THE INFLUENCE OF RURAL PRINCIPAL PRACTICES AND STATE ACCOUNTABILITY

by

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A Scholarly Delivery Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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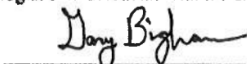

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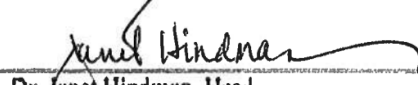Professor of Education
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*Qualified Signature	✓	Yes		No	Literature Review	Case Study	✓	Empirical Study

*The qualified signature of the methodologist indicates agreement only with the scholarly deliverable(s) checked. The lack of one or more checked scholarly deliverables is not indicative of disagreement, but instead reflects a lack or absence of the methodologist's involvement with the unchecked scholarly deliverable(s).

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the practices of rural school principals in Region 16 that impact student achievement. **Research Methods:** A mixed-methods design was utilized for this study with evidence provided by 16 principal and 165 teacher responses, along with state accountability data ratings, and five principal interviews. Excel was used determined the degree of alignment in survey data between principal perceptions and teacher perceptions. Observation Oriented Modeling (OOM) was used to determine if there was a relationship between the degree of alignment in survey data and state accountability ratings. **Findings:** Within schools, principal and teacher perceptions of principal practices that influence student achievement vary; however, both identified the practice of maintaining a positive culture and climate as one of the most influential practices. Principals often rated themselves lower on the survey than their teachers rated them. Data-driven decision-making and technology were important principal practices related to student achievement. **Implications:** School leaders underestimate the importance of maintaining a positive school culture. The PIMRS, which is 30 years old, did not take into account the impact of data-driven decision-making and technology as a principal practice to improve student achievement. Further research is needed to identify how principals carry out the practices needed to maintain a positive school culture and how that practice and others such as data-driven decision-making and technology improve student achievement.

Keywords: instructional leadership*, rural principal practices, STAAR, teacher perceptions, empirical paper

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS
Letter of Approval

March 15, 2021

Dr. Klinker:

The West Texas A & M University Institutional Review Board is pleased to inform you that upon review, proposal **#2021.03.010** for your study titled, **"Improving Educational Leadership of Rural School Principals: Rural Principal Practices and Student Achievement,"** meets the requirements of the WTAMU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) No. 15.99.05.W1.01AR Institutional Review Board (Human Subject Research). Approval is granted for one calendar year. This approval expires on **March 14, 2022**.

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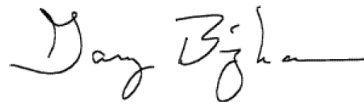
9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

   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

with kind words and a listening ear. I would not have earned this degree without the love,

support, and guidance from each of you, and for that I am truly grateful.

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FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOLARLY DELIVERY

This document contains a systematic review of literature which reviews principal practices that influence student achievement. It also includes two scholarly deliverables. One of the scholarly deliverables, the empirical article, demonstrates the candidate's ability to perform research on rural principal practices and their influence on state accountability ratings. Findings from this research identified the practice of maintaining a positive culture and climate as one of the most influential practices of rural school principals. The research also indicated that data-driven decision-making and the use of technology are also important practices related to student achievement. The other scholarly deliverable, a case study, demonstrates the candidate's ability to teach aspiring principals and public-school teachers about biases and misconceptions encountered when teaching children in poverty. Master's and doctoral candidates in the field of education leadership would benefit from this case study through the discussions and role play scenarios which encourage participants to take a deeper look at and uncover any biases and prejudices they may have.

Principal Practices Which Influence Student Achievement: A Systematic Review

by

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This scholarly deliverable satisfies one of the three requirements in the final composite
scholarly delivery.

Abstract

Purpose: This systematic review of literature identified specific principal practices and behaviors that positively influence student achievement. The researcher employed a conceptual framework with Hallinger's (2014) analytical rubric for conducting research reviews. **Method:** The author analyzed 40 peer-reviewed research articles in education leadership, focusing on principal practices. Data analysis focused on identifying common practices among effective principals, in rural, suburban, and urban schools, who have a positive influence on student achievement. **Findings:** Three themes emerged through data analysis, along with 19 practices that influence student achievement. Seven practices support the first theme. Eight practices support the second theme, and four practices support the third theme. Of the 19 identified practices, the top five were common to both rural schools and non-rural schools. **Implications:** The education field would benefit from future studies regarding principals in rural schools and the direct effect they have on student learning.

Keywords: instructional leadership*, principals, practices, rural school, student achievement

Principal Practices Which Influence Student Achievement: A Systematic Review

School leaders play an essential role in creating environments conducive to student learning. Although the teacher's instructional role continues to be viewed as the primary factor influencing student achievement, research reveals that school leadership is second only to teacher quality (Leithwood et al., 2004). Principals are "seen as the key figure in a school's success" (Drysdale, 2011, pg. 447). The effective schools research, along with other studies, has found that "a principal's attention to instruction has a positive impact on teacher professional growth and student learning" (Terosky, 2016, p. 312). Although principals have many roles in the school setting, instructional leadership is one of the core roles (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Decades of research have determined that principal leadership can have a significant but indirect effect on student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Robinson et al., 2008). Numerous studies have been conducted to identify specific practices of school leaders that contribute to school effectiveness. Leithwood (2007) developed four core categories of practices that lead to successful school leadership: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. Leithwood et al. (2008) identified seven strong claims about successful leadership and then updated the claims in 2020, making moderate revisions to claims one and seven, and significant modifications to claim four. Hitt and Tucker (2016) developed a Unified Model of Effective Leader Practices (Unified Framework) by combining practices from three prominent frameworks: Essential Supports (ES), Learning-Centered Leadership (LCL), and Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF). The Unified Framework consists of five domains and 28 dimensions. All of these studies, along with others, suggest the

potential benefits of examining instructional leadership practices, specifically with principals, to impact student achievement.

This systematic review is organized around five specific goals:

1. examine the research published in educational leadership journals between 2000 and 2020

2. explore themes published by scholars regarding instructional leadership and student achievement

3. identify a set of exemplary research articles in educational leadership for rural schools

4. determine if there are any differences or similarities in the principal practices that led to student achievement between rural school principals and principals in schools that were not designated as rural

5. offer recommendations regarding effective leadership behaviors and practices and how they can benefit rural school districts

The study identified and synthesized 40 peer-reviewed, empirical research articles on how principal practices influence student achievement published over the last 20 years to address these goals. The term *practices* encompass principals' behaviors, beliefs, and decisions that comprise effective leadership along with a discrete set of actions that can be improved with effort and commitment (Leithwood, 2012). Information extracted from the 40 articles and reviews was analyzed and evaluated utilizing Hallinger's (2014) rubric based on a conceptual framework for conducting systematic reviews of research.

The resulting systematic review contributes to research in educational leadership in several ways. First, by identifying research-based principal practices that support

student achievement. Second, the review acknowledges that principals have direct and indirect effects on the school environment, teaching, and student achievement. Third, the 40 published peer-reviewed, empirical research articles provide a historical development of instructional leadership in educational research. Fourth, the review provides useful models for future scholarship through the subset of exemplary reviews; and it offers empirically grounded recommendations to rural schools by identifying patterns and themes throughout the 40 articles.

Conceptual Framework

Hallinger's (2014) conceptual framework for conducting systematic literature reviews was used to guide this review. This review incorporates relevant criteria identified by Hallinger (2014), including statement of purpose, conceptual framework, sources and search procedures, data analysis, presentation of findings, limitations, and implications. This review also seeks to answer the questions that Hallinger (2014) posed: 1) What are the central topics of interest, guiding questions, and goals? 2) What conceptual perspective guides the review's selection, evaluation, and interpretation of the studies? 3) What are the sources and types of data employed in the review? 4) What is the nature of the data evaluation and analysis employed in the review? 5) What are the major results of the review?

Method

An initial step in conducting this review was to search prominent journals pertaining to instructional leadership. The search was bounded to reviews of literature conducted between 2000 and 2020 and limited to educational journals. Search terms included "instructional leadership," "principals," "practices," "beliefs," "behaviors,"

"decision-making," "student achievement," and "rural schools," as well as their combinations. Although decision-making is found in other fields, there was limited research available on decision-making in the field of education. There is also limited research in the field of rural education, specifically regarding principal practices that influence student achievement; therefore, I included studies in this review that met the initial search terms while omitting rural schools. I was able to identify 19 studies that met the initial search criteria when including rural schools and 21 additional studies when omitting rural schools; thus, I provided a sample of 40 reviews to include in this literature review.

Sources for this Review

This study's overarching goal is to identify instructional leadership practices and behaviors that the research indicates increases achievement in rural schools. Therefore, a representative sample of high-quality instructional leadership articles and reviews, with principals as the primary focus, was selected for this review. The articles were empirical studies of principals regardless of grade level. The reviews of research had to be explicit reviews, or commentary reviews, to be included in this review of principal practices. Hallinger (2014) identifies explicit reviews as "papers that the reviewer explicitly framed as a review of a body of research literature" (p. 550). Commentary reviews use reviews of research as the "method of exploring a specific issue or topic" (Hallinger, 2014, p. 550). The articles and reviews also had to focus on instructional leadership.

The studies included in this review are in Appendix A, which was adapted from Hallinger's review of reviews. The column names were changed from review to articles and reviews as I included both in my review. The articles and reviews were sourced from

14 educational leadership journals. Eight of the reviews were sourced from well-recognized international educational leadership journals: *Education Administration Quarterly (EAQ), Education Management Administration and Leadership (EMAL), School Effectiveness and School Improvement (SESI), Leadership and Policy in Schools (LPS), Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), International Journal of Leadership in Education (IJLE), School Leadership and Management (SLAM), and International Journal of Educational Management (IJEM).* The other six reviews came from general education journals: *Public Agenda (PA), Review of Education Research (RER), The Rural Educator (TRE), American Journal of Education (AJE), Education Leadership and Management (ELAM),* and *Education Leadership (EL).*

This review analyzed articles published in these journals between 2000 and 2020. Twenty years was deemed sufficient for the purpose of this review. The date 2000 was selected as the starting point for the review since it marked the beginning of the twenty-first century. The number of published research reviews in education has increased substantially in the past twenty years (Hallinger, 2014). Consequently, the review includes 40 published articles, 19 of which included studies from rural school districts.

Data Extraction

Data extraction entailed collecting information from each of the 40 articles and reviews. Hallinger's (2014) rubric (see Appendix B) was utilized to evaluate the studies and reviews of studies based upon eight criteria: goals, conceptual framework, search and sources, data extraction, data analysis, communicates findings, states limitation, and states implications (p. 559). Descriptive information was also extracted (journal, year, total cites) and incorporated into the spreadsheet (see Appendix C). Data were extracted

by searching each article for key terms that identified specific leadership practices that
influence student achievement (see Table 1).

Table 1

Specific Leadership Practices and Behaviors That Influence Student Achievement

Establish a shared vision/mission [b]	Structure the organization to facilitate collaboration [b]
Communicate the vision/mission [b]	Develop processes for problem-solving
Identify/set school goals [b]	Encourage teachers to reflect on their practice
Create high-performance expectations[b]	Maintain a safe and healthy school environment [b]
Encourage/provide professional development [b]	Allocate resources in support of the vision and goals [b]
Shared decision-making	Offer suggestions, provide feedback and follow-up
Model values, ethics, and practices [b]	Provide instructional support [b]
Build trusting relationships among staff, students, and parents [b]	Utilize data to monitor student learning
Maintain a positive school culture and climate	Buffer staff from distractions to their instructional work [b]
Ensure the alignment of, and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Model techniques and strategies

Note. [b] Adapted from Leithwood et al. (2020, p. 8).

These practices were initially identified from Leithwood's (2012) Ontario

Leadership Framework and Hitt and Tucker's (2016) Unified Framework. By examining

the abstract, keywords, findings, and discussion sections from each of the 40 articles and

reviews, the author was able to identify which practices were connected to each study.

Specific leadership practices were then color-coded and entered into a spreadsheet. Data

were pulled from the color-coded spreadsheet and entered into a table with the rural school data highlighted (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this review sought to identify common themes across the 40 articles and reviews to determine instructional leadership practices which positively influence student achievement. Hallinger's (2014) analytic rubric assisted in providing insight into each article's strengths and weaknesses for this review (see Figure 1). Descriptive statistics were employed to examine common practices among instructional leaders, specifically principals, which influence student achievement. Information from each article was entered into two separate tables and then compared.

Appendix D lists 20 specific leadership practices found in education research articles that positively influence student achievement and a frequency tally for each practice found in the 40 articles. Five practices were found to occur in 30 to 37 of the articles reviewed, seven practices were found to occur in 20 to 29 of the articles reviewed, and eight of the practices were found to occur in ten to 19 of the articles reviewed (see Figure 1). The top five principal practices that influence student achievement starting with the most influential are: encouraging professional development (92.5%), identify and set school goals (90%), establish a shared vision/mission (87.5%), maintain a positive school culture and climate (87.5%), and structure the organization to facilitate collaboration (85%).

Figure 1

Leadership Practices

Percentage of Occurences in 40 Reviewed Articles
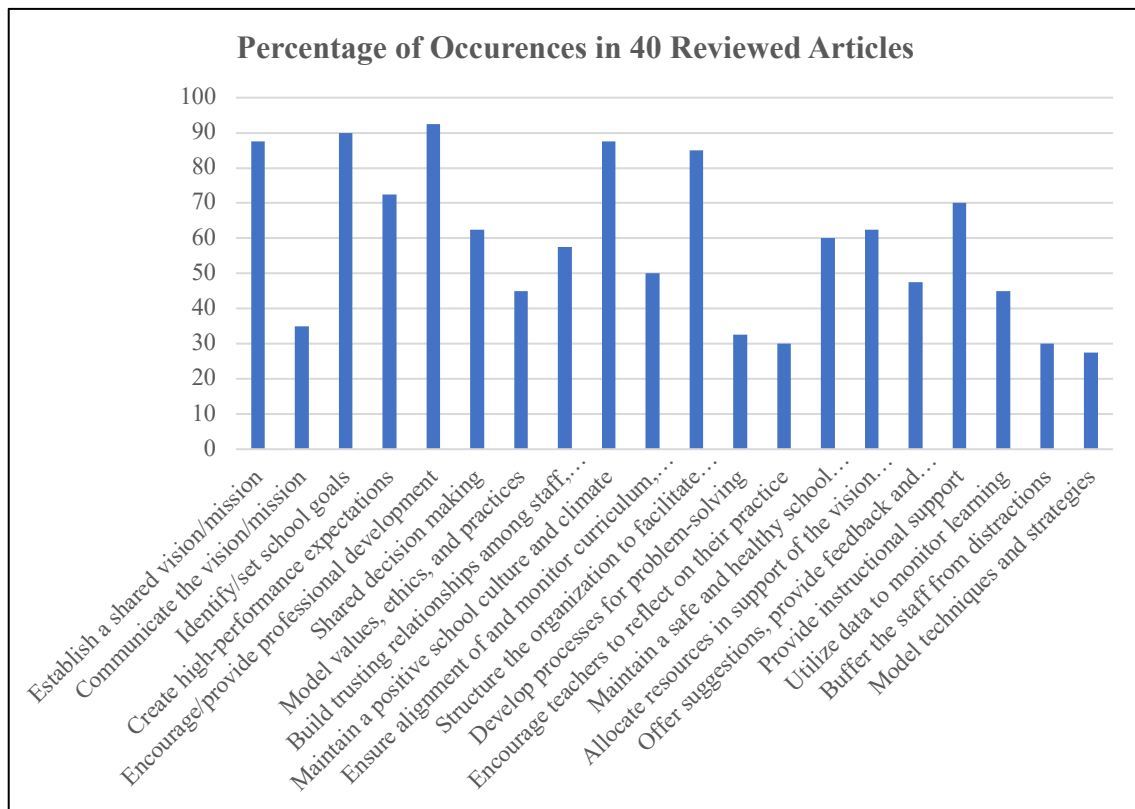
In Appendix D, the 19 articles that included rural schools are highlighted. Ten of the practices occurred in 10 to 19 articles reviewed, and ten of the practices occurred in five to nine articles reviewed. The top five principal practices that influence student achievement in rural schools are: encouraging professional development (100%), establish a shared vision/mission (89.5%), identify/set school goals (84.2%), maintain a positive school culture and climate (84.2%), and maintain a safe and healthy school environment (78.9%).

The data from both tables were entered into a spreadsheet to create a chart comparing the two sets of data (see Figure 2). The top five practices were standard between the two data sets in all studies and the studies focused on rural schools.

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However, while identify/set school goals was the second most influential practice found in all studies, it was the third most influential in the rural schools' studies behind establish a shared vision/mission. To compare the rural schools' results with the results from the entire study, I created a table with the 20 leadership practices ranked in order from most influential to least influential on student achievement (see Table 2).

Figure 2

Comparison of Leadership Practices

Percentage of Occurances in Reviewed Articles

Leadership Practice
Model techniques and strategies
Buffer the staff from distractions
Utilize data to monitor learning
Provide instructional support
Offer suggestions, provide feedback and follow-up
Allocate resources in support of the vision and goals
Maintain a safe and healthy school environment
Encourage teachers to reflect on their practice
Develop processes for problem-solving
Structure the organization to facilitate collaboration
Ensure alignment of and monitor curriculum,…
Maintain a positive school culture and climate
Build trusting relationships among staff, students,…
Model values, ethics, and practices
Shared decision making
Encourage/provide professional development
Create high-performance expectations
Identify/set school goals
Communicate the vision/mission
Establish a shared vision/mission

Legend: Rural Schools, All Studies

Table 2

Leadership Practices Ranked from Most Influential to Least Influential

Ranking	Studies with Rural Schools	All Studies
1	Encourage/provide professional development	Encourage/provide professional development
2	Establish a shared vision/mission	Identify/set school goals
3	Identify/set school goals	Establish a shared vision/mission
4	Maintain a positive school culture and climate	Maintain a positive school culture and climate
5	Structure the organizations to facilitate collaboration	Structure the organizations to facilitate collaboration
6	Maintain a safe and healthy school environment	Create high-performance expectations
7	Allocate resources in support of the vision and goals	Provide instructional support
8	Create high-performance expectations	Shared decision-making
9	Build trusting relationships among staff, students, and parents	Allocate resources in support of the vision and goals
10	Shared decision-making	Maintain a safe and healthy school environment
11	Provide instructional support	Build trusting relationships among staff, students, and parents
12	Utilize data to monitor learning	Ensure alignment of and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment
13	Offer suggestions, provide feedback and follow-up	Offer suggestions, provide feedback and follow-up
14	Model techniques and strategies	Model values, ethics, and practices
15	Ensure alignment of and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Utilize data to monitor learning
16	Model values, ethics, and practices	Communicate the vision/mission
17	Develop processes for problem-solving	Develop processes for problem-solving
18	Encourage teachers to reflect on their practice	Encourage teachers to reflect on their practice

Table 2 continued

Ranking	Studies with Rural Schools	All Studies
19	Communicate the vision/mission	Buffer staff from distractions
20	Buffer staff from distractions	Model techniques and strategies

Results

One crucial finding lies in the relatively small amount of research on leadership practices in rural schools that influence student achievement. Out of the 40 research articles and reviews in this review, only 19 included rural schools, suggesting that more research is needed on instructional leadership in rural schools. Another important finding is that although establishing a shared vision/mission ranked among the highest practices, communicating the vision/mission did not. This finding leads the researcher to question whether communicating the mission was an understood assumption in some of the studies. For this review, I have decided to combine the two practices.

Three themes about principal behaviors and practices emerged through this review of the literature on instructional practices. Principals who have the most significant influence on student achievement know and understand how to lead their campus effectively; grow other professionals; and focus on improving the instructional program. The discussion that follows will review each of the themes and the specific leadership practices that support them.

Theme 1: Lead the Campus

Principals who have the most significant influence on student achievement know and understand how to lead their campuses effectively. They (a) establish and

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communicate a shared vision and mission; (b) identify and set school goals; (c) maintain a positive school culture and climate; (d) maintain a safe and healthy school environment; (e) build trusting relationships among staff, students, and parents; and (f) they model values, ethics, and practices. McGuigan and Hoy (2006) state, "the way a principal organizes and runs a school, can make a difference in teacher confidence in the possibility of students' academic success" (p. 221). Suber (2011) claims that "The difference between strong and weak professional communities is the effectiveness of the principal as a leader" (p. 10).

Establish and Communicate a Shared Vision/Mission

Establishing a shared vision/mission was indicated as a practice that influenced student achievement in 87.5% of the articles reviewed, and in 89.5% of the articles that were associated with rural schools. However, communicating the vision/mission occurred less frequently, with 35% and 26.3%, respectively. It is unclear if this discrepancy is due to some studies incorporating both as one practice, while other studies separated them into two practices. What is pertinent is that establishing a shared vision and mission is critical to student success.

A school's mission describes its overall purpose while the vision pertains to where the schools hope to be in the future in order to fulfill the mission. Establishing a shared vision and mission starts with the purpose or why. A collaborative, shared vision becomes the foundation of what a school wants students to know and be able to do (Reagle, 2006). Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found that a vision should "foster those emotional arousal processes antecedent to the development of efficacy beliefs" (p. 507). "Principals who consistently articulate the belief that 'we can make a difference in the

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quality of teaching and learning' exercise influence on the beliefs and attitudes of the school faculty" (Hallinger et al., 2017, p. 809).

Identify and Set School Goals

Identify and set school goals is a principal practice determined to influence student achievement. It was stated in 90% of all articles reviewed, and 84.2% of the articles focused on rural schools. Setting school goals has an indirect effect on students by focusing on and shaping the teachers' work. If goals are to influence student achievement, they need to be embedded in school and classroom routines and procedures (Robinson, 2001). Goals should be specific and clear, developed with staff consensus, and utilize feedback and data to regulate their performance. Goldring and Pasternak (1994) found that the principals' roles in framing goals and obtaining staff consensus were strong predictors of student outcomes. Robinson et al. (2008) state, "Goals provide a sense of purpose and priority in an environment where a multitude of tasks can seem equally important and overwhelming" (p. 661). Goals provide an avenue to gauge success and energize action as long as people believe they can accomplish them (Leithwood and Mascall, 2008). Robinson et al. (2008) found that student achievement was higher for principals who set high academic achievement. "Without clear goals, staff effort and initiatives can be dissipated in multiple agendas and conflicting priorities, which, over time, can produce burnout, cynicism, and disengagement" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 666).

Maintain a Positive School Culture and Climate

Maintaining a positive school culture and climate was identified in 87.5% of all articles reviewed and 84.2% of the articles that focused on rural schools. School culture refers to how the staff members work together and their set of core beliefs and values.

Principals who maintain a positive school culture and climate have a direct influence on student achievement as they are able to implement necessary changes to enhance the learning environment. Muijs et al. (2004) claim that a blame-free culture is essential and can be achieved through open communication and supportive leadership. The principal sets the tone and is responsible for the culture of the school. "The principal is the most potent factor in determining school climate" and that "a direct relationship between visionary leadership and school climate and culture is imperative to support teacher efforts that lead to the success of the instructional [and disciplinary] program" (Benda, 2000, as cited in Leithwood et al., 2010 p. 675).

Maintain a Safe and Healthy School Environment

Maintaining a safe and healthy school environment ranked as the sixth most influential practice for student achievement in rural schools and was identified in 78.9% of the rural articles reviewed. The same practice ranked tenth, or at 60% in all articles reviewed. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs identifies safety as a basic need just above the physiological needs of food, water, warmth, and rest. Principals need to ensure a safe learning environment for the students and create an atmosphere in which staff members feel safe to take risks with their classroom instruction. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) found that the teachers' work setting, which is susceptible to leadership influence, has "significant effects on student achievement" (p. 554). Principals influence student achievement through initiating change in the school environment, being open to parents, and "making the school building more attractive and safe by limiting access and screening visitors to reduce disruptions to the school environment" (Ylimaki et al., 2007,

p. 378). Principals also influence student achievement when creating a school environment where academic achievement is the norm (Hagelskamp & DiStasi, 2012).

Build Trusting Relationships Among Staff, Students and Parents

Although building trusting relationships did not rank as high as some of the other principal practices and behaviors in this study, 57.5% overall and 57.9% in rural studies, it is still argued that trust makes a difference in student learning. McGuigan and Hoy (2006) found a positive correlation between teacher trust and student achievement in reading (.55) and mathematics (.68). "The trust that teachers as a group hold in the school's students and their parents have also been shown to predict student achievement, even accounting for socioeconomic class" (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006, p. 208). Trust is fostered with parents when principals are welcoming and demonstrate that they are reliable, open, and honest in their actions and interactions. Organizational trust among teachers and staff is also vital to student success. Louis et al. (2010) found that "principals can build trust indirectly through supportive behavior, but they cannot make teachers trust one another through direct action" (p. 319).

Model Values, Ethics, and Practices

Model values, ethics, and practices were mentioned in 45% of all articles reviewed and in 31.6% of the articles that focused on rural schools. Successful principalship is "underpinned by the core values and beliefs of the principal" (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 379). Principals that are child-centered believe that all children can learn and believe that all children matter have the most significant impact on student achievement (Gurr et al., 2006). They tend to be honest and open, flexible, committed, and empathetic.

Gurr et al. (2006) indicated that influential principals believed that all children are important, all children can succeed,

- All children are important.

- All children can be successful.

- All children have unrealized potential.

- All members of the school community should be supported.

- Schools must focus on what is best for all children.

- Principals can and should make a difference (p. 381).

Principals who model a work ethic that the community respects, model positive behaviors by attending professional development training or participating in book studies with their staff, help teachers grow, and demonstrate a commitment to learning (Klar & Brewer, 2013). Hallinger et al. (2017) found that effective schools are led by principals who accept personal accountability for student learning. Effective principals model the behavior they want to see and engage in purposeful communication with their staff (Hollingsworth et al., 2018).

Theme 2: Grow Other Professionals

The second theme that emerged from this review is that principals grow other professionals. Seven practices were identified throughout the literature to support this theme. The principal must: (a) encourage and provide professional development; (b) structure the organization to facilitate collaboration; (c) practice shared decision-making; (d) offer suggestions, provide feedback and follow-up with teachers and support staff; (e) model techniques and strategies that promote learning; (f) develop processes for problem-solving; and (g) encourage teachers to reflect on their practice.

Encourage and Provide Professional Development

Encouraging professional development is a leadership practice identified in 37 of the articles reviewed (92.5%) and was identified in all 19 of the rural school studies (100%). The professional development should be linked to the school's vision, be practical and relevant, and incorporate coaching and feedback (Muijs et al., 2004). Jacobson (2011) states, "Successful leaders begin to focus on building the capacity of their teachers through the use of staff development, in order to create more favorable conditions for learning" (p. 35). Professional development should not consist of just "sit and get" sessions, but rather should encourage active participation from participants, and be followed up with conversations regarding the impact of implementation in classrooms.

Blasé and Blasé (2002) identified six strategies to promote professional development: (a) emphasizing the study of teaching and learning; (b) supporting collaboration among educators; (c) developing coaching relationships, (d) encouraging and supporting the redesign of programs; (e) applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to staff development; and (f) implementing action research to inform instructional decision-making. Principals must develop individual teachers as well as focus on professional development on a schoolwide basis. The type of professional development will depend on the individual needs of teachers and the group needs of the entire staff. Blasé and Blasé (2002) state that, "Effective principals provided staff development opportunities that addressed emergent needs for teachers" (p. 259).

Structure the Organization to Facilitate Collaboration

Structuring the organization to facilitate collaboration was a practice identified in 85% of the articles reviewed and in 84.2% of the articles that studied rural schools.

"Effective principals recognize[d] that collaborative networks among educators are *essential* for successful teaching and learning" (Blasé and Blasé, 2002, p. 260). Collaboration allows teachers to work together to analyze data; to discuss student issues; and to plan instruction; and provides teachers an opportunity to explore teaching standards, evaluate practices, and to share ideas. Collaboration leads to campus ownership of students' successes as they no longer are isolated to one teacher but belong to all teachers. Chance and Segura (2009) found that "Consistent collaboration among teachers has great potential for addressing the demand for fundamental change in schools as well as creating a positive climate in which students will be academically successful" (p. 8). Dufour and Mattos (2013) claim that the most powerful strategy for improving teaching and learning is by "creating the collaborative culture and collective responsibility of a Professional Learning Community (PLC)" (p. 37). The PLC process allows teams to make decisions, gives teachers a voice in determining what they will teach, how they will teach it, strategies they will use, and how they will assess the students (DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

Shared Decision-Making

Shared decision-making was identified in 62.5% of the articles reviewed and in 52.6% of the articles that focused on rural schools. Teachers and staff need to have opportunities to participate in shared decision-making. Decision-making can occur through committee participation such as campus improvement teams, discipline committees, professional learning communities, and district level committees. Another opportunity for shared decision-making is through reasonable autonomy in developing and assessing instructional practices (Hagelskamp & DiStasi, 2012). Chance (1992)

explained, "The visionary leader engages others in the process by actively involving them in decision-making, problem-solving, and goal shaping" (p. 101). Shared decision-making gives staff a voice and ensures that a variety of viewpoints are considered. It also promotes collegiality and commitment to the organization, as well as ownership. Gurr et al. (2006) state that, "Successful leaders foster shared decision-making to motivate and empower others" (p. 376).

Offer Suggestions, Provide Feedback and Follow-Up

Offering suggestions, providing feedback, and following up ranked in the bottom half of practices identified throughout the study to influence student achievement. These practices occurred 47.5% in all articles reviewed and 42.1% of the articles focusing on rural schools. However, these are still valid approaches to indirectly improving student achievement through influencing teacher practice.

Blasé and Blasé (2002) explain that effective principals make suggestions, provide timely and specific feedback in a non-threatening manner, and then follow-up with coaching sessions and modeling as necessary. In order to offer suggestions and provide feedback, principals have to be in classrooms. Being visible in classrooms allows principals to identify strengths and areas of concern, leading to coaching and modeling opportunities to promote teacher growth. Effective principals also give praise focused on specific teaching practices because they recognize and reinforce what teachers are doing well and identify areas which need to be refined. Shin et al. (2012) found that "Teachers are the key to improving instruction and principals are the likely source of guidance and leadership" (p.519).

Model Techniques and Strategies

While modeling techniques and strategies was the lowest ranking practice identified, occurring in 27.5% of all articles reviewed, it ranked a little higher among rural schools at 31.6%. Research shows that mentoring and coaching has become an essential part of leadership development in recent years (McCulla, 2012, p. 88). Principals do not have to be experts in all content areas. However, they should remain up to date on instructional practices and strategies proven to significantly impact student learning, so they can coach teachers as needed. Instructional coaching provides teachers with one-on-one support centered around an identified need and helps move a teacher from where they are to where they want or need to be. Through coaching and modeling, teachers are provided the support they need to make necessary changes. Blasé and Blasé (2002) state that effective principals encourage teachers to become peer coaches and models for each other. By encouraging teachers to become peer coaches, the principal fosters a commitment to teaching and learning. Knight (2004) found that peer-coaching often leads teachers to try new strategies.

Develop Processes for Problem-Solving

Developing processes for problem-solving occurred in 32.5% of the 40 articles reviewed and in 31.6% of the 19 articles centered around rural schools. Hagelskamp and DeStasi (2012) found that engaging staff in problem-solving and decision-making process was an essential attribute of successful principals. Allowing teachers and staff to have an active role in solving problems leads to greater commitment to and buy-in from the school community, and it allows everyone to have a voice and to participate in developing solutions that foster positive attitudes and practices. Principals who exhibit a proactive stance on problem-solving are more effective than those who exhibit a reactive

stance. Being proactive requires the principal and staff to consider possible problems that might arise and have a plan to address such problems.

Encourage Teachers to Reflect on Their Practice

Encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice occurred in 30% of articles reviewed, and in 31.6% of the articles that focused on rural schools. Blasé and Blasé (2002) found that "Effective principals valued dialog that encouraged teachers to critically reflect on their learning and professional practice" (p. 257). Reflecting involves asking questions about the lesson and lesson delivery in order to determine what worked, what did not work, and why. Reflective discussions can be led by the principal after an observation or walk-through. In these discussions, principals prompt teachers to reflect on their practice through a series of questioning techniques. These reflective discussions have the greatest impact when the teacher discovers areas that can be improved without the principal or instructional coach, having to point them out. Numerski (2012) points out that, "Even with reflection, collaboration, and adequate data, some teachers may not know how to learn to improve or have the desire to do so" (p. 334).

Theme 3: Focus on Improving the Instructional Program

The third theme that emerged from this review is that principals who focus on improving the instructional program have a greater impact on student achievement than those who do not. Hallinger and Heck (1996) found that instructional leadership is one of several core roles of principals. Hallinger (2005) found that managing the instructional program requires the principal to be "deeply engaged in stimulating, supervising, and monitoring teaching and learning in the school" (p. 226). In the past twenty years, research has concluded that principals can influence the instructional program through

various practices described in more detail below. Common principal practices that support improving the instructional program include: (a) allocating resources in support of the vision and goals; (b) creating high-performance expectations; (c) providing instructional support, and (d) utilizing data to monitor student learning.

Allocate Resources in Support of the Vision and Goals

Principals who allocate resources in support of the vision and goals were found to influence student achievement positively. Allocating resources was identified in 62.5% of all articles reviewed, and in 68.4% of the articles that focused on rural schools. Resources encompass personnel, funding, time, and instructional materials. Hitt and Tucker (2016) state, "leaders must guard their faculty composition as it is the single largest resource for maximizing student achievement" (p. 550). Principals must select and recruit staff who match their campus composition, and who would be the best fit (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Selecting and recruiting the right staff has a direct impact on student achievement.

Principals also must be able to identify instructional resources that align with the goals and support student achievement. Robinson et al. (2008) claim that there is "an obvious connection between resource selection and allocation and leaders' knowledge of curriculum, curriculum progressions, and pedagogy" (p. 667). Principals can utilize school resources to help equalize students' opportunities by providing home resources to complement in-school learning for less advantaged students. These resources could include computers and internet access, and access to museums and art galleries (Ross & Berger, 2009). Suber (2011) identified several essentials that influence how principals perceive the value of instruction, one being the management of time and resources. Principals can demonstrate their value of time by being strategic in planning staff

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development sessions and faculty meetings. If information can be relayed effectively to teachers and staff via email instead of a faculty meeting, principals should utilize this approach first.

Although allocating resources is identified as a principal practice that influences student achievement, it does not automatically lead to improvement. Providing resources is not enough. Teachers have to know and understand how to incorporate the resources appropriately to influence achievement, which may require additional training. Principals also have to know how to manage the resources effectively in order to see improvement in student achievement.

Create High-Performance Expectations

Creating high-performance expectations was identified in 72.5% of all articles reviewed and 63.2% of the articles focused on rural schools. Effective principals do not just create high-performance expectations for students and teachers. They also create high expectations for attendance and behavior. In schools where all students are expected to succeed and do their part, principals and teachers adopt a "No Excuses" mentality. They do not accept excuses for low grades, poor attendance, or undesired behaviors. Hagelskamp and DiStasi (2012) reported that "Setting and enforcing high expectations for student behavior frees both teachers and students to concentrate on instruction and learning" (p. 4). McGuigan and Hoy (2006) state that principals should "insist on academic rigor and challenging coursework for all students" and that "teachers and students alike should be commended and rewarded for outstanding academic performance" (p. 223).

Academic press, which is described by Murphy et al. (1982) as "the degree to which environmental forces press for student achievement on a schoolwide basis," (p. 22), requires teachers and administrators to set high academic expectations for students. Leithwood et al. (2010) states that in schools with a strong academic press, "Teachers make appropriately challenging academic demands and provide quality instruction to attain these goals" (p. 699). Hallinger (2005) and Marks and Printy (2003) identified some common behaviors among principals, including academic press and high expectations for student achievement. Academic press and disciplinary expectations had "significant and very similar effects on student achievement" (Leithwood et al., 2010, p. 696). Creating high expectations for students can directly influence study achievement if the principal makes it a priority to talk to students about the expectations and regularly check in on student progress.

Provide Instructional Support

Principals who provide instructional support were found to influence student achievement in 70% of all articles reviewed. However, this is significantly lower in rural school studies, with only 47.4%. Instructional support includes a variety of practices such as modeling best practices, securing necessary resources, identifying professional development needs for individual teachers and campus-wide, and coaching teachers to improve their craft. Ylimaki et al. (2007) found that effective principals provide instructional support, are visible in the classrooms, and model instructional practices. Leithwood et al. (2004) found that specific practices such as planning and supervising instruction; providing instructional support; monitoring the school's progress and eliminating distractions to instructional time all significantly affected student

achievement. Robinson et al. (2008) found that principals in higher-performing schools "work directly with teachers to plan, coordinate, and evaluate teachers and teaching" (p. 663). These principals are seen as a source of instructional advice and are knowledgeable about instructional matters (Robinson et al., 2008). Effective principals also make it a point to engage with staff individually and determine what teachers need to improve their teaching (Hagelskamp & DiStasi, 2012). Goddard et al. (2015) found that "schools in which principals are reported by teachers to monitor instruction and provide strong instructional support frequently are the ones most likely to be characterized by high levels of collective work among teachers to improve instruction" (p. 505).

Utilize Data to Monitor Student Learning

Utilizing data to monitor student learning was identified in 45% of all the articles reviewed and 47.4% of the articles that focused on rural schools. Muijs et al. (2004) state, "Data-rich schools continuously interrogate existing test data to see whether initiatives are working" (p. 158). By utilizing data, principals can determine which programs are working and which ones need to be reconsidered. Hagelskamp and DiStasi (2012) found that data plays a crucial role in planning instruction and intervention. Teachers need to have time to participate in data-digs and have conversations around the students, teaching, learning, and any misconceptions identified through the data. At the beginning of the academic school year, teachers should study incoming students' state assessment data to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This will help plan intentional lessons to address specific needs. Effective principals play a critical role in data disaggregation by making it transparent for teachers and easy to understand; they should ensure the consistent use of data to drive instructional practices.

The data collected are not limited to instructional practices and academics, but should also incorporate attendance, discipline, and program reviews. Attendance data are important because students cannot learn if they are not in class. By reviewing attendance data, principals can identify trends and patterns and work with district personnel to address any issues or concerns. Discipline data are also important. By identifying patterns in behavior, principals can work with teachers to address concerns. For example, suppose a student continually acts out in one class compared to another. In that case, the principal needs to identify why this is happening to plan an appropriate behavior intervention. As stated earlier, students cannot learn if they are not in class; thus, a principal's main priority is to ensure students remain in the class. This can be accomplished when patterns and trends in behavior are identified and addressed through data.

Ensure Alignment of and Monitor Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Ensuring the alignment of curriculum and monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment was identified in 50% of all articles reviewed as a principal practice that influences student achievement but only in 36.8% of the articles focused on rural schools. Effective instruction encompasses a variety of instructional practices to meet the needs of all learners. Marks and Printy (2003) concluded that "Strong student performance probably reflects the concerted work of administrator and teachers focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment" (p. 390). Principals and teachers need to work together to ensure the curriculum (what is taught) is aligned to instruction (how the curriculum is taught) and to assessment (why it is taught). Teachers are to prepare lessons aligned to the state standards, and design appropriate pacing to ensure the lesson is successful, and the principal is responsible for monitoring these practices (Suber, 2011).

Buffer Staff from Distractions to Their Instructional Work

Buffering staff from distractions is a principal practice identified to influence student achievement in 30% of all articles reviewed and 26.3% of articles focusing on rural schools. However, this is still a practice that merits some discussion and possibly more research. Leithwood et al. (2008) identified buffering staff against distractions from their work as a specific practice that fosters organizational stability (p. 30). Buffering staff from distractions to their instructional work sends a message to teachers, students, and the school community that instructional time is valuable. Principals need to ensure that ARD meetings, 504 meetings, and other student support meetings are scheduled during conference times or after school so that teachers are not pulled from their classrooms, as this disrupts the flow of instruction.

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Discussion

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This systematic review identifies three broad themes regarding principal practices and behaviors that influence student achievement. To begin this review, I categorized specific practices identified and substantiated through 40 studies that link principal practices to student achievement. This review makes several significant contributions. First, it utilized a systematic review of research to identify three broad themes regarding principal practices and behaviors that influence student achievement. Second, it acknowledged the direct and indirect effects principals have on the school environment and student learning. Third, it presented the practices and behaviors of principals who are geared towards enhancing teaching and learning. I discuss the importance of these points in more detail in the following section.

First, this work is aligned with Hallinger's (2014) systematic review. The standards, phrased as questions, intended to generate a conceptual framework. This work addresses each of these questions as evidenced by, respectively (a) focusing on principal practices and behaviors shown to influence student achievement, (b) reviewing the literature and determining how principal practices have changed in the past twenty years, (c) identifying data sources, (d) critiquing methodologies utilized in the research, and (e) presenting and supporting three identified leadership themes with specific principal practices and behaviors that influence student achievement based on my analysis and synthesis (see Table 3).

Second, principals play a vital role in determining a school's effectiveness. They are responsible for supporting teachers in their quest to educate all students regardless of background, socioeconomic status, learning styles, and academic challenges or limitations. Principal leadership is second only to teaching in terms of impact on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). Scholars have demonstrated that the principal's work has indirect effects on student achievement, mostly through the support principals provide to teachers (Hallinger 2005; Hallinger & Heck 1998, Leithwood & Mascall 2008; Louis et al. 2010). Some researchers have shown that leadership effects (both direct and indirect) account for up to one-fourth of total school-level effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Therefore, principals and principal preparation programs should consider how to equip future principals best to prepare them for this challenge.

Table 3

Guiding Questions and How they are Addressed

Hallinger's questions	How questions are addressed in the review
What are the central topics of interest, guiding questions, and goals?	The goals of this review are to: examine research published in educational leadership journals between 2000 and 2020; examine themes published by scholars regarding instructional leadership; identify a set of exemplary research articles in educational leadership for rural schools; and offer recommendations regarding effective leadership behaviors and practices and how they can benefit rural school districts.
What conceptual perspective guides the review's selection, evaluation, and interpretation of the studies?	This review's distinct purpose is to synthesize empirical research on principals' instructional leadership practices and identify themes as to how leadership influences student achievement.
What are the sources and types of data employed in the review?	The author reviews 40 empirical, peer-reviewed studies from 13 education journals that link leadership to student achievement.
What is the nature of the data evaluation and analysis employed in the review?	Criteria for inclusion in the review include empirical and peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2020 that show the relationship between principal practices and student achievement. Through analysis and synthesis, the author identifies common practices and behaviors in the field of education.
What are the major results of the review?	Out of twenty principal practices identified, five were most influential on student achievement among all 40 studies and the 19 studies that focused on rural schools.

Note: Information adapted from Hallinger (2014).

Finally, I present three themes that emerged from the review of literature. These themes are that principals: (a) know and understand how to lead their campuses effectively, (b) grow other professionals, and (c) focus on improving the instructional program. Identified with each theme are practices and behaviors that support student achievement. Under the first theme, know and understand how to lead their campus effectively, I identified seven practices: (a) establishing and communicating a shared

vision and mission; (b) identifying and setting school goals; (c) maintaining a positive school culture, and climate; (d) maintaining a safe and healthy school environment; (e) building trusting relationships among staff, students, and parents; and (f) modeling values, ethics, and practices. The first three of these practices were in the top five identified in this review. Of these practices, maintaining a positive school culture is found to directly impact student achievement as it conveys the campus beliefs and core values.

The second theme, grow other professionals, is supported with eight practices: (a) encouraging and providing professional development; (b) structuring the organization to facilitate collaboration; (c) practicing shared decision-making; (d) offering suggestions, providing feedback, and following-up with teachers and support staff; (e) modeling techniques and strategies that promote learning; (f) developing processes for problem-solving; and (g) encouraging the teacher to reflect on their practice. Encouraging and providing professional development and structuring the organization to facilitate collaboration were two of the top five practices and behaviors identified in this review.

The third theme identified, focus on improving the instructional program, is supported with four practices: (a) allocating resources in support of the vision and goals; (b) creating high-performance expectations; (c) providing instructional support, and (d) utilizing data to monitor student learning. Allocating resources in support of the vision and goals also has a direct effect on student learning when considering personnel issues – recruiting new teachers and utilizing current teachers in positions in which they are best fitted and passionate about. Creating high-performance expectations can also directly impact student achievement if students are continually having conversations with their teachers and principal around their academic strengths and weaknesses.

All of these practices are essential for supporting student achievement. Some were shown to have a more significant impact on student achievement than others. Hitt and Tucker (2016) state, "School leaders, particularly principals, hold the formal authority, responsibility, and discretion for creating the very conditions and supports that promote student achievement" (p. 562). Therefore, future studies must include a focus on leadership practices and behaviors that support effective teaching.

Limitations

Two significant limitations of this review article have been identified. The first concerns the limited number of studies included in this review. The initial search set out to include only articles that focused on rural schools; however, the limited number of articles returned with the search (19 articles total) prompted me to remove that criterion and broaden my search in an attempt to obtain more data. After removing rural schools as a required field for my search, I obtained 21 additional articles to include in this review. This brought the total number of articles included in this review to 40, which seems relatively small, considering all of the research available in education today, but it does represent what was published within the last twenty years in the 14 journals I accessed. Of the 40 articles, 47.5% focused on rural schools, and 52.5% focused on non-rural schools.

The second limitation concerns the possible bias in the review. I recognize the possibility that bias exists in the form of my interpretation of the review of works included in this review. Although I employed structured processes and color-coding to identify common practices and behaviors, I acknowledge that my interpretation of the literature may still contain some bias, especially regarding what practices to include with

each identified theme. For example, I chose to combine two practices (establish a shared vision/mission and communicate the vision/mission) to form one practice instead of leaving them as separate practices.

Conclusion and Implications

This systematic review was organized around four specific goals. The first goal was to examine the research published in educational leadership journals between 2000 and 2020. This goal was obtained by searching the West Texas A&M library database to find research articles related to my focus statement and including pre-determined search terms related to rural principal behaviors and practices that influence student achievement. Articles were then examined using Hallinger's (2014) analytical rubric to ensure they met this review's criteria. Information such as date, author, title, and key findings were then entered into a spreadsheet for easier manipulation of the content.

The second goal was to examine themes published by scholars regarding instructional leadership and student achievement. Once the information was in a spreadsheet, I highlighted key terms associated with principal practices and behaviors that influence student achievement. I identified 20 practices and then sorted those practices into three main themes. The first theme, principals know and understand how to effectively lead their campuses, had seven supporting practices. The second theme, growing other professionals, had eight practices supporting it. The third theme, focusing on improving the instructional program, had four identified practices that supported it.

The third goal was to identify a set of exemplary research articles in educational leadership for rural schools. Although I attempted to utilize articles that only focused on

rural schools, I could only find 19 articles related to rural schools that fit the parameters for this review. These articles can be found in highlighted in Appendix D.

The fourth goal was to offer recommendations regarding effective leadership behaviors and practices and how they can benefit rural school districts. Through this review, I discovered 19 principal practices that are found to influence student achievement. The first five practices were common to both rural schools and non-rural schools and occurred in approximately 85% or more of the articles reviewed. The number one practice found in rural schools was to encourage and provide professional development. This practice was identified in all 19 of the articles reviewed, indicating it as a crucial practice for rural principals.

Recommendations for rural principals based upon the data in the review would include the following:

1. Rural principals need to be trained on how to identify professional development needs for individual teachers as well as for campus-wide initiatives. The professional development should be differentiated to meet individual needs.

2. Rural principals must work with teachers, staff, parents, and community members to establish and communicate a shared vision and mission. This vision and mission must be related to campus demographics and incorporate community values and beliefs.

3. Rural principals should work with teachers to identify and set school goals. These goals need to be based upon data and must be attainable.

4. Rural principals need to maintain a positive school culture and climate. This can be accomplished by holding all staff accountable for student learning, addressing conflicts as they arise, and by inviting parents and community members to be active and support student learning.

5. Rural principals must develop schedules that allow for staff to have time to collaborate and work together. Teachers need to be able to share ideas, strategies, and suggestions, as well as talk about data and ways to improve it. Collaboration helps foster an attitude of, "We are all in this together." It also helps promote the belief that the students are "our students" and not just connected to individual teachers (Dufour & Mattos, 2013).

Our knowledge about what school principals can do to support effective teaching and learning has grown over the past twenty years; however, there is still much work to be done. This review has implications for principals, principal programs, and researchers. In regard to principals, this review offers some research-based practices which influence student achievement. However, just knowing about these practices is not enough. Principals need to understand how to implement these practices with fidelity in their daily professional lives. Another implication for principals is professional development to enhance their abilities to implement the high-yield strategies. Principals may need training on how to provide meaningful professional development or how to create a vision and mission statement.

For principal programs such as universities, this review offers some focal points for coursework aligned to principal practices and student achievement. Universities should work with pre-service administrators to ensure that they understand how to carry

out these specific practices and why they are beneficial to student learning. For example, pre-service administrators need to know how to create a vision and mission and why that is important. By helping principals obtain the tools they need to be successful administrators, we equip them for success in their careers.

A final implication is for researchers. More research needs to be done in the area of rural schools. Rural schools face various challenges that non-rural schools do not, such as high mobility rates of students, high teacher turnover, and the challenge of recruiting quality educators. Another area in need of additional research is decision-making in education. Due to limited research on decision-making in education, additional research is also needed to help determine campus leaders' decision-making strategies. Finally, researchers have identified a small number of principal practices that directly influence student achievement. Most of the research in the field focuses on the indirect influence principals have on student achievement. More research is needed to identify the direct effects and how to implement them, especially in rural schools. "Although high-quality teachers remain our best resource for promoting student learning, it is talented leaders who will take student success to scale" (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 563).

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Articles and Reviews of Research on Principal Practices that Influence Student Achievement Published in Fourteen Selected Journals, 2000 – 2020.

No	Author(s)	Year	Article and Review Type	Locus	Journal	Thematic Focus [a]	Goal Orientation	Data Analysis [b]	Search Type [c]	Sample Size	Total Cites	Cites per Year
1	Blasé and Blasé	2002	EMP	United States	LPS	S	Exploratory	CA	S	800	58	3.2
2	Marks and Printy	2003	EMP	United States	EAQ	S	Exploratory	HLM	S	24	2531	148.89
3	Witziers et al.	2003	EMP	International	EAQ	S	Explanatory	MA	E	38	1341	78.89
4	Muijs et al.	2004	EMP	International	SESI	M	Exploratory	CS	S	NR	639	39.93
5	Hallinger	2005	EMP	International	LPS	S	Explanatory	CS	S	NR	1393	92.87
6	Gurr et al.	2006	EMP	Australia	SLAM	C	Explanatory	IA	S	14	358	25.57
7	McGuigan and Hoy	2006	EMP	Ohio	LPS	C	Exploratory	CS and MA	S	40	344	24.57
8	Reagle	2006	EMP	United States	TRE	S	Explanatory	CS	S	NR	28	2
9	Ylimaki, et al.	2007	EMP	International	SESI	M	Explanatory	CS	S	13	150	11.53
10	Leithwood and Jantzi	2008	EMP	United States	EAQ	M	Exploratory	PA	S	2860	1108	92.33
11	Leithwood and Mascall	2008	EMP	United States	EAQ	S	Exploratory	PA	S	2570	912	76

No	Author(s)	Year	Article and Review Type	Locus	Journal	Thematic Focus [a]	Goal Orientation	Data Analysis [b]	Search Type [c]	Sample Size	Total Cites	Cites per Year
12	Leithwood et al.	2008	EMP	International	SLAM	S	Explanatory	CS	E	NR	3230	269.17
13	Robinson et al.	2008	EMP	International	EAQ	S	Exploratory	MA	S	27	3138	261.5
14	Leithwood et al.	2010	EMP	Canada	EAQ	S	Exploratory	LISREL	S	199	925	92.5
15	Louis, et al.	2010	EMP	United States	SESI	S	Exploratory	SEM	S	106	755	75.5
16	Printy	2010	EMP	United States	SLAM	S	Explanatory	CA	B	NR	132	13.2
17	Supovitz et al.	2010	EMP	United States	EAQ	M	Exploratory	MSM	S	38	824	82.4
18	Jacobson	2011	EMP	International	IJEM	C	Explanatory	CS	S	NR	255	25.5
19	Suber	2011	EMP	South Carolina	IJEL	C-M	Explanatory	QA	S	2	75	8.33
20	Hagelskamp and DiStasi	2012	EMP	Ohio	PA	M	Explanatory	CS	S	9	18	2.25
21	May et al.	2012	EMP	United States	SESI	S	Exploratory	MA	S	39	137	17.13
22	Neumerski	2012	Analysis	United States	EAQ	M	Exploratory	CS	B	129	620	77.5
23	Sebastian and Allensworth	2012	EMP	United States	EAQ	S	Exploratory	MSM	S	NR	461	57.63

No	Author(s)	Year	Article and Review Type	Locus	Journal	Thematic Focus [a]	Goal Orientation	Data Analysis [b]	Search Type [c]	Sample Size	Total Cites	Cites per Year
24	Shin et al.	2012	EMP	International	EAQ	S	Exploratory	HLM	S	75		
25	Chenoweth and Theokas	2013	EMP	United States	EL	S-C	Explanatory	CS	S	33		
26	DuFour and Mattos	2013	EMP	United States	EL	C	Explanatory	CS	S	NR	435	62.14
27	Klar and Brewer	2013	EMP	United States	EAQ	S	Exploratory	MA	S	3	204	29.14
28	Schrum and Levin	2013	EMP	United States	IJLE	S	Explanatory	CS	S	8	39	5.57
29	Hallinger	2014	EMP	International	EAQ	S	Explanatory	CS	S	38	120	20
30	Goddard et al.	2015	EMP	International	AJE	S	Exploratory	SEM	S	93	290	58
31	Day et al.	2016	EMP	International	EAQ	S	Exploratory	SEM	S	20	505	126.25
32	Hitt and Tucker	2016	Standard	International	RER	S	Exploratory	CS	B	56	267	66.75
33	Woods, and Martin	2016	EMP	International	ELAM	C	Explanatory	CNM	S	12	36	9
34	Goddard et al.	2017	EMP	United States	JESPAR	M	Explanatory	QA	S	47	24	8
35	Hallinger et al.	2017	EMP	Iran	EMAL	S	Exploratory	CFA and SEM	S	456	62	31

No	Author(s)	Year	Article and Review Type	Locus	Journal	Thematic Focus [a]	Goal Orientation	Data Analysis [b]	Search Type [c]	Sample Size	Total Cites	Cites per Year
36	Preston and Barnes	2018	EMP	International	TRE	M	Exploratory	CS	B	40	48	16
37	Hollingsworth et al.	2018	EMP	United States	EMAL	S	Exploratory	CS	S	4	20	6.67
38	Leibowitz and Porter	2019	Standard	International	RER	S	Exploratory	MA	S	51	13	6.5
39	Goddard et al.	2020	EMP	United States	LPS	C	Explanatory	MSEM	S	95 schools	0	0
40	Leithwood et al	2020	EMP	International	SLAM	S	Explanatory	CS	E	NR	63	63

Note: EAQ = Educational Administration Quarterly; EMAL = Education Management Administration and Leadership; SESI = School Effectiveness and School Improvement; LPS = Leadership and Policy in Schools; PA = Public Agenda; RER = Review of Educational Research; JESPAR = Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk; TRE = The Rural Educator; AJE = American Journal of Education; IJLE = International Journal of Leadership; ELAM = Education Leadership and Management; SLAM = School Leadership and Management; EL = Educational Leadership; IJEM = International Journal of Educational Management.

[a] Thematic Focus: substantive (S), conceptual (C), methodological (M), or a combination. Article Type: Empirical (EMP)

[b] Data Analysis: CA=Comparative Analysis; IA = Inductive Analysis; MA = Meta-Analysis; CS = Critical Synthesis; PA = Path Analytic; MSM = Multilevel Structural Model; QA = Quantitative Analysis; CNM = Concurrent Nested Model; CFA = Confirmatory Factor Analysis; SEM = Structural Equation Modeling; MSEM = Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling; HLM = Hierarchical Linear Modeling. [c] Search Type: S = Selective; E = Exhaustive; B = Bounded. A sample size of NR indicates the sample size was not reported.

Analytical rubric applied to assessment of the research reviews.

#	Criteria/Level	Does Not Meet the Standard	Partially Meets Standard	Meets Standard
		0	1	2
1	**Statement of Purpose**	No clear definition of the research problem or questions behind the review.	The reviewer has articulated a topical focus, but this is not clearly defined in terms of research goals, outcomes, or questions.	The research problem and specific research goals or questions are clearly articulated with appropriate rationale for its importance
2	**Conceptual Framework**	There is no conceptual framework used in the review and no justification for its omission.	The review supplies a conceptual framework, but it lacks either articulation or justification.	An explicit conceptual framework to guide the review is articulated and justified or a clear rationale is offered for why a conceptual framework is not used.
3	**Sources and Search Procedures**	There is no discussion of source selection procedures or rationale.	Either the sources used in the review are not described and justified, or the procedures used to identify the specific set of resources are unclear.	Sources and procedures used to identify them are clearly described and justified.
4	**Data Extraction**	Procedures for extracting and evaluating information from the studies are not discussed and are unclear for the reader.	Procedures for extracting and evaluating information from the studies are implicit but can be ascertained by the reader.	Procedures for extracting and evaluating information from the studies are clearly stated.

#	Criteria/Level	Does Not Meet the Standard	Partially Meets Standard	Meets Standard
5	**Data Analysis**	Procedures for analyzing and synthesizing data from the studies are unknown to the reader.	Procedures for analyzing and synthesizing data from the studies are implicit but can be ascertained by the reader.	Procedures for analyzing and synthesizing data from the studies are clearly stated and executed.
6	**Presentation of Findings**	Presentation of findings does not clarify how the results advance our understanding of the research problem.	Presentation of findings emphasizes analysis more than synthesis and/or only partially clarifies how the results advance our understanding of the research problem.	Synthesizes findings across studies and clearly communicates what was learned and how this advances understanding of the research problem.
7	**Limitations of the Review**	No explicit discussion of how the findings are limited by the methodology of the review.	Limitations of the review are mentioned by not directly linked to the interpretation of results.	Limitations of the review are described and linked to interpretation of results.
8	**Implications of the Review**	No explicit discussion of implications.	Discussion of implications could be vague, overstated, or incomplete (i.e., omits implications for a <u>relevant</u> audience).	Comprehensive set of implications is described for <u>all relevant audiences</u> of the review (e.g., scholars, policymakers, and/or practitioners).

Note: Information from Hallinger (2014, p. 559)

Appendix C

Evaluation of Articles and Reviews of Research on Eight Rubric Criteria

No	Author(s)	Year	Total Cites	1. Goals	2. Conceptual Framework	3. Search and Sources	4. Data Extraction	5. Data Analysis	6. Communicates Findings	7. States Limitations	8. States Implications	Total Rubric Score
1	Day et al.	2016	505	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
2	Hallinger	2014	120	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
3	Hallinger et al.	2017	456	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
4	Leithwood and Mascall	2008	912	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
5	Leithwood et al.	2010	925	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
6	Seashore Louis et al.	2010	755	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
7	Robinson et al.	2008	3138	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
8	Sebastian and Allensworth	2012	461	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
9	Witziers et al.	2003	1341	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
10	Goddard et al.	2020	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	15

No	Author(s)	Year	Total Cites	1. Goals	2. Conceptual Framework	3. Search and Sources	4. Data Extraction	5. Data Analysis	6. Communicates Findings	7. States Limitations	8. States Implications	Total Rubric Score
11	Hagelskamp and DiStasi	2012	18	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	15
12	Hitt and Tucker	2016	56	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	14
13	Klar and Brewer	2013	204	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	14
14	Leithwood and Jantzi	2008	1108	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	14
15	May et al.	2012	137	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	14
16	Shin et al.	2012	75	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	14
17	Supovitz et al.	2010	824	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	14
18	Hollingsworth, et al.	2018	20	2	2	2	1	2	2	0	2	13
19	Leibowitz and Porter	2019	13	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	13
20	Marks and Printy	2003	2531	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	13
21	McGuigan and Hoy	2006	344	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	13

No	Author(s)	Year	Total Cites	1. Goals	2. Conceptual Framework	3. Search and Sources	4. Data Extraction	5. Data Analysis	6. Communicates Findings	7. States Limitations	8. States Implications	Total Rubric Score
22	Goddard et al.	2017	24	2	2	1	2	2	2	0	1	12
23	Preston and Barnes	2017	48	2	1	2	2	1	2	0	2	12
24	Goddard et al.	2015	290	1	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	11
25	Neumerski	2012	620	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	11
26	Suber	2011	75	2	1	2	2	2	2	0	0	11
27	Woods, and Martin	2016	36	0	1	2	2	2	2	0	2	11
28	Schrum and Levin	2013	39	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	1	10
29	Muijs et al.	2004	639	1	2	2	0	0	2	1	1	9
30	Ylimaki et al.	2007	150	1	1	2	1	0	2	0	2	9
31	Gurr et al.	2006	358	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	8
32	Printy	2010	132	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	8

No	Author(s)	Year	Total Cites	1. Goals	2. Conceptual Framework	3. Search and Sources	4. Data Extraction	5. Data Analysis	6. Communicates Findings	7. States Limitations	8. States Implications	Total Rubric Score
33	Jacobson	2011	255	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	7
34	Leithwood et al.	2020	63	2	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	7
35	Chenoweth and Theokas	2013	61	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	5
36	Hallinger	2005	1393	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	5
37	Leithwood et al.	2008	3230	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	5
38	Blasé and Blasé	2002	58	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	4
39	DuFour and Mattos	2013	435	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
40	Reagle	2006	28	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2

Note: EAQ = Educational Administration Quarterly; EMAL = Education Management Administration and Leadership; SESI = School Effectiveness and School Improvement; LPS = Leadership and Policy in Schools; PA = Public Agenda; RER = Review of Educational Research; JESPAR = Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk; TRE = The Rural Educator; AJE = American Journal of Education; IJLE = International Journal of Leadership; ELAM = Education Leadership and Management; SLAM = School Leadership and Management; EL = Educational Leadership; IJEM = International Journal of Educational Management. Article Type: Empirical (EMP). Each criterion in a column was evaluated on a 0-2 scale, 0 = criterion not met, 1 = criterion partially met, 2 = criterion met (Hallinger, 2014). Total cites refers to the total number of citations accumulated by the article since its publication.

Principal Practices and Behaviors that Influence Student Achievement – Rural Schools Highlighted

					Specific Leadership Practices and Behaviors						
		Vision/Mission[b]	Communicate Vission and Mission	Establish School Goals[b]	High Expectations[b]	Provide Professional Development[b]	Shared Decision Making	Model Values, Ethics, Practices	Build trusting relationships	Positive Culture and Climate	Ensure alignment of and monitor Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Blasé and Blasé[c]	2002					✓	✓				
Marks and Printy	2003	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Witziers et al.	2003	✓	✓						✓	✓	
Muijs et al.	2004	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Hallinger	2005	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓
Gurr et al.	2006	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
McGuiganand Hoy[c]	2006			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Reagle[c]	2006	✓			✓	✓			✓		
Ylimaki et al.[c]	2007	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Leithwood and Jantzi[c]	2008	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Leithwood and Mascall	2008	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leithwood et al.	2008	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Robinson et al.	2008	✓		✓	✓	✓					
Leithwoodet al.	2010	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Seashore Louis et al.	2010			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Printy	2010	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Supovitz et al.	2010	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

		Facilitate Collaboration	Problem-solving	Reflect on practice	Safe/healthy school[b]	Allocate resources[b]	Offer Suggestions, Feedback, and Follow-up	Provide Instructional Support[b]	Utilize data	Buffer staff from distractions	Model techniques and strategies
Specific Leadership Practices and Behaviors											
Blasé and Blasé[c]	2002	✓		✓			✓				✓
Marks and Printy	2003	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Witziers et al.	2003						✓	✓			
Muijs et al.	2004	✓		✓		✓		✓			
Hallinger	2005									✓	
Gurr et al.	2006	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
McGuiganand Hoy[c]	2006	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Reagle[c]	2006		✓		✓				✓		
Ylimaki et al.[c]	2007	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Leithwood and Jantzi[c]	2008	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leithwood and Mascall	2008		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leithwood et al.	2008	✓	✓					✓		✓	
Robinson et al.	2008	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leithwoodet al.	2010	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Seashore Louis et al.	2010	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Printy	2010	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			
Supovitz et al.	2010	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		

Rural Principal Practices and State Accountability

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Abstract

Purpose: With continued high-stakes testing and accountability, school principals have turned to instructional leadership to ensure academic success for all students. This study investigated the practices of rural school principals in Region 16 that impact student achievement. **Research Methods:** A mixed-methods design was utilized for this study with evidence provided by 16 principal and 165 teacher responses, along with state accountability data ratings, and five principal interviews. Excel was used to determine the degree of alignment in survey data between principal perceptions and teacher perceptions. Observation Oriented Modeling (OOM) was used to determine if there was a relationship between the degree of alignment in survey data and state accountability ratings. **Findings:** Within schools, principal and teacher perceptions of principal practices that influence student achievement vary; however, both identified the practice of maintaining a positive culture and climate as one of the most influential practices. Principals often rated themselves lower on the survey than their teachers rated them. Data-driven decision-making and technology were important principal practices related to student achievement. **Implications:** School leaders underestimate the importance of maintaining a positive school culture. The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), which is 30 years old, did not take into account the impact of data-driven decision-making and technology as a principal practice to improve student achievement. Further research is needed to identify how principals carry out the practices needed to maintain a positive school culture and how that practice and others such as data-driven decision-making and technology improve student achievement.

Keywords: instructional leadership*,* rural principal practices, STAAR, empirical paper

Rural Principal Practices and State Accountability

Educational leadership is defined as the ability of a principal to initiate and lead school improvement, to create a learning-oriented environment, and to stimulate and supervise teachers so they can carry out their tasks effectively (Grift & Houvteen, 1999). Principals can make a difference, but the debate has been whether their impact is direct or indirect and only recently have researchers focused on the practices principals use to make that difference (May et al., 2012; Supovitz et al., 2010).

Research on instructional leadership is the most published in four leading educational leadership journals (Wang, 2018). Instructional leadership is one of the primary responsibilities of a principal (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998). Leithwood et al. (2004) found that principal instructional leadership practice is second only to teaching in terms of impact on student achievement. Scholars have demonstrated that a principal's work has indirect, not direct, effects on student achievement, (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1998, Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Louis et al., 2010) as school culture and leadership support can impact teacher learning and professional development. Hallinger and Heck (1998) suggested that principals have an indirect influence on students through teachers and instructional cultures. Other researchers have shown that leadership effects (both direct and indirect) account for up to one-fourth of total school-level effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) with instructional leadership possibly being the most important factor of an effective learning environment (Kelley et al., 2005).

Bryk et al. (2010) concluded that, "instructional leadership directly impacts the dynamics of student engagement and learning" (p. 62). Principals who establish a culture

centered in the belief that all students can learn and grow; and foster an atmosphere that encourages student engagement, risk-taking, and learning from mistakes, have a positive impact on student learning. Robinson et al. (2008) found that school leaders who engage in activity closely related to the classroom are more likely to have a positive influence on student learning outcomes. The effective schools research, along with other studies, found that "a principal's attention to instruction has a positive impact on teacher professional growth and student learning" (Terosky, 2016, p. 312). Principals are "seen as the key figure in a school's success" (Drysdale, 2011, p. 447) as principals play an important role in creating "organizational and policy conditions that influence how teachers teach" (Burch et al., 2010, p. 333), and in creating environments conducive to learning. In other words, the culture created by a principal's practices matters as culture is connected to the beliefs, values and habits of the school staff (Flores, 2004). Yet despite this insistence, "empirical studies have generated only scant descriptions for the practices of effective instructional leaders and their impact on teachers and classroom instruction" (Blasé & Blasé, 1999, p. 354).

Hitt and Tucker (2016) stated, "School leaders, particularly principals, hold the formal authority, responsibility, and discretion for creating the very conditions and supports that promote student achievement" (p. 562). Support as a leadership practice is one of the most important factors of creating an effective learning environment (Kelley et al., 2005). Some support behaviors are being visible in the school, visiting classrooms frequently, observing and evaluating teaching, monitoring progress, having curricular expertise, and setting the vision for the campus (Neumerski, 2012). Such behavior is driven by values and beliefs. Drysdale (2011) found some common values and

beliefs among principals to be "empathy, care, and social justice for all; teacher happiness; community participation in decision making; and shared responsibility in the interests of students" (p. 448). Hallinger (1982, 1990) identified three functions of school administrators as defines the school mission, manages the instructional program, and develops a positive school learning climate. He then defined each function in terms of practices and behaviors that can be assessed through the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). Although numerous studies have been conducted to identify specific practices of school leaders that contribute to school effectiveness (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Klar & Brewer, 2013), the amount of research on the practices of rural school principals is limited. The purpose of this study was to examine the instructional leadership practices of rural school principals, determine if those practices are aligned or similar to principal practices in urban and suburban areas, and then identify which practices have a positive influence on student achievement. The teacher survey was used to validate principal responses, and the higher the degree of alignment between principal responses and teacher responses, the greater the reliability that the principal implements those practices.

Statement of the Problem

School leaders play an essential role in creating learning environments that support and enhance student learning. Numerous studies in urban and suburban schools have identified specific practices that lead to successful school leadership including the practices to establish and communicate a shared vision and mission; to identify and set school goals; to maintain a positive school culture and climate; to encourage and provide professional development; and to structure the organization to facilitate collaboration

(Leithwood et al, 2004; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The purpose of this study is to explore if the principal practices that positively influence student achievement in urban and suburban districts are effective in rural school districts in Region 16 in Texas.

Teachers, students, and campus leaders are faced with immense pressure to have high performance on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tests in Texas (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008). The Student Success Initiative (SSI) requires students in grades five and eight to pass both math and reading STAAR assessments in order to be promoted to the next grade; and high school students must pass STAAR End of Course (EOC) exams in Algebra I, English I, English II, Biology, and U.S. History in order to graduate. Texas provides annual academic accountability ratings that examine student achievement, school progress, and whether campuses are closing achievement gaps among various student groups. These ratings come in the form of a letter grade (A-F) assigned to each campus and district. With greater emphasis on academic accountability (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007), school leaders are pressed to examine how students perform; thus, school leaders continue to restructure schools and incorporate a variety of practices in order to meet the demands of state and federal mandates.
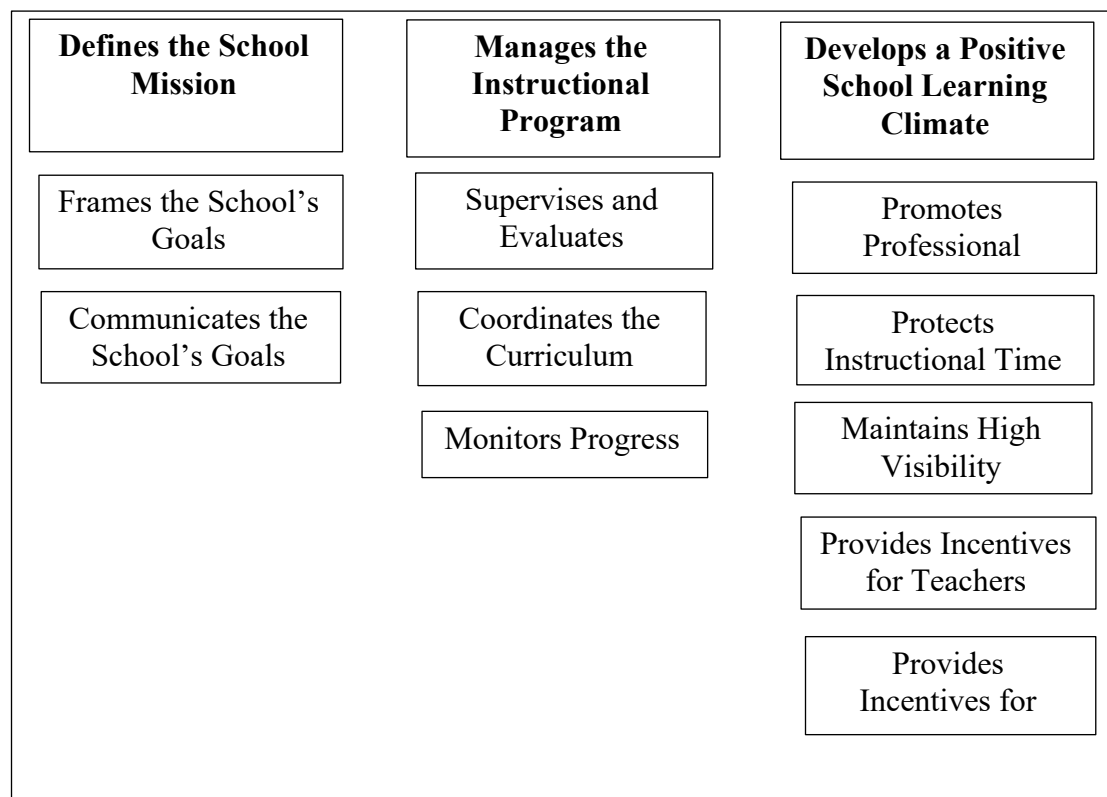
Purpose of Study

The purpose of this mixed methods research study is to determine rural principal practices associated with student achievement in rural schools. Principals of rural schools in Region 16 and their corresponding teachers were selected for the study. During the quantitative study, I examined principal practices adapted from Hallinger's (1982, 1990)

PIMRS (see Figure 1) along with teachers' perceptions on how often they were carried out.

Practices I examined from the PIMRS included: promote professional development, identify and set school goals, establish a shared vision and mission, maintain a positive school culture, and facilitate collaboration. I then compared those practices with state accountability data (STAAR) and determined if the identified practices influenced student achievement. The intent of the qualitative portion of this research is descriptive in that I examined principals' perceptions about the efficacy of the practices they employed that they believe contributed to student achievement.

Figure 1

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)

Defines the School Mission	**Manages the Instructional Program**	**Develops a Positive School Learning Climate**
Frames the School's Goals	Supervises and Evaluates	Promotes Professional
Communicates the School's Goals	Coordinates the Curriculum	Protects Instructional Time
	Monitors Progress	Maintains High Visibility
		Provides Incentives for Teachers
		Provides Incentives for

Delimitations of the Study

Participation in the quantitative portion of this study was delimited to schools (a) in Region 16 of the Texas Panhandle, (b) that are considered rural schools, and (c) are public. For the purposes of this study, teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership were measured using a 5-point Likert scale on the PIMRS. Thus, generalizability of this study is best applied to public, rural schools in Region 16 of the Texas Panhandle who use the STAAR assessments as a measure of student achievement.

For the qualitative portion of this study, delimiters included principals (a) who participated in the survey, (b) who had been principal of that building for at least 2 years, (c) who fell 1 standard deviation above or below the mean on the PIMRS and (d) whose buildings scored A ratings or C ratings on the STAAR. Principals meeting the above delimiters were then considered for site visits and/or Zoom interviews based on geographic location and the tenure of the principal. I sought to represent a cross-section of Region 16 rural school principals in the Texas Panhandle.

Research Questions

Rural school districts often face many challenges that can hinder student learning and academic success. Some of these challenges include funding, training, and hiring qualified personnel. However, even in the midst of such challenges, rural schools can be successful if led by an effective principal. The following overarching question guides this research: What is the relationship between principal practices and student achievement in rural school districts in Region 16, and how do principals explain or understand these effects on student achievement? The following research questions focused the study:

1. What is the frequency of leadership practices reported by rural school principals and their teachers?

2. What leadership practices do rural school principals and their teachers report being the most important for promoting student achievement?

3. What is the degree of agreement between rural school principals and their teachers regarding the importance of leadership practices for promoting student achievement?

4. Is there an association between the practices perceived to be most important for promoting student achievement by both building principals and their teachers and a school's Texas Education Association (TEA) accountability rating?

5. How do the leaders of more successful rural schools and leaders of less successful rural schools explain the relative efficacy of the practices they use?

Review of Literature

Hallinger and Heck (1998) synthesized 43 studies conducted between 1980 and 1995 seeking evidence of the relationship between principal leadership and student outcomes. Three categories emerged from their review of the literature: direct effects, mediated effects or indirect effects, and reciprocal effects. Most of the evidence they found supported indirect effects. Supovitz et al. (2010) stated, "principals have a measurable, but indirect effect on school effectiveness and student achievement" (p. 32). Hallinger (1983) developed the PIMRS as a system to assess principals for both accountability and assessment purposes. The framework he designed defined

instructional leadership functions along with specific practices and behaviors for each

function (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Between 1983 and 2010, 130 PIMRS studies were

conducted in 11 countries, including the United States (Hallinger, 2011). Prior to this

study, I conducted a systematic review of literature and identified five principal practices

common in rural schools that influenced student achievement. Those five principal

practices were: encourage and provide professional development, maintain a positive

school culture and climate, structure the organization to facilitate collaboration, identify

and set school goals, and establish and communicate a shared vision and mission.

Establish and Communicate a Shared Vision/Mission

Establishing a shared vision and mission is critical to student success. A school's

mission describes its overall purpose while the vision pertains to where the school hopes

to be in the future in order to fulfill the mission. Establishing a shared vision and mission

starts with the purpose, or why we do what we do. A collaborative, shared vision

becomes the foundation of what a school wants students to know and be able to do

(Reagle, 2006). Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found that a vision should "foster those

emotional arousal processes antecedent to the development of efficacy beliefs" (p. 507).

"Principals who consistently articulate the belief that 'we can make a difference in the

quality of teaching and learning' exercise influence on the beliefs and attitudes of the

school faculty" (Hallinger et al., 2017, p. 809). Principals who allocate resources in

support of the vision and goals were found to influence student achievement positively

(McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). Resources encompass personnel, funding, time, and

instructional materials.

Identify and Set School Goals

Setting school goals has an indirect effect on student achievement by focusing on and shaping the teachers' work. Goldring and Pasternak (1994) found that the principal's roles in framing goals and obtaining staff consensus were strong predictors of student outcomes. Robinson et al. (2008) stated, "Goals provide a sense of purpose and priority in an environment where a multitude of tasks can seem equally important and overwhelming" (p. 661). Goals provide an avenue to gauge success and energize action as long as people believe they can accomplish them (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

Robinson et al. (2008) found that student achievement was higher for principals who set high academic achievement goals. If goals are to influence student achievement, they need to be embedded in school and classroom routines and procedures (Robinson, 2001). Goals should be specific and clear, developed with staff consensus, and utilize feedback and data to regulate their performance. "Without clear goals, staff effort and initiatives can be dissipated in multiple agendas and conflicting priorities, which, over time, can produce burnout, cynicism, and disengagement" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 666).

Principals also must be able to identify instructional resources that align with the goals and support student achievement. Robinson et al. (2008) claimed that there is "an obvious connection between resource selection and allocation and leaders' knowledge of curriculum, curriculum progressions, and pedagogy" (p. 667). Principals can utilize school resources to help equalize students' opportunities by providing home resources to complement in-school learning for less advantaged students. These resources could include computers and internet access, and access to museums and art galleries either virtually or in person (Ross & Berger, 2009).

Encourage and Provide Professional Development

Principals influence student achievement indirectly through school wide group and individual professional development of teachers. Jacobson (2011) stated, "Successful leaders begin to focus on building the capacity of their teachers through the use of staff development, in order to create more favorable conditions for [student] learning" (p. 35). Professional development should not consist of just "sit and get" sessions, but rather should encourage active participation from participants, and be followed up with conversations regarding the impact of implementation in classrooms. School wide professional development should be linked to the school's vision, be practical and relevant, and incorporate coaching and feedback (Muijs et al., 2004), but principals must also develop individual teachers. Blasé and Blasé (2002) stated that, "Effective principals provided staff development opportunities that addressed emergent needs for teachers" (p. 259). This type of professional development should depend on the individual needs of teachers. Principals should be strategic in planning staff development sessions and faculty meetings as it demonstrates that they value their teachers' time which in turn indicates that they value their teachers, a positive vibe that enhances school culture/climate (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

Maintain a Positive School Culture and Climate

Culture is one of the most cited elements in improving schools. School culture refers to how the staff members behave and work together and their set of core beliefs and values (Shaffer, 2018). Effective principals model the behavior they want to see and engage in purposeful communication with their staff (Hollingworth et al., 2018). Muijs et al. (2004) claimed that a blame-free culture is essential and can be achieved through open communication and supportive leadership. "The principal is the most potent factor in

determining school climate" (Cunard, 2017, p. 7). Hallinger et al. (2017) found that effective schools are led by principals who accept personal accountability for student learning.

Principals also influence student achievement when creating a school environment where academic achievement is the norm (Hagelskamp & DiStasi, 2012). Day et al. (2016) stated that, "Successful principals build cultures that promote *both* staff and student engagement in learning *and* raise students' achievement levels in terms of value-added measures of pupil progress in national test and examination results" (p. 253). Principals who maintain a positive school culture and climate influence student achievement as they are able to implement necessary changes that enhance the learning environment (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

Structure the Organization to Facilitate Collaboration

"Effective principals recognize[d] that collaborative networks among educators are *essential* for successful teaching and learning" (Blasé & Blasé, 2002, p. 260). Collaboration allows teachers to work together to analyze data; to discuss student issues; and to plan instruction; and provides teachers an opportunity to explore teaching standards, evaluate practices, and to share ideas. Collaboration leads to campus ownership of students' successes as they no longer are isolated to one teacher but belong to all teachers. Chance and Segura (2009) found that "Consistent collaboration among teachers has great potential for addressing the demand for fundamental change in schools as well as creating a positive climate in which students will be academically successful" (p. 8). Dufour and Mattos (2013) claim that the most powerful strategy for improving teaching and learning is by "creating the collaborative culture and collective

responsibility of a Professional Learning Community (PLC)" (p. 37). The PLC process allows teams to make decisions, gives teachers a voice in determining what they will teach, how they will teach it, strategies they will use, and how they will assess the students (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Preston and Barnes (2017) claim that "a rural principal who fosters rich, collaborative relationships with teachers, students, parents, community members and senior educational leaders is positioned to succeed" (p.11).

Research Methods

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of 89 principals of rural schools and the teachers who work in their schools in Region 16 (see Table 1 and Table 2). In order to be included in the study, primary participants (principals) had to (a) serve in a rural district in Region 16 with an accountability rating of A through F from the TEA, (b) have at least 2 years' experience in the principal role at their current school, and (c) have a valid school email address. The TEA uses National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) definitions for rural, rural-remote, rural distant, and rural fringe.

> Rural schools are schools that are located in an area not designated as an urbanized area or urban cluster by the US Census Bureau. Rural-Remote … more than 25 miles from an Urbanized Area and more than 10 miles from an Urban Cluster; Rural-Distant … more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urban Cluster; and Rural-Fringe … less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster. (Hussar, 2020, p. 312)

Table 1

Demographics of Principals Completing Survey

Characteristic	Number	%
Male	8	50
Female	8	50
Total	16	100
Principal 2 – 4 Years	10	63
Principal 5 – 9 Years	5	31
Principal 10 – 15 Years	1	6
Principal More than 15 Years	0	0
Total	16	100
Elementary (Grades EE – 5)	8	50
Junior High (Grade 6 – 8)	2	13
High School (Grades 9 – 12)	5	31
All Level School (EE – 12)	1	6
Total	16	100

Table 2

Demographics of 16 Teachers Completing Survey

Characteristic	Number	%
Male	33	20
Female	128	78
No Response	4	2
Total	165	100
Teaching Experience		
2 – 4 Years	23	14
5 – 9 Years	31	19
10 – 15 Years	39	24
More than 15 Years	70	42
No Response	2	1
Total	165	100
Years Worked with Principal		
2 – 4 Years	125	76
5 – 9 Years	32	19
10 – 15 Years	6	4
More than 15 Years	1	1
Total	165	100

Recruitment of principals for the study was in the form of an email request inviting principals to participate; completion of the survey indicated consent. Recruitment of teachers was more complicated. Once principal surveys were collected, I sent a follow-up email with a link to the anonymous teacher survey to participating principals and asked those principals to send out that email to their certified teachers. Survey links were specific to each campus. The achieved sample of data used for this study included responses from 16 principals (18% response rate); 8 from the elementary level (EE-5th grade); two from the junior high level (grades 6–8); 5 from the high school level (grades 9–12); and one from an all-level campus (EE–12th grade). A total of 165 teachers from those schools (39% response rate) participated in the study. Fifty-eight teachers were at the elementary level (EE–5th grade), 17 were at the junior high level (grades 6–8), 82 were at the high school level (grades 9 – 12), and 8 were from the all-level campus (EE–12th grade). It should be noted that I removed principal 15 from the data due to identifying information.

Sources of Evidence

This mixed-methods study utilized a sequential exploratory design. It consisted of two phases: the quantitative phase, which was completed first, followed by the qualitative phase. I selected five principal participants (two from A-rated schools, and three from C-rated schools) for the qualitative portion of the study. In order to select the three principals for the qualitative study, "C" schools were organized in order of most degree of alignment to least degree of alignment between principal ratings and teacher ratings (see Table 3). "A" schools were not ranked by degree of alignment because only two "A"

schools participated in this study; therefore, they automatically qualified for the

qualitative study.

Table 3:

"C" Schools ranked from greatest degree of alignment to least alignment.

School	Acc. Rating	Professional Development	Culture and Climate	Facilitate Collaboration	Identify and Set School Goals	Establish a Shared Vision/Mission
4	C	89%	89%	33%	100%	33%
11	C	50%	67%	33%	67%	50%
8	C	40%	40%	20%	80%	80%
13	C	18%	91%	36%	100%	73%
6	C	75%	75%	0%	100%	0%
16	C	0%	100%	67%	67%	0%

The first set of data collected was quantitative in the form of principal and teacher

responses to fixed response questions, which were the same for both groups, with only

the stem changing. The instrument that I used to collect data for this study was adapted

from Hallinger's (1982, 1990) revised Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale

(PIMRS). For this particular study, I incorporated 15 questions adapted from Hallinger's

PIMRS, and then generated 10 additional questions following a similar format to

determine the perceived frequency of principal implementation of establishing a shared

vision and mission and identifying and setting school goals. Two additional questions,

one open-ended response and one rank-order question, were added to the survey to help

me have a better understanding of the leadership practices principals and teachers

perceive to lead to student achievement.

Five areas of practice were examined in this survey with five questions for each

area of practice. With the first three practices, promote professional development,

maintain a positive school culture/climate, and structure the organization to facilitate collaboration, principals and their teaching staff were asked to choose the frequency in which those practices occur on their campuses. Principals and teachers assessed the last two practices, identify/set school goals and establish a shared vision/mission, according to the degree of importance as perceived by individual principals and their teaching staff. I also included an open-ended question to determine if other principal practices are perceived to be influential on student achievement. The final question asked participants to rank principal practices from most influential (1) to the least influential (5) in regard to student success.

The second set of data collected was qualitative in the form of five semi-structured principal interviews. Participants for the interviews included two principals from A-rated campuses whose survey data most closely aligned to their teacher survey data, and three principals from C-rated schools whose survey data was most closely aligned to their teacher survey data. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and color-coded line by line to identify themes and subthemes. Principals were selected from both A and C schools so that themes and sub-themes could be compared to determine if principal practices from A schools varied from the practices of principals in C schools, thus indicating the practices that promote student achievement.

Data were collected to identify school accountability ratings and demographics from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website. The Texas Education Agency publishes annual accountability data and reports for public schools in the state of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2007 – 2020). For purposes of this study, accountability

ratings for the 2018-2019 academic school year were used as there were no
accountability ratings for the 2019-2020 school year due to Covid-19.

Data Analysis

Data used for the quantitative study were individual principal responses from the
principal survey and teacher responses to the teacher survey aggregated to the school
level. I entered principal and teacher responses into an Excel spreadsheet for each school.
Excel calculated the mean and standard deviations of principal and teacher responses.
The weighted mean was also calculated for each practice. For each school, teacher
responses were then compared with principal responses by calculating the average
percent of teachers who fell into each rating category using Excel. This process identified
patterns in the data on the individual level allowing the researcher to identify the degree
of alignment between teacher and principal responses. The data was then broken down by
individual practices in order to have a better understanding of which practices principals
deemed to be most effective in influencing student achievement (see Appendix A).

For the qualitative study individual interviews were recorded and then transcribed
by hand into a Word document. Transcripts were reviewed line by line and color-coded.
Color-coded words were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet to organize the themes
and sub-themes.

Findings

Sixty-three percent of the principals were fairly new in the field with 2to 4 years
of principal experience. Seventy-six percent of teachers had worked with their campus
principal for under 5 years. Forty-two percent of the teachers had been in their role more
than 15 years.

Research question one focused on the frequency of common leadership practices reported by rural principals and their teachers. Three practices (provide professional development, maintain a positive culture/climate, and facilitate collaboration) were assessed through the survey in regard to frequency. For the practice of promote professional development, 10 out of 16 principals (63%) rated themselves as "frequently" to "almost always" implementing that practice. Four of those principals (27%) had at least 80% degree of alignment with teacher perceptions. The six principals that rated themselves as "sometimes" promoting professional development had teacher scores indicating that the practice does occur on their campus "frequently" to "almost always", indicating that these principals scored themselves lower than their teachers scored them.

Maintaining a positive culture and climate was the top practice based on frequency with 14 out of 15 (93%) of the principals surveyed indicating that they implement this practice frequently to almost always. Facilitating collaboration was the lowest ranking practice based upon frequency determined by principal perceptions with only five out of 15 (33%) of the principals indicating that they implement this practice "frequently" or "almost always." However, eight out of 15 (53%) of the principals rated themselves as "sometimes" facilitating collaboration, with six of those campus scores indicating a higher response from teachers in the "frequently" to "almost always" category. The scores in this practice did not have a degree of alignment higher than 80% between principal perceptions and teacher perceptions, indicating that there may be misconceptions on what collaboration is.

Descriptive statistics for the principal and teacher surveys are presented in Table 4. Overall, teachers rated their principals higher in the areas of providing professional

development, maintaining a positive culture and climate, and facilitating collaboration, indicating that teachers believe these practices are happening more often than their principals perceive to be doing them.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Principal and Teacher Surveys

	16 Schools; N = 16 Principals		16 Schools; N = 165 Teachers		16 Schools; N = 165 Participants
	M	SD	M	SD	Weighted Average
Establish a Shared Vision and Mission	4.18	.87	4.14	.94	4.14
Identify and Set School Goals	4.46	.59	4.31	.83	4.32
Provide Professional Development	4.05	.86	4.42	.77	4.39
Maintain a Positive Culture and Climate	3.89	.69	4.33	.89	4.29
Facilitate Collaboration	3.55	1.14	4.18	1.14	4.12

The data also indicated that some of the principals rated themselves lower than the teachers rated them, which is of interest because over the last couple of decades, typical research findings indicate that principals tend to rate themselves higher than teachers do in regard to principal instructional leadership practices. Hallinger et al. (2013), stated that "principal self-report scores [on the PIMRS] tend to be substantially higher than those obtained from teachers" (p. 277).

The second research question sought to determine the practice principals implement that are perceived to be the most important for fostering student achievement. The last two practices surveyed, establish a shared vision and mission, and identify and

set goals, were assessed based on importance. Setting goals was rated as the most important practice by 14 out of 15 (93%) principals, with eight out of 15 (53%) of teachers agreeing. One principal rated goal setting as moderately important; however, 94% of the teachers from that campus rated the practice of goal setting as important to very important. Establishing a shared vision and mission was ranked important to very important by 10 out of 15 (67%) principals, with four out of 15 (27%) principals having 80% degree of alignment based upon teacher perceptions. The last question on the survey asked principals and teachers to rank the five practices that were surveyed in order from "most important" (1) to "least important" (5). Results from this question indicate that both principals and teachers perceive a positive culture and climate to be the most important practice for improving student achievement (see Table 5).

Table 5

Importance of Principal Practices that Positively Influence Student Achievement

	Principal Ranking	Teacher Ranking
Establish a Shared Vision and Mission	12%	20%
Identify and Set Goals	12%	8%
Provide Professional Development	7%	18%
Maintain a Positive Culture and Climate	50%	47%
Facilitate Collaboration	19%	7%

The third research question focused on the degree of alignment between principal perceptions and teacher perceptions regarding leadership practices that promote student achievement. Table 6 shows the degree of alignment between principals and teachers by individual campuses.

Table 6

Overall Alignment by Survey Theme and State Accountability

School	Acc. Rating	Professional Development	Culture and Climate	Facilitate Collaboration	Identify and Set School Goals	Establish a Shared Vision/Mission
1	A	56%	75%	31%	50%	44%
2	B	33%	100%	0%	100%	100%
3	B	100%	86%	76%	95%	81%
4	C	89%	89%	33%	100%	33%
5	B	64%	86%	14%	57%	36%
6	C	75%	75%	0%	100%	0%
7	B	55%	55%	46%	36%	55%
8	C	40%	40%	20%	80%	80%
9	B	21%	89%	72%	0%	17%
10	A	17%	42%	25%	50%	25%
11	C	50%	67%	33%	67%	50%
12	B	88%	100%	25%	100%	63%
13	C	18%	91%	36%	100%	73%
14	B	12%	100%	0%	100%	88%
16	C	0%	100%	67%	67%	0%

Note: School 15 is omitted due to identifying information.

This data indicates that maintaining a positive culture and climate had the greatest level of alignment of 80% or better for nine out of 15 principals (60%), followed by identify and set goals with eight out of 15 principals (53%) having alignment of 80% or better. Establish a shared vision and mission had four principals (27%) with alignment of 80% or better. Providing professional development was ranked fourth with three out of 15 principals (20%) having alignment of 80% or better and facilitating collaboration did not have any schools with a degree of alignment above 80%. When participants were asked to rank individual practices by order of importance, with "1" being "most important" and "5" being "least important" both principals (56%) and teachers (47%) said that maintaining a positive culture and climate was the most important practice.

Identifying and setting school goals was ranked second by both principals and teachers, promoting professional development was the least important practice as rated by both principals and teachers (see Table 7).

Table 7

Combined Ratings for Ranking of Instructional Practices

	Promote Professional Development	Maintain a Positive Culture and Climate	Facilitate Collaboration	Identify and Set School Goals	Establish a Shared Vision and Mission
Principal	5	1	4	2	3
Teacher	5	1	3	2	4

Note: 1 is most important, and 5 is least important

Research question 4 sought to determine if there is an association between the practices perceived to be the most important for improving student achievement by both building principals and their teachers and the school's TEA accountability rating. Since the samples were small and the data were not obtained through random sampling, Observation Oriented Modeling (OOM) was selected as the tool to analyze this set of data. The build-test model function in the OOM software was used to identify individual patterns in the data and not simply aggregates. A percent correct classification (PCC) was determined for each practice in relation to TEA ratings. The PCC value identifies how many of the individual observations matched the detected pattern. The model also identifies a c-value which determines the percent of times the pattern might occur by chance. The higher the c-value, the lower the uniqueness of the detected pattern, and thus the more likely it is that the observed pattern is due to chance. There was no relation

between TEA rating and the percentage of agreement in each of the categories. However, an interesting finding did occur with two practices being significant. The data from OOM indicated that facilitating collaboration and identifying and setting goals was significant, but not in the manner one might think. Score totals for identifying and setting goals ranged from 5 to 25, with 25 indicating that goal setting is very important. Individual respondent scores were added up to get a total. Out of 181 participants, 146 had total scores between 20 and 25, with 50 respondents having a total score of 25, indicating that goal setting is important to very important.

The histogram below (Figure 2) indicates that out of the 146 participants, 17% were from schools with a TEA rating between 60 and 73 (C and D schools). Seventy-two percent were from schools with a TEA rating between 74 and 87 (B and C schools), and only 11% were from schools with a TEA rating of 88 – 100 (A schools). The pattern identified for setting goals indicates that 81% of the time schools with the lower TEA data identify and set school goals more frequently as indicated in the histogram below (see Figure 2). The c-value for this practice was < 0.001 indicating a significant result. The pattern was similar for facilitating collaboration, with 71% of the time schools with lower TEA ratings incorporating that practice more frequently. The c-value for facilitating collaboration was also low at 0.10. The other practices had PCC lower PCC values (e.g., around 60) with c-values around .25, indicating no significance between the practices and TEA ratings. These findings indicate that the higher frequency of reports of identifying and setting goals and facilitating collaboration are in the lower TEA ratings. This suggests that in response to state ratings, campus principals are trying to improve ratings by implementing goal setting and collaboration.

Figure 2

PCC Values of Goals and Facilitating Collaboration
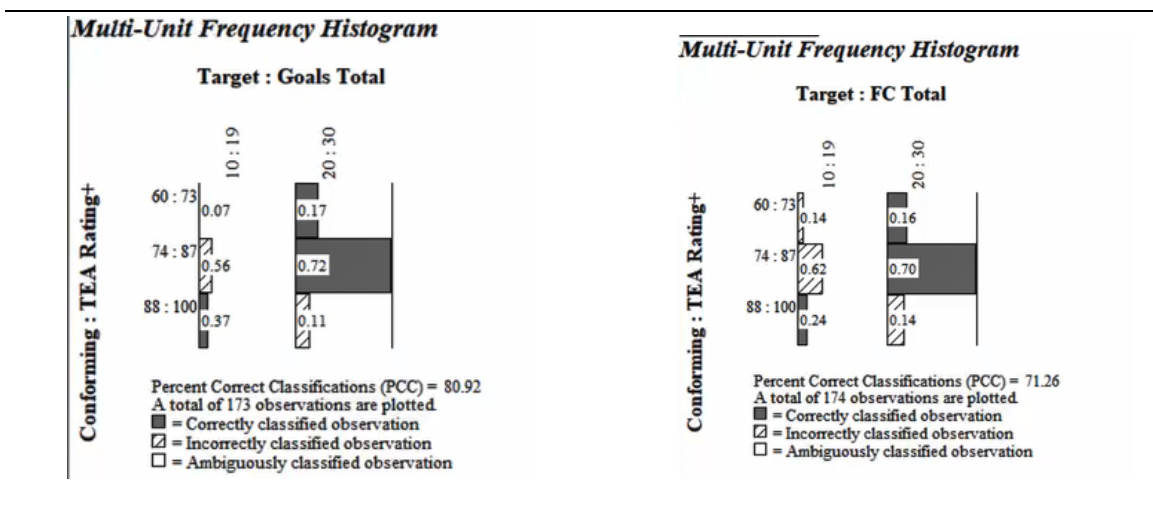
The qualitative portion of this study, which consisted of five principal interviews, two from A-rated campuses, and three from C-rated campuses was utilized to answer research question five. These interviews helped answer research question five regarding the relative efficacy of the practices these principals employ. Through analysis of the quantitative data, six themes and five subthemes were identified. Themes and subthemes are identified from most common to least common (See Appendix B).

Four of the themes aligned with the practices from the survey, although establishing a shared vision and mission was rarely mentioned; and therefore, did not get identified as a theme through the interview process. Two themes stood out from the interviews that were not on the survey. These themes are data and technology. All five of the principals stated that data was an important component for student achievement and school improvement, with four of those indicating that their campuses participated in weekly data meetings, while one principal indicated data was looked at each 6 weeks;

and three principals really focused on the use of technology to help promote student

achievement. Table 8 compares the principal responses from the survey to the themes

identified through principal interviews.

Table 8

*Importance of Principal Practices as Identified Through the Survey and Principal
Interviews*

Principal Survey (N = 16)	Principal Interviews (N = 5)
Identify and Set School Goals	Maintain a Positive School Culture/Climate
Maintain a Positive School Culture/Climate	Use Data to Drive Instruction
Provide Professional Development	Integrate Technology
Establish a Shared Vision/Mission	Facilitate Collaboration
Facilitate Collaboration	Provide Professional Development
	Identify and Set School Goals
	Establish a Shared Vision/Mission

When comparing transcripts from "A" schools to "C" schools, one practice stood

out over the others, which was connected to the culture and climate of each campus. That

practice was developing relationships with students and their parents. Both "A" school

principals stated that their parents trust them to educate their children. One of the

principals stated, "We develop those relationships with their parents, so their parents trust

us to teach them (their kids) … and allow us to hold their kids accountable." The other

principal from an "A" school stated, "One thing about (school name) is that everybody

(talking about parents and the community) cares, … everybody being involved and on

one team." Although all principals touched on relationships with students, only the "A"

schools included the importance of positive relationships with parents as well.

In discussing data, one principal stated, "The first thing I do is look at all of our data and I really try to do a data driven, what is our strength, and so when I identify our strength I want to train and focus on our strength." Another principal stated, "Data is our number one. We do quick checks in all of our tested subjects about every three to four weeks. We can track the data according to SE (student expectations) and the students that are struggling there, we know immediately who is struggling."

The use and integration of technology into the classroom was another theme that emerged during the principal interviews. One principal stated, "The tried-and-true paper and pen are not as effective now, because I think because our kids are more tech savvy. The *sit and get* doesn't work anymore. We use a lot of Kahoot, a lot of Quizlet, a lot of those kinds of things. That sit and get, they just, uhm, it's just not as effective." Another principal stated, "The computer is always on its A game. I think (it) is absolutely one of the best tools that all kids can use because the lack of emotion with a computer, but also their relationship with that technology, it breaks the boundaries of poverty." While two of the principals indicated technology was incorporated to enhance student engagements, three of the principals indicated that technology was integrated as a tool for reteaching, remediation, and enrichment activities.

When asked if there was one particular practice that was more important than the others, one of the principals replied, "I think they are all equally important. I really do. I don't think you can have any of those without the others. You can't provide PD without time for collaboration, you can't I mean, there is nothing to collaborate about or provide PD if you don't have a goal or a vision/mission."

Discussion

In this study, mean scores indicate a similar match between overall principal perceptions and teacher perceptions regarding principal practices that influence student achievement, with the exception of facilitating collaboration. However, individual school data showed varying responses and alignment. Data also indicated that principals were more likely to rate themselves lower for performing certain practices than teachers rated that they observed them.

Although this study only focused on five principal practices that influence student achievement, there are numerous principal practices that can be implemented to support student learning and academic growth (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Hallinger's PIMRS, which was adapted for this study, identifies three dimensions of instructional leadership: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the school learning climate. Those are delineated into 10 principal functions, or practices (Hallinger, 2011). One area not addressed in Hallinger's PIMRS but included in my study was collaboration. An area of concern is that only five principals "frequently" to "almost always" facilitate collaboration, eight principals "sometimes" facilitate collaboration, and three principals "seldom" facilitate collaboration. This is a concern for rural schools because as Preston and Barnes (2017) state, "A school principal who cultivates collaborative relationships within the school community is a person who promotes and endorses public education that can meet the challenges that many rural communities face in the 21st century" (p. 11).

Two additional practices identified through this study were using data to drive instruction and integrating technology into the classrooms. Data-driven decision making that leads to improved student performance is a process that involves time and trust. According to Ikemoto & Marsh (2007), data-driven decision making is defined as "teachers, principals, and administrators systematically collecting and analyzing data to guide a range of decision to help improve the success of students and school" (p. 108). Educators have access to a wide variety of data ranging from formal to informal and observations; however, they may not have the knowledge and skills to properly analyze the data to create solutions and intervention plans (Farrell, 2015; Mandinach & Gummer, 2013). In order for data-driven decision making and instruction to be implemented there has to be a culture of trust. Teachers have to be willing to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses and be open to discussing these with their colleagues (Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007). Teachers and campus administrators must also set aside time for data disaggregation and data talks. Professional learning communities (PLC's) are one way to establish a culture of inquiry that deepens understanding of student thinking and instructional practices (Park, 2018).

Integrating technology into the classrooms was another practice that was identified through this research as being influential to student success. Prior studies show that technology integration through computers, software, online curriculum, and games is associated with positive gains in student achievement (Ahn et al., 2016). Benefits of technology include immediate feedback to students, reteaching and enrichment activities, and individualized instruction plans designed to target specific gaps in learning. Technology is a tool that transforms learning, increases efficiency, and is convenient.

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When integrated correctly, it can create enhanced and relevant learning experiences for students (Courduff, et al., 2016).

Limitations

The results and conclusions from this study are limited by several weaknesses. First, the number of participating schools was small with only 16 out of 89 rural schools (18%) in Region 16. Teacher participation in the surveys was also limited, with participation ranging from 28% on one campus to 100% on another campus. It should be noted that only one campus had 100% participation. Due to the small sample size, findings cannot be generalized to all rural schools in the region. Another limitation with this study is that the PIMRS that was adapted for this study may be outdated as it is almost 30 years old and did not include such practices as data-driven instruction and technology use in classrooms. Finally, this study only focused on five principal practices that influence student achievement, and research shows there are more than five practices that principals can implement that either directly or indirectly influence student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood et al, 2004; Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

Implications

This study has several implications for both practice and future research. One implication is that practicing principals should understand the importance of maintaining a positive culture and climate, which would include establishing positive relationships with parents. Components of a positive relationship with parents included establishing trust and both parents and school personnel holding students accountable for learning. According to Day et al. (2016), "Successful principals build cultures that promote *both*

staff and student engagement in learning *and* raises student achievement levels in terms of value-added measures of pupil progress in national test and examination results" (p. 253). Preston and Barnes (2017) stated, "a collaborative educational culture cultivates problem-solvers, uncovers and takes advantage of opportunities, and fosters additional collaborations, committees, coalitions, networks, and partnerships" (p. 11).

This research focused of five principal practices that influence student achievement, but not how those practices are carried out; therefore, future research is needed in the area of how those individual practices are carried out at the campus level. Another area for future research is integrating technology into the classroom, and its impact on student learning. Although technology integration was not part of the original study design, it was identified as an important practice through principal interviews as was data-driven decision making. By continuing to study principal practices and identifying the practices that influence student achievement and how they are carried out, future leaders will be able to support and promote academic growth in all students on their campuses.

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Comparison of Principal Perceptions and Teacher Perceptions by School

School	Acc. Rating	Promote Professional Development				Maintain a Positive School Culture/Climate				Facilitate Collaboration			
		Principal		Teacher		Principal		Teacher		Principal		Teacher	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1 [c]	A	4	0.71	4.05	0.89	5	0	4.3	0.81	3.6	0.89	3.54	1.02
2 [c]	B	4	0.89	4.353	0.35	4.2	0.55	4.33	0.63	3.4	0.84	3.13	0.26
3 [a]	B	5	0	4.736	0.55	4.6	0.55	4.63	0.58	4.6	0.55	4.42	0.81
4 [c]	C	4.2	0.84	4.53	0.69	4	0.71	4.72	0.58	3.2	0.45	3.84	1.13
5 [c]	B	4.2	1.3	4.05	0.89	4.6	0.55	4.2	0.81	4	1.73	3.94	0.82
6 [c]	C	4.2	0.45	4.3	0.86	4.4	0.89	4.6	0.8	2.2	1.3	3.55	0.69
7 [a]	B	4.4	0.55	3.67	1	4.6	0.55	3.85	1.15	3.3	0.45	2.71	0.99
8 [c]	C	4	0.89	3.76	1	4	0	3.56	0.94	4	0.89	3	1.13
9 [b]	B	3.6	1.14	3.66	0.62	4.4	0.55	4.65	0.66	4	0	4.21	0.97
10 [a]	A	4.6	0.55	3.34	1.07	5	0	3.52	1.11	4.4	0.89	3.02	1.41
11 [b]	C	4	0.71	4.1	1.12	4.4	0.89	4.2	0.96	4.2	0.44	3.53	1.31
12 [a]	B	4	0	4.28	0.82	4	0	4.73	0.51	2.6	1.52	3.73	1.2
13 [b]	C	3.6	0.55	4.56	0.74	4.4	0.55	4.73	0.53	3.8	1.3	4.24	1.08
14 [b]	B	4.4	0.45	4.73	0.22	4.8	0	4.85	0	2.8	0.45	4.43	0.38
16 [c]	C	4.4	0.89	4.13	0.35	4.4	0.55	4.4	0.63	4.2	0.84	3.93	0.26

Note: [a] signifies schools that had 75% or greater teacher participation; [b] signifies schools that had 50 – 74% teacher participation; [c] signifies schools that had 25 – 49% teacher participation. School 15 is omitted from this table due to identifying information. Weighted averages were also calculated for each practice. Promote Professional Development: 4.39; Maintain a Positive Culture/Climate: 4.29; Facilitate Collaboration: 4.12; Identify and Set School Goals: 4.32; Establish a Shared Vision/Mission: 4.14.

Comparison of Principal Perceptions and Teacher Perceptions by School

School	Acc. Rating	Identify and Set School Goals				Establish a Shared Vision and Mission			
		Principal		Teacher		Principal		Teacher	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1 [c]	A	5.0	0	4.01	1.08	5.0	0	3.72	1.34
2 [c]	B	4.8	0	4.67	.94	4.4	0	5.0	.51
3 [a]	B	4.6	.55	4.65	.51	4.2	.45	4.34	.69
4 [c]	C	4.0	0	4.33	.56	3.8	.45	4.16	.71
5 [c]	B	4.4	.45	3.89	1.08	2.6	1.52	3.77	1.23
6 [c]	C	4.4	.55	4.4	.6	3.0	0	4.35	.49
7 [a]	B	3.8	.55	3.84	.82	4.6	.55	3.9	.79
8 [c]	C	5.0	0	4.44	.65	4.4	.55	4.28	.79
9 [b]	B	4.2	.55	4.49	.67	3.6	1.14	4.43	.74
10 [a]	A	4.6	.55	3.67	1.0	5.0	0	3.75	1.04
11 [b]	C	4.4	.55	4.4	1.0	3.8	.84	3.28	1.12
12 [a]	B	4.4	.55	4.48	.68	3.4	.55	4.0	.93
13 [b]	C	4.8	.45	4.76	.51	4.8	.45	4.38	.71
14 [b]	B	4.0	.71	4.55	.5	4.0	0	4.53	.64
16 [c]	C	5.0	0	4.2	.94	5.0	0	3.57	.51

Note: [a] signifies schools that had 75% or greater teacher participation; [b] signifies schools that had 50 – 74% teacher participation; [c] signifies schools that had 25 – 49% teacher participation. School 15 is omitted from this table due to identifying information. Weighted averages were also calculated for each practice. Promote Professional Development: 4.39; Maintain a Positive Culture/Climate: 4.29; Facilitate Collaboration: 4.12; Identify and Set School Goals: 4.32; Establish a Shared Vision/Mission: 4.14.

Identified Themes and Subthemes

THEMES

Most Common → Least Common

Culture and Climate	Data	Collaboration	Technology	Professional Development	Goals
Relationships	Analysis	PLC's	Provide Interventions	Intentional	Individual Student Goals
Parent Communication	Intentional Intervention	Common Planning	Student Engagement	Need Based	Teacher Goals
Parent Involvement	Progress Monitoring	Time	Immediate Feedback		
Community Involvement					
Trust					

SUBTHEMES

A Principal's Influence on Teachers Who Teach Children in Poverty: A Case Study

by

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This scholarly deliverable satisfies one of the three requirements in the final composite
scholarly delivery.

Abstract

This case illustrates why and how school leaders can help faculty members uncover their beliefs about why children in poverty cannot learn. With increasing numbers of non-English students entering our schools and the challenge of poverty that faces many of our families and students, principals must help staff members understand their own prejudices and biases that influence their teaching. High stakes testing and state accountability have exacerbated frustrations and tensions, and the only way to combat that is to dig deep to uncover erroneous beliefs that teachers have about the role parents play in helping children succeed in school so that they can escape from poverty. Through discussion questions and role play scenarios, participants are given an opportunity to explore their own beliefs and experience situations from other stakeholders' perspectives.

Keywords: poverty, biases, beliefs, principal practices

The Principal's Influence on Teaching Children in Poverty

The United States, despite having the largest economy, has the second highest poverty rate among thirty-five industrialized countries (Edelman, 2016). Twenty-one percent of all children in the U.S. live in poverty (Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018). Children living in poverty and in the welfare system face many challenges. They are twice as likely to fail in school and more likely to have discipline problems (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). The effective schools research, along with other studies, has found that "a principal's attention to instruction has a positive impact on teacher professional growth and student learning" (Terosky, 2016, p. 312). This section includes studies that have been conducted on instructional leadership, specifically principals, and examines how motivations, beliefs and practices influence interactions with teachers regarding teaching children who live in poverty.

Principals are "seen as the key figure in a school's success" (Drysdale, 2011, pg. 47). They play an important role in creating "organizational and policy conditions that influence how teachers teach" (Burch, Theoharis, & Rauscher, 2010, p. 333). Principals have many roles in the school setting. Their roles range from managerial – administrative functions, instructional (teaching processes) and relational, to problem solving and shared leadership. Of those three areas, research on instructional leadership is the most published in four leading educational leadership journals (Wang, 2018).

Decisions are made on a regular basis by all staff in the school system. Principals are tasked daily with managerial decisions and instructional decisions, and teachers are tasked daily with instructional decisions. One character trait of effective schools is shared decision making. "Successful leaders foster shared decision-making to motivate and

empower others" (Gurr et al., 2006, p. 376). Chance (1992) explained, "The visionary leader engages others in the process by actively involving them in decision-making, problem-solving, and goal shaping" (p. 101). According to Hertberg-Davis and Brighton (2006), effective leaders (a) clearly communicate the goals to stakeholders, (b) establish a small number of specific goals (c) maintain high standards for teaching and learning, (d) simultaneously communicate expectations while providing support, and (e) share some decision-making.

"There are no short-cuts to sound decision-making. Good decisions are backed up by thorough knowledge, experience, and reflection" (Duke & Salmonowics, 2010, pp. 56-57). Beliefs drive our decision making. According to Hodge (2019), "Teacher's beliefs about student ability influenced their decision making" (p. 643), and their "views of students shape their expectations and instructional decisions" (p. 640). Hodge (2019) also found that the rigor of questions and texts were often lower when teachers worked with students identified as low functioning. Duke and Salmonowics (2010), state that "Strategic thinking corresponds in many ways to what might be considered the components of good decision making" (p. 35).

School culture and leadership also impact decisions about teacher learning and professional development and therefore impact student learning. Principals set the tone and are responsible for the culture of the school. Muijs et al. (2004) claim that a blame-free culture is essential and can be achieved through open communication and supportive leadership. School culture is connected to beliefs, values, and habits of the school (Flores, 2004). Drysdale identified values and beliefs that were common among principals. He found some common values and beliefs to be "empathy, care, and social justice for all;

teacher happiness; community participation in decision making; and shared responsibility in the interests of students" (Drysdale, 2011, p. 448). These characteristics are important to the success of the principal.

Principals who have the most significant influence on student achievement know and understand how to lead their campus effectively; grow other professionals; and focus on improving the instructional program. Some common practices among effective principals include: establishing a shared vision and mission, identifying and setting goals, providing professional development, creating a positive school culture with shared decision making, and facilitating collaboration (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Klar & Brewer, 2013). A collaborative, shared vision becomes the foundation of what a school wants students to know and be able to do (Reagle, 2006). "Principals who consistently articulate the belief that 'we can make a difference in the quality of teaching and learning' exercise influence on the beliefs and attitudes of the school faculty" (Hallinger et al., 2017, p. 809). McGuigan and Hoy (2006) claim, "the way a principal organizes and runs a school, can make a difference in teacher confidence in the possibility of students' academic success" (p. 221).

Identifying and setting goals is important at multiple levels. Goals should be prioritized based upon identified needs at the district and campus level, the individual teacher level, as well as at the individual student level. Goals should be clear, specific, and attainable. Robinson et al. (2008) stated, "Goals provide a sense of purpose and priority in an environment where a multitude of tasks can seem equally important and overwhelming" (p. 661). Individual goals and campus goals should be embedded in

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school and classroom routines and procedures and reviewed regularly, with progress towards the goals being celebrated (Robinson, 2001).

Professional development opportunities at the individual and campus level also play an important role in student achievement. "Successful leaders begin to focus on building the capacity of their teachers through the use of staff development, in order to create more favorable conditions for [student] learning" (Jacobson, 2011, p. 35). Professional development, whether in-house or outsourced, must be intentional and aligned to school and teacher goals. Principals that value professional development will be able to encourage staff to seek their own growth opportunities, which in turn will improve classroom instruction and student learning (Jacobson, 2011).

One of the most cited elements in school improvement is a positive culture and climate. Principals that model the behavior they want to see and engage in purposeful communication with their staff are more effective at improving student learning outcomes (Hollingworth et al., 2018). One way to improve campus culture is to encourage and support risk-taking. When teachers feel supported and are encouraged to learn from their mistakes, they are more likely to step out of their box and incorporate new strategies to support learning. This requires a blame-free culture to be established through open communication (Muijs, et al., 2004). Another important factor related to a positive culture and climate is establishing meaningful relationships with students and parents. Parents that feel valued are more likely to trust the teachers and be actively involved in their child's educational experiences, and students that feel valued and loved are more willing to take academic risks, thus improving their learning outcomes (Heiskell, 2021).

Principals that support collaboration among staff have a positive impact on student learning outcomes. "Collaborative networks among educators are *essential* for successful teaching and learning" (Blasé & Blasé, 2002, p. 260). In order for collaboration to be beneficial, there has to be an atmosphere of trust among the staff members. Without trust, teachers are not willing to open up to share ideas or ask for help. Collaboration also helps create a positive culture as teachers and staff move away from the mind-set of "my kids" and begin thinking more globally in terms of "our kids" (Dufours & Mattos, 2013).

"Students in poverty are in need of educators who thwart biases and stereotypes and make concentrated efforts to provide educational opportunities that allow all students the same opportunity to succeed" (Lawson, 2015, p. 2191). The principal plays a vital role by creating a culture and climate that "allows all the employees to share a vision, establish a mission, and develop values and goals" (Ibrahim & Mashhadany, 2012, p. 472). Motivations, beliefs, and practices also influence interactions with teachers regarding teaching children who live in poverty. In order to be an effective proponent of equality, educators must "commit to working with, rather than on, families in poverty" (Gorski, 2013, p. 132).

Case Narrative

Karen is an up-and-coming campus principal with fifteen years of educational experience. She has thirteen years of classroom experience, and two years' experience as an assistant principal. All of her educational experience has been in a Title I school. This year, Karen accepted her first principal position at a fourth and fifth grade campus in a rural Texas panhandle town with a population of approximately 7,000 people. The town

boasts of its agricultural background and has seen an increase in feed yards, dairies, and farmlands. Due to this increase in the agricultural community, there has also been an influx of migrant farm workers - many of which come from Mexico and Guatemala. The demographics of the campus and the district have changed to reflect large number of migrant families now calling this town home. Currently, the campus is 67% Hispanic, and 33% white. The EL (English Learners) population is also increasing and currently accounts for 23% of the student body. The campus is a Title I campus with 69% of the students on free or reduced meal plans and is rated as Needs Improvement by the state accountability system.

During her interview, Karen was informed that the campus faced many challenges. The previous principal had not been able to run the school due to health issues, therefore, teachers had not been evaluated for the past three years. Paraprofessionals were running the building; thus, state and federal requirements such as Campus Improvement Plans, and Title I documentations had not been developed or updated for several years. Teachers were struggling with classroom management and discipline issues, and students were not making the progress that they needed to make. The culture of the building was toxic, and although several of the staff members were eager for a change, several were content with the way things were.

When state assessment scores came in the summer Karen was hired, she carefully reviewed the data and determined that she did not have time to wait until staff came back in August to develop a plan. She immediately sent out a letter to all staff introducing herself and inviting staff to a meet and greet the following week. She mentioned in the letter that she would be seeking volunteers to serve on a campus leadership team and

explained what that would look like. The following week, Karen was a little disappointed when less than half of the staff showed up to the meet and greet. However, she was not going to let this disappointment get her down.

Karen started the meet and greet by giving a brief overview of her educational career. She went over her philosophy of education, and then she briefly mentioned some concerns she had about the campus and students' academic scores. She told the staff that were in attendance that she was looking to form a campus leadership team (CLT) to design an improvement plan that would address areas of concern. While she was talking about the need for a campus leadership team, she noticed that some of the staff were excited about this team, and others had the attitude of, "This is just going to mean more work." As she took time to meet the new staff members and ask about their families, careers, and visions for the upcoming school year, she discovered that this position was going to be more challenging than she had thought.

By the end of the meet and greet, Karen had formed her CLT and they had planned to get together later that week to review data, go through the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) process, and develop their plan to present to their peers during the staff development session at the beginning of the school year. The CLT consisted of: Julie - the EL teacher, Bob – the special education teacher, Mary – a fourth grade math teacher, Lisa – a fourth grade ELAR teacher, Becky – a fifth grade ELAR teacher, Debra – a fifth grade science teacher, and Karen – the principal. The team spent two days digging into the data – something they had never done before. Karen thanked the team for their work and asked for volunteers to help present the plan during staff development. Julie and Debra volunteered to help present. As the team left, Karen

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had a new sense of hope that the upcoming school year, although it would be difficult, it would be very rewarding.

As teachers came in for the first staff meeting, there was a mix of emotions. Some were very eager to get the new year started and were excited to have a new leader for their campus. Others looked at Karen with suspicion and contempt, as they were not looking forward to a new campus leader. Karen welcomed everyone back and gave a brief overview of her career. She said a few words about working together as a team to build a strong educational community. She then asked the staff to indicate their knowledge on how to disaggregate data using the fist to five hand method. Fist – no knowledge, five – I am a professional at data disaggregation. The teachers did not respond much and there was little interaction between the staff and Karen.

Karen continued, "We need to do a data talk. We need to look at our demographics and identify target areas of concern." Karen could feel the tension starting to build in the room. She continued, "We need to look at our academics – what are our strengths, and where can we improve? We also need to identify what we are doing that is working, and what we need to change." By this time, Karen felt like she had just about lost the staff's attention. She decided to introduce the Campus Leadership Team and explain what they had been working on. "Last week the Campus Leadership Team, Julie, Bob, Mary, Lisa, Becky, Debra, and I, completed what is called a TAIS process. This process had us really dig deep into our data, generate problem statements, and identify the root causes for the low performance." Once the leadership team was introduced, the tension in the room lessoned, and the teachers started to relax some.

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At this point, Julie and Debra took over the meeting. They presented the staff members with copies of the data and the plan the team had created. They highlighted the key information and reviewed targeted areas of concern such as the economically disadvantaged (ECD) students and the EL students. Reading and writing were identified as academic weaknesses based upon the data. They encouraged staff members to ask questions and provide input.

Patty, a teacher who had been at the school for the past 17 years spoke up, "This plan looks like a lot of extra work. Teachers here already do a tremendous amount of work."

Karen had trouble keeping quiet. The teachers did only the minimal amount of work and they knew it.

Patty continued, "When will parents have to take some responsibility for their student's academic success? Parents aren't interested in their children's education. If they won't support us from the home, what are we supposed to do? We can't make the students want to learn!"

Karen replied, "I appreciate your input, Patty, and I think we need to discuss ways in which we can make our school more inviting to our low-income and EL parents."

Patty rolled her eyes and let out a sigh.

Although Karen was getting frustrated at the lack of professionalism she saw in the room, she attempted to get her point across. "Are we communicating with parents in their native languages? Do we provide multiple opportunities for parent participation events such as parent conferences and student information meetings?"

Patty interrupted, "We do more than our fair share of trying to bridge the gaps between the school and the home. We just can't get parents to participate."

Karen kept her temper under control and replied, "We need to come up with creative ways to get parents into our school building. We need to help them find ways to help their children at home." We cannot buy into the stereo-types about our low-income families and EL families."

Patty fumed, "These parents don't care."

Karen calmly stated, "These parents are interested in their children's education, in fact, they want their children to get a good education, so they don't have the struggles their parents have had."

Next Jenna spoke up. Jenna had been with the school for two years. Prior to coming to this school, she worked at a similar campus in another district that faced the same problems and had tried multiple strategies to get parents involved. "Look, Karen, this school is not like any of the schools you have been in. We have tried to get parents involved."

Karen inquired to find out what they had previously tried.

Jenna informed Karen, "We have hosted family nights, brought in outside presenters, and tried to get the parents to attend parent conferences – we even offered to stay late, but parents just don't show up."

Karen asked, "Have you tried asking the parents what they would like to see brought to the community from the school, or what programs they think would be beneficial in helping better understand their children's academic needs?"

Jenna replied, "They don't read or respond to notes that are sent home in weekly folders. In fact, they don't ever look in their child's folders. It is very frustrating for us."

Karen replied to Jenna, "I understand your frustrations. I just think we need to put our heads together and try to figure out something that might work." Several of the teachers started mumbling at their tables. Karen decided to ask each table group to work together and make a list of everything they have tried in the past, and then make a list of things they would like to try in the future in order to get parents more involved at the school. She told the teachers that the leadership team would look at their lists and see if they could add some new ideas to the improvement plan.

Karen ended the meeting by stating, "I appreciate all of your concerns. I am listening. I want you to know that I do not intend to make your work load heavier. I want us to find ways to work smarter and not harder." Karen heard some mumbling from the teachers. She continued, "I would like to invite anyone that wants to be part of our Campus Leadership Team to let me know, as I want everyone to feel like they have an opportunity to offer their ideas and suggestions into our plan." Karen ended the meeting by informing the staff that the leadership team would meet once a month and that as a staff they would review and update the plan during each staff meeting.

Four weeks after school started, the CLT met to discuss the improvement plan, and to discuss any new concerns on the campus. Only one staff member, Janice – the music teacher, had volunteered to join the leadership team. She attended the meeting and brought up a new concern. She stated that she had noticed a student was being bullied in her class. The student had been wearing the same clothes for the past three days and was starting to smell. The situation had not been brought to anyone else's attention as Janice

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tried to handle the issue on her own by talking to both students. However, she felt like the leadership team needed to know about it and she was hopeful that they would help give some ideas on how to address the problem. At that week's staff meeting, Karen decided to use this situation as a learning opportunity. She briefly explained the situation and asked, "What else might the school community do to help address this problem?"

Conversations quickly turned to blaming the parents – one teacher stated, "There is no excuse for being dirty. The parents need to make sure the child is wearing clean clothes." Another teacher stated how the parents of this particular child never pay attention to what the child wears and that the child even came to school before with mix-matched shoes.

Another staff member chimed in and stated, "The parents must be lazy and don't want to wash the laundry."

Another staff member stated, "Maybe that outfit is the child's favorite outfit, and it makes him feel good when he wears it."

Another teacher stated that the school should turn the family in to Child Protective Services.

At this point, Karen was becoming concerned. How was she going to help her teachers and staff have a better understanding of poverty? How could she help them overcome their prejudices and biases? Karen knew that she could discuss data all day long, but until her staff addressed their beliefs about poverty, nothing would change in the school.

Karen decided to ask her staff if anyone would like to do some home visits with her. She wanted the staff to see what was happening at the homes of their students so they

would have a better understanding of an approach that might help provide support or solutions for the families in poverty. She was hopeful that if she could get a couple of people to have a better understanding of poverty and the issues faced by these families that she might be able to get more support from the staff in finding and implementing strategies to meet the students' needs. She was also hopeful that by doing home visits, the staff would have a better appreciation for these families and not be so quick to judge their homes and lives. Karen knew that she could not make this change happen on her own. She needed some of the staff members to buy in and help change how the school operated. She also had to figure out how to help teachers examine their beliefs and be reflective in order for the campus to move forward.

Teaching Notes

This case study can be used as a tool for discussions to help teachers identify their own values and beliefs around the issue of poverty, and to help staff members examine any assumptions they have that act as barriers to teaching children who live in poverty. It can also be used for role playing scenarios to help overcome barriers in communication between the school and families, and to help future school leaders identify and discuss ways to build a campus culture that supports and embraces equitable and inclusive schooling for all students including students of poverty. Creating a positive campus culture is vital for improving teaching and learning. Students are more likely to thrive in a supportive environment where they feel valued and loved.

In-Class Discussion

This case is designed so that it can be read and discussed during a faculty meeting or during teacher prep classes. Faculty and staff, or students at a college can choose some

or all of the discussion questions below as a means of generating dialogue about the case and ways it can influence the way we approach teaching children who live in poverty and creating equitable and inclusive schools.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some stereotypes and underlying assumptions that the staff in this scenario have regarding children and families of poverty?

- How could Karen have approached her staff differently in order to help them have a role in shared decision making and become more supportive and understanding of equitable and inclusive schools for all including students of poverty?

- Since beliefs drive decision making, what is a necessary step in changing the culture of this school?

- What strategies might Karen pursue to help her staff consider using different approaches when dealing with families from poverty?

- What would be a benefit of the school community working with families of poverty to encourage and support them in being more active in the education of children?

- What are some strategies/approaches that could be implemented to help families attend school functions?

- What role does timing play in parent participation and how can it be addressed?

- Identify your own beliefs around poverty. Is poverty a choice, or does it happen by chance? How can families escape the trap of poverty?

- How might the school work with the community to bring jobs to the area?

- How might the school provide training to improve English language skills for adults in poverty?

- Brainstorm some community resources that could be available to help this school provide food and clothing to families of poverty.

Role Play:

"Role-plays have been used in diverse applications across many disciplines" (Rao & Stupans, 2012). According to Anderson et al. (2001), role-play is considered effective in achieving a broad range of learning outcomes and able to address cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning as described in Bloom's taxonomy. Role play allows individuals to safely take on roles that they might not otherwise encounter or consider during personal and/or professional lives. It helps individuals put themselves in others' shoes, so-to-speak, in order for them to be more empathetic to others' feelings and emotions. By taking an "out-of-character" role, the individual has the opportunity to more authentically experience the emotions and feelings of another person in the scenario. Bachen, Hernandez-Ramos, and Raphael (2012) "affirm the importance of role-playing games as an effective way to promote affective learning outcomes like empathy, even when compared with another learning activity also embodying active, student-centered learning" (p. 453).

Role Play Option 1:

Faculty members (or students) can reenact one of the staff meetings from the case study by being assigned one of the various roles below while other faculty members act as observers and offer feedback. Roles for option 1 include: Karen, the principal; Julie, the EL teacher; Bob, the special education teacher; Mary, 4th grade math teacher; Lisa, 4th

grade ELAR teacher; Becky, 5th grade ELAR teacher; Debra, 5th grade science teacher; Janice, the music teacher; Patty, a 17-year veteran teacher; and Jenna, a 2nd year teacher at this campus.

Note: During role play it is important to establish some guidelines and ground rules to ensure a safe environment for all participants. Guidelines might include teacher preparedness, clarity around goals, awareness of limitations in the learning context, adequate time and space, time for reflective discussion and for students' evaluation of the impact of the role play on their learning, and teacher evaluation of the effect on student learning (Freeman & Capper, 1998). Some examples of ground rules might be:

1. Speak your truth from the role you are playing.

2. Do not make the issue personal.

3. Be respectful when disagreeing.

4. Participants have the right to opt out or pass if they become uncomfortable.

Debriefing after the role play:

Once the role-play is over, have participants explain how they felt being in that particular role. What was it like viewing the situation from a different perspective? Why might it be important to consider all viewpoints when making decisions that impact educating all students? Allow the audience to provide feedback and ask any questions that come up regarding the scenario. If time permits, you could change roles and role-play the scenario again to see how perspectives influence decisions that are made.

Role Play Option 2:

Faculty members will role play a parent meeting addressing the concern of the student that has worn the same clothes for the past three days and is starting to smell.

Roles for this scenario include: Karen, principal; Janice, music teacher; Patty, 17-year veteran teacher (homeroom teacher of the student); Student, Parent, School Nurse, and School Counselor. Remember to establish ground rules prior to role-playing.

Note: Depending on the situation, it may not be in the best interest of the student to participate in the entire meeting. The student may just be called in at the end, or not at all. The team doing the role-play will make that decision. Treat this as an actual situation and be considerate of the student's feelings and well-being. You could also do the scenario twice – once with the student and once without to see if there would be a difference in the outcome.

Debriefing After the Role Play:

Participants will explain how they felt during the role play. How was being the parent different from being the teacher? Why would the school nurse and the counselor need to be involved in a meeting like this? What are some solutions to the problem that was discussed? Allow the audience/observers to ask any questions that they thought of during the role play. If time allows, change roles, and repeat the process. The more roles each individual can play, the better perception they will have from all viewpoints.

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