The Voices of Four Principals: An Exploration of the Four Dimensions of Leadership as Used by Middle School Leaders in Transforming Low Performing Schools into Schools That Meet and/or Exceed Local, State, and National Standards

Tanisha Lashan Hunter-Heaston

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The Voices of Four Principals: 
An Exploration of the Four Dimensions of Leadership as Used by Middle School Leaders in Transforming Low Performing Schools into Schools That Meet and/or Exceed Local, State, and National Standards

by

Tanisha L. Hunter-Heaston

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Leadership and Policy Studies

The University of Memphis
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“You cannot travel the path until you have become the path itself” – Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism, 563-483 B.C.

First, I would like to give appreciation to GOD for allowing me to have the opportunity to come thus far in my educational endeavors. Gratitude is given to my parents, Von and Betty Hunter, who have been my backbone and strength for every single second of my existence. Expressions of thanks are essential to the colleagues and acquaintances that I have met at Mississippi State University, The University of Mississippi, and The University of Memphis, who have served as support systems since 1998 when I first began my collegiate endeavors. I would like to extend towering expressions of appreciation to Dr. Reginald Leon Green, Dr. Linda Wesson, and Dr. Beverly Cross, Dr. Lisa Horton, and Dr. Karen Weddle West for introducing me to new methods of theory and research that have assisted me in becoming the educational leader and the professional consumer of research that I am today and have yet to become.
DEDICATION

“Don’t be afraid to go out on a limb, that’s where the fruit is” – Janie Mines

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to those who have spoken words of encouragement and inspiration to me during the times when I was at a loss for words to give myself. First, I would like sincerely thank my husband, Mr. Cortez M. Heaston for encouraging me to continue this journey and being patient along the way. Next, I would also like to express an abundance of gratitude to my siblings April and Xavier Hunter for being a motivating force of achievement throughout every obstacle that I have ever encountered. Last and certainly not least, I would like thank every family member, co-worker, student, associate, and friend who has given me words or gestures of encouragement along the path that I have traveled, am currently traveling, and will embark in the future.
ABSTRACT

Hunter-Heaston, Tanisha L. Ed.D. The University of Memphis, December, 2010. The Voices of Four-Dimensional Leadership: An Exploration of the Four Dimensions of Leadership as Used by Middle School Leaders in Transforming Low Performing Schools into Schools That Meet and/or Exceed Local, State, and National Standards. Major Professor: Reginald L. Green, Ed.D.

For more than 50 years, education professionals have pondered over the phenomenon of failing schools. Despite years of educational reform efforts, America remains A Nation at Risk (1983). Towards the turn of the 21st century, America was well into its third attempt to remedy one of its major ailments, scholastic insufficiency. In the midst of schools failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), decreasing graduation rates, and increasing teacher turn-over rates, stands the school leader.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates, Race to the Top dollars, and other numerous policies attempt to provide incentives for regions and leaders who change failing schools into achieving academic institutions. The paths to these incentives are separated by achievement gaps across the nation. This study attempts to conquer the quest that many school leaders have traveled by researching a change model that may embody the recipe for turning around failing schools.

The purpose of this study was to research the experiences of four middle school principals, 2 female and 2 male, who utilized the processes and procedures embedded in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010) to change their failing schools into schools with a progressing status. The voices of these school leaders were captured by the researcher through the methodological process of three individual interviews, three focus groups, and artifact collections. This study uses case study analysis and phenomenological research along with other qualitative methodologies to
answer the question, “What meaning do school leaders in underachieving schools ascribe to the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as they engage in the change process?”

Findings of this study include eighteen major themes that surround the four dimensions. The first of the major themes supported the first dimension, understanding self and others. Theories connected with this dimension include, Hersey and Blanchard’s (1960) Situational Leadership and Greenleaf’s (1970) Servant Leadership. Second, it was found that the participants used the next dimension, understanding the complexities of organizational life, majorly to establish congruent visions of the change process by the internal and external populations. Theories connected with this dimension include Fullan’s (1999) Change Theory and Senge’s (1990) System Theory. The participants used the third dimension, building bridges through relationships, to stay connected with internal and external populations. Finally, the fourth dimension, utilizing leadership’s best practices, was used to build a social network amongst the participants.

In response to the turn-around challenge set forth by policy makers, the findings in this study reveal specific methods involving the Four Dimensions of Leadership that middle school level principals used change the status of their schools. Ultimately, the findings within this study help to validate the Four Dimension Leadership Model as a valued model for change in our 21st century schools.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“A leader is a dealer in hope.” – Napoleon Bonaparte

Background of the Problem

Over the past 20 years educational theorists and scholars have made numerous attempts at developing and implementing strategies to aid schools in their endeavors to achieve academic excellence. Despite these efforts, underachieving schools are rapidly becoming more prevalent in our nation. As a result of the perpetual occurrence of schools failing to meet academic requirements set by local, state, and national standards, school leaders are in a constant search for a remedy to resolve the failing school epidemic.

The phenomenon of failing schools within our nation has overwhelmingly become an issue of great importance. This is mostly because the academic standing of a school is directly linked to student achievement (Yukl, 1999). In turn, this link becomes a cycle which leads to barriers in the advancements of educational achievement and progression of our society as a whole. If K-12 educational institutions continue in a pattern of failing to meet educational standards, our nation will be faced with a dilemma that will ultimately negatively impact students sitting in classrooms all over America from obtaining a quality life.

A quality life in America can be classified to include, owning a home, having a job and good health. In fact, some may consider these as necessary fundamental elements or in some instances, the “American Dream.” Obtaining these possessions largely depends on goals and opportunities. Consequently, the outcome of pursuing, capturing,
and maintaining the “American Dream” is directly linked to quality of one’s education and is a part of the cycle of our society’s forthcoming progression.

A number of strategies have been previously implemented to create academic excellence in our nation’s schools. Though these strategies have proven effective under certain conditions, schools who have implemented them are left to face issues relative to sustaining a status of good standing as it relates to meeting their local, state, and national standards. In an effort to aid school leaders with the relentless search to remedy the failing school epidemic, research has been on-going and additional research has been suggested.

Many factors contribute to the academic success and academic standing of a school. Two of the most critical factors that affect a school’s status are the quality of teaching and school leadership. In an effort to obtain national, state, and local academic goals, school districts and individual schools often employ prominent models of reform. Unfortunately, not every school leaders is able to implement strategies of success which causes them to fail to meet academic goals. In light of this reality, Lee and Smith (1993), have raised the possibility of questioning a leader’s capacity to effectively implement a change model rather than to question the model put in place (Lee & Smith, 1993). Green (2010) has identified four critical components that leaders can use to build leadership capacity to bring about sustained change in underachieving schools. He has coined them as the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010).

In this study I explored the school leadership styles of four middle school principals who are currently engaged in the process of leading change. Additionally, this study will allow exploration into how school leaders interpret the importance of using the
Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010) as they are involved in the change process. School leadership is most critical when engaged in leading change efforts in schools and is second only to the instructional styles of teachers. Therefore, this research was conducted to explore the experiences of four middle school principals who utilized the processes and procedures embedded in the Four Dimensions of Leadership: understanding self and others, understanding the complexities of organizational life, building bridges through relationships, and engaging in leadership best practices, to enhance academic achievement in their schools. Through dialogue occurring in individual interviews and focus groups the participants of this study (re) told and (re) lived their experiences of using the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership to create and sustain change. As a result, readers of this research can unveil meanings and feelings that the participants possess about the importance of using the principles of the Four Dimensions to bring about change. Coding, collecting, and sorting were used by the researcher to analyze data and to report the findings. Member checking and peer debriefing were used to create and to ensure accuracy in the (re) presentation of the participants’ experiences.

As a result of the exploration of the practices of the participants of this research, critical evidence regarding the relevance of recognizing and using the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership to obtain success in failing schools was revealed. More importantly an invaluable revelation was exposed in this phenomenon that can be shared with theorists and other scholars. Ultimately this research will generate significant accounts in the practice of leadership that will aid in the educational experiences of middle school students across the nation. Furthermore, it will assist in increasing the
number of students meeting grade level benchmarks and decrease the number of schools failing to make adequate yearly progress.

**Statement of the Problem**

Research has yielded tremendous efforts made by school leaders to elevate levels of student achievement. Despite these efforts, low performing schools and underachieving schools exist at increasing rates. Knowles and Brown (2000) discuss the middle grades as being the most critical years in the development of the intellect of students (Knowles & Brown, 2000). Griffin (1999), states that “the school principal and student academic achievement linkage should be the main focus in assessing school success factors” (Gunter, 2001, p.283). “Schools are complex organizations and the interaction of people who work in them are relative factors in enhancing the active achievement of students” (Gonder & Hymes, 1994, p.8). Taking these views into consideration, exploring the leadership styles of middle school principals, and observing complex challenges faced by these individuals, factors used to bring about change appears to be beneficial. Middle school has proven to be a critical stage in the academic spectrum for the student, principal, school, school district, and society as a whole.

The problem facing educational leaders today is that though many schools are failing, a number of schools are thriving. Gonder and Hymes (1994), state that disproportionate success rates exist in schools across the nations partially because standards of excellence are not defined (Gonder & Hymes, 1994). Additionally, Gonder and Hymes state that student learning is supported when standards of excellence are defined by considering the values and beliefs of school leaders and school personnel when setting goals (Gonder & Hymes, 1994, p. 8). The work of Griffith (1999), and
Gonder and Hymes (1994), assist in affirming the existence of conditions that create educational gaps in K-12 schools across the nation. Lambert (2003) expounds on factors that affect student achievement in underachieving schools. Schools that fail to meet local, state, and national standards face consequences that may include the following (see Table 1).

Table 1
Corrective Actions for Failing Schools According to NCLB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years of Failing to Make Adequate Yearly Progress According to the No Child Left Behind Policy</th>
<th>Progressive Action Taken in Response to Failing to Make Adequate Yearly Progress According to the No Child Left Behind Policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 consecutive years of failure</td>
<td>School must offer option to students to transfer to a school in Good Standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 consecutive years of failure</td>
<td>School must implement mandatory supplemental services (i.e. after school tutoring programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 consecutive years of failure</td>
<td>Corrective Action - district must implement one of the following: replace school staff, replace school curriculum, decrease authority of school administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressive Action Taken in Response to Failing to Make Adequate Yearly Progress According to the No Child Left Behind Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 consecutive years of failure</td>
<td>Restructuring (Planning) - school district must implement one of the following: alternative governance arrangements: reopen the school as a public charter school; replace all or most of the school staff, including the principal; enter into a contract to have an outside entity operate the school; arrange for the state to take over operation of the school; or any other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 consecutive years of failure</td>
<td>Restructuring (Implementation) School must implement the plan created in the Restructuring Planning Process</td>
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Derived from the U.S. Department of Education Website, 2010
Despite the circumstances or conditions surrounding a school’s failure to progress, mandatory consequences are implemented after two consecutive years of failing to obtain Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) (U.S. Dept. of Ed, 2010). According to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy, corrective action is a significant intervention that occurs in Title I schools, and it is designed to remedy a school’s persistent inability to make AYP. In relation to this problem, school principals are increasingly being placed in the center of the outcome of a school’s academic standing status. Sadly, in some instances, principals of schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for consecutive years may face being replaced or terminated.

The challenge faced by school districts that have been given the status of corrective action is to determine the cause of consecutive failure in academic categories. Lambert (2003) lists factors to consider for failure: school leadership, climate, culture, curriculum, communication, internal motivation, teaching strategies, and models of reform (Lambert, 2003). Other factors to consider when assessing schools for underachievement include: values, beliefs, the relationships of internal and external stakeholders, and goals set by school leaders (Gonder & Hymes, 1994). Green (2010) also recognizes and references the factors identified by both Gonder and Hymes (1994) and Lambert (2003) as critical factors in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership. The relation to these crucial points in works of educational leaders such as Gonder and Hymes (1994), Lambert (2003), and Green (2010) strengthen the need and importance for investigative research into best practices to develop and sustain change. None the less, it is apparent that the key strategies implemented by schools and school districts under the corrective action status have proven ineffective and in most instances are recycled to the
instructional and managerial strategies practiced by school administrators. Conley (1992), states that the main goal of restructuring a school is to “change the basic organizational practices to meet the needs of students” and stresses that the school principal is central in reorganizing practices of individual schools (Conley, 1992, p.3).

Considering the critical significance of the academic development of a middle school students, the reoccurring problem of failing schools, and the increased accountability responsibilities associated with school leadership, it is imperative that exploration into the leadership styles of middle school principals take place. More importantly, it is essential to research the practices of middle school principals using the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership. By sharing their experiences surrounding their practices using the Four Dimensions of Leadership, the participants of this study can lend assistance to other change agents who will ultimately have the power to influence progressive change in our middle schools across the nation.

**Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of four middle school principals who utilize the processes and procedures embedded in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010) to enhance the academic achievement of their schools. As a result of this process school leaders and educational audiences can acquire a deeper understanding of how the participants of this study view the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as a model to lead school reform and consider using it within their own schools to lead progressive change.
**Significance and Rationale of the Study**

The significance of this study is that useful information can be obtained while examining the reactions and interactions of school principals who have identified and use the processes and procedures outlined in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as they journey through the process of creating and/or sustaining change. This information may serve as a useful contribution to other school leaders or school district personnel as they plan for and select strategies to use in times where significant change efforts are needed. The findings in this study may also serve as information used to assist professors, theorists, and scholars as they develop and/or expound on instruments of change for school leaders. Finally, the findings of this research can be a significant contribution to educational leadership and the training of school leaders. Once the lived experiences of the participants of this study are revealed, education professionals can make necessary decisions about implementing the model to contribute to both school and student success endeavors across the nation.

**Research Questions**

**Global Question:** What meaning do school leaders in underachieving schools ascribe to the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as they engage in the change process?

The following questions were used to guide this process:

*Dimension I - Understanding Self and Others*

1. What was your experience with self and others as a part of the change process?

2. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?
Dimension II- Understanding the Complexity of Organizational Life

3. What was your experience with understanding the complexity of organizational life as a part of the change process?

4. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

Dimension III - Building Bridges Through Relationships

5. What was your experience with building bridges through relationships as a part of the change process?

6. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

Dimension IV - Engaging in Leadership Best Practice

7. What was your experience with engaging in leadership best practice as a part of the change process?

8. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

Definition of Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) - Adequate yearly progress is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year, according to federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (U.S. Department of Education, 2010)

Change/Reform – These two terms reference the process of moving the academic achievement level of students in a school from one level to a higher level.
**Change Agent/Facilitator** – These two terms have the same meaning and refer to building level principals, “The key players of change in schools are the principals as change facilitators” (Hallenger & Heck, 1998, p. 159).

**Corrective Action** – The status given to schools that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two or more consecutive years.

**Four Dimensions of Leadership** – Four specific elements critical to principal leadership as they implement and/or sustain change in school; (1) understanding self and others, (2) understanding the complexity of organizational life, (3) building bridges through relationships, (4) engaging in leadership best practices (Green, 2010). The Four Dimensions are defined below:

- **Understanding Self and Others**- A school leader’s in-depth understanding of his/her own beliefs, values, and personal qualities and the beliefs, values, and personal qualities of the individuals that they lead (Green, 2010, p. 25).

- **Understanding the Complexity of Organizational Life**- A school leader’s ability to recognize that schools are a multifaceted organizations and that this understanding addresses the school’s structure, climate, and culture (Green, 2010, p. 64).

- **Building Bridges Through Relationships**- A school leader’s ability to establish and nurture relationships that include, but are not limited to, the following: Principal/Teacher, Teacher/Teacher, Teacher/Student, and School/Community (Green, 2010, p. 130).

- **Engaging in Leadership Best Practices**- A school leader’s ability to identify and implement programs, activities, or behaviors that are research-based and have proven to generate specific outcomes in a variety of settings (Green, 2010, p. 153).
**Introspecting**- The act of a school leader self reflecting about his/her leadership style and ability to lead others.

**Local Standards** – Academic standards set by a school district or the local education association. For the purpose of this study, local standards will refer to the same standards as defined by the state.

**Low Performing Schools**- A school failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress for two or more consecutive years (See Chart 1.0 – U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

**Middle School**- A school level between elementary and high school, including grades 6, 7, and 8. (Knowles & Brown, 2000).

**National Standards**- Academic benchmarks National Assessment of Educational Progress in Mathematics, Reading, Science, Writing, the Arts, Civics, Economics, Geography, and U.S. history (National Education Association, 2009).

**Principaling**- The act of carrying out the duties of a school principal: making decisions, attending programs, enforcing policies.

**State Standards**- Academic benchmarks set by the state department of education that are included in daily state performance indicators assessed using a summative criterion referenced test.

**Transforming** – Moving a school academic status from corrective actions status to a level which meets and/or exceeds local, state, or national standards.

**Underachieving** - The failure of a school or school district to make the state’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals in academic areas in specific student demographic categories.
Voices - A framework of detailed expressions of one’s way of knowing. Voices include one’s life experiences (personal and professional) which may be expressions of his/her beliefs, concerns, needs, and values.

Assumptions

I assumed that all participants would answer the questions to the best of their ability. However, because I am the instrument, there are automatically certain biases that are inherent in my study. I cannot separate myself from the data, and I realize that the findings are my interpretations of the participants’ perspectives. Also, I am an African American, middle class female, and I cannot separate myself from the biases associated with that identity. Furthermore, I recognize that this research cannot be generalized to other situations. It is my interpretation of the experiences of these four school administrators, specifically. If another researcher were to conduct the same study with the same administrators, the emergent process of the study would be influenced and different interpretations would possibly result.

Limitations

With regard to keeping with naturalistic research, there are limitations to the study. The limitations to this study include the following: the researcher will examine leaders in one school district and only school principals who fit the specific selection criteria listed in this study; no other school leaders were researched. Therefore, the researcher is not making the claim that all school leaders will share the same experiences as those in this study. The researcher’s optimism rests in the possibility that this study can contribute to and/or enhance the implementation of change models for school leaders across the nation.
Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 of this study consists of an introduction that serves as a background of the study. This section informs readers of the research that was conducted and the rationale behind the desire to conduct research on this topic. Chapter 1 includes; the statement of the problem, statement of purpose, significance of the study and the research questions used to guide the study. Limitations associated with this study are also listed in this chapter. The chapter will end with a summary that highlights key points of the section.

Chapter 2 contains findings from a review of literature that is relevant to the research. This chapter also introduces and discusses educational reform efforts of the nation and provides a methodical discussion of how these efforts contributed to the current state of the nation’s educational progress. Chapter 2 details the theoretical framework used within the research. As a result of an in-depth discussion, a connection between the theoretical framework used to guide this study and educational reform efforts of the nation were revealed. An introduction and summary are provided to reinforce organization of this chapter.

Chapter 3 contains an explanation of how the participants and schools were chosen to participate in the study. The research design, risks, benefits, and ethical considerations are also detailed in this chapter. The purpose of chapter three is to clarify the actual procedures of conducting, analyzing, and reporting the research. The chapter ends with a summary that will conclude the section and highlight key points.

Chapter 4 contains a summary and analyzes the data of the study. This chapter reveals research findings and provides a detailed account of the experiences of the study
to the readers. The chapter is written in a narrative format and presented to the reader in the form of multiple case studies. This design allows an individual case study to be written on each participant of involved with this research. Additionally, the chapter gives readers an opportunity to form their own inferences from the data and match them with or against the conclusions listed in chapter five. Last, the chapter ends with a summary that concludes the section and highlights key points.

Chapter 5 presents the researcher’s significant contribution to the literature on the topic in relation to the utilization of the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership. An in-depth look into how methods used influence change processes to enhance academic achievement implemented by middle school leaders is also presented. This chapter summarizes essential points made in chapters one through three and includes suggestions for future research. It ends with a summary that highlights the key points of the section.

**Summary**

This chapter has provided a topic of interest for a proposed research study, set a platform with an established background for an existing phenomenon, stated the problem, and detailed a significant purpose for conducting research. Questions to guide the study have been listed and an organizational structure has been set to outline the specifics of the study.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

“I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?” - Benjamin Disraeli

Introduction

American history is filled with unsuccessful attempts to reform education. Copeland (2003) remarked that American public schools have experienced a number of crises since being established in the 19th century. Historically it has been generally accepted that schools mirror society (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) and consequently, perceived crises in the educational system resulted from societal change. As a result, societal changes have prompted a shift in how education is perceived. Social equality, social cohesion, and excellence in education (Copeland, 2003) appear to be the prevailing themes prompting historical reform efforts.

In this chapter, three major efforts of American educational reform are introduced and detailed. An in-depth look at supportive and controversial views of the educational movements is presented. A connection between the historical relevance of these movements, current efforts of reform, and the current state of America’s educational status is established. Finally, the conclusion provides clarification and concise evidence to support the implementation of new efforts that make way for the development of a successful state of achievement in all of our nation’s schools.

Over the past three decades, in an attempt to improve student achievement, American education has under gone constant change. Schools districts and schools across the nation have engaged in restructuring efforts in an attempt to address standards, assessments, and accountability measures. However, few efforts have been successful in
addressing the needs of all children. Beginning with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 the beginning of establishing the premise that schools in America were failing. The *National Education Goals 2000 Act* and the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 supported issues addressed in the controversial *A Nation at Risk* document. Although each of these reform movements had merit in its own right, advocating programs, activities, and strategies resulting in extensive change in how educational services are delivered, collectively, they have failed to identify and sustain an approach that addresses the needs of all students. America’s academic structure includes participating in three decades of reform, focusing on improving the quality of education in grades K-12, the quality of teachers, and finally the process used by school leaders charged with leading educational reform. Despite decades of implementing educational reform efforts, large numbers of students in schools across the nation are still not meeting district, state, and national standards (Hillard, 2003).

In school year 2006–07, only 70% of America’s 98,905 schools nationwide made adequate yearly progress, and 10,676 schools were designated as schools in need of improvement (National Education Association, 2009). Research reveals that schools generally have explored a variety of strategies to improve student achievement, but without rapid, clear success. Research has also revealed that school leaders are charged with making progress by looking beyond slow, incremental change and examining practices that will raise and sustain student achievement within one to three years (Hay Group, 2004).

The need to improve student achievement in low performing schools is critical. An examination of change models popularly used in schools with failing academic
conditions has shown that a focus on an all inclusive change model would best serve the school leaders of failing schools and assist in developing successful academic outcomes for students in our schools across the nation.

**Three Decades of Educational Reform**

*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform* is the title of the 1983 report of American President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education. The report focused on improving the quality of education in grades K through 12. Its publication is considered a landmark event in modern American educational history (Orfield, 2004). This report was written after direct observation of America’s schools and their failing status. Major findings concluded that graduates of American schools were not educated well enough to positively contribute to the nation’s workforce. Additionally, the document made reference to the ability of American educated students to compete on a global stage (Vinovskis, 2009, 213).

Calwelti (1997) stated that C. H. Edson (1983) concluded that *A Nation at Risk* very closely resembled the famous report issued by the Committee of Ten in 1893. Non-public school personnel dominated both groups. Both reports had recommendations that were intuitively based, rather than based on empirical or evaluative data. Both groups recommended longer school terms. Both reports endorsed a philosophy of social Darwinism—survival of the academic fittest. One difference between the reports is that the Committee of Ten established the concept of academic, general and vocational duration for the high school, whereas *A Nation at Risk* implied that the high school should be an academically elite institution. Calwelti (1997) states that policy makers and editors were less kind in their critiques of *The Nation At Risk* document, viewing it as a
cheap political attempt to influence public policy. Few reformers in the 1980’s or 1990’s heeded James B. Conant’s advice from 1959 that schools in America can be improved but only “school by school” (Brookover, Schwietzer, Schnieder, & Beady, 2005, p. 96).

This report sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education presented a rhetorical call to reform with its infamous assertion that: “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre instructional performance that exists today, we might have viewed it as an act of war.” A Nation at Risk recommended (1) a tougher set of academic basics for high school graduation, (2) higher standards for universities, (3) a longer school year or school day, (4) merit pay for top teachers, and (5) more citizen participation (Vinovskis, 2009).

Just as there have always been pros and cons to every piece of literature ever published, A Nation at Risk was no different. Every person who read the report had an opinion as to the nature of the language and guidelines established by the commission. Because our society tends to emphasize the negative aspects of today’s society, the number of “cons” that the educators of the time far outweighed the “pros”. E.A. Crosby was no exception to this rule. He found that “US students were still at risk” (Jensen & Kiley, 2000, p. 431). He also found that, just as a connection was formed between the society’s educational progression and economic prosperity, a gap was being formed between the ideal and the practicality of many applications outlined in the report. This, along with many other factors, may help explain the lack of influence the report had on modern day reform efforts. Other plausible reasons for such lack of influence include: “Educators, teachers, administrators, and government officials never agreed that the reforms…would produce the kind of improvements schools needed. Leadership was
lacking. Financial resources were inadequate. Schools tend to resist change. The suggested changes were too great and more time was needed” (Johnson, Livinvgston, Schwartz, & Slate, 2000, p. 351).

Many critics felt that the report forced educators into a defensive position, rather than an offensive one. Following the release of the report, many state governments issued regulations and mandates, “created rigidity and stifled creativity” (Johnson, et al., 2000, p. 352), and created an atmosphere of “political polarization” (Johnson, et al., 2000, p. 352). While many of the guidelines set forth have been met, many schools are lacking change in the amount of homework issued, the length of their school year, as well as the length of the day. Many came to the clear and simple consensus that the need for reform would lead to the failure of schools.

During the late 1980’s another report on the effectiveness of American public education funded by the federal government was released. This report written by James Coleman concluded that public schools did not make a significant difference. The controversial report claiming that the main reason for lack of academic achievement of students rest with family background. He reported that children from poor families and homes, did not have the prime conditions or values to support education, and could not learn, regardless of what the school did (U.S. National Commission, 1996). The report sparked what became known as Effective Schools Research.

During this movement, extensive research was conducted to determine if there were schools where students from low income families were highly successful. The work lead by Edmonds, Brookover, and Lezotte, looking at achievement data from schools in several major cities, revealed schools nationwide where children fitting the characteristics
described by Coleman were achieving. The challenging question that was left unanswered by these and other researchers was why these schools were making a difference and similar schools were not.

In search of an answer to this challenging question, studies followed that compared successful schools with similar schools, in like neighborhoods, where children were not learning, or learning at a low level. Findings from these studies revealed that schools serving students of poverty can make a difference and students in those schools can achieve at high levels. With these correlates are included in school improvement efforts, the proportions of students that achieve academic excellence either improves, or at the very least, remains the same (U.S. National Commission, 1996).

The national reform agenda for 1990 was set by President George W. Bush. In October 1989 with the announcement of *America 2000: An Education Strategy*, the president and the nation’s governors endorsed six major national goals. In 1994, under the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, the U.S. Congress would expand the list of goals to eight. The Act codified in law the six original education goals concerning school readiness, school completion, student academic achievement, leadership in math and science, adult literacy, and safe and drug-free schools. It added two new goals encouraging teacher professional development and parental participation. Furthermore, The National Education Goals 2000 Act stresses establishing relationships with internal and external school populations to support academic growth, and sustaining a progressive school status by identifying and implementing effective leadership practices that have proven productive with the school’s population.
In effort to achieve the goals listed in the National Education Goals 2000 Act, it is imperative that current practices within schools change. Hopkins and Jackson (2002) assert that Hodgkinson states in his book *Effective Leadership for School Improvement* “before changes can be implemented in a school environment, school leaders must first have an understanding of the emotions and feelings within themselves and others” (Hopkins & Jackson, 2002, p. 27).

In every component of a change process in a school environment, school leaders have a tremendous impact on the outcome. The United States National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (USNCTAF) (1996) cites both teacher quality—content knowledge and effective strategies — and school leadership as significant factors in student achievement, particularly for students of color. According to the USNCTAF, closing the achievement gap requires highly qualified teachers, culturally responsive instructional strategies, and continuous examination of the institutional conditions that perpetuate achievement inequities. The NCTAF states that “in every building, school leaders must articulate these concepts and support staff in achieving this level of rigor” (U.S. National Commission on Teaching, 1996, p. 8). The National Education Goals 2000 Act placed a heavy focus on school readiness and a safe school environment for students. Later educational reform efforts focused more on curriculum and defining accountability.

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed. One of the hallmarks of NCLB is state accountability, as measured by the adequate yearly progress (AYP) of all local educational agencies and all public schools. Title I, Part A of NCLB requires states to outline in their state plans that they are implementing a single, statewide
accountability system based on the academic assessments and standards adopted, as well as the incentive and penalty system it will use to ensure local accountability within the system. States must also demonstrate what will constitute AYP in that state, and do so in a manner that is statistically valid and reliable and results in continuous and substantial academic improvement for students. AYP data must be disaggregated into several categories, including race and ethnicity of students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient students. The concept of AYP is similar to the accountability system outlined in Perkins, particularly in relation to the goals that states must set. Under NCLB, all students in each subgroup must reach the state’s “proficient” level on the state’s assessments by 2014.

All students are impacted by AYP. The goal is that all students were able to perform at proficient levels by 2014 means that states and local school district are focusing intensely on academic achievement. As a result, some states have increased the academic requirements for graduation, thereby reducing the time available for students to take career technical education courses. The No Child Left Behind policy also reinforces the unfortunate belief that students must choose to take either career technical or academic education; students can take both and succeed in both during their high school careers.

Chronic underachievement in schools has been and continues to be an essential issue in education. Policies have been created to address underachievement at both the federal, state, and district levels. Educational policies that address underachievement and low performance in schools have strongly influenced improvement efforts and accountability systems set at each of these levels. However, after decades filled with
educational reform efforts, the imperative inquiry remains, why is America still a *Nation at Risk*? Despite the terms and guidance set by both the education reform movements outlined in the *A Nation at Risk* (1983) document and Effective Schools’ Research, and The No Child Left Behind Act (2001), America is still facing academic ruin in some of its’ schools. Each of these reform initiatives set an independent precedent. However, the challenge remains; there are still a large number of students who are not reaching the established standards (Hatcher, 2005). Consequently, the reform movements of the twentieth century concluded with a huge outcry for additional reform in the twenty-first century.

This literature review offers that if 21st century reform efforts are successful in meeting the challenge, efforts must focus on values, beliefs, strengths, and other personal aspects of individuals functioning in the schoolhouse. A shared vision must be developed and that vision must be pursued by leadership that is distributed throughout the organization. Relationships are of primary importance and they must exist in a manner that will foster collaboration in the implementation of leadership best practices that data driven.

Reginald Green (2010) in his book *The Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership: A Framework for Leading 21st Century Schools* has captured the initiatives of the past reform models and narrowed them into a model that contains four dimensions. Green (2010) postulates that under performing schools can become high performing schools when these four dimensions are simultaneously implemented in a failing school environment.
The Change Model: The Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership

*The Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership: A Framework for Leading 21st Century Schools*, written by Reginald Leon Green (Green, 2010), details the way and forms in which schools have evolved over the years and equips the reader with tools to address these changes. He has classified the tools into four categories; (1) understanding self and others, (2) understanding the complexity of organizational life, (3) building bridges through relationships, and (4) engaging in leadership best practices. Green (2010) presents the material in a style that provides readers with a guide to the latest reforms and modifications to school systems and comprehensively incorporates each major leadership principle advocated for school leaders at all levels. When implemented effectively, the dimensions inform a change model that can be used to move low performing schools from one level to the next progressive level.

In both the *A Nation at Risk* (1983) document and the No Child Left Behind (2001) policy, the goals were to improve student achievement with collaboration amongst school leaders and district level administrators. The Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (2010) model has proven effective in various settings. In 2008 and 2009 two separate school districts that were undergoing restructuring processes used the model to achieve predetermined goals. In both school districts a major goal included building a level of trust between central office administrators and school-based personnel (Green, McNeal, & Cypress, 2008) Additionally, in both districts school leaders participated in activities informed by the model that enhanced student achievement (Green, McNeal, & Cypress, 2009).
**Dimension I - Understanding Self and Others.** Understanding self and others is the first of four dimensions in the Green’s (2010) change model. The purpose of this dimension is to assist school leaders to understand themselves and recognize their leadership style and its effects on the behavior of followers. School leaders develop an understanding of self by identifying their personal values, beliefs, strengths, and other personal aspects. Green (2010) takes the process to another level when addressing how the school leader should not only understand his/her interpersonal characteristics but also recognize the interpersonal characteristics of others. Recognizing the essential components of self and others enhances the capacity of school leader to lead and lays a foundation for carrying out the mission and vision of the school.

**Dimension II - Understanding the Complexity of Organizational Life.** The second dimension in the change model, understanding the complexity of organizational life, addresses school structure, climate, culture, and the interaction of people. This dimension “is designed to enhance knowledge of the culture and climate of the internal and external environment of the school” This dimension speaks to the structures in school settings and the importance of structuring a school in a manner that facilitates a trust based culture and a climate wherein individuals work collaborative in search of goal attainment. When this dimension is paired with the first dimension, understanding self and others, a school leader is equipped with necessary tools to indicate what style of structure works best with his/her personality and make-up of the school’s personnel. Consequently, leadership style and readiness of followers for task completion can be aligned in a manner that enhances effective goal attainment.
**Dimension III - Building Bridges Through Relationships.** As stated previously, in both the *A Nation at Risk* (1983) document and the No Child Left Behind (2001) policy the goals were to improve student achievement with collaboration amongst school leaders and district level administrators. Dimension three, building bridges through relationships, assists in “enhancing relationships between and among central office administrators and principals, principals and teachers, teachers and students, and teachers and parents.” This dimension also details the types of relationships needed to foster goal attainment (Green, 2010).

**Dimension IV – Engaging in Leadership Best Practices.** Dimension four, engaging in leadership best practices, sets the stage for change, communicating the school’s vision, assessing current conditions of the school and identifying the discrepancy between current conditions and the vision (Green, 2010). As indicated in past research change, decision making, conflict managements, and communication are important elements in instructional improvement efforts. Each of these elements is a component of dimension four. Though each dimension of the change model is important, dimension four, is of great importance because school leaders will have the capacity and the instructional material to lead the change initiative.

The Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (2010) as a change model not only connects the points of past educational reform models with current practices of today’s school leaders, it enforces a sense of accountability. The accountability is represented in the form of a challenge to the school leader to engage in the processes and procedures embedded within the model to enhance student achievement.
The Administrator’s Role: Leading Change in Underachieving Schools

A focus of many effective school studies has been on the principals’ leadership role in enhancing organizational performance (Shum & Cheng, 1997; Starrett, 1993). Leadership can be broadly defined as the process of moving a group or groups in some direction through mostly non-coercive means (Sergiovanni, 1984). Recent studies have highlighted the mediating role principals serve between teachers and learners (Silins & Murray-Harvey, 1999). Interestingly, results from these studies suggest that principals have the ability to affect student achievement indirectly by improving the tone or learning environment of a school (Johnson, Livingston, et al., 2000). To be most effective in performing this role in any school environment, the school leader must understand him/herself and others (Green, 2010).

In effective schools, the principal acts as an instructional leader who persistently communicates the organizational vision and mission of the school to the stakeholders of the community (Leithwood & Day, 2007b). Incorporated into the leadership function of the principal is the role of creation of shared values among the community members. The principal defines the vision of the school, which continues to act as “magnetic” in setting the direction for the community to travel. To achieve this, however, the principal recognizes that, in a complex school community, they are a “leader of leaders” rather than a “leader of followers” (Argyris, 1976). The effective school principal is also concerned with providing instructional leadership that emphasizes best practices of teaching pedagogy. Silins and Murray-Harvey (1999) defined this leadership as the allocation of significant amounts of instructional time and the promotion of teaching methods favorable to the attainment of student mastery of content. Consequently,
principals act as instructional coaches who seek constantly to monitor value-added results in student achievement (Walsh, 2005).

Schools that are effective in increasing academic achievement also have an organizational environment that is conducive to fostering the work done by teachers. This includes the creation of an environment which is orderly, purposeful and businesslike. It is also free from the threat of physical harm (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Day, 2007a). In this type of environment, there is a climate of expectation that encourages all students to achieve high levels of mastery (Fullan, 2002). In these effective school environments, there is an attitude among teachers that intrinsic job satisfiers such as pupil achievement, teacher achievement, pupil growth, recognition, mastery, self-growth and positive relationships will outweigh the extrinsic dissatisfiers such as rapid change, poor supervision, and administrative workloads (Dahir, 2001). These findings support the elements of dimensions two and three of Green’s model (2010), understanding the complexity of organization life and building bridges through relationships.

Research conducted in the effective schools area acknowledges the difficulty in linking principals’ leadership practices directly with student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hunt & Dodge, 1997). However, several studies highlight the indirect effects a principals’ leadership practices have on teacher motivation, commitment and innovation (Beale, 2004), faculty trust (Brier, 1995) and the teaching and learning cycle (Silins & Murray-Harvey, 1999). Hallinger and Heck (1998), commenting on fifteen years of effective schools research, concluded that effective principals influence student learning by manipulating the internal processes and contextual factors of a school (Fry, 2003; Silins, 1994). Although it is recognized that principal leadership is an essential
component in determining the tone of a school learning environment, the correlation between the leadership style of the principal, teacher, student achievement (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Deforges & Abouchaar, 2003), and teacher job satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 1998) within their school contexts have not been adequately studied (Fry, 2003). Further, recent paradigm shifts in conceptualizing leadership have also encouraged educational researchers to consider these relationships from the perspective of new leadership models. Prominent among them are the transformational and transactional leadership models (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Burns, 1978; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1991). In dimension one of the Green model (2010) understanding self and others, implementation of these leadership principles are advocated.

Today, the title of school administrator can refer to a district level leader such as a superintendent or a site base leader who is located at an individual school and serves as school principals. Adequate yearly progress (AYP) in schools determines the AYP of the school district. The responsibility of meeting AYP goals at individual schools mainly relies on school principals. School principals, especially principals of underachieving schools, are faced with various challenges that serve as barriers inhibiting student achievement. These barriers include, (but are not limited to) lack of parental involvement, students with poor attendance rates, and multiple home life and health issues that prohibit students to attend school. Michael Fullan (1999) notes, the metaphorical walls of the school are tumbling down. “Out there” is now “in here,” as government policy, parent and community demands, corporate interests, and ubiquitous technology have all stormed the walls of the school, “the relentless pressures of today's complex environments have intensified the workload for principals” (Fullan, 2007, p. 2).
School principals are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. Despite numerous responsibilities principals are amongst the most critical and significant factors in making positive gains towards student achievement. In low performing schools, principals are expected to “turn around” the negative stigma, create positive change, and an optimistic environment for student learning. Hence, they are expected to create change within themselves, the school building, instruction, and the external environment. Green (2010) advises school leaders to develop a deep understanding of these elements prior to embarking on the change inactive. Thus, there is support for the elements embedded in Green’s descriptors of dimension 2, understanding the complexity of organizational life.

In light of the previous findings, it appears reasonable to add the duty of becoming an agent of change to the list of expectations of school principals in low achieving schools. An assortment of literature and research discusses the importance of the building level principal as it relates to change processes and student achievement within schools (West, Fullan; 2000, 2002).

Though school principals have key roles in change methodology, there are other school administrators that have direct impact on change within schools and the school district. These administrators are at the district level and work directly with school principals. School district administration includes superintendents, supervisors, and school board members. They each have an important role in creating and implementing change processes within individual schools and within the school district as a whole. Sink
(2005 b) discusses how successful leaders understand the importance of school culture and emphasizes that effective leaders view their organizations in a holistic way (Sink, 2005a). Furthermore, Sink (2005a), specifically states, “Schools obtain momentum from the culture aerated by the central administration” (Sink, 2005a, p.3).

Cotton and Wikelund (2001) list 26 essential traits that school leaders, both district and school level, must possess in order to pave the way for implementation of new strategies that support student achievement (Cotton, 2001). This research supports the proposition that school leaders from the district level and building level produce positive outcomes when they collaboratively work towards change strategies, school improvement targets, to achieve common goals. Common goals for school districts mainly consist of parental involvement, student attendance, and student academic achievement.

Although the school district administration provides vital support in academic achievement efforts “the building level principal is mainly referred to as the instructional leader” (Leithwood & Poplin 1992, p. 8). Schmidt (2003), supports Leithwood (1992) stance that “the blame for failure of educational reform rests largely with teachers, administrators, and school staffs” Leithwood, 1992, p. 10). Green (2010) addresses these actions in dimensions one, understanding self and others and dimension four, engaging in leadership best practices.

School principals serve many roles within school buildings as they relate to teachers, students, and parents. Each of the roles that are linked to the school principal, surrounds supporting systems, thinking, and current instructional methods and techniques to support annual growth and improvement. Overall, a number of studies and researchers
emphasize the importance of the school leader being transformational. Educational researchers who support transformational leadership include, Fullan, Leithwood, Sergiovanni, and Conley.

From this literature review, it is apparent that the academic outcomes of schools that are in need of change are dependent upon a variety of factors, among them, school leadership. For this reason, it is apparent that the school principal plays a vital role in the process. Furthermore, it is essential that school district personnel support school principals, foster a system of open communication, and consistently fashion these methods into the culture of the school district so that school level targets and district wide goals can be met annually. All of these principles are embedded in dimension three of Green’s (2010) change model.

In urban schools, specifically underachieving schools, school principals have a major impact on the success or failure of the school. In an effort to change a school’s status from failing to progressing a school leader must possess characteristics that both support and build the capacity for change to occur. Transformational leadership is hypothesized to occur when leaders and followers unite in pursuit of higher order common goals, when “one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (Burns, 1978, p. 20). This implies that the leader-follower relationship is one in which the purposes of both become fused, creating unity and collective purpose (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The leader motivates followers to “work for transcendental goals instead of immediate self-interest, for achievement and self-actualization rather than safety and security” (Murray & Feitler 1989, p. 3), and creates within followers a capacity to
develop higher levels of commitment to organizational goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Transactional leadership is hypothesized to occur when there is a simple exchange of one thing for another. Burns (1978) argued that transactional leadership occurs “when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of exchange of valued things” (Burns, 1978, p. 19). In this relationship the leader and the led exchange needs and services in order to accomplish independent objectives (Kirby, King, & Paradise, 1992). Bass (1985) conceptualized a third type of leadership, laissez-faire leadership, which is hypothesized to occur when there is an absence or avoidance of leadership. In this case decisions are delayed, and reward for involvement is absent. No attempt is made to motivate followers, or to recognize and satisfy their needs (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Effective schools, researchers agree, have a school learning environment that is directly influenced by the leadership style of the principal (Allen & Daly, 2002; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004). The leadership style of the principal is largely responsible not only for the teaching and learning environment of a school, but also for the performance of the staff beyond that which exceeds a basic level (Lee, 1993). Australian research has demonstrated that it is the style of leadership exercised by the principal, which determines not only the tone of the entire school, but also the quality of education offered by a school (Sergiovanni, 1984). Transformational leadership models also emphasize that “transformational leaders are able to alter their environments” to meet their desired outcomes (Kirby, et al., 1992, p. 303). Transformational school leaders do this by promoting educational restructuring and innovation, focusing on building
vision, encouraging collaborative participation and raising the role of follower to that of leader (West, 2000).

The essential underlying premise in underachieving schools is that “effective school principals have a sense of purpose, goals, and future and characteristic of resilient survivors and learners” (Bass, 1993, 1994). It is important that school leaders understand that managing turnaround efforts effectively requires a particular set of skills (Kritsonis, 2000).

Despite the expanded role of school principal responsibility and the need for increased external support, most school districts do not have the resources themselves to develop high-capacity school leadership much less a specialized subset of principals with expertise in turnaround (McEwan, 2003).

**Building the Capacity for Improvement: Assessing the Necessary Tools for Change**

The core purpose of school leadership is to cultivate meanings of learning and to have a clear focus on enabling and supporting teaching (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003; Starratt, 2003). For teachers and official school leaders, this is more or less stating the obvious; the focus on schools during the 1980s and 1990s has inevitably been on management, compliance, and standardization, so it is encouraging to note that learning and teaching are starting to become the focus of gaze again in relation to school leadership (Robinson, 2006). Collectively, the principles of *Four Dimensions of Leadership* foster these practices.

leadership is a part of the installation of distributive leadership, specifically he details “distributive leadership is easier said than done and probably necessarily instigated by transformational leadership, facilitative individual leaders seeking to build powerful school cultures” (Copeland, 2003, p.379). In most instances the centralized goal of restructuring is to close the achievement gap to simultaneously build capacity for improvement. Therefore in the Green model, it is recommended that individuals that actually implement the change initiative participate in reaching data driven decisions.

Reddin (1970), details the U.S. Department of Education factors that state and district leaders should consider when reviewing reconstruction methods for low-performing schools/districts (Reddin, 1970). Specific factors for consideration included; “motivation of those involved, equal-decision making, school size, and legacy of failure in a school/district over time” (Reddin, 1970, p. 3). Restructuring also includes foundation building and/or rebuilding. Lieberman and Murphy (1991), identify four building blocks relevant to foundation in school restructuring, administrative and teacher leadership, process versus content, student/teacher achievement, and a balance of action and reflection (Pristine & Bowen, 1993). All principles inform dimensions three and four.

Each method in the restructuring process is used to support the improvement and capacity for continuous improvement in instruction as well as school effectiveness. Cotton and Wikeland (2001), state that, “capacity building is often seen as the key to better education” (Cotton & Wikeland, 1999, p. 2; Cook & Kaffenger, 2003). Studies by Cotton and Wikeland (2001) and MacBeth and Mortimore (2001) detail the importance of building internal capacity for growth and improvement at three levels,
school level administration, teachers, and most importantly with the students. Specifically, Cohen and Wikelund explain, “students’ experiences, understandings, interests, commitments, and engagements are crucial to instructional capacity” (Cotton & Wikelund, 2001, p. 7).

MacBeth and Mortimore (2001), key in on specific systems and tools of change to foster improvement and effectiveness within urban schools. Furthermore, expanded information details the importance of consistent professional development opportunities for those involved in direct process and with school effectiveness and improvement efforts. Overall, what is taken from the reading is that regardless the tool used, it is the consistency of the individuals involved in the process that is most significant. In addition to consistency, individual characteristics, beliefs, and attitudes of those involved in the change process may also affect the outcomes of improvement models and building capacity for growth in schools.

Building capacity in underachieving schools requires a collaborative effort from the school’s principal, faculty, staff, community members and school district personnel. Senge’ (1990), and other organizational theorists, discuss distributive leadership. Specifically, Senge’ discusses his stance on redefining distributive leadership in organizations. Both recent research and theorists agree that despite more than two decades of writing about organizational learning (e.g., Argyris, 1976; Senge 1990; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), educational leaders are still in a position of needing to develop understandings about what leadership really involves when it is distributed, how schools might function and act differently and what operational images of distributed
leadership in action might look like (Spillane et al., 2001). Additionally, Green (2010) addresses these issues in the Four Dimensional Principal Leadership change model.

Over the last six years, distributed leadership has become increasingly commonplace and popular within the school leadership field (Harris, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1991). Early research on capacity building (Hadfield; 2002, Hopkins & Jackson, 2002) reveals that distributive leadership practices have been well received by school leadership practitioners. With economic pressures working against any significant increase of staffing, schools had only one way to go, distribute leadership tasks or experience further school leadership role overload (Hallinger, 2007; Holt, 2005). In one sense, distributed leadership has had to have become popular as a means of coping with the increased intensity of managerial tasks. However, popularization does not necessarily equate to best practice; a critical review of school distributed studies reveals that the concept is conceptually thin, not all that new and is conceptually decoupled from parallel developments in the wider leadership field, where relational forms of leadership are at the forefront of new developments (Hunt, 2004; Hunt & Dodge, 2000; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Some school leadership researchers consider distributed leadership as being at risk of becoming another trend of school reform, yet on the other hand there are researchers that support the stance that distributed perspective of leadership has the potential to broaden the understanding of school leadership beyond the “privileged power structures that emphasize a leader-follower dichotomy and authority, power and influence with individual organizational role” (Fiedler, 1967, p. 69).

The wish for change in underprivileged schools is often driven by powerful ideas but, all too often the need to discuss the sustainment of the change and the need to build
the capacity to implement the change is forgotten. Major changes have been attempted at the school level with only modest resources and commitment (Elmore, 2004).

Capacity building in schools involves creating the conditions for opportunity and growth of an environment that allows for collaboration, mutual understanding, and learning. This perspective embraces the notion of professional learning communities in which teachers can participate in decision making and have a shared sense of purpose. This provides the opportunity for all persons involved in the change process to engage in collaborative work as well as to accept joint responsibility for the outcome of their work (Lambert, 2003).

Building capacity entails the act of schools promoting collaboration amongst stakeholders, empowerment of participants, and inclusion in processes and procedures. Building capacity also implies that individuals feel confident in their own capacity and in the capacity of their colleagues to promote professional development (Hopkins & Jackson, 2002). Sergiovanni (1991) emphasizes a “community of practice” as one of the most critical elements in school improvement. He takes the stance that “developing a community of practice may be the single most important way to improve a school” (Sergiovanni, 1991, 41). This process would involve collaboration amongst teachers in which learning takes place within work-based groups (Fullan, 1999). While both Fullan and Sergiovanni recognize and discuss the importance of collaboration in efforts to build capacity in schools, Earl and Lee (1998) discuss the primary source of change and capacity building to be individual change agents within the organization (Earl & Lee, 1998).
In their study of the Manitoba school district in Winnipeg, Canada, Earl and Lee (1998) describe successful school improvement as the actions of change agents in schools and in the community that responded to the urgent need for high energy change in a failing environment. Their work supports the belief that building the capacity for change and school improvement requires both internal and external support. In Earl and Lee’s work, a change agent is described as one who functions to organize and prepare the school for change.

Research has shown that effective support from outside the school helps to build internal capacity and is a pre-requisite of successful school improvement (West, 2000). In a growing number of projects the factor of external agents is provided by the school districts of underachieving schools in need of improvement (Harris, 2000). However, despite the proven role of external agents being considered a necessity in successful school change efforts, the level of involvement of such agents varies in individual schools across the nation. This element has proven to be most critical in urban schools that often lack the support of external resources (Lee & Smith, 1993).

Organizations in their entirety need to undergo processes to enforce capacious standards and individual teachers who are a part of an organization need to have support in their efforts to build their instructional capacity. For real school change to occur, teachers and administrators must understand both theoretically and partially “the nature of leadership and the complex systems in which leadership is exercised” (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Administrators cannot, and should not, be the only leaders in a school (Hadfield, 2002). Teachers must know that they are the leader in their classroom. They must take responsibility for change in their classroom and change school-wide. In order
for teachers to become effective leaders, administrators must create a clear concept of teacher leadership within the organization. With a clear concept of teacher leadership, a faculty will build trust and rapport, make organizational diagnoses, manage resources, coordinate work, demonstrate expertise, and share knowledge with others (Lee & Smith, 1993).

The goal of an education leader is to improve instruction, practice, and performance within a school (Earl & Lee, 1998). Many researchers will attest that teacher capacity building is the key concept of reform in schools. Building teacher capacity may consist of professional development approaches such as building professional communities, experiments with new materials and assessments, coaching, peer observations, or on-going staff development involving teacher leaders. A report issued by the U.S. National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) points out that teacher expertise is the single most important factor in determining student achievement, and that teachers must have access to high quality professional development.

Most importantly, building capacity in schools allows for the opportunity for teacher reflection and professional growth. This growth helps to support the process of effective teaching and assessing for student learning. In turn, academic achievement can flourish. In underachieving urban schools, change is needed and the levels of capacity for change within the school could determine the amount of success a school may experience.

**Summary**

In conclusion, this review of literature contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the field of educational leadership by expanding the notion that in order for
success to occur in today's schools a shift from traditional transactional leadership models of practice as developed by Burns as described by Bass (1985) to more transformational leadership practices as asserted by Fullan (2002) must occur. Also, distributive leadership practices which include a more collaborative effort must be present to increase student achievement and create change in under achieving schools.

In our ever evolving society and in the school educators’ growing struggle to reach students in schools that need desperate turn around measures, it is important to recognize that programs and systems are not the measures of success. It is the committed and dedicated individuals within the organizational systems who are engaged in healthy and systemic collaboration that truly impact change. As a result of established relationships that operate the programs and systems within the organization, a true measure of success can be obtained.

Ultimately, this review of literature will impact the belief in educational professionals that when positive climates and relationships exist between principals and teachers and between schools and parents, great synergy occurs, productivity increases, and students excel.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision. You can’t blow an uncertain trumpet.” –Theodore M. Hesburgh

Introduction

In this phenomenological case study, four middle school principals in a recognized public school district were purposefully selected as participants. Each participant serves as the middle school principal of a school including grades 6-8. The significant factor surrounding the selection of the participants is that in addition to being a middle school principal, each participant is currently experiencing a challenge of leading a school that has historically failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for at least two consecutive years. Additionally, the participants of this study were placed in their current position as principal largely due to the commitment made by the local school district to provide restructuring in the capacity of school leaders of failing schools. To enforce confidentiality, each participant, the school, and the school district that they work in were assigned pseudonyms.

During the interviews, the participants were asked questions based on the instrument (see Appendix A) developed by the researcher. It is essential to state that the core of this research lies in the data, therefore, each participant participated in three interviews, three focus groups, and provided artifacts to support their beliefs and values relative to the focus of this study. This research was qualitative in structure therefore the actual words of the participants were used to tell a story. The (re) telling of their stories took a narrative form and provided a (re)presentation of the ideas initially presented by
the participants. All persons involved or associated with this study were informed that I was working as a researcher and that I was a doctoral student at a local university. The format used to obtain data and to structure this study allowed for the induction of the participants’ real life experiences, provided the audience with causations for their responses, and established relevance for their actions to be depicted in the most naturalistic form possible.

**Qualitative Research/Phenomenological Approach**

I have chosen to conduct a qualitative research study using a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research examines life experiences (i.e., the lived experience) in an effort to understand and give them meaning. Phenomenology is one of many types of qualitative research that examines the lived experiences of humans. A phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). As noted by Yin (2002), phenomenology explores the structures of consciousness in human experiences.

As a Phenomenological Researcher in this study, I hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of the essential "truths" of the lived experiences of the participants. Furthermore, I took the stance to support the belief that knowledge and understanding are embedded in our everyday world and that knowledge cannot be quantified or reduced into numbers.

**Representation**

A qualitative framework was selected based on personal interest and the sincere effort to gain an understanding of how school principals undergoing a process of significant change interpret their experiences. The participants of this study were chosen
because they have been educated and trained in the theoretical framework of the processes and procedures embedded in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership. Additionally, they are currently using this model to create and sustain significant change efforts in their schools.

This study investigated the relationship between the participants’ lived experiences and behaviors associated with working through a change process, and the natural occurrences of becoming a change agent. Actual words of the participants were used to preserve the richness in the (re) presented data. Ultimately, the beliefs, ideals, and actions of the participants were used to shape the phenomena revealed in the findings of this study.

**The School District**

The school district selected for this study is in the western geographic area of the southern half of the United States. The school district serves well over 50,000 students and is located in a metropolitan area. The district was referred to as The District.

**Rationale for Selection of School District**

This particular school district has been selected because of the number of schools that met the criteria of the study. A second reason for selection of this school district as a research site was because of the number of willing participants that met the requirements of the study. This was the first time that any of the four participants had undergone inclusion in research such as the type proposed. This study met all requirements of the university’s institutional review board and approval to conduct the study was given.

Conducting research in this particular district permits an implicit interest in methodologies that school leaders use to create change and their respective feelings and
beliefs about being the leader of a change process. Also, this school district expresses a need for reflection and additional clarification of the decisions made by those in leadership positions. Thus, this research site will allowed me to work in a natural setting, with willing participants and the opportunity for extensive unopposed research. Each of these factors added to the richness of this study.

**The Community**

The school district is located in a large metropolitan area. According to the United States Census Bureau estimate in 2006 there were 670,902 people living in the community, (United States Census Bureau, 2009). Table 2 lists the racial breakdown for the population of the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Schools**

**School 1 - Sailing Academy.** Sailing Academy is located in the south eastern part of the city. It is a middle school serving students in grades 6-8. The principal of Sailing Academy is an African American female with four years of experience as a school
principal. The population of Sailing Academy is approximately 350 students. The school is located in a community with a strong symbolic heritage. Ninety eight (98%) of the students who attend Sailing Academy are African American and 90% of the teachers at Sailing Academy are African American. The school has made AYP for the three consecutive years beginning with the 2006-2007 school year. This progress was made under the leadership of its’ current principal. The current principal was placed at this school as a result of a restructuring process. Prior to the election of this principal, the school failed to make AYP for the previous three consecutive years.

School 2 - Landing Academy. Landing Academy is located in the north western part of the city. It is a middle school serving students in grades 6-8. The principal of Landing Academy is an African American Male with over three years experience. The population of Landing Academy is approximately 350 students. The community has taken a recent interest and support of the school’s athletic advancements. One hundred percent of the population of the school is African American and 96% of the teachers are African American. The school has consecutively made AYP for the previous two years under the leadership of the current principal. Prior to the school year 2007-2008 the school had not made AYP in three years.

School 3 - Talon Academy. Talon Academy is located in the south eastern part of the city. It is a middle school serving students in grades 6-8. The principal of Talon Academy is an African American Female with over four years experience as a school principal. The school serves approximately 1100 students. The student demographic population is over 90% African American while 60% of the teachers are African American and 35% being European American. The school has consecutively made AYP
for the previous two years under the leadership of the current school principal. Prior to the 2007-2008 school term the school had not made AYP for two years.

**School 4 - Roaring Academy.** Roaring Academy is located in the north eastern part of the city. It is a middle school serving students in grades 6-8. The principal of Roaring Academy is an African American Male with two years experience as a school principal. This year is his first year as principal of Roaring Academy and also the first years for his entire leadership team at the school. The entire leadership staff was placed at this school as a part of a restructuring process by the school district.

The school serves over 850 students. The demographic make-up of the student population is as follows; 94% African American, 1% European American, and 5% other. The instructional staff is 81% African American and 19% European American. The school made AYP in the school year 2007-2008 but failed to reach its’ academic goals for the two years prior.

**Participants**

For the purpose of this study, I have purposely selected the population of participants for two reasons, 1) the willingness of the school district to allow this research and 2) the number of individuals that meet the selection criteria of this study.

I have chosen to work with a subset of middle school principals. The rationale for this decision is three-fold, 1) the need for significant reform is highly prevalent in the middle schools of this school district, 2) the number of middle school principals who meet the criteria of this study, and 3) I wanted to select both male and female participants and the population allowed this selection. The selection of two male and two female participants is of interest to me because I would like to capture this phenomena from both
the male and female perspective. The school district has forty middle schools. The specific criteria for selection of the participants are listed below:

1. Currently a middle school principal in The School District
2. School site has a history of being identified as low performing for at least of 2 consecutive years in the at least one of the following categories:
   a. Reading/Language Arts
   b. Math
   c. Socio Economic Status
   d. English Language Learners
3. School has had a recent change in school principal (within the last 3 – 4 years)
4. School has/had been targeted for restructuring by the school district
5. The principal has previously had educational training on implementing the Four Dimensions of Leadership
6. The principal is currently using the Four Dimensions of Leadership as a change model to create and/or sustain change within his/her school

If the population had been randomly selected, each of the above criteria may not have been met and the design of the study would differ. As stated previously, the school district’s leadership personnel has expressed a sincere concern for additional information regarding the experience of school principals involved in the change process.

Selecting a population actually experiencing the phenomenon of restructuring as it is occurring allowed me to obtain first-hand knowledge about the actual feelings, understanding, and meanings that the participants ascribe with the current reality and the process of working through the change procedures aligned with processes of
restructuring. Each of the participants in this study were charged with the responsibility of becoming a change agent within their own school buildings.

**Research Design/Consultation**

The qualitative format of this study allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of what school principals believe about what does and does not work when using the Four Dimensions of Leadership as a model to lead change. Uncovering the true reactions and beliefs of these individuals helped to provide deeper levels of genuine findings on the part of the participants that would otherwise not have been explored.

**Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity were protected with the usage of member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, and auditing. Member checking were conducted to help provide credibility by allowing the participants to review and verify the written material prior to submission for publication. Triangulation was developed from the interviews, focus groups, and artifacts collected during the field work. Peer debriefing occurred when I referred to other qualitative researchers about concerns within the study and auditing occurred when the advisory board reviews the material in various stages of development.

The research for this study was conceptualized under the assumption that features of the selected environment were constructed as the interpretations are revealed by participants and the assumption that interpretations are situational. To further ensure that reality and validity were protected, the information obtained was categorized into topics that emerged during the process of interview and observing the participants. The utilization of the protocol sheets and field notes provided the opportunity for the
construction of index cards that served as a filing system of key occurrences that was revealed throughout the process. Occurrences and findings that emerged from the data collection are expounded upon in the chapter four.

**Case Study Design**

Case study research was the design used for the construction of this research. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2002 b, p. 23). The following steps were used as the layout design for this study: 1) Development of research question and guiding questions, 2) selection of the case study site and participants, 3) preparation to collect data, 4) field work, 5) analysis of findings, and 6) construction of report/study. In chapter four the results acquired from each of these steps were discussed.

**Data Collection**

**Implementation.** Interviews and focus groups served as the primary source of direct information for this research as they allowed the opportunity of authentic accounts of the participants perceptions, reactions between themselves and reactions with their colleagues as they were located in an equivalent environment and circumstances yet experiencing comparable to diverse resonations.

For the purpose of this study, an interview is referred to as brief and willful interactions with the participants based on their choice to answer brief questions about their experiences. The participants were interviewed at the school sites and/or at a designated site chosen by the participant. Allowing the participant to be interviewed at
his/her preferred location, the relationship between the researcher and participant may be strengthened, thus, promoting a trustworthy environment. The purpose of the above activity is to collect data and to observe processes unfold in effort to identify patterns and symbolism commonly exhibited by most of or all participants. According to Sergiovanni (1991), “success in observation depends not upon collecting discrete data but, upon observing characteristics and mastering patterns as a whole” (p.39). The participants responses during the interview were hand written on a protocol response document and audio recorded for transcription purposes.

Advantages of having both notes and audio recorded sessions of the interviews include the allowance for reflection on the part of the researcher and the capability to distinguish between important accounts and thoughts that occurred during the interview process. Additionally, the interview protocols were beneficial because they will help to relieve the researcher of having to remember exactly what the each of the participants said about their experiences.

As stated previously, the data collection techniques for this study will also include focus groups. The participants were invited to take part in focus groups, and asked to provide artifacts used with their faculty and/or staff. The purpose of these above activities is to collect data and to observe processes unfold in effort to identify patterns and symbolism commonly exhibited by most of or all participants.

The third method of data collection was artifacts. Collecting artifacts were implemented to ensure triangulation. The artifacts included but will not be limited to the videotaped focus group, documents and articles shared by the participants of the study and notes detailing non-verbal cues and non-linguistic signs observed while interacting
with the participants. The section below gives an in-depth insight into how complementary methods of data collection were carried out.

**Interviews.** Each participant was asked to participate in three interviews. The interviews were broken down into segments of three sessions in effort to provide time for a comfortable relationship to develop between the researcher and participant. Each interview session lasted for approximately 40-45 minutes and was held at a location that the participant found most comfortable. The objective of the interviews was to capture the responses of the participant in the most comfortable environment possible so that he/she was able to experience moments of natural sharing without prohibitions.

The interviewing process is very critical when conducting qualitative research. The interviews were conducted in a manner as described by Yin (2002a) and Yin (2002b). In reference to the interviewing process, Yin (2002a) states that the research interview seeks to describe the meaning of central themes in the life of the world of the participants (Yin, 2002a). Yin (2002b) simply puts the interview process in qualitative research as being one that allows the researcher to capture the story of the participant (Yin, 2002b).

The views shared in Yin (2002a) and Yin (2002b) substantiate the stance of the researcher of this study in that as a phenomenological researcher the belief is present that truth and understanding of life can emerge from people's life experiences. It is the researcher’s intent to conduct three interviews with each participant in effort to reveal truth and knowledge about how the factors embedded in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010) have impacted their decisions and actions as they journey through the change process and to ultimately capture the pure essence of the
personal feelings and meanings as a result. The interview process will follow Yin (2002a, p. 88) 7 step process to conduct and interview:

1. Thematizing – formulating the purpose of the investigation
2. Designing – taking into account all the seven stages prior to the interview
3. Interviewing – conduct the interviews based upon a protocol
4. Transcribing – transcription of oral speech
5. Analyzing – categorization
6. Verifying – Validating- Member Checking
7. Reporting – report as edited dialogue

Using the above format and understanding both the purpose of the interview will assist in assuring that quality findings were revealed in the study. Most importantly, it is imperative to remember that each interview with each participant is another experience and each experience is significantly unique.

There will three interviews conducted with each of the four participants. The structural process of the interviews is shown in Table 3.
Table 3

*Interview Format*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Session</th>
<th>Purpose of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview 1</strong></td>
<td>The purpose of this initial interview is to gain insight and feedback from the participants about their overall knowledge of the Four Dimensions of Leadership as a change model and to identify what each participant feels is of specific importance about the model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview 2</strong></td>
<td>The responses collected in the initial interviews from each participant were used to construct the protocol for the second interview. The second interview will consists of questions surrounding the four dimensions, 1) Understanding self and others, 2) Understanding the complexities of organizational life, 3) Building bridges through relationships, and 4) Engaging in leadership best practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview 3</strong></td>
<td>The third and final interview session with each of the four participants were used to answer questions and connect inquiries that remain after the previous interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus Groups.** A second method of data collection was to conduct a focus group. The focus groups included only the participants of the research. Each participant was asked to attend three focus group sessions. The sessions surrounded themes identified from the three interviews previously conducted. The focus groups lasted for periods of 45 minutes to 1 hour. Each meeting was video taped and held in a common location that the participants felt most comfortable.

Kreguer (1994), states that “a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment” (p.74). The focus groups served as a valuable research tool. The researcher served as the moderator at each focus group. The only persons engaged in
dialogue were the participants and the moderator. Additional persons in attendance will include a videographer and a note taker to write notes on a poster board, if applicable.

Since the number of participants in the study was limited to four, the focus groups will consist of only four people, the researcher, and a co-facilitator. This number of people was appropriate in creating an environment that is small enough to give each participant the opportunity to express his/her opinion. The focus groups occurred after all of the interviews are completed with each participant. This method was used to encourage a sense of sharing and openness surrounding the phenomenon.

The first focus group meeting was patterned after themes collected from the first set of interviews. The second and third focus groups were patterned after themes that appeared during the first focus group, and second respectively. After the three focus groups were completed, the video tapes and notes were analyzed and placed into categories that have been pre-identified by the researcher as relevant to the research topic. The findings were transcribed and reported in a narrative dialogue for audiences to read and interpret.

**Artifacts.** For the purpose of this research the collection of artifacts were not limited. Specific interest in the following documents was expressed when communicating with the participants of the study:

1. Documents in the public sphere (e.g. pictures, articles, documentaries, educational material, books) that they may have used or produced

2. Statistical records

3. Files

4. Meeting minutes
5. Emails

6. Documents used in daily work (e.g. internal manuals, written procedures, wall posters and other public postings in a work place, chart flow sheets)

7. Memos

The above documents were significant because they provided hard documentation of actions of the participants as they are engaged in the change process. Also, each of the documents above are directly related to the fourth dimension, engaging in leadership best practices, of the Four Dimensions as identified by (Green, 2010). Most importantly, collection of the above artifacts aided the process of analyzing and categorizing other data collected during the interview process.

**Timeline**

Due to the nature of the study and setting, the above procedures were carried out in effort to provide an in-depth look at school leaders’ experiences as they participated in change processes associated with restructuring. The timeline is shown in table 4 on the next page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action (why)</th>
<th>Method (how)</th>
<th>Date (When)</th>
<th>Rationale (Why)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Review of Literature</td>
<td>Pull Journal Articles, Books, and Previous Research on School Restructuring, Low Performing Schools, and the Responsibility of School Leaders during times of reform.</td>
<td>October - December 2009</td>
<td>To provide a substantive account of research to be conducted, identify finding of previous research on the subject of the study, and to develop an in-depth understanding of occurrences that surround the research being conducted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop scholarly written analysis of material relevant to study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Protocols to use during interview and observations of participants</td>
<td>Collaborate and consult with University Advisors to create interview protocols</td>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>To provide structure to guide interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain permission to conduct research/study</td>
<td>Submit structured outline of final product and proposed research for approval At the discretion of population and participants of the study</td>
<td>January-February 2010</td>
<td>To go forward in retrieving data from participants In effort to provide the most comfortable environment for data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Field Work, Interviews and Focus Groups</td>
<td>Transcribe data (Ongoing) Use Flash cards and index cards to identify common themes found in field notes and transcribed data</td>
<td>February-May 2010</td>
<td>To create triangular data, identify themes, connect with scholarly research, and create validity within study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze/Organize Data</td>
<td>Create Document/Dissertation</td>
<td>Aug -Sept 2010</td>
<td>To inform audience-educators, professors findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consultation with dissertation committee and participants was on-going throughout this process.

**Risks and Benefits**

Benefits associated with this study for the participants include serving as a major contributor to research for students, scholars and theorist of educational leadership. Another benefit is to become a relevant part of a natural revelation of unknown phenomena that directly correlates with their own personal experiences and the experiences of the colleagues. An additional benefit is that each participant was given a fifty dollar stipend given to them to use for the purchase of supplemental materials for implementing change within their schools and becoming change agents.

Risks associated with this study for participants include confidentiality of identity being lost, because the participants were selected from a group of their peers who share commonality of employment and purpose for being involved in the selected research population. Each participant was informed that their identity will not be revealed by the researcher but because of the relationship between the research participants and the research population there is a risk that the identities of those selected were present. Risks associated with this study do not include any physical or mental harm or the usage of any individuals under the age of eighteen.

Emerging contributions of the selected population and participants aside from risks and benefits include the opportunity for participants to share additional information, correct errors and interpretations identified by the researcher obtained during interviews and observation. Each of these contributions will help to add credibility to the research.
Ethical and Political Considerations

Political considerations include the fact that the participants were purposely selected based on their connections with the local university and the school district, thus their responses may be skewed to include what the participants feels the two institutions would preferably like to hear in regards to persons in their situational experience. Ethical consideration for the researcher include whether or not this study will actually be conducted for the greater good of education or for the good of the sponsoring institution. Both ethical and political concerns include reviewing the various factors that could interfere with the relationship between the researcher and the participants of the study.

Credibility

The process of establishing trust in a naturalistic inquiry is critical (Murphy, 1991). The criteria for building an environment of trust includes; credibility, transferability, and dependability. In effort to establish credibility I ensured that I kept all appointments with the participants and followed a consistent process so that they felt comfortable. Additionally, I always reinforce the purpose and policy of confidentiality and choice of participation throughout the research process.

Member Checking

Member checking, according to Yin (2002), is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. It is a process which involves participants verifying data and interpretations collected through the interviews. This process was implemented to contribute to trustworthiness and credibility within this study. This process also provide the opportunity for the participants to share additional information. The participants of
this study received a copy of the interview transcripts for review, clarification, and suggestions.

Limitations

The participants were serving dual roles. In addition to being participants of the study, the school leaders also be served as recipients of restructuring models of change. Taking these factors into account, ethical research is a necessity on both professional and moral grounds. Therefore, it was critical that the researcher conducted this study with the utmost consideration and respect for each participant involved with this research process.

Summary

Qualitative methods were selected and used due to the delicate nature of this study. The nature of this study includes, and it not limited to, the participants, the setting, and the personal interests of the researcher. Procedural steps have been established and were followed in effort to provide an in depth look at the unique experiences of four middle school principals as they utilize the processed and procedures embedded in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership to enhance academic achievement within their schools. In effort to identify meanings that the participants relate to experiencing this phenomenon, the researcher emphasized a naturalist inquiry method. It is from the voices of these school principals that others can be informed about pertinent issues of leadership through diversity.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

“Don’t tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.” -George S. Patton

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of four middle school principals who utilized the processes and procedures embedded in the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership, (Green, 2010), to enhance academic achievement in their schools. This research was conducted with the belief and the interest that examining these experiences would lead to the answer of the global inquiry, “what meaning do school leaders in underachieving schools ascribe to the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as they engage in the change process?” The researcher of this study sought to acquire a deeper understanding of how school leaders of failing schools have used the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as a primary model to lead or sustain change within their schools and to find what personal meanings these school leaders gave to this experience as a result of being engaged in the process.

The participants of this study were two female and two male middle school principals. They represented similar situations and diverse backgrounds in relation to their principalships. Two of the four participants, one female and one male, were principals of small middle schools with populations below 500 students, while the remaining two participants, one female and one male, were principals of large middle schools with a population greater than 500 students. Each of the participants were principals in an urban school district. Three of the participants had served as principals
for 5 or more years and had effectively used the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as a change model to lead their school from a status of failing to good standing. Additionally, once the goal of reaching a good standing status was accomplished by each of these participants, they continued to use the Four Dimensions of Leadership model to sustain that status within their schools. The fourth participant of the study had served as a school principal for 3 years and is currently using the Four Dimensions of Leadership as a model to change the school status from failing to good standing.

In this chapter, I will present the leadership experiences of the school leaders in this study through my own eyes. The actual words of the participants have been used to (re) tell their story in hopes of providing a rich representation of the ideas presented. Data collected from individual interviews, collective focus groups, and collected artifacts were used to structure and tell each school leader’s story. In order to make meaning of the data, it has been organized in the following manner: an introduction of each participant, a case-by-case review of interview responses, and a collective thematic case review of the focus group dialogues. An explanation of beliefs held by the participants and researcher has also been inserted for understanding.

Throughout the data collection process, the participants reacted differently to their surroundings but shared openly with the researcher in varying degrees. To ensure their levels of comfort and to support the participant/researcher relationship, delicate measures were taken by the researcher to define and classify findings as they surfaced throughout the research process. The researcher also used specific techniques such as member checking to improve the data collection interpretations as the study unfolded.
Literature reviews on educational change models, educational efforts of reform in America, and the school leader’s role in the change process were used as a framework for this study. Data materials were collected through the following methods; documented interviews in person or via telephone, focus groups, and artifact collection. In an effort to ensure the confidentiality of identity, the participants were given pseudonyms. These pseudonyms were used during the individual interviews, focus groups, and when any contact was made with the participants. The participants are referred to within this document using these pseudonyms, unless otherwise noted.

The research design consisted of three personal interviews, three focus group meetings, and artifact collections for each participant. The data collected from the first interview was used to formulate questions for the second interview and focus group meeting and the third interview was used to clarify major themes and information found within the two previous interviews and focus group meeting. The third personal interview and focus group meeting allowed time for the participants to share their personal experiences and to elaborate on any additional information that he or she would like to contribute to the research. Once the interviews and data collection were complete, the researcher gathered the artifacts collected from the participants, organized the materials in categories and developed them into dominant themes.

Research Questions

In an effort to ensure that each of the components of the Four Dimensions of leadership was addressed, eight research questions were developed. The global question, the guiding questions, and sub-questions used to guide the data collection of the study are listed below.
Global Question: What meaning do school leaders in underachieving schools ascribe to the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as they engage in the change process?

Dimension I - Understanding Self and Others

1. What was your experience with the dimension understanding self and others as a part of the change process?

2. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

Dimension II- Understanding the Complexity of Organizational Life

3. What was your experience with the dimension understanding the complexity of organizational life as a part of the change process?

4. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

Dimension III - Building Bridges Through Relationships

5. What was your experience with the dimension building bridges through relationships as a part of the change process?

6. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

Dimension IV - Engaging in Leadership Best Practice

7. What was your experience with the dimension engaging in leadership best practice as a part of the change process?

8. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?
Data was collected, analyzed, and the findings are presented through four individual case studies and themes that describe the experiences of the participants and the meaning that they gave to each dimension. In the next section, the four case studies are presented.

**Case Study 1: Mr. Patrick Lewis**

*Context.* Patrick was interviewed three times. After three interviews the following responses were compiled. Patrick is an African American male and is approximately 37 years of age. He was raised by two parents. He has a total of fourteen years experience in education with eight of those years in administration. Patrick is presently a middle school principal. He plans to pursue his superintendent license and to become a district level supervisor of other principals to assist them with turning around failing schools.

*Patrick Lewis’ Story.* As I walked into the office of Patrick Lewis the tone for the interview was set. Before the initial interview I asked him where he would prefer to meet and he stated that his office was his place of preference. Upon my arrival he had already set up an area with a table and chairs so that we could begin the interview process with ease. Each time before we started the recordings he would always request that his secretary hold his calls and not to disturb him while the interview was in session. The office was well lit and structured with relevant books aligned along the walls in the book shelves. It is important to mention that from time to time throughout each of the interviews he laughed and nodded his head to show that he was comfortable and in agreement with the responses that were received from the interviews. Second, it is also important to mention that there were periods throughout the interviews that he shared his innermost feelings from childhood to adulthood that impacted his life and leadership
style. Patrick appeared quite confident and pleased with his life’s accomplishments. He constantly reminded me of the many opportunities that the school district offers its employees and that he was proud graduate of a school in the district.

Over the years as a teacher and administrator, Patrick kept a journal that documented his first years of teaching until the days that he first became a school principal. He used his teaching journal to document things that he would and would not do in regards to building relationships and operating the school as an effective organization. He informed me that it was this journal that assisted him in ensuring that he was successful in turning around his school from a failing status to a school in good standing. During the interview sessions Patrick expressed his concern for ensuring that as a school leader, he was an effective listener and a practitioner of servant leadership. To Patrick, being a practitioner of servant leadership means that he always “puts the good of the students and the people of the organization before the needs of himself.”

As Patrick began to discuss the importance of understanding self and others his facial expressions began to change and become more serious. It was with sincerity that he stated that, “There is a lot of reality that you must face when walking into a situation of change. You must understand who you are as a leader, if not, you will have a chaotic situation on your hands that were non productive.”

Patrick reasserted his belief in servant leadership and how it was a major influence in understanding himself and others within in his organization. This dimension [understanding self and others] is needed when undergoing change. Change is a process. It is a thing where people like it, love it, or they hate it. If you look at organizational leadership, we have to change with the times. My favorite type of
leadership is situational leadership. This is my favorite because when you get placed in a situation, you’ve got to face it head on and adapt and be able to handle it. Regardless of the stress and it being unbearable, they are counting on you to handle it. I also split situational leadership with being a servant leader. Meaning that you have got to serve your people because, if they see you serving for them then they will work hard for you.

Patrick went on to express his values regarding organizational leadership and how his experiences with this dimension shaped his understanding and meaning of the dimension in reference to creating and sustaining change when turning around failing schools.

School wide organizational operations of a school inside of a school district, is like playing the game of chess. If you know how to play chess then you were a master at understanding how to manage your organization in the times of change. I have not yet mastered it but I understand it. An effective organizational leader must understand the importance of communication within an organization. You must also understand the need for networking to get the resources that you will need to ensure that your organization is successful and to also secure your position as a leader.

At points throughout the interviews, Patrick felt feelings of productivity. At this point, he would pause and take breaks to ensure that he was getting his point across and answering the questions to his level of satisfaction. His responses to the inquiries about the dimension building bridges through relationships were quite candid. He reminisced on days of walking through the neighborhood where his school campus was located and knocking on doors of parents and community members asking for their support in reducing the number of fights that occurred when the students walked home from school.

Visiting the homes of the parents of the students that attend his school assisted him in
establishing relationships with them and other community members. “These relationships helped the people in the community to feel welcomed to come into the school. I’ve been told that this type of relationship has never been built with members of the community before.” This represented his belief systems surrounding the importance of building bridges through relationships.

Engaging in leadership best practices for Patrick involved conversing with other middle school principals who have successfully turned around failing schools, reading current literature on the change process and strategies of effective change, and preparing teacher leaders within the building to take on the role of leadership in his absence.

**Case Study 2: Mrs. Glenda Sullivan**

*Context.* The following information was compiled after three interviews with Glenda. Glenda is an African American female, approximately 40 years of age, and married with no children. She has always had a passion for education and knew that one day she would be a principal of a school. Currently, she has over twenty five years of experience in education, all of which are in the same school district.

*Glenda Sullivan’s Story.* Each time that I entered the doors of Glenda’s school, I was welcomed by the secretary and greeted with a large smile. We met in the conference room of the main office in a relaxed setting. As she began to tell her stories she openly expressed how she enjoyed teaching, school administration, and being a part of the research process.

It is important to detail the fact that she discussed her principal mentors and how they played a significant role in assisting her to become the transformational leader that she is today. Second, Glenda discussed the importance of daily reflection and how it has
played a major role in understanding herself as a leader and others who work with her within the school organization. When asked to what her experiences were with understanding self and others she responded:

We [school leaders] must begin with self reflection to understand ourselves. Actually knowing who you are and how you are effective as a leader. As we self reflect, it is important to understand why we as leaders make the decisions that we make so that we can begin to understand others that we work with. As an instructional leader we have to remember to be open minded and understand that just because we respond to a situation in the way the we do because of our experiences. This doesn’t mean that our constituents, our followers, or teachers, will accept the decision in the same manner. Having said that it is important that we strive daily to understand others and that we look at their personal lives and their family make up as well as their teaching experiences when taking into account their actions and reasoning for performance.

Glenda confirmed that understanding self and others was one of the most important dimensions of leadership and that she linked it closely with building bridges through relationships because, “understanding others depends on the type of working relationship that he/she has with the school’s leaders.” The personal letters of communication with her faculty members and pictures of their family members that she had posted on the wall was evident of the importance and value that she gave to establishing connections with members of the staff and faculty of her school.

Glenda shared her experiences with understanding the complexities of organizational life in comfortable fashion. Her level of comfort with me had reached new
levels as we spent more time together engaged in the research process. Glenda vividly described her experiences with this dimension:

My experience with this dimension has led me to understand that you must know who you’re dealing with in all settings. As a leader you must know the community, the types of students that attend your school, and how the organization plays a role in student achievement. As an instructional leader, we have to understand that the community plays a role as well as my relationships with the central office, and my interactions with my superiors. All of these things are a part of student achievement. It can be very political in that you must understand your role as a leader and the impact of the role of others. It is almost like an orchestra in that you can’t make that big music without each instrument. For instance, I may not know how to play the flute but I need to understand how each instrument adds or subtract to the sound. We must have a harmonious balance to obtain the desired outcome. We can’t have harmony without instruments and we can’t have one without the other.

Glenda’s words flowed continuously throughout three one-hour interviews. Each interview became more revealing than the one that it preceded.

Building bridges through relationships was a major topic of interest for Glenda. She proclaimed that she was a people person and that she valued having relationships with persons who would be candidly truthful with her about the status of the organization. She shared the following comments about her beliefs regarding this dimension:
The meaning of this dimension to me is that by building bridges through relationships, doors are opened to be brutally honest. Honesty with each other (teacher to teacher, principal to teacher, teacher to student, teacher to principal) sets the stage for true change to occur and opens the door to be quote/unquote a critical friend. I can truly tell persons that I have a relationship with what I see that needs to be improved and in turn they can also tell me the same. Not having a relationship with others creates a barrier that prohibits growth.

She expressed her value for this dimension and reiterated the importance that it had on student achievement and school wide progress.

Engaging in leaderships best practices for Glenda is an on-going process. As a principal in an urban school she understands that she has to document and possess different strategies to ensure academic success for the students and faculty of her school. Reflecting on her experiences with utilizing best practices, she states the “she has to be a store keeper and analyzer of data to measure progress.” Her goal is to have at least two proven strategies that work for a problem that occurs within any system in her school. She also stands firmly on the belief that, “people make programs, programs don’t work by themselves.” As a result of this belief she believes in attending professional development regularly and extending the opportunity to other faculty members of her staff as well.

**Case Study 3: Mr. Victor Reed**

**Context.** Victor Reed’s compiled information is the result of three individual interviews and a follow-up phone call. Victor is an African American male in his early thirties with over 10 years experience in education. Before becoming a school principal,
Victor was a physical education teacher. Victor was raised by his mother in a single parent home and is the oldest of three children. He is now currently married with three children.

*Victor Reed’s Story.* A routine was established when I began to conduct interviews with Victor. I would sign-in and then wait in the outer office area until he requested that I come back to his office. His office was neat but the walls were scarce without pictures or color because of the construction that was currently underway. Victor exhibited a very exact personality and each interview with him was very structured. He explained his experiences with understanding self and others:

In order for you to evoke change in a process, you must first understand yourself. As the initiator in the change process, you must understand that you were dealing with several personality types. You have to understand your role in the entire change process before you can move forward. In order to be effective you must be able to understand where you in terms of your leadership style and how it effects other people within the school. This means that you must self reflect and look within self before you can successfully influence others to engage in an extensive process of change.

As he spoke, Victor’s facial expressions and body gestures indicated that he was very passionate about what he was saying in regards to understanding self and others to implement change within schools. Victor elaborated on this topic, giving personal experiences of how his interactions with others affected the outcomes of progressive change within his school.

Victors stated that experiences with understanding the complexities of organization life mirrored his daily leadership practices:
Organizational life deals with structure. An effective leader must understand policies and procedures of the school district and the school before any change can occur. Having said that, I think about the framework of an organization and how policies and procedures serve as the glue the organization. They [policies and procedures] also serve as a guide to the change process in its entirety.

Victor shares a strong belief in charting and documenting teacher progress and steps to daily routines. This was evident by the organized files and structured charts displayed in his office. Through his interview responses, observations of his office arrangement, and copies of examples of documentation that he provided to his staff, it is apparent that Victor values structure within an organization.

Discussing the importance of relationships with Victor led to an in-depth conversation. He expressed his feelings of the importance of a professional relationship between the school administration and the teachers of the school. He stated that, “the relationship between teacher and student is the most important relationship in the entire organization.” Additionally, he explained:

Establishing positive relationships is the key to this whole process. Before you can push change or changes upon people, you must establish some type of rapport with them. Without a relationship, they will waiver on implementing change. I make it a point to be visible and open to talking with faculty, staff, and parents. For example, we reinforce relationships when speaking with our teachers. We hope to create a relationship in effort to minimize issues with discipline. We work off the motto that “you have to know me in order to teach me. This also goes
along the old saying that “no one cares what you know until they know that you care.

Victor stated that building relationships “is the cornerstone for success.” Later in our conversation he revealed the meaning that he equates to this dimension is that “positive relationships make people go above and beyond.” He gave an example of the effects of positive relationships with teachers in his building. When relationships are present, he stated that, “teachers will respect you [the leader] and them and then go the extra mile to produce results”. He went on to state that, “the students, if you have a strong rapport with them, will work hard, extra hard, to achieve success.” Victor ended this discussion by including the parents in the relationship building process, “last but not least fostering relationships with parents get them on your side in our quest for student success.”

Throughout each of the interviews, Victor seemed to spend more time discussing relationships that any other topic. He expressed that he valued relationships because they were powerful and key in implementing change.

The questions that surrounded best practices in leadership, was a topic that Victor spoke very boldly about. He reiterated the importance of self-reflection in his practice: Self reflection is vital. Reflection means that you are forever learning and forever improving. I hope to model best practices and create a domino effect. For instance, if I engage in best practices so will teachers and then students. Ultimately a change in culture will occur and everyone will work together to create student achievement.

Victor gave his meaning of this dimension, “in regards to my experiences reminds me of servant leadership.” He elaborated on his definition, “this means that you have got to
serve your people because, if they see you serving then they will work hard.” Victor expressed his belief in communicating with other leaders in similar situations. He ended his interview by affirming his goal, “the ultimate goal is to obtain student achievement.”

Case Study 4: Mrs. Theresa Mitchell

Context. Theresa Mitchell’s information is based on two interviews and a follow-up phone call. Theresa is an African American female in her early forties. She has over 20 years of experience in education, eight of which have been in the capacity of leadership. She is the eldest of five siblings. Currently, she is single without children. She details close ties to her family and religion.

Theresa Mitchell’s Story. Each time that I met with Theresa, it was always in the late evenings when all teachers and secretarial staff were gone. Her rationale for these meeting arrangements was that she liked the solitude of the building when everyone was gone and that she could complete her best work during these hours. Theresa’s office walls were filled with pictures and each room in the main office was decorated with bright colors and wall border.

Theresa explained that she had always worked in urban schools in which the poverty levels were extremely high. Currently her school is in good standing and she was eager to share her processes and procedures for achieving this status. Understanding self and others was a process that Theresa found challenging. She stated that as the oldest child, she was used to doing most things on her own. When she began to work in roles of leadership, she then began to realize that she could not do everything on her own. She said:
As I have grown in my leadership, I have become more sensitive to others and their capacity to lead as well. Sometimes, because we as leaders have extended leadership roles, we tend to think that we can do it all by ourselves. I understand that you can’t do everything alone. Once I as a leader understood that others responded better to my understanding of their ability to work and create possibilities, they began to trust and believe that I would lead them in a good direction and that I had their best interest at heart. In turn, they began to work harder and became more dedicated to most initiatives set forth.

Though she struggled previously with understanding the needs and abilities of others, she states that she recognizes the importance of including them in the decisions that are made within the school regarding student achievement.

The complexities of organizational life for Theresa proved to be challenging at times. She shared her experiences:

My experiences have led to me the understanding that one can’t get upset with these things or even excited because you will find yourself disappointed. For example, my superintendent sent out a message on Monday for a survey to be completed by this Thursday but the actual survey was not received until Thursday morning. As a result of this event and others in the past, I’ve learned to be ready for the unexpected and learn to gauge what will happen before notice is sent. I’ve also learned that relationships with district office personnel are important when staying abreast and turning in items and mandates. Each of these factors is critical because whether we understand it or not, each of these items is tied to student achievement.
Relationships was a topic of interest for Theresa, she was candid about revealing that there are some relationships that are in favor of student achievement and others that are not. Her experiences include banishing relationships with people who did not have the best interest of the children at the center of their actions. Theresa spoke confidently and strongly about ensuring that relationships are established under appropriate conditions: Sometimes as a leader you must decide that you don’t want to build a bridge with people if their interest does not lie in the best light for the children and making the school the best that it can be. Therefore, it’s okay in some instances to burn bridges. In other instances, we must ensure that we have positive relationships with faculty members, parents, community members, and students. I’ve learned that trust in relationships is built on actions, especially when we are striving towards change. For example, I have reached the point in my school status that the teachers know that I will provide everything that they need in order for them to be successful with instructing our children and in turn they know that they can trust in me as a leader. In exchange for my supply of trustworthy leadership, they have less absenteeism and are willing to stay for evening programs.

According to Theresa some relationships can pose obstacles for student achievement.

Theresa shared her experiences with engaging in leadership best practices. She shared that sometimes this dimension proved to be quite challenging. She shared the following:

I had to first identify what measures and processes where deemed essential by the school district and then I had to decide how these processes worked best for my school. Mainly, as a leader you have to follow school board policy but you must find a way to make the policy work for your school. To find out what worked for
my school, I conducted student and teacher surveys. I responded to the information that was collected to teacher made assessments, state tests, and district measures of success. Above all, I observed how students and teachers responded to actions that were put in place.

Theresa gave specific meaning to her experiences with this dimension; she simply stated that it meant to her, “if at first you don’t succeed, try again.” She went on to state that “in order for best practices to work we must first understand ourselves as leaders, understand our willfulness to allow others to lead and progress.”

**Analysis of Findings**

As the lives of these school leaders unfolded throughout the interviews and the focus group meetings, I identified major themes. The themes describing the experiences resulted from a cross referencing of the participant responses and examples from individual interviews, focus group meetings, and artifacts surrounding their experiences with the four dimensions of leadership.

**Dimension I: Understanding Self and Others**

**Experiences with Understanding Self and Others: Rotating Energy, Digging for Treasure, Introspecting the Inspector.** In answering the first research question that was related to the dimension, understanding self and others, the following themes were developed. The participants were asked:

*What was your experience with self and others as a part of the change process?*

The participants’ responses were collectively analyzed from individual interviews, focus group meetings, and artifact collection. Responses from each of the four participants were used to tease out themes surrounding the first dimension. Specifically,
participant dialogue and conversation surrounding building capacity to begin the change process within their schools helped to identify major similarities of action. The themes below support their ideas of components used when building a foundation for change by understanding self and others. The voices of the participants testified to the importance of the following themes:

1. Rotating energy between leaders and followers
2. Leaders pushing while followers pull
3. Leaders digging for treasures within themselves and others
4. Introspecting the Inspector for self understanding
5. Discovering the potential within leaders and followers

The first theme details the participants’ experiences with understanding self and others while being engaged in the change process. Understanding self and others is the first dimension of the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010). Rotating Energy, Digging for Treasure, and Introspecting the Inspector are the names given to classify data collected surrounding the dimension discussed and experienced by the participants in regards to understanding self and others. Data for this study supports the notion that in order to lead an organization effectively, school leaders must develop and understanding of self and others and it is with this understanding that they build a foundation of leadership. The participants of this study practiced many forms of understanding self and others that is consistent with recent trends in leadership research such as self reflection and reading current literature (Growe and Montgomery, 1999; Moskowitz, 2005; and Kingleman, 2010) while being involved in the change process.
Rotating Energy and Leaders Pushing while Followers Pull. Rotating Energy was described as a push and pulling process. This theme came into existence when Glenda led a conversation surrounding being pulled and pushed in different directions. Specifically, the participants expressed feelings of having to push others to participate actively in the change process while at the same time feeling as if they were being pulled by others to lead the change process by making decisions that benefitted them (the followers). The overall process of rotating energy can be described as leaders pushing while followers pull them.

Patrick described this process as a “swinging door.” Victor expressed similar feelings of pushing and pulling when he agreed with Glenda by stating that it is like a cycle, in that the “leader pushes followers towards the goal and the followers pull the leader towards what best benefits them.” During the second focus group, Glenda describes Patrick’s example of pushing and pulling as a simple word, “rotation”. Thus, a key meaning that the participants of the study align with understanding self and others when engaged in the change process was developed and the theme rotating energy was given to this process because of the participants’ graphic description of the energy that rotates between the leader and the followers.

The participants go on to elaborate on the topic of rotating energy. While listening to the discussion of the participants in the second focus group meeting they talked about the experience of understanding self and others as if they were peeling back layers of the dimension. Victor stated, in regards to his experiences with rotating energy and the push and pulling process, “I feel like I’m being challenged about my ability to lead others.” Patrick nodded in agreement with Victor and Theresa elaborating on the topic by stating,
“I’m faced daily with the challenge of unveiling hidden truths about myself and my leadership.” Patrick described what unveiling meant to him. He referred to it as “working through Johari’s window”, a cognitive psychological instrument, created by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955, used to help people understand their interpersonal relationships (Storti, 1999). This discussion brought about the significant finding that when understanding themselves, the participants found themselves having to face hidden truths.

**Digging for Treasures.** These revelations or hidden truths about themselves became apparent through a form of self reflection that required them to search inside themselves for their own personal understanding of their leadership ability. Further research surrounding their ability to lead others while engaged in the change process helped the participants to clarify that their hidden truths were actually current realities regarding the condition of their school and the change process.

In describing the process of finding hidden truths, the participants referenced it as being quite complex and difficult. Theresa reference the process of hidden truths as “digging for treasure.” She elaborated that “hidden truths were like treasure because hidden truths were valuable when understanding self and how to deal with others.” When hidden truths surfaced within a leader while they are engaged in the change process it occurs without purposeful intentions. Glenda stated that, “when becoming aware of the truth about their leadership ability, the leader is in a better position to face reality and move forward with the change process.”

The participants conversations regarding hidden truths and understanding self and others revealed that strengths hidden by persons within the organization can turn out to be
hidden treasures that support the change process. The conversations also revealed that areas of weakness within an organization can be found while exploring hidden truths and then later strengthened by engaging in professional development.

**Introspecting the Inspector.** Victor expressed major advocacy of self reflection. Victor’s colleagues, Patrick, Theresa, and Glenda, shared the same idea about self searching. The theme *Introspecting the Inspector* exemplifies a process used by the administrators to look internally within themselves to understand their leadership boundaries and how to use their leadership style to engage others in the change process. The participants described a period in which they internally appraised themselves to gauge their capabilities to actively lead others towards progressive goals. According to the participants, this process, *Introspecting the Inspector*, is unfolded in three steps:

1. **Reflection**- The review and resonaion of your (the leader’s) response to others as a result of your internal appraisal results.

2. **Response**- The response that you (the leader) give others in reflection of your reaction

3. **Influenced Behavior**– The reaction to the internal appraisal results = positive or negative behavior from leader or followers

The data from this research supports that through this three (3) step process the leader becomes aware of his/her values and beliefs as well as the values and beliefs of the followers involved in the change process. It is believed by the participants of this study that engaging in an introspective practice can assist school leaders in building the capacity to change their behavior in a manner that will positively influence the behavior of followers within the organization towards the goals in the change process.
Personal Meanings of Understanding Self and Others: Unearthing Resistant

**People, Colloquium Chats.** In answering the second research question that was related to the dimension, understanding self and others, the following themes were developed. The participants were asked:

*What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?*

As a result of the experiences shared in the process of gaining a better understanding of themselves as leaders and of others within their organization, the participants developed personal meanings associated with this dimension. In response to the above question the participants described inner feelings of urgency to communicate and motivate others to be involved in the change process. These actions have been given the names *Unearthing* and *Colloquium Chats.*

**Unearthing.** *Unearthing,* as described by the participants, is the “act of finding the purposeful functions of each stakeholder despite the stakeholder’s willingness or unwillingness to buy into the change process.” The name unearthing came into existence from a statement made by Theresa, who stated, “when you are involved in the change process, sometimes you (the leader) have to uproot people from their comfort zones – this means that you must put them on the spot to find out what makes them want to see positive things happen.” This process was labeled as “unearthing” because of the participants’ descriptions of individuals in the midst of times of change. Victor’s best definition of unearthing is “that in times of change individuals tend to be still and observe rather than involving themselves in an active role.” Glenda added the thought that “individuals are still because becoming actively involved in the change process makes
them feel uncomfortable.” A diagram illustrating the participants meaning of the unearthing process is listed in the appendix.

**Colloquium Chats.** To start the unearthing process, the participants described the act of engaging themselves in courageous conversations termed “colloquium chats”. Colloquium chats are intimate conversations with individuals involved in the change process. Glenda, like Theresa, often involved herself in intimate conversations with her faculty to gain insight on issues within the organization and to grasp a better understanding of the faculty members’ rationale of the current conditions. The theme colloquium chats has been given to this process because it best illustrates the participants meaning of understanding others through positive intimate conversations. Colloquium chats are designed to be meaningful and unveiling. Victor describes courageous conversations or colloquium chats as “a purposeful conversation in which the leader and follower can engage in open dialogue in an effort to come to an agreement that benefits both the school and the individual.”

Engaging in colloquium chats helps the leader to unearth hesitant individuals within the organization. Glenda stated that “colloquium chats assisted her in being successful in the change process by acquiring golden keys of communication that unlocked barred doors to successful change.” Patrick’s added “golden keys of communication open doors from all directions that contribute to the change process.”

During the third focus group meeting, the participants described the dimension of understanding self and others as the most essential component of the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership. A review of their responses revealed that the rationale for their classification of this dimension as the most essential rests in their belief that the change
process of any school begins with the school leader engaging in self exploration, reflection of his/her leadership ability, and recognizing the abilities of others within the organization.

Ultimately, the participants described their experiences with this dimension as being unveiling, challenging, and complex. They in-turn used these experiences to detail their personal meaning of this dimension as being necessary, purposeful, and engaging.

**Best Practices to Understand Self and Others.** An observation, review, and analysis of the interviews, focus group meetings, and artifacts submitted by the participants revealed common practices that they valued regarding the first dimension.

The following practices were used during the process of understanding self and others:

1. Journaling
2. Daily Self Reflection
3. Linking Internal and External Environments
4. Situational Leadership/Servant Leadership

The participants used both journaling and reflection as a form of self discovery and understanding of self. The journaling technique was apparent when Victor shared his daily diary. Victor states that he takes notes of his daily interactions with his teachers and uses them to reflect before addressing similar situations with or when speaking with others. During Glenda’s second interview she shared her daily affirmations. These daily affirmations were in the form of a calendar with quotes that sat on her desk. She explained during this interview that she uses these daily quotes as releasing moments of reflections or escape when dealing with difficult situations or when making difficult
decisions. During his first individual interview, Victor elaborated on self reflecting and servant leadership.

Victor:

Self reflection is vital. Reflection means that you are forever learning and forever improving. I hope to model best practices and create a domino effect. For instance, if I engage in best practices so will teachers and then students. Ultimately a change in culture will occur and everyone will work together to create student achievement.

The meaning of this dimension in regards to my experiences reminds me of servant leadership. Meaning that you have got to serve your people because, if they see you serving then they will work hard. I strongly believe in communicating with other leaders in similar situations to my own to bring about success. All in all, the ultimate goal is to obtain student achievement.

Another example of journaling was taken into account during Patrick’s first interview. He stated that he took notes when he read books about leadership and teaming or when he heard interesting quotes. After taking these notes he would type them up or develop power point presentations to share with his colleagues.

Patrick was also a major proponent of situational leadership. His support for situational leadership was found during his first interview when he shared his story about walking the neighborhood of where his school is located. These neighborhood walks led him into the process of getting the local members of the community to buy into the change process by offering them something as simple as school baked butter cookies. Leading by situation was expressed by Patrick when he told of the dilapidated
neighborhood that his students lived in. He shared how the mind set of his students were
affected by their living conditions. Fighting and negativity was a norm within his
students’ lives during school hours and while they were at home. To address this situation
he met with community members and young adults that lived in the neighborhood. The
community members informed Mr. Lewis that they would assist him with intervening
with the fights the children in the community would have while they were walking home
if he would bring them school baked butter cookies once a week. Patrick agreed and the
number of fights after school decreased. This example supports situational leadership and
a belief in including external factors to make internal changes.
Specifically, Patrick told his story:

I can go on record by saying that I don’t see how anyone could sit in this seat and
not recognize the importance and power of relationships. A local community
member who is very influential hosts a youth ministry. Several of our students
attend this ministry and I would hear them talking about it all the time. I decided
to go and meet the man responsible for it and I still have a relationship with him
today. This relationship helped me to build other relationships within the
community. These relationships helped the people in the community to feel
welcomed to come into the school. I’ve been told that this type of relationship has
never been built with members of the community before.
I do neighborhood walks and talk to people of the neighborhood on their time. I
have got to tell you this story. It is very important. Landing Academy was known
for fights. The students were fighting on their way home from school. There were
some guys standing under a tree and they said to me – “Man we can help you stop
these fights”. I said to myself, I’m probably going to have to buy something but I was willing to buy whatever was needed to gain some assistance with the problem. The men simply wanted butter cookies that were made at the school.

From that point on, every Friday, I would give them butter cookies and the fights began to decrease.

I’ve said all of this to say that you have to have an out of the box thinking mentality and you have to be as real and as genuine as possible in order to let people know that you are serious about what you do. You can’t get caught up in titles or roles. It doesn’t matter if you’re the principal. You never know what people will bring to the table. It is in your best interest to get your community members to be your allies. They truly make a difference in your leadership. For example, if you’re having a hard time, they may come to your aid. On the other hand if you haven’t established these relationships and they see that you’re having a hard time, they will probably watch you and not assist.

During the second focus group meeting both Glenda and Patrick expressed the importance of gaining the support of external stakeholders of the school. The participants discussion during the second focus group labeled the following individuals as external stakeholders; district personnel, parents, and community members. Glenda stated during the second focus group:

You must have the support of district personnel within your building. More importantly you must have the support of parents in your building. These two populations of people can make or break your school’s progress because they have the ear of people outside of the school. For instance, if you understand and
relate to parents then they will speak about your leadership and school positively and if you don’t relate to them then they will not support your school or make negative comments about the school to other people. The same with district staff members, if you don’t stress their role within your building with teachers and students, then your school may not get the resources needed to move forward. It’s a win, lose, or draw situation.

The dialogue of the participants during the second focus group meeting showed a defiant link between the external environment and the internal environments and its effects on student achievement.

Victor spoke of servant leadership during his first and second individual interviews. Servant leadership according to Victor Reed during his second interview is “showing others that you are not afraid to work hard for them to make progress for everyone.” Victor shared his experiences with servant leadership as staying long hours with teachers to ensure that final projects are completed for students when they returned to school.

Theresa shared her version of servant leadership as “supplying teachers with the resources they needed to make academic progress with the students.” She stated:

I work hard to let the teachers in my building know that if they need something, anything at all, all they have to do is ask for it. Of course, that something is limited to instructional tools and pieces, but I were sure to supply them with their needs. As an instructional leader, I will work hard to provide my teachers with the necessary tools because if they lack something then that will impede student learning. Student learning is a part of education that can’t be compromised.
The subject of servant leadership continued during the first focus group meeting for quite some time. The dialogue below illustrates the conversation surrounding this topic:

Victor:

I am a strong advocate and implementer of servant leadership. This means to me that I will communicate with my faculty and staff my mission and vision for success verbally and then continue communicating the same message through my actions. For example, saw the building engineer moving trash bags and they seemed to be heavy. So immediately I went over to assist with my suit on. Those actions may be small to you and I but to that building engineer it means that Mr. Reed is on her side and that to accomplish anything in this building it takes team work, cooperative efforts and collaboration.

Glenda:

Mr. Reed, I’d like to add, that we must be able to communicate to our stakeholders verbally and non-verbally that as instructional leaders we have respect for the “craft of teaching.”

Victor:

In response to your comment and in extension to my earlier statement, I stand firm in my belief that as a leader, I have to feed my teachers so that they won’t eat the children. Meaning that through professional development opportunities, notices of appreciation, and open door policies for discussion, I let teachers know that I support them and together “we support the children.”
Patrick:

Let me say this Mr. Reed, I too am a proponent of servant leadership and I implement it daily. My experiences have brought me to the realization that regardless of how you communicate to some persons that you have a vested interest in them and in your working relationship with them, you will not win 100% of the people. However, if you have 85% on your side and working towards a common goal, then you can make change stick.

Also, simple things to boost teacher morale such as letters of progress or mini candy bars to show appreciation can make big things happen. It’s all in the working relationship between school administration and teachers, as leader we must never let a gap exist in the relationship.

Another example that I will never forget that was given to me by my supervisor was, “you can’t make a cat bark.” This simply means that if someone is in your building and they are against the mission and vision of the school then they are against the children. You may try hard to get them to buy in but they never do. This made me realize that there will always be some that won’t become a part of the systematic change, regardless of relationships and regardless of communication.

Data for this study supports the notion that in order to lead an organization effectively, school leaders must develop an understanding of self and others and it is with this understanding that they build a foundation of leadership.
Dimension II: Organizational Life

Experiences with the Complexities of Organizational Life: Playing Politics and Making the Scene. In answering the third research question that was related to the dimension, understanding the complexities of organizational life, specific themes were developed. The participants were asked:

What was your experience with the dimension understanding the complexity of organizational life as a part of the change process?

When questioned about their experiences with this dimension of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010), each of the participants discussed their understandings of organizations as being complex. A deeper look into the participants’ experiences with this dimension revealed a simpler version of how they understood their schools as being an organization. On the whole, each participant felt as if their school was a small piece in a larger puzzle. The larger puzzle being considered the school district in which their school was apart. The participants also expressed a responsibility to include the community in which their school was located in the decision making processes.

Listening to the participants’ voices during their dialogue surrounding understanding the complexity of organizational life led to the classification of their schools as being unique parts of the larger school system. The themes below reveal their understanding of the importance of understanding the complexity of organizational life in the change process and the influences that exist within a complex system. The voices of the participants testified to the importance of the following themes surrounding organizational life:
1. Staying connected with central administration
2. Recognizing the school as a part of the school system
3. The strategic process of playing politics
4. Making the scene: Connecting with the internal and external community
5. Unpacking the standards: Designing cultural relevant programs

**Staying Connected with Central Administration.** The participants detailed their understanding of the complexities of organizational life, as their actions (the school leader) to gain human and tangible resources needed to go forward towards success within their organization. Most importantly, the participants described their experiences with recognizing that their schools were not just buildings serving in isolation but were functioning organizations included in the larger school district. The participants expressed that most times acquiring human and tangible resources that their schools need becomes a strategic process because the resources supplied and funded to them are limited. The participants affirmed that staying connected with central administration was a positive process in attaining items that were scarce or limited within the larger community.

**Recognizing the School as a Part of the School System.** During the third focus group meeting, Victor stated the following:

Victor:

One can suffer in isolation. I can tell you from first hand experiences, my first year as principal was trying because I hadn’t developed any systems or practices that were good for me. Later, I realized that mentors are given to new principals
for a reason. I’m glad that I had a mentor because, I was working alone, I had to
realize that my school was one of many and I did not have to re-event the wheel.

Victor’s statement exemplifies his experiences and his understanding that his
school is one of many in a large school district. As a result, Victor came to the realization
that assistance and support exists within the larger school system that is not primarily
available in his individual school location.

**Playing Politics.** The theme *playing politics* was given to this finding based on
data from the interviews and focus group meeting held with the participants. In the third
focus group meeting, Patrick stated, “If you know how to play chess then you were a
master in organizational management.” The same sentiment was shared by Victor who
agreed with Patrick by sharing his beliefs about strategic politics in schools:

I must say that the meaning is simply to understand. As a school leader, you must be able
to understand your organization and the political underpinnings thereof. School leaders
must be able to reflect on decisions that have to be made within your building to ensure
success. An effective leader has to understand what is going on within the organization
and the community in order to ensure success. The entire process is tricky. Above all the
main goal is to keep your sanity.

Both Patrick’s and Victor’s statements lend to the belief that internal and external
populations play a major role in understanding the complexities within an organization.
Dialogue amongst the participants revealed their beliefs that before one can become
successful in the change process, internal evaluations of the organization and external
evaluations of the community have to be completed. For instance, Glenda expressed her
belief regarding this topic by stating, “You must inspect what you expect.” When asked
to elaborate on this statement, Glenda explained, “Because the educational system is so strategic on the levels of testing, building requirements, and instructional strategies, evaluations must be conducted first before any actions can be made. Otherwise, we would be making actions arbitrarily.” Theresa supported Glenda’s statement by saying “the evaluations of organizations must be systematic so that the change agent can deliver specific outcomes that reflect the culture of the community.”

The experiences with understanding the complexities of organizational life for the participants proved to be a strategic process that was given the theme, playing politics. These experiences aided in the development of their personal meanings of this dimension. Playing politics for these participants meant being visible within the school building and community by walking the hallways and entering the classrooms of the school, attending community events, and identifying influential leaders in the internal and external community that impact student achievement. This process of being visible was given the theme, making the scene.

**Making the Scene.** The underlying purpose surrounding making the scene is for the leader to acquire a familiarity with internal elements of the organization and the external elements of the community and to make a connection with constituents. Once the elements in both the internal and external environments have been identified, the leader can establish buy in from stakeholders to initiate the change process. The participants state that the first step in the change process is to define the standard of excellence. It is their belief that once buy-in is established in both the internal and external populations, defining the standard of excellence will become an easier process.
Unpacking the Standards. Glenda refers to defining the standard of excellence as “unpacking the standards”. When asked to elaborate on this statement, she explained: Unpacking the standards means breaking down the meaning of what is acceptable and what will not be tolerated. An effective leader must be able to repeat the same standard of excellence to various audiences by using code switching techniques to define expectations and goals of the organization. Code switching, (stating the same general idea in different genres and modes befitting to cultural backgrounds), allows the leader to relate to members of the internal and external environment as well as provides the opportunity for him or her to understand the culture of both environments. Once the culture of the internal and external environments are understood by the leader, he or she can then move forward to unpacking the standards in a manner that meets the understanding of multiple populations.

Personal Meanings of Understanding the Complexities of Organizational Life

In answering the fourth research question that was related to the second dimension, understanding the complexities of organizational life, the participants were asked:

What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

The meanings that the participants developed surrounding this dimension are closely linked to their experiences with the organization during times of strategic change. Specifically giving meaning to their experiences the participants expressed their understanding of the complexities of an organization as the ability to relate to various populations of stakeholders, establish buy-in from these stakeholders, and define the standard of excellence. Once the standard of excellence is defined, decisions can be made
to support the standards based on purposeful percentages of data rather than just preference of the people. Once these steps are implemented and the process of change is underway in a successful direction, understanding the complex organization.

Best Practices with Understanding the Complexities of Organizational Life.

An observation, review, and analysis of the interviews, focus group meeting, and artifacts submitted by the participants revealed common practices that participants valued regarding the second dimension. The following practices were used during the process of understanding the complexities of organizational life:

1. Organizational Structure
2. Communication
3. Networking
4. External Environment and Internal Transformation

Organizational structure was the primary discussion amongst the participants during the first focus group meeting. Much of their dialogue surrounded establishing and defining roles of internal and external people. Theresa stated:

When working inside your school as principal, especially realizing that your school is an organization that is politically charged, you have to be observant of the persons in your organization. Once you’ve observed them, you will see who is working towards the mission and vision of the school. I say this because the mission and vision of your school is our most political piece and as school principals it is our duty to ensure that we are operating under the mission and vision, ensuring school wide buy-in, and observing those who are not a part of the common goal.
Theresa also emphasized communication as a key factor to creating a successful change process in schools. Communication proved to be a popular topic that sparked a tremendous interest with Glenda.

Glenda discussed communication as a tool to share and borrow with other schools that had faced similar challenges as her school. During the first focus group meeting, both Patrick and Theresa agreed with Glenda that communication was the initial process for networking with other school principals. Glenda stressed that “communication with others must be clear and easy to understand for all audiences.”

In addition to verbal communication, Theresa discussed written communication. She detailed her protocol of communicating verbally with her staff and then following up with written confirmation. Glenda’s emphasis on communicating with other school principals as a means for networking and sharing ideas was her contribution to an organization’s best practice. As her contribution to communication as a best practice, Theresa emphasized school structure and verbal and written communication with her teachers and staff. Patrick agreed, elaborated, and stressed the importance of both points made by the female principals.

While Patrick, Glenda, and Theresa spoke about communication being important when networking with other principals, Victor discussed communicating with the parents of students. During the first focus group he stated:

I’ve learned in my experience that when dealing with any and all stake holders, you have to let them know that you are a voice for them. By the same token, you must understand when you are speaking and making decisions for others, you
have to learn not to make any decisions hastily and too quickly. Making hasty decisions is like playing Russian Roulette.

After Victor explained his view of the importance of communicating with parents, Patrick agreed by stating, “You must have the parents on your side, if not, then as a principal, you’re already at a loss.”

The dialogue between the participants regarding communication with different stakeholders expressed the impact that an organization’s external populations can have on its internal transformation. After ingesting comments made by the other participants, Patrick stated the following in regards to schools as organizations:

As school principal you wear many hats. You must be able to understand school structure, recognize personal and communicate clearly to implement change. I support and implement transparency in my leadership. However, my experiences have given me the opportunity to understand that you have to master the art of knowing how to sooth your personnel, including informal and formal leaders, manage your assets, build and maintain positive relations with stakeholders, and balance your time to ensure that you are getting things successfully done.

Dimension III: Building Bridges Through Relationships

Experiences with Building Bridges Through Relationships: Code Switching and Sitting in the Trenches. In answering the fifth research question that was related to the third dimension, building bridges through relationships, specific themes were developed. The participants were asked:

What was your experience with building bridges through relationships as a part of the change process?
Relationships proved to be a healthy conversational piece with the participants. Vertical and horizontal dialogue revealed tremendous focal points on numerous relationships that school leaders must share in effort to be effective in their schools. The unified voices of the participants led to the development of the following themes surrounding building bridges through relationships:

1. Code switching: Adapting the style of the leader to fit the constituent group
2. Sitting in the trenches: No job is too small or too large
3. Confronting the brutal facts with critical friends
4. Managing relationships inside and outside of the schoolhouse

Rating the importance of this dimension was a popular topic amongst the participants in their focus group meeting. The first dimension, understanding self and others was closely linked in importance to the third dimension, building bridges through relationships. The participants believed, as a result of their experiences, that understanding self directly impacted the school leader’s ability to build relationships. This correlation is evident in Glenda’s statement, “I am a firm believer in relationships because they help to define who I am as a leader.” Though Theresa agrees with Glenda when she stresses the importance of relationships, she felt that understanding self and others helped to establish foundations for building effective relationships during a time of change and uncertainty. The statements from both Glenda and Theresa support the belief that the dimensions understanding self and others and building bridges through relationships are strongly connected.

**Code Switching.** Listening to the participants on the importance of building relationships revealed a belief within the participants that an effective school leader must
be both willing and able to wear various hats within the organization. During the second focus group, Glenda referred to wearing various hats as “playing different characters in the theater each day” and Theresa referred back to the school leader’s ability to code switch with various populations of people. Glenda was asked to elaborate on playing characters in a theater. Her response, “Playing characters in the theater means that a leader must both serve in the capacity of and empathize with the role of a student, teacher, parent, district personnel member, or community members at different times, as applicable.” Each of the participants expressed the importance of being able to understand the importance of student, parents, teachers, and community members. The theme code switching has been given to these characteristics shared by the participants. The ability to code switch is similar to that of the abilities of a chameleon to change color. When code switching, a school leader changes modes in various environments. For instance, a chameleon has to change its colors to adapt to its surroundings and the participants described having to share the same ability when placed in different environments or situations.

The rationale for school leaders having to code switch is that individuals (teachers, students, parents, or community members) in different populations see situations from different points of view. A school leader must be able to understand these different points of view. The participants expressed that understanding varying points of view allows the school leader to empathize with stakeholders and assist in establishing relationships. Code switching for the participants means more than just a superficial change in voice or personality but a genuine understanding for the importance of the ideas and concerns of students in uncompromising situations, disgruntled parents, burned-out teachers,
concerned community members, and district supervisors. According to Glenda, “Once persons of these various populations understand that you (the school leader) truly support them and have their best interest at hand, they will support you. This is the foundation of a strong relationship.”

Once the relationship is established, keeping it in strong and nurtured is a new task. Victor states that the best way to ensure that a relationship lasts is by “going the extra mile.” Each of the participants recognized the importance of not only establishing a relationship but ensuring that it is strengthened and continues to grow. The participants connected a strong relationship between the school administrator and any stake holder to positive impacts surrounding the change process. Victor was asked to elaborate on “going the extra mile”, he stated:

Going the extra mile means giving the support to parents through neighborhood walks, supporting faculty and staff members by attending their major life events, participating in activities of the community, and recognizing key happenings of internal and external members of the school.

Patrick supported Victor’s statement by saying, “when you engage in these events, other individuals will migrate to you and realize that you are capable of sitting or standing in any situation within them.” Theresa and Glenda nodded in support of this statement as Victor replied to Patrick by saying, “in return for you (the school leader’s) supporting them (stakeholders) they are more open and willing to buy into the change initiatives and processes of the school.”

**Sitting in the Trenches.** The theme *Sitting in the Trenches* was given to the actions of school administrators as they supported school personnel and community
members by going the extra mile at extracurricular activities and with personal responsibilities. Victor shared a story of seeing a school custodian going outside making trips to the trash receptacle with large trash bags. He explained to the group how he exited the building, rolled his sleeves up, and assisted in carrying out the trash because he knew that helping out a little went a long way.

**Critical Friends and Managing Relationships.** The friendship process according to the participants includes two major concepts, *Critical Friends and the 3-D Process; Defend, Detect, and Decease.* Conversations about relationships with the participants revealed different levels of expectations. The participants discussed trust and confidentiality as being critical components of a relationship between principal and teacher. A level of trust and confidentiality amongst colleagues is just as important. The participants detailed the importance of having a group of individuals to surround them that would tell them the truth about their decisions and actions within the organization. Patrick was adamant about stating “the reactions of others when you (the school leader) are engaged in the change process helps to build a relationship that would otherwise be non-existent.” After Patrick’s comment, Glenda mentioned having *critical friends.* When asked to explain what a *critical friend* was, she stated; “a *critical friend* is a person or persons that will tell you the truth about your ideas and decisions regardless of your feelings, this person were brutally honest in a time that you need it the most, as school leaders we often never come across these people.” Glenda stated during the first focus group meeting:

> I would like to add that we (school leaders) would like to add parents to our critical friends circle. We (school leaders) can do this by establishing
relationships through communication. As my colleague said earlier, as a leader you wear many hats but one of the hats that you can never take off is becoming an effective code switcher. In my school environment, I service parents that may or may not have limited education, so these experiences have allowed me the opportunity to realize that my communication must be at a level that they can understand and most importantly, I have to stay abreast with my community members so that I can relate to them when they come into my building. Also, we have to code switch with teachers and students. Everyone needs to understand that the principal is just like everyone else. In turn they will feel comfortable with our relationship and share things with me that they would not otherwise share. My years of experience as principal have shown me that effective code-switching ability is important.

The conversation of critical friends continued throughout all three of the focus group meetings. During the second focus group meeting, the group came to the conclusion that having critical friends would be beneficial within the school. They also came to the realization that critical friends would rarely exist within schools unless you (the leader) frame the culture within the building to embrace feedback, otherwise, you will never receive honest and unbiased critiques.

As the conversations in focus group meeting three unfolded, the participants went on to describe three critical components in relationship building. These components were based on their collective experiences with establishing relationships as school leaders during the time of implementing change. The components have been labeled, the 3-D Process.
First, defending a relationship includes communicating to self and others the critical rationale of establishing and keeping positive relations with individuals that have the ability to provide an improving impact on student achievement. The participants explained that this component is critical. If individuals who have the ability to improve student achievement are not surrounded with positive relations they can use their ability to negatively impact student achievement unknowingly.

Second, detecting relationships includes the ability to evaluate relationships with persons who have an indifferent impact on student achievement and organizational progression. According to the participants, these persons are those who are often quiet and have not yet discovered their impact on student achievement. This impact has not yet been discovered because they are new personnel or because of some other situational possibility. Victor, states “these persons are crucial because they can get on board and make the vision happen or they can get off track and take the vision off course.”

Finally to terminate or decease a relationship means that relationships and ties with individuals who have the ability to impede the positive impact on student achievement or organizational progressions should be severed. Theresa states, “all relationships are not good, as a school leader you must recognize when it is time to terminate a relationship, if the best interest of the children is at stake.”

The act of engaging in both the critical friends circle and the 3 D process requires cooperative communication or the willing ability to agree to disagree in times of uncertainty.

**Personal Meanings of Building Bridges through Relationships.** In answering the sixth research question that was related to the third dimension, building bridges through
relationships, meanings were given to the experiences acquired. The participants were asked:

*What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?*

Individual dialogues and collective conversations with the participants revealed their experiences with dimension three, building bridges through relationships. The results of these conversations revealed the participants understanding of the importance of relationships when implementing change. The experience of the participants afforded them the opportunities to become familiar with and interact with a variety of populations. These experiences widen their scope of thinking and points of view when engaging in the decision making process, and equipped them with the reality that establishing healthy relationships in a work setting that produces positive results is a step-by-step process that requires time and commitment. The participants’ experiences also made way for the revelation that relationships are powerful, meaningful, and important when making decisions in the best interest of the students.

The meaning associated with the experiences shared by the participants include, the understanding that relationships are situational and that they exists on different levels. The ultimate meaning of relationships reached by the participants is that relationships have a definite impact on student achievement. As a school leader the management of relationships inside and outside the school building can determine whether the students and teachers of a school experiences success or failure in reaching set goals.

**Best Practices with Building Bridges Through Relationships.** An observation, review, and analysis of the interviews, focus groups meetings, and artifacts submitted by the participants revealed common practices that they valued regarding the third
dimension. The following practices were used during the process of building bridges through relationships:

1. Intimate Interactions with Stakeholders

2. Open Door Policy of the School

3. Transparency and Honesty in Relationships

Intimate interactions or meetings with purpose involving individuals that are a part of the organization are important when building relationships. An example of intimate interactions is shown when Theresa stated during focus group meeting one that she would like to provide the group with some of her best practices in regards to her experiences with leading change and fostering relationships:

First, you must communicate with your parents about the positives and negatives, if any, about their child. Second, we must communicate and collaborate with other principals and leaders about what’s working and what’s not working in our schools. This communication will build relationships and assist in establishing critical friend networks. In order to support access to intimate interactions, an open door policy must be established.

During the second focus group meeting, Patrick championed inviting parents and district personnel into the building at all times to support an open door policy within his school. In his third individual interview, Victor stressed having an open door policy with his teachers so that they could feel comfortable discussing their needs and issues with him. During the third focus group, both and Glenda and Theresa discussed the value of teacher input and academic expertise when making decisions within the building. These
discussions support the best practice of having an open door policy when building
relationships.

Both intimate interactions and the open door policy lead to revealing
conversations. If these conversations are honest then trust can be established between
individually. Transparency and honesty are important factors in relationships according to
the participants. During her first individual interview, Theresa speaks of trust and
building relationships:

I’ve had some positive and some learning experiences with this dimension.
Sometimes as a leader you must decide that you don’t want to build a bridge with
people if their interest does not lie in the best light for the children and making the
school the best that it can be. Therefore, it okay in some instances to burn bridges.
In other instances, we must ensure that we have positive relationships with faculty
members, parents, community members, and students. I’ve learned that trust in
relationships is built on actions, especially when we are striving towards change.
For example, I have reached the point in my school status that the teachers know
that I will provide everything that they need in order for them to be successful
with instructing our children and in turn they know that they can trust in me as a
leader. In exchange for my supply of trustworthy leadership, they have less
absenteeism and are willing to stay for evening programs.

These factors, honesty and transparent leadership, are also seen as important through the
participants’ dialogues of critical friends and the 3-D process.
Dimension IV: Engaging in Leadership Best Practice

Experiences with Engaging in Leadership Best Practice: Bragging & Borrowing, Evaluation, Human Capital Management. In answering the seventh research question that was related to the fourth dimension engaging in leadership best practices, specific themes were developed. The participants were asked:

What was your experience with Engaging in Leadership Best Practice as a part of the change process?

A triad process of individual interviews, focus group meetings, and artifact collections surrounding best practices in leadership lead to the development of four major themes. The participants reflected, engaged in discussions, and provided supporting documentation that exemplified the following:

1. Bragging and borrowing ideas to achieve success
2. Owning the obstacle that prohibits change
3. Principaling with a purpose
4. Packing the parachute of followers

In the midst of focus group meeting three Victor stated, “Whoever said, conversation rules the nation, told the truth.” He was referring to the conversations that he shared with his colleagues on a weekly basis about which procedures work and did not work within their schools. The phrase, Bragging and Borrowing has been given to the conversational sharing amongst colleagues. Glenda, Theresa, and Patrick each expressed moments of sharing information amongst their colleagues and discussed how valuable the sharing and borrowing process has become.
Bragging and Borrowing. The Bragging and Borrowing process, as explained by the participants, is a collegial conversational sharing process in which two or more individuals share which processes and procedures work and do not work effectively within their schools. Patrick stated, “I know that I can pick up the phone and call Glenda at anytime and ask her for a method or procedure about teacher observation.” Discussing the process of bragging and borrowing allowed the participants to become more relaxed and reminisce of times in the past in which they had come to each other’s aid. This process not only created an ease within the room but lead to a discussion on how it helped to ease the stress that school leaders have about developing and implementing systems without a model to follow.

The discussion of best practices yielded an interest in evaluative processes that the participants used to ensure that systems such as instructional models and intervention programs were being implemented effectively. According to Patrick, systematic processes such as Kurt Lewin’s Force Field Analysis (1943) and Reginald Green’s Ten Sequential Steps (2004) should be implemented with fidelity rather than using various evaluative systems when involved in the change process.

The participants described the best strategies that their experiences have led them to believe are the most effective to use when involved in the change process. Amongst the first listed was collegial sharing or bragging and borrowing because this process provided a method to communicate which systems were working to produce positive results within their school and allowed the opportunity for them to request assistance from leaders of other schools who have experienced success in areas in which they had been unsuccessful.
The second method of best practices revealed was that effective school leaders always have consistent evaluative system to measures the progress of student achievement and teacher effectiveness. The evaluative systems are used to ensure that measures inform the school leader of performance and informational tool on which to base decisions about school wide effectiveness. In some instances the results from the systematic processes of evaluation are used to appropriately place the people working within the organization or human capital management.

**Personal Meanings of Engaging in Leadership Best Practice: Owning the Obstacle, Principaling with a Purpose, Parachute Packing.** In answering the eighth research question which was related to the fourth dimension, engaging in leadership best practice, specific meanings were given. The participants were asked:

*What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?*

The participants’ experiences have been used to clarify and classify their meanings of the fourth dimension of leadership, engaging in leadership best practices. The participants reported that their experiences were enlightening. This dimension is what Victor refers to “a make you or break you component”. The critical conversation that surrounded the participants meanings of this dimension have been labeled as owning the obstacle, principaling with a purpose, and parachute packing.

**Owning the Obstacle.** The participants viewed dimension four as an expanded leadership role. The expansion of the role of the leader is detailed with Patrick’s discussion of *Owning the Obstacle*. According to Patrick, “*Owning the Obstacle* means accepting the current state of reality of the organization that you (the leader) lead.” The participants agreed with Patrick as he described this process. Patrick emphasized the
importance of the school leader establishing a strategic and systematic plan of execution of the obstacle with the leadership team of the school.

**Principaling with a Purpose.** Patrick goes on to state that engaging in best practices also means that as a school leader you practice *Principaling with a Purpose*. Patrick describes principaling with a purpose as “learn, earn, and act with the ability to make methodical and logical decisions within your principalship that exemplifies a goal or purpose.”

**Parachute Packing.** The final theme of *Parachute Packing*, according to both Patrick and Theresa, means to model your leadership style in such a way that others learn how to act and react to situations effectively in your absence. Here is the voice of one of the participants, Patrick:

> Presenting my findings and talking with other effective leaders helped to increase and sharpen my eye for best practices. Even though I’m a school leader, I have shadowed other leaders of excellence and engage myself in constant learning. This means to me that I must be effective so that I would be able to pack someone’s parachute in order to get them ready for the next level of leadership. By doing this, I know that I have done my job as a professional and I feel good personally.

**Best Practices.** An observation, review, and analysis of the interviews, focus groups, and artifacts submitted by the participants revealed common practices that they valued regarding the fourth dimension. The following practices were used during the process of Leaderships Best Practice:
1. Interactions with Principals of Similar Challenges

2. Reading Current Literature

3. Developing Teacher Leaders

Often throughout individual interviews and focus groups it was found and stated that working with leaders that face similar issues within their buildings is a practice for use by school leaders undergoing the change process. In the section collaborating with colleagues is also an important practice.

It was once said the good leaders create leaders. Patrick Lewis is a school leader who believes this statement whole-heartedly. During his first individual interview he spoke of packing another’s parachute or developing teacher leaders to support him in the change process. He also detailed other processes that he thought were best practices for school leaders undergoing the change process. When asked to share his best practices in leadership Patrick shared the following comments.

Patrick:

Dr. Green’s ten sequential steps will aid you in becoming an effective administrator at any level. I would tell anybody that this is the secret. The steps are a blueprint for success and they simply make your job easier. Working with data and analyzing it through mandatory data report of sessions with the school district regional superintendent and engaging in professional conversations about effective practices with other school administrators are tools that I used to ensure success in my role as a leader.

Presenting my findings and talking with other effective leaders helped to increase and sharpen my eye for best practices. Even though I’m a school leader, I have shadowed other leaders of excellence and engage myself in constant learning.
This means to me that I must be effective so that I would be able to pack someone’s parachute in order to get them ready for the next level of leadership. By doing this, I know that I have done my job as a professional and I feel good personally.

Beliefs

The school leaders that were the focus of this study were bound in their shared experiences surrounding the four dimensions of leadership and their beliefs. Each participant of this study understood the process of student success in regards to academic achievement to all students and believed that all students were capable of advancing to a higher level of understanding and academic achievement. Each of them connected this belief to having strong foundations in education and continuously being grounded in continuing education processes.

All of the participants in this study have turned failing schools into schools in good standing. The belief that this success is attributed to a higher power was shared by each of them. Irvine and Armento (2000) alleged that spiritual leaders supported others in seeking the greatest vision, reach for the best accomplishments and serve before being served. This belief is also present in the participants’ expression of being a servant leader to their followers. Glenda, Patrick, Victor, and Theresa each connected their spirituality to their schools’ sustained success.

I was not surprised that spiritual faith played a major role in the leadership styles of these school leaders. In addition to utilizing the four dimensions of leadership, I believe that it was spiritual faith that helped them to be resilient in trying situations. As a result of engaging in this research, I have found that I am like the participants in this
study in several ways. One of which is being a resilient optimist seeking to empower others and increase student successes through academic achievement.

**Summary**

Chapter 4 described the findings of the case reports of this study investing the inquiry, what meaning do school leaders in underachieving schools ascribe to the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as they engage in the change process? This chapter has captured the voices of school leaders involved in a situation that has painfully proven to be a common epidemic across the nation, failing schools.

The phenomenon studied in this research process detailed the experiences and reactions of school leaders who used The Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as a model to set change in a school with a status of failing and lead it towards turn-around with a status of good standing. Many sources were used during this research process, from these sources major themes emerged and were identified and described. In Chapter 5 the conclusions drawn from this research were presented along with the relationship of these findings to the literature and recommendations for future research studies.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, SUMMARY

“Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.” - Peter F. Drucker

Introduction

I would like, at this point, to review where I started with my study, and how it evolved. Given the perspective of the naturalistic paradigm, I set out to conduct a qualitative research study, examining the life experiences and leadership practices of four middle school principals in an urban school district who were familiar with and had received training on the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership developed by Dr. Reginald Leon Green (Green, 2010). More specifically, through discourse, the purpose of this study was to determine the constructed meanings of their personal and professional experiences with using the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership to change the academic status of failing schools and transform them into high achieving urban middle schools. Recognizing that the participants in this study had multiple realities, I chose the qualitative methodology in an attempt to understand the meaning they assigned to their experiences. I understood that the knower and the known were inseparable and the researcher and participants would influence each other.

In an attempt to understand the life experiences and leadership practices of these four school leaders, I began with these research questions as guides:

Global Question: What meaning do school leaders in underachieving schools ascribe to the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership as they engage in the change process?
The following questions were used to guide the research:

*Dimension I - Understanding Self and Others*

1. What was your experience with the dimension understanding self and others as a part of the change process?

2. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

*Dimension II- Understanding the Complexity of Organizational Life*

3. What was your experience with the dimension understanding the complexity of organizational life as a part of the change process?

4. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

*Dimension III - Building Bridges Through Relationships*

5. What was your experience with the dimension building bridges through relationships as a part of the change process?

6. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

*Dimension IV - Engaging in Leadership Best Practice*

7. What was your experience with the dimension engaging in leadership best practice as a part of the change process?

8. What meaning did you make of these experiences as a part of the change process?

A thorough investigation of these research questions was conducted through individual interviews, focus group meetings, and artifact collection. The individual
interviews were written in the form of field notes and audio recorded for transcription purposes. The focus group meetings were video recorded and notes were written on the board and later transferred to field note documents. The third method of data collection was the collection of artifacts. The artifacts that were collected included: letters to faculty, staff, and community members from the school principal, daily journal entries, and monthly calendars developed by the school leaders. The purpose of collecting these items was to classify and categorize hard copy documentation of the participants’ actions and align them with the statements and experiences that they shared while in the process of individual interviews and focus group meetings. After the data collections process was completed, the data was transcribed and major themes were identified. The actual process of classifying data included a numbering system. The numbering system was divided into four categories that surrounded the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010). The numbering system is shown in table 5.
### Table 5

*Data Classification Numbering System*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Major Theme(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Category 1        | Understanding Self and Others | Rotating Energy  
|                   |                             | Leaders pushing/Followers pulling  
|                   |                             | Digging for Treasure  
|                   |                             | Introspecting the Inspector  
|                   |                             | Discovering Potential Leadership |
| Category 2        | School Organization         | Staying Connected with Central Administration  
|                   |                             | School as a part of the School System  
|                   |                             | Playing Politics  
|                   |                             | Making the Scene  
|                   |                             | Designing Cultural Relevant Programs |
| Category 3        | Relationships               | Code Switching  
|                   |                             | Critical Friends  
|                   |                             | Managing Relationships  
|                   |                             | Sitting in the Trenches |
| Category 4        | Leadership Practices        | Bragging and Borrowing  
|                   |                             | Owning the Obstacle  
|                   |                             | Principaling with Purpose  
|                   |                             | Packing the Parachute |

Prior to collecting data, a literature review was conducted. The literature review consisted of investigating literature that would be relevant to the topic and title of this study. The topic of this study falls under the category of school turn-around and change models and the title of this study is: *The Voices of Four Principals: An Exploration of the Four Dimensions of Leadership as Used by Middle School Leaders in Transforming Low Performing Schools into Schools That Meet and/or Exceed Local, State, and National Standards.*
With this title and topic in mind, it was determined that an investigation
surrounding the literature of effective models of school reform, school change models,
the role of a school leader, and the Four Dimensions of Leadership (Green, 2010) should
be explored in-depth.

Discussion

A Conversation between the Literature and Research Findings. When
reviewing relevant literature, I began with an investigation into American educational
reform efforts over the past four decades. The major efforts of reform during this period
included; A Nation at Risk (1983), Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), and No
Child Left Behind most commonly referred to as NCLB (2001). Although, over the past
forty years several education reform acts have been developed, this study focuses on
major acts that affected the entire nation.

The publication of A Nation at Risk (1983) informed America of the nation’s
educational status and established the premise that schools in America were failing. The
issuance of a Nation at Risk received a variety of feedback, there were those in support
of what the document stated about the American educational system and those who
thought that this document was a political attempt to gain leverage of the implementation
of educational policy. Regardless the reaction to the literature, just over a decade later the
nation recognized the reality of the nation’s schools system as stated in A Nation at Risk
(1983) and established the National Education Goals 2000 Act (1994) which set eight
goals for American students and goals that would be obtained by the year 2000. This
mass attempt to gain momentum in the failing educational system by the federal
government was too large to address the individual issues that impacted the failure and
promotion rate that America’s school faced daily. A later look into educational reform revealed the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) was adopted seven years after American schools across the nation continued to produce failing academic standing status.

In regards to the participants’ conversation about school reform efforts, my study revealed that despite the major educational polices approved and implemented by national and local government systems, urban middle schools seem to excel when intimate issues are addressed by school leaders. The participants gave specific reasons that their schools had experienced failure. Patrick Lewis stated that his school had undergone significant changes based on the fact that there had not been a full time principal of the school in the last two years. Glenda Sullivan stated that her school was experiencing failure mainly because of a huge lack of tangible resources and school personnel. Victor Reed stated that his school lacked community support and needed a cultural change. Theresa Mitchell stated that her school had to place a tremendous focus on data to make a change from failing to progressing status. These intimate issues surround four distinct components:

1. The School Leader
2. The School’s Organization
3. The School’s Relationships with Stakeholders
4. Practices that the School Engages

The review of literature also lead into delving deeply in the research of change models used to create successful change in failing schools. Though each school leader involved in this research process experienced similar situations with the challenge of changing their school’s academic standing, the conditions in which they had to create the
change were relatively different. Hersey and Blanchard (1977) describe a situational leader as one who can adopt different leadership styles depending on the situation. They go on to state that “By adopting the right style to suit the follower’s development level, work gets done, relationships are built up, and most importantly, the follower’s development level will rise” (p. 63).

The participants stated during their discussions that their leadership styles during the time of implementing change was highly situational. Their conversations yielded the results that there is no one best way to influence group members and that the effective leadership style depends on the relationships between group members. The relationship the participants spoke of during their discussions mirrors the readiness concept introduced to by Hersey and Blanchard (1977). According to Hersey and Blanchard, readiness in situational leadership is defined as the extent to which a group member has the ability and willingness or confidence to accomplish a specific task. The concept of readiness is therefore not a characteristic, trait, or motive—it relates to a specific task (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). This finding suggests a strong correlation between Green’s (2010) first and third dimension on Principal Leadership, Understanding Self and Others and Building Bridges through relationships and Hersey and Blanchard’s (1977) Readiness Level of Group Members/Followers.

The participants also spoke frequently of Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) when they discussed modes of creating and sustaining change in their school environments. Servant leadership is a philosophy and practice of leadership, coined and defined by Robert Greenleaf (1970) and supported by many leadership and management writers such as James Autry (1999), Ken Blanchard (2002,2006), Stephen Covey (1987),
and Peter Senge’ (1990). This study found that the participants held a high regard for the people in their organizations. Greenleaf (1970) defines servant leadership as leaders who achieve results for their organizations by giving priority attention to the needs of their colleagues and those they serve. Servant-leaders are often seen as humble stewards of their organization’s human, financial, and physical elements.

In addition to reviewing America’s educational reform efforts and change models, the role of the school leader was researched. Specifically, the contextual elements of the principalship, principal accountability for student academic success, and the mediation role of the principal between the teacher and the learner (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Firestone, 1981; Getzels, 1957; Hallignger, 2007) were thoroughly reviewed. Each of these authors contended that the district and school systems now hold educational leaders accountable for students’ academic success. These authors go on to state and support that failure to meet set targets effected graduation rate, teacher bonuses, district funding, and the retention of principals. Irvine and Armento (2001) support these authors and take the stance based on their research that the above issues are especially true for urban schools.

The participants of this study stated similar consequences to those stated above for failure to meet yearly goals, increase student achievement, or to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Since these consequences are linked so closely to the school leader, the participants of this study consider themselves as the most important factor to impact obtaining or failing to obtain these goals. Throughout the research process the participants emphasized that relationships and relationship building was also an important step in making progress in their school environment. The mindset of the participants is supported by Lapan, Gysberg, and Petroski (2001). They discuss school environments by
stating, “in effective school environments, there is an attitude among teachers that intrinsic job satisfiers such as pupil achievement, teacher achievement, pupil growth, recognition, mastery, self-growth and positive relationships will outweigh the extrinsic dissatisfies such as rapid change, poor supervision, and administrative workloads” (Dinham & Scott, 1998, p. 57). The participants of this study stated that their relationships with parents, teachers, and students, had a critical impact on their school’s academic progress and ultimately it contributed to the school’s academic standing.

The role of the school principal has been seen as a major part of the school’s achievement process. Irvine and Armento (2001) asserted that the number of children of color in urban schools will show a great increase by the year 2010. Additionally, principals of color are more prevalent in urban settings that have a high number of students of color (Fan & Chen, 2001). The participants of the study were principals of color in urban schools in which the student population is majority students of color. Despite their homogeneity of color to the students of their schools, the principals recognized the importance of appreciating cultural diversity amongst their students, parents, and teachers by communicating effectively and consistently to all populations.

Despite the fact that the participants’ schools had a majority African American student enrollment, the participants stood firmly on the fact that recognizing and appreciating diversity among students and teachers was not an option. Each of the participants stressed that in their schools they made it a common practice to enhance students’ academic performance by promoting teacher awareness and promoting that they express a willingness to address students’ learning styles and individual needs. Hence,
because of their attempts to successfully lead students toward academic success, culturally responsive leadership was a characteristic of leaders in this study.

The school leaders involved in this study often referred to themselves as having to multitask daily and wear various hats to accommodate a variety of people. Fitch (2005) discussed the school leader as having a difficult role. Specifically she states “the job of a principal can indeed be staggering in its demands, particularly in the context of school reform. The job has evolved significantly over the last twenty years, and today’s principal is constantly multi-tasking and shifting roles at a moment’s notice” (Fitch, 2004, p. 172).

According to researched documents and the voices of the participants of this study, understanding the school’s population, being aware of current trends, promoting cultural awareness between students and teachers, supporting diverse instructional methods, and multitasking are roles of the school leader.

The participants of the study were asked about their understanding of the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010). They responded that they were familiar with the philosophy and could relate the concepts of the dimensions to books that they’ve recently read. Because the Four Dimension Model is fairly new, research and critiques are limited. The participants shared their reading interests that offered them assistance in their leadership efforts. Authors mentioned were John C. Maxwell, Michael Fullan, and Ruby Payne.

**Dimension I: Understanding Self and Others**

The first two questions asked of the participants surrounded understanding self and others, the first dimension of the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010). The major themes that emerged from this dimension (*detailed in chapter four*)
were: *rotating energy, leaders pushing while followers pull, digging for treasures, introspecting the inspector, and discovering potential leadership*. Throughout individual interviews, focus groups, and collecting artifacts, it was evident that the participants placed a hefty value on understanding themselves and self reflection in their leadership. This research revealed that understanding self truly aids in the processes of understanding others and making a positive impact in the efforts of turning around a school with a failing status. Most importantly, the research supported the adverse about understanding self. Thus, if a leader does not have an ample understanding of self and others within the organization, the change process will suffer within the school organization.

I observed that the participants in this study used this dimension to build a foundation within their school for leading change. In understanding themselves and by gaining an understanding of the work ethics and driving passions of other persons within their organization, the school leader was able to determine the best style of leadership to use and was also able to build capacity within organizations for the change process to begin.

Listening to the voices of the participants on the important point of leadership styles led to the realization that specific styles supported them in delivering change. Below are specific leadership theories that embody the descriptions of the participants’ experiences with delivering change. An explanation of the connection between the participants’ voices and current literature from the researcher’s understanding is listed below:

1. Situational Leadership – According to Duignan (1992), Hersey and Blanchard (1977) define situational leadership as the readiness level of followers within an
organization. The participants of this study classify situational leadership as assessing the will of the people in the organization to accept the change and engage in the change process.

2. Servant Leadership – Firestone (1981) classifies servant leadership as one who has the desire to serve others first and lead as a natural result of serving others. The participants of this study express a similar understanding of being a servant leader. Their ultimate goal was to meet the needs of the people within their organizations first.

3. Distributive Leadership – Feinstein and Symons (1999) define distributive leadership as the sharing of leadership between two or more individuals. This type of leadership has many names, such as shared, dispersed, relational, roving, collective, group-centered, broad-based, participatory, fluid, inclusive, and supportive leadership. The participants of this study discussed their experiences with sharing their leadership duties with others in effort to focus of specific areas of need within their schools to truly make an impact on the student achievement.

4. Collaborative Leadership- Hallinger and Heck (1998) define collaborative leadership as leadership shown by a group that is acting together to solve agreed upon issues. The participants of this study referred to connecting with other individuals with personal and professional strengths outside of their own to reach academic goals.

Below are examples of how the leadership styles listed above are connected to the major themes that appeared in this research.
Building Capacity in Faculty and Staff: Rotating Energy and Situational Leadership

I observed the implementation of Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership Theory (1960) in the participants’ efforts to gain an understanding of the personal and professional needs of the faculty. This was apparent when the leaders spoke candidly of assessing the readiness level of the followers in the organization to move forward in the change process. The major themes, *rotating energy* and *leaders pushing while followers pull them*, are examples of situational leadership in that both processes involve the readiness level of the followers to successfully engage in the change process. An illustration formulated from the participants’ voices and the researcher’s vision is listed below. This illustration depicts the continuous rotating cycle of leaders and followers engaging in interchanging reaction while trying to find their specific purpose in the change process.

![Rotating Energy Diagram](image)

*Illustration 1*
Building Capacity in the Community: Digging for Treasures and Servant Leadership

The participants engaged in Servant Leadership (Firestone, 1981) when they attended and hosted community events. Through the execution of servant leadership practices, the participants were making valid attempts to assess the needs and gain an ample understanding of the needs of the community. Specifically, Glenda told of her experiences when the faculty and staff of her school walked the community and knocked on the doors of the parents of their students within the community and introduced themselves. Visiting the parents in the community gave Glenda and her faculty the opportunity to assess the needs of the community and understand their expectations of the school. These community walks gave Glenda an opportunity to dig for treasures within the community in that she was able to find talents and needs that the community members had and she was also able to participate in self discovery to find talents within herself to deliver the needs to the community members. Patrick detailed a story of understanding others in the community when he took walks through his school’s community. Each of the participants expressed in deep detail the benefit of working with organizations and association in the community to build the capacity to deliver change within their schools.

Building Capacity in Students: Discovering Potential Leadership and Distributive Leadership

The major theme discovering potential leadership found in this research in reference to the dimension understanding self and others is connected to the leadership theory, distributive leadership. The notion of distributed leadership has garnered the
attention of many policymakers and practitioners (Elmore, 2004). The voices of the participants in this study testified to the importance of identifying others persons within the organization who could effectively work towards bridging the achievement gap between current student performance and national assessment standards.

Theresa discussed providing all the essential items needed to ensure that her teachers had everything they needed to instruct the students. Glenda emphasized the importance of recognizing the talent in others so that they could reach students and meet the needs of students that otherwise could not be reached by her efforts alone. Both Victor and Patrick discussed promoting the leadership of others within their building. Patrick referred to shared leadership as “sharing the wealth” in educating children.

Building Capacity in Self: Introspecting the Inspector and Collaborative Leadership

According to Hadfield (2002), the term collaborative leadership describes an emerging body of theory and management practice which is focused on the leadership skills and attributes needed to deliver results across organizational boundaries. For the participants in this study collaborative leadership refers to identifying the strengths and areas to strengthen within themselves and reinforcing them with them with others who exemplify the opposite.

An example of collaborative leadership was found when Theresa expressed her lack of leadership in recognizing the best instructional practices in teachers who taught the subject of English. She recognized this as a weakness within herself and decided to formulate a literacy team within her school to assist her in strengthening this critical deficit. This practice and others by the participants support collaborative leadership as an important aspect of understanding limitations within self and recognizing the strengths
within others. The voices of the participants clarified that in order to engage in collaborative leadership practices the school leader must first inspect himself or herself internally for personal strengths. They explained the process as containing three steps. Below is an illustration developed from the voices of the participants and the vision of the researcher. The illustration emphasizes the three step process involved in *Introspecting the Inspector* and shows how each phase overlaps in connection. The first phase is self reflection for the school leader. The second phase is the response the school leader makes to others in the organization after self discovery. The third and final phase is the influenced behavior of the followers in response to the leader’s actions. See below:

![Introspecting the Inspector Illustration 2](image)

*Introspecting the Inspector*

*Illustration 2*

For the participants, the dimension understanding self and others had a significant role in building capacity for the change process. Additionally, personal characteristics that surfaced as a result of the research process included; practicing open communication with others within the organization, being supportive to others within the environment, accepting support from others, and daily reflection in a journal or personal diary. Unanimously, each of these school leaders demonstrated the character of resilience throughout their leadership role as principal.
Dimension II: Understanding the Complexities of Organizational Life

The second dimension, understanding the complexities of organizational life, was examined in the third and fourth inquires to the participants. The major themes that emerged from this dimension were; *playing politics* and *making the scene*. The participants detailed that organizational life could be quite complex in schools, specifically in schools with a failing academic status. Through interviews and artifact collection, and focus group meetings, being visible with the school environment and at community events was important to the school leaders because this effort was used to stay connected with the school district and the school community. Additionally, the participants believed that staying connected with community and school district support systems helped them to obtain support in their school environment with tangible needs, human capital, and monetary support. Overall, the process of staying connected with both internal and external systems helped to build congruence with the school organization.

“The way schools work often has a greater effect on what students learn than what their teachers try to do” (Leithwood, 2005, p. 37). The efforts of the school leaders to be visible in various environments were mainly to develop a routine within their internal environment and to develop a working partnership with external populations. Specifically, during the first focus group meeting, Glenda shared her flyers about hosting a community event at her school involving the local clergy and political leaders. Victor expressed interest in this project and borrowed the flyer to begin a project of the same sort in the community where his school was located. Patrick and Theresa also shared how being present at community events and hosting programs at their schools helped to increase support and tangible resources within their school.
The following educational theories appeared relevant surrounding the participants’ experiences and this dimension:

1. Social Systems Theory- The participants of this study viewed their internal and external environments as diverse systems in a social circuit working together rather than accomplishing goals individually.

2. Systems Theory- Senge’ (1990) described a system as an organized collection of parts (or subsystems) that are highly integrated to accomplish an overall goal. The system has various inputs, which go through certain processes to produce certain outputs, which together, accomplish the overall desired goal for the system. The participants of this study have envisioned their schools as many systems working together towards one common goal.

3. Change Theory- Fullan (1999) described change as overcoming entrenched disadvantage. The participants of this study view change as overcoming their disadvantaged state by building capacity and focusing on results.

Establishing Congruence Externally: Playing Politics and Social Systems Theory

Playing politics proved to be a strategic process for each of the participants. Essentially, the school leaders of this study recognized the importance of staying connected with members of the community and the school district to ensure that each member of the social system would support them in efforts of change within their schools. The school leaders also expressed the need to be aware of the personal and social goals held by both the community leaders and school district leaders. Staying connected
with the goals of community and school district organizations helped them to align their school goals. Ultimately, this process would help to ensure that each organization, would be working toward common goals when possible.

Connecting the school organization with the community and larger school district organization provides data in support of a strong correlation between playing politics and the social systems theory. This is apparent in the participants emphasis on the connection between internal and external environments.

**Establishing Congruence Internally: Making the Scene and Systems Theory**

Establishing the school leader’s presence within the school house is an important part of building congruency in the change process. Specifically, Victor shared his story of ensuring that he visited each of his classrooms at least once a week. Both Glenda and Patrick discussed the importance of being present at the personal events such as weddings, funerals, and events of their faculty and staff members.

The purpose of making the scene in the internal environment is to aid in the process of establishing systems thinking within the internal environment. Senge (1990) coined systems theory in his book the Fifth Discipline. For the participants, the rationale of systems thinking was to establish a shared vision and professional learning communities that would radiate common goals and practice in the internal environment. Making the scene helps to enforce this process.

**Establishing Congruence for the Purpose of Change**

Listening to voices of the participants helped to sing the song of staying connected to establish congruence as their experiences with the second dimension. The interaction of different persons within organizations is quite complex. One of the main
goals of organizational theorists according to Spillane (2001) is “to revitalize organizational theory and develop a better conceptualization of organizational life” (Spillane, 2001, p. 38). The participants of this study made a painstaking effort to provide simplicity within their complex organizations for the purpose of implementing change.

Fullan (1999, 2002) focuses on the various roles of change agents. The participants in this study viewed themselves as agents promoting change within their organizations. Fullan (1999) identified three areas of the major factors affecting implementation: 1) characteristics of the change to be implemented, 2) local characteristics and 3) external factors (government and other agencies). The participants of this study identified these exact same factors as considerations when waging their process to implement within their schools.

The findings surrounding this dimension support the participants’ beliefs that school leaders must be present and visible within their school organization and community environment in order to make an influential impact towards progressive change. Additionally, organizations can become less complex with adequate communication amongst all stakeholders and by developing networking partnerships with district personnel, community leaders, and informal leaders within the building. Below is an illustration of the complexities of organizational life as detailed by the participants and envisioned by the researcher. This illustration places the complexities of organizational life at the top as an overall classifying marker. Below are the three critical components that the participants experienced when simplifying their complex school environments. As a school leader you must understand how to play politics in both the internal and external environments. Then, you must make the scene or show your presence in support
of your people. The end result of playing politics and making the scene will assist the school leader with staying connected with the external and internal environment. An illustration is shown below.

Organizational Life Thematic Illustration

Illustration 3

Dimension III: Building Bridges Through Relationships

Building bridges through relationships, the third dimension of the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010), was assessed in the fifth and sixth questions to the participants. The major themes that emerged from discussion and research surrounding this dimension were; *code switching* and *sitting in the trenches* (described in chapter 4).

The participants understood the importance of building relationships with stakeholders of the school. According to their discussions, the first step in the process of building a relationship is being an effective communicator. The goal shared by each of them was to effectively and honestly communicate the same message surrounding school
goals and issues to each population that has an impact on the school in an informative language that they could best understand. The second step in building effective relationship was to show support to others by providing assistance and showing support to school personnel, school district officials, and community members. Research over the years has stressed the importance of the relationship between principal and teacher and its effect on student achievement (McEwan, 2002; Walsh, 2005). Though research surrounding the effects that the relationships of both school principals and community members, and school principals and district officials have on student achievement is limited, the participants of this study find relationships with each to be a very important aspect that impacts student achievement. This dimension is also connected to Peter Senges’ (1990) systems theory in that it places a major emphasis on common visions and team leadership. Collectively, the participants agreed that the impacts of all the relationships that the principal develops will have some form of an impact on student achievement.

Overall, the findings surrounding this dimensions support the beliefs that open and honest dialogue helps to build relationships and showing transparency in leadership helps to strengthen relationships. Additionally, relationships that exist with the school leader have a direct impact on student achievement.

**Dimension IV: Engaging in Leadership Best Practice**

The last two questions addressed to the participants surrounded the fourth dimension, Leaderships Best Practice. The major themes that occurred as a result of discussions in regards to this dimensions included; *principaling with a purpose* and *parachute packing* (described in chapter four). Patrick shared his story surrounding his
personal challenge to train others to lead in excellence. He operates under the premise good leaders create leaders – not followers. Poynton (2006) states that teacher leaders are becoming a powerful in today’s schools (Poynton, 2006).

The findings surrounding this dimension conclude that school leaders are most effective when they involve others in the change process. Additionally, developing systems to evaluate and measure the change process, and making decisions based on data were major contributors to an effective change process.

In addition to these themes, I have found that each administrator possessed a strong belief in the ability of the children to learn and succeed academically. The school leaders also shared a common viewpoint of being able to create and sustain progress in failing schools by being a master of situational leadership. This viewpoint shared by each leader was grounded in their strong belief of student achievement and the extended role of the school leader to accept ownership of the organization. An illustration of best practices is shown below depicting the three major themes. The voices of the participants explained that these three practices are continuous when engaging in the change process. Bragging and borrowing is considered as sharing best practices and borrowing practices that are effective for others. Owning the obstacle means understanding that if something is not working in your organization, you must accept the outcome and begin working on new solutions. Finally, principaling with a purpose means making decisions based on data that determines for what works best for your school environment. See illustration 4.
Best Practices to Leading Change

Illustration of Best Practices

Illustration 4

Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the findings of this study:

1. This study served as a validation of the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010) and its effect on the change process. Based on the data found in this study it is recommended that the Four Dimension of Principal Leadership be used to assist school leaders with turning around failing schools. Additionally, it is recommended that this study be followed up with the participants and later continued with school leaders with exposure to the model.

2. Principals need strong people skills. Positive relationships with community organizations, students, parents, teachers, and district personnel proved beneficial for these leaders. Thus, professional development surrounding relationship building, collaborative leadership, distributive leadership, and sustainability would be beneficial to other principals facing the turn-around challenge.
3. Organizational processes and procedures proved to be a topic with limited discussion for the participants. School leader preparation programs should continue to improve or implement programs that support the exploration of the subject of schools as organizations. Additionally, specific courses that address the individual school’s relationship with central administration and how to be culturally responsive would assist school leaders with understanding complex organizational life.

4. Understanding self is a powerful concept. School leaders should continue to share their practices of self exploration and discovery with others to promote discovering layers of leadership that are unknown to self. This study found that understanding self and others assisted in building capacity in school organizations. Therefore, in effort to assist in building capacity, is recommended that school leaders invest in professional development with a concentration on public relations and building learning communities.

5. Networking with colleagues was a major contributor the success of the school leaders within this study. School districts should research the effectiveness of school clusters in leading student achievement.

6. Servant leadership, situational leadership, collaborative leadership, and distributive leadership were styles of leadership that proved to be effective for the school leaders involved in this study. In addition to these leadership styles, efficacy is a characteristic that has constantly been related to student achievement, especially with students in diverse classrooms (Murray, 1989). Principal efficacy is associated with the school leaders in this study by their belief that they could make a difference in their teachers’ and students’ lives. This belief greatly impacted the school leaders as they led
their students toward academic success. Thus, approaches by which principal efficacy might be enhanced need to be addressed.

**Implications for Future Research**

Based on the findings of this study the following are suggestions for further research:

1. This study was conducted with two African American females and two African American male of middle schools in an urban school district. It would be beneficial to measure the effects of this Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership using school leaders of different ethnicity in the urban schools as well as in rural schools.

2. It would be both interesting and beneficial to discover the similarities and differences of female and male educational leaders who were successful in transforming schools from failing to good standing in both elementary and high schools in rural and urban school districts.

3. Since research surrounding the Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership is limited it is beneficial to continue with follow up study surrounding the model and its effects on the change process.

**Summary**

It is my belief that each of the school leaders in this study were an example to society at large as leaders who believe in equity and quality. As the United States becomes more focused on educating its children, it appears that these educational leaders share in their efforts towards high academic achievement for all children. This study showed that principals make a significant impact in shaping teaching and learning.
Finally, although there is valuable knowledge rooted in the stories shared by these school leaders, it is my sincere hope that other educational leaders will realize the stories that they have created. Therefore, this research will contribute to the conversations concerning school leaders that have been a part of recognized performing schools in successful urban education.

**Conclusion**

The Four Dimensions of Principal Leadership (Green, 2010); understanding self and others, complexities of organizational life, building bridges through relationships, and leadership best practices has proven to be a formula for effective change for the school leaders of this study. The participants individualized the model to make it a sound base and successful combination for each of them. The types of successes demonstrated and attained by these school leaders required them to be focused, dedicated, and confident in meeting the needs of the students in their schools.

One purpose for embarking on this research was to describe the leadership practices of principals in urban middle schools. What emerged was an understanding that these four leaders use common practices in individual forms to create successes within their environments. They defined themselves by their positions as educational leaders who devoted their lives to providing a quality education for their students. They were able to effectively articulate their vision to their staff and empower them to lead. Collectively, these administrators felt the style of leadership that worked best in today’s educational system was one of inclusiveness-building relationships, rather than promoting competition. Their leadership styles were complementary to Green’s model, collaborative in nature, and nurturing for their students.
References


Hay Group Education. (2004). Distributed leadership: An investigation for NCSL into the advantages and disadvantages, causes and constraints of a more distributed form of leadership in schools. London: Hay Group Education.


APPENDIX A
ILLUSTRATION OF MAJOR THEMES

Dimension I: Understanding Self and Others

Rotating Energy
Energy rotates between the leader and the followers
Illustration 1.0

Digging for Treasure
Hidden truths are found in the midst of digging for treasure
Illustration 2.0

Introspecting the Inspector
(Involves 3 Steps)
Illustration 3.0
Unearthing Resistant People

Change

Progressive Uprooting

Fostering

Resisting

The Unearthing Process
Illustration 4.0

Dimension II: The Complexities of Organizational Life

The Complexities of Organizational Life

Playing Politics

Making the Scene

Staying Connected With External and Internal Communities

Organizational Life Thematic Illustration
Illustration 5.0
Dimension III: Building Bridges Through Relationships

Thematic Illustration of Relationships
   Illustration 6.0

Dimension IV: Engaging in Leadership Best Practice

Best Practices to Leading Change

Thematic Illustration of Best Practices
   Table 7.0
APPENDIX B
CASE STUDY CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT/SUBJECT CONSENT FORM
PARTICIPATION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH
The University of Memphis

**Project Title:** Voices of Four Principals: An Exploration of the Four Dimensions of Leadership as Used by Middle School Leaders in Transforming Low Performing Schools into Schools That Meet and/or Exceed Local, State, and National Standards

**Principal Researcher:** Tanisha L. Hunter, Ed.S
**Major Professor:** Reginald Green, Ed.D. Department of Leadership.

My name is Tanisha L. Hunter and I am a Doctoral student at The University of Memphis. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Educational Leadership Degree and in support of my major discipline of study, I am conducting a qualitative research study to research how middle school principals use the Four Dimensions of Leadership enhance academic achievement within their schools.

If you agree to participate in this study, you were asked to participate in three interviews. Each interview will last for approximately 20-25 minutes and were audio recorded for the purposes of writing a manuscript. Each participant, four in total, will also be asked to attend three focus groups. The focus groups will last for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Each focus group session were video recorded and were in a location agreed upon by the majority of the group. As a participant of this study, your identity will not be revealed. Your responses will be analyzed, placed into four identified categories, and included in my dissertation. After the research is completed, you will receive a copy of the approved final document upon request. The document will be submitted to a scholarly journal and upon approval were published.

This project has been approved through the University of Memphis. That basically means that you will not be harmed in any way by participating in this group. Your identity will not be revealed. At any point and for any reason (even after you have signed this form), you are free to withdraw from participating in this study and have the option to have all finding associated with your involvement withdrawn.

**Authorization:**

I have read the above, understand the nature of this study, and agree to participate. I understand that by agreeing to participate in this study I have not waived any legal or human rights. I also understand that I have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study were respected with no coercion or prejudice. If I have any concerns regarding my selection for this study or my treatment during this study, I may contact:
To: CONFIDENTIAL RECIPIANTS

Subject: Initial Interview for 4-Dimensional Leadership

Hello Four-Dimensional Leaders!

The time has come to begin our interview sessions. I would like to visit each of you this week. The following days are open, please inform me which day is your preference. The meeting will last approximately 30-45 minutes.

Tuesday - 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm, 3:00 pm, 4:00 pm, 5:00 pm, 6:00 pm
Wednesday - 5:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 7:00 pm, 8:00 pm
Thursday - 9:00 am, 10:00 am, 11:00 am, 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm,
Friday - Open anytime

I’m assured that one of these days and times will work for you. Please respond as soon as possible with your availability. Thank you SO MUCH!

-See you soon.

TH
"Don't be afraid to go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is." - Janie Mines
To: Confidential Recipients

Hello Potential Participant!

I would like to take the time to congratulate you for meeting the requirements of being involved in a research study that will impact the lives of students across the nation. Your responsibilities, if you accept, include supplying the researcher with artifacts that support the four dimensions of leadership. As a participant, you will be included in three individual interviews that will last for approximately 30-45 minutes each and three focus groups that will last approximately 45-60 minutes each.

Upon completion you will receive $50.00 dollars that you can use towards educational supplies. If you would like to participate, please respond to this email with your acceptance. Thanks.

TH
"Don't be afraid to go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is." -Janie
Mines
APPENDIX D
RECRUITMENT LETTER

PARTICIPANT/SUBJECT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Tanisha L. Hunter, Ed.D. Candidate
The University of Memphis
Department of Leadership and Policy Studies

Dear Potential Participant,

Congratulations! You have the opportunity to participate in unique experience that will earn you fifty dollars.

My name is Tanisha L. Hunter and I am a Doctoral student and the University of Memphis. I am currently recruiting participants for my dissertation which is titled: Voices of Four Principals: An Exploration of the Four Dimensions of Leadership as Used by Middle School Leaders in Transforming Low Performing Schools into Schools That Meet and/or Exceed Local, State, and National Standards

Throughout this research process, I was consulting with my major professor Dr. Reginald Leon Green.

As you may know, Green (2010) has identified four dimensions of principal leadership that are critical to leading and sustaining change in underachieving schools. The purpose of this study is to identify two male and two female middle school principals who are familiar with the four dimensions of leadership and are using them to enhance academic achievement in their schools. As an educational scholar who is familiar with these four dimensions you are asked to participate in this study. If you are familiar with the research of Reginald Leon Green and meet the following criteria, I invite you to become a participant in this study:

- Currently serving in the capacity of middle school principal
- Familiar with the Four Dimensions of Leadership (Green, 2010)
- Have previously or currently using the Four Dimensions to lead or sustain change initiatives
- Willing to become a participant of the study

If you are interested in becoming an essential part of this major contribution of educational research, or would like to request more information, please contact me at via email or by telephone. Thank you for your consideration.