between 2005 and 2011.

• Average SAT scores exceeded the state average for four of the six years between 2005 and 2011.

• The College Readiness measure for “Both Subjects” exceeds 60% for four of the six school years between 2005 and 2011.

• Teacher turnover rate is less than the state average for four of the six school years between 2005 and 2011.

• Identification of the school size by classification: Texas schools: 3 (A) – 401- 900 students; 4 (A) 901-1500 students. Montana schools: Class B – 125 - 300 students; Class AA - 900 students, or more.

• Identification of the school by location: rural, suburban, and large city.

While schools may share similar organizational and academic structures, the considerably varied arrangement of these structures—school-by-school and state-by-state—contributes to each school’s unique structure and operation, and thus to each school leader’s “individualized” application of his or her art of school leadership.

When I began this study, in August of 2013, I lived in San Antonio, Texas. In April of 2014, I accepted a superintendent of schools position in Conrad, Montana. Using the selection criteria, described above, I was able to identify several schools that were near to where I lived, both in Texas and Montana. When I began my recruitment process, I discovered that not many of the principals at the schools that met the selection criteria were willing to take part in the study. Several schools, in each state, failed to respond to the invitation to participate in the study and many of the schools that did respond, declined my invitation to participate in the study. As I
worked my way down the list of schools that met the selection criteria, I accepted the first two principals, from each state, who accepted my invitation to be a part of the study. I was able to recruit four demographically diverse schools: A suburban 4A high school in Texas, led by a woman; a rural 3A high school in Texas, led by a Hispanic male; a rural Class B high school in Montana, led by a white male; and a Class AA high school in a large Montana city, led by a white male. All have led their respective schools for at least five years.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews

One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview (Yin, 2009). “Interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives and is, in effect, special forms of conversation” (Bryman & Burgess, 1999, p. 105). Interviews can make a person feel positive, negative, or have no affect at all and can be remembered or forgotten (Wengraf, 2001). Interviews are conducted in order to support or question data obtained during direct observation and document review. It is essential that a connection between the interview and interviewee be established. By establishing a relationship or reciprocity of perspectives, the interviewer and the interviewee form a personal relationship (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003).

Description of interviews. Interviews may take several forms. Yin (2009) describes three interview types: open-ended, focused, and structured. Open-ended interviews solicit the interviewee’s recall of facts and opinions regarding an event. A second type of interview is the focused interview in which the researcher has a set of questions with which to begin the interview. The interview may still remain open-ended, but the interviewer is more likely to follow a set of questions. The final type as described by Yin (2009) is the structured interview.
Structured interviews follow a format along the lines of a survey. For the purposes of this study, the researcher used the open-ended and focused interview techniques (Appendix A).

**Interview strengths.** Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) explain that interviews are a strong form of data collection because they use “individuals as the point of departure for the research process and assume[s] that individuals have unique and important knowledge about the social world that is ascertainable through verbal communication” (p.119). The interview is a research instrument designed for the purpose of improving knowledge on a particular subject (Wengraf, 2001).

**Interview limitations.** In face-to-face work, the interviewer has an impact on the participants sometimes leading to contamination of data (Knight, 2002). Yin (2009) delineates four specific limitations of interviews as a data collection method:

- Bias due to poorly constructed questions
- Response bias
- Inaccuracies due to poor recall
- Reflexivity—interviewee gives the answers they believe the interviewer wants to hear.

**Interviewee criteria.** For this study, the research deals directly with what a high school principal does to effectively lead a high school and the impact these actions have on student academic success. Therefore, interviews are conducted with only the principal from the schools selected.

**Interview procedures.** The interviews lasted from one to two hours. The researcher explained that the interview is for the purpose of research and gained the consent of the interviewee. The principals selected to be interviewed at each school were informed that the interview was recorded and that notes were taken by the interviewer while the interview was
conducted. Following the interview, the interview was transcribed and the researcher coded the transcription and assigned themes to the data.

**Document Review**

The second type of data collection method used in this study was document review. Document review is taking written or visual artifacts and examining them for data collecting purposes. Documentation can take many forms including letters, memoranda, travel logs, calendars, communiqués, progress reports, internal documents, personal journals, and meeting agenda (Yin, 2009). “The texts and objects that groups of humans produce are embedded with larger ideas those groups have, whether shared or contested” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 286). Several types of documents were analyzed for the purposes of this study; most specifically, the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) reports for the school years between 2005 and 2011 (for Texas schools), data reported on the Montana Office of Public Instruction website, campus improvement plans, student handbooks, the student code of conduct for each high school in the study, as well as newsletters and procedural memoranda that describe and communicate operational practices initiated by the principal. While student handbooks and the student code of conduct may not be always be locally written, many times the school principal has added sections to these documents elaborating on administrative processes and operational procedures that are specific to that school site.

**Document review strengths.** Robson (2002) lists three distinct advantages to document review:

- They are unobtrusive and non-reactive. The inquirer does not need to be in direct contact with the person producing the document.
- They provide valuable cross-validation of other measures, either supporting or
challenging them.

- They encourage ingenuity and creativity on the part of the researcher.

**Document review limitations.** There are limitations to document reviews as well. Yin (2009) notes four weaknesses to document review: documents can be hard to retrieve, biased selectivity, reporting bias on the part of the author, and limited access or deliberate blockage of access. Documents may also be “incomplete, inauthentic, or inaccurate” (Creswell, 2008, p. 231). Personal documents, which are handwritten, may be hard to read and decipher (Creswell, 2008). Robson (2002) writes of the ethical difficulties of researching without the knowledge or consent of the subject being studied. There may also be issues of the confidentiality of the information recovered in a review of documents as sensitive and distressing information may be revealed. The objectivity of the researcher could be lost without the subject supplying context for documents retrieved (Robson, 2002).

**Direct Observation**

Another source of evidence in a case study is direct observation (Appendix B). Observations of the subjects being studied can yield powerful data where the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of the individual at the research site. The observer may also engage in roles varying from a non-participant to a complete participant (Creswell, 2008). Observations can be of meetings, sidewalk activities, classrooms, and casual interactions (Yin, 2009). In this multiple case study, observations of the actions of principals, both casual and formal, are used to gather observational data. Of particular interest is the observation of principals as they conducted day-to-day operations at the school site.

**Direct observation strengths.** Robson (2002) lists several advantages of direct observations. Because direct observation involves the researcher watching what people do and
listening to what they say, this method is not dependent on the participant’s response, feelings, or attitudes. Direct observations are particularly useful to help describe complex operations and interactions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Yin (2009) notes that observation covers events in real time and in the real world.

**Direct observation limitations.** Observation can be time-consuming and there may be limitations on selectivity of activities to be observed. There is also the possibility of the event proceeding differently because it is being observed (Yin, 2009). Ensuring that the actions are genuine and not contrived due to the researcher’s presence could be a limitation as well.

**Data Analysis**

When analyzing the data in qualitative research, Miles & Huberman (1994) suggest methods to obtain high quality data analysis. These include data reduction, in which the researcher will find ways to manage the accumulated amounts of data; data display, in which the researcher uses better means of organizing and displaying data, such as matrices, charts, and networks; and conclusion drawing and verification, in which the researcher draws conclusions about the meaning of data from the very beginning of the data collection process. Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) break down data analysis and interpretation into a series of steps:

1. **Data preparation**, in which the researcher thinks about what data will be analyzed and whether or not these data will provide an understanding of the research question.

2. **Data exploration**, in which the researcher highlights and emphasizes the information of most importance to the study.

3. **Specification/reduction** of data, in which the researcher codes the data and organizes data into analytical dimensions.

4. **Interpretation**, in which the researcher processes the data to provide a basis from which
knowledge claims can be drawn.

**Field Note Memos**

Denzin (1981) claims that:

Fieldwork is the method that throws the researchers directly into the life-worlds under investigation and requires the careful recording (through field-notes) of the problematic and routine features of that world. (p. 117)

Occurring continuously throughout the data collection process, the researcher made notes on thoughts and ongoing questions that came to mind as the data were being collected.

**Interpretation of Data.** Creswell (2003) states that data interpretation is an ongoing process which involves continuous reflection and questioning throughout the study. He describes six generic steps in data interpretation, which the researcher will follow in this inquiry:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis. This involves transcribing interviews, typing field notes, or sorting or arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information.

2. Read through all of the data obtaining a general sense of the information and reflect on its general meaning.

3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process which involves organizing the data into “chunks” before bringing meaning to those “chunks.”

4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. Description involves a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting.

5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. This could be a chronology of events or a discussion of connecting themes.
6. Interpreting or making meaning of the data. What were the lessons learned? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Creswell, 2003). Frameworks for the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this study (Figure 2.1, Figure 5.1) were developed and adapted from the research reported by Day et al., (2010).

**Trustworthiness of the Findings**

Credibility is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about (Robson, 2002). “Credibility (or validity) suggests whether the findings are accurate or credible from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, and the reader. This criterion becomes a key component of the research design” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 86). In order to ensure the credibility of the findings in this study, the researcher used three strategies described by Creswell (2008), which checked the accuracy of the findings: triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.

**Triangulation**

An important check on the credibility of research is to incorporate the technique of triangulation, in which two or more methods of data collection are used to answer the same research question (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). A major attribute of case study is the ability to use multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). This study will extract data from several different sources associated with the high schools. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, three methods of collecting qualitative data were used.

**Peer Debriefing**

Another method of enhancing the accuracy of the findings is to use peer debriefing, a process involving an outside person who reviews the study and asks questions to ensure that the study resonates with people other than the researcher (Creswell, 2003). For the purposes of this
study, the researcher identified a fellow doctoral student from the University of Texas at San Antonio as peer debriefer. Throughout the study the researcher met with the peer debriefer to discuss the study and analyze the emerging data.

**Member Checking**

Creswell (2008) defines member checking as taking the final report or specific description or themes back to the participants and allowing the participants to verify their accuracy. Written observation records and transcriptions of interviews were presented to the participants and feedback was solicited. This ensured there were no misinterpretations of collected data prior to publication.

**Dependability of the findings.** Miles & Huberman (1994) write that qualitative researchers need to share the “explicit, systematic methods we use to draw conclusions and to test them carefully. We need methods that are credible, dependable and replicable in qualitative terms” (p. 2). “The more important question becomes one of whether the findings are consistent and dependable with the data collected” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 86). To this end, it is important that the researcher keep a journal and detailed accounts of how the data were analyzed and interpreted (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). It is hoped that the use of a variety of sources in this study will also increase the dependability of the research conducted. In order to safeguard the dependability of the findings of this study, Rueter (2009) suggests that the researcher should be continuously reminded of certain questions:

- Are the research questions clear, and are the features of the design congruent with them?
- Does the narrative “ring true,” make sense, seem convincing or plausible, and allow for a vicarious presence for the reader?
- Did triangulation among the complementary methods and data sources produce generally
converging conclusions?

- Were the conclusions considered to be accurate by original informants?

**Chapter Summary**

Case study research tells a story, and this form of research comes closer to revealing the “truths” that can be useful to educational leaders than do the esoteric arguments about which lens is more effective, or the epistemological orientation of a researcher. These supercilious pronouncements are ephemeral propositions that are subject to change whenever there comes a challenge to the prevailing “isms” by another “academic” positing a new string of cryptic thoughts recorded in some lofty journal, only to be read by those engaged in these “academic” questions. They are of no use to the principal who is struggling to find ways to improve high school mathematics instruction, or working to ensure that new teachers are successfully integrated into the culture of the school, or trying to integrate more dual-credit college courses into the curriculum. The use of case study research methodology provides a starting point for discussion and consideration by these educational leaders. The position of many “academic” researchers, and the research that they conduct, reminds the researcher of a line from Macbeth: “…[They are] but a walking Shadow, a poor Player That struts and frets his Hour upon the Stage, And then is heard no more; It is a tall Tale, Told by an Idiot, full of Sound and Fury, Signifying nothing” (Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act V).
CHAPTER FOUR
REPORTING THE DATA

Introduction and Purpose of the Chapter

As stated in Chapter One, if one looks into the workings and operation of a successful school, most often one will find an excellent principal. Next to teachers, the research has shown (Marks & Printy, 2003; Lambert, 2006; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008) that school principals have the second largest impact on the academic success of their students. Chapter Two was a comprehensive review of the professional literature to identify the leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies of effective school principals who lead successful schools. Chapter Three set the parameters and methodology used to conduct the research. Chapter Four identifies what successful school principals actually do in their day-to-day interactions with students, faculty, staff, and school operations to manifest these leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies in their school leadership practices. To gather the data for this chapter, a twelve question interview was conducted (Appendix A) with each of the participants of the study, as well as conducting direct observations of the principals at work (Appendix B). These data are reported in the first part of this chapter.

As the data collected were analyzed, three themes emerged from the interviews and were reiterated by all four of the exceptional school leaders who participated in this study. They all asserted that the fundamental first step of an effective high school principal is to be observant: ask a lot of questions and then listen to the answers. Next, all of the principals concurred that developing and sustaining relationships is a vital dimension of effective school leadership. Finally, they all supported the notion that all change in their schools must be measured, carefully planned, and then vigorously and collaboratively implemented. These themes are discussed in
the summary of Chapter Four.

A suburban high school principal in Texas

Mission Overlook High School is lead—as it has been for more than 23 years—by Dr. Janie Brown, who will admit to being sixty-something, but has the energy and stamina of women (and men) half her age. She began her career in education as a teacher, and while teaching at a high school in another district, she earned two master’s degrees and a doctorate in education. Dr. Brown was promoted into the assistant principal position at the high school in which she began her career in education, for a few years, and then she moved into a central office administrative position as the Director of Special Programs. After that, she was asked by Mission Overlook Independent School District—an affluent suburban district located within the city limits of one of the largest cities in Texas—if she would be interested in taking the helm as principal of Mission Overlook Junior High School. She held that position for five years, and then Dr. Brown moved into the high school principal position at Mission Overlook High School, where she has been in charge of a Texas “4A” high school with more than 1500 students, for the past 23 years (JB 04/16/2014, 14-22).

Mission Overlook Independent School District has been in operation for about 100 years, and Mission Overlook High School (MOHS) has been in existence for more than 60 years. In the 2013-2014 school-year, MOHS housed about 1500 students and was staffed by 129 administrative, faculty, and support personnel. Dr. Brown describes the school as, “a very traditional high school…a college preparatory” high school that is:

…very focused on getting kids ready for college. Ninety four to ninety five percent of our students go on to college, and it’s a very motivated student body. Our kids are very successful, so we really take a lot of pride in getting them ready for their college
experience and their success there. (JB 04/16/2014, 26-32)

The basic demographics for Mission Overlook High School’s 1500 students include a student body that is about 60% Anglo, 30-35% Hispanic, and a very small percentage of African-American students. There are about 27% of the students on the federal free or reduced price lunch program. The demographics of the staff essentially mirror the composition of the student body (JB 04/16/2014, 35-39).

Dr. Brown describes her leadership style as “collaborative.” She works hard to prepare her teachers to become “teacher leaders,” and then she uses groups of those teachers to help make the professional leadership development decisions for the campus. She commented that the teachers are “very participatory” in school leadership activities (JB 04/16/2014, 41-43). When she first came to MOHS, she concentrated her efforts on “changing the classroom dynamics throughout the school.” She brought in some teachers whom she had worked with previously at the junior high school, hired some new teachers, and moved some teachers out. She still has conversations with the teachers and staff in order to help them “find their place.” These efforts were made to begin the change in the school-staff culture she believed was necessary to improve the academic program at the high school. She met with students and listened to what they had to say about their classes and also used course surveys in order to find out what students thought about their school (JB 04/16/2014, 69-84).

As Dr. Brown reflected on her preparation for the school leadership position she now holds, she credits her Master’s degree program in supervision, her Master’s degree program in school administration, and her Doctoral program in educational leadership as laying the groundwork for her understanding of how curriculum and school leadership work together to form the framework for a successful academic program at the high school. She remained
steadfast, however, in her assertion that the practical aspects of running a school are how one really learns to be an effective school leader. She stated, “I’m a different high school principal now than I was 23 years ago, when I first walked in the door…I was 40 years old and trying to find my way. I think that practice and experience is how you get it figured out versus the knowledge” that comes from academic coursework at the university (JB 04/16/2014, 48-53).

When asked to describe her responsibilities as a high school principal, Dr. Brown was straight-forward in observing, “I think you have to do everything as a high school principal, and I am willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done (JB 04/16/2014, 56-57).” She thinks that the key to being able to carry out her role as the instructional leader of the school is to surround herself with “high quality” personnel who are capable, competent, and knowledgeable about what they are supposed to do to promote and foster an effective academic setting. They should share her beliefs and philosophies and must be willing to collaborate in order to provide an outstanding academic atmosphere for the students at MOHS. As the school principal, she believes, one must “look for people who are student-centered and you seek stability (JB 04/16/2014, 58-62).” Dr. Brown’s “typical” work week is far from typical, and she smiles as she elaborates:

You never know what is going to happen. You can have a schedule, for example, scheduling observations of teachers, but you can be called out of these observations, anytime. You have to be able to flourish in uncertainty and be able to keep a lot of “balls” in the air at the same time. You have to make it look easy. I really enjoy operating this way. (JB 04/16/2014, 64-67)

When the Mission Overlook Independent School District asked Dr. Brown to become the principal of MOHS, the school was populated by about 1000 students and was not the student-
centered, high expectations and standards, teacher-lead, program that it has become under her leadership. Dr. Brown brought her reputation for “getting things done” to the task of changing the “habits of the high school faculty and staff (JB 04/16/2014, 69-73),” and, with a specific vision of what the school could become, Dr. Brown went to work making the organizational, operational, and academic changes she deemed necessary to build an effective and academically successful school. The first thing she did to begin the conversion of the school was to replace the existing department chairs with teachers who had “the more student-centered mind set” she sought, to reform and lead the academic program at the school. She had the complete support of the superintendent and the school board to make these changes (JB 04/16/2014, 79-82).

One of the first things that she discovered about the academic program at MOHS was that students who had liked—and done well in—mathematics were not doing well in math at the high school level. To fix this, she recruited new math teachers who were “student oriented, competent, and targeted their professional development,” in order to “rebuild the math department” (JB 04/16/2014, 73-75). As she had elsewhere in the school, she moved some new teachers in and moved some other teachers out. Once she had the math faculty she wanted in place, she focused on the professional development of those teachers, providing the assistance and support they needed to become the math teachers she knew her students would need to become successful (JB 04/16/2014, 75-83).

Reflecting on her more than 30 years of experience as a school leader, Dr. Brown offered some advice on what aspiring and practicing school leaders need to know and be able to do to improve their schools’ effectiveness and their students’ academic success. She explains that, “new principals need to first listen and watch what is going on around them in their schools” (JB 04/16/2014, 87). She believes that it is imperative that principals surround themselves with high
quality faculty and staff, who not only share the principal’s ideals and philosophies, but who are also student-centered, competent, capable, and knowledgeable. It is also important that principals treat all of the people they come into contact with—students, faculty and staff, parents and other community members—with respect (JB 04/16/2014). When they first come into the building, a new principal should sit down and meet with teachers—collectively and one-on-one—and “begin to build relationships with those teachers, so that the teachers in turn can build relationships with students.” New school leaders, she finishes, need to be able to “practice strategic planning to address ways to integrate changes into the school.” (JB 04/16/2014, 88-91)

When asked about what the community expects from her, as a high school principal, and what are her future plans for school improvement, Dr. Brown is again straight-forward in her response, “The community expects me to run a high-performing high school and to take care of their kids” (JB 04/16/2014, 97). As far as future plans for school improvement, she will rely on her successful ability to communicate with faculty and students to ascertain what they think is needed to improve the high school. This year, based on student input, MOHS opened a coffee bar in the library (JB 04/16/2014, 99-100).

Dr. Brown has led a highly effective and academically successful high school in Texas for more than 23 years. When asked about the rewards of being a high school, she reflected that her reward is:

Knowing every day that I’m touching lives and trying to help people. I like watching freshmen and watching what they become. I like watching the faculty grow up and raise their families. For me, it is fun being a part of people’s lives. (JB 04/16/2014, 93-94)

A rural Texas high school principal

Mustang High School is a rural 3A high school that was lead for five years by Joseph
Rodriguez. Mr. Rodriguez began his career in education more than 24 years ago as a teacher in a very large, urban school district in west Texas. He began as a high school chemistry teacher in an ethnically diverse high school and was advised by an administrator in the district that he should move into school administration. The administrator told Rodriguez that “you have more control of your students …they respond to you and you are handling some of the worst kids on the campus—that I get in my office every day—really well…” (JR 10/08/2014, 17-21). That led him to earn his Master’s degree in educational administration and obtain his certification for school administration. Looking back on his decision, he says, “I wanted to make a bigger difference” (JR 10/08/2014, 21-22).

Prior to his current position as the high school principal at a rural 3A high school, in south-central Texas, and after several years in other administrative positions—high school assistant principal and principal—Mr. Rodriguez found himself appointed as the high school principal for Mustang High School (MHS), in the Mustang Independent School District (MISD) (JR 10/08/2014, 15-18). MISD is a rural 3A school district with about 2000 students, located 25 miles south of one of the largest cities in Texas. The school district, like most small, rural school districts in Texas, is the heart of the community it serves. The community actively supports the school, and on Friday nights, in the fall, the whole community turns out to cheer for their Mustang varsity football team. While MHS has been a part of the community for more than a century, the current high school building was constructed in the late 1990’s (JR 10/08/2014).

During Mr. Rodriguez’ tenure as principal, Mustang High School housed about 520 students, with more than 80% of the students being Hispanic, 19% of the students Anglo, and about 1% African-American. More than 80% of the students qualified for the federal free and reduced price lunch program. There were 38 teachers at MHS: 15 Hispanic and 23 Anglo. The
Mr. Rodriguez describes himself as practicing a “laid back” leadership style. He seeks a lot of input from his teachers and allows them to have a voice in the decision-making process at the school (JR 10/08/2014, 39-40). There were numerous teacher-led committees at MHS, by design, but he is quick to add that when it comes to accepting accountability for the decisions made, Rodriguez will accept full responsibility for any decisions made in conjunction with the committees, “When we have decisions to make, we make them by committee and I always stand by my teachers, in public” (JR 10/08/2014, 40-47). He continues, “In private, if they are wrong, I’m going to let them know what they did wrong and then I will help them to learn from their mistakes…and we will work to correct” (JR 10/08/2014, 47-50). A large part of his leadership style involves having an “open door” policy and he is easily approachable for students, faculty and staff, parents, and community (JR 10/08/2014).

Mr. Rodriguez described his graduate studies as a “very thorough” preparation for his role as a school leader. He worked as an administrative “intern” in a suburban school district in far west Texas and that experience was “very helpful. I got to see the whole gamut of junior high school through senior high school….I had really good training” (JR 10/08/2014, 53-55). Rodriguez credits his graduate school coursework and administrative intern experience as fully preparing him to take over as principal of a “low-performing” high school, and that was the status held by MHS—according to the Texas accountability ratings—for the school year previous to Rodriguez assuming his duties as MHS principal (JR 10/08/2014, 55-58).

When asked how the job description for high school principal at MHS described the actual duties of the principal at MHS, he laughed as he quickly replied,

Wow! [Laughing] Not even close! The job description as the leader of instruction and
curriculum is a misnomer. You wear many hats and you’re a counselor and a teacher, and you are a conciliator and a moderator and there is all kinds of custodial work…you name it. The job description is not even close to the work that we [as principals] do, the hours that we put in. (JR 10/08/2014, 64-68)

Rodriguez went on to describe a “typical” work-week as at least 50 hours, and usually more. He makes every attempt to visit classrooms and deal with a lot of “fires.” Among the activities he may have to manage in a “typical” work-week are: handling student discipline issues, dealing with angry parents, counseling teaches, and responding to community concerns. Rodriguez ends his description of the typical work-week with, “there is no typical work-week” (JR 10/08/2014, 73-79).

When Mr. Rodriguez arrived as the new principal for Mustang High School, he had not been briefed on many of the problems he subsequently discovered. The school had not met the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act standards for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for the previous three years. The school was rated as “Academically Unacceptable” by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). He found that he had many “toxic” teachers on his staff (JR 10/08/2014, 83-86).

One of his first actions, upon assuming leadership of MHS was to implement a new class schedule that included a “cluster” period. During the cluster period the teachers would meet to discuss problem areas in curriculum and instruction, especially for “core” classes: math, science, English, and social studies. Changes were made, instruction was improved, and mastery checks of student progress were developed and implemented. Rodriguez began reviewing the teachers’ instruction and confirming the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) that they were covering in class to ensure that what was to be tested was being taught in class. The teachers began to collect large amounts of data on their students’ progress and identifying the areas in
which students needed assistance. Rodriguez actively monitored and participated in all of these efforts. The results of their year-long efforts were an “Academically Acceptable” rating from TEA and being found to have met the “Adequate Yearly Progress” standards under NCLB (JR 10/08/2014, 92-140).

At the same time he had found himself dealing with “low performing school” issues, Rodriguez also discovered that he had too many “toxic” teachers on staff (JR 10/08/2014, 83-86). In order to get the campus headed in the right direction, he decided that there needed to be personnel changes made. He quickly identified the teachers who were impeding the academic progress of the school and, with his superintendent’s full support, Mr. Rodriguez used various strategies that included: targeted professional development, coaching and counseling teachers himself, and strategic transfers of personnel to reconfigure his faculty. As he began his second year as principal, he had replaced 14 teachers and had the faculty he was confident could carry the school to academic success (JR 10/08/2014, 123-143).

After moving the school to be “academically acceptable” under both TEA and NCLB standards, Mr. Rodriguez moved to improve the academic standards and raise academic expectations at Mustang High School. He focused on the academic standards of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) mandated by the State of Texas.

Academically, we just focused on the standards. We focused on the student expectations. We did not deviate, we used that cluster period to visit and do the mini assessments, and at the end of the semester we would do a two hour final exam that covered the student expectations. We would take that data, at the end of December, and use that to bring in students. We had the flex schedule and that was another thing that we used. So we had those flex days. The semester exams that we gave, we used that data to
exempt students from those flex days or bring students in for those flex days. And we had two sets of five and five [flex days]. Five right before testing and five at the end of year for the kids going into summer school. So they had an extra week, basically, of summer school. (JR 10/08/2014, 136-143)

Mr. Rodriguez believes that aspiring principals and those practicing principals who are seeking was to improve their school and student performance should concentrate first on teachers. He elaborated on his primary belief:

You have to start with the teachers. You have to have the right kind of people on board. You know, people who are going to build relationships with the students, people who care about the students, people that feel education is a calling. You have to start with the people, they have to understand that this is not a business, it’s a calling. You know it’s not a paycheck, you’re going to help children be the best that they can be. So, you have to have those kinds of people on board. If you don’t have that, it’s very toxic to the system. It takes away from the learning, it’s a war, it’s a battle every day with students, you’re fighting teachers and it wears you out. So, you got to make the right personnel choices and pull the trigger, right away, if you make a bad choice. Don’t bring them back for another year. There’s some that you know right away, if they’re probationary, they didn’t cut it, they’re not going to cut it, get rid of them. There are some that have potential, they just need another year of seasoning, another year of help and they’ll be fine. You know, you keep those for another year. If the second year gets worse, boom, you get rid of them, you know. But, don’t keep going after it. Don’t keep hoping that people are going to change, when there is no chance (JR 10/08/2014, 151-160).

When Rodriguez was asked what he thinks the community expects of him, he said:
Well, honestly, I think what the community wants is for me to make sure that the students, their children, have the proper education to graduate from high school and have some sort of post-secondary success. I am not sure if they care about their students’ EOCs, but I know my Board does. And the Board is part of the community and it does have an integral part in all of the decision making that I do because, if they don’t pass those tests, they don’t graduate. But, essentially what I think is the community as a whole wants to be able to trust us to make the right decisions for their children. (JR 10/08/2014, 171-176)

Rodriguez has some pretty big plans for school improvement as he moves forward as the principal at his new school. He wants to move his new school into Texas’ “Early College High School” program. This program requires accepted high schools to partner with a college or university and change their high school program to offer its students the opportunity to earn college credits, and in some cases an Associate’s degree or trade certification, during their high school years (JR 10/08/2014, 178-180). If Rodriguez’s high school is accepted into the Early College High School Program, the school will be required to substantially raise academic standards and expectations for both students and teachers. Additional courses will have to offered, and the infrastructure—personnel and hardware—put into place to facilitate the changes to curriculum and staff required to affect the program. The challenges for Rodriguez are numerous, but he believes the students and staff are ready. He firmly believes “…if they [students] can see somebody else succeed, they will think, ‘that guy’s no better than me, I can do that” (JR 10/08/2014, 180-184).

For Mr. Rodriguez, the biggest reward that comes from being a high school principal is the impact that he can have on his students’ lives. He enjoys “talking to them, visiting with
them, giving them hope.” He values those relationships and believes that is the greatest reward he can receive as a high school principal (JR 10/08/2014, 162-169).

For Mr. Rodriguez, everything is about the students.

A large, Class AA high school principal in Montana

Mr. Stanly Clark has been the low keyed, unassuming leader of Remington High School, a large Class AA high school in Big Water, Montana for the past 17 years. Big Water is a city of over 50,000, in central Montana and is also home to Lightening Air Force Base, a strategic nuclear missile command center (SC 10/01/2014).

Clark didn’t begin his professional career as a teacher. He began as an engineer and when he went to work for a large petroleum exploration and processing company, he discovered he didn’t like it. He explained, “So I switched over to education and finished up my education credentials. I earned a master degree in laser physics and while I was finishing that up Big Water School District called up and asked ‘do you want to teach science?’” (SC 10/01/2014, 15-18). After a seven year stint as a science teacher, Mr. Clark taught math for thirteen years at the same high school. While working on his Master’s degree in educational administration, one of his professors asked Clark if he would be interested in the principal position at a high school in central Montana. He was there for one year before moving back to Big Water and Big Water Public School District #3, where he has remained for the past 27 years.

Remington High School recently celebrated its 50th anniversary and is Big Water’s second oldest high school. The campus is populated by over 1400 students: 87% are white, and the remaining 13% are Native American, African American, or Asian. About 25% of the students are enrolled in the federal free and reduced price lunch program, although Mr. Clark noted that 35 to 40% of the students actually qualify. There is a certain stigma attached to this
program by high school students and that prevents many of those who qualify, from applying. The number of faculty and staff members at Remington High School number a little more than 200 (SC 10/01/2014, 41-48).

Upon entering the three story main building, one is struck by how well maintained the building is, and how polite and helpful both students and staff are to those visiting the campus. When Mr. Clark was appointed principal, 17 years ago, the school was populated by more than 2000 students and considered an “affluent” high school. Mr. Clark noted, “The demographics in this high school has changed over last…even since I’ve been here, but over the last 30 years [RHS] gone from a very affluent high school to a somewhat of a poverty type high school. And it’s because of changing demographics in our community” (SC 10/01/2014, 48-50). After almost two decades at the helm, Mr. Clark has presided over a decline in both the number of students and the affluence of the families who send their children to the school.

Mr. Clark categorizes his leadership style as “eclectic.” He elaborates on his description:

I think I would term myself as “eclectic.” My nature is to be a distributive leader. I’ve always had greater success planting a seed and letting someone else think this idea was theirs and watching it grow and not being an autocrat and saying this is the way we’re going to do things, or this is what is going to happen. That would probably be my style: as a collaborative leader. (SC 10/01/2014, 61-64)

He also says that over the past 20 years there has been a “huge change in the educational theory” (SC 10/01/2014, 68) behind school leader styles. During his experience as a school leader, the theory and practice of school leadership has evolved from “educational administration to educational leadership and it reflects the change in our society” (SC 10/01/2014, 69). Mr. Clark has seen leadership style move more towards operating in teams and less about school leaders
operating as “dictators” (SC 10/01/2014, 70).

Mr. Clark received a lot of his preparation for school leadership through a number of “mentors rather than through formal coursework” (SC 10/01/2014, 77). He explained that his coursework at the universities he attended was “invaluable,” (SC 10/01/2014, 78) and that a lot of what he learned there he could put to use the next day, at his school, and that he had many “incredible mentors” (SC 10/01/2014, 81). Mr. Clark relates that he had a mentor from the university who was a young and dynamic practicing superintendent and who went on to be a superintendent in one of the largest school districts in the country. Other mentors were practicing administrators in Big Water Public Schools. Clark continues, “this district is known for having outstanding staff, period. And the educational leaders on this staff are pretty well known across the country. I had great leadership and role modeling and mentors right here in our own district” (SC 10/01/2014, 89-91).

When Mr. Clark was asked if his job description accurately describes what he actually does as a high school principal, his answer was short and to the point: “No” (SC 10/01/2014, 94). He maintains that to be an effective principal, “you have to go way, way, way beyond the job description” (SC 10/01/2014, 94-95). In Clarks view, it is vital that a high school principal be visible to his students, staff, parents, and the community. He spends “very little time in my office during the day time” (SC 10/01/2014, 105). He is “out in the building during passing times…out in classrooms” spending “time with teachers, all day. Checking with classified staff and certified staff” (SC 10/01/2014, 105-107). One might even find Clark “out pushing a broom in the hall if something needs to be swept up, or swinging a mop, or shoveling snow…” (SC 10/01/2014, 107-108). His main thrust about the time he spends at school is “that the time you spend in a given week isn’t defined by particular hours in a day” (SC 10/01/2014, 97-98).
Another big priority for Mr. Clark is the importance he places on his attendance at all school activities. He relates this anecdote:

Beyond that, you have to be at everything. One of my mentors told me 35 years ago, the kids don’t care if the assistant principal isn’t there, but they care and they notice if I, as the principal, am not at something, they are going to ask why? That was driven home to me about my second year here. I had a school board meeting on the same night as an across-town sophomore football game, which was under the lights. And so I missed the sophomore football game and I get to school the following morning at 6:45 in the morning and walk in with one of our sophomore players and he says, ‘jeez I didn’t see you at the game last night.’ Probably only one of the events I’ve missed in the last 15 years. And he nailed it. (SC 10/01/2014, 117-123)

Mr. Clark’s typical work day:

Well, as you well know, you really can’t schedule anything. Every day I come and I have a list of tasks I intend to accomplish at the end of the day. And if, during the course of the day, out of eight or ten tasks, if I’ve gotten one of them done, it’s been a good day. Totally unpredictable. Totally unpredictable. (SC 10/01/2014, 126-128)

In a more serious vein, Clark notes that he does try to visit classrooms every day, meet with his guidance counselors and teachers on a daily basis, and that his door is always open to students, staff, parents, and the community, if they should catch him in his office.

When Mr. Clark arrived at Remington High School, he had been transferred from the other high school in Big Water, and he was already familiar with Remington’s reputation for high academic standards, a high quality faculty, and a college-going student body. He related that “in that first year, I took lots of notes, convinced people that they were going to be okay,
asked a lot of questions…” (SC 10/01/2014, 167-168). Clark did notice that the physical condition of the high school facility was not quite up to the standard that he was used to. In his previous high school, Mr. Clark noted that,

…the building I came from before this building, you could literally eat off the floor at the end of the school day. The lead custodian out there believed in impeccable building maintenance, you could see your reflection in the floor on the last day of school. I came here and the standards were not quite that high, but we raised them. The engineer who had been here for thirty years at the time stepped up. Since then we have gotten a new engineer who happens to be a former student of mine and has the same expectations as I do. And so the condition of the building now is terrific. It was good when I came, it is better now. (SC 10/01/2014, 134-140)

Even though Remington had a glowing academic reputation when he arrived, Mr. Clark began to make some changes to the academic program offerings in an effort to enhance and improve the academic efforts at the high school. His first initiative was the creation of a “Freshman Academy.” Remington was the first high school in Montana to implement this concept. Clark explained the background to the origin of Freshman Academy at Remington,

I think we were the first high school in the state to implement freshman academies, and there again, happened to have a couple of middle school people who had come here at the same time that I did, and one of them came in and said, “I’d like to transfer,” and I asked why, because she was a fabulous English teacher, and she said, “because I feel very strongly in the team concept especially for young students, and we don’t have it here, so I am going to leave.” So I told her to talk to some folks and see if you can get them to join you. She did and we formed an experimental academy where we took two years of
data, copious data, and that’s what I based my doctorate on, was that information, and after two years, one of the members of that team who stepped up and said, “I’ll try it,” came up to me and he is six five and probably weighs about 260 pounds, head basketball coach, walked in here, and I was sitting at my desk and he took this ham-sized hand slammed it down on my desk and said “This isn’t an experiment, teaming works. We need to do it for all the freshman.” Well I had wanted to do that since I came [here] but that’s what I needed, so I said okay you write it up and make the presentation to the staff, show them the data and the next year we had a full, wall-to-wall freshman academy. So that’s an example of the way we’ve approached things here. (SC 10/01/2014, 169-183)

Another academic enhancement is the way Remington handles students at-risk for dropping out of high school. Clark implemented a multi-faceted approach to this problem:

We developed a transition program for incoming freshman. Students at risk are in the transition program. What that is, is one period a day they are with a specialist, and this guy is incredible, he’s been doing it for twenty years—incredible at reaching kids. Every teacher in the building mentors students who are struggling or who are at risk. Every teacher in the building identifies kids in their class and they mentor them. We have a credit recovery program. We have a credit recovery blitz program. In fact, the meeting right before this we were talking, that was our academic variance team, and we were talking about students who needed credit recovery. We have an ASAP program—After School Assistance Program—that runs until 5 o’clock in the evening. We have a Saturday school program that students can come in on Saturday. This is funny. Three years ago, we had this kid showing up for Saturday School. He would come in, sit down, ask questions, get help, get his work done, stay the full time, and leave. And finally one of
the Saturday School teachers asked one of the other Saturday School teachers, “do you
know who that is?” And the other says, “I don’t know, I’ve never seen him before.” So
they went over to the kid and he gave them his name. So, they went to the database, and
he is not in the database. They walk back over to him and said, “You’re not in our
database.” And he says, “Oh, I don’t go to school here, I go to school in Centerville.” He
had been coming here the whole semester working at Saturday School and getting his
homework done. But that is the culture we have instilled here. (SC 10/01/2014, 207-223)
Mr. Clark and his faculty have worked hard to instill and communicate the exceedingly
high expectations they have for the students at Remington High School. When asked how he
goes about communicating those expectations to the staff, he explains:
I meet with the departments. We have a leadership team and our leadership team meets
every month and then we meet twice during the summer for an extended retreat. We look
at data, we look at data and we talk about student success every Monday morning. Our
registrar puts out an “F” list and it’s by student, by class, with teacher name behind it.
We sort by teacher and it tells them this is how many Fs they have. And the teachers,
rather than taking offense at that, start zeroing in on those kids. Academic success is an
expectation here. And it’s a culture. (SC 10/01/2014, 191-196)
How does the administration and faculty communicate their expectations for students?
We tell kids, we tell kids if you walk through those doors as a student, you will earn a
diploma here. That is the expectation. It’s not if, or we want you to, it is that you will
earn a diploma and the operative word there is “earned.” We don’t lower the bar, and our
kids have bought in. Do we still have failures? Yes. Kids who don’t graduate? Yes.
But out of the student body over the last 15 years, the number of kids who dropped out of
this high school is about 19. And that is out of a student body of 1500. Very low dropout rate. We won’t let them drop. We won’t let them fail. But they have to earn it.

(SC 10/01/2014, 198-204)

Mr. Clark has a clear understanding of what the Big Water community expects from him, and the school he leads:

Number one, I think they expect good citizens, and we really instill that. I think that they expect our kids to come out of here prepared for whatever they want to pursue, college or certificate, or go directly to work. I think they expect us to have kids in school and teach them “soft skills.” I think they expect us to excel. I think our community expects, particularly RHS to maintain its reputation of excelling in all arenas—academics, athletics, performing in fine arts—that’s an expectation in our community. And when we don’t [meet those expectations], we hear about it. And that’s okay. (SC 10/01/2014, 236-241)

There are rumors that Mr. Clark will retire at the end of this school year, but he still has a definite vision for the direction he would like to see Remington move, no matter who is at the helm.

We have a school improvement team. And one of the gals who was in here with me [before the interview] is the chair of that team. I’m a real, real strong believer in team. Our school improvement initiatives are identified by that team. Some of them are in the “soft” arena some of them are in the academic arena. But academically, I want us to continue to grow. I want to see us improve “relevance,” and I think we need to get better at application of our academic areas. I want to see our CTE [career technology education] continue to grow. Health science…we’re at our limit now. I want to see our
dual credit, our college dual credit, grow. We offer now…kids can walk out of here with over 40 college credits, but we teach some college courses in areas that are not dual credit yet. I want to go in that direction. Also want to extend our tentacles into the “trade” world. We have agreements set up with Big Water College, where students are taking classes here and they earn a construction or welding certificate after they complete their senior year. I want to see those things grow. (SC 10/01/2014, 243-253)

When Mr. Clark was asked what the rewards of being a high school principal are, he looked back over his almost 50 year career in education, and replied:

  Watching kids succeed. Watching teachers succeed. Watching teachers grow. Having graduates…having students come back. My oldest students started drawing social security this year. And having them come back and say, “thank you.” You know what I took from here, or having a former student who is now pretty successful, very successful in business, walked into my office and he said, “you know what?” and he handed me a card and I said, “what is this for?” and he said, “that is for outing up with me when I was such a little shit, when I was here.” He said that, “if it hadn’t been for you, I wouldn’t be where I am today.” Watching the kids that leave here and they go and they excel at the college level. We had a young man who graduated from here, in fact he came and saw me, and he graduated from here in the class of 2011, and had completed his degree at Harvard in three years, was number one in his class and is in the doctoral program at Harvard now. But he came back to see me, say hi and to say thank you. Turning lives around. I mean that’s what it’s about. (SC 10/01/2014)

A small, rural Class B Montana high school principal

Farmington High School, a small, rural Class B high school, in Barley, Montana, and
well known in Montana for its tradition of academic and athletic excellence, has been ably led by
Fred Russell for the past seven years. Barley High School is a beautiful, older building
constructed in the 1950’s, with additions in the 70’s and in 2010 that blend in perfectly with the
original architectural style of the school. The high school has been the focal point of the
community and a source of pride for the people of Barely for more than 100 years. Currently,
there are 176 students enrolled at FHS. Of these students, 162 are white, 6 are Hispanic, 4 are
Native Americans, 3 are African American, and 1 is a foreign exchange student from China. The
high school has a faculty and staff of 24 that includes 19 teachers, two secretaries, and three

As we walk through the hallways of BHS, making final security checks, and turning off
lights, Mr. Russell relates that he began his educational career as a business teacher and coach
for a high school in western Montana. But, he didn’t enter college right after graduating high
school. Instead he held various jobs on ranches and farms, and even spent some time as a DJ,
searching for his life’s direction. He finally entered college, at 25 years old, to become a teacher
and coach because “the second most influential man in my life was my high school football
coach. So, I became a business teacher, just like he was. A football coach, just like he did” (FR
10/09/2014, 21-22). He taught at the western Montana high school for 16 years.

Mr. Russell describes his path to school leadership this way:

I got to watching my high school principal in Corvallis. She tried to guide me towards
administration and I wasn’t sure if I wanted to do that, although I was always in some
leadership role. I was the union president at a school with 110 staff and there was always
some sort of leadership position I was doing without even realizing it. And this ed
leadership position intrigued me and so back before online education was hip, I got my
degree online in a couple of years and then a few years later, I wasn’t sure I was going to take it anywhere, I decided it was time and I became a principal at a school of 80 kids, was there for three years and then I came to Barley. (FR 10/09/2014, 24-30)

When asked to describe his leadership style and the methods he uses as a school leader, Mr. Russell replies,

I used to think servant leadership was what I was and that’s what I wanted to be. You know, ‘how can I help you to become a better teacher?’ And I think that I am probably still close to that. But, I think relationships are a big part of leadership. If I understand someone and they understand me, I think the development of a mutual respect…so I try to figure out for every teacher what their needs are, what their emotional development needs are, and try to be a mentor and support what they want to do. Up until this year, we had an open grading scale. And I told the staff, “if you want to have a grading scale beyond this, you better be able to defend it.” And it was like that when I came here. But I try to be democratic, but I’m finding the more I am into my principal life, people wanted more, “tell us what you want and then we will do that.” So, maybe that’s not servant leadership anymore, although that’s what most people say they prefer, I think. (FR 10/09/2014, 44-53)

Mr. Russell’s graduate school preparation for school leadership and the principal’s position was a little different than the other three participants in this study. Russell completed his coursework in an online educational leadership program when these programs were in their infancy. Because it was online, Mr. Russell thinks that he missed out on the relationships that can develop in the face-to-face interactions that are common in a traditional university program. He thinks that he “was prepared quite well” (FR 10/09/2014, 58) because he took the instruction
seriously, setting aside time for study and online interaction with his cohort. When he took on his first principal assignment in a small high school in central Montana, he believed that his program had prepared him for the task at hand. There were some gaps in his instruction, but he sought out guidance from the superintendents he worked with, and picked up what he needed to know through a lot of practical experience (FR 10/09/2014, 58-63).

When asked about how accurately his job description lays out his duties and responsibilities as the high school principal at Barley High School, he shakes his head and smiles, “I don’t know if I’ve ever seen my job description!” He goes on to explain what he believes is his job as BHS’s instructional leader,

I believe that it should be the educational leader at the high school. To form a vision and send that to my staff so we are all pointing arrows at the same thing. I believe that is what it should be. I am also a “fireman.” And the interruptions are the frustrating part of the job. I call it a fireman because I am putting out spot fires. Student discipline, student conferences, toilets are backed up, “I can’t unlock my locker,” “I’m looking for a pair of orange shoelaces,” those are the things you need to help kids because they’re asking you for help, or staff. So, as far as job description, I try to be the educational leader and try to do what’s right. (FR 10/09/2014, 71-77)

When it comes to describing a “typical” work-week at BHS, Mr. Russell begins by setting the time parameters of his week. He starts out with,

Monday through Friday I arrive between 7 and 7:30 [in the morning] and I’ll go home around 5 or 6 p.m., or when I’m done. Some nights I come back up and then Saturdays I’ll come up if there is an event here. I come up and do work during the event or else I’ll come up and spend two or three hours on a Saturday. Sometimes I’ll come up on a
Sunday if something’s working at me and I need to get this done before the week, then I’ll go in on Sundays. But, that’s about what it is. (FR 10/09/2014, 79-83)

But when asked to more accurately describe what it is that he actually during his typical work-week, Mr. Russell provides relevant details,

Well, [first] greet the kids and the staff in the morning, get the school going, go and try to make contact with as many kids as I can, between classes, without disrupting classes, try to pop in on the younger teachers and the newer teachers, the untenured teachers, just to see how it’s going. Not to catch them doing anything, but just so I can talk to them like this, tell them they are doing a good job or, “think about this.” So they can feel like they have the support, and they do have that. We try to keep Wednesday nights open, so in the back of my mind I try to get out of here at 5 o’clock so nothing else is happening. Go to an event Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. If there is not one on Tuesday, there is one on Saturday. [I] Try not to miss any events because it’s important to the kids that they see me do that. (FR 10/09/2014, 86-93)

When Mr. Russell assumed principal duties at Barley High School, he related that he was told by his superintendent, “Things are going really smooth here, we don’t need somebody to come in and make a bunch of changes” (FR 10/09/2014, 95-96). He found himself trying to adjust to the way things were done at BHS, prior to assuming the principal position. But, he describes the school as having an aging staff, but still good teachers. His first impression was that, “some of the teachers I thought were weaker, at the beginning, are probably better teachers now, and the teachers I thought were more outstanding, were not as good. They had a good first layer, but down deep, they weren’t good teachers” (FR 10/09/2014, 99-102). The budget he inherited was adequate at the time he was hired, but has been shrinking as the years pass.
Concerning the facility and the technology assets of the school, he says, “I think our facilities are in great condition. Our technology was very poor when I came and I think our technology is much better now…” (FR 10/09/2014, 104-105). BHS has had a reputation for academic excellence for many years, “Academic wise our kids are well prepared. We have kids that are going to be doctors and lawyers and engineers and also trades” (FR 10/09/2014, 114-116).

The first challenge that Mr. Russell took on, upon his arrival at BHS, was to upgrade technology at the school. As he shows me through one of the three computer labs he has established since his arrival, he relates his initial response to the problem,

My first year the biggest frustration was [with] technology. And we could not…we couldn’t handle the computers that we had. We didn’t have enough bandwidth, we didn’t have anything like that. And so we had this money that is called “Indian Education for All” money, and we have Native American kids here, and we had 33,000 dollars left over. I could have bought a new suburban and take people to training. However, we took that money and put into our server, and upgraded our server so that in my second year we had technology, and we’ve been building on that since then. In fact, now we’re fiber optic and we have wireless access throughout the school. I would send out an email that says: “donuts are in the teachers’ lounge,” but I wouldn’t tell anybody. So the teachers would generally…I would start giving them information and the only way they would find it is on email. Our staff began to start using technology more and more. Quite honestly, that’s the big thing. I would hire technologically proficient people and would ask them, “do you have a smart phone?” Having a smart phone, they would do other things with it. So, technology-wise I have taken the school from little technology to academic technology like Chromebook, which is now in the classroom, and our
Chromebook lab is being alternated between two teachers doing a google classroom…. So, I’m pretty happy with that; with the technology and how we’re maintaining that. (FR 10/09/2014, 123-137)

The next major challenge to come Mr. Russell’s way was the implementation of the “Common Core Curriculum” adopted by the State of Montana in 2010. He describes his first encounter with “Common Core,” and his struggle to implement it at BHS, this way:

One of the things that came in as I became a principal… as I came to Barley is the Common Core. And, …when the No Child Left Behind [Act] came in, there was no information about it given to the staff. We knew nothing about it until the testing came in. So, in ’09 I went to my first “Common Core” meeting to see what the heck it was about, and they were very vague. I said, “what does it look like?” and was told, “that is something you guys will have to figure out.” Well we need some guidelines. “Well that is something you are going to figure out.” And so that was a very frustrating time, because everybody knew it was coming, but nobody wanted to give us direction. So, through looking we tried to implement this, and I tried to get the staff going. After our in-service this last week they are putting all those things together. So, we’re going to approach it in a different manner to support that. (FR 10/09/2014, 137-146)

Mr. Russell went on to describe some other academic issues he is working on:

Now, other academics. When I first came here, a student could be passing only three classes and still be able to participate in extra-curricular activities. Kids were failing classes and leaving school for different trips. And so we put in our eligibility standards. And that corrected… the first year was kind of difficult, we had kids missing games and missing activities but the next year, and the next year, our eligibility [rate] has been quite
good. I feel like that eligibility [standard] kept the academic standards and kept the academic integrity of the school in a good spot. (FR 10/09/2014, 146-152)

He continues,

We’ve implemented two more AP [Advanced Placement] classes since I’ve been here. We’ve implemented Montana Digital Academy, we’ve started an alternative school. And all of that is really great, but having the reading class is probably the biggest feather in my cap and helped the most kids. And maybe that’s supporting the lower end kids, but I still believe that an A student is going to get an A in the back of a horse trailer. That’s not dependent on the teacher. We need to challenge our upper level students and we have teachers that do that. Our advanced placement classes—our AP calculus, our AP Stats, and Advanced math—those are very challenging. AP Literature, those are challenging. So, I’m pretty darn comfortable with the [academic] support we’ve added since I have been here. (FR 10/09/2014, 152-159)

Mr. Russell has a firm belief that new principals can “learn far more from principals than” from college instructors (FR 10/09/2014, 181-182). He believes in “real people for the real world” and that “if you are teaching it to someone, you are developing a better vision of what it should be” (FR 10/09/2014, 182-183). And when asked what he thinks that the community expects from him and his high school, Russell commented,

I get far more calls about the grass on the football field than about the English department. However, I think the people want transparency. People want to have strict rules as long as it doesn’t get in their way. So you kind of have to be able to fluctuate that. You know, they want to have a budget minded person, fiscally sound. We don’t want people spending money on things that we don’t need. But, some of the things I’ve
spent money on, people really like. I think our community expects for us to prepare our kids for college and for life beyond high school. I always like to say that when a kid walks across our stage to graduate, “would you want that kid living right next door to you?” And hopefully you would want to. (FR 10/09/2014, 197-203)

When asked what the rewards of being a high school principal are, Mr. Russell explains, Relationships: with the kids, with the staff, with the community. If you can build a relationship with somebody, there’s going to be a level of trust there, and I feel confidence with that. Sometimes you have to do stuff that is not the most pleasant, however, if you say, “this is right, this is wrong,” you can get through the storms and you’re never going to make everyone happy. But, if you always try to do what you think is right, I feel like that’s going to be the best. And the relationships are going to get you tied through. I had a student…just an example, the student would come in to my office all the time and he was in trouble with law and he was in trouble all the time, just a troubled kid. He’d come in here and I’d talk to him and we’d talk. And he came in, just last weekend and he’s been out of school for four years. We have a great relationship. He hated his parents, he hated living in Barley, but he still comes back. So, I think that through relationships, you can help people grow. (FR 10/09/2014, 185-194)

**Summary**

All of the principals who participated in this study agreed that effective school principals are willing to do whatever it takes—operationally, organizationally, or academically—to ensure that their students are provided with outstanding academic opportunities and have an exceptional educational experience. Whether it is mopping the floor, replacing all of the academic department leaders, helping students to open their lockers, or implementing an early college high
school program, all of the principals insist that it is vitally important to the success of their school that they are willing to take action. They were all grounded in the practical aspects of their responsibilities to their students and the schools they lead.

From the data collected for this study, three themes developed that recur in all four interviews of the exceptional school leaders who participated in this study. First, they all insist that the vital first step to being an effective high school principal at a new school is to be observant: asking a lot of questions and then listening to the answers. Second, they all state that developing and sustaining relationships is the key to being an effective school leader. Finally, they all confirm that any change in their schools must be measured, carefully planned, and then vigorously and collaboratively implemented.

During each principal’s interview, when asked: What is the most important part of their job as a principal? each of these principals related that it is vitally important to impart on first-year, or beginning principals, that they must be observant: Ask a lot of questions and then listen for the answers before making any changes at their new school. For Dr. Brown, this means that a new principal “needs to first listen and watch what is going on around them in their new schools. Practice strategic planning to address ways to integrate changes into the school” (JB 04/16/2014, 87, 91). Mr. Rodriguez instituted a “cluster period” at his school. This was a period during the school-day in which the principal would meet with teachers and they would discuss instruction and curriculum at the school. They would review data and plan for instructional improvement, based on the data discussions (JR 10/08/2014, 92-98). Mr. Clark provided this advice, “…in that first year, I took a lot of notes, convinced people that they were going to be okay” (SC 10/01/2014, 167-168). He also offered this unique advice that was once recommended to him, as a new principal, by one of his mentors,
...when you assume a new job, number one, if you going into a new community… go to the cemetery and note the headstones and the names on the headstones, then go sit down in all of the places you can find where people gather and listen. Don’t talk, just listen.

When you get your first job, spend the first year asking a lot of questions, listening, observing, and asking a lot of ‘what ifs?’ before you start doing any changing…. (SC 10/01/2014, 149-153)

Finally, Fred Russell offered this advice for new principals, on being observant: “I try to pop in on the new younger teachers and the newer teachers, the untenured teachers, just to see how it is going. Not to catch them doing anything [wrong], but just so I can talk to them…. I try to figure out for every teacher what their needs are…” (FR 10/09/2014, 47, 87-89).

A second strong theme expressed by all of the principals is the need for effective school leaders to establish and build relationships. In each interview, the principals elaborate on this theme, each adding specific anecdotes about why they think that developing relationships with the faculty and staff, their students and parents, and the broader school community, is such an important part of what they do. Dr. Brown, principal at Mission Overlook High School, believes that principals need to “sit down with their teachers individually and begin to build relationships with teachers so the teachers in turn can build relationships with their students” (JB 04/16/2014, 89-91). She also thinks that through the relationships she develops with her faculty, staff, and students she knows she is “touching lives and trying to help people. For me it is fun being a part of people’s lives” (JB 04/16/2014, 93-94). For Joseph Rodriguez, at Mustang High School, the relationships he develops with his students lead to his “making an impact on these kids’ lives. Talking to them, visiting with them, giving them hope…” (JR 10/08/2014, 162-163). He also thinks that when selecting faculty and staff for his school it is important to have “people who are
going to build relationships with the students, people who care about the students…” (JR 10/08/2014, 148). For Stanley Clark, the principal at Remington High School, in Big Water, Montana, the reward of the relationship building comes when former students come back to “say, ‘hi’ and to say, ‘thank you.’ Turning lives around. I mean that is what it is all about” (SC 10/01/2014, 233-234). When Fred Russell was asked “what are the rewards of being a high school principal?” he had a one-word response: “Relationships” (FR 10/09/2014, 185). He went on to explain:

I think relationships are a big part of leadership. With the kids, with the staff, with the community. If you can build relationships with somebody, there’s going to be a level of trust there… and the relationships are going to get you through. I think through [developing] relationships, you can help people grow. (FR 10/09/2014, 45-46, 185-186, 189, 193-194)

When confronted with the need for change, whether it was an operational, organizational, or academic change, all of the principals take actions that are measured, carefully planned, collaborative, and then enthusiastically carried out. At Mission Overlook High School, Dr. Brown fervently believes that it is necessary for principals to “Practice strategic planning to integrate changes into the school. I listen to ideas from faculty and students and then help them do it” (JB 04/16/2014, 90, 99-100). She also believes that in order to get things done, that what “…makes a tremendous difference is hiring quality people and surrounding myself with people that are really very strong and competent and believe in the same philosophies that I do… working with people, kind of trying to find the win-win solution…” (JB 04/16/2014, 57-60). Joseph Rodriguez echoes the thoughts of his cross-state colleague, “I use a lot of input from teachers, letting them have a voice, empowering them in the decision-making process, always
work in committees. When we have decisions to make, we make them by committee, and I always stand by my teachers…” (JR 10/08/2014, 39-47). For Stanley Clark and the faculty at Remington High School, change begins with, “asking a lot of questions, listening, observing, and asking a lot of ‘what ifs?’ before you start doing any changing. I follow that philosophy and it worked very well for me” (SC 10/01/2014, 151-154). Mr. Clark also said:

I’ve always had greater success [with implementing changes] planting a seed and letting someone else think the idea was theirs and watching it grow and not being an autocrat and saying this is the way we are going to do things, or this is what is going to happen. That would probably be my style as a collaborative leader. (SC 10/01/2014, 61-64)

He added that it is also important for the principal “to make the need to improve apparent” (SC 10/01/2014, 186-187). For Mr. Russell, initiating changes at Barley High School was problematic:

When I assumed this position, my superintendent said, ‘Things are going really smooth here, we don’t need somebody to come in and make a bunch of changes.’ So, when I would see something that maybe didn’t work for me, I would try to adjust because that was my…directive….” (FR 10/09/2014, 95-98)

After a while, however, changes did have to be made and his approach to change was, I try to be democratic, but I’m finding the more I am into my principal life, people wanted more, “tell us what you want and then we will do that.” So, now I try to form a vision of what I want the campus to be and send that to my staff so that we are all pointing arrows at the same thing.” (FR 10/09/2014, 50-52, 72-73)

For all of the principals in this study, it is practical experience, the things they actually do, and the actions they take to get the job done that drive their effectiveness as school leaders
and enables them to lead successful high schools. It appears that the further a principal moves into the practical experiences of being a principal, theory becomes practice.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction and Purpose of the Chapter

Leadership skills have been examined by researchers from various perspectives. Early analyses of leadership differentiated between leader and follower characteristics. Finding that no single trait or combination of traits fully explained leaders’ abilities, researchers examine what influence leaders’ skills have in varying school contexts. Subsequent studies attempt to distinguish effective from non-effective leaders (Williams, 2006). Most researchers of school leadership focuses on identifying the school leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies employed by principals who lead both successful and effective schools (see, e.g., Bolman & Deal, 1994; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Lambert, 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Sergiovanni, 1984; Silins & Mulford, 2002). The purpose of this study was to identify school leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies common to successful and effective school leadership, and to identify what these high school principals actually do to implement these strategies within their school leadership practices. The investigation also targets how school leadership styles, traits, and characteristics manifest themselves in what successful high school principals actually do, every day, as they lead their schools. This chapter presents a review of the study, a discussion of the data, the conclusions that can be drawn from the discussion, and recommendations for further research and practice.

Research Questions

This study examines the school leadership actions that are common among four high
school principals who lead successful and effective high schools, through the investigation of the following general research question:

What are the manifestations of the common school leadership strategies employed by successful and effective high school principals as they carry out their practice of school leadership?

And, these two underlying research questions:

(1) What are the school leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and leadership strategies common to successful and effective high school principals?

(2) How are common school leadership strategies implemented by successful and effective high school principals?

**Methodology**

This study incorporated qualitative methodology to determine if there is a commonality in what successful and effective school leaders actually do to implement their leadership strategies and how these actions affect the academic achievement of the school. A multiple case study model is used. The study focuses on four successful high schools: two in Texas and two in Montana. The schools are rural, urban, and suburban; large, medium, and small; headed by males and females of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

**Participant Selection**

For this study, interviews and observations were conducted with the principals of four successful high schools, a suburban high school in Texas, a rural high school in Texas, a high school in large city in Montana, and a small high school in rural Montana. Each principal was considered successful using multiple measures such as standardized test results, accountability ratings, graduation rates, attendance rates, SAT results, teacher turnover rates, and college
readiness measures. The schools were considered successful in numerous areas including: state accountability scores and ratings, academics, school attendance rates, graduation rates, and teacher turnover rates. The four high schools studied were: one rural, 3A high school in Texas; one rural, Class B school in Montana; one suburban, 4A high school in Texas; and, one Class AA high school in a large city in Montana. The high school principals were three males and one female. One principal is a Hispanic male, and all participants have headed their respective schools for at least five years.

**Data Collection**

Three types of data collection methods—interviews, document reviews, and direct observation—were used in this study. According to Burton (2000), triangulation is defined as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior” (p. 298). The use of several different types of data sources within the same study adds to the validity of research results (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The three data collection methods that were incorporated in this study enabled the researcher to select participants, triangulate the data, and assisted in ensuring the trustworthiness and usefulness of this study.

**Interpretive Framework**

Because the sheer volume of professional literature on leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies is so vast, this study uses an effective school leadership framework suggested by Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, and Brown (2010) as the interpretive framework (Figure 5.1). Day et al. identified eight dimensions of effective school leadership that are present through multiple phases of a school principal’s career. The dimensions identify specific leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies that are the core practices of effective school leaders. The phases are not necessarily sequential.
The eight dimensions of successful school leaders include: (1) define their values and vision to raise expectations, set direction, and build trust; (2) reshape the conditions for teaching and learning; (3) restructure parts of the organization and redesign leadership roles and responsibilities; (4) enrich the curriculum; (5) enhance teacher quality; (6) enhance the quality of teaching and learning; (7) build collaboration internally; and (8) build strong relationships outside the school community (Day et al., 2010, p. 4). When the three phases of school leadership success: i.e., foundational phase, developmental phase, and enrichment phase are added to the attributes of effective school leadership, the resulting framework allows for a more effective analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this study.

Day et al. (2010) present a timely and relevant amalgam and blended enumeration of leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies exhibited by effective high school principals that have been examined by research for the past sixty years. Case studies of what principals actually do to manifest these leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies may be of practical use to beginning and experienced school leaders. The purpose of this study is to make two contributions to professional educational literature: First, is to present a concise and thorough review of leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies of effective high school principals; and second, is to more thoroughly identify and describe exactly what principals do, in their daily practices, which make them effective leaders of successful high schools. The report of the data for this study may provide practical guidance and real-world examples of what effective high school principals actually do to lead successful schools. The case studies may also be beneficial to aspiring and experienced school principals, as they seek practical ways to improve their leadership practice.

The interpretive framework suggested by Day et al. (Figure 5.1) guides the discussion of
Figure 5.1. Interpretive framework illustrating the movement of leadership practices from theory to what school leaders actually do to implement their leadership practices. Adapted from "10 Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership," by C. Day, P. Sammons, D. Hopkins, A. Harris, K. Leithwood, Q. Gu, and E. Brown, 2010. Professional development presentation published by: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services, p. 4. Copyright 2010 by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services.
the research questions and the responses to these questions the data suggests. The data reported in Chapter Four indicates that the eight dimensions of the interpretive framework suggested by Day et al. (2010) are exhibited by what effective school leaders actually do to manifest these leadership dimensions. The main focus of this study is “how” effective school leaders manifest leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies in their day-to-day activities. As well as sharing many of the same leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies, the successful high school principals who were a part of this study also put into practice these common leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and strategies by taking many of the same actions.

**Discussion of findings**

The data reported for this study indicate that not only do effective high school principals share many of the same leadership characteristics, traits, skills, and strategies; they also share ways of getting things done. There is a common set of actions shared by these principals in the day-to-day activities that they engage to lead their respective high schools to be effective learning institutions and to foster the academic success of the students housed in these buildings. According to Day et al., all successful school principals move through a number of phases during their school leadership careers (Day et al., 2010). While the number of phases can vary, they could be classified under three broad headings—foundational, developmental, and enrichment (Day et al., 2010). The phases described in this study may not be sequential, depending on the task or situation at hand (Day et al., 2010).

**The foundational aspects of effective school leadership**

In the foundational phase, new principals, or principals new to the building, tend to focus on improving the physical environment of the school and to begin their tenure with positive actions. New principals also set out new standards and expectations for students and staff, begin
the evaluation process to determine how to restructure their organizations, to improve program
effectiveness, and put into place new performance management systems (Day et al., 2010).

Dr. Brown began her tenure at Mission Overlook High School with a reputation for
“getting things done. I used that reputation…and worked on changing what had been the habits
of the high school faculty and staff” (JB 04/16/2014, 72-73). The first academic change she
made was to the mathematics program at MOHS. She found that “…students liked math, until
they got to high school. I looked for new math teachers who were student-oriented, competent
and targeted their professional development to rebuild the math department” (JB 04/16/2014, 74-
75). As she worked on improving the academic programs at MOHS, she also, “…rotated up
some of the teachers I had worked with at the junior high school. I worked on changing the
culture of the school and worked at improving the faculty and staff. [I] hired some new
[personnel] and moved some people out” (JB 04/16/2014, 80-82).

At Mustang High School, Mr. Rodriguez had taken over a school that had not met the
Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) mandated by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act for three
years (JR 10/08/2014, 83-84). He began to make changes in his academic program, almost
immediately. First, he implemented:

…what was called a ‘cluster’ period. During ‘cluster’ they [teachers] would basically
talk about instruction and curriculum [improvements]. We started doing ‘mastery
checks’ every fifteen days. We started on…the student expectations that were being
tested…and then get the data, go over the data…making sure that we were covering
everything, formatively. So, our cluster meetings moved away from just talking in theory
and generalities, to being more specific and data driven. (JR 10/08/2014, 92-100)

But this only addressed half of the academic improvements needed at MHS. A problem with
“toxic” teachers was also a focus of improving the academic program for Mr. Rodriguez (JR 10/08/2014, 86). When he arrived at Mustang High School, Rodriguez discovered that he “had teachers that were ‘toxic’” (JR 10/08/2014, 86). With the full support of the superintendent, Rodriguez moved out the toxic teachers and assembled a faculty that not only moved MHS to meeting the AYP standards, but also led to the campus being designated a “Recognized” campus by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (JR 10/08/2014, 113-116).

In Montana, Stanley Clark faced a different sort of challenge. Remington High School has had a reputation for academic excellence almost from its inception, but Clark believed there was still room for it to grow academically (SC 10/01/2014, 166-167). The first thing he did was to implement “…freshman academies. I think we were the first high school in the state to implement freshman academies” (FC 10/01/2014, 165-166). These academies use a “teaming” concept that keep freshmen together during their first year of high school (SC 10/01/2014, 172-173). Clark found more room for growth in the college dual-credit program offered at RMS: “I want to see our…college dual credit grow. We offer now…kids can walk out of here with over forty college credits, but we teach some college courses that are not dual credit, yet. I want to go in that direction” (SC 10/01/2014, 248-250). For those students not headed to the university after high school, Clark also wanted to begin:

…to extend our ‘tentacles’ into the ‘trade’ world. We have agreements set up with Big Water College, where these students are taking classes here [at RHS] and they earn a construction or welding certificate after they complete their senior year. I want to see those things grow. (SC 10/01/2014, 250-253)

Fred Russell began his tenure at Barley High School with a problematic mandate from his superintendent, who directed, “Things are going really smooth here, we don’t need somebody to
come in here and make a bunch of changes” (FR 10/09/2014, 95-96). Despite this inauspicious start to his tenure at BHS, Mr. Russell began to look for ways to make needed academic improvements to the campus’s academic program. He focused on the addition of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, dual-credit college courses and Montana’s Digital Academy (FR 10/09/2014, 152-153). He also added the support of an alternative school for academically and behaviorally struggling students (FR 10/09/2014, 153). But the academic enhancement that he believes is “biggest feather in my cap and helped the most kids,” (FR 10/09/2014, 154-155) was the establishment of a reading program that focuses on incoming ninth grade students who do not read well. Mr. Russell has strong feelings that in order to be successful in high school, or life, students must be able to read. Another policy he initiated at the high school to enhance academics is the extra-curricular eligibility policy. This policy set the standards and expectations students must meet in order to participate in extra-curricular activities (FR 10/09/2014).

**The developmental aspects of effective school leadership**

During the “developmental” phase of effective school leadership, principals focus on a wider distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities. They also rely on the more regular and focused use of data to inform their decision-making about how to further develop programs that will enhance student learning and achievement (Day et al., 2010). All of the principals in this study were actively engaged in expanding the academic opportunities for all of their students, and they all have a genuine belief in the real meaning and practice of “no child left behind.”

Dr. Brown took an active role in improving the mathematics courses and instruction at Mission Overlook High School. Mr. Rodriguez looked to expand the college courses available at Mustang High School by moving the school into the “Early College High School” program in
Texas. Mr. Clark also looked to expand not only the college courses available to his students, but also to enhance the technical trade opportunities to be offered at Remington High School for those students who may not be going to college, through forming partnerships with the local university and technical college. Clark also turned his focus to students at the other end of the academic spectrum, and has put many academic support systems in place. These include: transition programs, credit recovery programs, mentoring programs, and “Saturday School” homework programs (SC 10/01/2014). Mr. Russell also began to expand the dual credit, Advanced Placement, and the technical trade course offerings at Barley High School.

All of the principals became actively involved in all aspects of their school’s operation. All agreed that it was important for the principal to be prepared to take over many aspects of the physical operations of their schools, when needed. Whether it was Stan Clark, at Remington High School “swinging a mop, or shoveling snow” (SC 10/01/2014), or Fred Russell, at Barley High School, tending to “backed-up toilets” (FR 10/09/2014), or Dr. Brown, at Mission Overlook High School, working in the recently installed “coffee bar, in the library” (JB 04/16/2014), or Mr. Rodriguez, at Mustang High School, “mopping the floor because somebody spilled something at the game” (JR 10/08/2014, 66-67), all of the principals believe it is their duty to be willing to do whatever needs to be done to maintain an outstanding physical plant for their students, faculty, and staff. None of them shy away from doing whatever is needed, nor do they look for someone else to come and take care of the immediate needs of facility maintenance, because after all, they are the principal. All believe that it is important for the high school principal to attend as many school activities as possible and to be “visible” in the hallways and visit as many classrooms, every day, as is possible. None are hesitant to put in the long hours necessary to be the “conspicuous” leaders they believe is a
vital part of their job (JB 04/16/2014; SC 10/01/2014; JR 10/08/2014, 10/09/2014).

The enrichment aspects of effective school leadership

After several years of school leadership, principals begin to focus on strategies that are
designed to personalize and enrich the curriculum of the school they lead. They can also look to
further expanding the distribution of leadership on campus (Day et al., 2010). Each of the
principals in this study focused on improving the organizational aspects of their respective
schools, mainly by ensuring that they recruit, hire, support, and sustain “high quality” faculty and
staff who can move the organization forward. They all also recognize that sometimes it is
necessary to remove teachers and staff that are “toxic” (JR 10/08/2014, 124-134) to their
organizations. They all recognize the need for high quality, focused professional development
for teachers, the need to act as coaches and mentors for their faculty and staff, and the need to
ensure that everyone is in the “right seat on the bus” (Collins, 2001, p. 27). Once all are in their
proper roles, all of these effective school leaders worked diligently to ensure that the entire
organization is supported and nurtured. Dr. Brown replaced all of her academic department
chairs in an effort to change “what had been the habits of the high school faculty and staff” (JB
04/16/2014, 73). She also “looked for new math teachers who were student oriented, competent,
and [then] targeted their professional development to rebuild the math department” (JB
04/16/2014, 74-75). At Mustang High School, Mr. Rodriguez also removed the “toxic” teachers
who had been a part of his faculty upon his arrival, with the full support of the superintendent.
He was able to move out these teachers and bring in the faculty that moved the school to
“Recognized” status in only one year (JR 10/08/2014, 128-134). Even though Mr. Clark at
Remington High School was fortunate to inherit a high quality and competent teaching staff, he
selected about 85-90% of the current faculty at RHS (SC 10/08/2014, 187).
Mr. Russell, at Barley, has seen almost no turnover in the past seven years.

Conclusions

Educational research conducted over the past sixty years has thoroughly considered and enumerated the leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and leadership strategies that identify what it means to be an effective school leader. The purpose of this study was to identify and document what exactly these effective school leaders actually do to lead successful schools. This study has also documented what specific actions the selected high school principals take to impact and enhance the academic success of their students. It is important to study and report what actions taken by effective school leaders lead to effective schools and successful students. The research has confirmed, by almost every study cited in this dissertation, that successful schools require effective school leadership. It must now be our task to identify the specific actions these school leaders take that makes our pronouncements about the importance of effective school leaders valid.

The framework developed to analyze and interpret the data from this study provides a “window” for the movement of theory to practice. The interpretive framework derived from the eight dimensions of successful school leadership described in the research of Day et al. (2010), and set in the context of the phases of a principal’s career, illustrates how the each of the eight dimensions might be put into action by effective principals who lead successful schools. The eight dimensions of school leadership may be manifested in any, all, or none of the phases. Although the phases in the interpretive framework suggest a sequence, principals may find themselves operating in many phases at the same time, or in varying sequences of the phases depending on the circumstances of the school they lead.

It is also important to for educational leadership researcher to make efforts to expand on
the “what’s” of quantitative and qualitative studies on effective leadership and move to the practical “how’s” and “whys” of effective school leadership. Researchers should begin to illuminate how and why school leaders lead and take the actions they take to lead successful and effective schools. This study has been one step in that direction.

Recommendations

Future Research

If for no other reason than the limited sample employed in this inquiry, it is evident from this study that there is a need for further study of the practical aspects of school leadership. Future researchers may want to focus attention to “what works” and the “best practices” of effective school leaders. Such new research would complement the extensive body of professional literature—collected over the past 60 years—that identifies the leadership styles, traits, characteristics, and leadership strategies of effective school principals. It will be important to the training and education of future school leaders that research of the practical—at all levels of school and district leadership—becomes an integral part of the educational leadership programs at institutions charged with preparing new leadership for our schools and school districts. Questions for future research may include:

- What do effective school boards actually do?
- What do effective superintendents actually do?
- What do effective high school principals actually do?
- What do effective middle school principals actually do?
- What do effective elementary school principals actually do?

The answers to these questions are extremely important as educational leadership programs prepare new leaders for school and school district leadership.
Another avenue for prospective research may be in determining leadership styles of school leaders and then investigating whether there are common actions school leaders take based on their leadership styles. At this point the question remains of school leaders: Do skills, traits, characteristics, and strategies determine what school leaders actually do in their day-to-day practice of leadership, or, is what school leaders actually do determined by the skills, traits, characteristics, and strategies they possess? An interesting research approach might be case-studies of school leaders who are identified as transformational [or transactional, instructional, authoritarian, democratic, servant, etc.] leaders share common leadership strategies and actions with those leaders likewise identified. Investigation into the relationship of leadership styles and the actions taken by principals who exhibit the various leadership styles may also provide insight for the selection of school leaders.

**Practice**

Just as there are several “clearinghouses” established for “best practices” of teachers, there should be one or more these clearinghouses established to consolidate the research of the “best practices” for school administrators that focuses on the practical aspects of what school leaders actually do. More qualitative research focusing on the “how’s” and “whys” of effective school leaders is paramount in order to provide aspiring school leaders, and those who seek to improve their school leadership practices, with “real world” insight. Attention to the practical aspects of educational leadership may also encourage educational leadership programs to continue to augment their instructional programs with “real world” examples and experience of how school leaders move theory to practice.

The addition of a “practical school leadership” course to the current course of studies offered by universities providing graduate educational leadership programs might be beneficial
to aspiring principals, or school principals seeking ways to improve their practice. Such a course might focus on the varied, practical, and “real world” actions taken by effective principals who lead successful schools. Based on more than sixty years of research of the characteristics, traits, skills, and strategies of successful principals, the course would provide a “window” to the “best practices” of school principals and what they actually do in their day-to-day leadership role. The course should be led by a currently practicing school leader, or a recently retired principal or superintendent with extensive school leadership experience. Such a course might provide valuable insight to prospective school leaders and expose them to the “realities” of leading successful schools.
APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Principals

1. Tell me about yourself – what is your experience and why did you choose to become a high school principal?

2. Describe your school – how many staff members and students do you supervise, what are the demographics of staff and students, how old is the school?

3. Describe your leadership style and methods.

4. How do you feel about your preparation for your current position?

5. How does your job description define your responsibilities, and do you think this accurately describes what you actually do as a school principal?

6. How would you describe a “typical” work-week?

7. Describe the condition and status of the school when you assumed the principal position.

8. Describe, in detail, what you did to maintain what was working and to implement the changes – organizationally, operationally, and academically – you deemed necessary to improve school effectiveness and student achievement?

9. Based on your experiences at this school, what do aspiring and practicing principals need to know and able to do to improve their schools’ effectiveness and their students’ academic success?

10. What are the rewards of being a high school principal?

11. What do you think the community expects from you and your school? What makes you believe that?

12. What are your future plans for school improvement?
APPENDIX B

Observation Guide

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Location:

Setting:

Observation Scene:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of Observation</th>
<th>Reflections of Interviewer</th>
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APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

Donald E. Mathis, M.S.
Faculty Sponsor: David Thompson, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
UTSA

Dear Mr. Mathis:

On March 11, 2014 the IRB approved:

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<th>Type of review:</th>
<th>New submission</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>School Leadership: Implementation of Effective Leadership Practices by Four successful High School Principals in Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal investigator:</td>
<td>Donald E. Mathis, M.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty sponsor:</td>
<td>David Thompson, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB number:</td>
<td>14-113E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND or IND number, if any:</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>HHS grant title and ID, if any:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documents reviewed:</td>
<td>Application for the Use of Human Subjects, Protocol, Consent forms, Recruitment material</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Copies of any approved consent documents, consent scripts, or assent documents are attached.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements in “INVESTIGATOR GUIDANCE: Investigator Obligations (HRP-800).”

Sincerely,

IRB Office

Created by WIRB Copernicus Group, Inc. for University of Texas San Antonio
Appendix C – Initial contact letter for identified study candidates

Donald Everett Mathis

San Antonio, Texas • 210-380-5112 • demathis@yahoo.com

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

Dear (Principal’s Name),

I am a high school principal preparing to do my doctoral study: School leadership: Implementation of effective leadership practices by four successful high school principals in Texas. The study will focus on what high school principals actually do to implement effective leadership practices at their school. After my initial data analysis of Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data from 1995-2011, you, and your school, have been identified as potential candidates for my study. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this study.

I propose to gather the information stated above by conducting one taped interview, up to two hours in length, with each participating principal. The interview will be followed by an observation of school operations to identify specific practices, policies, and procedures discussed during the interview. One additional interview with a teacher or administrator may be conducted, based on the information gathered during your interview. Principals invited to participate are from 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, or 5A high schools located in rural, sub-urban, and urban high schools who have been identified as effective school leaders of academically successful high schools. Participation is voluntary and may be discontinued at any time before, during, or after the interview. The information collected in the interview will be held to strict standards of confidentiality, and your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Prior to conducting the interview, I will ask you to sign an informed consent form, which details this information for your protection.

This letter of invitation to participate will be followed by a telephone call in the next week to ten days to arrange a mutually convenient time and place to hold the interview. I realize the constraints on your schedule, but I hope you can find an hour or two to contribute your perceptions and practices about our complex and demanding work.

If you have any questions related to participation in this study, please call me at (210) 880-7392, during the day, or at (210) 380-5112, in the evenings or on weekends. You may also contact my dissertation committee chair, Dr. David Thompson, professor at University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), at (210) 289-7552.

I look forward to talking with you soon about including you in this project.

Sincerely yours,

Donald E. Mathis
CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH AS A HUMAN SUBJECT

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Title of Project: School leadership: Implementation of effective leadership practices by four successful high school principals in Texas
Study sites: UTSA

Principal Investigator(s): Donald E. Mathis, M.S.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. You will also receive a copy of this form to keep for your reference. The Principal Investigator or his/her representative will provide you with any additional information that may be needed and answer any questions you may have. Read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before you decide whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to participate or withdraw at anytime without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

What is the purpose of the study?
We are asking you to take part in a study of what effective high school principals actually do to implement effective leadership practices. We want to learn what principals actually do to implement effective leadership practices at their schools. We are asking you to take part in this study because you have been identified, by AEIS data analysis, as an effective high school principal leading a successful high school.

What will be done if you agree to take part in this research study?
I will come to your high school and conduct an interview with you that will take no more than two hours. I will use audio recording equipment to record our interview, the recording will be kept in a secure place, and the recordings will be heard only for research purposes. The recording will be erased after they have been transcribed or coded. I will also provide you with a written copy of our interview transcripts, hand delivered or via regular mail, for your review. This will ensure the accuracy of the interview notes.

Upon completion of the interview, I would like to observe you, no longer than the regular school day, as you go through your normal conduct of school operations, paying particular attention to those actions identified as being crucial to your implementation of effective leadership practices. During the interview, if I identify other school personnel (i.e., another administrator, or teacher) who might lend perspective to my line of inquiry, I would like to conduct an interview with that individual, again, for no longer than two hours. I would also like the opportunity to review documents that you have created as a part of your school leadership practice, e.g. student handbooks, student code of conduct, disciplinary procedures, etc.

What are the possible benefits to society from this research?
This study is being conducted to help aspiring school leaders and practicing school leaders to better understand what effective high school principals actually, and specifically, do to lead operationally effective and academically successful high school campuses.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study or to withdraw from the study at any time. Your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at San Antonio.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?
Once the data have been collected, the code that links to your identity will be destroyed. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. Your records
CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH AS A HUMAN SUBJECT

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Title of Project: School leadership: Implementation of effective leadership practices by four successful high school principals in Texas
Study sites: UTSA

participation may be used in publications and/or presentations but your identity will not be disclosed. I will use audio recording equipment to record our interview, the recording will be kept in a secure place, and the recordings will be heard only for research purposes. The recording will be erased after they have been transcribed or coded

How can you withdraw from this research study and whom should you call if you have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation for any reason, please contact the principal investigator, Donald E. Mathis at , or tell the research personnel. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

If you have questions now, you may ask the principal investigator (or representative staff). If you have questions later, you may contact David Thompson, Ph.D. at .

If you believe you may have been harmed by your participation in this study, contact David Thompson, Ph.D., Faculty Sponsor, at . In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, you may contact the University of Texas at San Antonio Institutional Review Board at (210) 458-6473.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study or to withdraw from the study at any time. Your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at San Antonio (and specify any additional sites/institutions).

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time.

You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Printed Name of Subject __________________________ Signature of Subject __________________________ Date __________________________

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent __________________________ Signature of Person Obtaining Consent __________________________ Date __________________________

v3/2013

Page 2 of 2

UTSA IRB# 14-113E
Date Approved: 3/11/14
REFERENCES


Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. F., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weifield,


published by: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services.


Publishers.


VITA

Donald E. Mathis, after leading a nomadic lifestyle for the past 35 years, has made his home in Conrad, Montana. He has earned two Bachelor’s degrees – the first in History and the second in Political Science – from The University of Texas at Arlington. He completed his Master’s degree work, in Education, at The University of Tennessee, in Knoxville, Tennessee. With this dissertation, he completes his Doctorate in Education degree in, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Dr. Mathis has served as an officer in the United States Army and held positions as an instructional technologist, over-the-road truck driver, high school and middle school teacher, high school and middle school assistant principal, high school principal, and currently serves as the Superintendent of Schools for Conrad Public School District #10 in Conrad, Montana. After serving in educational positions in nine different school districts – in five states – his future plans include only serving as the superintendent for Conrad Public Schools until he is no longer physically or mentally able to serve in that capacity.