

A PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTION ON INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

By

Damon McCall

A Scholarly Delivery Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership

West Texas A&M University

Canyon, Texas

December, 2023

Signature Page

H. H. Hooper Jr.	10/25/2023
Dr. H.H. (Buddy) Hooper Jr.	Date
Associate Professor	
Chair, Scholarly Delivery Committee	

Irma Harper	10/25/2023
Dr. Irma Harper	Date
Associate Professor	
Member, Scholarly Delivery Committee	

Minseok Yang	10/30/2023
Dr. Minseok Yang	Date
Assistant Professor	
Methodologist, Scholarly Delivery Committee*	

*The signatures of the methodologist indicates agreement only with the empirical scholarly article. This reflects a lack or absence of the methodologist's involvement with the case study article.

Eddie Henderson	10/30/2023
Dr. Eddie Henderson, EC-12 Director	Date
Department of Education	

Betty Coneway	10/30/2023
Dr. Betty Coneway, Head	Date
Department of Education	

Gary Bigham	10/31/2023
Dr. Gary Bigham, Dean	Date
College of Education and Social Sciences	

Dr. Angela Spaulding, Dean Graduate School	Date
---	------

ABSTRACT

This final composite explores the challenges that principals in public schools face. The first scholarly deliverable is a case study that can be used in college for candidates seeking a master's in education with a focus on being a principal. The case, "Cultures Colliding," explores issues faced by a middle school principal that is associated with integrating new students from a low socioeconomic, low-performing campus into an upper middle-class high-achieving campus. This case study illustrates the trials and tribulations that this principal faced, from parents and staff not wanting the new students, to the students' struggle over whose school this is and who will run it. The final empirical article, "A Principals' Perception on Instructional Coaching," is a qualitative study examining elementary and secondary principals who have experienced various levels of instructional coaching. These principals speak of how the coaching relationship impacted student learning and teacher development on various campuses in a mid-sized Texas school district.



**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS
Letter of Approval**

April 28, 2023

Dr. Hooper:

The West Texas A & M University Institutional Review Board is pleased to inform you that upon review, proposal #2023.04.017 for your study titled, “**Principal's Perspective on Having an Instructional Coach**” meets the requirements of the WTAMU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) No. 15.99.05.W1.01AR Institutional Review Board (Use of Human Subjects in Research). Approval is granted for one calendar year. This approval expires on **April 28, 2024**.

Principal investigators assume the following responsibilities:

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed on or before the expiration date if the research project requires more than one year for completion. A [Continuing Review form](#) along with required documents must be submitted on or before the stated deadline. Failure to do so will result in study termination and/or loss of funding.
2. **Completion Report:** At the conclusion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a [Close out form](#) must be submitted to AR-EHS.
3. **Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:** Pursuant to [SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.13AR](#), unanticipated problems and serious adverse events must be reported to AR-EHS.
4. **Reports of Potential Non-Compliance:** Pursuant to [SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.05AR](#), potential non-compliance, including deviations from the protocol and violations, must be reported to the IRB office immediately.
5. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an [Amendment form](#) to AR-EHS for review by the IRB. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented. Amendments do not extend time granted on the initial approval
6. **Consent Forms:** When using a consent form, only the IRB approved form is allowed.
7. **Audit:** Any proposal may be subject to audit by the IRB Administrator during the life of the study. Investigators are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records for five years and making them available for inspection upon request.
8. **Recruitment:** All recruitment materials must be approved by the IRB. Recruitment materials distributed to potential participants must use the approved text and include the study's IRB number, approval date, and expiration dates in the following format: WTAMU IRB##-##-## Approved: ####/####/#### Expiration Date: ####/####/####.

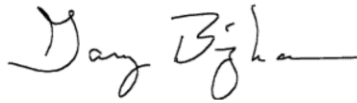
9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

administrator at the institution where the research will be conducted in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) if applicable to the research being proposed. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) protects the rights of parents in students ensuring that written parental consent is required for participation in surveys, analysis, or evaluation that ask questions falling into categories of protected information.

Sixty days prior to the expiration of this proposal, you will receive a notification of the approaching expiration date at which time you will need to submit an [Amendment/Continuation/Close out](#) form.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Dr. Gary Bigham
Chair, WTAMU IRB



Dr. Angela Spaulding
Vice President of Research and Compliance

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my wife, Suzanne and my three kids, Taylor, Grant, and Mason. I would never have gotten through this without all of your love and support. You allowed me to spend the time studying and away from the family. Suzanne, you picked up the pieces that I could not do while spending time researching and working. You are my best friend and my partner in life, and this is for the both of us!

Next, I would like to thank my mother and father, Hugh and Ardeth. You both have always encouraged me to think and dream bigger than what I thought I could accomplish. You supported me through this process, and without your support, this would have never happened. Thank you for choosing me in this life and giving me the resources to go after my dreams.

I would like to thank Dr. Kathy Rollo and Doyle Vogler for believing in me and encouraging me to take the risk and pursue my doctorate. You have both supported me emotionally through this process. My only regret is that Doyle did not make it to see me complete this. Rest in peace, Doyle. I know you are looking down with a big smile on your face.

Finally, I want to thank my committee. Dr. Hooper, my chair, you were positive and encouraging from the day I met you through this entire process. I could not have asked for a better cheerleader and counselor than you. Dr. Harper, my content expert, you made this all happen. Your videos and Zoom calls on nights and weekends are why I kept my sanity through this process. I can honestly say that you have taught me more than you will ever know. You are a teacher at heart, and your guidance and help is the reason that I completed this. Dr. Yang, my methodologist, thank you for your unique thoughts on my data.

Table of Contents

Signature Page.....	ii
Scholarly Delivery Abstract.....	iii
IRB Approval	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Case Study Article	1
Abstract	2
Case Study	3
Teaching Notes	12
Discussion Questions	13
Activities	14
References	15
Empirical Article	17
Abstract	18
Theoretical Framework	20
Method	36
Findings	41
Discussion.....	46
References	54

Cultures Colliding

Damon McCall

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Department of Education

College of Education and Social Science

West Texas A&M University

Author Note

Damon McCall is an Ed.D. candidate at West Texas A&M University. He currently serves as an Executive Principal in Lubbock Independent School District.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Damon McCall, Department of Education, West Texas A&M University, Canyon, Texas. E-mail: dmccall1@buffs.wtamu.edu

Abstract

Principals have to navigate many different scenarios to run a school. Principals are charged with being instructional leaders in conjunction with being a building manger. This case study follows the journey of a new principal as he tries to unite a campus that has been consolidated with another campus. The principal has problems with students' culture, parent culture, and staff culture. There are discipline issues that lead to parent and staff complaints. The student achievement data is falling as the new principal tries to turn the school around where student learning is at the center.

Keywords: principal coaching, culture, instructional leader

Cultures Colliding

The role of the principal has evolved over the years from one of a building manager to more of an instructional leader. According to Leithwood et al. (2008), they cannot find a single documented case where student achievement rises in the absence of talented leadership, which serves as a catalyst for unleashing potential organizational capacities. Davis et al. (2005) defined the role of a principal as follows:

Principals need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, district office officials, unions, state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs.

(p.1)

School leaders today are constantly tasked with solving complex problems. Yet, the workload and rise in accountability have reduced the time available for principals for careful thinking, planning, building relationships, and maintaining focus on their goals (Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

The problem is that principals are not given a clear roadmap for how to become an instructional leader due to the many competing priorities and demands of the job. “Guidance around exactly what principals should do as they visit classrooms, how they should supervise instruction, or how to establish the most effective visible presence is largely nonexistent” (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2020, para. 1). Principals struggle to be instructional leaders. They are “pulled in many different

directions, making it difficult to focus significant time and energy on leading learning” (McQueen, 2021, para.1). It is becoming more apparent that school districts expect principals to improve their teachers’ performance through observations, feedback, and other forms of instructional leadership (Neumerski et al., 2018).

This case study focuses on principal coaching. The problem is that inexperienced principals are faced with many challenging tasks that are critical to the success of a school. These leaders need coaching tailored to the specific problem or issue they are facing. This case study will illustrate the need for a coach to guide this inexperienced principal through these demanding and critical problems so that all students will learn in a safe environment. The study focuses on a new principal of a large middle school that has recently consolidated with a low- performing middle school. The principal faces many challenges, including merging two different demographics of students, their parents, and a faculty. This once confident new leader soon realizes he is in over his head and needs help.

Case Study

Setting

Welcome to Cooke City, Texas, which has a population of 310,000 people in Cooke County, and 240,000 in the city limits. Cooke City is the largest city in the western region of Texas. Most of the people from the smaller surrounding communities come here for their shopping and entertainment. The town was founded on agriculture and oil, but now has an urban feel to it. The city has experienced a population surge in the last 20 years because of the boom in manufacturing plants and agriculture-related businesses and services. The cost of living and tax rate was low, so many companies

from other states moved their companies here. There is a large university that is a leader in the medical field, which draws many workers as well. The city's growth is stretching to the south and west at a rapid pace.

There are three main school districts in the county of Cooke City. Cooke City ISD, Friendly ISD, and Billings ISD. Cooke City ISD serves approximately 28,000 students, Friendly ISD serves approximately 8,000 and Billings ISD serves around 7,200 students. Friendly and Billings have doubled in size during the past 10 years. They are two of the fastest growing districts in the state, constantly building brand new schools to keep up with the growth. Cooke City ISD is a declining district, losing around 300 students a year for the last 10 years. Cooke City ISD has 52 schools, with four of them being comprehensive high schools. The facilities in Cooke City ISD are old and in need of renovation. The district has passed two major bonds in the past several years to build some new schools and consolidate some smaller neighborhood schools. The district is landlocked and does not benefit from the population increase the county is experiencing. Friendly ISD and Billings ISD have increased revenue from the home and business growth in their districts, while Cooke City ISD has reduced staff to offset the revenue loss from the declining enrollment.

Lenox Middle School (LMS) is located in southwest Cooke City. LMS has a population of around 920 students, making it the largest middle in the district. LMS serves a diverse population of students. It has increased from 42% low socio-economic students to 78% low socio-economic in the past two years. The large spike in diversity came from the consolidation of one of the habitually low-performing schools in the district, Spartan Middle School (SMS). The district closed SMS and re-zoned all of the

students. LMS took on around 300 of these students, who were low-socioeconomic and Hispanic and African American. The previous students were predominately white and affluent. With this population shift, also came a growth in students receiving specialized services. LMS serves students with emotional disturbances, intellectual disabilities, deaf education students, and students with learning disabilities. Many of the teachers that were at SMS came to LMS during the transition. In addition to the shift in students at the school, the COVID pandemic hit. Cooke City ISD went to virtual learning for a year, and then when school reopened, the student could choose between face-to-face instruction, and virtual learning for a year. Many of the teachers were shifted to virtual teachers and some remained face to face teachers. The principal, who had been at the school for the past 5 years quit. The district hired a new principal to replace him as the school transitioned to face-to-face learning since the consolidation of the two middle schools.

Main Characters

The district hired Johnny Rodriguez as the new principal of LMS. Mr. Rodriguez has been with the district for 21 years, serving in many different roles. He started as a coach at SMS before moving into administration in a middle school and a high school. Mr. Rodriguez was the associate principal of Spanish River High School for the last 4 years prior to being named the principal of LMS. Mr. Rodriguez has three assistant principals with varying levels of experience.

Tyler Crum was an elementary principal for five years and a middle school principal for two years before that. He was moved to Lennox as an assistant after his elementary was reconstituted instead of sanctioned by the state for low performance. Suzanne Garcia worked in the central office with the gifted students prior to coming to

Lennox, where she has been the assistant principal for 4 years. Karen Bayer is the third assistant principal, in her third year. Karen was an excellent teacher who got accepted into an intern program at Lennox that fast-tracked her into administration.

Mr. Rodriguez also has three counselors, one instructional coach, and one social-emotional learning (SEL) coach. Lennox has 47 certified teachers and 24 para-professionals, for a total of 71 staff members.

The Case

Lennox Middle School was underperforming academically for several years prior to the consolidation. The school was ranked as a C-rated campus by the Texas Education Agency's accountability rating. The district felt like LMS should have been an A or B-rated campus with the students they served. Many of the teachers had been there for a long time and had a "fixed-mindset" that their job was to deliver content, and the student's job was to learn it. The staff had a culture in which that the adult was the authority, and students must respect them because of their position. The student population before the consolidation was compliant and there were no major discipline problems. The students followed the directions of the teachers and the school did not require strict procedures and routines. LMS was not a top priority of the district because of its C-rating, but SMS was because of its F-rating over the past 3 years. The district had to make a bold decision and close SMS and reopen the school under a new name, with new students and as a magnet school, with no attendance zone. When it came time to close SMS, the geographic boundaries meant that the students would be split between LMS and another middle school in CCISD.

The parents of LMS were not happy with the consolidation. They did not want the new students coming to LMS because they had heard rumors of the gangs, drugs, and weapons that these students supposedly brought to school. The district held community meetings and the Lennox parents showed up to protest against the consolidation. They spoke publicly in an open forum meeting condemning the district's decision to consolidate SMS students into their school. The SMS parents were in the same meeting and listened to the predominately white population make racist accusations towards their children. The superintendent was in a tough position because of the pressure from the state education agency to *fix* SMS and from trying to make the parents of LMS *happy*. The superintendent tried to reassure the parents of both communities. He told the LMS parents that their children would be safe and would have a good learning environment with the consolidation. He also reassured the parents of the SMS that their children would be safe and that the district would not tolerate racism.

Mr. Rodriguez was hired in late June to run LMS. He was confident and energetic. He felt that his background as an assistant principal had more than prepared him to run what he knew LMS should be, a well-performing school with well-behaved students. He knew the parent-teacher organization would be vibrant and supportive of the school. He knew that the staff had been in place for many years and that they had the *tools* and expertise needed to teach the students at LMS. What Mr. Rodriguez encountered was something different than what he was expecting.

As Principal Rodriguez walked into LMS on his first day, he was met with seven empty teaching positions. This was around the first of July, and he needed to fill seven teaching positions immediately. This was not uncommon for new principals to face; the

issue came when he tried to look for people, but was told that he had to take teachers on the district's surplus list. These teachers were not picked up from any other school and many were from SMS. He did what all new principals would do; he accepted these teachers into the building. The reality he was facing was that he inherited a staff with no expertise in dealing with diversity and students who had learning gaps. Now, he also had a new group of teachers that were part of the reason that SMS closed.

Mr. Rodriguez had July to get acquainted with his staff. He had to build his leadership team, which was comprised of teachers and administration. He just received a new position on the campus, a social-emotional learning coordinator. This person was to help with classroom management and help struggling students, something LMS had never dealt with before the consolidation. He also had a new community in-school liaison that he needed to help acclimate into the building. This person was a social worker designed to help families and students with food, appointments, and paying bills. Again, this is something LMS had never needed before. He had to develop a plan with his assistant principals on what professional development they would roll out at the beginning of the year. Who would teach the different components and when? His assistants were also off the month of July as he was trying to bring them into this planning. His excitement and confidence began to fade as he was trying to unite the school while people were gone.

When his teachers returned from their summer break, he was met with many teachers who were unsure of the school. He thought they would be united and excited about the new school year, but in reality, they were not. They wanted a plan for *those* kids and what to do when they did not behave and follow orders. How would he

discipline them and show them how to act in the *LMS way*? He was attacked at every meeting of the staff, demanding answers. Two of his assistants, Karen and Suzanne, fueled the apprehension in the teachers by telling the teachers that they would have to *deal with it*. His other assistant, Tyler, was new and stayed quiet. Mr. Rodriguez was feeling a great deal of anxiety as he was trying to reassure the staff that he would cope with the students' problems and that the teachers would be fine. He was also wondering if his administrative team was dysfunctional. They did not appear to be operating as one unit; all united towards a common goal with a plan in place.

On the first day of school, Mr. Rodriguez showed up early and was filled with anticipation and excitement about meeting his students. As the over 900 students filed into the school, he was at the front door welcoming them. He was smiling, greeting them and the parents that showed up as well. Assistant Tyler came over the radio and said, "We need help in the 600 hall, we have a fight." The school had not even started, and there was a fight. All the administrators ran to the hall and dispersed the students. Mr. Rodriguez could sense the tension in the air among the students. As soon as he got the students to class, his secretary called him to the office because he had a parent who needed to see him immediately. When he arrived, he found a lady waiting for him. They went to his office, and he asked what he could do for her. She said, "This is my third child to attend LMS, and the other two were fine here. I am worried about Sally because of all of the *Black* and *Mexican* kids that are in the school." She continued, "I have heard that they have guns, drugs and are in gangs. I fear for her safety." She wanted Mr. Rodriguez to tell her how he was going to deal with *those* kids so that her child could learn. She also stated that she was the president of the parent-teacher association and that

she spoke for all of the LMS parents, and they wanted answers! Mr. Rodriguez was speechless. He was not sure what to say. As a Hispanic man in charge of securing a non-discriminating environment for his students, he had to answer to what appeared to be an apparent racist. Finally, he simply stood up and said, “Thank you for bringing your concerns to me.” She obviously wanted a stronger answer as she stormed out the door.

As Mr. Rodriguez moved through the day, he noticed that his school looked different than what he thought it would look like. The cafeteria was chaotic; kids were yelling and screaming and running around the building. The halls were loud, and there were no adults supervising the students. When the bell rang, 40 to 50 students never went to class and the teachers never counted them absent. Teachers were sending students to the office just as quickly as they walked into the classroom. As the days went on, the chaos became worse. There were routine fights in classrooms and the halls. Discipline was out of control. Teachers were mad and wanted to quit. Parents were complaining on social media, to the superintendent, and the school board.

Mr. Rodriguez went to the superintendent and asked for help. The superintendent said that she would look for conferences to send him to and that he could call other principals and talk to them, but she did not offer any other help. She just stated that he was hired to run the school, and he better fix it! All that Mr. Rodriguez could think of was that he wished he had someone to ask for help, someone to give him advice, someone to help him solve these issues. He needed a coach and needed one now! He knew things needed to change. He just did not know how to change them.

Teacher Notes

Coaching is defined as continual support to principals that allows them to operate in a safe and confidential environment, providing support in personal, professional, and instructional areas (Bloom et al., 2005). The primary purpose of a leadership coach is to accelerate the principal's learning so that the students do not face learning deficits (Shoho et al., 2010). All principals need support, but it is critical to help shape new principals as they learn to manage their leadership skills. (Shoho et al., 2010). In modern schools, ones that must promote learning for all, schools require courageous leaders with a compelling vision and a drive and passion for all students to reach their fullest potential (Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

Current research on coaching indicates improvement in productivity, better relationships with staff, improved teamwork, and greater job satisfaction (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). Time with a coach allows the leader to spend more time reflecting on decisions and systems in the school. The coaching relationship provides a shared problem-solving setting, where they work together to construct meaning from situations and develop new action plans (Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

The most widely used coaching model is blended coaching. This model focuses on the intellectual needs of the principal through building a trusting relationship (Lochmiller, 2013). The specific actions of the coach include listening, observation, structured questioning, and feedback (Lochmiller, 2013). The coach imparts their wisdom regarding situations to allow for new actions. While changing a person is very complex, quantitative data support coaching. Bossi (2008) stated, that 40 of the 50 participants

schools that implemented blended coaching experienced a 26-point increase on their growth index in the first year of coaching.

Case Study Questions

1. Mr. Rodriguez has administrative experience, but none as the principal of a school. He is tasked with uniting two diverse schools into one and raising the academic achievement of all students. Explain the district-level supports that Mr. Rodriguez will need in order to do what the district asks of him.
2. What are the steps Mr. Rodriguez will have to take to learn the previous culture of the building before planning to shape the new culture?
3. The school has 920 students with a broad range of learning gaps. What systems will Mr. Rodriguez have to put in place to monitor learning and ensure there are equitable learning opportunities for all students?
4. How should Mr. Rodriguez share his philosophy about teaching and learning with his staff?
5. Considering the diverse student population that makes up the school, what kind of professional development will the staff need in order to learn how to teach the students?
6. What steps does the district need to take to promote the school and Mr. Rodriguez to the community?
7. Parent support is critical to the success of schools. What steps does Mr. Rodriguez need to take to unite the parents around his mission and vision for the school?

8. Teachers are the number one factor in student success, with administration being second. What steps does Mr. Rodriguez need to take to recruit, retain, and train his staff?

Case Study Activities

1. Plan your first speech to the staff about the new school year. How will you share your vision for the schools, set your expectations for the staff, and unite the staff into one school? Be prepared to share this speech with the class.
2. Get into groups of four. Your assignment will be to create the systems for how you will enter the building, walk in the hallways, go to lunch, and exit the building for pickup. Your goal is to make sure that the school operates efficiently and safely. You may use all of the staff you need, but you can only use them for one duty a day.
3. You and a partner will design the data protocols for teachers. How will they track student learning on formative assessments and district assessments to ensure that all students are learning and that they will be ready for the state-mandated test, STAAR? When and how will they look at this data, and what will they do with the data? Who will collaborate with the teachers on their data?

References

- Bloom, G., Castagna, C., Moir, E., & Warren, B. (2005). *Blended coaching: Skills and strategies to support principal development*. Corwin Press.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A112686941/AONE?u=txshracd2629&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=28c4a890>
- Bossi, M. (2008). Does leadership coaching really work? *Leadership*, 38(1)31-36
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). School leadership study: Developing successful principals. *Stanford Educational Leadership Institute*. [Commissioned by the Wallace Foundation], 2-27.
<https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/library/publications/244>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 28(1). 27-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701800060>
- Lochmiller, C. R. (2013). Leadership coaching in an induction program for novice principals: A 3-year study. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 9(1), 59-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942775113502020>
- McQueen, C. (2021). *Follow the instructional leader*. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/follow-the-instructional-leader>
- National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. (2020). *Empowering principals: Bringing clarity to the role of instructional leader*.
<https://www.niet.org/newsroom/show/feature/empowering-principals-bringing-clarity-to-role-instructional-leader>

- Neumerski, C., Grissom, J., Goldring, E., Rubin, M., Cannata, M., Schuermann, P., & Drake, T. (2018). Restructuring instructional leadership: How multiple-measures teacher evaluation systems are redefining the role of the school principal. *The Elementary School Journal*, 119(2), 270-297. <https://doi.org/10.1086/700597>
- Shoho, A. R., Barnett, B. G., & Tooms, A. K. (2010). *The challenges for new principals in the twenty-first century*. International Research on School Leadership Series. IAP-Information Age Publishing.
- Wise, D., & Jacobo, A. (2010). Towards a framework for leadership coaching. *School Leadership and Management*, 30(2), 159-169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632431003663206>

Damon McCall

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Department of Education

College of Education and Social Science

West Texas A&M University

Author Note

Damon McCall is an Ed.D. candidate at West Texas A&M University. He currently serves as Executive Principal for Lubbock Independent School District.

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Damon McCall, Department of Education, West Texas A&M University, Canyon, Texas. e-mail: dmccall1@buffs.wtamu.edu

Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to explore principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaching on student learning and data analysis. **Research Method:** An exploratory case study was used in this research to develop an understanding of the principals' perceived efficacy associated with instructional coaching and the impact it has on student achievement. This research examined the perceptions of multiple principals from fluctuating school settings. **Findings:** The overarching research question was “What are the principals’ perceptions of instructional coaching?” The study answered this question by exploring the principals' perception of instructional coaching on student learning, analyzing student data, and teacher performance. The following themes were discovered: student growth, teacher growth, data-driven instruction, and culture.

Conclusion: In response to the research question, the principals all agreed that having an instructional coach gave them the tools they needed to accelerate student growth and improve teacher practices on their campuses. The results of this study will help inform all school stakeholders on the best practices in the implementation of instructional coaches.

Key Words: principal, instructional coach, transformational leadership, student learning, collaboration

Principal's Perspective on a Having a Coach

The role of the principal has evolved over the years from one of a building manager to more of an instructional leader. According to Leithwood et al. (2008), they could not find a single documented case where student achievement rises in the absence of talented leadership, which serves as a catalyst for unleashing potential organizational capacities. Davis et al. (2005) defined the role of a principal as:

Principals are responsible for being educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies. They need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs. (p.1)

School leaders are constantly tasked with solving complex problems. However, the workload and rise in accountability have reduced the time for principals to think carefully, make plans, build relationships, and focus on their goals (Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

Principals need to be given a clear roadmap for becoming instructional leaders due to the job's many competing priorities and demands. "Guidance around exactly what principals should do as they visit classrooms, how they should supervise instruction, or how to establish the most effective visible presence is largely nonexistent" (Hudgens et al., 2020, para. 1). Principals struggle to be instructional leaders. They are "pulled in

many different directions, making it difficult to focus significant time and energy on leading learning” (McQueen, 2021, p. 1). School districts expect principals to improve their teachers’ performance through observations, feedback, and other forms of instructional leadership (Neumerski et al., 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of principals on the effectiveness that instructional coaching had on student learning and data analysis on them and their campuses. This study also investigated the most effective activities for improving teacher performance. The overarching research question for this study was “What are the perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaching?” The study also addressed three sub-research questions:

- What are principals' perceptions regarding the impact of instructional coaching on student learning?
- What are principals' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching in helping teachers analyze student data?
- What are principals' perceptions regarding what coaching activities are the most effective in improving teacher performance?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was transformational leadership. The study was guided by the direct link that connects the transformational leadership theory to the behaviors and practices of the instructional leader. The research that led to this framework concluded that an instructional leader exhibits behavior closely related to the transformational leadership theory. Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) stated,

"Predominant notions of the principal's role have evolved from a manager, to street-level bureaucrat, to change agent, to an instructional manager, to the instructional leader, to transformational leader" (p. 137).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory depicts the leader as an instrument that brings about substantial organizational change by creating a shared vision and instilling a passion and purpose (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Leithwood, 1994). According to Roberts (1985), a transformational leader facilitates the mission of others by helping them commit to attaining their goals that align with the school's vision. One of the guiding practices behind the transformational leadership theory is adult learning, which focuses on learning processes stemming from problem-solving and critical thinking (Wells, 2014).

Transformational leaders integrate energy, creativity, persistence, and sensitivity to cultivate strategies to change the culture of their buildings to fulfill their school's vision (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Hallinger (2010) reviewed 30 years of empirical research on school leadership and found that leaders can positively affect student achievement through structures and cultures, collaboration among staff, and the development of staff by leadership.

Ronald Reagan (1975) stated, "The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one who gets people to do the greatest things." The definition of leadership is very complex and continually evolving as new theories and approaches arise. Leadership is a process it involves influencing other people to achieve the organization's goals; it occurs in groups moving toward common goals (Northouse, 2019). Transformational leaders exhibit many common behaviors. Essential behaviors

include a relentless drive, motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and business knowledge (Kirkpatrick et al., 1991). The most successful organizations have great leaders, and the most successful schools have great principals. In the field of educational leadership, the leader's behaviors towards decision-making are a result of what he or she values and believes, the mindscapes of how the world works, and the decision, actions, and behaviors of the leader and the influence they have on their team (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Transformational leadership theory is the fastest-growing theory linked to instructional leadership because of the complexity of the modern-day school. Transformational leadership focuses on developing the leader to solve complex problems using innovative solutions, collaboration, and teamwork to achieve lasting organizational change (Cox et al., 2018). The attributes most associated with transformational leadership in principals are shared leadership, systems and protocols, and vulnerability (White, 2022). Many principals leave the profession because they are not equipped to lead a school (Herfurth, 2017), are paid low salaries, lack autonomy and politics, and have poor professional development (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Others, however, choose to leave the profession because of a lack of feedback that helps them grow in their role, causing them not to be fully aware of their everyday practices and lack the confidence they need to influence and develop their teachers (Gilley et al., 2007; Milner et al., 2018).

One of the guiding practices behind the transformational leadership theory is adult learning, which focuses on learning processes stemming from problem-solving and critical thinking (Wells, 2014). Adults learn the best when they can draw from their own experiences, (Cox, 2015) by connections made through observations, feedback, and

reflection. Mezirow (2003) argued that everyone has unique beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions of the world in which they live, which causes people to be reluctant to change. For adults to change their beliefs, they must trust that the information they receive is accurate and true. They should believe in the vision and know that the plan that is in place will work.

Connecting Transformational and Instructional Leadership

Transformational leadership theory depicts the leader as an instrument that brings about substantial organizational change by creating a shared vision and instilling a passion and purpose (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Leithwood, 1994). Roberts (1985) indicated that a transformational leader facilitates the mission of others by helping them commit to attaining their goals that align with the school's vision. Instructional leadership directly relates to the transformational leadership theory in that the principal increases the teacher's awareness of values, focuses on the organization's overall vision, and improves everyone's ability to perform their duties related to student achievement (Smith et al., 2017). The principal does not have to do all these tasks, but they must oversee the process of making sure they happen. The key to transforming a culture is to share or distribute the leadership duties while ensuring everyone is moving towards the goals and fulfilling the school's vision. Fullan (2007) perfectly stated, "We need leaders who can create a fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and the teaching profession itself" (p.17).

Research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) linked seven principal practices to the transformational leadership theory: (a) vision; (b) intellectual stimulation; (c) clear and explicit expectations; (d) modeling; (e) shared leadership; (f) relationship building; and

(g) motivation. The leader should clearly articulate the process he or she used to create and communicate the vision to all key stakeholders. The principal must also be able to provide innovative ways to grow the staff intellectually. The leader must clearly state explicit expectations and provide individual support to help the teachers meet these expectations. The principal must model their thoughts and actions through conversations and collaboration with teachers, thus, teaching them ways to improve as a teacher. The principal constantly tries to inspire and motivate the staff by helping them feel valued and that their effort translates into student learning. The leader builds trusting relationships and shares leadership with the teachers to build a solid connection to the work.

Literature Review

Instructional Leadership and the Principal

The role of the principal has been under scrutiny for many years. Are principals building managers, instructional leaders, or mid-level managers from the central office? The answer is yes. The effective principal is a building manager who runs a tight ship, fosters trusting, positive parental relationships, manages discipline, and is a good steward of the budget. Being a mid-management central office employee refers to carrying out the mandates from the district level without resistance. What does the role of an instructional leader look like? Rutherford (1985) described an effective instructional leader as:

Having clear, informed visions of what they want their schools to become—visions that align with the students and their needs; translating these visions into goals for schools and clearly stated expectations for their teachers, students, and administrators; continuously monitoring progress and intervene in a supportive or corrective manner when this seems necessary. (p.32)

Current research on instructional leadership describes it as the integration of tasks with direct assistance to teachers through staff development, curriculum assistance, and actions based on reflections of teaching. Blasé and Blasé (2004) stated that influential instructional leaders are skilled at supervising instruction, while ineffective leaders are not.

One of the primary purposes of an instructional leader is to create situations in which teachers excel and grow in their instructional capacities. Principals can accomplish this through various practices and systems they implement in their schools. In their research, Kraft and Gilmour (2016) concluded that designing schedules with standard planning periods, which created systems and times for teacher collaboration and to observe one another, and setting goals and high expectations for all stakeholders are factors that contribute to student learning. Teacher-led collaboration meetings are influential in improving practices. However, the most effectively run meetings have the principal ensuring that their formal authority is present and that the meetings are organized and aligned to instructional practices and student needs (DeMathews, 2014). In addition to teacher collaboration, focusing on the critical input (curriculum) and key output (examining student learning) are two key components of instructional leadership (Peterson, 1987).

Teachers perform better when they perceive that their principal is an instructional leader. Teachers gauge instructional leadership as the principal's ability to get the needed resources, communicate clear expectations to all key stakeholders, and have a visible presence in classrooms and teacher collaboration meetings. Smith and Andrews (1989) found that solid instructional leaders spend more time on instruction than they do student

discipline; however, they conclude that there is little difference in the amount of time spent on managerial tasks and instructional leadership. According to the research, a principal can continue being a building manager and an effective instructional leader without a predetermined amount of time allocated, but what they do as an instructional leader translates into student achievement.

The principal needs to be the instructional resource provider for the teachers. In order to do this, the principal must understand and be knowledgeable about good instruction. Sapone (1985) explained that any school could increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning if the principal is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction. In addition to being a resource provider, the instructional leader becomes a resource to facilitate teachers' growth through reflection. Blasé and Blasé (1999) concluded in their research that effective principals valued dialogue that encouraged teachers to reflect on the impact of their instruction on students, by making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, and praising the teachers.

The modern-day instructional leader does more than observe and give feedback to teachers; he or she coaches and models' innovative practices related to teacher outcomes and behaviors (Goff et al., 2014). Evidently, the expectations for the principal are evolving to be more specific in their instructional practices; however, there needs to be more focus and research on how they can achieve this (Thessin & Louis, 2019). There is a push to strengthen principals through systematic training targeted at the individual needs of the principal as it relates to their school. Such targeted and systematic support focuses on developing instructional leaders who will reduce disparities among schools (Robinson et al., 2008).

Instructional Coaching

Meaningful change does not just happen by chance; there needs to be clearly defined systems, procedures and routines. The principals need someone to guide them through developing a data-driven culture, designing systems and frameworks for implementation, and continuous support routinely monitoring the implementation of these systems.

Coaching is continual support to principals that allows them to operate in a safe and confidential environment, providing support in personal, professional, and instructional areas (Bloom et al., 2005). The primary purpose of a leadership coach is to accelerate the principal's learning so that the students do not face learning deficits (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). All principals need support, but it is critical to help shape new principals as they learn to manage their leadership skills (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Modern schools that must promote learning for all require courageous leaders with a compelling vision, drive, and passion for all students to reach their fullest potential (Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

Current research on coaching shows improvement in productivity, better relationships with staff, improved teamwork, and greater job satisfaction (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). Time with a coach allows the leader to spend more time reflecting on decisions and systems in the school. The coaching relationship provides a shared problem-solving setting where they work together to construct meaning from situations and develop new action plans (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). The coach works with the principal to reflect on the current practice of data-driven instruction and what they want it to look like, and they analyze and allocate resources needed to support the change (Neufeld & Donaldson,

2012). Due to the complex working environments principals navigate daily, principal coaching is becoming one of the most influential and popular approaches to professional leadership (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Coaching allows principals to differentiate, work on real-life situations, and use the central office supervisor as the coach. It allows the work to align with the principal's evaluation and professional growth (Weathers & White, 2015).

Browne-Ferrigno et al. (2008) concluded that increasing the principal's capacity to be an instructional leader is achieved by the principal learning how to build and lead schools revolving around quality instruction and student achievement. Leading a building is described by Smith et al. (2017) as the principal "not just supervising teachers, but being a lead teacher and a lead learner and a steward of the learning process as a whole" (p. 20). Stronge and Xianxuan (2008) concluded in research that by increasing principals' abilities to lead instructional meetings, teachers' self-effacing in instructing their students increases, increasing student achievement.

Research indicates that principal supervisors who coach and mentor principals have the highest impact on instructional leadership development practices by principals (Honig, 2012; Jerald, 2012). Relationships between central office supervisors (coaches) that focus on strengthening instructional leadership capacity are critical for transforming campus teaching and learning (Honig et al., 2010). This partnership has potent effects in shifting the mindsets of principals as well as increasing their knowledge as it relates to curriculum and instructional practices (Honig et al., 2010). Research indicates that the most impact occurs when principal supervisors/coaches focus 100% of their time on instructional leadership (Rainey & Honig, 2020).

Research by Goldring et al. (2018) indicated that engaging in instructional activities with the principal is one of the best methods for developing instructional leadership. By engaging in the activities with the principal, the coach can provide feedback to the principal on the conversations they will have with the teachers (Rainey & Honig, 2020). The critical component of the research indicates that for actual change to happen, the principal supervisor/coach must be on campus with the principal (Goldring et al., 2018). The supervisor/coach must be the liaison between the central office and the campus to help influence decisions that will impact the campus the most. Rainey and Honig (2020) concluded that the most effective supervisors/ coaches had 8-12 principals. If they have 13 or more, there needs to be more time to develop them fully. True campus transformation cannot happen without a transformed central office; the supervisor's role will not evolve into that of a coach without direct support from the superintendent (Corcoran et al., 2013).

Principal coaching centers on supporting the principal through good communication, gathering relevant information, motivation, morale-boosting, and professional feedback, which results in growth (Stone, 1999). The coach keeps the principal driving for success and sustaining the needed momentum through practical goal setting, support, and helping them overcome obstacles (Moore, 2020). Research by Bloom et al. (2003) concluded that principal coaching increases confidence in administrators, which directly correlates to better classroom instruction and higher student achievement. According to research, only a few certificate programs train principals to lead instruction on their campuses (Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009). For principals to perfect the art of leadership, they require multiple chances to practice this

type of leadership with feedback along the way (Howard, 2018). This type of work is often messy because of the real-life situations involved, according to Doornbos et al. (2004). However, the principal will develop into an instructional leader through a commitment to continual meetings to discuss growth, development targets aligned with data-driven practices, and genuine and honest feedback (Joo, 2005).

Instructional Coaching and Student Learning. Federal and state accountability is very complicated when analyzing student learning. Principals are held accountable for student learning by ensuring an appropriate number of students in each demographic group pass tests. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that every student they teach learns the content they present to them, regardless of the outside factors that students may carry daily. In order to teach students current grade level content while simultaneously filling in learning gaps, the teacher must become skillful at differentiating instruction (DI). Teachers must understand their students' learning history to effectively differentiate their lessons (Evans & Waring, 2004). The teacher must learn DI strategies to implement in their classrooms, as most do not know them coming out of school (Evans & Waring, 2004). In order to effectively differentiate instruction for the students in a classroom, the teacher has to abandon the traditional practice of whole-group instruction and begin to group students according to the student's needs. Teachers learn effective DI strategies over time. Moosa and Shareefa (2019) stated that teachers increase the use and effectiveness of DI when explicitly taught. In a study conducted by Wertheim and Leser (2002) of 191 teachers surveyed, the results showed that teachers were reluctant to use new instructional strategies for DI without gaining confidence through teaching and coaching practices.

Another way to help student achievement is through response to intervention (RTI). RTI originated as a screener to help teachers decide if students needed more time with the curriculum or if the student needed a referral to special education (Lenski, 2012). RTI has a three-tier approach. Tier 1 is whole classroom instruction. Tier 2 focuses on some form of formative assessment, and the students work in small groups based on similar deficits aligned to their content. Tier 3 is the most intensive intervention and requires a pull-out or after-school approach from the teacher. Wherein Tier 3 intervention, the teacher works on filling learning gaps with the students that are keeping them from mastering on grade-level content.

Research indicates that student achievement rises when there is a presence of curricular leadership. Louis et al. (1999) conceptualized curricular leadership as a combination of interactions with existing structures in the building, such as lesson planning, instructional methods, data-driven decisions, collaborative structures, and teacher support. A review of school effectiveness and student achievement research indicates they are linked to school leadership (Cross, 1994; Louis et al., 1999). The principal leads these initiatives through a collaborative process. Justice et al. (2002) concluded that school effectiveness occurs through routinely using student performance data to drive instructional decisions. These decisions are made collaboratively with teachers and administrators regarding what instructional decisions the student needs and how they will be implemented and measured for success (Peterson, 2002). Through this collaborative approach, teachers can plan and implement an effective intervention. Foorman and Torgensen (2001) concluded in their research that interventions are effective if implemented promptly so that the target student can have the appropriate time

to master the content. The critical factor for the team to determine is the appropriate level of work to challenge the student, but not so much that they need help to grasp the concept. In looking at a student's independent level, Knestrick (2012) defined it as the work a student can handle easily with no assistance. The instructional level is what they can do with DI, requiring targeted assistance (Powell et al., 2020), and the challenge level needs to be revised, even with assistance (Knestrick, 2012).

Instructional Coaching and Student Data. Recent reforms to evaluation systems have shifted the principal's role from an evaluator to an instructional leader, working individually with teachers to improve classroom practice (Kraft & Gilmour, 2016). The responsibility of improving student achievement is that of the building administrator and depends on the principal's ability to improve teachers' practice (Alvarez & Anderson-Ketchmark, 2011). Much of the research to date has focused on teacher effectiveness more so than the effectiveness of principals (Dhuey & Smith, 2018). Nevertheless, the primary focus for school principals remains to be instructional leaders, as it has the most significant impact on the student achievement of the principal (Robinson et al., 2008). The use of user data has become more prevalent in recent years because of legislative mandates. Many teachers and administrators collect data but do not use the data to make instructional decisions (Coburn & Turner, 2011). Data-driven instruction has to be a part of the school culture, Guskey and Yoon (2009) said that principals are critical for modeling and creating this data-rich environment. Fullan (2007) went on to further state that "effective school leaders are key to large-scale sustainable education reform" (p. 16).

Research indicates that using assessment data as part of the decision-making process to influence instructional decisions is instructional leadership (Marsh & Farrell, 2015). The principal's role in the data-driven decision process is essential for collaboration and cohesiveness in the school so that the students can meet the benchmark and state accountability standards (Park et al., 2014). Principals must be able to model and grow them to transform data into information and use the knowledge gained to make actionable decisions (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016). Grissom et al. (2021) described the most effective principals as those who can turn student data into instructional actions. Principals have the potential to impact learning in their schools by "developing coherent systems that allow school staff to generate, interpret, and act upon quality formative information on students and school programs" (Halverson, 2010, p. 130).

One of the primary responsibilities of an instructional leader is to create situations in which teachers excel and grow in their instructional capacities. Principals can accomplish this through various practices and systems they implement in their schools. Kraft and Gilmour (2016) concluded in their research that designing schedules with standard planning periods, creating systems and times for teacher collaboration and observing one another, and setting goals and high expectations for all stakeholders, are factors that contribute to student learning. Teacher-led collaboration meetings are influential in improving practices. However, the most effectively run meetings have the principal ensuring that their formal authority is present and that the meetings are organized and aligned to instructional practices and student needs (DeMathews, 2014). In addition to teacher collaboration, focusing on the critical input (curriculum) and key

output (examining student learning) are two critical components of instructional leadership (Peterson, 1987).

Instructional Coaching Activities

One of the most widely accepted strategies for improvement in schools, according to Mandinach and Gummer (2016), is for instructional leaders and teachers to work together to analyze outcomes and trends in student assessment data and measure the progress that leads to student growth. The problem is that teachers and administrators have varying ability levels in looking at data (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016). Accessing current and relevant data rather than waiting for formal assessments is the key to impacting daily classroom instruction. Anderson et al. (2010) argued that using student achievement data alone provides little information on why students are or are not learning. The teacher should also look at the classroom environment, the student's discipline, and absences to help gauge the reason for or lack of learning. Data literacy of all educators is critical for schools to use data to increase student achievement effectively. A focus of the instructional leader is to build human capacity around data use in their school (Mandinach & Gummer, 2013).

Schools that are good at using data developed a data theory of action, the interaction between data and people. Depending on the data context, determine the appropriate action steps to take (Schildkamp & Poortman, 2015). Using data to plan for upcoming in-class instruction is frequently seen in schools but only occasionally used for follow-up and intervention. Sun and Leithwood (2014) said that for teachers to effectively use data to inform them of their instruction's impact on students learning, principals need to guide and model this process. An essential step to make sure the

student data adequately displays learning, Leithwood et al. (2020) explained that the teacher must do these things; "maximize teaching and learning time, create classroom conditions that allow for an appropriate pace of instruction, and help students take charge of their learning in age-appropriate ways" (p. 6). Hattie's (2009) work indicated that data-informed decisions are among the 252 factors influencing student learning. Despite this, it is rare to find studies that measure this, thus a gap in the research.

Improvement of instructional practices at the building level to improve student achievement is the key to full-scale education reform (Hord, 1994). A belief must accompany the change by all in the building, their thought process, and their instructional strategies (Guskey & Huberman, 1995). The principal ensures ongoing support for the teachers to implement and sustain the new practices. Guskey and Huberman (1995) stated this process results in teachers changing their belief systems. This change was most evident when teachers were culturally, economically, and socially different than their students (Horne, 2012). The teachers with the most significant impact on their students through new and innovative instructional practices had a minimum of 80 hours of sustained professional development around the targeted practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). It takes work to achieve this level of professional development time. Guskey and Yoon (2009) stated that substantial student achievement gains are made if the principal embeds real-time classroom coaching in addition to professional development. Horne (2012) said that in addition to the coaching feedback loop, teacher collaboration led to improved practices in the classroom. Schlechty (2001) indicated that "for change to be sustained, it is essential that a group be established that can be depended on to sustain and support a course of action" (p. 141). The principal and their coach are vital to

ensuring that this professional development, embedded coaching, and teacher collaboration become a reality, resulting in changing belief systems in their school and increased student achievement (Knight, 2006).

Summary

Effective teaching is the number one factor in student achievement (Leithwood, 1994). Therefore strong instructional leadership is key to developing teachers (Leithwood et al., 2020). The literature characterizes transformational leadership as the interrelated leadership theory with instructional leadership. Transformational leadership theory requires the leader to bring about substantial organizational change by creating a shared vision and instilling a passion and purpose for teaching and learning on the campus (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Leithwood, 1994). There is a gap in the literature encompassing teacher performance and assessment data to improve student performance acquired from instructional leadership. This gap in the literature lends this study to an exploratory design obtained from a qualitative study. This research investigated the perceptions that public school principals have about the impact that instructional coaching had on their ability to improve teacher performance in their schools.

Methodology

An exploratory case study was used in this research to develop an understanding of the principals' perceived efficacy associated with instructional coaching and the impact it has on student achievement. This research examined the perceptions of multiple principals from fluctuating school settings, therefore necessitating a qualitative approach. The data collected were a result of triangulating multiple sources of rich texts gathered through conversation to answer the research questions, which according to Kozleski

(2017), called for a qualitative research design. All of these research questions used language rather than numbers for data collection, which is why qualitative research is the best approach (Gobo, 2020).

Exploratory case studies are used in research to obtain an empirically based introduction to a phenomenon, with a focus on the discovery of perceptions or feelings from participants (Chopard & Przybylski, 2021). This case study sought to understand the principals' perception of how instructional coaching affected their ability to lead teachers. It was not the intent to explain how a coach benefits a principal, but rather to understand the experiences of these particular principals while implementing the 'coaching' process. This research attempted to gain the full picture of the participants' feelings about instructional coaching and how it impacted their ability to develop and grow teachers on their campuses. This exploratory research examined the challenges that these principals face in improving student outcomes on their campuses and how instructional coaching helped them overcome the challenges and improve student outcomes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Participant Population

The population for this research was chosen through purposeful and convenience sampling. This sampling process was chosen because of a specific criterion, as well as the availability of the participants. The criteria for the participants were active campus principals who had an experienced instructional coach on their campus. The participants were also chosen because of their location and their relationship with the researcher. All the participants were employees of the school district where I work, but I was/am not their supervisor. I do serve in a supervisor role in the district and have some contact with

the participants. I do not evaluate any of the participants and they do not directly report to me.

There were 13 participants in the study. They came from a comprehensive high school principal, two middle school principals, and 10 elementary principals. The participants' school is located in a "large city" area as categorized by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the National Center for Educational Statistics (TEA, 2023). Each of these principals had varying levels of instructional coaching, resulting in academic achievements in their schools. Their instructional coaching experience included data disaggregation, creating a data culture, curriculum and instruction, and response to intervention.

The principals were recruited via invitation. Once all the consent forms were signed, the interview process using focus groups was explained. A demographic questionnaire, consent agreement, and the Zoom link, date and time were sent to each participant individually. The participants completed the demographic questionnaire and consent agreement prior to their scheduled meeting. All of the participants had the opportunity to have a private interview if they preferred; however, no one opted for the one-on-one interviews. Each focus group was structured according to the level of the school they supervised, elementary and secondary. The focus groups were arranged homogeneously in order to facilitate interaction, as they were all equal to one another and shared similar working environments (Acocella, 2012). The following table represents the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1
Participant Information

Participant Name* (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Number of Years as Principal	Number of Years in Education	Have You Ever Thought of Quitting as a Principal
EP1	Female	9	38	Yes
EP2	Male	13	27	Yes
EP3	Female	2	22	Yes
EP4	Female	2	26	Yes
EP5	Female	2	33	No
EP6	Female	1	15	No
EP7	Female	5	16	Yes
EP8	Female	2	31	Yes
EP9	Female	4	22	Yes
EP10	Female	1	26	No
SP1	Male	5	11	No
SP2	Male	1	15	No
SP3	Male	15	29	No

Note: The pseudonyms, EP represents Elementary Principals and the SP represents Secondary Principals.

Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected using two focus groups. One group was elementary principals, and the other was composed of secondary principals. As part of the data collection, the observations of the group interactions and dynamics were based on predetermined descriptors (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) that were established through the review of the literature. The discussion sessions were recorded and transcribed to secure the reliability and validity of the data.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the focus groups in order to evaluate the adequacy of the questions to be used in the discussion groups (Lowe, 2019). The pilot study was implemented with the intent of testing the study design to be used in the larger discussion groups to make sure that the information gained was useful in answering the

research questions (Moore et al., 2011). As a result of the pilot study, no revisions were made in the interview protocol.

Data Analysis

Qualitative studies can produce a tremendous amount of textual data. Comparing and contrasting this data into patterns shedding light onto a phenomenon that is under investigation requires the use of a data analysis method. The framework method by Gale et al. (2013) was used because of the specific stages and steps. Gale et al. (2013) framework method has the following seven steps:

1. Transcription: A good quality verbatim recording of the focus group is needed.
2. Familiarization with the Interview: Record thoughts and notes during the discussion, and listen to the recording and add to the notes afterward.
3. Coding: Read the transcripts line by line, adding a paraphrase/label that describes the passage.
4. Develop a Working Analytical Framework: Group the codes into clearly defined categories, mapping connections between categories to look for causal relationships.
5. Applying the Analytical Framework: Indexing the categories by assigning a number or abbreviation.
6. Charting Data into the Framework Matrix: Summarize the data into a spreadsheet matrix.

7. Interpreting Data: Looking for characteristics of and differences between data are identified, generating typologies, and mapping theoretical connections and concepts.

The framework method is best suited for homogeneous thematic research that incorporates semi-structured interviews (Gale et al., 2013).

The recording and the transcripts do not capture the looks, body posture, long silences, and other factors addressing the tone of the interview (Poland, 1995), so notes were taken during the focus group discussion. Since qualitative data gathered from discussion groups is often influenced by the interaction among the groups, more notes were taken to reflect how this interaction could have influenced any of the participants (Seers, 2012). Finally, the fidelity of the data analysis process was ensured by correlating all of my observations, assumptions and evidence around the focus group discussion, while making sure the data analysis was still grounded in the literature (Levitt et al., 2021) as well as making connections with the theoretical framework of transformational leadership.

Findings

Principal Perceptions

The overarching research question of this study was, "What are the principals' perceptions of instructional coaching?" The study answered this question by exploring the principals' perception of instructional coaching on student learning, analyzing student data, and teacher performance. The following themes were discovered: student growth, teacher growth, data-driven instruction, and culture.

Theme #1: Student Growth

Student growth was one of the central themes mentioned by all of the principals. The principals wanted all of their work to equate to student learning. Learning is why they came to school and what teachers do. However, as they all expressed in the focus group, this task took work. They leaned on instructional coaches to help them ensure that students were learning on their campuses.

EP5 stated that "having an instructional coach has genuinely made a difference at our campus." Furthermore, EP1 attributed instructional coaching as the critical factor in student growth. SP2 stated that "focusing on what students need to learn, rather than what the teachers teach, had shifted the conversations on his campus. This allowed the student to be the center of discussion and focus on the solution, growing the student." EP2 said that the focus of conversation his coaches led him was centered around where the students are now and where they need to be by the end of the year. This allowed EP2 to help his teachers identify their students' needs and develop a plan to help them grow. His instructional coach helped him realize that for his students to get to where they needed to be by the end of the year, his teachers would need to accelerate the student growth all year. EP7 and EP9 stated that student growth was achieved by digging deep into the standards and pinpointing what students need to achieve. They could lead this conversation with an instructional coach to guide them.

Theme #2: Teacher Growth

The principals in these focus groups believed that their teachers should have a growth mindset. They believed they should constantly strive to learn new strategies to be the best teacher possible for their students. The principals took different approaches to

growing and developing their teachers. The elementary principals directly coached all teachers in their building, whereas the secondary principals utilized the team approach to coach and grow teachers. This required them to have collaborative meetings where they discussed teachers for the principal to monitor the growth of all on their campuses.

EP9 stated that she had minimal turnover on campus and could direct her content coaches to spend time with high-needs teachers. She stated that "they [content coaches] plan lessons, model lessons for them, and meet with them frequently." She felt she could grow teachers through a "very intentional" approach that could occur over a school year. EP9 then stated that her leadership team looked at teacher's data, observations, and evaluations, and then would decide who would receive intensive coaching the following year.

All but two of the elementary principals were a part of the Texas Leadership Initiative, which allowed them to be trained in observation and feedback and to receive coaching through the year on observation and feedback with their teachers. They all stated that this coaching was the reason they could grow their teachers. EP3 used this training to provide immediate feedback to her teachers. She stated that they would do classroom walks together, and then the coach would help them script the feedback to teachers. EP8 would video herself giving a teacher feedback, and the coach would analyze the video and provide feedback. EP8 stated that "sometimes we do notice the way we say things to teachers" and that she could change her feedback to teachers through coaching.

SP3 credits his instructional coaches for helping him develop the tools needed to go into a classroom and observe teaching, then give quality feedback to the teacher. SP1

stated that through formal coaching, he could use the teaching rubric to give timely and specific feedback to help his teachers grow. EP2 stated that early in their career, he did not receive this type of coaching and is now trying to catch up to his younger peers. However, he finally felt comfortable observing teachers and giving them timely feedback. He said, "I noticed significant growth on his campus."

Theme #3: Data-Driven Instruction

Looking at student scores and data have been around for many years. As this concept of data-driven instruction has evolved, so has the type of data that principals use to measure student learning. The amount of data available to teachers and administrators can be overwhelming. An instructional coach has helped these principals filter through what is essential.

EP2 stated that his coach helped him "identify high priority standards, digging deep into the standards to identify what the students need to know and how they will show that they mastered it." The high-priority standards are the ones that yield the most significant results when it comes to skills needed for the next grade level. SP3 exclaimed, "I believe in leveraging the essential standards to help students the most, getting a big bang for your buck, so to speak." SP1 used data, stating, "We collect data on everything we can using the rich data that we have to guide teachers through unpacking targeted standards is key to student mastery."

Elementary principals also used data to guide their instruction. EP3 stated that her instructional coach taught her how to use data. She stated:

We have our data digs, and being coached on how to dig down to the question level has helped me work with my teachers in this process, but we even dig down

to the question types. Which question? What is the stimulus, and how are we going back and re-teaching that as well?

EP5 said, "We thought we were doing data digs well, but our coach gave us a whole new perspective on looking at data." EP9 and EP10 used their professional learning community time to examine student data. They look at which student missed which skill and why. They decided if it was a teaching practice, meaning most of the class missed the skill. They looked for best practices to re-teach the standard to the class if it was a teaching practice. If it was a "handful of students," they looked at why they missed the skill and then developed an intervention lesson and time to teach it.

Theme #4: Culture

All of the principals alluded to culture being critical to the success of these initiatives. If the teachers did not believe in what they were doing, then it would not work. In order for student growth, teacher growth, and data meetings to be effective, there needed to be routines and procedures developed.

SP1 articulated in the focus group that "to help teachers be very reflective upon what to focus on, I have a four-page data analysis form that my teachers fill out anytime they take an assessment." His teachers followed this straightforward procedure every time they came to a data meeting; this is culture. SP3 shaped the culture at his sizeable high school by doing the following:

Being present is also crucial. I need to be in the meetings watching to see what my people know and what they do not; this helps me keep the pulse on the school and to be a good role model. My principal job is to ensure the well-oiled machine is running. How can I tell them the machine is not working if I am absent?

"Being present in the meetings with the teachers is key to accountability on my part on their part. This is how to get commitment and buy-in from the staff. They will value what the leader values," according to SP2.

EP2 stated that he took over a low-performing school. The first thing he noticed was that the culture was not student-friendly, but was very much adult-centered. He stated, "I was in charge of getting the building in order, and my assistant was tasked with instruction." He further stated that instruction could only happen with order in the building. He knew how to manage a building, but needed coaching on leading instruction. Both of these things were critical to the culture of the building.

EP1 changed the culture of her building from a low-performing school to a high-achieving school through the deliberate act of implementing procedures and routines. She learned these procedures and routines from her instructional coach. She stated, "Having a coach come in and work with me and my team has given us the tools to go out and work with my staff. To see them implement the practices in their classroom is remarkable."

EP4 shifted the culture on her campus by implementing a new reading curriculum, and she said that she could have done it successfully with an instructional coach.

Discussion

Summary

This study contributed to the field of educational leadership through the lens of instructional leadership. There are numerous stories on the news about how education is failing. The academic standards for students have been rising for years at the state and national levels. The role of the principal is critical to the operation of a school. Leithwood et al. (2008) tried to find a case where student performance rose without talented

leadership. This study examined ten elementary principals, two middle schools, and one high school principal. The study aimed to see their perceptions of how instructional coaching increased learning on their campuses. The transformational leadership theory was the theoretical framework to correlate with instructional leadership. The principals in this study correlated a direct link to their increased efficacy as instructional leaders and common traits associated with transformational leadership.

Conclusions

This study aimed to answer the question based on the perceptions of the effects of instructional coaching of 13 school principals. This study revealed four common themes among the participants and their perception of how coaching transformed their schools. The four themes were culture, student growth, teacher effectiveness, and collaboration. These themes answer the research question.

Overarching Research Question: What are the perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional coaching?

The overall response was that instructional coaching was a benefit to the school, teachers, and students. This research concluded that instructional coaching increased principals' ability to lead instruction on their campuses. They could change the culture by implementing structures and routines that promote student learning. The coaching relationship gave these principals new ways of looking at campus instruction. The secondary principals were able to get more detailed in their procedures for analyzing student learning. The elementary principals had a thinking partner to help them process what was happening around them. They used these coaches to increase their capacity to lead others on their campuses.

Instructional coaching is an ongoing job-embedded in support of principals. It allowed them to operate in a safe environment where they could be vulnerable about what they know and do not know (Bloom et al., 2005). Current research on coaching concluded that principals had better job performance, increased happiness, and better teacher relations (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). In the modern school, all students are expected to reach their maximum potential. Wise and Jacobo (2010) revealed that a coach provides a trusting relationship where the principal can create a compelling relationship with shared problem-solving to create new actions and plans.

What are principals' perceptions regarding the impact of instructional coaching on student learning? The participants felt that the students were experiencing gains because of the instructional coaching process. These principals have been experiencing success in their accountability ratings because of increased student performance on tests. They attribute their students' growth to the instructional coach's help. They indicated that the coach helped them identify the students' gaps in their learning, which helped them differentiate their teaching to meet the students' needs. They then showed them how to develop an intervention plan based on differentiated learning that was directed at student misconceptions regarding the learning objective. These practices resulted in the students getting more growth in the state assessments than in previous years. Many principals said the coach was critical to their student's success. Principals indicated that the coaches helped them break down learning standards into what students need to know and how they will display mastery. This, along with DI, was valuable to the principals in helping their teachers meet the students' needs.

Differentiating instruction is something only some teachers or principals learn how to do in college. According to the participants, in order to grow students, teachers must become proficient in DI. This starts with looking at what the students know when they enter the classroom. Moosa and Shareefa (2019) stated that teachers increase the use and effectiveness of DI when explicitly taught. This is one way in which the instructional coach helped the principal. In a study conducted by Wertheim and Leser (2002) of 191 teachers surveyed, the results showed that teachers were only willing to use new instructional strategies for DI if they gained confidence through teaching and coaching practices. The principal should be proficient in this or lead a team of people who can teach others how to do this for students to maximize their growth.

What are principals' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of instructional coaching in helping teachers analyze student data? All principals engaged in data analysis with their teachers and leadership teams. Seven of the 10 principals went through formal coaching and training in data-driven instruction. This professional development allowed them to learn the process, but the embedded coach allowed them to practice and receive feedback. They now have confidence in coaching their teachers through this process.

Data-driven instruction is a cyclical process by the teacher at the classroom level. Teachers look at the learning objective they are to teach, what the student needs to know in the objective, and how students will show that they have learned it. They design a formative assessment to measure learning and then plan a lesson to guide the student in the learning. They teach, give the assessment, and then look at who learned and who did not and why.

Mandinach and Gummer (2013) stated that the data-driven decision-making process is critical to the teaching and learning cycle. They also declared that teachers must have a formalized process of examining student data to improve student achievement. Bambrick-Santoyo (2019) wrote a manual around data-driven instruction, concluding that it measures student learning to fill in the gaps between what is taught and what is learned. His research has been instrumental in changing how education looks at and uses student data.

What are principals' perceptions regarding what coaching activities are the most effective in improving teacher performance? The ten elementary principals viewed collaboration as the tool that most improved campus teaching and learning. They loved having a thinking partner to bounce ideas off of and someone to collaborate with when they became stuck or stagnated. They do not have large teams; often, it is them and their assistant, so the coach gave them someone extra they could trust to talk to. The secondary principals stated that the coach helped them create systems and routines in the building that focused on teaching and learning. These routines have changed the culture on these campuses. Every stakeholder understands their role and responsibility in the learning process. The coach guided these principals and their leadership teams through these processes, which resulted in a shift in beliefs.

Bloom et al. (2005) said that coaching is a continual support that allows principals to operate in a safe and confidential environment. For a school to thrive, the modern-day principal must be courageous with a compelling drive and vision that centers around student achievement (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). The coach enables the principal to accelerate their learning so that students do not face deficits in learning (Shoho, 2010).

The coaching relationship provides a shared problem-solving setting where the principal and coach work together (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). Principal coaching is becoming one of principals' most widely used professional development tools because it allows for individualized support, rather than the one-size-fits-all approach of the past (Grissom & Harrington, 2010).

Implications

This study produced several implications. One implication affects policy. Federal, state, and local policymakers should mandate an instructional coach to come in and work with school administrators. Research indicates that instructional coaching is effective in improving student learning (Grissom & Harrington, 2010; Wise & Jacobo, 2010), so legislators and state agencies should require a coach to assist struggling principals to improve student learning. There should be a vetting process that allows the right coach to be placed with the principal with the hope of creating a congenial and trusting relationship. This mandate should come with the funding to ease the burden on the schools. Professional developments to help train schools in this process should also be included.

This study presents an implication of practice for schools implementing the instructional coaching process. When implemented correctly, instructional coaching can change the culture of the school. A culture that promotes collaboration, teacher and student growth. The instructional coach and the leadership team could develop a compelling vision for success that drives the rationale behind the systems and routines that the school puts in place. These systems become the drivers for the professional development of the staff and eventually become engrained in the school's day-to-day

operations. The collaboration between the coach and the principal is critical during the challenging times that all schools face.

Transformational leadership is the framework of this study. It focuses on developing the leader to solve complex problems using innovative solutions, collaboration, and teamwork to achieve lasting organizational change (Cox et al., 2018). Schools require a courageous leader who can motivate the staff to do the hard work needed to ensure that students learn. Leaders should do more than simply go through the motions and rely on teachers to fix the problems. Leaders must embrace the art of teaching and grow and develop the teachers in their schools to use formative assessment data routinely and systematically to guide their teaching based on student learning. The transformational leader has a relentless drive, motivation, integrity, self-confidence, and cognitive ability to tackle the complexities of the principalship and ensure that all students on their campus learn. It is suggested that schools train their leaders in the concepts of transformational leadership.

Future research should examine the correlations between the transformational leadership theory and successful schools nationwide. This study found a qualitative link between the theory and strong leadership. The coach was the catalyst in this study to help the principals acquire the skills and behaviors needed. A quantitative study could be implemented that measures learning when a principal has an instructional coach. The research could use historical student achievement data and compare it to the new trends after a coaching relationship has changed the school's culture. It would be interesting to conduct a qualitative study using ethnography. This method would collect data through observations and interviews from highly effective schools that use instructional coaching.

This would help other schools learn about best practices and strategies to use when implementing instructional coaching.

Strengths and Limitations

There were several strengths of the study. One strength was the use of qualitative research. Using qualitative research allowed the interviewing of principals to get their thoughts, which added depth to the study, which a quantitative study would not have provided. The setting was also a strength of this study. The principals that were interviewed had been utilizing an instructional coach for 3 years. This allowed them to give specific details about how the coach helped them grow and acquire new skills. This gave a needed depth that qualitative studies can provide.

The study also had limitations. One limitation was that all of the principals were from the same district. Including principals in the study from other districts could have added new perspectives. Another limitation was that there were only 13 participants. This is a limitation because only three of the participants were from the secondary level. Adding more secondary principals could have added more depth to the study.

References

- Acocella, I. (2012). The focus groups in social research: advantages and disadvantages. *Quality & Quantity*, 46(2012), 1125-1136. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-011-9600-4>
- Alvarez, M. E., & Anderson-Ketchmark, C. (2011). Danielson's framework for teaching. *Children & Schools* 33(1), 61–63. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/33.1.61>
- Anderson, S., Leithwood, K., & Strauss, T. (2010). Leading data use in school: Organizational conditions and practices at the school and district levels. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9(3), 292–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700761003731492>
- Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2019). *Driven by data: A practical guide to improve instruction, second edition*. Wiley & Sons.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational leadership and organizational culture. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 17(1), 112-121. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40862298>
- Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (1999). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130-141. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230010320082>
- Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2004). *Handbook of instructional leadership: How successful principals promote teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Corwin Press. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED418493>

- Bloom, G., Castagna, C., & Warren, B. (2003). More than mentors: Principal coaching. *Leadership*, 32(5), 20–23. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=ff4b0bda80946072ba41163c3101fa99251e8623>
- Bloom, G., Castagna, C., Moir, E., & Warren, B. (2005). *Blended coaching: Skills and strategies to support principal development*. Corwin Press.
<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A112686941/AONE?u=txshracd2629&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=28c4a890>
- Browne-Ferrigno, T., Allen, L., & Hurt, P. (2008). Longitudinal reform and renewal efforts to improve public schools: Kentucky's standards and indicators for school improvement. *Leadership & Policy in Schools*, 7(4), 401–427.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ810906>
- Chopard, K., & Przybylski, R. (2021). Methods brief: Case studies. Justice Research and Statistics Associations. <https://www.jrsa.org/pubs/factsheets/jrsa-research-methods-brief-case-studies.pdf>
- Coburn, C. E., & Turner, E. O. (2011). Research on data use: A framework and analysis. *Measurement: Interdisciplinary Research & Perspective*, 9(4), 173-206.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15366367.2011.626729>
- Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. (2013). *Rethinking leadership: The changing role of principal supervisor*. Wallace Foundation. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/rethinking-leadership-thechanging-role-of-principal-supervisors.aspx>

- Cox, E. (2015). Coaching and adult learning: Theory and practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2015(148), 27–38.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.20149>
- Cox, E., Bachkirova, T., & Clutterbuck, D. A. (2018). *The complete handbook of coaching* (3rd ed.). SAGE. <http://digital.casalini.it/9781473904132>
- Cross, R. (1994). Do the influences of effective elementary schools endure? Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED379780>
- Darling- Hammond, L. Wei, R. C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad. Dallas, TX: National Staff Development Council. <http://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/nsdcstudy2009.pdf>
- Datnow, A., & Hubbard, L. (2016, November). Teacher capacity for and beliefs about data-driven decision making: A literature review of international research, *Journal of Education Change*, 17(7), 7-28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-015-9264-2>
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., Lapointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). Developing successful principals. Stanford Educational Leadership Institute & Wallace Foundation. https://www.casciac.org/pdfs/sls_research_review.pdf
- DeMathews, D. (2014). Principal and teacher collaboration: An exploration of distributed leadership in professional learning communities. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 2(2), 176–206.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.447/ijelm.2014.16>

- Denton, C. A., & Hasbrouck, J. (2009). A description of instructional coaching and its relationship to consultation. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 19(2), 150–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474410802463296>
- Dhuey, E., & Smith, J. (2018). How school principals influence student learning. *Empirical Economics*, 54(2), 851–82. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00181-017-1259-9>
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education* 40(4), 314–21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x>
- Doornbos, A. J., Bolhuis, S., & Simmons, P. R. J. (2004). Modeling work-related learning on the basis of intentionality and developmental relatedness: A noneducational perspective. *Human Resource Development Review*, 3(3), 250–2. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484304268107>
- Evans, C., & Waring, M. (2004). Trainee teachers’ cognitive styles and notions of differentiation. *Education and Training*, 50(2), 140–154. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910810862128>
- Foorman, B., & Torgensen, J. (2001). Critical elements of classroom and small-group instruction promote reading success in all children. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 16(4), 203–212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0938-8982.00020>
- Fullan, M. (2007, May). The change. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16–20. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://www.sigmus.edu.rs/eng/files/ChangeLeaderFullan%20\(1\).pdf](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://www.sigmus.edu.rs/eng/files/ChangeLeaderFullan%20(1).pdf)
- Gale, N. K., Heath, G., Cameron, E., Rashid, S., & Redwood, S. (2013). Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health

- research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 13(1), 1-8
<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-117>
- Gilley, A., Gilley, J. W., & Kouider, E. (2007). Characteristics of managerial coaching. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 23(1), 53–70.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/piq.20075>
- Gobo, G. (2020). Mario Cardano, defending qualitative research. Design, analysis, and textualization. *London Routledge*, 104–109. <https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.3771>
- Goff, P., Guthrie, J. E, Goldring, E., & Bickman, L. (2014). Changing principals’ leadership through feedback and coaching. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(5), 682–704. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-10-2013-0113>
- Goldring, E. B., Grissom, J. A., Rubin, M., Rogers, L. K., Neel, M., & Clark, M. A. (2018). A new role emerges for principal supervisors: Evidence from six districts in the principal supervisor initiative. *Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.*
<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com>
- Grissom, J., & Harrington, J. (2010). Investing in administrator efficacy: An examination of professional learning as a tool for enhancing principal effectiveness. *American Journal of Education*, 116(4), 583-612. <https://doi.org/10.1086/65363>
- Grissom, J. A., Egalite, E. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). *How principals affect students and schools*. Wallace Foundation. <https://cahnfellowsprograms.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/How-Principals-Affect-Students-and-Schools.pdf>.
- Guskey, E. T., & Huberman, M. (1995). *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices*. Teachers College Press

- Guskey, T. R., & Yoon, K. S. (2009). What works in professional development? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(7), 495-500. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170909000709>
- Hallinger, P. (2010). Developing instructional leadership. In B. Davies & M. Brundrett, (Eds) *Developing successful leadership* (pp.61-67). Springer Link. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-9106-2_5
- Hallinger, P., & Leithwood, K. (1998). Unseen forces: The impact of social culture on school leadership. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 73(2), 126–51. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327930pje7302_6
- Halverson, R. (2010). School formative feedback systems. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(2), 130–46. doi.org/10.1080/01619561003685270
- Hattie, J. (2009). The black box of tertiary assessment: An impending revolution. *Tertiary Assessment & Higher Education Student Outcomes: Policy, Practice & Research*, 259(2009), 275. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=ef18bd57b49bf1cb99b4b7fd150c893e607c6b6b>.
- Herfurth, M. (2017). *School principals: What we can learn about why they leave within five years*. Saint Mary's College of California. <https://search.proquest.com/openview/b1cbdbcaa291cac58cf3db8f2ca529ec/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>.
- Honig, M. (2012). District central office leadership as teaching: How central office administrators support principals' learning as instructional leaders. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(4), 733-774. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X12443258>

- Honig, M. I., Copland, M. A., Rainey, L., Lorton, J. A., & Newton, M. (2010). Central office transformation for district-wide teaching and learning improvement. *Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-7984.2009.01154.x>
- Hord, S. (1994). Staff development and change process: Cut from the same cloth. *Issues about Change*, 4(2), 1-6. <http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues42.html>
- Horne, J. B. (2012). Instructional coaching: Teachers' perceptions of practice and effectiveness. [Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University] ProQuest.
- Howard, B. (2018). Principal preparation In C. Bingham, P. Egelson & K Sanzo (Eds.), *Based instructional practices of effective principals* (pp. 3-20). Information Age Publishing.
- Hudgens, T. M., Logis, H. A., Leutscher, T., & Barnett, J. H. (2020, Winter). NIET research summary: Examining the evidence and impact of NIET's initiatives, *National Institute for Excellence in Teaching*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED604973>.
- Jerald, C. (2012). Leading for effective teaching: How school systems can support principal success. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Joo, B. K. (2005). Executive coaching: A conceptual framework from an integrative review of practice and research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(4), 462–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/153448430528086>
- Justice, L., Invernizzi, M., & Meier, J. (2002). Designing and implementing an early literacy screening protocol: Suggestions for the speech-language pathologist.

Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 33(2), 84-101.

[https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461\(2002/007\)](https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461(2002/007))

Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A. (1991). Leadership: Do traits matter? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 5(2), 48-60.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1991.4274679>

Knestrick, J. (2012, November 27). *The zone of proximal development (ZPD) and why it matters for early childhood learning*. Teach. Learn Grow. NWEA.

<https://www.nwea.org/blog/2012/the-zone-of-proximal-development-zpd-and-why-it-matters-for-early-childhood-learning/>

Knight, J. (2006). Instructional coaching. *School Administrator*, 63(4). 36-40.

<https://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorIssue.aspx?id=3866>

Kozleski, E. B. (2017). The uses of qualitative research: Powerful methods to inform evidence-based practice in education. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities: The Journal of TASH*, 42(1), 19–32.

doi.org/10.1177/1540796916683710

Kraft, M. A., & Gilmour, A. (2016). Can principals promote teacher development as evaluators? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(5), 711-753.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X16653445>

Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 30(4), 498-518. [https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461\(2002/007\)](https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461(2002/007))

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of*

Educational Administration 38(2), 112-129.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230010320064>

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5-22.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230010320064>

Leithwood, K., Seashore, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2008). Review of research: How leadership influences student learning. University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement: *The Wallace Foundation*.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2660-6_35

Lenski, S. (2012). What RTI means for content area teachers. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(4), 276-282. <https://doi.org/10.1002/JAAL.00034>

Levin, S., & Bradley, K. (2019). Understanding and addressing principal turnover: A review of the research. *National Association of Secondary School Principals*.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/JAAL.00034>

Levitt, H. M., Morrill, Z., Collins, K. M., & Rizo, J. L. (2021). The methodological integrity of critical qualitative research: Principles to support design and research review. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(3), 357–70.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000523>

Louis, K., Toole, J., & Hargreaves, A. (1999). Rethinking school improvement. In J. Murphy & K. Louis (Eds). *The handbook of research on educational administration*, (pp.251-276). Jossey-Bass.

Lowe, N. (2019). What is a pilot study? *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing*, 48(2), 117-118. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jogn.2019.01.005>

- Mandinach, E. B., & Gummer, E. S. (2013). A systemic view of implementing data literacy in educator preparation. *Educational Researcher*, 42(1), 30–37.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12459803>
- Mandinach, E. B., & Gummer, E. S. (2016). What does it mean for teachers to be data literate: Laying out the skills, knowledge, and dispositions? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 60, 366–376. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.07.011>
- Marsh, J. A., & Farrell, C. C. (2015). How leaders can support teachers with data-driven decision making: A framework for understanding capacity building. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 43(2), 269–89.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143214537229>
- McQueen, C. (2021). Follow the instructional leader. *Educational Leadership: Journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, N.E.A.*, 78(7), 63–67. http://ovarefereecademy.com/uploads/file/48384_FollowtheInstructionalLeaderEducationalLeadershippdf_FollowtheInstructionalLeaderEducationalLeadership.pdf
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education* 1(1), 58–63. doi.org/10.1177/1541344603252172
- Milner, J., McCarthy, G., & Milner, T. (2018). Training for the coaching leader: How organizations can support managers. *Journal of Management Development*, 37(2), 188–200. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-04-2017-0135>
- Moore, C. (2020). 32+ coaching skills and techniques for life coaches & leaders. *Positive Psychology*. <https://positivepsychology.com/coaching-skillstechniques/>

- Moore, C. G., Carter, R. E., Nietert, P.J., & Stewart, P. W. (2011). Recommendations for planning pilot studies in clinical and translational science, *Clinical and Translational Science* 4(5), 332-337. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-8062.2011.00347.x>
- Moosa, A. M., & Shareefa, A. (2019). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 15(1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.201650501.11>
- Neufeld, B., & Donaldson, M. (2012). Coaching for instructional improvement. In B. Kelly & D. Perkins (Eds.) *Handbook of Implementation Science for Psychology in Education*, pp. 373. Cambridge.
- Neumerski, C. M., Grissom, J. A., Goldring, E., Rubin, M., Cannata, M., Schuermann, P., & Drake, T. A. (2018). Restructuring instructional leadership: How multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems are redefining the role of the school principal. *The Elementary School Journal*, 119(2), 270-297. <https://doi.org/10.1086/700597>
- Northouse, P. G. (2019). Introduction to leadership: Concepts and practice. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(1). [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1379\(200002\)21:1<115::AID-JOB5>3.0.CO;2-C](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(200002)21:1<115::AID-JOB5>3.0.CO;2-C)
- Park, B., Plass, J. L., & Brünken, R. (2014). Cognitive and affective processes in multimedia learning. *Learning and Instruction* 29, 125–127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2013.05.005>

- Peterson, K. D. (1987). Administrative control and instructional leadership. In W. Greenfield (Ed.), *Instructional leadership: concepts, issues, and controversies*, (pp.139-152). Allyn and Bacon, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737010002117>
- Peterson, K. (2002). The professional development of principals: Innovations and opportunities. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 213-232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02382006>
- Poland, B. D. (1995). Transcription quality as an aspect of rigor in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), 290–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049500100302>
- Powell, J. J., Aker, L., & Mesmer, H. A. (2020). Differentiated literacy instruction. In A. Dagen & R. Bean (Eds.). *Best practices of literacy leaders: Keys to school improvement* (pp. 209-230). The Guilford Press.
- Rainey, M., & Honig, L. (2020). A teaching-and-learning approach to principal supervision. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 102(2), 54–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721720963234>
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological* (pp. 185-214). Sage Publishing
- Reagan, R. (1975, March). Let them go their way. *Speech. 2nd Annual CPAC Convention. Washington, DC*
- Roberts, N. C. (1985). Transforming leadership: A process of collective action. *Human Relations*, 38(11), 1023-1046. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872678503801103>
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types.

- Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635–74.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509>
- Rutherford, W. (1985). School principals as effective leaders. *Phi Delta Kappa*. 67(1), 31-34. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20387520>
- Sapone, C. O. (1985, Winter). Curriculum: The basis for instructional leadership, the principal's role. *Catalyst for Change*, 14, 4-7. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-021-09425-5>
- Schildkamp, K., & Poortman, C. L. (2015). Factors influencing the functioning of data teams. *Teachers College Record*, 117(5).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811511700403>
- Schlechty, P. C. (2001). *Shaking up the schoolhouse: How to support and sustain educational innovation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Seers, K. (2012). Qualitative data analysis. *Evidence-Based Nursing* 15(1), 2.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/ebnurs.2011.100352>
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). *Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement*. Jossey-Bass
- Shoho, A. R., & Barnett, B. G. (2010). The realities of new principals: Challenges, joys, and sorrows. *Journal of School leadership*, 20(5), 561-596.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461002000503>
- Smith, W., & Andrews, R. (1989). *Instructional leadership: How principals make a difference*. ASCD. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636511404062>

- Smith, B., Senge, P. M., Dutton, J., Cambron-McCabe, N., & Lucas, T. (2017). *Schools that learn: A fifth discipline field book for educators, parents, and everyone who cares about education*. Crown.
- Stone, F. M. (1999). *Coaching, counseling, and mentoring: How to choose and use the right technique to boost employee performance*. American Management Association.
- Stronge, J., & Xianxuan, X. (2008). *Qualities of effective principals* (2nd ed.) Association for Supervision and Curriculum Learning.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315854403>
- Sun, J., & Leithwood, K. (2014). Transformational school leadership effects on student achievement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 11(4), 418–51.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2012.681001>
- Texas Education Agency. (2023). *Campus and district type data search*.
<https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-data/campus-and-district-type-data-search#:~:text=TEA%20classifies%20districts%20into%20nine,rural%2C%20and%20charter%20school%20districts.>
- Thessin, R. A., & Louis, K. S. (2019). Supervising school leaders in a rapidly changing world. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 57(5), 434–444.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-09-2019-228>
- Weathers, J., & White, G. (2015). Executive coaching of school's leaders in a mid-sized urban school district: Learning of a model of effective practice. *Leading Small and Mid-Sized Urban Districts Advanced in Educational Administration*, 22, 191-222. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-366020150000022020>

- Wells, K. E. (2014). *Launching the next generation of school leaders: An ethnographic look at leadership coaches and their experiences on the development of transformational leadership skills in new school administrators as a result of participating in the blended coaching model*. [Doctoral dissertation, Brandman University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/launching-next-generation-school-leaders/docview/1658247637/se-2
- Wertheim, C., & Leser, Y. (2002). Efficacy beliefs, background variables, and differentiated instruction of Israeli prospective teachers. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 96(1), 54–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18761342>
- White, G. (2022). *Principal transformation leadership and the instructional leadership action coaching program: A qualitative case study*. [Doctoral dissertation, Baylor University]. Proquest. www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/principal-transformational-leadership-texas/docview/2669412759/se-2
- Wise, D., & Jacobo, A. (2010). Towards a framework for leadership coaching. *School Leadership and Management*, 30(2), 159-169.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632431003663206>