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AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEIVED
INVOLVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING AND
CONCURRENT STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE, SUSPENSION RATE,
GRADUATION RATE, AND DROPOUT RATE

by

Kendra A. Ashford-Hightower

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

Major: Education Leadership & Policy Studies

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends who have supported me throughout this professional journey. To my outrageously loving and supportive husband, Thirston Hightower, I thank you more than I could ever express in words. To my *more than a handful* sons Kameron, Tristan, and Karson, I thank you for allowing me to be a mom and a doctoral student simultaneously. A special feeling of sincere gratitude and appreciation to my loving parents, Raymond and Shirley Wiseman whose ‘grand sitting’ and carpool hours I could never repay. To my sister Keila Ashford and biological father Kenneth Ashford, both of whom I am sure are smiling down from heaven. Your presence was felt throughout this entire experience. A huge thank you to Staci Hendrix for the many hours of literary expertise, proofreading, and conversations about education research. Last, but certainly not least, I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my best friend Trudy Jones Jackson for teaching me the true meaning of faith over fear.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between secondary level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to their making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their schools and four measures of school productivity. Grounded in archived accountability information stored on the Tennessee Department of Education website, these four productivity measures were the student attendance, graduation, suspension, and event dropout rates computed for 248 high schools for the 2012-2013 academic year. At these same 248 institutions, teachers' perceived involvement was computed from responses to a section on teachers' roles in decision-making that appeared on the 2013 state-wide administration of the *Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL)* survey in Tennessee. A principal component analysis of the mean responses to the eight items constituting this section yielded two interpretable components that could be termed classroom-based or "pedagogical" and institution-based or "administrative."

Inspection of the zero-order correlations between teachers' perceived involvement as regards pedagogical decision-making and school productivity revealed statistically significant positive relationships with rates of student attendance ($r(248) = .23, p < .01$) and graduation ($r(248) = .20, p < .01$) and negative relationships with rates of student suspension ($r(248) = -.38, p < .01$) and dropping out ($r(248) = -.26, p < .01$). When student demographic characteristics were controlled, hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicated that these statistically significant relationships were sustained with respect to student attendance rates ($\beta = 0.153, t = 2.604, p = .010$) and student suspension

rates ($\beta = -0.116$, $t = -2.974$, $p = .003$, but not for student graduation and event dropout rates.

Conversely, positive student outcomes evidenced no connection with teachers' perceived involvement with respect to deciding administrative issues. Correlational analyses were suggestive of counter-intuitive relationships with rates of student suspension ($r(248) = .22$, $p < .01$), graduation ($r(248) = -.20$, $p < .01$), and dropping out ($r(248) = .14$, $p < .05$), while hierarchical multiple regression analyses showed no effect on any of the outcomes examined in this study after student demographics were taken into account.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The American school system places an extraordinary amount of responsibility on teachers with the expectation that teachers will ensure that students acquire the cognitive and socialization skills that are required by the 21st century workforce. The roles and responsibilities for today's teachers differ significantly from the roles and responsibilities of twenty years ago. Teachers today are required to serve in multiple roles deemed necessary to enhance student achievement and academic outcomes, which ultimately improves schools.

Throughout my personal experience as both a teacher and administrator, I have served in multiple roles at the school level in order to enhance student and school outcomes. Roles such as grade chair, master teacher, curriculum team, etc. allowed me to have a voice in decisions that affected my classroom. As a result of serving in multiple roles, I invested more time in my practice and put forth more effort into my teaching. Having the opportunity to broaden my role and responsibilities as a teacher opened the doors to having a voice in administrative decisions that affected both student and school outcomes. Reflecting upon the multiple roles that I have served and reading literature regarding the amount of responsibility placed upon teachers today led me to wonder if having the opportunity to make decisions really mattered or was reflected in student achievement outcomes.

Over the past decade, school improvement efforts have resulted in a major focus on student achievement. As school leaders seek to improve student achievement they are turning to teachers to have a voice in decisions made at both the pedagogical (classroom)

and administrative levels. By getting teachers involved, decision-making becomes more distributive in nature. This style of leadership is a conceptual and analytical approach to understanding how the work of leadership takes place among people in a complex organization. It is known as distributive leadership.

The inclusion of teachers in the decision-making process by way of distributive leadership is one of many researched ways to incorporate teachers' voices. The voice of teachers has gradually become more noticeable within current trends related to schools working toward a common goal of improvement. Teacher voice refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, expertise, and cultural backgrounds of the teachers working in a school, which extends to teacher unions, professional organizations, and other entities that advocate for teachers (Edglossary, 2013). Teacher voice is centered on the belief that a school will be more successful. Therefore, teacher involvement in pedagogical and administrative decisions within the school can be viewed as a form of teacher voice. Considering teachers are the closest to student learning, one would assume that teachers are more actively involved in pedagogical decisions more so than administrative. Whereas the truth of this assumption may vary among schools, school leaders have the ability to include teachers in decision-making at either the classroom level or the administrative level. Allowing teachers to have a role in making decisions about their work environment is important to achieving teacher involvement (Hirsch et al., 2006a).

Decision-making is one dimension of teacher involvement. When teachers participate in decision-making, their ability to problem-solve improves, and the entire school benefits from it, resulting in a feeling of stronger commitment to the overall

organization (Dee, Henkin, & Duermer, 2003; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012; Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpia, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, 2015). School leaders play an integral role in creating an atmosphere where teacher involvement can occur (Leech & Fulton, 2008; Hulpia et al., 2009). However, school leaders must be willing to share responsibility for operating the school in order to effectively involve teachers to assist in decision-making. A reoccurring theme in the literature suggests that successful improvement efforts occur most at schools that demonstrate the ability to manage change (Short & Rinehart, 1993; Hirsch et al., 2006a; Muijs & Harris, 2006; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). These schools have established a capacity for change by working together as a professional community. Within the professional community, teachers are given the opportunity to participate in leadership and decision-making practices that influence school improvement. In this study, the improvement of secondary school attendance, suspension, dropout, and graduation rates were examined to determine if there is a connection as a result of teacher involvement at the classroom and administrative levels. Research shows that in order for a school to be successful in its improvement efforts, a variety of factors can be taken into consideration. However, a significant factor in the success of the schools, businesses, and other organizations in which individuals are working toward a common goal is the involvement of employees.

School leaders who are willing to share responsibility encourage the cooperation of teachers in their efforts to improve schools through distributive leadership, thus encouraging teachers to evaluate their own learning environments (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Distributive leadership focuses on collaboration, shared purpose, responsibility, and recognition of leadership irrespective of role or position within an

organization. Furthermore, it is suggested that school districts and school leaders listen to the ones who are the most knowledgeable about teaching and learning, the classroom teacher (Hirsch et al., 2006a).

The increasing level of teacher involvement in decision-making encourages teachers to effect change at both the classroom and administrative level. However, teacher involvement varies in regard to school improvement outcomes and there is a gap in the literature as to whether school improvement in the areas of secondary attendance, suspension, dropout, and graduation rates are directly related to teacher involvement.

The Background of the Study

Student attendance, suspension, dropout, and graduation rates at the secondary school level are very important indicators of secondary school success and are important to improvement efforts established by its leadership. Changes in adult perception will yield positive changes from the students, which will have a domino effect on student achievement and the overall climate of the school (Freiberg, 1998). Thus, this makes it possible to increase the number of students attending and graduating from secondary school while decreasing the number of suspensions and dropouts. Previous research suggests that school and student outcomes improve as teacher involvement is enhanced; however, questions remain. To further investigate the proposition that teacher involvement in decision-making leads to improved school and student outcomes, this study contributed to the original *Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL)* study in three aspects. It focused on a set of subtopics included in the original study and examined them in relation to each other. This study supported an additional study of how

involving teachers as decision-makers influenced school productivity which is the foundation underlying the original theory and practice of *high involvement management* (Wood & de Menezes, 2011) with a more recent application of practice. This study surpassed the simple description of outcomes and instead implemented more complex analytical methods to answer questions that were not fully addressed or that were previously unaddressed.

Specifically, this study is designed to build upon previous studies on teacher involvement in decision-making and provide a thorough statistical analysis that would be supportive in answering questions, filling gaps in knowledge, and building practical and theoretical perceptions regarding teacher involvement in the decision-making process of Tennessee public secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Attendance, suspension, dropout, and graduation rates are ongoing issues among secondary schools in the state of Tennessee. Furthermore, each issue is profoundly highlighted in failing secondary schools. If students do not attend, are suspended, dropout, and do not graduate school, their opportunities to achieve academic concepts are challenged. If the cause of each issue is identified, then each can be addressed and student achievement outcomes enhanced.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between secondary level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative

decisions and four measures of school productivity related to students' academic achievement. It is reasonable to believe that if a relationship exists, then procedures for use in reducing attendance, suspension, dropout, and graduation can be identified and put into practice.

The Significance of the Study

The role of teachers is ever-changing. In addition to completing countless instructional tasks, Bateman (2002) believed that teachers must be more involved in decisions as they relate to all levels of the school organization. According to Bateman, teachers would have an impact on an organization if they felt that they had the power to solve problems, institute change, and share responsibility for organizational outcomes. The ongoing pressure to improve student achievement and school outcomes is placed on principals and school administrators who cannot assume all of the responsibility. Therefore, the inclusion of teachers in decision-making in areas beyond the classroom is becoming a trend in school improvement efforts. The inclusion of teachers in decision-making has been a topic of concern for many years (Enderlin-Lampe, 1997; Klecker & Loadman, 1998; Li, 2015). However, for teacher involvement in decision-making to happen, teachers must believe that their involvement is genuine and that their opinion has a critical impact on the outcome of the decision (Short & Greer, 1989, as cited in Bogler & Somech, 2004). The results from this study may help to identify a relationship specific to the involvement of teachers at the classroom and administrative level that will improve student and school outcomes. Understanding more about teacher involvement and its

relationship to secondary school attendance, suspension, dropout, and graduation rates adds to the body of knowledge related to current teacher decision-making research.

Research Questions

Research Question 1.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent student attendance rate?

Research Question 2.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent student suspension rate?

Research Question 3.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent student graduation rate?

Research Question 4.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent event dropout rate?

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the foundational theory and practice of distributive leadership, high involvement management, and site-based management. The practice of distributed leadership draws on multiple perspectives that describe how individuals work to establish the conditions for improving teaching and learning in schools, whereas, the high involvement management model provides a framework for evaluating school-based management and potentially serves as a lens to further understand teacher leadership. The site-based management approach, on the other hand, moves decision-making control from the central office to the local level of a system (Rinehart et al., 1998). Thus, the site-based management approach provides principals and teachers the opportunity to make more decisions. The link between teacher involvement and student achievement has been vague as a school practice according to Aliakbari and Amoli (2016). The primary purpose of this study was to determine if increasing teacher involvement in decision-making at either the pedagogical or administrative levels influences secondary school outcomes. More specifically, this study focused on the determination of whether teacher involvement in decision-making made a difference in secondary school attendance rate, suspension rate, dropout rate, and graduation rate. If teacher involvement in decision-making was positively associated with attendance, suspension, dropout, and graduation, then school leaders would be equipped with a body of research suggesting that implementing strategies for increasing teachers' involvement in decision-making will enhance secondary school outcomes.

Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that the secondary public-school teachers that participated in this study were representative of public school teachers across the state of Tennessee.

Organizational improvements were the result of accurate indicators obtained through the *TELL* instrument.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to secondary public schools in the state of Tennessee. Completed instruments were obtained from 248 secondary schools who originally administered the *TELL* survey during the spring of 2013. The *TELL* survey instrument was used to measure indicators of teacher involvement. School achievement was measured by proficiency levels as reported on the Tennessee Report Card. In addition, the following limitations impacted this study:

1. This study did not include the perceptions of students, parents or administrators.
2. This study did not include equal representations among grade levels and subject areas.

Definition of Terms

Absenteeism—Chronic absence (as from work or school); *also*: the rate of such absence (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Administrative—Involvement relating to the running of a business, organization, etc. (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Attendance rate—Total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education attending that level at any time during the referenced academic year, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group (UIS, 2018).

Decision-making—The act or process of deciding something especially with a group of people (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Dropout—The Tennessee Department of Education defines a student who has dropped out as an individual who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year; was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year; has not graduated from high school or completed a state-approved educational program; and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: transfer to another public-school system, private school, or specifically approved state education program, a temporary absence due to suspension or excused illness or death (Comptroller TN, 2018).

Dropout rate—There are three kinds of dropout rates commonly cited: *event dropout rates* describe the proportion of students who leave school each year without completing a high school program; status dropout rates provide cumulative data on dropouts among all young adults within a specified age range. *Status rates* are higher than event rates because they include all dropouts ages 16 through 24, regardless of when they last attended school; and *cohort dropout rates* measure what happens to a single group, or cohort, of students over a period of time – for example, how many students starting in grade 9 drop out before the end of grade 12 (NCES, 2018).

Graduation rate—Number of cohort members who earned a regular high school diploma by the end of a specific school year (including the summer term after grade 12). Number of first-time 9th graders in the fall of the first year of the cohort (starting cohort)

plus students who transferred in, minus students who transferred out, emigrated or died during the four school years of the cohort (Comptroller TN, 2018).

Leadership—Any activities tied to the core work of the organization that is designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other organizational members (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Pedagogical—Involvement of, relating to, or befitting a teacher or education (Cambridge, 2018).

Secondary school—A school intermediate between elementary school and college and usually offering general, technical, vocational, or college-preparatory courses (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Student achievement—Measures the amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Teacher perception—The thoughts or mental images teachers have about their students are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences. These experiences might involve their family history or tradition, education, work, culture, or community (IRIS, 2018).

Teacher voice—In education, teacher voice refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, expertise, and cultural backgrounds of the teachers working in a school, which extends to teacher unions, professional organizations, and other entities that advocate for teachers.

Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 contains an introduction to the study, the problem statement, the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter 2 contains a comprehensive review of the literature relative to decision-making. Chapter 3 describes the methodology that was used in the study. Chapter 4 contains the results of the data collected. Chapter 5 consists of a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and implications for further research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This review of literature presents teacher involvement, interactions between teachers and leaders and how leaders involve teachers in the decision-making process. The literature review also examines the effect that interplay has on school outcomes, such as the school's attendance rate, student suspension rate, graduation rate, and event dropout rate. This chapter is divided into the subsequent sections, namely: a) school-based management models such as the high involvement management model, site-based management, and distributed leadership; b) teacher voice and teacher involvement; and c) the influences of teacher involvement in decision-making and its relationship to school outcomes.

Although the roles and expectations for teachers have shifted, the singular purpose of the shift has been to identify and implement methods that will enhance educational outcomes. Concerns about what causes some students and schools to achieve more than others has frequently been the subject of investigation. The Coleman Report (1966), which stated that the best predictor of educational outcomes was the socioeconomic status of the parents caused a flurry of investigations on school productivity. This literature review suggests that the current wave of educational reform carries with it a conception about the role of teachers and leaders in raising educational outcomes. As states have raised their standards for accountability in the era of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), school principals and teachers have been viewed as a catalyst for educational change.

The current educational roles that teachers are expected and required to adhere to are frequently controversial from a traditional educational lens (Riggs, 2013). It appears clear that teachers have a central role in upgrading American education. If they find themselves excluded from planning and school-based decision-making, the blueprints will be poor and their ability to utilize their talents will be damaged. A teacher's sense of inclusion represents an important variable in the comprehensive school improvement efforts of today's era of accountability. Teachers will contribute more when more is needed if they are included as full participants in the ongoing process of the education reform movement. Today, school leaders have a unique opportunity to include teachers in the decision-making process of the school. Principals are able to develop school-level teams and committees that can be used to gain insight into issues that are concerning to teachers that, if left unaddressed, could result in teachers deciding to leave the profession (Lambert, 2002). Once teachers are included as members of the leadership team, school leaders possess the power to modify or adjust current policies to include provisions that are more aligned to the needs of the teachers (Basu, 2014).

Barth (2003) stated that effective leaders understand that teachers have different personalities and strengths. This knowledge should be leveraged to provide teachers with access to leadership roles that will increase their level of engagement in school-related activities and leadership events. When teachers are engaged and committed to advancing student achievement efforts, a domino effect occurs with their students' behavior. Research from DuFour and Marzano (2011) indicates that teachers and students have a reciprocal relationship in which they mimic and feed off of one another's behavior. Essentially, this research suggests that teachers who are excited about and committed to

high academic achievement are more likely to inspire their students to become excited about learning, thus resulting in elevated academic achievement. It can be assumed that positive interactions between adults and students will lead to positive interactions between students and/or positive interactions among adults in the school (Barth, 2003). It is imperative for school leaders to understand that positive teacher perceptions about the school and academic achievement will yield the formation of positive student perceptions around these topics also.

School Management Models

The High Involvement Management Model

The interest in school management models such as the high involvement model (HIM), site-based management (SBM), and distributive leadership (DL) has developed in reaction to the first wave of educational reform that stressed centralized methods (Conley & Bacharach, 1990). Labeled bureaucratic controls and harking back to the best tenets of Frederick Taylor and scientific management, various education interest groups took the report to task and produced their own recommendations for reform. One of these (i.e., school based decision-making) is the antithesis of those of *A Nation at Risk*. It calls for an increase in authority at the individual school site and is clearly a reaction to the failure of centralized reforms. The 1986 Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, the 1987 task forces of the National Governors Association, and a 1988 report of the National Education Association (NEA) were cited as sources of the second wave of reform. In the context of today's initiatives to reform schools (i.e., turnaround, reform of low-performing schools), high involvement work practices have experienced a

resurgence in popularity in terms of extensive sharing about effective school operations, plans, and experiences (Datnow, Park, & Wohlstetter, 2007).

School management models can indicate a variety of decision-making arrangements but generally the leadership behaviors and systems that use HIM, SBM and DL are situated toward the democratic end. Conley and Bacharach, for example, in referring to the Carnegie Report and two subsequent reports, state that "all these reports strongly emphasized the value of allowing teachers to participate in expanded decision-making at the school site (1990, p. 539)." School-based management is an improvement effort to address many internal and external school problems by promoting more cooperation between all the stakeholders or public associated with the schools (Wohlstetter, Smyer & Mohrman, 1994).

This school-based management reform process shows many similarities to HIM, Total Quality Management (TQM) and other lean production concepts that are being incorporated into the organizational structure of private businesses. These management concepts imply an ongoing improvement effort or a continual high involvement process. For example, Ahmad, Shahzad, Waheed, and Khan (2014) conducted a study to enhance the literature on the relationship between high involvement management and employee job performance in the banking sector. They found a substantial correlation between high involvement management and employee and organizational performance. Indeed, the underlying force behind this high involvement endeavor in any organization is in the hands of the leadership. This involvement of all the organizational players is a never-ending effort from the top management down to create mutual trust and shared goals.

When delegating, leaders must grant both authority and responsibility to those they have delegated tasks and responsibilities and hold them responsible.

However, Deming (2000) states that 85% of employee failures are the result of the system so that the leader must learn to ask ‘what’ (can we do to improve the system), not ‘who’ is responsible. It is the role of leadership to create and communicate the strategic vision of high involvement and performance. Unlike other management systems, high involvement necessitates a cultural change that permeates the entire organization. Dealing with systems and processes, high involvement is an empowering tool that *listens* to all parts of the system—workers, processes, stakeholders, and leaders—for continuous improvement. Juran (1989) assigns to managers and leaders the tasks of goal setting and deployment, creating an infrastructure for high involvement and organizational improvement, reviewing progress regularly, and giving recognition.

Indeed, scholars outside of the field of education have determined that the high involvement management model can prove to be beneficial to school organizations (Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford, 1992). The high involvement management model is grounded in prior organizational and management research revealing that employees will perform better and be more engaged when they are more involved (Böckerman, 2015). High involvement management involves employees in the decision-making process (Wood et al., 2012). High-involvement of the stakeholders, according to Lawler (1992), in the decision-making process helps bring clarity to the school’s purpose and spread the ownership which will lead to the ultimate goal of school improvement. If improvement is to occur, the result must be improving things that affect the students and school performance in a meaningful way. High involvement seemingly allows participation and

shared decision-making down to the operational level, the people closest to the process, with managers and leaders becoming guardians of the system.

Distributive Leadership

Effective school principals are much more than about managing schools, as principals today must be able to disperse authority and collaborate more efficiently. While the quality of teaching most strongly influences levels of pupil motivation and achievement, it has been demonstrated that the quality of distributive leadership matters in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching in the classroom (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1999). A shared leadership approach leads to school productivity and a stronger school community of learners. To effectively enable teachers to serve in leadership roles within the school, school leaders must be willing to share the responsibility for operating the school.

Distributive leadership focuses upon the interactions of those in leadership roles rather than their actions. Although perspectives of distributive leadership vary throughout the literature, a common theme that emerges is the shared leadership between multiple leaders within and between organizations (Harris, 2007; Spillane et al., 2004). The works of all individuals who contribute to leadership practices are acknowledged in workplace settings where the distributive leadership model exists. Distributed leadership is also a key component to organizational redesign that requires lateral, flatter decision-making processes (Hargreaves, 2007). As a result of this shared approach, the leader no longer has a singular role within the organization; a greater emphasis is instead placed upon teams such as teachers, support staff, and student leaders.

Site-Based Management (SBM)

The major objective of the site-based management approach is to move decision-making control from the central office of a system to the local level (Rinehart et al., 1998). Site-based management operates under the premise of devolution or decentralization, the development of human resources, and the wide participation of school stakeholders in the decision-making (Fullan & Watson, 2000). If SBM is viewed as a school improvement reform, Lawler's (1992) work suggests that districts must give teachers at the school level direct control of the key variables that are in the learning environment. Although the rhetoric of site-based management is not precise, generally SBM models contain local school councils that are theoretically designed to share in the decisions necessary for managing the individual school. The councils are made up of teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members. In schools, this implies that principals and teachers are able to move decisions affecting the individual school than district-level personnel, with teachers more capable of making quality decisions. It assumes that principals and teachers closest to the core functions of the school are best able to make optimal decisions regarding school concerns that are responsive to the specific local context in which they are employed.

More recent scholars demonstrate that the site-based management approach has been utilized as a way to transfer certain duties from the principal to the teachers (Fullan & Watson, 2000; Mielke & Frontier, 2012). Areas over which site-based management have discretion also vary from one SBM approach to another. In some schools, budget, personnel, curriculum and instructional issues are subject to site decision-making. In some schools, only one or several of these areas are discretionary. The scope of teacher

authority within areas also differs. Applying the site-based management approach to schools to educational outcomes, the power would be decentralized to the school level, and there would be an emphasis on expanding knowledge, skills, and information for individuals at this level (Wohlstetter et al., 1994).

Teacher Voice and Teacher Involvement

Teacher voice refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, expertise, and cultural backgrounds of the teachers working in a school, which extends to teacher unions, professional organizations, and other entities that advocate for teachers (Edglossary, 2013). However, different in definition, teacher voice drives teacher involvement at the school level. It is the result of having teachers' voices heard that inspires teachers' need to serve in the multiple roles in which administrators have called them to serve. Therefore, the use of the term teacher involvement for the purpose and explanation of teacher actions mentioned in this study is driven by the voices of teachers which encourage them to have a say in decision-making at the administrative and pedagogical level of the schools represented in this study.

Teacher Involvement Through Decision-Making

While increasing the level of accountability, recent education reform has also pushed to include teachers in the decision-making process. The negative consequences of teacher powerlessness have been reviewed in previous studies. Increasing teachers' authority and accountability in decision-making at their school is often driven by the concept of teacher involvement. Involved teachers can contribute vitality, commitment,

energy, an accurate assessment of needs, and full participation in a goal-setting process. Research informs us that teachers should be included in the decision-making process within their school, since they affect what happens in the school (Barth, 1990). Prior studies emphasize that cooperation between administrators and teachers is of utmost importance (Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Maeroff, 1988; Bolin, 1988; Lightfoot, 1986). In perhaps one of the best articles on teacher involvement, Francis Bolin (1988) writes that "authority in teacher leadership is not achieved by conquest, but through cooperation" (p. 87). Additionally, Short and Rinehart (1992) indicate that school improvement is dependent upon increased opportunities for staff to participate in the decision-making process in vital areas within an organization.

School leaders play an integral role in creating an atmosphere where teacher involvement can occur (Leech & Fulton, 2008; Hulpia et al., 2009). In order for teachers to become empowered at the school level, school administrators, including principals, must be willing to engage in decentralizing, which means that they must be willing to shift or share power with teachers (Kimwari, Chirure, & Omondi, 2014). Teachers who have no power become complacent, develop a *just do the job mentality*, and feel as though they are not being true to self (Freire, 2004). Therefore, teacher involvement has been employed in school settings to achieve specific results:

- Effectiveness (Short & Rinehart, 1992; Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer, et al., 1997).
- Job satisfaction (Coble, 2011; Scribner et al., 2001; Seibert et al., 2004; Short & Rinehart, 1992).
- Morale (Coble, 2011; Sagnak, 2012; Stachowiak, 2011).

- Ownership (Blasé & Blasé, 1997; Lintner, 2008; Stachowiak, 2011; Terry, 1995).
- Improvements (Angelle, 2010; Coble, 2011; Lintner, 2008; Scribner et al., 2001).

As stated by Bogler and Somech (2004), there is a correlation between teacher involvement and student success. Additionally, Bogler and Nir (2012) claimed that empowering teachers and building a supportive environment at a school is believed to be a viable solution to problems related to educational effectiveness.

Synthesis

School-based management, teacher involvement, and decision-making are terms referring to another reform effort that have implications for principals and teachers in the post-Race to the Top and ESSA era of greater school accountability. As noted earlier the basic premise by which this effort gains momentum is by promoting shared decision-making. This effort to empower/enable teachers should help create positive feelings throughout the organizational structure. Involving all the stakeholders could lead to a school improvement effort that has a greater chance of success because of the sense of ownership throughout the system. The changing roles, responsibilities, and relationships existing between leadership and teachers will have to be planned so that change can occur. The possible areas of action in which these elements would include are instructional delivery, instructional support, curricular alternatives, school budget, and student discipline policies (Fullan & Watson, 2000). For example, teachers' pedagogical

and curriculum decisions become school-centered and teachers are encouraged to develop curriculum and select or create instructional materials. There is additional time needed by teachers to be involved in administrative and curricular decisions. Teachers would not be responsive to devoting more of their time to these activities if there were not a sense of ownership on their part.

The remaining section of the literature review provides a discussion of the educational outcomes to be used in this study. The review also examines the interplay of teacher leadership and shared decision-making that affects educational outcomes (also referred to as ‘school productivity’), such as the school’s student attendance rate, suspension rate, graduation rate, and event dropout rate.

Factors Influencing Educational Outcomes

Prior studies assert that four factors play a key role in influencing educational outcomes such as attendance, graduation, dropout, and suspension rates (LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991). The consensus in academic research is that these school-level outcomes are influenced by student-related issues, school-related issues, constructed related issues, and macro-system (societal ills) related issues (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993; Raudenbush & Bryk, 1986). Student-related issues pertain to background characteristics, experiences, and traits that students bring to the school environment. The student’s home environment, economic status, age, and culture are often out of the school system’s sphere of influence (Rumberger, 1987).

School-related issues, on the other hand, have a direct influence on a student’s attendance, graduation, dropout, and suspension rates. Inadequate teaching, non-

responsive school staff, or intimidating school climate can negatively impact a student's desire to perform well academically or attend school regularly (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). Constructed related issues refer to aggressive attitudes and rejection of school rules as well as individual attitudes concerning self, peers, school, or authority that can be proximate causes of educational outcomes and more distal determinants of school performance (Lee et al., 2011). Macro-system (societal ills) related issues refer to social and economic factors that are important precursors of educational outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). On the other hand, the interrelated consequences of educational outcomes, like the causes, are difficult to untangle (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992).

This study primarily utilizes school management models, teacher involvement, and decision-making as its theoretical base and these collective theories/models pose a useful lens for understanding the relationship between educational outcomes and school improvement through teachers' involvement in decision-making (i.e., administrative and curricular decisions). There is a scarcity of studies that directly link teachers' shared leadership in administrative and curricular decisions to various aspects of educational productivity (namely attendance, graduation, dropout, and suspension rates).

The next section explores the relevant literature on attendance, graduation, dropout, and suspension rates.

Attendance, Graduation, Dropout, and Suspension Rates

Several challenges face the American school system. One particular dilemma has plagued the system for decades: educational outcomes such as attendance, graduation, dropout and suspension rates. For school administrators and teachers, identifying the school-level factors that influence these outcomes is paramount to developing strategies

that effectively address these problems. Teacher leadership is important because research indicates that students mimic the behaviors and actions of their teachers. This belief should hold true for attendance in particular. If teachers pride themselves on arriving at school on time each day, it stands to reason that their students will follow this same trend.

Finlayson (2009) conducted research on the Cobb County (Georgia) School District and identified a correlation between teacher absenteeism and student performance. Finlayson found that students who were taught by teachers who were frequently absent from school obtained lower achievement test scores than did their peers whose teachers were present. Her research also found that, on average, teachers miss approximately 10 days of school annually. She also stated that these numbers were larger in urban school districts. The relevance of this research is that teachers appear not to value school by frequently being absent, an action that may result in students forming the same opinion and missing a significant number of days from school as well (Finlayson, 2009). If school leaders share leadership responsibilities with teachers, they will strengthen the willingness of their teachers to engage in the collaboration process, commit to the success of the work, and reduce the likelihood that the teacher will take off without having a serious issue to address (Finlayson, 2009).

A 2009-2010 study conducted by ECO Northwest, using data supplied from the Oregon Department of Education, concluded that a clear and consistent relationship existed between student attendance and academic achievement (Henderson, Hill, & Norton, 2014). This finding has a significant impact on the field of education and is linked to common educator beliefs that suggest it would be difficult for children to obtain

proficient scores on cognitive achievement assessments if they are not in school to receive direct and implied instruction.

School leaders frequently measure attendance using two factors: average daily attendance (ADA) and truancy. ADA is typically defined as the percentage of students who are present in school each day (Chang, 2012). Schools and districts typically set a goal or target to achieve: an ADA rate of 95% or higher. The rationale for using this rate to set attendance goals is linked to the fact that the ADA is used at the federal and state levels to allocate funding to schools and districts. The higher the rate, the more funds that the school/district receives to fund educational programming. The term *truancy* refers to the number of unexcused absences that a child has. Schools and districts with large truancy issues may need to seek legal intervention from the city and/or state level to enforce state compulsory laws for school attendance.

ADA and truancy may be the two most common terms used when discussing student attendance issues; however, the term *chronic absenteeism* should also be included in the conversation. Chronic absenteeism occurs when a student misses a minimum of 10% of the school year for any reason. Research indicates that students who miss 10% or more of any given school year are at a larger risk for academic failure than are students who attend school regularly and consistently (Chang, 2012).

The publication *Attendance in Early Elementary Grades* found that over 7.5 million students miss between thirty (30) and thirty-one (31) days from school annually (Applied Survey Research, 2011). Additional data collected by the Office of Civil Rights suggests that nearly 122,000 students were chronically absent from Tennessee schools in 2013 (Office of Civil Rights, 2013). The data captured via the Office of Civil Rights

align with the predefined definition of chronic absenteeism by stating that students were absent fifteen (15) days or more during the school year. If a student misses fifteen (15) days of school, he or she has missed approximately 1,125 hours of instructional time. The research also found that students who miss this amount of time from school are headed for academic woes and are at risk for failing to graduate from high school. The third fact that the researchers found was that poor attendance was not an isolated issue for high schools but could begin as early as Pre-K (10 Facts, 2014).

Chronic absenteeism is a problem that can be difficult for schools and districts to identify because schools have systems in place to measure their ADA and truancy rates; however, chronic absenteeism may go unnoticed because some students have excused notices to cover their frequent absences. Many students who are excessively absent have health issues and impairments that can be linked to issues with asthma, diabetes, obesity, tooth decay and other illnesses such as sickle cell anemia (Research Brief, 2012).

Chronic absenteeism can have an adverse impact on student achievement at all educational levels. Research from the Utah Education Policy Center aligned the number of times that a student is chronically absent from school with the likelihood that the student would not complete high school. The table below shows the impact that years of chronic absenteeism can have on a student's chances for high school completion (Research Brief, 2012).

Table 1

Impact of Chronic Absenteeism on Graduation Rate

# of Years of Chronic Absenteeism from 8 th through 12 th grade	% of Students Who Drop Out of High School
1	10.3%
2	36.4%
3	58.7%
4	61.3%

Source: Research Brief, 2012.

Data from the chart indicate that if students are chronically absent for three (3) or more years, the likelihood that they will not complete school is greater than 50%. This research is important because it provides instructional leaders and teachers with a different way of looking at attendance. Knowing and understanding that chronic absenteeism can lead to dropping out of school provides school leaders with an opportunity to develop and implement programs that are geared towards ensuring that students attend school on a consistent basis (Research Brief, 2012).

Impact of Attendance on Standardized Assessments

Richmond (2014) concluded that students who are chronically absent frequently obtain lower test scores on national assessments than did their peers with good attendance. Richmond also stated that chronically absent students scored, on average, three (3) percentage points lower than their non-absent peers on the National Assessment

of Educational Progress (NAEP) examination that is administered nationally to students in 4th and 8th grades. Richmond (2014) defined chronically absent students as any student who missed three or more days of school during the month before the assessment was administered.

Research conducted by Chang (2012) and Richmond (2014) suggests that chronic absenteeism has an adverse impact on student achievement. Richmond described the negative impact that missing 10% of the school year can have on the graduation rate for a student enrolled in high school. Additional research needs to be conducted to determine if a correlation exists between chronic absenteeism and low ACT or SAT scores for high school seniors.

Attendance Solutions

Multiple connections have been made between attendance and student achievement. Finlayson (2009) stated that teacher absences and student absences result in the same outcome of students obtaining lower scores in literacy and numeracy on standardized assessments. For this reason, school administrators and teacher leaders need to understand the three main categories that can be associated with poor attendance (Chang, 2012).

The three categories are discretion, aversion, and barriers. Discretion factors arise when parents, students, or teachers fail to understand the importance of regular school attendance. Discretion also occurs when the school lacks a strong culture of attendance. For example, if teachers are frequently absent, students may be frequently absent as well. Aversion possibly occurs when students avoid coming to school because of cognitive

struggles, a lack of teacher engagement, or to avoid bullying. Teacher aversions include a feeling of being unsupported by the administration when disciplining students and avoiding completing tasks that teachers feel are not related to education, such as administering medication to students. Barriers include a lack of access to healthcare, lack of a safe way to get to school, and poor transportation (Chang, 2012). An example of a transportation issue is evident when the ADA for the school is lower on days when the weather is inclement because the majority of students walk to school.

Recommendations for addressing and improving attendance issues include developing a recognition program, increasing stakeholder engagement, personalizing outreach efforts, and establishing a school team to monitor and track attendance (Change, 2012). Each of these strategies provides the school with a systematic approach for addressing attendance concerns. The recognition program and engagement strategies are linked, as they are aimed at improving the general attendance of all students. For example, a school may host a monthly attendance dance that students with a 95% ADA can attend. Advertising this plan to students and parents is likely to increase attendance at the school because the students will want to receive the incentive. Personalized outreach and attendance monitoring are linked strategies because the monitoring process will identify the families that need personalized attention. If a student missed multiple days within a month, the student and his or her parents should be contacted to determine the root cause of the frequent absences and to identify solutions that the school can assist with that will result in the child being able to attend school more frequently.

School leadership teams can implement a three-tiered approach for addressing attendance issues as listed in the table:

Table 2

3-Tiered Approach for Addressing Student Attendance

Targeted Student Population	Program Type	Purpose and Cost
At-Risk Students Students who have been chronically absent 20%	Recovery Program	To provide options for students and families that will increase attendance. High cost
Moderate-Risk Students Students who have been chronically absent between 10% and 19% of the time	Intervention Program	To identify students at risk of being chronically absent and to offer support before it is too late. Moderate cost
All Students	Universal Prevention	To inform stakeholders of the importance of attending school regularly. Low cost

Source: Change, 2012.

The types of prevention, intervention, and recovery programs that are put in place will vary based on the individual needs of the students, parents, and teachers in a given school district. The idea and basic structure of the plan can be put in place by any organization to increase attendance and student achievement.

The last section of the review of the literature thus far has focused on leadership and attendance data that are representative of national data. The following research and data are specifically associated with high schools in the state of Tennessee.

Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Data

The *Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL)* survey originated from extensive work by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission (NCPTSC) that began in 2001. Based on a literature review and analyses of both state and national survey data, the NCPTSC was able to identify the factors that contributed to teacher satisfaction and employment trajectories. As a result of the findings, the areas of time, empowerment, leadership, decision-making, and facilities and resources as related to future employment plans emerged and helped to establish the *TELL* survey that would assess effectiveness and outcomes of interest in schools where the survey was administered.

In this study, the method for determining the effectiveness of teachers over time involved analyzing high school achievement data. The state of Tennessee currently operates 248 high schools that contain diverse student populations. The state develops an annual *TELL* report that monitors student achievement by analyzing data for the graduation cohort using the event dropout, attendance, graduation, and dropout rates for

students in the state (TELL, 2013). Looking at the performance of individual schools or comparing all of the schools in the state as a whole, one can analyze the data. Tennessee is divided into 95 counties, and each county that has a high school is included in the data discussion. In addition to using the Tennessee *TELL* data for graduation, retention, and attendance rates, the 3-year averages of ACT scores for each county was also reviewed to determine if any trends emerged.

According to the 2013 Tennessee TELL data report, the attendance rate for all high school students was 94.4%. A scan through the data revealed that several counties had attendance rates that met or exceeded 97%: Alcoa, Fayetteville, Johnson City, Lewis, McKenzie, Rhea, and Rutherford. One common thread for these counties is that they are located in rural areas with a student population that is composed predominantly of White students. The three districts with the lowest attendance rates were Carroll County with an 80% attendance rate, Memphis City Schools (91.4%), and Unicoi County Schools (91.8%). Memphis City Schools, currently Shelby County Schools, is the largest and most urban school district in the state (*TELL*, 2013).

The cohort dropout rate for the state of Tennessee in 2013 was 7.3%. An analysis of the data revealed that multiple school districts had dropout rates that exceeded 15%: Cannon, Carroll, Davidson, Dyersburg, Fayette, Giles, Hamilton, Henderson, Humboldt, Lake, Manchester, Marion, Memphis City Schools, Sequatchie, and Sevier. Manchester County's data stood out in the list with a cohort dropout rate of 100% and was an outlier within the data set. Carroll County, Lake County, and Memphis City Schools had the largest cohort dropout rates, 55%, 18%, and 17.3%, respectively. One trend that is beginning to emerge from the data is that attendance rates are lower in predominantly

urban school districts, and the cohort dropout rates are higher in these areas as well (*TELL*, 2013).

The third analyzed area was graduation rates. The state of Tennessee has a graduation rate of 86.3%. Several districts had graduation rates that exceeded 95%: Clay, Decatur, DeKalb, Gibson County Special School District, Henderson, Johnson City, McKenzie, Milan, Morgan, Richard City, Trenton, and Wilson County. It is important to note that the Richard City School District had a graduation rate of 100%. Multiple counties obtained a graduation rate that was significantly lower than the state average: Cannon County, Davidson County, Fayette County, Marion County, Maury County, Memphis City Schools, and Rhea County. Davidson County and Memphis City Schools generated the lowest graduation rates with only 67.6% of enrolled students successfully completing high school at the conclusion of the 2013 school year (*TELL*, 2013).

The final area that was analyzed was the event dropout rate for each county. The average event dropout rate for the state was 2.7%. Event dropout rates for Cumberland County, Gibson County Special School District, Grundy County, and Tipton County were lower than 0.5%. Event dropout rates for Carroll County, Memphis City Schools, Davidson County, Fayette County, and Fentress County were 4% or higher. The event dropout rate for Carroll County exceeded 50%. Memphis City Schools had the second largest rate: 8.1% (*TELL*, 2013).

The Tennessee *TELL* data (2013) also contained the three-year average of ACT scores for high school students. The median score for the state was 19. Twenty-two counties in Tennessee obtained scores that were greater than or equal to the average.

Among those, Alcoa, Blount County, Elizabeth, Johnson City, Maryville, Oak Ridge, Tullahoma, and Williams had average scores of 22 or higher. The lower performing counties were Humboldt, Hardeman, and Memphis City School with composite scores that were lower than 17. The two school districts with the lowest rates were Humboldt with a mean score of 16.1 and Memphis City Schools with a mean score of 16.2 (*TELL*, 2013).

Research Synthesis

The rise and fall of educational outcomes (attendance, graduation, dropout, and suspension rates) are among the most researched – and least understood— of phenomena in education. Although the above-mentioned studies examined many aspects of educational outcomes, there is still much to know on teacher distributed leadership and teacher involvement in decision-making. The basic premise by which this particular research strand gains momentum is by promoting teachers’ pedagogical and administrative decisions that have an impact on school outcomes. Furthermore, there is a need for more current research to be conducted on the relationship of teacher involvement in pedagogical and administrative decisions and its effect on indicators of school productivity.

The above empirical findings signify the importance of the school environment regarding the aspects of schools as institutions/organizations and the relations among people (principals and teachers) within schools that affect school productivity. Education scholars have noted that school improvement will occur if teachers are allowed more

access to school decision-making processes (Short & Rinehart, 1992; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). This study sought to build upon prior studies on teacher involvement, school management models, and decision-making and provide a sound statistical analysis (namely, hierarchical multiple regression) that can help answer questions, fill knowledge gaps, and generate practical and theoretical perspectives regarding the general working conditions in Tennessee public schools.

Based on the literature, the research concludes that a gap in knowledge was present regarding teacher involvement in pedagogical and administrative decisions and educational outcomes. The present study contributed to the existing literature regarding teacher involvement, while implementing more complex analytical methods to answer questions that were not completely addressed or were unaddressed previously.

The next chapter provides thorough descriptions of the process in which the study was conducted. A review of the purpose of this study, the study design, a description of the sample and the proposed analysis is included.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Overall Methodology

As previously stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teachers' perceived role in school decision-making and concurrent student attendance rate, suspension rate, graduation rate, and dropout rate. Utilizing the theoretical constructs of the literature review in conjunction with the *TELL* Tennessee teacher survey, this study researched teachers' perceptions of their perceived involvement of the three subgroups contained within the context (minority, free and reduced lunch, and learning-disabled, or LD); process (secondary data analysis, evaluation, and report), and content (school management models, teacher involvement, and decision-making).

To address the study's central question, a further examination of teacher decision-making research was conducted to extend research regarding teachers' perceived involvement by combining two currently existing data sources. To address each of the four research questions and conclude findings, a secondary analysis of data was used.

Study Design

The method of this study addressed four teacher involvement research questions using quantitative secondary analysis while outlining strengths and limitations. Due to an increase in the accessibility of both quantitative and qualitative data, secondary analysis of data has gained more attention and use (Heaton, 2004). Hakim (1982) defines secondary analysis as "any further analysis of an existing dataset which presents interpretations, conclusions, or knowledge additional to, or different from, presented in

the first report on the inquiry as a whole and its main results” (Hakim, 1982, p.2).

Hakim’s definition is applied in this study as new interpretations and conclusions emerge from the original *TELL* Tennessee dataset.

This study highlights three characteristics of secondary analysis as described by Hakim. The first characteristic is present and applied through the use of a set of subtopics found in the original *Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL)* questionnaire that was administered in Tennessee in 2011 and 2013. The empowerment section of the *TELL* captured teachers’ perceptions of their involvement in decision-making. The second characteristic of secondary analysis emerges as the merger of perceptual data and publically accessible data of student achievement are used to evaluate secondary school effectiveness. The publically accessible data on student achievement was captured via the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) and provided an additional lens through which effectiveness, as it relates to student achievement, can be enhanced through teacher involvement at the secondary school level. Lastly, this study seeks to answer questions that were not previously addressed regarding teacher involvement at the secondary school level. Hakim refers to this technique of going beyond the original reporting as a sophisticated analytical technique.

Instrument

This study was conducted utilizing teacher responses from the *TELL* survey at 248 secondary schools across the state of Tennessee. The teachers whose responses were captured at each of the 248 schools were given the option to participate at the school level

and did so on a voluntary basis. Information included in this study is focused solely on the 248 participating secondary schools and teacher responses from each.

Context and History

Interactions between teachers and leaders involved in the decision-making process are reviewed in the literature. The effects that teacher involvement has on school outcomes, such as the school's attendance rate, suspension rate, graduation rate, and dropout rate are also examined with the intent to indicate whether school improvement in each of these areas are dependent upon increased opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making. Prior studies emphasize several ways through which teacher involvement has been employed in school settings. The most reliable results were those that generated information about multiple aspects of the school—including climate, effectiveness, job satisfaction, morale, ownership, and improvement (Blasé & Blasé, 1997; Short & Rinehart, 1992; Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer, et al., 1997; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Lintner, 2008; Angelle, 2010; Coble, 2011). According to Fullan (2008), school leaders help to transform each of these aspects. In order to explain the results of each aspect of the school, a reliable instrument such as a questionnaire would prove beneficial in providing adequate evidence of psychometric validity and reliability.

The *Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Questionnaire (TELL)* is a school climate instrument that is widely thought to meet the requirements of validity and reliability mentioned above. The instrument was first developed in 2001 by the New Teacher Center (NTC) and made its debut in North Carolina. Nearly 1.5 million educators across eighteen (18) states have responded to the questionnaire (New Teacher Center, 2016). The *TELL* consists of eight research-based constructs:

- Time—Available time to plan, to collaborate, to provide instruction, and to eliminate barriers in order to maximize instructional time during the school day
- Facilities and Resources—Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers
- Community Support and Involvement—Community and parent/guardian communication and influence in the school
- Managing Student Conduct—Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment
- Teacher Leadership—Teacher involvement in decisions that impact the classroom and school practices
- School Leadership—The ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns
- Professional Development—Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching
- Instructional Practices and Support—Data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning. (*TELL* Tennessee Research Brief, 2013).

Each of the eight constructs mentioned helps to inform and guide educators and policymakers toward plans of school improvement.

The *TELL* Tennessee was formally administered by legacy Memphis City Schools as a part of a collaborative partnership with the Gates Foundation. Shortly thereafter, the adoption of the *TELL* by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) proved to be a

reliable instrument in measuring school climate issues across the state. With its first statewide administration taking place in 2011 and secondly in 2013, Tennessee has since moved away from the *TELL* as its climate measure instrument. However, the collected data from the second administration of the instrument in 2013 aligns with and supports the purpose of this study. With special permission from the New Teacher Center, data were aggregated to the level of the school and merged with coexisting institutional information at 248 high schools in the state of Tennessee.

Evidence of the Validity and Reliability of the TELL

The validity of the *TELL* is supported by the length of time in which it was administered and its statewide adoption. Additionally, the publically available *TELL TN* website further supports the validity of content and provides a shared statistical analysis of both content and structural validity of the eight research-based constructs previously mentioned. An excerpt from the 2012 New Teacher Center “Teaching Conditions Initiative” Executive Summary states:

NTC’s Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey has been externally validated and nationally recognized. Using the school as the unit of analyses, the survey consists of a core set of questions that address the following teaching conditions: New Teacher Support, Instructional Practices & Support, Managing Student Conduct, School Leadership, Teacher Leadership, Community Engagement & Support, Use of Time, Professional Development and Facilities & Resources. (*NTC*, 2012, p. 1)

The Spring 2013 research brief published on the *TELL* Tennessee website also informs us that an extensive review of research literature on working conditions, teacher dissatisfaction, and teacher mobility helped to develop the first *TELL* instrument. The research brief sheds light on issues that not only supports the *TELL*'s content validity but also its structural validity by referencing results of studies conducted prior to its inception. Among the studies, Swanlund (2011) was referenced for using a combination of factor analysis and Rasch measurement modeling to examine the dimensionality of the instrument. Based on Swanlund's data taken from 400,000 teachers from 5,000 schools in 12 states, analyses revealed thirteen constructs that the *TELL* could possibly measure. However, the *TELL* focuses on eight of the thirteen measures. The additional constructs were integrated into four domains of the instrument.

As a result of the newly formulated eight-construct instrument, an analysis of school-level responses specific to teacher leadership emerged. The set of items were then used to group teachers as either *perceived* as leaders or *empowered to act* as leaders: hence, the *TELL*'s sixteen (16) teacher leadership items. For the purpose of this study, the extent to which teachers are involved to act as leaders is further examined, more specifically their role in making a school-wide decision as referenced in the following eight *TELL* Tennessee domains (*TELL*, 2013):

- a. Selecting instructional materials and resources
- b. Devising teaching techniques
- c. Setting grading and student assessment practices
- d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs
- e. Establishing student discipline procedures

- f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent
- g. The selection of teachers new to this school
- h. School improvement planning

A principal components analysis followed by a varimax rotation suggested that a two-factor solution could be used to summarize the data. Explaining some 69.4% of the variance, this two-factor solution highlighted a contrast between largely *administratively-oriented* teacher leadership domains items (d, e, f, g, and h) and those that were mostly *pedagogically-oriented* (teacher leadership domains a, b, and c). Table 3 shows mean standard deviations, item loadings, and commonalities for each of the eight items that are focused on in this study. Factor scores with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one were computed for each of the two factors, using the regression method. These two-factor scores serve as independent variables in this study.

Sampling: Individual Level

The data sets that were analyzed for this study were obtained from the *Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Questionnaire* that was published through the New Teacher Center. Data sets from 2011 and 2013 were the focus of the analysis with a concentration placed on linking demographic data provided from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) with student achievement. After reviewing both data sets, it was concluded that it was easier to identify correlations within the 2013 data as opposed to the 2011 data set.

Table 4 displays demographic characteristics from the 2013 TELL data sample. The original data set is comprised of responses from over sixty thousand respondents

located in seventeen hundred different educational facilities in the state. The questions that were addressed were directly aligned with their perceptions of the climate of the school they were employed in. According to the data, 44% of respondents were employed at an elementary school while 27.5% and 27.9% were linked to middle and high schools. Approximately 90% of those surveyed classified themselves as teachers while approximately 4% stated that were in an administrative role as either a principal or assistant principal. 45.1% of the respondents reported having less than ten years of experience in their current roles while 53.6% indicated that they have ten or more years of experience in the current roles. The majority of the participants revealed that they had been employed at their current school for less than six years; therefore, they had not had an opportunity to obtain tenure at the time of the survey.

Sampling: Institutional Level

An analysis of the 2013 TELL Survey along with information from the TDOE website revealed that over 248 secondary institutions are located in the state of Tennessee. The data represented in Table 5 shows the locations that had missing values on the intake and outcome variables that were analyzed in this study. According to the data, 53.36% of the students in the state qualify for free and or reduced lunch. Approximately 1/4th of the students in the state are classified as non-white and 12.23% have been diagnosed with a learning disability. Table 4 also contains data that is relevant to the analysis of intake variables. Specifically, in relation to the demographics and experience of the faculty members from the institutions. According to TELL responses,

55.14% of the respondents reported having 10 or more years of experience; however, 51.41% reported being in their current location for six or more years.

An analysis of student achievement based on the TDOE accountability model allowed for data to be analyzed based on the state's value-added model. *Value-added* in Tennessee is based on the three-year averages of student outcomes on end of course state assessments. Data for English and math are addressed in this study. According to the data, 50% of the students assessed were proficient or advanced in math and 60% were proficient or advanced in reading. Although 50% and 60% were performing well on the state assessment, the average three-year score on the ACT for Tennessee students was 19. However, the national average on the assessment is 21 (ACT, 2016).

An analysis of the assessment provides researchers with a variety of different questions and issues that could be explored in future studies. Although the national average in attendance and graduation rates is lower than the national average, both the attendance and graduation rates for the 248 schools in the study were relatively high. According to the data, the attendance rate for the schools exceeded 90%. One year, three-year, and four-year attendance rates were $M = 93.50$, $SD = 1.91$; $M = 93.74$, $SD = 1.83$; and $M = 94.46$, $SD = 2.14$, respectively.

The graduation results were also close to 90% with one year, three-year, and four-year rates being $M = 88.77$, $SD = 6.10$; $M = 88.83$, $SD = 6.23$; and $M = 88.99$, $SD = 7.71$, respectively. The attendance and graduation success rates at the schools could possibly be linked to the teachers' responses on the 2013 *TELL* survey in relation to the question linked to their intentions for future employment at their current school. According to the

results, 83.47% of the respondents indicated they wanted to continue working at their current school and also indicated that their school was *a good place to work and learn*.

Analysis

Relevant descriptive statistics that address the research questions for the study are presented in Table 6. The data in the table shows that only 50% of the variables are statistically significant. The largest correlation observed in the data set was related to the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch and the attendance rate. A second interesting finding was related to the fact that a correlation was not found between attendance rates and teacher administrative concerns; however, a correlation did exist between attendance rates and pedagogical concerns.

Table 7 contains the results of the hierarchical multiple regression that are aligned with the descriptive statistics. The data in the table revealed the factors that have the greatest impact on student attendance. One correlation that was present was between the attendance rate and the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch ($\beta = -0.480, t = -8.494, p < .001$).

The findings also indicated a correlation between teacher decision-making variables and increases in the percent of the variance of students' attendance. According to the data, a variance of 3.1% existed between attendance and pedagogical decision-making. This finding appears to have statistical significance linked to the outcome ($\beta = 0.173, t = 3.131, p = .002$). Conversely, increased teacher decision-making about administrative concerns does not seem to enhance student attendance ($\beta = 0.046, t = 0.814, p = .416$).

Table 3

Summary Statistics for Principal Components Analysis of Eight Teacher Decision-making Items (N = 248)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>h</i> ²	Loadings	
				1	2
Providing input on how the school budget will be spent (M)	1.78	0.31	0.777	0.856	
The selection of teachers new to this school (M)	1.57	0.31	0.696	0.833	
Determining the content of in-service professional development programs (M)	2.32	0.33	0.657	0.730	
Establishing student discipline procedures (M)	2.45	0.33	0.602	0.628	
School improvement planning (M)	2.82	0.33	0.554	0.557	
Devising teaching techniques (M)	3.46	0.20	0.816		0.861
Selecting instructional materials and resources (M)	3.20	0.26	0.778		0.852
Setting grading and student assessment practices (M)	3.21	0.22	0.671		0.803

Note. Component 1 = Administrative, Component 2 = Pedagogical.

Table 4
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample at the Individual Level (N = 61341)

Characteristic	<i>f</i>	%
School Level		
Elementary	24185	44.3
High	15130	27.7
Middle	15039	27.5
Special	279	0.5
Position		
Teacher	54633	89.1
Principal	1107	1.8
Assistant Principal	1213	2.0
Other Education Professional	3199	5.2
Not Answered	1189	1.9
Years of Experience		
First Year	3552	5.8
2-3 Years	5698	9.3
4-6 Years	8051	13.1
7-10 Years	9782	15.9
11-20 Years	18412	30.0
20+ years	14471	23.6
Not Answered	1375	2.2
Years at the School		
First Year	8392	13.7
2-3 Years	10906	17.8
4-6 Years	11799	19.2
7-10 Years	10394	16.9
11-20 Years	12194	19.9
20+ years	5686	9.3
Not Answered	1970	3.2

Table 5

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample: Institutional Level (N = 248)

Characteristic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Students on F/R Lunch (%)	53.36	17.17
Minority Students (%)	23.35	26.07
Students w/ Disabilities (%)	12.23	6.00
Teachers > 10 Years' Experience (%)	55.14	10.91
Teachers > 10 Years' Tenure (%)	51.41	11.84
ACT Composite Score 2010-2012	18.90	1.76
Algebra I Proficiency 2010-12 (%)	48.30	13.62
English II Proficiency 2010-2012 (%)	59.24	12.70
Graduation Rate 2010-2013 (%)		
Current Year (%)	88.77	6.10
Three Years (%)	88.83	6.23
Four Years (%)	88.99	7.71
Attendance Rate 2010-2013 (%)		
Current Year (%)	93.50	1.91
Three Years (%)	93.74	1.83
Four Years (%)	94.46	2.14

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Multiple Regression Analysis (N = 248)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5
1. Attendance 2013 (%)	94.5	2.1	-0.47**	0.03	0.06	0.23**
2. F/R Lunch (%)	53.4	17.2		0.22**	0.04	-0.11*
3. LD students (%)	12.2	6.0			0.27**	0.01
4. Administrative	0.0	1.0				0.00
5. Pedagogical	0.0	1.0				

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 7

Hierarchical Regression Summary of Teacher Decision-Making Scores on Concurrent Student Attendance Rates (N = 248)

Source	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.B.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> =
Block 1: Student Demographics					
Model Fit: $F(2, 245) = 39.02, p < .001, R^2 = .242$					
F/R Lunch Students (%)	-0.063	0.007	-0.503	-8.820	0.000
LD students (%)	0.050	0.020	0.140	2.459	0.015
Block 2: Student Demographics + Teacher Decision-making					
Model Fit: $F(4, 243) = 22.79, p < .001, R^2 = .273,$					
F Change (2, 243) = 5.22, $p = .006$					
F/R Lunch Students (%)	-0.060	0.007	-0.480	-8.494	0.000
LD students (%)	0.043	0.021	0.121	2.084	0.038
Administrative Score	0.099	0.122	0.046	0.814	0.416
Pedagogical Score	0.370	0.118	0.173	3.131	0.002

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between secondary level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions and four measures of school productivity related to students' academic achievement. Deriving from this overall purpose are the four more specific research questions as follows:

Research Question 1.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent student attendance rate?

Research Question 2.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent student suspension rate?

Research Question 3.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent student graduation rate?

Research Question 4.

Controlling for student demographic characteristics, what is the extent of the relationship between secondary-level teachers' perceived involvement with respect to making pedagogical and administrative decisions at their school and the school's concurrent event dropout rate?

The chapter opens with an inspection of the descriptive statistics underwriting the multiple regression analyses employed to answer the four research questions.

Accompanied by brief discussions, summaries of the aforementioned multiple regression analyses are provided for each research question in turn. A brief synopsis of what was learned from these analyses concludes the chapter.

Descriptive Statistics

Inspection of the zero-order correlation matrix that summarizes the relationships between the three control, two independent, and four dependent variables employed in these analyses suggests robust associations between and among these three variable types (see Table 8). Among the control variables, there is a statistically significant relationship between the percent of students on free and reduced lunch and both the percent of minority students ($r = .41, p < .01$) and the percent of learning-disabled (LD) students ($r = .22, p < .01$). However, no such relationship is observed between the percent of minority students and the percent of LD students ($r = .04, p = .578$). While the latter variable only seems systematic to depress the school's graduation rate ($r = -.37, p <$

.01), its impact on the other three student outcomes examined in this study appears at best to be minimal.

With respect to the other two student demographic variables, there is a systematic tendency to inflate the negative and deflate the positive measures of student attainment in this study. On the one hand, the percent of students on free and reduced lunch and the percent of minority students are inversely related to the school's attendance rate ($r = -.47$, $p < .01$ and $r = -.29$, $p < .01$, respectively), and the school's graduation rate ($r = -.50$, $p < .01$ and $r = -.55$, $p < .01$, respectively). On the other, the school poverty variable and the school minority variable are linked to both higher school suspension rates ($r = .46$ $p < .01$ and $r = .80$ $p < .01$, respectively), and higher event dropout rates ($r = .46$, $p < .01$ and $r = .55$, $p < .01$, respectively).

With respect to the associations between the two teacher involvement variables and student outcomes, positive links are seen for increasing pedagogical decision-making, while negative ones or ones that are not statistically significant are observed for increasing administrative decision-making. Without controlling for student demographics, pedagogical involvement appears to be both statistically significantly and directionally appropriately correlated with the student attendance ($r = .23$, $p < .01$), suspension ($r = -.38$, $p < .01$), graduation ($r = .20$, $p < .01$), and event dropout rates ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). While no zero-order correlation is observed for the association between administrative decision-making and student attendance rates, those that are statistically significant but substantively problematic are observed for increases in that variable and increases in the student suspension and event dropout rates rate ($r = .22$, $p < .01$ and $r = -.20$, $p < .01$, respectively). It would also seem that empowering teachers administratively

is linked to a higher event dropout rate, but the correlation is weak and not controlled for other confounding influences ($r = .14, p < .05$).

Given the inverse associations between teacher administrative decision-making and positive student outcomes, it should also be noted that schools that more often tend to promote this form of involvement are those with higher percentages of minority students ($r = .22, p < .01$) and higher percentages of LD students ($r = .27, p < .00$). Conversely, it would more often seem that schools promoting pedagogical involvement—the form more identified with positive student outcomes—are less likely to be those with higher percentages of minority students ($r = -.36, p < .01$).

Assumption Checks for the Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

For the four hierarchical multiple regressions that were conducted to answer the research questions, the statistical outcomes were to a degree foreshadowed by the zero-order correlations previously discussed. In attempting to fit these four regression models to the data, procedures outlined by Field (2013, p. 316) were followed to check for linearity and unusual cases and to determine whether the statistical assumptions of homoscedasticity, normality, and independence were tenable. With no violations of these assumptions observed, final regressions were conducted with the answers to the questions as follows