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2018

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF PRINCIPALS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF HIGH-POVERTY STUDENTS

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Recommended Citation

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF PRINCIPALS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF HIGH-POVERTY STUDENTS

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The College of Education and Human Services

Department of Educational Studies, Leadership, and Counseling

at Murray State University

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

P-20 & Community Leadership

Specialization: PK-12

Under the supervision of Dr. Teresa Clark

Murray, KY

December 2018

ABSTRACT

This quantitative research study focused on teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the instructional leadership skills of their principals and the academic achievement of students in high-poverty schools in the Northwest Tennessee CORE region. All 14 of the participating schools were above the 50 percent threshold to be considered a high-poverty school. According to the overall effectiveness rating levels for TCAP performance on the 2014-2015 Tennessee Department of Education Report Card, four schools were rated as below average performance, three schools were rated as average performance, and six schools were rated as above average performance. The teachers surveyed (N=44) from the 14 schools provided their perceptions of their principals' instructional leadership skills according to three of the subscales on the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) created by Philip Hallinger in 1983. The three subscales that were included in the teacher survey were promoting professional development, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress. The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was used to analyze the relationship between the three different subscales and the teacher survey responses at the three different achievement school levels. After performing the MANOVA test in SPSS, the conclusion of this quantitative study was there were no statistically significant differences in any of the three different subscales on the PIMRS survey.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Successful schools are complex, collaborative institutions that require a high level of performance from every professional in the building. School success begins with the school principal, who has the primary responsibility for ensuring that all students meet challenging grade level or college and career readiness standards. The intent of this research study is to indicate that the principal's instructional leadership skills have a direct effect on whether a school becomes a dynamic learning organization or a failed enterprise.

Unfortunately, many new principals today are not ready for the demands of the job and find it difficult to tackle all the daily duties while putting the instructional vision of the school in action. A 2012 study of first-year principals by New Leaders, a national nonprofit that develops school leaders, found that 20 percent of new principals left their jobs within the first two years. The principals who were at the lowest-performing schools were the ones who were most likely to leave. This is a compounding problem because schools that lost their principals were more likely to perform poorly the following year. These findings show that a lack of stability in a school leader hurts schools and therefore highlights the importance of districts having well-designed plans for training and support for their new principals.

The new generation of principals is younger and is coming into the profession with less teaching experience. Clifford (2012) points out that today's principal workforce is more mobile, works more hours, and experiences more job stress. New principals report being underprepared to evaluate teaching, provide teachers with meaningful feedback, and balance their daily tasks.

Much of this turnover can be attributed to the changing role of the principal over the last 20 years. For many years it was commonplace for the primary roles of the principal to be very

good managers of day-to-day activities and take care of discipline for the school. However, the role of principal has morphed over the last twenty years to include instructional leader, aspirational leader, team builder, coach, and visionary while still being a good manager.

Background of the Problem

Public education has faced significant changes with demands for accountability and increased student achievement. Much of that attention can be linked back to the passage of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The federal government has historically provided only minimal involvement in the day-to-day operations of public schools. Under the NCLB, all public schools must administer state assessments to students in grades three through eight and grade 10 in core content areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The law mandated that every school must demonstrate annual progress toward the goal that all students perform on standardized tests at a proficient or advanced level in the content areas by 2014. Each state must establish grade-level benchmarks of achievement and schools across the country must report student test scores by school. Additionally, the law added vigorous accountability standards to schools and outlined serious consequences a school may face if it does not meet student-achievement standards. One of the most drastic penalties a school can face is the removal of the principal. With those mandates set in place by NCLB, the federal government took a step into every classroom in the United States of America.

In Tennessee, the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) was developed to measure the impact teachers have on students' academic growth. The TVAAS model uses data from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) to calculate yearly growth for all students in the state. According to the Tennessee Department of Education Assessment brief (2015), in order to calculate growth for students, TVAAS looks at a student's

past testing data and predicts his or her growth based on the average growth of students statewide with similar initial levels of achievement. A TVAAS score for a teacher is determined by examining the amount of growth above, below, or just at expectations that each of the teacher's students make in a given school year. Each student's growth is compared to the growth they were predicted to make during that school year. The TVAAS data allow teachers to reflect on their instruction, to highlight their strengths and pinpoint opportunities for growth. The TVAAS data also informs school and district leaders of individual students or groups of students who need targeted instructional interventions. This information can inform professional development opportunities for teachers, need for after-school tutoring programs, or the hiring and distribution of instructional coaches.

The Tennessee Department of Education state report card (2015) categorizes student test results into four scoring categories by achievement level indicators on the TCAP assessment. The highest scoring achievement level is advanced, which includes students whose performance demonstrate superior mastery in academic performance, thinking abilities, and application of understandings that reflect the knowledge and skill specified by the grade or course-level content standards. The second highest scoring achievement level on the TCAP is proficient, which includes students whose performance demonstrate mastery in academic performance, thinking abilities, and application of understandings that reflect the knowledge and skill specified by the grade or course-level content standards. The next to lowest achievement level is Basic, which includes students whose performance level demonstrate partial mastery in academic performance, thinking abilities, and application of understandings that reflect the students are minimally prepared for the next level of study. The lowest scoring achievement level is below basic, which includes students whose performance level have not demonstrated mastery in

academic performance, thinking abilities, and application of understandings and are not prepared for the next level of study.

Statement of the Problem

According to the Tennessee Education Department state report card (2015), more than 60 percent of the students in the state of Tennessee were identified as economically disadvantaged. Additionally, the TCAP testing results for the 2014-2015 school year, 64 percent who were economically disadvantaged scored in the basic or below basic category on the 3rd-8th grade Reading and Language Arts section. For the same year, 45 percent of the economically-disadvantaged students scored in the basic or below basic category on the 3rd-8th grade Math section.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to determine if there is a direct relationship between the instructional leadership skills of the principal as perceived by teachers with the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students. This study examines the extent to which principals in above average, average, and below average performing Tennessee elementary schools promote professional development, supervise and evaluate instruction, and monitor student progress as perceived by teachers.

Research Questions

The following three questions served as this study's primary research questions:

1. According to teachers' perceptions, how do principals in high, average, or low-performing Tennessee elementary schools with high-poverty differ in the selection and participation of professional development programs?

2. According to teachers' perceptions, how do principals in high, average, or low-performing Tennessee elementary schools with high-poverty differ in supervising and evaluating instruction?

3. According to teachers' perceptions, how do principals in high, average, or low-performing Tennessee elementary schools with high-poverty differ in monitoring student progress?

Definition of Terms

1. High-Poverty Students- students who participate in the federal free or reduced lunch program.

2. Principal- the leader in a school setting.

3. Elementary School- public Tennessee school with a K-5 or 3-5 configuration.

4. Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) – state-mandated assessment administered in grades 3-8 in Tennessee schools each spring.

5. Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) – Value-added measure that quantifies students' progress within a grade and subject every year.

6. Value Added Gains- The minimum standard of expectation that students will gain a year's growth for a year's instruction in each subject area.

7. Achievement- The number of students who score at a proficient level or higher on TCAP.

8. Instructional Leadership- Strong, directive leadership focused on curriculum and instruction leading to successful change in school improvement or school effectiveness.

CHAPTER II

Principal Preparation in the United States

Multiple studies have found important links between principal quality and school performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). These findings are supported by research that shows that principal leadership is positively associated with teacher satisfaction, teacher morale, commitment to the workplace, and teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2001; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). Their studies have found a significant positive relationship between principal leadership and student outcomes that operates indirectly through the school and classroom conditions and teachers' performances.

According to research by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESSP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) (2013), the effect of good leadership in schools is usually the largest when and where it is needed the most. While this research shows a relationship between leadership actions and student learning across the spectrum of schools, the studies show a greater effect on student learning in schools with the most difficult circumstances. The report points out that there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst (NAESP & NASSP, 2013).

According to the Center for American Progress (2011), federal policymakers have not given school leadership much attention. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) state much of the blame for lack of preparedness for school-level administrators can be put upon university programs in educational administration. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) state there are significant problems in almost every phase of university programs that includes recruitment and selection, content of

training, delivery system, and the clinical experiences in the principal preparation programs at the university level. Principals themselves make clear the problems with existing preparation, with only four percent citing their university training as the most valuable source of preparation for their current position (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003).

Levine (2005) contended that the faculty in many educational administration programs that are helping to prepare aspiring education leaders for the future are inadequate. He proposed that the educational administration programs are too dependent on adjunct faculty who lack expertise in the academic content they are supposed to be teaching. Additionally, Levine (2005) stated that the programs employ many full-time professors who have had little, if any, recent experience as practicing school leaders.

Tucker and Codding (2002) argue that even at elite educational administration programs there is typically very little connection between the curriculums as taught and the actual demands, conditions, and problems of everyday practice. The methods that preparation programs use to train principals vary nationally and are a source of concern among policymakers, university faculty, and educators (Levine, 2009). Hess and Kelly (2005) were able to discern that there is a dearth of capable school leaders and that traditional preparation programs have not trained administrators to operate in an environment of outcome-based accountability, evolving technology, and heightened expectations which have resulted in wide-ranging debate about how to reform recruitment and preparation. In their research, Hess and Kelly (2005) point out the move to reform school administration can perhaps be best understood as encompassing two general schools of thought: those who wish to refine and bolster the existing system of preparation and licensure and those who advocate a move away from licensure and the implicit model of school leadership it assumes.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2008) estimates more than 40 percent of K-8 principals will retire during the first decade of the 21st century. According to a 2001 Public Agenda survey, 50 percent of superintendents are having problems recruiting qualified principals (Peterson, 2002). Problems with finding qualified principals are even more pronounced in urban schools, with 60 percent of urban superintendents reporting problems recruiting and retaining qualified candidates. Inadequate preparation and support for the principal position often is cited as a primary reason for these challenges (Peterson, 2002).

In a study by Grissom and Harrington (2010), they found strong evidence that not all modes of administrator professional development were equally effective at improving principal performance. They found a significant positive association between principal participation in formal mentoring and coaching and principal effectiveness but found principals who invest in university coursework as professional development are rated less effective. Grissom and Harrington (2010) offered that principals taking formal classes may have to attend off-campus meetings or complete homework assignments during the work week and that these activities may substitute significantly for the time they might otherwise spend managing school affairs or building relationships with staff.

According to Hess and Kelly (2005), recent efforts to improve principals' corps have occurred on two levels: First, states have made changes to licensure and certification provisions; second, an array of providers, from traditional preparation programs to for-profit companies, have offered alternatives that claim to rethink the content, delivery, and scope of principal preparation.

According to research by Hess and Kelly (2005), an array of district-based leadership preparation programs exists throughout many states across the United States. In most cases,

districts partner with a local school of education and other education groups to create a streamlined program to produce their own leadership prospects. These programs usually draw candidates from within the district's teaching ranks. Hess and Kelly (2005) point out that these programs are characterized by a practical curriculum focused on real-time experience and are tailored to the specific needs of the district.

Max Silverman (2013) discusses how principals in Shelby County in Memphis, Tennessee, are coached liked business executives. Shelby County Schools in Tennessee has invested $1.5 million for a principal mentoring program. Silverman (2013) points out that Shelby County Schools knew they had to do something to turn their school scores around and see growth for their students. They chose to put their money into a principal training system to help make their principals better leaders in their schools. Each of the 236 principals in the district were assigned a coach, a former principal, or central office administrator whose full-time work was to work with the principal and improve school scores.

Mentoring for new principals is now required by half the nation's states. However, many programs are not ready to provide the support to developing principals who can drive better instruction, according to the Wallace Foundation analysis (2007). Providing high-quality training for mentors is one essential step, as not all experienced and successful principals have the skills to mentor new ones.

According to the Wallace Foundation study (2007) on mentoring principals, to adequately support new principals as they develop from novices to leaders of change, mentoring should be provided for at least a year or more if possible. State and local funding for principal mentoring should be sufficient to provide quality training. Ultimately, the primary goal is to

provide new principals with the knowledge, skills, and courage to become leaders of change who put teaching and learning first in their schools.

Hess and Kelly (2005) speculated in their research that the most promising sources of innovation for principal preparation are the emerging non-traditional providers. These include stand-alone nonprofit organizations like the New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). According to their research, these two have garnered the most national attention because of their innovative approach to training school leaders and their extremely selective admission processes. Hess and Kelly (2005) stated that in 2003, NLNS received 1,012 applicants for 70 fellowship slots in its principal cohort and the KIPP School Leadership program had more than 250 applicants for 11 slots.

According to the work of Hess and Kelly (2005), the mission of the NLNS is to scour the country for talented and committed people from many different backgrounds and prepare them for the challenge of driving school improvement and student achievement as school leaders. The program only admits about five to seven percent of applicants for a six-week, seven-days-a-week summer institute taught by both education and business school faculty. The curriculum is broken down into three stands, which are transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and organizational leadership. The students begin their residency in an area public school. Instead of having a mentor, the candidate helps in handling the day-to-day business of the school and is charged with taking on three separate challenges. The students must work with three teachers and show evidence of increased student achievement, must oversee a team to ensure a focus on the core business of student achievement, and must start an initiative to tackle a schoolwide problem and then document its success. The NLNS has set up a post-residency network in each district which includes coaching from proven veteran principals.

Hess and Kelly (2005) also discuss the KIPP Leadership Program as being similar to NLNS, however, it has developed an innovative curriculum that blends educational content with conventional management expertise and focuses explicitly on results. Instead of being placed in traditional public schools like NLNS graduates, the KIPP school leaders are trained to open new KIPP charter schools. The KIPP program requires that applicants have at least two years of teaching experience, a college degree, demonstrated leadership, and a dedication to education. After the initial screening stage, the final stage of the selection process entails two interview weekends and a visit by KIPP staff to the candidate's current place of employment to observe job responsibilities, leadership capability, and interpersonal relations. After their initial training, students serve two, four-week residencies at existing KIPP academies. The residency period is followed by a one-month boot camp. Finally, from January to June of the year before starting in their new school, the fellows work on site with the KIPP regional teams to implement their school plan and get ready to start.

According to the research of Hess and Kelly (2005), despite the increasing demand for these programs, groups such as NLNS and KIPP have run into statutory and political barriers that hinder expansion. The biggest obstacle for most non-traditional programs is that, in the vast majority of states, the only institutions that are empowered to endorse public school leaders are university schools of education. Additionally, non-traditional providers are being hindered by hiring practices because some school systems are hesitant to hire candidates who haven't gone through a traditional licensure program.

One of the most recent trends in principal preparation has been the use of online educational programs. According to Stratford (2009), many colleges of education are facing declining enrollments in a poor economy at a time when state funding for higher education is

being cut dramatically. This is making online education an attractive way for providers to serve more student while lowering the instructional costs and capital resources.

Huss (2007) completed one of the few empirical studies that specifically focused on the differences between online teacher education and traditional face-to-face instruction. Huss (2007) concluded that online teacher education was not perceived as positive by a large majority of the principals in the three states that were included in the study. According to the principals, they were worried that an online teacher education would not fully prepare teachers in the areas involving the social aspects of teaching. There have not been any studies currently about the differences between the online principal programs that are being offered as compared to the traditional principal preparation programs. There are many online principal preparation programs that have been developed over the past ten years that include the University of Phoenix, Western Governor's University, and Walden University.

The issue of principal preparation has shown little evidence that the new initiatives and new programs that have been around for the last fifteen years have yielded much in the way of substantive change. As Hess and Kelly (2005) point out, simply redesigning curricula, adding internship time, or tweaking delivery is unlikely to help programs improve significantly, much less prepare their candidates for the demands of 21st- century school leadership. According to a report on developing leaders by the American Institute for Research (2016), preparation alone will not solve the issue of ensuring that every school has a great principal. They suggest that there needs to be more sustained research on issues of developing and retaining our most effective principals, education leaders need to learn from the body of leadership research in other fields, and districts along with policymakers should consider how preparation fits into a

continuum of development and supports along principals' career pathways and work to improve all aspects of principal talent management.

However, with the current reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), ESSA's new policies should ensure that all 50 states develop definitions of principal effectiveness and next-generation principal evaluation systems that identify effective leaders based on student achievement and other rigorous measures of outcomes and practice. Additionally, ESSA's new policies should also ensure that states hold principal preparation programs accountable for preparing leaders that are effective in schools. According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2013), defining and evaluating principal effectiveness is not sufficient to ensure strong leadership, it is a critical step to creating a coherent, statewide vision of effective school leadership that can inform other policies.

Principal Preparation in Tennessee

The focus of this study leads to the examination of the current policies, protocols, and practices used for new administrators in the state of Tennessee. According to a legislative brief by the Offices of Research and Education Accountability (2009), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) began the work in 2001 to produce sustainable changes in principal preparation in its 16-member states. The SREB (2009) argued for principals to be effective instructional leaders who need to understand how to inspire faculty to develop engaging instruction and engage faculty in maintaining a culture of high expectations for all. Additionally, SREB (2009) stated that in order to develop leaders with these particular characteristics will require a new method to their selection, initial preparation, and provided support structures. In 2005, the SREB joined with the Tennessee State Board of Education and two Tennessee

universities to reshape educational leadership preparation in the state. According to SREB (2009), the research identified several components of the Tennessee redesign project as essential to effective principal preparation.

Furthering that research, According to a legislative brief by the Offices of Research and Education Accountability (2009), the SREB requested that the Tennessee State Board of Education and Tennessee Higher Education Committee (THEC) jointly appoint a commission to oversee the development and implementation of a new system of instructional leadership development. The proposed learning-centered instructional leadership system policy requires research-based changes, needed to guarantee that every public school has an effective instructional leader. In October 2005, a Leadership Redesign Commission was appointed jointly by the State Board of Education and THEC. The Commission was challenged to develop a comprehensive plan to redesign the current instructional leadership development system. The Commission developed 14 recommendations for improving the current system and developed a plan to implement those recommendations in five key areas. The redesign components included how instructional leaders are currently selected, prepared, licensed, evaluated, and provided professional support.

The Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS) represent the cornerstone of Tennessee's leadership redesign policy. The new TILS standards are aligned to national leadership standards that include the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders. According to the Tennessee State Board of Education Policy 5.101 (2017), based upon best practice and current research, and sharpened by the wisdom of experienced educators, the TILS identify core performance indicators of ethical and effective instructional leaders. The TILS standards are:

1. Standard A: Instructional Leadership for Continuous Improvement- An ethical and effective instructional leader facilitates professional practice that continually improves student learning.

2. Standard B: Culture for Teaching and Learning- An ethical and effective instructional leader collaborates with stakeholders to create and sustain an inclusive, respectful and safe environment conducive to learning and growth for all.

3. Standard C: Professional Learning and Growth- An ethical and effective instructional leader develops capacity of all educators by designing, facilitating, and participating in collaborative learning informed by multiple sources of data.

4. Standard D: Resource Management- An ethical and effective instructional leader facilitates the development of a highly effective learning community through processes that enlist diverse stakeholders and resources.

In September 2009, Tennessee moved from a two-tiered licensure system for school administrators to a four-tiered system. The new licensure better recognizes the varying levels of leadership expertise. The first level is aspiring, which includes aspiring leaders who have not yet completed all their training. The second level is beginning, which is an initial 5-year license. The third level is professional, which is a five-year license renewal cycle. The top level is exemplary, which is an eight-year license renewal cycle. Since 2009, current principals have automatically transitioned into the new licensure system called the Tennessee Academy for School Leaders.

The state of Tennessee has an overarching body that oversees all training for new principals in the state. According to Tennessee's Department of Education (2018), that body is

the Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL) and it provides "high-quality professional learning opportunities for principals, assistant principals, and instructional supervisors that are aligned with the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS)." Beginning assistant principals, principals, and supervisors must successfully complete a TASL-sponsored induction academy to advance their beginning Instructional Leadership license, which is good for three years, to a professional license. These academies are to be completed within the first three years serving as an administrator in the state of Tennessee. The TASL academies meet for eight days over a two year period and include training modules and networking. Administrators write their required Professional Learning Plans during the two-year period and have to submit them to the state in order to advance their licenses.

Tennessee State Board of Education Vision

As of 2011, the state of Tennessee ranked in the bottom half of states according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test results. The NAEP assessment is administered every two years in mathematics and reading for students in grades four and eight. Based upon those results, the Tennessee State Board of Education developed a plan to become the fastest improving state in the nation to show advances on student outcomes with specific goals to achieve and a guiding vision to make student success a primary focus.

According to the Master Plan developed by the Tennessee State Board of Education (2017), the first goal for student success is for Tennessee rank to the top half of states on the NAEP test by 2019. This goal has already had some positive traction with the new policies and procedures have been put into place since 2011. According to the data on the Tennessee Department of Education website, the state of Tennessee's ranking on the NAEP test has increased from the mid-40's on all four parts of the test (Grade 4- Math and Reading, Grade 8-

Math and Reading) to the mid-30's. The goal is for the trend to continue upward over the next two cycles of testing to reach the goal of the top half of states.

The second goal for student success set by the Tennessee State Board of Education (2017) Master Plan is that 75 percent of third graders will be proficient in reading by 2025. Every spring in Tennessee, students in grades 3–8 take a timed, multiple-choice achievement test as part of the TCAP. The TCAP Achievement Test is a criterion-referenced test that has non-redundant test items and is customized yearly to measure academic skills and knowledge in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Currently, as of the 2014 TCAP assessment results, only 43 percent of third graders scored at the proficient or above level.

The third goal for student success set by the Tennessee State Board of Education (2017) Master Plan is that the average ACT composite score for high school students in the state will be a 21 by 2020. Because the State Board of Education knows that the ACT determines a student's eligibility for the HOPE scholarship and requirements for initial postsecondary education coursework, they have put this as a major focus for the state. As of 2011, according to the Tennessee Department of Education website, the average ACT composite score for the state of Tennessee was a 19. Over the last four years, it has increased to 19.4 with the eventual goal of increasing every year by .3 to reach 21 by 2020.

The final goal for student success set by the Tennessee State Board of Education (2017) is that the majority of high school graduates from the class of 2020 will earn a postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree. The current statistics for students in the state of Tennessee are that two-thirds of high school graduates enroll in postsecondary; however, less than one-third complete a postsecondary program. The governor in the state of Tennessee has enacted the

Tennessee Promise initiative to provide community and technical college free to all Tennessee high school graduates to help improve those statistics.

Qualities of Effective Principals

According to Murphy and Shipman (1998), the Council State School Officers proposed and adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) "Standards for School Leaders" in 1996. The consortium was made up of more than 30 state education agencies and all the major organizations involved in school administration that included the American Association of School Administrators, National Association of Secondary School Administrators, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals along with funding by the Wallace Foundation. The ISLLC standards are six overarching leadership standards for both building and district level administrators. The standards describe what all school leaders can do to support their organizations and teachers, lead instruction in their buildings, and improve student learning. The ISLLC (2008) standards are:

1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning;

2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;

3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;

4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;

5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and

6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts.

The ISLLC standards were initially developed in 1996 have been revised multiple times since their beginning. Most recently, in response to the changing roles and responsibilities of school principals, the ISLLC standards following an extensive development and vetting process in 2015. According to Derrington and Sharratt (2008), the ISLLC standards have influenced the licensing and certification process in most of the states' administrative codes since their inception. Consequently, most university principal preparation programs in the U.S. focus their curriculum on these six standards.

For many years, an effective principal was seen as a good manager of the three B's. The three B's were buses, boilers, and books. However, since the changing era of standards-based reform and high stakes accountability brought in with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the role of an effective principal has altered drastically. The shift in regards to effective principals has transformed what education institutions need from their principals. Principals can no longer rely on being good building managers, they must become the leaders of the learning that can put together a staff that delivers effective instruction and relies on data to drive their instruction in their classrooms every day.

The Wallace Foundation (2012) completed a study on how the school principal needs to be the leader and identified five key responsibilities in that capacity. The first key responsibility is shaping a vision of academic success for all students that includes establishing a schoolwide vision of commitment to high standards. The second key responsibility is to create a climate hospitable to education by ensuring that schools put learning at the center of their daily activities. The third key responsibility is to cultivate leadership in others by sharing in the decision making for the school and building capacity in teacher leaders in the building. The fourth key responsibility is to improve instruction by focusing on the quality of the instruction in the school.

The final key responsibility is to manage people, data, and process by being an effective manager.

Kimball (2011) identified an additional key responsibility of an effective principal as being a human capital manager. This requires the principal to be able to acquire and develop a talented staff and to create the working environment where staff fully commit their time and energy to the improvement of the students in the school. In his article, Kimball states that instructional leadership is only one part of the principal's responsibility for the management of teachers. He concludes that principals must also ensure that the school has the teaching talent capable of carrying out the school's instructional vision. Principals must have a good command of making the correct staffing decisions that involves planning for turnover, marketing the schools, networking with talent sources, and carrying out a well-planned selection process.

In today's organizational structures, good leaders need to be able to adapt to the situation at hand and act according to what they know is best for their organization. An effective leader needs to be able to operate within the confines of the Four-Frame Model presented by Bolman and Deal (2014). The four frames discussed are "structural, human resource, political, and symbolic" (Bolman & Deal, 2014, p. 20). All four frames represent different perspectives of an organization and how they all interact with each other on a daily basis. The political frame is the conflict side of your organization. The symbolic frame is the cultural side of your organization. The structural frame is the rational side of your organization. Lastly, the human resource frame is the people side of your organization.

Bolman and Deal (2014) say that as a leader "you don't have to be equally comfortable with all four frames. If certain areas fall outside your comfort zone, expand your field of vision- or work with someone who can help cover for your blind spots" (Bolman & Deal, 2014, p. 145).

The trait is of knowing yourself as a leader is imperative for principals. Principals need to be able to adapt to what the needs of the school are in order to make it successful. If principals know they have a weakness in a certain area, they need to find someone or something that can help in making it a strength for the school.

As part of the human resource framework, principals need to embrace the concept of shared leadership among teachers. With shared leadership, principals can rely on the connections with their teachers in order to have a successful school culture. Principals need to support and empower teachers to help them make the best decisions for the school.

Bolman and Deal (2014) point out that an effective leader needs to be able to function in as many of the four frames as possible to be effective. However, this can be a very difficult task for any principal and one that takes time and training to fine tune. This can be a daunting task for leaders because each issue that arises has its own set of circumstances that make it unique. A good leader needs to be able to adapt to the situation and decipher which frame is needed for the issue at hand.

Principals in the field of education need to think about the "Why" of wanting to be a leader. Kevin Cashman (2008) has as a very good answer to the "Why" of being a leader. He states that "each of us are being called to lead by authentically connecting our own life experiences, values, and talents to the special circumstances we face. Our ability to rise to the challenge depends on our understanding of our gifts, as well as how prepared we are to take the journey with grace and contribution" (Cashman, 2008, p. 34).

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is a complex practice that has many definitions and many different aspects that comprise its function in a school setting. According to King (2002), the

definition of instructional leadership can be defined as anything that leaders do to enhance teaching and learning. The responsibility of the instructional leadership ultimately falls upon the school leader in the building, otherwise known as the principal. When looking at factors within a school, it is estimated that principals are second only to teachers in their impact on student achievement (Seashore-Louis, et al. 2010). A highly effective principal can increase his or her students' scores up to 10 percentile points on standardized tests in just one year (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Those two statements are very powerful to solidify how important it is for a school to have an effective principal as their leader.

Principals show instructional leadership by setting a culture within the school that supports continual professional learning for all stakeholders (Seashore-Louis, et al. 2010). As the instructional leader, principals must be the ones that can be relied on to make the important curriculum decisions for the betterment of the school. However, it's imperative that the principal understand that they need to depend on the assistance of others in a shared leadership structure to make the right choices. As the instructional leader, a principal should work toward developing a framework to assist teachers, assistant principals, and instructional coaches to identify the instructional needs of the school and an action plan to meet those needs.

In the new role of the principal as an instructional leader, determining the needs of the school and students lies with being able to use data-based decision making daily. Effective, shared decision-making thus requires knowledge, skills, and dispositions conducive to systematic gathering, analysis, and interpretation of relevant data (Reeves & Burt, 2006). This ability for principals to effectively use data is an acquired skill that takes practice and professional development. Many new principals assume responsibility for schools already in various stages of federally mandated sanctions caused by achievement lags and gaps. The principals and the

schools they lead have no time for slow, incremental change. Additionally, they can't continue supporting the same teaching and learning processes. The schools need strategic decisions to be made based on a deep understanding of the school context, student needs, and student performance profile to help ever-more diverse and more socioeconomically challenged student populations.

Many principals express concern about their own lack of training and understanding of how to effectively use the data they receive from their district and state assessments. In most cases, if the principal doesn't have the capability to effectively use the data to drive the instruction, they have no way of leading their teachers to efficiently use the data their students produce. Additionally, principals and teachers find that time is a major barrier to analyze data or to collaborate regarding the meaning and use of the data (Reeves & Burt, 2006). If principals are to be effective instructional leaders, they need to attend or facilitate job-embedded professional development that will help gain a better understanding of data and how it can help in making effective school decisions.

Principals that provide teachers with instructional leadership improve student achievement (Seashore-Louis, et al. 2010). One of the best avenues for principals to provide instructional leadership is through the use of teacher evaluation and effective feedback. In the state of Tennessee, teachers are evaluated and receive feedback on their teaching practices by their administrator on an annual basis. The number of times and length of the evaluation visit depends on the evaluation system used in each of the Tennessee school districts.

The Wallace Foundation (2012) found a contrast between effective and ineffective principals in how they evaluate their teachers. They found that effective principals provide support by having ongoing and informal interactions with teachers throughout the year instead of

only completing the annual formal evaluations to provide feedback to their teachers. While both sets of principals said they frequently visit classrooms, effective principals made more frequent and spontaneous observations of classroom instruction so they could provide direct and immediate feedback to help improve teachers' performance, no matter if the teacher was a novice or a veteran (Seashore-Louis, et al. 2010). In contrast, ineffective principals still made classroom visits, but they were usually planned in advance and they rarely provided effective feedback to teachers after an observation.

The ability to get into teacher classrooms and observe the daily instruction is a very difficult task due to all of the other demands put upon a principal. Recent studies reveal that the average principal spends around 18 percent of their time in the area of instruction and curriculum and around three percent on teacher evaluation (May & Supowitz, 2011). The average elementary school has 475 students, 20 students per teacher, one principal, and a small cadre of other professional educators and staff that require the principal's attention (Murphy, Hallinger, & Heck, 2013). Therefore, the math on those figures with a principal working a typical nine-hour day for five days (2,700 minutes), three percent of that is 80 minutes a week on teacher evaluation and about three minutes per teacher per week. With that math, it is obvious to see the struggle a principal can have to meet the demands of their daily duties and be an effective instructional leader.

Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010) completed a study in the Miami-Dade County school district trying to define what principals do and where they spend their time. For their study, there was a team of researchers that shadowed 65 principals over the course of a day and collected detailed information at five-minute intervals. Their findings showed that on average, principals spent the most time on administration activities to keep the school running smoothly,

such as managing student discipline and fulfilling compliance requirements, accounting for about 30 percent of the school day. Principals spent over a fifth of the day on organization management tasks, such as managing budgets and hiring personnel. On average, principals spent 15 percent of their time on the internal relations tasks, such as developing relationships with students and interacting socially with staff. Principals spent five percent of their time on external relations tasks, such as fundraising. Principals devoted the least total amount of time to instruction-related activities and general instructional program responsibilities that included conducting classroom visits and informally coaching teachers.

The second revelation that Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010) had from completing their study was where principals spent their time. According to their research, principals spent most of their time in the school office with 51 percent in their own offices and another nine percent elsewhere in the main school office. About 40 percent of principals' time was spent away from the school office in locations around campus that included hallways, playgrounds, and classrooms. Of the time spent away from the office, principals spent approximately 20 percent of their time in transition between all of the locations. The most compelling finding was that principals spent only about 8 percent of the school day in classrooms.

McIntyre and Morris (1982) suggest that if principals are to improve instruction, they not only must be able to devote time to supervision but also must use that time effectively. They found that the cause of the obvious discrepancy between the perception of the principal as an instructional leader and the inability to fulfill this role is time. Peterson (1977) found that principals spend less than five percent of their time in classrooms and the planning and coordinating of curriculum and instruction consumes less than six percent of their time. Peterson (1977) found that principals are now engaged in service to teachers, including advisement on

proceedings and schedules and clerical auditing but seldom on core issues involving change or innovation.

The fact that many of the activities or interactions engaged by principals are initiated by others may be at the core of the problem (McIntyre & Morris, 1982). Many times, principals must be reactive instead of proactive in their use of time. The best-laid plans for principals to spend time on important school issues or innovative change often gets interrupted by an upset parent, a discipline issue, or a mechanical issue that needs to be fixed immediately. As a result, the most well-intentioned principals can be sidetracked in trying to devote their time to instructional leadership.

McIntyre and Morris (1982) recognize that principals will never have complete control of their time, but that it is imperative that principals use the time allocated to instructional supervision more effectively. They believe that the methods employed most often to improve instruction are those of classroom observations and post-conference through the teacher evaluation cycle. Seifert and Beck (2015) found nearly two-thirds of principals believe that instructional improvement is the real purpose of evaluation. Unfortunately, only one-fifth of the teachers agree with that purpose. Most teachers see renewal or cancellation of contracts as the real purpose of evaluation. How principals communicate with the teacher can determine the success or failure of the purpose of the evaluation cycle. In the past, observations were somewhat general and subjective. Principals sat in the back of the classroom and made judgments concerning the performance of the teacher (McIntyre & Morris, 1982). Having open communication throughout the entire evaluation cycle can lead to more trust of principals and better results for the teacher. For the teacher to gain effective feedback from the observation

cycle, principals should conduct classroom observations that are more descriptive by using systematic observation instruments.

After the observation has been completed, the post-conference is an important phase that often gets overlooked and needs to be included in the evaluation cycle. McIntyre and Morris (1982) suggest that an effective post-conference consists of four steps. Step one is establishing the teacher as an equal partner that includes the teacher's perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson. Second, the principal shares the descriptive data with the teacher and they interpret its meaning together. Third, a strategy for improving future teaching performance is planned jointly. The fourth and final step consists of the principal and teacher planning the follow-up observation and reviewing the responsibilities each has for improving the teacher's performance.

Principals as instructional leaders need to gain a better understanding and become more competent in the skills associated with the instructional supervisory cycle. The most often used methods for gaining knowledge in that skill set are graduate courses, professional development, and scholarly journals. However, translating the knowledge gained in those endeavors into useful skills requires practice in the field. As this paper has already established, principals are pressed for time and that makes the utilization, development, and refinement of these instructional supervisory skills difficult to acquire and maintain. However, it is crucial that principals regularly re-evaluate their roles with respect to instructional supervision and review their commitment to this vital area of school improvement.

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)

One of the means principals can use to evaluate how teachers perceive their instructional management skills is through the use of teacher surveys. One that has been used many times over the last 30 years is the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) that was created by Philip Hallinger in 1982. The PIMRS survey was developed out of study completed by Hallinger and Murphy that examined the instructional management behavior of 10 elementary school principals. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985), the primary goal of their research was to describe the instructional management behavior of these principals in terms of specific job behaviors. The study was conducted in cooperation with the school district, whose superintendent was interested in developing an effective method for assessing principal instructional management behavior. Therefore, as part of the study, Hallinger and Murphy began the development of an appraisal instrument that could be used to assess the effectiveness of principals' instructional management skills.

The PIMRS instrument divides the instructional management role of the principal into three dimensions. Those three dimensions are defining the schools' mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). These three dimensions are further broken down into 10 instructional leadership functions, each of which is measured by behaviorally anchored items (Hallinger, 1983).

The first dimension of the PIMRS instrument is defining the school mission. Defining a school mission involves communicating this vision to the staff and students in such a way that a sense of shared purpose exists, linking together the various activities that take place in classrooms throughout the school (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The first function under the dimension of defining the school's mission is framing school goals. This function refers to a

principal's role in determining the areas in which school staff will focus their attention and resources during a given school year. Instructionally effective schools often have clearly defined goals that focus on student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The second function is communicating school goals. This function is concerned with the ways in which the principal communicates the school's important goals to teachers, parents, and students. Principals can communicate that the significance of school goals by discussing and reviewing them with staff periodically during the school year. This can be especially important when viewed within the framework of instructional, curricular, and budgetary decisions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

The second dimension of the PIMRS instrument is managing the instructional program. This dimension involves working with teachers in areas specifically related to curriculum and instruction and consists of several related job functions. The first function is supervising and evaluating instruction. This function is a central task of the principal that involves coordinating the classroom objectives of teachers with those of the school, providing instructional support to teachers, and monitoring classroom instruction through numerous classroom visits (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The second function under this dimension is coordinating curriculum. This function of the principal is ensuring that school curricular objectives are closely aligned with both the content taught in classes and with achievement tests. The third function is monitoring student progress. All effective schools use multiple types of standardized and criterion-referenced testing to assess student progress toward meeting the standards. Principals play an important role in ensuring that this is done effectively. Principals provide teachers with test results in a timely fashion, discuss test results with the staff and with individual teachers, and provide interpretive analysis for teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

The third dimension of the PIMRS instrument is promoting a positive school learning climate. This dimension refers to the norms and attitudes of the staff and students that influence learning in the school. The first function under this dimension is protecting instructional time. This function is imperative for principals to provide teachers with blocks of uninterrupted instructional time through the development of school policies and master schedules. The second function is promoting professional development. Principals have several ways to complete this function that includes informing the teacher of opportunities for staff development, leading in-service training activities, and integrating the skills learned during staff development programs. The third function is maintaining high visibility. Much of the principal's school day can be taken up by managerial tasks. By being visible in the school, the principal increases the number of interactions with teachers and students. The fourth function is providing incentives for teachers. An important part of the principal's role in creating a positive learning climate involves setting up a working structure that rewards and recognizes teachers for their efforts. The fifth function is developing and enforcing academic standards. This function involves clearly defined, high standards that reinforce the high expectations necessary for improving student learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The last function is providing incentives for learning. While it is important to provide incentives for teachers, it is equally paramount to create a school learning climate in which students are rewarded and recognized for their academic achievements.

Student Success

According to research findings by the National Education Association (2016), children who enter school behind their peers often stay behind. Additionally, in the NEA research findings, children who do not recognize the letters of the alphabet when they enter kindergarten demonstrate significantly lower reading skills at the end of first grade. Eighty-eight percent of

children who are poor readers in first grade will still be poor readers by fourth grade. Seventy-four percent of children who are poor readers in third grade remain poor readers when they start high school (NEA, 2016).

To further the argument for the importance of a good foundation in the Pre-K through 12th grade, according to U.S. Department of Education (2016), a college graduate with a bachelor's degree typically earns 66 percent more than those with only a high school diploma. Over the course of a lifetime, the average worker with a bachelor's degree will earn approximately $1 million more than a worker without a postsecondary education. Additionally, in the U.S. Department of Education research, by the year 2020, an estimated two-thirds of job openings will require postsecondary education or training.

The research data stated in the first two paragraphs of this section provides the evidence that a good foundational education for students in Pre-K through 12th grade years is imperative. This task falls to all of the professionals in a school setting, which includes teachers, support staff, and the principals. This primary responsibility for this comprehensive initiative is for the principals to be the leaders in their buildings. Successful schools need to have good leaders at the top who can help guide the decision making and needs for the students. School success begins with the school principals, who have the primary responsibility for making sure all students meet both the challenging grade level and college and career readiness standards.

One of the most recent school initiatives developed in the last 15 years that has supported student success has been Response to Intervention (RTI). The RTI framework was written into law with the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004. The RTI framework was developed because of concern about the large number of students being identified for special education services (President's Commission on Excellence in Special

Education, 2002). The expectation was that RTI would reduce that number and provide more effective classroom instruction for students. RTI requires a different sort of climate in the school and a change in how educators teach, learn, and interact with others (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012).

One of the major changes that RTI has made in schools is the way they are identifying specific learning disability (SLD). Schools are no longer required to use a discrepancy model for determining whether students meet criteria for SLD and are eligible for special education services; rather, students can be identified based on how well they "respond" to instruction and intervention. It is this "response to instruction and intervention" that has changed the way that reading programs in many schools function (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012).

The RTI framework refers to the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention matched to students' needs, monitoring student progress frequently to make decisions about instructional changes, and evaluating regularly collected data on student progress to determine whether to refer the student for special education support (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). RTI is able to impact numerous areas of teaching practice that includes data-based inquiry, collaboration amongst peers, and instructional techniques across many curriculums starting from pre-k and continuing through the 12th grade.

According to Wixson (2011), RTI is best thought of as a comprehensive, systematic approach to teaching and learning designed to address learning problems for all students through increasingly differentiated and intensified assessment and instruction. Equally important is the need for highly qualified professionals with the appropriate expertise to deliver this instruction. Wixson (2011) claims that RTI cuts across general and special education and isn't simply a pre-referral process for special education.

The RTI model was written into law in order to allow flexibility for school districts to use the model that works for its students. Most RTI models include several common features that include universal screening of all students, multiple tiers of intervention, a problem-solving method for decision making, and an integrated assessment system and data collection to inform decisions at each tier of service delivery (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). The multi-tiered aspect of RTI typically includes three tiers in which the services are increased after a student has not presented the adequate response to the intervention.

Wixson (2011) explains each tiered service. Tier I is the core instruction that involves some differentiated instruction and is intended to accommodate at least 80 percent of the students in a given class. Those who do not make sufficient progress in Tier I instruction receive a second, more targeted and intensive tier of instruction intended to accelerate their progress (Tier II). This might be accomplished by providing more time in instruction, smaller instructional groupings, and alternative methods of instruction targeted to specific areas of students' needs. Tier II instruction is intended to be provided in addition to the Tier I instruction and might be provided by the classroom teacher or a specialist in a small group setting. Students' progress continues to be monitored, and an additional 15 percent of students are expected to succeed with this supplemental instruction or intervention. Those who do not demonstrate accelerated progress with Tier II interventions are considered for even more intensive and targeted intervention in Tier III and possibly special education services.

According to a three-year study of successful RTI implementation completed Rinaldi, Higgins-Averill, & Stuart (2017), principals that play a large role in the planning and implementation of the RTI program will lead to its success. During all three years, the principal worked the budget to provide weekly planning time at the individual and grade level, extra

paraprofessional planning support during the literacy period for all grades, and an additional literacy coach. The literacy coach provided support with the entire RTI program and provided professional development sessions that included important topics about RTI planning and implementation, curriculum-based measures, data analysis, and recommended literacy strategies. Additionally, the principal revised the schedule so teachers would have weekly individual planning time, plus an additional hour of weekly grade-level planning time.

Bean and Lillenstein (2012) completed a research study of five schools that were using effective RTI frameworks. They asked three specific questions of all the educators in the five schools that included: "What were the thoughts and perceptions of educators about their roles? In what ways had role and function expectations for them changed? What skill sets were essential if educators were to be effective in this systematic effort to improve instruction for all students?" From their research about the role of the principal in their study, the principals all noted that they had the lead role in establishing the conditions for success. Additionally, the principals all agreed that they served as the central person for promoting a risk-free environment, leading the effort in establishing norms for collaboration, and facilitating shared responsibility. Effective implementation of RTI required that principals involve teachers in making instructional decisions as a means of capacity building and accountability with the data.

Many schools are now using RTI as a way to improve instruction and overall school achievement. Schools are providing high-quality core instruction that addresses the needs of all students and then selecting research-based approaches to meet the needs of the students who need more targeted instruction in the classroom. Because of RTI, schools are identifying students who need more intensive instruction and are using data more consistently toward instructional decision making.

Students in Poverty

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), 16.4 percent of families in the state of

Tennessee are living in poverty, which is almost two percent higher than the national average at

14.8 percent. Furthermore, the state report card published by the Tennessee Department of

Education quantified that there were nearly one million students in the state of Tennessee and

57.9 percent of those students have been identified as economically disadvantaged (TDOE,

2014). All of these statistics show that a large majority of students in the education systems in

the state of Tennessee are facing a larger issue than trying to achieve proficiency on any

standardized exam.

Wallenstein (2012) points out that no matter how the problem is defined, students from

affluent backgrounds, regardless of race or ethnicity, have a running head start on kids whose

parents struggle to make ends meet. He goes on to further state that research done by Tavernise

(2012) shows that by the time high-income children start school, they have spent about 400 hours

more than poor children in literacy activities. Students whose families are living in poverty are

finding barriers to a good head start in education. For many students, the gaps in academic

achievement observed at age 18 are already observable at age five or six (Duncan et al., 2007).

Most schools are not equipped or prepared to support high-poverty students in overcoming the

barriers they face at such a young age and often continue to face through their high school years.

According to the profile of teachers in the U.S. completed by the National Center for

Education Information (2013), 84 percent of teachers are white, 84 percent are female, and 43

percent have a master's degree in education. However, a large majority of students in the

educational system today don't embody the same racial makeup or income level as the teaching

workforce. Many of the students that come from economically disadvantaged homes haven't

had the same life experiences or cultural norms as the teachers who are educating them on a daily basis. The state report card released by the Tennessee Department of Education (2014) showed that the student ethnicity make-up was 65 percent White or Caucasian, 24 percent African American or Black, and 8.5 percent Hispanic or Latino. Unfortunately, according to Sato and Lensmire (2009) children from poverty are being identified as less capable as learners. Additionally, they state that teachers need better models, practices, and frameworks for teaching students from a multitude of backgrounds, especially if the students represent cultures and social classes that are different from their teachers.

As Payne (2009) describes, the decontextualized environment of school requires students to use an abstract representational system of knowledge that is learned and usually not available in the situated-learning environment of generational poverty. In order to survive poverty, students must become incredible problem solvers. Payne (2009) feels the purpose of the book was to explain the situated-learning environment of generational poverty and the bridges and strategies needed for students to make successful transitions to the decontextualized environment of school.

The philosophy of the No Child Left Behind Act in January of 2002 was that every child will learn and will learn to a level of proficiency against a standard knowledge and skills set. However, this idea does not take into account the different barriers and different situations some students face in order to perform proficiently at their given grade level. Not all students in our educational system have the same ability level, context, or parent support that aid them in being proficient in their grade level standards and skills.

Therefore, the main question becomes, "What can our educational systems do to help bridge the gap?" According to Rothstein (2008), we need to acknowledge the effects of

socioeconomic disparities on student learning as the first vital step to closing the achievement gap. Rothstein (2008) believes it's too difficult to address non-school problems like inadequate incomes, health, or housing, in order to focus on what school reforms can be made to address the issue.

Gorski (2013) agreed with Rothstein's philosophy and acknowledges that there's no nicely wrapped bundle of strategies that work for all low-income students everywhere, however, he does offer a few strategies to help aid in the process. The first Gorski offers is that students learn best at schools in which pedagogy is driven by high academic expectations for all students. Next is to incorporate arts instruction and movement into the daily schedule for students. Since NCLB was passed, many school districts across the United States have cut time for physical education and recess along with arts programs. Gorski feels this is the last thing school districts should be doing, especially for low-income schools. Lastly, Gorski advocates for reaching out to families early and often to nurture the relationship between school and home, especially including community agencies and health services to aid the students.

Chenowith and Theokas (2013) worked with the Education Trust organization over an eight-year period visiting schools that are high-achieving or rapidly improving and have significant populations of students of poverty. The schools they visited were, on average, student percentages of 75 percent or above qualifying for free or reduced lunch programs. Chenowith and Theokas (2013) found that it was clear that school leadership was a key factor in these schools' successes. In examining the work of the 33 principals they followed, they discovered four qualities that they tend to share. The first quality was the principals' belief in the capacity of all students pushes them to set a rigorous performance standard and honestly discriminate between excellence and mediocrity. The second quality was that all the principals

put instruction at the center of their managerial duties, and 76 percent defined themselves as instructional leaders when asked how they defined the job of principal. The third quality is that the principals know that teachers hold the greatest power over student achievement and they focus on building the capacity of the teachers in the school. The final shared quality of the principals was they monitor student data, set measurable goals, and evaluate what leads to success and what can be learned from failure.

Rural Education

The schools that were chosen to be part of this research study are rural schools located in the Northwest Tennessee region. The public schools in the state of Tennessee are divided into eight regions. Each region is called a CORE region, which is an acronym for Center of Regional Excellence. According to the Tennessee Department of Education (2018), each CORE's mission is to empower Tennessee school districts to build educator capacity through targeted, differentiated academic support resulting in student readiness. To do this, each CORE office is staffed with an executive director and a variety of academic consultants including individuals who specialize in ELA, math, data analysis, teacher and principal evaluation, intervention, CTE, and school nutrition. The Northwest Tennessee CORE is comprised of 23 school districts that service over 40,000 students.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) changed its classification system for school local types in 2006 to be more precise in its classification of rural areas. The new classification system has four major categories that are city, suburban, town, and rural. According to the new classifications, rural areas are between five and 25 miles from an urbanized area.

According to the data from the NCES (2010-2011), 57 percent of all operating school districts in the United States were located in rural areas, while 20 percent were located in suburban areas, 18 percent in towns, and 5 percent in cities. Rural public school systems differ in terms of the population of students they serve. In the same NCES data for the 2010-2011 school year, 52 percent of those students were Caucasian, 16 percent were African American, 23 percent were Hispanic, five percent were Asian, and 1 percent were American Indian.

According to data collected by the American Community Survey (2009), households in poverty are defined as those with an annual income below the poverty threshold, which is $22,050 for a family of four. The NCES (2010) statistics reported that 19 percent of children between the ages of five and 17 in rural areas were living in families below the poverty threshold. The result is that 244 of the 250 poorest counties in the United States are rural. There were also regional differences in the United States in the percentage of rural children living in poverty in 2010. NCES (2010) reports the highest percentage is in the South at 22 percent, with the West at 20 percent, the Midwest at 15 percent, and the Northeast at 12 percent. Additionally, in the same NCES (2010) data, it was reported that 48 percent of public and elementary students nationwide were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under the National School Lunch Program.

According to the same statistics from NCES (2010), as far as educational performance, 35 percent of 4th grade students living in rural areas scored at or above the proficiency level on the reading portion of the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). For the math portion of the 2011 NAEP exam, 42 percent of 4th grade students living in rural areas scored at or above the proficiency level.

These statistics about students and teachers in rural populations indicate they have to overcome many obstacles in order to be as successful as their peers in more urban environments. One of the major challenges rural school systems fight is the fear of consolidation with larger school districts. Since the beginning of the 1950s, spurts of consolidation have the reduced the number of school districts in the US from 84,000 to fewer than 14,000 that are operating today (Lewis, 2003). Lewis goes on to say that consolidation of these rural school can have a major impact on the community that the school district serves. When a school in an urban district closes, the disruption usually resolves itself and life goes on as usual. Close a school in a rural area, and the community effectively closes too (Lewis, 2003). According to the NCES, the average school population of a rural school is 338 students. Consolidation also brings about the challenges of bringing multiple school districts together that don't always have the same culture and values. Teachers and other school officials in consolidated districts must then find ways to bring together the differing perspectives into a common and coherent school endeavor. When consolidations are contentious, teachers and administrators must do what they can to forge a new community identity (Monk, 2007).

Another large struggle for schools in rural areas is the ability to attract and retain good teachers to the area. According to the Status of Education in Rural America report (NCES, 2007), the average base salary for teachers in rural areas was $44,000, which is nearly $5,000 a year below the national average. Gibbs (2000) found that urban salaries are approximately 21 percent higher than rural salaries for starting teachers and 35 percent higher for teachers with Master's degrees. Recruiting teachers to rural schools can be extremely challenging. According to Miller (2012), metropolitan locales may offer more pay, better career prospects for partners, or other life amenities. Miller (2012) states that often times the distance from professional learning

opportunities puts rural schools at a disadvantage in helping to develop the teachers they have in their schools. Because of many of these reasons, teacher relocation is headed away from rural schools.

Additionally, small rural schools also heavily rely on teachers to teach more than one subject area (Schwartzbeck, 2003). Monk (2007) found that both rural and small schools have a below-average share of more highly trained teachers. Gibbs (2000) found that teachers in rural areas are only about half as likely to have graduated from top-ranked colleges or universities. Additionally, Gibbs (2000) found that teachers in rural areas have reasonably low educational attainment, which gives reason to why rural areas are usually less likely to offer college-preparation programs.

According to statistics by the Tennessee Rural Education Association (TREA, 2017), 49 percent of school districts in the state are classified as rural. Martin (2016) highlights one of those rural school located in Fentress County, Tennessee. In Fentress County, close to 40 percent of children live in poverty. It was also one of the 301 rural counties identified by the Obama administration that suffer from persistent poverty, meaning poverty rates have exceeded 20 percent in every census since 1980. In 2011, 65 percent of the students qualified for free or reduced lunches, which is 18 percent higher than the average in the state of Tennessee.

Martin (2016) goes on to state that rural students in Fentress County have limited opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities because many of them live too far away to stay after school for practice or club meetings. One bus travels over an hour-and-a-half and drops off a handful of kids at a car, which takes them the rest of the way home. Fentress County also has low college-attendance rates because students come from places where higher education traditionally hasn't been of much use. Previous generations could find good jobs in factories or

agriculture, which is part of the reason why in Fentress County only 58 percent of adults have a high-school diploma and only 8 percent have a bachelor's degree. If you remove teachers from that calculation, only 1 percent of adults have graduated college.

More importantly, Martin (2016) highlights that many of the jobs that used to sustain the community have vanished. The coal mines, logging industry, and paper manufacturing are all shutting down. The largest job markets are the local Walmart, hospital, and school system. Fentress County, Tennessee and many rural areas across the country are the places that talented, educated young people flee as soon as they can to seek better opportunities for their future.

CHAPTER III

Research Design

This quantitative research study focused on teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the instructional leadership skills of their principals and the academic achievement of students in high-poverty schools in the Northwest Tennessee CORE region. The quantitative method was chosen for this research project due to the ease of ability to gather teacher's beliefs about their principal's instructional leadership skills through a survey instrument using statistical means.

All the elementary schools that were selected for this study have free or reduced lunch students percentages that exceed the 50 percent threshold to meet the criteria of Title 1 funding and be classified as a school with a high poverty index. The schools were chosen based upon their achievement and growth scores on the 2014-15 TCAP assessment.

The schools for this study were classified into three different categories, which are above average, average, and below average based upon their 2014-2015 TCAP assessment scores. The above average schools have scored at an overall composite level of 4 or higher for the 2014-15 TCAP. The average schools have scored at an overall composite level of a 3 for the 2014-15 TCAP. The below average schools have scored at an overall composite level of a 2 or below on the 2014-15 TCAP.

The researcher chose to use the 2014-15 TCAP data because that was the most stable year of testing in the past few years. The TCAP testing was slated to transfer from paper and pencil to an all online testing format for the 2015-2016 school year. However, the vendor chosen by the Tennessee Department of Education was unable to successfully provide an online format for that year. Therefore, TCAP testing was suspended for the 2015-2016 school year. This

research study began in the summer of 2017 and the results for the 2016-2017 school year had not been finalized and released to the public. Additionally, there were new standards that were being assessed for math, reading, and social studies for the 2016-2017 school year.

The researcher emailed an invitation to the schools selected for this study requesting them to participate. The email invitation included a brief description of the study, the Informed Consent letter, and the directions to follow a link. The link included the electronic version of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) that was developed in Microsoft Forms. The principals that received the email were asked to send the survey link to their third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade teachers. Those three grade levels were chosen by the researcher because they are the first three years that students are held accountable for test scores in the state of Tennessee for English/Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science.

Sample Instrumentation

The Tennessee Department of Education website provides all the needed information to complete this study via examining the school's individual report cards. Each individual report card includes the school's composite TCAP assessment scores and the percentage of poverty students in the school. In order to determine the sample for the above average, average, and below average school scores, all elementary schools with a poverty index above 50 percent in the Northwest Tennessee CORE area were examined via the school report cards.

Data Collection

The survey link with the PIMRS questions was sent to the principals of the schools selected for this study. Via Microsoft Forms, all survey results were tabulated for each PIMRS category and the data was entered into a data set for SPSS.

Data Analysis

Promoting professional development, evaluation, and supervision of instruction and monitoring of student progress were the three dependent variables examined through statistical measures on the PIMRS survey. The PIMRS survey included 10 questions regarding the promoting professional development, 11 questions regarding the supervising and evaluating instruction, and 7 questions regarding the monitoring student progress.

Teachers responded to the three subscales of the PIMRS questionnaire using a Likert scale. The Likert scale was coded on a one to five scale. The five scale responses were scored as a one for almost never, a two for seldom, a three for sometimes, a four for frequently, and a five for almost always. After the results were collected and tabulated via Microsoft Forms, SPSS was used to conduct statistical analysis of the results.

Means were computed for each of the three subsections of promoting professional development, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress. In order to determine, from the teacher's responses, if there was a difference between the instructional management skills for the three different categories of school selected (above average, average, below average), a MANOVA test was run in SPSS. Descriptive statistics and mean differences between years of service of the teachers and how many years the teachers worked with the principal were also computed.

Assumptions and Limitations

This research study was framed around the dissertation work of Dr. Norma Gerrell in 2003. Dr. Gerrell completed a similar research study with the same research questions, but with different participating schools in Tennessee. The vision for this research study was to replicate Dr. Gerrell's work in many respects. However, the overarching goal was to update the research

that has been done in the last 15 years on the topic of instructional leadership. Additionally, this study sought to determine if the changing role of the principal over the last 15 years as an instructional leader would have an impact on the results.

In order to stay true to the original research study performed by Dr. Gerrell in 2003, the researcher chose to use the same instructional management assessment survey instrument. To determine the principals' perceived instructional leadership behaviors, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) created by Hallinger (1983) was used via an online survey. Teachers from selected schools completed the three subsections of PIMRS survey instrument to reflect personal perceptions of their principals' instructional leadership behaviors. The researcher assumed that all respondents would answer honestly and give a true reflection of the instructional practices of their principals. According to the email sent to the principals, the researcher asked that no pressure or influence was placed on the teacher by the principal for answers to the questions on the PIMRS questionnaire. Teachers who responded remained anonymous. The only limitations are the number of responses that are received from the selected schools after the survey link was sent to principals.

CHAPTER IV

Findings and Analysis

This chapter includes the findings and analysis of the survey data that was sent to teachers in the Northwest CORE region of Tennessee in relation to the research questions that framed this study. There were three overarching research questions posed in this study to determine teachers' perceptions of the instructional leadership skills of principals in high, average, and low-performing schools with high-poverty students. The data from the survey results were disaggregated to determine the difference in the extent to which the principals select and participate in professional development programs, supervise and evaluate instruction, and monitor student progress. The data results that were collected were based on the teachers' perceptions on the three main instructional leadership categories from the PIMRS survey questions.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Three Dependent Variables

Survey Headings	Achievement Groups	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Professional Development	Below Average	38.44	14.046	9
	Average	41.00	4.933	7
	Above Average	39.25	11.481	28
Supervising and Evaluating Instruction	Below Average	49.1111	5.20683	9
	Average	47.8571	6.33584	7
	Above Average	46.8214	9.92958	28
Monitoring Student Progress	Below Average	25.0000	3.90512	9
	Average	23.7143	4.75094	7
	Above Average	23.3214	7.24213	28

Table 1 reports the data of the three dependent variables as compared to the fixed factor of school achievement level of the schools that answered the survey questions as they are represented by descriptive statistics. The three dependent variables in this table are the performance of the principals as perceived by teachers in planning professional development, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress. The factor of school achievement was based upon the school's overall effectiveness score on the 2014-2015 TCAP assessment. The schools for this study were classified into three different categories, which are above average, average, and below average based upon their 2014-2015 TCAP assessment scores. The above average schools have scored at an overall composite level of 4 or higher for the 2014-15 TCAP. The average schools have scored at an overall composite level of a 3 for the 2014-15 TCAP. The below average schools have scored at an overall composite level of a 2 or below on the 2014-15 TCAP.

The outcomes of the disaggregation of the descriptive statistics data collected from the survey results showed mixed results. The researcher compared the means for each of the different achievement groups in relation to all three of the instructional leadership subsections to investigate how the teachers surveyed felt about the principal's leadership in planning professional development, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress.

As shown in Table 1, for the instructional leadership section of planning professional development, the average performing schools rated their principals the highest at a mean score of 41.00. The above average schools rated their principals at a close second at a mean score of 39.25. The lowest scores for this instructional leadership section was the below average schools at a mean score of 38.44.

As shown in Table 1, for the instructional leadership section of supervising and evaluating instruction, the below average performing schools rated their principals the highest at a mean score of 49.11. The average performing schools rated their principal second highest at a mean score of 47.86. The lowest scores for this instructional leadership section were the above average schools at a mean score of 46.82.

As shown in Table 1, for the instructional leadership section of monitoring student progress, the below average schools rated their principal the highest at a mean score of 25.00. The average performing schools rated their principal second highest at a mean score of 23.71. The lowest scores for this instructional leadership section were the above average schools at a mean score of 23.32.

The results of the teachers' perceptions of their principals for all of the instructional leadership sections for this study were surprising. The assumption was the schools with the above average test scores would have been rated the highest according to the teachers' perceptions for all three instructional leadership sections. However, the results from the PIMRS survey for this study were very different from that assumption. The above average schools did not score at the top of any of the instructional leadership categories. Most surprisingly, for two of the three instructional leadership categories, supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress, the below average schools were rated the highest according to teachers' perceptions. The schools with the average test scores were rated the highest for the planning professional development category and were second in both the supervising and evaluating instruction and monitoring student progress categories.

Table 2

Multivariate MANOVA for Achievement Scores

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.105	.741	6.000	80.000	.618	.053
Wilks' Lambda	.895	.740[b]	6.000	78.000	.619	.054
Hotelling's Trace	.117	.739	6.000	76.000	.620	.055
Roy's Largest Root	.112	1.496[c]	3.000	40.000	.230	.101

Table 2 shows the results of this study as it was analyzed in SPSS using a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The three dependent variables were collectively measured and the results showed there was not a statistically significant difference in below average, average, and above average schools based on teacher perceptions from the PIMRS survey results, $F (6,44) = .739, p > .05$.

In order to address each research question, the data will be disaggregated into more specific information at the univariate level. Research question one is "According to teachers' perceptions, how do principals in high, average, or low-performing Tennessee elementary schools with high-poverty differ in the selection and participation of professional development programs?"

On the PIMRS survey section for promoting professional development there were 10 questions. As shown in table 3, from the nine teacher respondents in the four low performing schools in Northwest Tennessee, the mean score was 38.44. For the seven teacher respondents in the three average performing schools in Northwest Tennessee, the mean score was 41.00. For the 28 teacher respondents in the six above average performing schools in Northwest Tennessee,

the mean score was 39.25. When comparing the descriptive statistics for promoting professional development, the means were tightly packed between all three achievement groups. The most meaningful piece of data when comparing the means was that the average performing schools' teachers rated their principals the highest for this instructional section.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Planning Professional Development

Professional Development	Achievement Groups	M	SD	N
	Below Average	38.44	14.046	9
	Average	41.00	4.933	7
	Above Average	39.25	11.481	28

The researcher used the ANOVA test in SPSS to compare the three achievement groups to the total of the instructional leadership section of promoting professional development. The results in Table 4 show that there was not a statistically significant difference in below average, average, and above average schools based on teacher perceptions in the instructional leadership section of planning professional development , $F (2,44) = .104, p > .05$.

Table 4

Analysis of Variance for Achievement

		df	F	Sig.
Professional Development		2	.104	.902

Research question two: According to teachers' perceptions, how do principals in high, average, or low-performing Tennessee elementary schools with high-poverty differ in supervising and evaluating instruction?

On the PIMRS survey section for supervising and evaluating instruction, there were 11 questions. As shown in Table 5, from the nine teacher respondents in the four low performing schools in Northwest Tennessee, the mean score was 49.11. From the seven teacher respondents in the three average performing schools in Northwest Tennessee, the mean score was 47.86. From the 28 teacher respondents in the six above average performing schools in Northwest Tennessee, the mean score was 46.82. When comparing the descriptive statistics for supervising and evaluating instruction, the means for all three groups were close. The most compelling piece of data when comparing the means was that the lowest performing school's teachers rated their principals the highest for this instructional section.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Supervising and Evaluating Instruction

Supervising and Evaluating Instruction	*Achievement Groups*	*M*	*SD*	*N*
	Below Average	49.1111	5.20683	9
	Average	47.8571	6.33584	7
	Above Average	46.8214	9.92958	28
	Total	47.4545	8.56834	44

The researcher used the ANOVA test in SPSS to compare the three achievement groups to the total of the instructional leadership section of supervising and evaluating instruction. The results in Table 6 show that there was not a statistically significant difference in below average,

average, and above average schools based on teacher perceptions in the instructional leadership

section of supervising and evaluating instruction , *F (2,44) = .243, p > .05.*

Table 6

Analysis of Variance for Achievement

Supervising and Evaluating Instruction		*df*	*F*	*Sig.*
		2	.243	.785

Research question three: "As perceived by teachers, is there a difference in the extent to

which a Tennessee public elementary principal in high, average, and low-performing schools

with populations of economically disadvantaged students monitor student progress?"

On the PIMRS survey section for monitoring student progress, there were 7 questions.

As shown in table 7, for the nine teacher respondents in the four low performing schools in

Northwest Tennessee, the mean score was 25.00. From the seven teacher respondents in the

three average performing schools in Northwest Tennessee, the mean score was 23.71. From the

28 teacher respondents in the six above average performing schools in Northwest Tennessee, the

mean score was 23.32. The most important piece of data, when comparing the means, was that

lowest performing school's teachers rated their principals the highest for this instructional

section.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Monitoring Student Progress

Monitoring Student Progress			
Achievement Groups	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Below Average	25.0000	3.90512	9
Average	23.7143	4.75094	7
Above Average	23.3214	7.24213	28
Total	23.7273	6.27421	44

The researcher used the ANOVA test in SPSS to compare the three achievement groups to the total of the instructional leadership section of monitoring student progress. The results in table 8 show that there was not a statistically significant difference in below average, average, and above average schools based on teacher perceptions in the instructional leadership section of monitoring student progress , $F (2,44) = .235, p > .05$.

Table 8

Analysis of Variance for Achievement

Monitoring Student Progress			
	df	*F*	*Sig.*
	2	.235	.792

The researcher ran additional descriptive statistics on two supplementary questions from the PIMRS survey data. The first was the number of years that the teacher who responded on the

survey has taught under the leadership of their current principal. The question was broken down into five categories. The results were five teachers had been with their principal for one year, 17 teachers had been with their principal for two to four years, 16 teachers had been with their principal for five to nine years, three teachers had been with their principal for 10-15 years, and three teachers have been with their current principal for more than 15 years.

Table 9

Number of Years with Principal

Years	*N*
1 Year	5
2-4 Years	17
5-9 Years	16
10-15 Years	3
More than 15	3

Table 10 shows the descriptive statistics for the MANOVA that was run in SPSS by comparing all three instructional leadership categories as the dependent variable as compared to the fixed factor of the number of years teachers worked with their principal. For the instructional leadership category of promoting professional development, the teachers who have worked with their principal for two to four years rated their principal the highest at a mean score of 42.65. For the instructional leadership category of supervising and evaluating instruction, the teachers who have worked with their principal for five to nine years rated their principal the highest at a mean score of 49.63. For the instructional leadership category of monitoring student progress, the teachers who have worked with their principal for five to nine years rated their principal the highest at a mean score of 25.69. The disaggregation of the data for means indicate that the teachers who have worked under the leadership of their principals for two to nine years rate their principals' instructional leadership skills the highest of all other categories.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Principal Leadership Categories

	Years with Principal	M	SD	N
Promoting Professional Development	1 Year	34.60	13.686	5
	2-4 Years	42.65	5.361	17
	5-9 Years	41.00	11.541	16
	10-15 Years	26.33	16.289	3
	More than 15	33.00	17.349	3
Supervising & Evaluating Instruction	1 Year	38.4000	16.28803	5
	2-4 Years	49.1765	4.70685	17
	5-9 Years	49.6250	6.16306	16
	10-15 Years	43.3333	10.40833	3
	More than 15	45.3333	13.31666	3
Monitoring Student Progress	1 Year	21.0000	9.02774	5
	2-4 Years	24.9412	3.49053	17
	5-9 Years	25.6875	4.81274	16
	10-15 Years	12.3333	8.38650	3
	More than 15	22.3333	9.07377	3

The second supplementary question the researcher ran additional descriptive statistics on from the PIMRS survey data was the number of years of teaching experience of respondents. Table 11 shows the results of the question that was broken down into five categories. The results were one teacher had one year of teaching experience, three of the teachers had been teaching for two to four years, 10 teachers had been teaching for five to nine years, 11 teachers had been teaching for 10-15 years, and 19 teachers had with teaching for more than 15 years.

Table 11

Number of Years of Teaching Experience

Years	N
1 Year	1
2-4 Years	3
5-9 Years	10
10-15 Years	11
More than 15	19

Table 12 shows the descriptive statistics for the MANOVA that was run in SPSS by comparing all three instructional leadership categories as the dependent variables as compared to the fixed factor of the number of years of teaching experience for the teachers that were surveyed in this study. For the instructional leadership category of promoting professional development, the teachers who have been teaching for two to four years rated their principal the highest at a mean score of 46.00. For the instructional leadership category of supervising and evaluating instruction, the teachers who have been working for two to four years rated their principal at the highest at a mean score of 51.33. For the instructional leadership category of monitoring student progress, the teachers who have been teaching for two to four years rated their principal the highest at a mean score of 27.33. The disaggregation of the data for means shows that the teachers who have been teaching for 2-4 years rated their principals' instructional leadership skills the highest for all categories.

Table 12

MANOVA results for Number of Years of Teaching Experience

	Years of Teaching Experience	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Promoting Professional Development	1 Year	35.00	.	1
	2-4 Years	46.00	6.928	3
	5-9 Years	40.70	9.487	10
	10-15 Years	36.73	11.774	11
	More than 15	39.37	12.411	19
Supervising & Evaluating Instruction	1 Year	38.0000	.	1
	2-4 Years	51.3333	6.35085	3
	5-9 Years	48.5000	6.50214	10
	10-15 Years	45.9091	8.26383	11
	More than 15	47.6842	10.11079	19
Monitoring Student Progress	1 Year	19.0000	.	1
	2-4 Years	27.3333	4.61880	3
	5-9 Years	24.5000	4.52769	10
	10-15 Years	21.6364	8.00341	11
	More than 15	24.2105	6.25903	19

CHAPTER V

Summary

The purpose of this research study has its roots in the Tennessee Comprehensive

Assessment Program (TCAP) testing results for the 2014-2015 school year. In that year, 64

percent of students who were classified as economically disadvantaged scored in the lowest two

categories on the third through eighth grade Reading and Language Arts section. For the same

year, 45 percent of the economically-disadvantaged students scored in the lowest two categories

on the third through eighth grade Math section. As has been presented through the literature

review for this research study, the principals of these schools play a large role in ensuring that

their students are academically successful.

This research study determined, from teachers' perceptions, how principals in high

performing, average performing, or low-performing Northwest CORE region Tennessee

elementary schools with high-poverty rates differ in their instructional leadership skills. This

study used the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) survey instrument to

assess the participating school's principal in the areas of promoting professional development,

supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress. The distinctions for

performance categories were based upon the TCAP results for the 2014-2015 school year.

The PIMRS survey data was analyzed in SPSS at the multivariate level to include all

three subsections of promoting professional development, supervising and evaluating instruction,

and monitoring student progress. The three subsections of the PIMRS survey were compared to

the three different achievement levels which were low performance, average performance, and

above average performance of the 2014-2015 TCAP results. The outcome of the MANOVA test

showed there was not a statistically significant difference in below average, average, and above average schools based on teacher perceptions from the PIMRS survey results.

In order to answer each research question for this study, the survey data was disaggregated at the univariate level. Research question one sought to answer how principals in high, average, or low-performing Tennessee elementary schools with high-poverty differ in the selection and participation of professional development programs according to teachers' perceptions. After comparing the means for this subsection on the PIMRS survey results, the schools that were average performing rated their principals the highest at mean score of 41. The above average performing schools rated their principals the second highest at a mean score of 39.25.

Research question two sought to answer how principals in high, average, or low-performing Tennessee elementary schools with high-poverty rates differ in supervising and evaluating instruction according to teachers' perceptions. When comparing the descriptive statistics between all three achievement levels on the subsection of supervising and evaluating instruction, the means for all three groups were close. The most compelling piece of data when comparing the means was the lowest performing school's teachers rated their principals the highest at a mean score of 49.

Research question three sought to answer if there is a difference in the extent to which a Tennessee public elementary principal in high, average, and low-performing schools with populations of economically disadvantaged students monitor student progress according to teachers' perceptions. The data for this subsection when comparing the means showed that the lowest performing school's teachers rated their principals the highest for this instructional section at a mean score of 25.

Overall, the survey results of the teachers' perceptions of their principals for all three of the instructional leadership subsections for this research study were not what the researcher had expected as an outcome. The assumption by the researcher was the schools with the above average test scores would have been rated the highest according to the teacher's perceptions for all three instructional leadership subsections. However, the results from the PIMRS survey for this study were very different from that assumption. The above average schools did not score at the top of any of the instructional leadership categories. Most surprisingly, for two of the three instructional leadership categories, which were supervising and evaluating instruction along with monitoring student progress, the below average schools were rated the highest according to teachers' perceptions.

Conclusions

Successful schools are complex, collaborative institutions that require a high level of performance from every professional in the building. According to the research by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), after looking at over 60 studies involving 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers, they calculated the correlation between the leadership behavior of the principal in the school and the average academic achievement of students in the school to be .25. This 25 percent effect size enumerates the evidence that having a successful school relies on having a great leader in the principal role. However, the work of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) also quantifies that the sole responsibility of student achievement is not exclusively reliant on having an effective leader as the principal.

The assumption of this study was the instructional leadership skills as perceived by teachers would have a direct effect on the success of their school for the 2014-2015 TCAP assessment results. The disaggregation of the PIMRS survey data addressed the research

questions that were framed in this study. The results of the PIMRS survey indicated schools

with high achievement and growth scores on state assessments do not always have the principal

with the most honed instructional management skills as perceived by the teachers in the building.

On the contrary, this study indicated for a school to be successful, it requires many different

components at the district and school level that work together to yield student growth and

achievement on state assessments.

Marzano and Waters (2009) continued their work on the effect size of principals to

include researching the effect size of district-level leadership. They found the computed

correlation between district leadership and student achievement was .24. District leadership is

one more component at 24 percent that contributes to the overall achievement of the students in a

school. Marzano and Waters (2009) identified five district-level leadership responsibilities that

had a positive effect on student achievement. Those responsibilities that need to be present at the

district level ensured collaborative goal setting, establishing non-negotiable goals for

achievement and instruction, creating board alignment with and support of district goals,

monitoring achievement and instructional goals, and allocating resources to support the goals for

achievement and instruction.

Marzano (2003) developed the model *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into

Action*. In that model, he describes 11 factors that could be used to develop school reform.

They are broken down into three different categories that are school level, teacher level, and

student level factors. The school-level factors are those that are usually a part of school policy.

The factors are a viable curriculum, challenging goals with effective feedback, parent and

community involvement, safe school environment, and professionalism. The teacher-level

factors involve issues that individual teachers can address effectively. The teacher-level factors

are instructional strategies, classroom curriculum design, and classroom management. Finally, the student-level factors that include home environment, background knowledge, and motivation are usually not addressed by schools but can be if a school is willing to implement specific types of schoolwide programs to target those areas.

The Learning First Alliance (LFA), which is a coalition of 12 major education organizations including the National School Boards Association, spent a year compiling research and best practices and developed what they believed were elements for success. The LFA (2018) work identified six critical elements that impact success in schools. The first critical element is to focus on the whole child. Successful schools support the needs of all students, both inside and outside of the classroom, to aid them to become effective learners. The second critical element is a commitment to equitable access to ensure all students have access to high-quality services that enable them to reach high goals for learning. The third critical element is effectively involve families and communities in support of students to recognize barriers to such engagement and work together. The fourth critical element is to use effective communication to allocate leadership and decision making to all stakeholders. The fifth critical element is a strong, supported teaching force and staff who are well-educated, well-prepared, and well-supported. The sixth and final critical element is a relationship-oriented school climate with a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility among staff and students.

The most important factor in all the critical elements that were listed is everyone must all be working together as one to create a successful school. A school is not successful if it has strong teachers, but leadership is lacking. A school is not successful if it has a strong leader, but teachers do not have a commitment to ensuring the needs of all students. All of these critical elements must be functioning together to create the synergy for success.

University and District Level Recommendations

The Wallace Foundation (2004) sponsored a report concerning how school leadership influences on student learning. In the research, it was established that school leadership is second only to teaching among the school-related factors in student success (Leithwood et al., 2004). With increasing demands placed upon school principals, finding a leader capable of handling the day-to-day administration of a school building while still doing a great job of improving teaching and learning presents a challenge.

One of the most difficult challenges in finding competent school leaders is that many candidates are insufficiently prepared for this very difficult job. According to the Wallace Foundation (2012), the problem starts with the leadership training that school leaders are receiving at the more than five hundred university-based programs. The report from the Wallace Foundation (2012) states that the major problems are the lax admissions, fragile connections between theory and practice, and poorly designed internships. Additionally, once school leaders are hired, many are faced with equally inadequate on the job training and professional development to help make them effective.

The Wallace Foundation (2012), details five steps that university-based programs and school districts can take to improve school leader training. The first step is to ensure the admission process for aspiring principals is rigorous and selective. Secondly, ensure that pre-service training for future school leaders will help to improve classroom instruction. The next step is to ensure school districts raise the quality of pre-service principal training at the district level to better meet the needs of local schools. The fourth step is to encourage states to exercise their influence to improve the quality of leadership training through program accreditation, principal certification, and financial support of highly-qualified candidates. The last step is to

provide principals with mentoring and professional development based on their performance assessments that address the areas that they need to strengthen, especially during their first years on the job.

Preferably, a principal assessment should be created and used that captures the fundamental roles of principals and provides valid data for purposes such as professional development and performance evaluation at the district level. However, criticism exists in regard to the reliability of the assessment instruments currently being used and the processes to evaluate principals (Goldring et al., 2009). Additionally, according to Goldring (2009), even with the increased attention to improving school leadership and renewed emphasis on principal training, leadership assessment and evaluation have received far less attention and research. Goldring et al.(2009) state that when designed and implemented properly, principal leadership assessment can enhance leadership quality and improve organizational performance at three levels. At the individual level, leadership assessment can be used for vital personnel tasks such as documentation for annual reviews and compensation. At the level of continuous learning, leadership assessment can be used as a great communication tool, providing both formative and summative feedback to a school leader. This will enable principals to make informed decisions by identifying gaps between existing practices and desired outcomes. At the level of shared accountability for schoolwide improvement, leadership assessment can be used to help develop the organizational goals and objectives for school leaders.

To do their jobs well, principals must be able to take on multiple responsibilities that are both internal and external to the school environment (Goldring et al., 2009). Because of the complexity of the principal's role, the main struggle in measuring principal leadership is classifying the leadership dimensions that should be assessed (Glasman & Heck, 1992). Beyond

the difficulties related to what to assess is the challenge of determining appropriate methods to use in the assessment process and to make effective conclusions about principal performance.

In a nationwide survey, Reeves (2005) found that principals established their evaluations were primarily positive, accurate, and consistent with their job expectations. However, few principals found that the evaluation process was appropriate to improving their motivation and performance. Most notably, the principals also specified that their evaluations did not state what behaviors should be changed and didn't provide any form of useful feedback in order for them to act upon to improve their work.

A study of leadership assessments done by Goldring et al. (2009) compared the content of the principal assessment instruments and found that the critical behaviors that principals perform to influence student achievement do not receive much emphasis. The two most vital areas of principals ensuring that the school has a rigorous curriculum and quality instruction, made up a relatively small percentage of the assessment instruments that were examined.

State Recommendations

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), many states are in the process of developing, refining, and submitting consolidated state plans that communicate their aspirations for their students and how they hope to reach their goals (Espinoza & Cardichon, 2017). As part of the process of submitting their state ESSA plan, states are redesigning their education systems by improving how they prepare their future leaders of their schools.

As states work to close achievement gaps and improve low-performing schools under ESSA, the role of the principal will be crucial. According to the policy brief written for the Learning Policy Institute, Espinoza and Cardichon (2017) explain that states have multiple opportunities to invest in high-quality school leadership especially in high needs schools and

communities. Espinoza and Cardichon (2017) describe that states will be able to access additional funding to help prepare school leaders under Title II, Part A. Title II, Part A explains that states may allocate up to five percent of their allocation to teacher and leader development and an additional three percent exclusively for leadership investments. The investments can be used to prepare aspiring school leaders, to develop current principals, or even to fund coaches or mentors who directly support principal learning.

The brief by Espinoza and Cardichon (2017), explains some of the major stipulations states are making under ESSA in leadership preparation are the requirements to be evidence based and tailored to address the context of their educational system. The Learning Policy Institute (2017) conducted a review of the research on school leader preparation and professional development to determine some factors that enable successful programs to produce school leaders who can improve outcomes. They identified four key practices that support principals in increasing student achievement. The first is to create organization partnerships between principal preparation programs and school districts where principal candidates can work alongside mentor principals in a low-stakes and reflective environment. Second, future school leaders need programs with structured learning opportunities to be carried out in collaboration among a small group of peers. Third, high-quality principal preparation programs use problem-based, context-specific learning opportunities to connect coursework and practice to enrich candidates' skill development to include support for the first few years as a school leader. The last key practice is curriculum in high-quality programs that focuses on improving schoolwide instruction, supports teaching and learning environments, and effectively analyzes and plans using data.

Principal preparation has changed drastically over the last five years in the state of Tennessee. Tennessee's ESSA state plan (2018) contains many evidence-based examples of school leadership development. These investments in school leadership were developed by the work of the Tennessee Transformational Leadership Alliance (TTLA). The TTLA (2016) issued a report with a series of recommendations for leadership development in the state of Tennessee. In the report, it outlined some of the ways that the state will use the three percent set aside to develop its school leaders.

The first part of the Tennessee ESSA plan (TDOE, 2018) is to support a leader residency program in high-need school districts. The state plans to offer competitive opportunities to eligible school districts for implementation of principal residency programs. These programs would underwrite the costs of training under the tutelage of expert leaders for a full year, while candidates complete coursework that is integrated with their residency placement. In exchange, candidates typically commit to serving in the district for a set period and receive ongoing support once they are placed in a school.

The second way Tennessee will change its leadership development in their ESSA plan (TDOE, 2018) is to create statewide and regional leadership pipeline programs. These programs will be line up with effective research-based program modules that help to produce transformational school leaders in order to increase the number of high-quality school leaders across the state. The Tennessee Department of Education will provide support to four-year leader development models. These models will create or continuously improve innovative and high-impact principal pipeline programs that identify and develop school leaders and are led by a partnership. A partnership must include a Tennessee school district with either a charter management organizations, a Tennessee-based institutions of higher education, a foundations, or

nonprofit organizations that work to advance K-12 academic achievement in Tennessee. Partnerships must have a four-year plan that comprises of a new model or an existing model to improve school leadership and must apply for funding. The four-year plan requires the fundamentals of a principal residency training content, bridge support for candidates that will happen between program completion and assignment, and an induction program for newly positioned school leaders.

The third piece in the Tennessee ESSA plan (TDOE, 2018) is to support improved leadership practices by developing a Principal Peer Partnership (P3) program. These partnership will provide a system of collaboration and support for instructional leaders and engage administrators in reflective peer dialogue. The guiding doctrines of these partnerships include building-level practices, ideas to grow shared leadership capability, and measurable results that are aligned with the Tennessee educator evaluation rubric.

The fourth piece of the Tennessee ESSA plan (TDOE, 2017) is a component that provides professional learning opportunities aligned with the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards for principals, assistant principals, and instructional supervisors. This first part of the program is for administrators, which includes induction academies, learning opportunities throughout the year, and university partnership opportunities to progress leadership licensure. Administrators meet in cohorts of 20-40 eight times over a two-year period to learn collaboratively and build their professional network. The state education department also recently launched a virtual hybrid academy pilot for 2017 that includes personalized online learning with three face-to-face meetings over a two-year period.

The next part of the professional learning component in the Tennessee ESSA plan (TDOE, 2017) is the Governor's Academy for School Leadership (GASL). It was developed in

partnership with the Tennessee governor's office, Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, and Tennessee school districts. GASL is an opportunity for assistant principals to take part in a one-year leadership development experience aimed at increasing school leadership capacity and supporting individual growth. The state-funded program is anchored in multiple evidence-based practices, such as practice-based mentorship and providing in-depth feedback to teachers. The program includes a stipend for each participant and meets one weekend per month with an additional weeklong summer institute at Vanderbilt University. The participants complete an ongoing internship during the year which includes working alongside a mentor principal for three days per month.

The last part of the Tennessee ESSA plan (TDOE, 2017) to support the development of school leaders is Integrated Leadership courses. These courses are state-funded, professional learning opportunities. There are four courses that focus on early-grade literacy and additional elementary and secondary topics, such as identifying best practices in classrooms, developing post-conference skills through coaching practices for the evaluation process, and identifying connection to the administrator evaluation model.

Most recently, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam and the state Education Commissioner Candice McQueen have announced additional investments in school leadership. According to a press release from the state Governor's office in March of 2018, the state budget has dedicated $3.5 million dollars to transform the leadership of Tennessee's schools by improving the preparation, retention, and development of school principals. (Tennessee Office of the Governor, 2018) The Transforming School Leadership Initiative is combining both state and private dollars to improve school leader preparation programs, reward and retain school personnel that are successfully leading the state's lowest performing schools, and make available networking

opportunities and support for principals in rural communities. According to the same press release, the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education are working together to revise policy to ensure that the 19 traditional preparation programs for school leaders are held accountable for the performance of their graduates.

With all of these changes for principal preparation under ESSA, Tennessee is headed in the right direction in terms of trying to improve the education it is providing to its students. By adding the current plans to reform school leadership under ESSA and continued financial support from the Governor, Tennessee schools will continue to make progress toward their four main goals stated in the State Board of Education's Master plan.

The primary statement of the problem and purpose for this research study was TCAP testing results for the 2014-2015 school year showed that 64 percent of the economically disadvantaged students in Tennessee scored in the basic or below basic category on the third through eighth grade Reading and Language Arts section. Additionally, for the same year, 45 percent of the economically disadvantaged students in Tennessee scored in the basic or below basic category on the third through eighth grade Math section. According to the Tennessee Department of Education (2018), over the past three years Tennessee students have made huge gains on the TCAP state assessments. Over 90,000 more students have scored in the proficient or above category in math and 52,000 more students have scored in the proficient or above category in science.

According to the Master Plan developed by the Tennessee State Board of Education (2015), one of their main goals for student success is for Tennessee to rank in the top half of states on the NAEP test by 2019. With some of the state recommendations by ESSA that have already been put in motion in Tennessee, students in the state have improved in overall national

rankings in each of the four tested areas of Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Since 2013, Tennessee students combined growth on all four tests has exceeded the growth of all other states. For fourth grade students, Tennessee progressed from 46th in the nation in math to 37th and from 41st to 31st in reading.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research is needed in the area of assessing principals' instructional leadership skills at the state and district level. According to Thomas, Holdaway, and Ward (2000), finding useful ways to truly assess leaders can have a profound impact on the quality of leadership and education in our schools. According to the research that has been done in the past, there has been widespread criticism regarding the adequacy of leadership assessment instruments and the processes used to evaluate school principals. There is also a noticeable difference in what is assessed in leadership assessment instruments. According to Ginsberg and Thompson (1992), many of the leadership assessment instruments usually focus on lists of responsibilities and characteristics of the school leader and no useful information about how standards were set for comparison purposes.

This study focused on using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale developed by Hallinger and Murphy in 1985. This widely used instrument was a 71-item questionnaire that addressed 11 educational leadership subscales. A recommendation for furthering this study's research would be to include all the subsections of the PIMRS survey. This study only focused on three components considered as the vital first steps toward strong instructional leadership, which are promoting professional development, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress. Therefore, this research study was focused on only one important component of the principal's job.

In order to further the research for this study, the survey could include the subsections of framing the school goals, communicating the school goals, protecting instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teacher, coordinating the curriculum, and providing incentives for learning. However, since 1985 there have been two more widely used survey instruments that were developed to assess the quality of school leaders.

Leithwood and Montgomery (1987) developed the Principal Profile through extensive interview and consultation with principals, teachers, and school superintendents. Leithwood and Montgomery (1987) consulted with these groups to establish validity to confirm that the Principal Profile was practical for use. The Principal Profile is used primarily as a diagnostic tool that is an interview-based assessment that measures leadership effectiveness on specific tasks and describes a principal's leadership style.

In 2008, Joseph Murphy, Ellen Goldring, Stephen Elliott, and Andrew Porter developed the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED). Since it was developed, it has become one of the most widely used and respected measures of school leadership performance assessment. The VAL-ED is an evidence-based, multi-rater rating scale that assesses principals' learning-centered leadership behaviors. It measures principal performance by gathering information from principals, teachers, and principal supervisors. The VAL-ED measures core components which are characteristics of schools that support the learning of students and enhance the ability of teachers to teach. The key processes that it assess are how leaders create and manage those core components.

The final recommendations for further research would be to complete a similar study using the VAL-ED instrument to replace the PIMRS survey instrument with a broader range of educators involved in the study. The current research study includes the third through fifth grade

teachers in the Northwest CORE region of Tennessee. The researcher would include all

kindergarten through fifth grade teachers in the entire state of Tennessee for further research on

this topic.

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