CENTRAL OFFICE TRANSFORMATION:

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL

LEADER DIRECTOR INFLUENCE

By

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Abstract: Questions regarding the role and organizational structure of central office administration in public school districts across the nation have recently come to light of high-stakes policy environments mandating enhanced student performance. Federal and state policy mandates have placed demands on school district central offices. This qualitative case study examines the perceptions of principals involved in central office transformation, specifically principal supervision, that focus on developing assistive relationships, and further developing instructional leadership skills with central office leaders.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Questions regarding the role and organizational structure of central office administration in public school districts across the nation have recently come into focus in light of high-stakes policy environments mandating enhanced student performance. Federal and state policy mandates have placed demands on United States' school district central offices. For example, in 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act extended the effort by state governors' calling for improvements in schools' performance by the year 2000 (Honig, 2013). The school district central office became responsible for the development and implementation of a districtwide plan to meet, or exceed, the current standards. These new initiatives required schools to go beyond basic minimum standards to reach higher levels of achievement.

Further, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated that districts assist schools to improve their performance and decrease current achievement gaps. NCLB amplified the increased performance piece by placing greater consequences for schools' failure to improve (Honig, 2013). As a result of this legislation and more current legislation such as Race to the Top (RTTT), increased emphasis was placed on the role of the central office in promoting reform efforts to enhance student success. Reform efforts targeting any educational issue are complex, but emphasizing a change in

role for the central office is a complex change that influences every part of the organization.

The change that is emphasized is a change in the role of central office administrators from district oversight and management to the role of instructional leadership. This change offers important implications for whole system reform. For example, central office transformation involves strengthening the professional practice of both central office leaders and building leaders while increasing teaching and learning outcomes (Honig, Lorton, & Copland, 2009). Unlike realigning organizational charts and restructuring or dissolving subunits efforts, central office transformation involves deep shifts in the district leaders' work and relationships with schools (Honig et al., 2009).

Currently there is an emerging body of research regarding this transformation and the change of role for district leaders in developing relationships with schools while supporting teaching and learning improvements (Honig, 2006a, 2009; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006a; Supovitz, 2006; Swinnerton, 2006). Significant strands of research regarding educational improvement indicate that when schools move toward teaching and learning improvements, they do not move in isolation (Honig et al, 2009). School districts and their central offices are essential supports for transformational work. Central office leaders can engage with building leaders in an effort to build capacity in both schools and the service of a district central office in efforts to improve teaching and learning. Transformation within the roles and responsibilities of district leaders takes time, and research suggests that without effective central office leadership, the chance of any school reform to improve student learning is diminished (Leithwood, Seashore- Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Change of this measure starts and maintains inertia from

the top level, which in an educational system, begins with district leadership residing within the central office.

In an effort to highlight these changes of roles and supervision responsibilities, the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), in partnership with the University of Washington, has inquired into the work of central office administrators as developing the instructional leadership capacity of building leaders. CEL has developed the Principal Support Framework (PSF) in collaboration with the Effective Teaching Project to investigate this change in central office roles and responsibilities. This framework is designed to support central office leaders and principals as they provide principals with instructional vision, help to identify strengths and weaknesses of current instructional practices, surface assistance needs, and prioritize areas of inquiry and next-stage policy development (Center for Educational Leadership, University of Washington, 2016a).

Problem Statement

As a result of policies and mandates placed on school districts to improve student performance and decades-old achievement gap, attention has recently been devoted to a change in the role of district-level leaders (Honig, 2008). This reform effort involves central office district leaders as they are understood as "principal supervisor" with an increased focus on providing additional resources as instructional leaders. As a part of this new work, district leaders work directly with building leaders to promote principal effectiveness in an effort to enhance learning outcomes in their buildings (Honig, 2008).

However, this role serves in stark contrast to the traditional role of district managers (Miller, 2014). Given the challenges involved in implementing the shift within any organizational structure, some reform efforts have been successful (Bryk &

Schnieder, 2002; Mintrop, 2004; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2007; O' Day, 2004), while other efforts have been unsuccessful (Mintrop, 2004; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002; Sunderman, Kim, & Orfield, 2005). While exploring these new roles and performance demands that are in contrast to long-standing roles, district leaders are setting aside historical work practices, and are now creating partnerships between principals and district leader to support district-wide instructional improvement (Honig, 2013). One reason why reform efforts have been successful in some cases and not in others may be due to principal perceptions regarding the influence of the district level administrator as an instructional leader, on the principal's role in teaching and learning to meet accountability mandates.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore principal perceptions of the influence of supervisory practices of central office administrators, Instructional Leader Directors (ILD); in districts working within the Principal Support Framework. By examining one dimension of an organizational change within the transforming central office, this study explores principal perceptions of increased instructional leadership development and the assistive relationship between principal and the principal supervisors (ILDs).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are principal perceptions of central office administrators, principal supervisors, as they work daily toward a more efficient and transforming process within the principal support framework?

a. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their ability to develop as instructional leaders under the ILD model of supervision?
b. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their relationships with district level leadership as the transformative role of principal supervisor (ILD) is implemented?

2. What other opportunities for future studies are revealed in this study?

Theoretical Framework

This central office transformational work is framed with both the socio-cultural learning theory (Lave, 1998; Rogoff, 1994; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and organizational learning theory (Levitt & March, 1998). Honig's research team from the University of Washington (2008) found that socio-cultural learning theory and organizational learning theory both describe work practices and activities that are consistent with redefining central office roles and reform. Socio-cultural theory identifies the needed work practices involved with relationships in which people work together to strengthen their protocol of everyday work (Honig, 2008). This framework is imperative while looking at the relationship between ILD's and their principals. If specific work practices are gleaned as beneficial between principal and supervisor, the relationship may strengthen, therefore, enhancing the teaching and learning development of instructional leadership.

Additionally, Honig's (2008) study reveals administrators want to learn from others; thus, their experiences closely align with concepts from organizational learning theory (trial-and-error or learning from experience). Each lens focuses on two dimensions of what organizational learning by central office leaders may look like: socio-

cultural learning theory examines the importance of leaders working with schools principals to support their teaching and learning improvements efforts; organizational learning explores how central office leaders use evidence from their own experiences, including assistance relationships, to help inform district operational performance (Honig, 2008).

These theoretical frameworks will be applied ex post facto providing a lens to focus on two collaborative dimensions that have been used extensively in the literature on the central office transformation, specifically the dimension involving principal supervision or ILDs (Honig, 2008).

Procedures

This qualitative case study utilizes a constructivist perspective to explore the perceptions of principals engaged in central office transformation through principal supervision by ILDs in a large Midwestern urban district. The case study design is employed in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of meaning for principals involved in a district that is implementing central office reform. Case studies, although common in the area of education, can influence practice, policy, and future research (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher is the primary instrument for analyzing and gathering data in this qualitative study. This responsibility maximizes the opportunities to produce and collect meaningful information. Research in a qualitative manner allows the discovery of principal support perceptions from several angles, and considers the social context in which the experiences occur. A total of six principals will be chosen utilizing criterion sampling as the study is designed to explore perceptions of principal support and

principal perceptions of forming assistive relationships with central office leaders. This type of sampling, according to Patton (2002), is based on a set of criteria, and will add important qualitative components to ongoing program monitoring.

Narratives are planned in the study design to communicate "fieldwork" reflections through words of practicing building and central office administrators. Of the six administrators interviewed, two will be elementary level, two middle level, and two high school level administrators. Survey instruments will be distributed to building administrators in the fall of 2016. Data collection will occur during the fall and spring of the 2016-2017 school year. The data will be collected from a large urban school district located in the Midwest. Data will consist of interviews, observations, surveys, and document analysis.

Significance of Study

To Practice

This study will provide insight into the growth and development of principals as instructional leaders under the ILD model. It will also provide insight into what effect relationships between central office supervisors and principals have on principal development as instructional leader development. The study will seek to identify support strategies that may influence principals' perceptions of supervisory relationships, and what type of instructional leader development is needed from the perspective of the principal.

Learning improvement initiatives depend on significant changes that occur within a district's central office. Specifically, models of central office administration that encourages district leadership to work with principals call for a shift from traditional top-

down supervisory relationships with schools, to close partnerships and relationships centered around improving classroom teaching practice and student learning (Elmore & Burney, 1998; Hightower, 2002; Hubbard et al., 2006b). This study will explore the influence of assistive relationships between central office supervisors and building principals on principal instructional leadership practices, as they work together to emphasize the importance of classroom teaching and student learning. This instructional focus involving teaching and learning has become a key responsibility associated with building principals. Relationships and support remains critical in the growth of a principal's instructional leadership role through teaching and student learning meeting accountability mandates.

To Research

Current research has provided more focused attention on the role of the central office in promoting student learning outcomes in districts across the nation (Honig, 2013). This focus is the result of the spotlight of high-stakes policy environments mandating enhanced student performance. Federal and state policy mandates have placed demands on United States' school district central offices. These new initiatives require schools to go beyond basic minimum standards to reach higher levels of achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) mandated that districts assist schools to improve their performance and decrease current achievement gaps. As a result, increased emphasis has been placed on the role of the central office in promoting reform efforts to enhance student success. Federal and state policies, in the past, have called for student standards to be met, but these new initiatives require students to reach high levels of proficiency within the standards (Honig, 2013).

Educational research of the past decade has identified principals' instructional leadership as a contributor to improved teaching, with select studies highlighting student achievement gains (Heck, 1992; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood et. al, 2004; Murphy, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987, 1988; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). Literature details the link between strong principals and their staff as it relates to student effectiveness. However, little information is available concerning principal perceptions of district level administrators working to facilitate instructional leadership with job-embedded support for principals (Honig, 2013).

To Theory

A district central office appears to engage two types of activities when examined through the lens of both the socio-cultural and organizational learning theory (Honig, 2008). First, the central office participates in "hands-on," direct assistance relationships with schools centered on the improvement of teaching and learning. Second, as a result of these assistance relationships as described above, central office leaders change the way they carry out their roles and responsibilities. Instead of serving in a managerial role in a top-down hierarchical structure, they collect lessons they have learned from their new relationships and resources and use these newly discovered evidences as they guide their day to day decisions and practices with building leaders (Honig, 2009). In this study, the exploration of these new assistance relationships in the form of principal supervisors, or (ILDs), will be explored through the principals' perceptions. Currently, little is known about how principals perceive this central office transformation model, and what influence this model has on the principal's ability to support teaching and student learning outcomes.

Definition of Terms

Instructional Leader Director (ILD) - In transforming districts, the ILD has the responsibility for the support of principals' instructional leadership. Supporting the development of principal instructional leadership skills is the main work of these central office leaders. The goal is to spend 100 percent of their time on helping school principals improve their practice (Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, & Newman, 2010).

Principal Support Framework (PSF) - Research teams resulting from the partnership between the Gates Foundation and the University of Washington Center for Education Leadership (CEL), explored research on principal supervision and how central office leadership impact teaching and learning improvement. They developed a tool to inform their plans for improving principal supervisors as they grow instructional leaders (Center for Educational Leadership, 2016a.)

Principal Professional Learning Communities (PPLC)- Select district central offices have begun to convene principals in groups called principal professional learning communities (Honig & Rainey, 2014).This involvement demonstrates a shift away from the traditional role of regulatory business functions, to a role that emphasizes involvement with teaching and learning. The goal of these groups is to strengthen principals' instructional leadership with the long term goal resulting in the quality of classroom teaching and ultimately, student learning.

Leading for Effective Teaching (LET) - LET is a project partnership between the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership (Center for Educational Leadership, 2016b). LET has the goal to

support schools that are working to improve instructional leadership, and produce research, tools, and other resources to support educators across the country.

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) - The aspect of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 that establishes a benchmark goal for district and school performance (Daly & Finnigan, 2011).

In Need of Improvement (INI) - Failure to meet benchmark, targets, or established goals for school performance established by NCLB, results in the label- need of improvement (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). This leads to progressive sanctions for districts and schools.

Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards (ELCC) - These Standards and Indicators were adapted from the Educational Leadership Constituencies Council (ELCC) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration as approved by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in January of 2002. The ELCC Standards were developed to assist current and future school administrators to meet the changing demands of society and schooling. The ELCC Standards were developed from the well-known ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 2008).

Center of Educational Leadership (CEL) –The University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership was founded as a nonprofit service arm of the University of Washington College of Education. CEL is dedicated to eliminating the achievement gap that continues to divide the nation's children along the lines race, class, language and disability. CEL works with teachers, principals, and school system leaders to build expertise to deliver great classroom instruction around a unified vision of outstanding

teaching. CEL's research-based methods are rooted in the belief that every child can succeed at the highest level (Center for Educational Leadership, 2016c).

Summary and Organization of the Study

Chapter I provided an introduction to the study and demonstrated the need to explore the role of the district central office in the current, high-stakes, policy focused, environment. In addition to the presentation of the problem and purpose of statement, the theoretical framework is introduced. Also, terms and definitions are introduced and defined as they relate to this study.

Chapter II highlights the extant literature on the district central beginning with the history of central office. School reform is explored next with characteristics of successful and unsuccessful initiatives. Chapter II discussions include the new roles, responsibilities, and road maps for central office leaders as they are challenged with providing support to principals to carefully define and lead staff forward in the area of instructional leadership.

Chapter III presents the qualitative paradigm that guides the study. Qualitative researchers are motivated by understanding the meanings constructed by participants and how they make sense of their world (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research reveals how the parts work together to form the whole (Merriam, 1998). Interacting with the transformation process highlights the various stages of change, specifically principal supervisors supporting principals with the PSF. This case study will be conducted using criterion sampling.

Chapter IV will present findings, and Chapter V will provide discussion through the lens of social-cultural and organizational learning theory. Conclusions and recommendations will be offered at the end of Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Questions regarding the role and organizational structure of central office administration in public school districts across the nation have recently come into focus in light of high-stakes policy environments mandating enhanced student performance. Federal and state policy mandates have placed demands on United States' school district central offices. Educational policy in the past ten years has targeted the persistent achievement gap between minority and majority ethnic/racial groups, and has attempted to mandate elimination of the achievement gap through a series of legislation pressing educators toward increased accountability at all levels within school systems (Daly, Finnigan, Jordan, Moolenaar, & Che, 2013). As a result, increased emphasis has been placed on the role of the central office in promoting reform efforts to enhance student outcomes. Therefore, the current high stakes policy environment has caused reconsideration of the role of the central office in promoting enhanced student outcomes. Recent reform initiatives put additional pressure on district leaders to serve in the capacity of instructional leader rather than focusing solely in a management stance (Honig, 2013). However, recent studies of school district central office engagement in teaching and learning improvement initiatives indicate that administrators may struggle

with the challenges of instructional leadership due to the temptation to continue to fulfill responsibilities involved in traditional managerial roles (Honig, et. al).

Highlights from a review of existing literature explore districts' central offices and their current traditional role. The following review of existing literature highlights the current body of work regarding historical information defining the creation and the role of the central office, school reform in accountability and performance mandates, school district central offices exploring organizational change, and the central office transformational process, while working within the principal support framework.

History of School Reform

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001), in a review of school improvement initiatives, highlight three phases of school reform during the last four decades. Phase one (1960-1970) witnessed the federal government channeling funds through local educational agencies targeting teacher resources of high needs students, bypassing the central office all together. The second phase (1970-1999) revealed the school site building as the unit for designated reform target. This focus resulted in building sites emerging as significant research sites. As research increased in building sites, the focus changed from teacher resources alone, to identifying effective classroom strategies that could be implemented building wide. Through this process researchers started identifying strategies of effective teaching that could be shared within the building. Thus, the focus grew larger than the teacher resources provided by earmarked funding solely, to exploring effective classroom strategies that could target student achievement (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). This second phase led to a deeper understanding of school-wide variables. These variables contained demographic factors such as economic status, diversity, and class size, came to light as a

contributor to overall school effectiveness (Edmonds, 1979; Leving & Lezotte, 1990; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993). Educators in the late 1980s started to embrace the influence of district school reform, and the third phase of school reform and improvement began.

During this third phase, reform models multiplied. Out of these reform models, the focus became the need to create substantial changes in organizational structure, operating norms, curriculum and instruction, and relationships between students, teachers and the community (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). The need for increased student achievement in large urban districts demonstrated this phase of school improvement as district reform emerged (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006). During the late 1990s, funding for school improvement was still allocated to schools, but researchers began to explore the district's role in reform (Chrispeels, 2002; McLaughlin & Talber, 2003; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The parallels began to surface between effective schools and effective districts. Chrispeels, et al. (2008) found similarities in effectiveness factors at different levels of systems, demonstrating the part-whole relationship between schools and the district office. For example, reform requires the parts (school sites) to work in sync with the whole (district office). Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, and Daly (2008) revealed, although district and school sites may share a common goal or focus on improving student outcomes, they may possess different models of how those goals are accomplished thereby limiting the effectiveness of reform efforts.

Leithwood et al. (2004) stated, "The chance of school reform improving student learning is remote unless district and school leaders agree with the purposes and appreciate what is required to make it work" (p. 7). Reform is challenging and requires a clear, consistent plan that has been agreed upon by all community stakeholders. When

district leaders, building leaders, teachers, staff, and parents can together identify an area of improvement, this elevates the awareness and appreciation of the work this is required in a reform effort. Agullard, Huebner, Gougnnour, and Calisi-Corbett (2005) found that the potential to enact consistent reform is enhanced when all members of the central office share a theory of action. In sum, reform requires a partnership among all levels of the organization to strengthen the authority, capacity, and professional practice of both the schools and district to impact districtwide teaching and learning improvements inside leading to systems change (Honig et al., 2009).

History of the Central Office

Historically, school district central offices emerged in the last century to operate basic business functions for school districts across the country. As cities grew in the early 1900s, district central offices expanded in their staff and functions. For example, urban school district central offices primarily expanded to help manage the growing number of public school enrollments in metropolitan areas (Cremin, 1982). The Great Society period brought further growth for central offices, but again, their activities remained limited to regulatory issues such as monitoring the building's use of federal funds to support particular student categories (Gamson, 2009). For example, central office leaders typically performed such tasks as the oversight of teacher's certification requirements and accountability measures for monies earmarked for identified student groups funded by the federal government. During the 20th century, school district central offices continued their focus on school business. Regulatory and fiscal functions of the district continued to demand attention in both the rural and urban districts (Honig, 2013).

As urban districts increased in size and complexity, managerial and political aspects of the work often took priority over the teaching and learning aspects. For example, in urban districts where the number of students enrolled in districts brought logistical issues such as transportation, facility management and growth challenges, and child nutrition programs, the operational responsibilities often took priority over the teaching and learning aspects needed for student achievement growth (Honig et al., 2009). During this time period, a select few urban superintendents tried to persuade policymakers and members of the community that the most important elements of district leadership involved management of district operations, which was separate from teaching and learning (Thomas & Moran, 1992).

Central Office and Reform

Typically, the district office has played a compliance-oriented role, and has not provided alignment or systemic structure for reform efforts. Recent studies of school district central office engagement with district wide teaching and learning reform, reveal administrators at the district level appear to be "climbing uphill." For example, Hubbard, Mehan, and Stein (2006b) and Swinnerton, (2006) found only a scattering of district leaders attempting to focus on instructional rather than operational issues, and these leaders often encounter challenges of long-standing institutional patterns that may be contrary to their current traditional practice. The emphasis on operation and management of a school district, by district leaders, demonstrates a long-standing pattern or tradition. As these new practices are encouraged, the number of district leaders focusing on instruction may increase, thus resulting in a change of motion contrary to long-standing institutional patterns. Additionally, researchers find that select district leaders may lack

the overall capacity for the new teaching and learning roles (Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006a; Swinnerton, 2006).

Clearly, management of operational issues is critical to a school district; however, district leaders are most recently challenged to couple this emphasis with the teaching and learning side of schools. Emerging central office reform efforts that highlight productive and meaningful engagement in district wide teaching and learning is a long way down the road from "business as usual." Honig et al. (2009) viewed this reform effort as a deep shift in the practices of the central office. Central office transformation reveals a distinct approach to district wide teaching and learning improvements. The focus is unique in that the entire district central office remains a unit of reform, and central office work practices and relationships with buildings support the teaching and learning improvements of all students (Honig et al., 2009).

Recent reform efforts that target relationships are not exclusive to building sites, but they emphasize relationships with the district central office (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006). For example, reform work is interactive, and invites the relationships to be interactive as well. Therefore, the understanding has emerged that successful reform efforts may require a shift in strategies as they are conceptualized and implemented within the central office (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). This shift requires engaging the entire system to connect, and move away from a single segment of focus. For example, clear and consistent communication around change between site leaders and central office leaders gleans greater systemic coherence and goal attainment (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006). Fullan (2005) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006) stated that reform initiatives that produce this type of change, must include sustainable effort that works through complex

issues that are resistance to change, and they often require several years to accomplish the goal.

Central offices, according to Honig et al. (2009), are more than the impersonal backdrop for school districts. However, this paradigm shift to support assistive relationships with building leaders may run against the institutional grain of the public bureaucracy traditionally known as the central office. Leadership at the district, building, and classroom levels is important for systems change. For example, if the distribution of leadership resulting from a reform initiative is not well planned, aligned, or effectively communicated with stakeholders, the self-sustaining culture starts to drift and lose its sense of vision and purpose. Additionally, incoherent efforts may result in fragmentation for teachers as their focus becomes exclusively on their own classrooms, working in isolation away from colleagues and assuming responsibility of their own work (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). The parallel may be observed at the district level within implementation of reform change. This occurrence results in an organization that may be ineffective, and student achievement may remain unchanged, or even decline (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010).

Accountability and Performance Mandates: Pressures to Reform

To promote equity and to eliminate a long-standing achievement gap between minority and majority students in the United States, schools, districts, and states have worked to increase student academic performance. Current legislation has directly influenced district emphasis on teaching and learning (Honig, 2013). For example, NCLB contained policy reforms that targeted the achievement gap by mandating districts to demonstrate successful performance for all students by the year 2014. Further, RTTT

provisions that allowed districts exemption from NCLB requirements have emphasized innovation and the development of higher standards for student achievement. However, reform mandated by policy and interventions performed by external agencies have generally failed (Dee & Jacob, 2009). In sum, despite an unprecedented investment of time and resources targeting school reform, the landscape of achievement in the United States has not significantly been altered (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011).

Public school environments are ever changing, thus making reform initiatives a moving target. Reform is not as simple as adopting new initiatives or passing legislative actions (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; Fullan, 2005; Hall & Hord, 1987; Sarason, 1996). Reform manifests over time as purposive action advances, and collective commitment advances from its initiation to the institutionalization (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). Typically, in history of school reform, a school district's central office has taken on a compliance-oriented role and has not provided for the alignment around focused improvement efforts. Historically, the role of the central office in reform has been plagued with regulatory demands, encompassing tasks and requirements made from both the state and federal government. For example, reform initiatives frequently require accountability measures involving the check list approach with report dates and data requirements. Central office leaders traditionally lead this information gathering, focusing on the compliance task of collection rather than analyzing the increase or decrease of student results.

One such discussed reform initiative example exists with the contested No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The number of districts that are facing sanction under NCLB is growing, and, unfortunately, the greatest impact appears to surface with

students that are "left behind" historically speaking (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). For example, one well-known aspect of NCLB is the benchmark for district and school performance that leads to the requirement of school districts to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) in student learning. Receiving the "in need of improvement" (INI) status indicates a failure to meet AYP goals, and it places a district in a state of sanction (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). The number of INI schools is increasing (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). During the 2004-2005 school-year alone, individual states identified more than 9,000 schools in this category, representing a nearly 50% increase over the previous year (Stullich, Eisner, McCary, & Roney, 2006), and nearly 30,000 schools did not reach adequate yearly progress in the 2007-2008 school year (Hoff, 2009).

In addition, under NCLB, many students who have been traditionally "left behind" are now educated in systems that receive multiple sanctions in disproportionate numbers (Stullich et al., 2006; Sunderman et al., 2005), leaving vulnerable students in school sites that are taxed with resource restrictions. Sunderman et al., (2005) reference this situation as one of the most pressing social justice-civil rights issues in the United States. District leaders of underperforming schools are held responsible for developing and implementing reforms at both the district and site levels (Mintrop & Turjillo, 2005, 2007) to enhance student progress. Researchers suggest improving school performance under sanction will require closer attention to relations between central office staff and school sites as they tackle the turnaround response to NCLB (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). The increasing number of INI schools places urgency on leaders to further understand relationships within school organizations, and the ways that educational leaders can facilitate efforts to meet district goals (Daly & Finnigan, 2011).

Successful and Unsuccessful Reform Initiatives

As the pressure to increase achievement heightens, educators have increased the number of improvement efforts through reform in an effort to depart from the INI status (Mintrop, 2004; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). As improvement efforts are imposed in tandem with daily requirements from teachers, increased pressure may result in unsuccessful reform efforts. For example, many underperforming schools are working to initiate multiple reforms simultaneously. This emphasis on multiple reforms exacerbates the responsibilities already felt by a school staff, and may affect the school climate. The typical INI school may produce a climate that produces high turn-over rates, multiple changing and fluid reforms, and high levels of pressure to improve (Mintrop, 2004). This turbulent environment can lead to low teacher motivation (Finnigan & Gross, 2007), and administrative challenges that present low performing schools as less attractive workplaces (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Sunderman et al. (2005) observed added to the pressure of increased improvement efforts, often underperforming schools find it difficult to attract and retain quality staff. Frequently, underperforming schools have a large representation of new and un-credentialed teachers as a result. All of these factors combined, bring challenges to central office leaders.

Conversely, some schools implement successful reform as a result of sanctions accompanied by the INI category. Such school sites intentionally utilize the opportunity to build school climate by purposefully incorporating activities that increase staff trust, interaction, and collaboration. As a result, educators may be able to negotiate the sanctions and have a positive increase in student improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Mintrop, 2004; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2007; O'Day, 2004). Schools that have previously

been a target of sanction due to the INI label, presently incorporate changes that may result in positive school climate characteristics. Climate characteristics such as staff trust and collaboration, inadvertently add to the likelihood of student improvement. For example, as collaboration within grade level teams increase, so do opportunities for teachers and staff to work together. Shared discussions producing agreed upon learning targets, may lead to improved student improvement. Staff trust is vital as improvement areas surface for district and building leaders. Trust between central office and school sites may significantly facilitate the flow of information available to district leaders. For example, information regarding the quality and type of professional practice and performance may influence student performance and teaching reform initiatives (Daly & Finnigan, 2011; O'Day, 2004).

Some school's reform initiatives appear to have an effect on student outcomes, while others do not. Failure of some schools to effectively influence student outcomes and success of others to enhance student performance, may be the result of inefficient balance in reform efforts across districts (Daly & Finnigan, 2011). For example, balance of reform efforts suggests the need for interconnected systems to facilitate the transfer of information and knowledge to accomplish organizational change (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). Studies of successful districts that achieve systemic change suggest district strategies that build stronger intra-organizational ties (Chrispeel, 2004; Honig, 2004a; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Successful strategies may include creating structure for increased collaboration between central office and school sites (McLauhlin & Talber, 2003), evolving learning partnerships (Copland & Knapp, 2006), enhancing communication (Agullar &

Goughnour, 2006), distributing leadership (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007; Spillane, 2006), providing support that is targeted (Massell, 2000; Massell & Goertz, 1999), and encouraging input on decisions (Brazer & Keller, 2006). An example found in the literature, the Wallace Study, frames this type of balanced reform and has the potential to impact student performance. This study, detailed in the following section, explores the interconnected systematic change described above, and exhibits successful strategies for increasing collaboration between the central office and building leaders.

Reconfiguration/Transformation of the Central Office

According to Knapp, Copland, Honig, Pleck, and Portin (2010), one of the most pressing challenges for today's district leaders is the familiar cycle of self-defeating conditions and a mutually reinforced story that shapes the schooling of many young people in urban cities of today (Knapp et al., 2010). However, educational leaders are emerging who are committed to being at the heart of the improvement process. These leaders are striving to intervene and make a difference with urban education.

A coordinated set of studies referred to as the Study of Leadership for Learning Improvement (Knapp et al., 2010) closely examined leadership aimed at learning improvements in urban school districts. The studies, supported by the Wallace Foundation and conducted during the 2007-2008 school year, examined leadership from the following three vantage points: what does leadership look like while supporting learning improvement and the enhancement of equity (Plecki, Knapp, Castaneda, Halverson, LaSota, Lochmiller, 2009), what does leadership look like through examples of distributed instructional leadership within the school (Portin, Knapp, Feldman, Dareff,

Russell, Samuelson, & Yeh ,2009), what does leadership look like during transformation of the central office work practices, and district school relationships to develop and sustain instructional leadership capacity (Honig et al., 2010). Although the study school sites varied from one another, the common theme between the urban study sites revealed they all shared a priority for improvement, practices and structures that were promising, and some evidence that progress is being made in the area of increased student outcomes (Knapp et al., 2010).

Several common themes emerged from this set of studies that contain central ideas for district leaders striving to create conditions that enable learning improvements. These themes include:

- districts were focused persistently and publicly on equitable and powerful teaching,
- learning, and instructional improvement
- districts were invested in instructional leadership within and across schools through targeted restructuring and reconfiguration of staff roles
- districts were actively reinventing leadership work practice, specifically between school and district central office
- districts demonstrated explicit, sustained attention to leadership support at all levels (Knapp et al., 2010).

Therefore, common themes in these school sites indicate hard work lies ahead for current and future dynamic, innovative educational leaders. Challenges for today's leaders reside in the ability to lead organizational transformation within current school structures. According to Knapp et al. (2010), "Participants at all levels face a steep

learning curve, in part because changes in work practice are not minor incremental adjustments, but rather fundamental shifts in how teachers, leaders, principals, and central office administrators do their daily work" (p. 28). Thus, the transformation of the central office provides a ripe opportunity for this challenging work.

New Roles

Role of the principal. Historically, of the many organizational changes that occurred in North America during the turn of the last century for schools, few were as impactful as the creation of the principal's role (Rousmaniere, 2007). Rousmaniere (2007) stated that the shift from a teacher supervising groups of students, to groups of teachers being managed by an administrator, altered the internal organization of schools. From the inception, when an appointed administrator began supervising teachers, a shift in power occurred internally from a classroom to the office of a principal. Along with this shift surfaced the principal as a middle-level manager representing a conduit between the central office and the classroom (Rousmaniere, 2007). This restructure added to the complex bureaucracy occurring within the school structure organizationally. The role of the principal is compared to the role of business middle manager as follows:

> Located as the connecting hinge between the school and the district, the principal was critical to the success of newly designed school systems in the early twentieth century, in much the same way that the middle manager in business reinforced the development of corporate enterprise. (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 3)

Following this parallel, business historian Alfred Chandler (1977) described how the creation of middle managerial structures helped to consolidate the control of independent businesses under a corporate umbrella. Middle managers were the engine

behind bureaucracy, providing the smooth transition of responsibilities. Responsibilities what Chandler described as ‘‘vertical integration’’ from the central office to the shop floor. Rousmaniere’s (2007) analogy continues as she refers to the foreman in a factory as overseeing the daily operations of managing the shop, the middle level manager (principal) is consumed with the operational day-to-day structure; therefore, leaving the strategic policy decisions to the district central office.

As difficult demands increase due to high stakes testing and policy environments with today’s school districts, the role of principals remains one enormous challenge:

> The school principal continues to represents the on-going tension between central and local management, between policy development and policy implementation, and between the formal bureaucratic aspects of school administrative work and the informal, relational and immediate demands of daily school life. (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 22)

Just as the role of the principal has changed organizationally, and continues to fill the unique position of middle-level leader, the role of the district office leader has been offered a change as well. School district central office leaders face unprecedented demands to strengthen both teaching and learning to meet enhanced accountability measures. School reformers, leaders and organizations acknowledge a number of guides presently exist on supporting districtwide teaching and learning improvements (Honig, 2009). These guides or frameworks, often stem from studies of districts that have experienced gains in their districtwide learning measures (Honig, 2009). However, few of the frameworks are based in research that directly link central office work practices to gains in teaching and learning (Honig, 2008). Additionally, very few exceptions

(Agullard & Goughnour, 2006) enter into the central office to probe what central office leaders actually do while participating in teaching and learning improvements.

Role of the central office. Historically, central offices' leader roles focused on assisting leaders and staff with the management of school site operations. Especially in urban districts, managerial and political aspects of the work often took priority over the teaching and learning aspects that required curricular support such as pacing calendars, benchmarks, and monitoring of student progress. Prior to reform, instructional practices were highly decentralized, thus the professional development for effective instructional strategies were sourced outside to recognized experts in the field (Honig, 2013). This left district leaders generally focused on maintaining fiscal integrity and managing services (Daly et al., 2013). For many district leaders, their pre-reform portfolio of managerial skills did not specifically target instructional leadership.

Most recently, educational emphasis placed on student achievement outcomes in the current high stakes policy environment has put additional pressure on district leaders to move from the role of "manager" to a role that more directly influences teaching and learning in the district. Current reform initiatives involving central office reform persuade district level leaders to serve in the capacity of instructional leader rather than simply in a management stance (Honig, 2013). However, this shift includes inherent challenges. For example, to begin this shift, focus has called for district administrators to strive to develop and communicate a clear, concise working definition of instructional leadership. Additionally, recent studies of school district central office engagement in teaching and learning improvement initiatives indicate that administrators may struggle with the challenges of instructional leadership because the temptation is to continue to fulfill

responsibilities involved in traditional managerial roles (Honig, Lorton, & Copland, 2009).

Even in districts with curricular and policy alignment, implementation of new roles and responsibilities for district level leaders may fall short of the leadership goals absent substantially increasing the capacity of people, including central office administrators, to support school improvements (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Blecher, 2001). The challenges that are associated with a change in role of central office administrators stem from the understanding that district-wide teaching and learning improvement is a part of a systems challenge, and full participation of the people in schools, central offices, and the local communities is crucial (Honig et al., 2009). Specifically, learning improvement initiatives depend on significant changes in how central office administrators work with school principals. This organizational shift calls for a change from traditional top-down supervisory relationships with schools, to close partnership relationships around improving classroom teaching practice and student learning (Elmore & Burney, 1998; Hightower, 2002; Hubbard et al., 2006). The change in the relationship between central office administrators and building level leaders is often hindered by strongly established perspective of roles and responsibilities at both the building and district levels. These firmly held perspectives may lead to confusion about responsibilities regarding supervision and accountability for reaching student outcomes goals.

Hillman and Kachur (2010) described this new teaching and learning role demonstrated by district leaders in Decatur, Illinois, a district that struggled to meet annual yearly progress (AYP). Findings from Hillman and Kachur (2010) indicated that

"the ultimate goal of the central office during the transformation process is to build staff and faculty capacity through professional development, offer quality education, and accept responsibility to meet the needs of a diverse population" (p.19). This new role expands the district leader to include the capacity building of staff and faculty through training, in addition to the traditionally known management responsibilities. One example of this new role calls for the central office leader to increase visibility, accessibility, and responsiveness to the professional learning needs at the school level (Hillman & Kachur, 2010). This increase in work practices may add to the success of the transformation process. These researchers also equate consistent, systemic partnerships with building sites across the district as an integral part of a successful central office transformation. For example, leaders that promote and practice partnerships with building leaders add vital relationships to the likelihood of district leadership success.

Transformative new roles and relationships during transformation are introduced to help administrators become more of a collaborative team. A shift in priorities causes central office leaders to a focus on teaching and learning, as non-instructional operational responsibilities become less the emphasis. Professional development is aimed at building leadership capacity to serve as instructional leaders rather than managers. As in the Illinois school district case study, district leadership teams provide vision and direction to build the capacity of central office leaders to effectively support principal efforts of improving student success (Hillman & Kachur, 2010). For example, all principals, assistant principals, and central office administrators participate in a walk through process, a "hands on" approach that provides central office personnel an opportunity to observe and gather data from the schools site at the ground level. Through this process,

central office staff move closer to schools, and opportunities develop for new relationships that may increase capacity of district leaders as instructional leaders (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006).

Additionally, while district central offices across the country are working to shift their traditional roles from a regulatory and business function to supporting teaching and learning improvements district-wide (Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; Honig et al., 2010), the roles of principals are changing as well. One of the new roles involves the practice of principals being grouped into "networks" or "principal professional learning communities" (PPLCs) with the long term goal of enhancing classroom teaching and student learning by strengthening principals' instructional leadership (Honig & Rainey, 2014). Executive level central office staffs often are observed leading principal support groups instead of contracting with external agencies for professional learning. For example, instead of the traditional central office meeting containing the delivery of information regarding district policies, or the principals' operational "to do" list, PPLCs are active in dialogue with collaborative conversations regarding how to integrate increased instructional practices into the principals' role (Honig & Rainey, 2014).

In many systems, this new emphasis is framed as a teaching function led by district leaders. This new teaching function, emphasizing teaching and learning roles performed by district leaders, may present a learning curve for leaders who are well versed on management and operational responsibilities. Literature in this area exploring the pre-transformational skill set traditionally required of leaders, reveal a level of concern surrounding the ability of select central office staff leading this type of teaching

and learning priority (Hubbard et al., 2006b). The pre-transformational skill set required for educational leaders did not emphasize the teaching and learning aspects required for the transformational leader described above.

Central offices, according to Honig et al. (2009), are more than the impersonal backdrop for school districts. Researchers posited that school district leaders can participate with building leaders to build capacity in schools and the central office can be a service unit to improving teaching and learning (Honig et al., 2009). However, this paradigm shift to support assistive relationships with building leaders may run against the institutional grain of the public bureaucracy traditionally known as the central office.

New Assistive Relationships

Presently, small groups of researchers have begun to question what central office conditions could be created to foster improvement in teaching and learning and what their work would look like from a learning organization point of view (Honig, 2008). Researchers have posed the challenge that districts may be able to meet enhanced accountability demands if entire districts operate as "learning organizations" (Honig, 2008, p. 23). This understanding brings to surface the image of the district central office operating as a dynamic organization that is engaged in continuous improvement that addresses student and school needs. Included in this line of inquiry is the desire to understand what type of daily work, or work conditions, need to be created by central office leaders in order for the district to operate as an effective learning organization.

As transformation occurs, new relationships are formed as schools begin to work as learning organizations. The first relationship created in this learning organization is the assistance relationship. Assistance relationships might involve the work practices

described in the following examples as central office leaders and building leaders work together inside a learning organization. “Joint work” occurs as central office leaders focus their work practices on principals, teachers, and staff along with improving teaching and learning (Honig, 2008). Joint work is at the center of learning assistance relationships (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Rogoff, 1994; Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995; Wenger, 1998). Joint work refers to activities that join participants and members of the larger community together as they perform tasks that they value (Honig, 2008). For example, this type of work does not focus on something that has been imposed on them, such as a district decision requiring a reading intervention program; rather, this work anchors the assistance relationships as participants, or in this case principals, decide on their own activities and goals to support the district decision of a reading intervention program.

Modeling professional practices consistent with goals is an additional work practice fostered in a central office assistance relationship. For example, models are powerful supports for learning when joined with assistance relationships (Honig, 2008). In this instance, the central office leaders models a strategy for the principal, and they dialogue together concerning the practice as it impacts teaching and learning. When participants or principals have access to models, they are able to develop images in their minds regarding work practices before using them (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 2003; Lave, 1998).

Relationships that provide assistance to participants or principals can involve more than the person-to-person assistance; they may involve developing and using tools or materials to aide in the teaching and learning process. Sociocultural learning theorists

specify that these tools include materials that carry ideas and prompt action for how people think and what they do, as well as what they should not think or do (Wenger, 1998). This process of thinking or change may be particularly important as school districts tackle the challenges of increasing teaching and learning. For example, a protocol that guides principals and central office administrators through observing classroom could be considered a tool (Honig, 2008). The assistance relationship is deepened as principals and central office leaders have conversations with teachers and each other regarding the teaching practices observed.

Brokering, and/or boundary spanning, occurs as part of the assistance relationship when a new idea is offered, understood, or additional resources are presented that help participants realize their goals (Wenger, 1998). In this context, an example of boundary spanning might be linking schools, including central office leaders, with external resources in ways that reveal new resources to the schools (Honig, 2006b, 2008). New partnerships with community stakeholders and exploring untapped ways for district leaders and principals to work in tandem with community support may further develop the assistance aspect of the relationship as school leaders' work together with stakeholders to tackle present day challenges.

Assistance relationships are facilitated as participants are valued and legitimized. For example, in one aspect of instructional leadership, central office leaders create opportunities for principals to serve as a resource for others (Honig, 2008). During Honig's (2008) study, principals viewed themselves as valued as they helped other principals, within a community of leaders, who were trying to improve their instructional leadership practice. The practice of engagement increased as they became involved in

their network community striving to improve instructional leadership. Individuals deepen their engagement in activities as they see themselves as valued members of an endeavor (Honig, 2008).

Research suggests without central office transformation, the central office in the traditional practices, may actually curbs these types of social interactions or assistive relationships thereby eliminating opportunities that are rich for this new work (Hannaway, 1989; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Thus, the call for transformation within the central office organization provides ripe landscapes for district leaders that supervise principals through new assistance relationships. These transformed relationships facilitate support as principals' work toward the ultimate goal of increasing teaching and student learning outcomes.

New Rules

Recent scholarship suggests that under high-stakes accountability, the school district central office may become more rule bound and even increase the level of bureaucracy (Daly, 2009). What, then, do new rules look like during central office transformation? New practices or rules, may develop at the edge of an organization, and may provide additional support to the reform work. Recently, Christense, Johnson, & Horn (2008) suggested that "disruptive innovations" that happen in organizations often provide radical changes in the mainstream practice. Therefore, new rules emerge in a political arena. A district central office provides ample opportunity for political environment.

Henig (2012) describes educational and educational institutions as inherently political units that push agendas, compete for resources, engage in decision making, and

have systems and actors that respond to demands, as referenced by Daly et al. (2013). Macro political issues that surface from large scale demands such as federal and state policy, parents, communities, and other stakeholders, have placed increased pressure on districts to meet demands, therefore, creating new rules. Increased legislative policies such as NCLB provide an example of accountability demand on districts, specifically district leadership within the hub of that demand. Daly et al. (2013) referenced these macro issues important by providing a context, and helping to influence the decision-making process inside organizations. The central office houses the main decision-making subunits within a school district. In coherent systems, micro decisions align to macro demands, and result in theory, to desired outcomes. The parallel in this instance highlights the relationship between school sites (micro units) working within the macro (central office) demands. Continuing the study of Daly et al. (2013), macro political systems within large urban districts have no choice but to respond to accountability pressures. Legislative issues such as NCLB have pressured districts to achieve at increasingly high levels or risk facing sanction. This in turn, has increased the spotlight on the role of function of the central office while supporting the teaching and learning priority.

Beyond macro pressures and the micro responses, another aspect of the micro level involves the formal structure of the district, compared with the informal that operates alongside this formal structure (Spillane, Hunt, & Henley, 2010). The formal structure (the district) operates in conjunction with the informal as "lived organization," reflects the interaction of individuals as they experience their organizational life (Spillane et al., 2009). This comparison brings to light the traditional formal structure (central

office) and informal (buildings) as "lived organizations," as they experience organizational life- educating students to become active citizens in society. At times, the formal organization and lived organizations may not mirror one another. Daly et al. (2013) stated these systems act in tandem at times, and at other times in conflict. During reform such as central office transformation this interaction may surface. Informal systems can be imaged as individual educational leaders enacting their work within the district, or creating new rules. Lasting change or reform does not result from plans and blue prints, but through the interaction of participants. This change is an example of a new rule.

Through the lens of central office transformation, practitioners and researchers may analyze formal and informational organizational structures to explore the degree to which the "intended" (formal) structure align with the "enacted" (informal) structure, and understanding new work practices needed from central office leaders to support building principals as instructional leaders. Daly et al. (2013) summarize that while the overall macro system is exerting significant pressure on improvements in the achievement gap, the micro-level interactions may not necessarily reflect district macro emphases. Their findings suggest possible misalignment between overall formal and informal structures taxing the systems enacting policy reform, new rules, based on external pressure for increased performance Daly et al. (2013). Thus revealing the broad challenge faced by districts working to meet the demands of state and federal accountabilities polices: "There is a mismatch between the skills and practices accountability based reforms required currently of district leaders, and the skills and practices that are required prior to the accountability movement" (Daly et al., 2013, p. 165). In light of central office

transformation, this knowledge is critical while assessing the skill set needed for district leaders striving to meet federal and state demand. The leader skill set needed is broader as a result of the transformation process. District leaders must assume responsibility for supporting instructional leadership and learning outcomes for students, in addition to the traditionally operational focused agenda. This is another layer of new rules for district leaders.

New Roads

Reform and transformational processes often require leaders to explore new pathways as routes to implementation. Policies and interventions that are supported with empirical evidence are only as effective as their implementation (Gross, Booker & Goldhaber, 2009; Stein et al., 2008). Adams and Jean-Marie reference Honig's (2008) argument that what works in implementation should clearly include: the who, what, where, and why. Large scale reform will continue to slip through educational leaders' hands if contributing factors to successful spread of planned change is not understood. Therefore, leadership reform requires new roads for implementation to travel upon. Diffusion provides a possible route for educational leaders. Adams and Jean-Marie (2011) stated "Successful reforms are defined as ones that disrupt traditional cultures, achieve goals, and evolve through developmental stages that eventually lead to a changed culture" (p. 354). Even though the rate may vary, the sequential process of establishing shared understanding; designing, experimenting, developing new tools, fostering expertise, and forming strong social networks appear to be critical foundational supports for authentic and sustainable reform (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). Diffusion of reform

takes time, strong leadership, and regular social interaction valued as a considerable part of the process.

Diffusion is defined as the spread of an innovation, idea, or program within a social system (Katz, Hamilton & Levin, 1963; Rogers, 2003). Desired outcomes of reform are tangible changes in the condition, practice and process of an outcome, not solely the adoption of said planned changed (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). Therefore, Adams and Jean-Marie (2011) specify reform diffusion as the spread of planned change across school members (who) to create new beliefs, values, and daily practices (what) that are entrenched in the culture of a school organization (where). Considering central office transformation diffused through reform may provide an alternative framework to consider the daily practices of central office staff, building principals, and the relationship between them to prioritize increased student outcome (why).

Wallace Study

Transformation within school district central offices has recently come into the research forefront. The Wallace Study provides a new type of framework for the work of the central office staff. A team of researchers from the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy at the University of Washington explored leadership in urban schools and districts that are currently seeking to improve both learning and leadership. The study explored the overarching question: "What does it take for leaders to promote and support powerful, equitable learning in a school, in the district and state system that serves the school?" (Honig et al., p.ii).

The Wallace study explored how leaders in urban school district central office transformed their work and school relationships to support district wide teaching and

learning improvements. The districts that were a part of this study posted gains in student achievement, and they credited part of their progress to this radical change within their central office (Honig et al., 2010). The investigator's goal was to uncover the daily work practices of central office administrators while they worked toward more efficiency and transforming the principal support system while helping schools improve the quality of teaching and learning. Study sites were chosen with a focus on learning and leadership improvement toward these three improvement strands; school leadership investigation, resource investment investigation, and central office investigation.

This study primarily focuses on the last investigation: central office transformation. These districts were undergoing central office transformation in a non-traditional approach. They approached transformation in the follow manner. First, staff focus is centrally and meaningfully on teaching and learning improvement. Central office staff demonstrates how their work matters in concrete terms to teaching and learning improvement. They take action on, instead of just discussing, change in their work that supports teaching and learning. Second, the entire central office was a part of the transformation. Everyone regardless of department or function participated in the transformation.

Third, central office administrators fundamentally reframed their work practice and school relationships to support teaching and learning improvements for all schools. The central office did not reorganize within itself; it implemented a transitional strategy to remake what the people in the central office did in their daily work with school relationships. And lastly, a focus was maintained on the reform in its own right. This was

not a program or an initiative, the transformation was working to change their central offices regardless of programs they were involved with at a particular time.

Findings revealed that these schools understand what experiences and research have shown: generally, districts do not see improvements in teaching and learning without engagement by their central offices helping to build their capacity for improvement (Honig et al., 2010). They found that the central office staff are not just "background noise" but can be essential leaders partnering with schools to build capacity through the systems for teaching and learning improvements. Researchers found that this effort was not a reorganization of a flow chart, it focused on transforming what the staff in the central office did with daily work to improve teaching and learning for all students (Honig et al., 2010).

The work uncovered by the research team presented five dimensions, illustrated in Figure 1, that were a part of their transformational process.

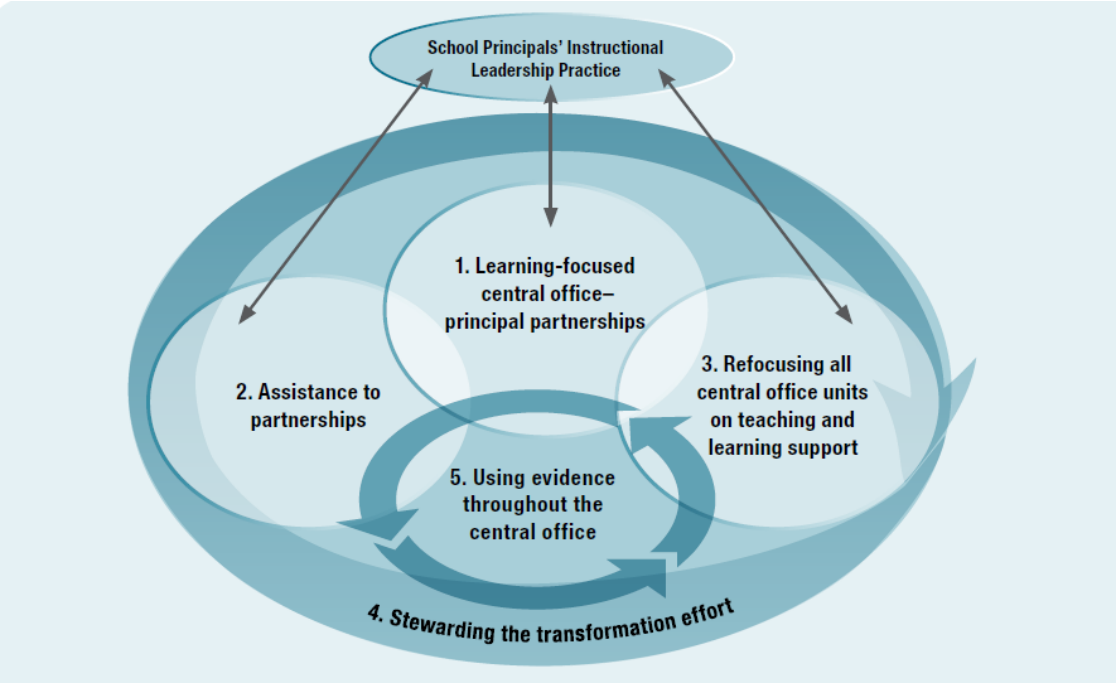

Figure 1: Dimensions of Central Office Transformation. This figure describes the school principals' instructional leadership practice through five dimensions. Retrieved from www.ctpweb.org (2010) Seattle, WA: The Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

The five dimensions that follow further provide a summary of the transformation process.

- Dimension 1: Learning-focused partnerships with school principals to deepen principals' instructional leadership practice. At the heart of the districts studied, was the goal to establish and strengthen relationships with the principals to further develop as instructional leaders, and to build capacity to lead within their schools. This demonstrates a shift away from school building and staff manager to instructional leadership roles. These designated central

office staff members were to focus 100 percent of their time on helping schools' principals improve their instructional practice.

- Dimension 2: Assistance to the central office-principal partnerships. Central office staff supported the work of the ILD's and provided intentional activities that provided professional development to the ILD's themselves, prioritized traditional daily work in order to lighten the load of the ILD to ensure all efforts to reflect instructional leadership, reinforced the ILD-principal relationship and the importance of their work, the central office in entirety shared accountability for holding principals accountable for improving performance measures. The office redistributed compliance type work, and replaced it with evaluation activities that portrayed the focus.
- Dimension 3: Reorganizing and re-culturing each central office unit to support the central office principal partnership and teaching and learning improvement. Shifts include case management and project management approaches to the daily work of central office staff. The case management approach helped to focus their work on questions that related directly to principal support of resources or improvement teaching and learning.
- Dimension 4: Stewardship of the overall central office transformation process. Stewardship defined here meant central office staff engaged in "theory of action" of the transformation and communicated to others to increase understanding. This also involved located external resources and securing relationship that supported teaching and learning.

- Dimension 5: Use of evidence throughout the central office to support continual improvement of work practices and relationships with schools. Along with the support of principals viewing data to reflect on their own work, central office staff engaged in collection of evidence from their work to ensure the connection of teaching and learning of principals and students.

Dimension one, two, and five of the central office transformation referenced above will provide the connection to the literature base that will frame the proposed study described in the following section and chapters. The theoretical framework chosen for this study specifically addresses dimensions one, two and five of the Center for the Study of Teaching Policy funded by the Wallace Foundation. These dimensions were chosen because they specifically address assistive relationships and the use of evidence to support practice.

Theoretical Frameworks

The combination of two theoretical frameworks will be applied in this study: socio-cultural learning theory and organizational learning theory. Honig's research team from the University of Washington (2008) found that socio-cultural learning theory and organizational learning theory both describe work practices and activities that are consistent with redefining central office roles and reform.

Socio-Cultural Learning Theory

Evolution of theory. Socio-cultural learning theory emerged in the work of Vygotsky (1978). He posited that social-cultural experience shapes the ways one thinks and interprets the world, and that individual cognition occurs within a social situation (Jaramillo, 1996). In his early work with children, Vygotsky asserted that social

interaction is instrumental to teaching and understanding the way children learn, encourages students to participate in the classroom with the instructor to plan activities, and be a part of the rule making (Jaramillo, 1996). Vygotsky believed that teachers can teach any subject effectively to any child at any level, but to do this, they must model and scaffold techniques aimed at the learner's zone of proximal development. For example, students use manipulatives which are concrete objects in a realistic context to construct meaning from their interpreted experiences.

In general terms, Vygotsky answers the main query regarding student learning by asking how do students' construct meaning. In the domain of social interactions with peers, Vygotsky acknowledges the importance of problem solving with cognitive growth (Jaramillo, 1996). Growth occurs when peers arrive at a common understanding by socially negotiation through problem-solving activities. Vygotsky believed social interactions invites different perspectives on issues; therefore, by working in cooperative, small group-formats, children and adults learn to solve problems collectively as a group. Thus, one learns more from constructing meaning through social interaction than through a formalized learning environment.

Additionally, as learning unfolds; it involves individual's engagement with others in particular activities not solely through an individual's acquisition of information (Honig, 2008). These activities are situated in particular social, cultural, and historical contexts (Engestrom & Miettinen 1999; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, Del Rio & Alverez 1995). Therefore, learners, through these activities, socially construct the meaning of ideas and potentially shape the habits of mind of their cultures (Wertsch, 1996). Specifically, researchers reference a strand of sociocultural learning theory, or

"communities of practice" ideas that originate from Burch and Spillane (2004); Gallucci (2008); Hubbard et al. (2006). They suggest the central office might be conceptualized as nested communities of practice; operating in chains of assistance relationships in which each person assists, and is assisted by others within the central office hierarchy. Further, Vygotsky (1978) posits communities of practice, or various supports, help learners shorten the distance between their current practice and deeper engagement of an activity. Examples of these supports might include assistance relationships that are relevant to the demands of schools central office leaders while working in partnership with schools (Honig, 2008).

Implications of socio-cultural learning theory to practice. As a part of this line of inquiry into the type of work and work conditions needed for district leaders within learning organizations, assistance relationships comes to light. Honig (2008) states assistance relationships seem particularly relevant to the demands of central office leaders as they are working with school building leaders. Working through the framework of socio-cultural theory, assistive relationships emphasize how people learn to improve their performance with work practice by engaging in real situations, receiving job-embedded support, that deepen their engagement in their practice (Honig, 2008).Through this lens, central office leaders explore work practices that support principals as they focus on teaching and learning achievements. If these work practices are implemented, they may result in what Vygotsky, (1978) referred to these assistance relationships, as rich, deep, sustained social interactions. Through these relationships, participants learn what practices are meaningful to them through the activities of joint work, modeling, developing and using tools, brokering and boundary expansion, and

valuing participation. Therefore, for this lens, socio-cultural theory helps to identify the needed work practices involved with assistive relationships in which people work together to strengthen their protocol of everyday work (Honig, 2008).

Assistance relationships developed between central office leaders and principals may be viewed through the socio-cultural lens. For example, in the proposed principal perception study this lens is impactful while considering the assistance relationships between ILD's and their principals as they work within a transformative process. If specific work practices are revealed as supportive, ongoing, differentiated support between principal and supervisor, the relationship may strengthen, therefore, enhancing the teaching and learning development of instructional leadership. These newly formed assistive relationships viewed through the socio-cultural framework aim to discover the perspectives of principals that are involved in an assistive relationship.

Organizational Learning Theory

Evolution of theory. Historically, organizational learning theory emerged largely outside of the school-system setting (Honig, 2008). General reflections regarding theory development include ideas that come from successful and innovative private firms across multiple organizational sectors that reveal findings of decision making over time (Honig, 2008). Theories of organizational learning from experience suggest when looking across learning organizations, members engage in a set of common activities related to the use of evidence from experience, regardless of how the subunits are differentiated in their work (Honig, 2008). Others rely on "organizational learning" from various fields such as management and administration, organizational sociology, and decision making, (Hannaway 1989; Honig 2003, 2004b). This strand of inquiry has roots within the

cognitive sciences as applied to management and administration advanced by Herbert Simon, James G. March, and their students and colleagues (Levinthal & March 1993; Levitt & March 1988). This line of theory elaborates how experience and evidence may be a resource available for others in an organization. Members systematically search for evidence from their experience to help inform their operations with how and whether to make changes in their formal and informal policies and practices (Fiol & Lyles, (1985); Huber, (1991); Levitt & March, (1988). Fiol & Lyles,(1985); Levitt & March, (1988) refer to an organizational learning process known as retrieval as the ongoing use of the newly incorporated evidence to guide subsequent choice and actions. During retrieval, the members of the organization use information in their formal and informal practices to guide their work.

Inside this process, the evidence-use involves three activities; searching for relevant evidence, incorporating or not incorporating evidence into central office policy and practice, and using the new policies and practices to frame ongoing central office operations (Honig, 2009). Levitt and March (1988) define searching as activities that members engage with as they scan their environments for forms of evidence; they may or may not use this evidence to inform what is done inside their work. An example of this may be central office leaders searching for ideas, images, data, or resources they may need to inform their work practices. When evidence from experience becomes a part of what an organization does, it is referred to as incorporation (Honig, 2008). Levinthal and March (1993) found that as organizational members start to incorporate evidence, they use it to inform organizational policy and practice. For example, it may be a formal process as leaders use evidence to write new school board policy or procedures. Other

organizational learning theorists such as McLaughlin (1991) and Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) emphasize the importance of members and how they consider how to incorporate new evidence into their policies and practices, how people think about their work, the norms of subunits within the organization, and the actual day to day work.

Thus, search, encoding, and retrieval provide ripe opportunities for central office leaders not only to access this evidence, but to engage with others about what the evidence means, and whether and how they could use the new information (Honig, 2008). Exploring central office transformation through this lens elaborates on how experience and other forms of evidence used from district leaders might be helpful within the organization (Honig, 2008).

Implications of organizational learning theory to practice. In terms of organizational learning theory viewed through the lens of a school district central office, the office operates as a learning organization when central office leaders search for evidence from the previously described assistive relationships, and reform or develop central office policy and practice to further support the teaching and learning improvements in a broader sense (Honig, 2008). For example, organization learning theory suggests if the central office is operative as a learning organization, leaders inside all subunits will be searching for evidence or information about district conditions that help or hinder improvement in the districts' policy or practice (Honig, 2008).

Viewing concepts from the organizational learning theory lens in the proposed principal perception study may be helpful in understanding how central office leaders' experiences with school assistance relationship and other evidence may be potential resources. A key element of this process includes the search for pertinent evidence, and

the implementation of that evidence as it fits with decision making, or the change process within the central office (Honig, 2008). For example, as central office leaders view evidence collected through their assistive relationships with the principals, they explore possible changes to both district policy and procedures. Additionally, Honig's (2008) study revealed that situations occur where administrators want to learn from others; thus, this additional concept aligns from organizational learning theory (trial-and-error or learning from experience). In this principals' perceptions study, principals explore opportunities to learn from each other, and principal supervisors (ILDs) may uncover strategies and opportunities in the area of instructional leadership development.

Central Office Transformation Viewed Through Combined Theories

Honig (2008) posits the studies detailed above suggest district research frameworks utilizing specific learning theories, however, up to this point research has emphasized assistance for schools OR evidence, but has not explored how two strands of theory together may reveal work practices, as mutually reinforcing for district central offices. Policy and research developments explore the following premise: current demands on district central offices to become supporters of high-quality teaching and learning, could expand student learning throughout district systems if implemented fully; calls for central offices to operate as learning organizations appear consistent with current demands; and ideas or strands from BOTH sociocultural learning theory and organizational learning theory highlight groundwork for district practice and research (Honig, 2008).

Most recently, educational researchers have begun to explore the theory of learning in social settings to explain how central offices might operate as learning

organizations (Honig, 2008). Researchers have posed the challenge that districts may be able to meet enhanced accountability demands if entire districts operate as "learning organizations" (Honig, 2008, p. 23). This understanding brings to surface the image of the district central office operating as a dynamic organization that is engaged in continuous improvement that addresses student and school needs. Included in this line of inquiry is the desire to understand what type of daily work, or work conditions, need to be created by central office leaders in order for the district to operate as an effective learning organization.

Practice, Policy, Research

Research, theory, and practice implications in the area of central office transformation is an upcoming and imperative issue as high stakes testing and performance mandates mount for school districts. School systems devoting time and personnel to accessing and using emerging data will continue to be on the forefront of change. Initiative projects such as Leading for Effective Teaching (LET) accompanied by ongoing study and data provided by the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), pave the way for district and state educational leaders to demonstrate leadership by design. As stated by Wilmore (2008), regarding superintendent leadership, "There is simply no way to overemphasize the importance of a coherently and collaboratively developed vision for the school district that is shared and supported by all stakeholders" (p. 28). Now is the time for educational leaders to take the research and theory, and plan strategically for new and innovative practices for public school systems. This identified and discussed issue has the greatest avenue for impact as it shines laser focus on increasing teaching and student outcomes. There are currently eleven large urban districts across the nation

engaging in the process, and many whom are beginning the conversation as a result of declining student performance and possible consequences of lack of yearly progress. This type of systematic change fits well with the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards that were never intended to be an answer to all challenging school issues, but guidelines to work within in the ever-changing society in which students currently live (Wilmore, 2008).

In an American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research publication, Honig (2013) provided suggestions for federal and state policy makers enabling districts of any size beginning the transformation process inside the central office. Federal and state policymakers may consider moving beyond the current reward and penalty system for school performance and lean toward guiding and incentivizing central office leaders who are engaging in central office transformation. Policymakers may consider a review of unnecessary rules and regulation that consume the time of central office personnel. Policymakers may consider ensuring district leaders that are driving central office performance the freedom to lead**.** Policymakers may consider working closely with district leaders to share the vision with school boards and unions that are compliance and performance driven.

The University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership published a white paper in which Rainey and Honig (2014) outlined one dimension of the central office transformation listed above. The paper, *From Procedures to Partnership*, provides current literature from research to action to assist districts while working in the area of transformation within the central office. Current practice is impacted as district central offices reimage not only the daily work within each unit, but ensuring the right work is

done in the right way to support and sustain districtwide teaching and learning system improvement (Rainey & Honig, 2014).

Summary

In summary, high stakes environments layered with accountability call for exploration in the role of the central office for meeting student outcome goals. The process of central office transformation highlights current and new frameworks to meet accountability goals. Educational leaders initiating this type of transformational change must demonstrate a mission and vision with heart-felt passion. The daily work begins with superintendent and executive positions. Commitment and hard work are needed to ensure systems change. Whole system change that achieves districtwide improvement occurs when district leaders develop collective capacity (Fullan, 2010). Fullan (2010) describes collective capacity as all the groups involved in the culture improving conjointly. Recent research suggests that the systems work needed to support schools, while tackling multiple challenges on a daily basis, requires transformation in current central office systems to prioritize and support teaching and learning outcomes (Honig, Lorton, & Copland, 2009).

Transforming systems in an educational setting call for new and dynamic central office leaders. Honig (2013) stated, "Leaders in transforming systems engage in forms of leadership characteristic of those in high-performing private firms" (p. 7). This new style of leader teaches staff to build capacity for the right work and to learn from ongoing performance process. This hands on, risk-taking, and innovative leadership style is counter-cultural for many educational leaders who view their role as more of the traditional service provider that engages with parents, board members and stakeholders.

Executive leaders in these transforming systems possess subsets of skill such as change management. They work at building a collective vision of the new face for the central office and guide their efforts long- term. They identify specific work for each unit, develop benchmarks for success, and implement an accountability system that is designed for completed work (Honig, 2013).

Central office transformation presents a roadmap that travels beyond bottom-up versus top-down reform, or the centralization of decision making. Rather, this transformation demonstrates building leaders and central office staff working together in partnership and forming close, assistive relationships around the shared challenge of the imperative role of principal in regards to instructional leadership as a key tool for school improvement (Honig, Lorton, & Copland, 2009).

> We found that central office transformation involves fundamental changes in how all central office administrators work day to day, and how they relate to schools. We also identified specific activities that transforming central offices engage in that seem associated with actual improvements in principal's instructional leadership or in creating conditions conducive to such changes. (Honig, Lorton & Copland, 2009, p. 36)

In summary, the whole is, or can be, greater the sum of the parts according to (Knapp, et al., 2010), the challenge for reformers, system leaders, and practitioners at all levels is to visualize the interconnected whole of the educational system that brings ideas energy coherently while educating a diverse student population both effectively and equitably. Executive level educational leaders who are willing to engage in transforming systems require both "will and skill." They must collaborate with staff to identify a

vision of high-performing central office nucleolus that guides the change efforts over a long period of time, clearly communicate success benchmarks and work groups, and demonstrate the accountability for the work (Honig, 2013).

Both perspectives identified above are impactful to student outcome and both are grounded in a systematic paradigm shift moving from traditional to inventive and repurposed frameworks for the central office and building level principals. As discussed above, change does not move from implementation to sustainment unless supported and demonstrated consistently by the leaders in the executive level positions. Considering results of school reforms attempted in the past, it is this author's belief that without the change in purpose and direction of the central office, the support systems required and built for building administrators and teachers will be less effective. Leading a magnitude of change is a major undertaking, and requires more than shifts in organizational charts. Improvement in efficiency of current operational systems that may be deeply rooted in "the way we have always done it", or evaluating departments for ways to trim the excess is a difficult challenge. Transformation requires the educational leader to look at each and every staff person and posit critical questions; to what extent does the current daily work impact improvement of teaching and learning districtwide, and if not, what is needed to align practices to marry both the new work with increased outcomes and results for students (Honig, Silverman, & Associates, 2014).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative case study utilizes a constructivist perspective to explore the perceptions of principals engaged in central office transformation through principal supervision by ILDs in a large urban district. Although the study contains select quantitative data throughout the case, the purpose of this data is to provide readers with a quick snapshot that adds to the rich, thick description provided by qualitative case study work. One of the key philosophical assumptions of qualitative research is based on the view that reality is constructed by humans as they interact with the social world (Merriam, 1998). Theory guided this qualitative work from the start to finish. Theory guides the qualitative researcher while motivated to explore and understanding the meanings constructed by participants, and how they make sense of their world (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research reveals how the parts work together to form the whole (Merriam, 1998). Patton (2002) stated:

> Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not an attempt to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of the setting, what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what is going on with

> them, what their meaning are, and what the world looks like in that particular setting. The analysis is being able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 6)

There are several characteristics of qualitative research that contrast that of quantitative work. First, the goal of the research is to understand the phenomenon of interest from the participant's perspectives, sometimes referred to as the insider's perspective or emic. Secondly, all forms of qualitative research in the data collection and analysis remains the researcher him/herself as the data collection instrument. Thirdly, qualitative research almost always requires fieldwork. Fourth, this type of research primarily involves inductive strategies. In sum, qualitative research remains focused on the process, understanding and meaning that evoke findings that are richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore principal perceptions of the influence of supervisory practices of central office administrators, Instructional Leader Directors (ILD); in districts working within the Principal Support Framework. By examining one dimension of an organizational change within the transforming central office, this study explored principal perceptions of increased instructional leadership development and the assistive relationship between principal and the principal supervisors (ILDs).

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study:

1. What are principal perceptions of central office administrators, principal supervisors, as they work daily toward a more efficient and transforming process within the principal support framework?
    a. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their ability to develop as instructional leaders under the ILD model of supervision?
    b. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their relationships with district level leadership as the transformative role of principal supervisor (ILD) is implemented?
2. What other opportunities for future studies are revealed in this study?

Research Design

Crotty (2012) provided a visual flow for qualitative research direction inside a design. This study specifically is rooted in the epistemology of constructivism, viewed through an interpretive theoretical perspective, utilizing case study research methodology to collect data through interviews, surveys and observations. Epistemology guides the process of looking at the world and making sense of it. Crotty (2012) summarized epistemology as the understanding of what is entailed in knowing, and "how we know what we know" (p. 8). Epistemology provides the grounding for knowledge. For the constructivist, meaning is not discovered, but constructed.

As a theoretical perspective, interpretivism emerged in a response to positivism with a goal to understand and explain human and social reality. It works as a way to develop natural science of the social realm (Crotty, 2012). As qualitative researchers, our

interest in the social world tends to focus on elements that are individual and unique, placing interest in the natural world on the abstract phenomena (Crotty, 2012). Reflecting upon the interpretive framework, the understandings of phenomena and our experiences of them lay new meaning that can emerge as we witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning (Crotty, 1996). Each person may construct a different experience or perspective to describe identical phenomenon. General education research has welcomed this framework based on the realization that qualitative research allows the researcher to retain what is most *meaningful* regarding a particular phenomenon (Randles, 2012).

The case study design is employed in this study to gain an in-depth understanding of meaning for those principals involved in a district that has implemented Instructional Leadership central office reform. The interest in working within the case study design highlights the process rather than the outcome, in discovery rather than confirmation, and context rather than variables (Merriam, 1998). Case studies, although common in the area of education, can influence practice, policy, and future research. Researching and designing a central office transformation case study is what I hope to accomplish through my study.

Methodological Procedures

Study Population

The study district located in an urban area in the Midwest is comprised of 56 elementary schools, 14 middle, and 12 high schools. The district offers EC-12th education. Average enrollment is 42,000 students. The district employs 2,120 teachers, with 224 administrators.

Participant Selection

Based on the personal commitment to display authenticity, I chose participants that would be principals working in a district that was currently in the process of central office transformation. The district that was chosen for this study implemented the ILD reform model three years ago; therefore, these principals have experienced the redesigned role of ILD's within the principal's support framework during the past three years. A total of nine principals were chosen utilizing criterion sampling as the study was designed to explore perceptions of principal support and relationships with the central office staff. This type of sampling according to Patton (2002) is based on a set of criteria, and will add important qualitative components to ongoing program monitoring. Of the nine administrators interviewed, three were elementary level, three middle level, and three high school level administrators.

Participants included one novice principal (0-5 years), one principal with mid-level experience (5-10 years), and one veteran (10+ years of experience) principal within each level: elementary, middle, and high school. Total years of service were not all within the TPS district. Additionally, care was taken to include principals who have adjusted well to the change in leadership structure and principals who have not adjusted as well. A survey instrument was distributed to building administrators during the fall. This survey was developed as a part of a tool kit created by CEL and Dr. Honig as a part of their research emphasis exploring central office transformation. The readiness assessment contained 14 questions where participants responded on a four-point scale ranging from strongly disagree, to strongly agree. This tool was designed to dive deeper into the scope of the current work in the area of principal support. The survey compared

the results with what research has been found pertaining to learning-focused partnerships and how these supported principal instructional leadership at scale (Honig, Silverman, & Associates, 2013).

Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the fall and spring of the 2016 school year. The data was collected from a large urban school district located in the Midwest. Data consisted of interviews, observations, surveys, and document analysis. The goal of data collection was to collect information in a natural environment, the school setting, and to demonstrate the different perspectives the participants brought to the study. The passion that typically exists in undertaking progressive school reform reflected in central office transformation invited this in-depth qualitative expression. I gathered the data and portrayed the emotion regarding the responsibilities of those impacted by the transformation and re-organization of the central office. This affected the level of principal support provided by the newly defined role of Instructional Leader Director.

Interviews. Collecting in depth data through interviews is an accepted and analytical step that provides data needed for categories or themes to emerge (Creswell, 1998). The different perspectives that were described by the participants helped shape an understanding of principal experiences in this type of reform. A recording device was used for all interviews, and shortly after the interviews, I transcribed the interviews in a word for word format to capture each nuisance of the experience. Member checking was utilized for accuracy in transcriptions. A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized. Questions posed during the interviews are provided in Appendix A.

Observations. An in-depth observation occurred in several school settings. The purpose of observations was to observe relationships between principals and ILDs. Field notes were taken to document and record all events in the school setting. After observations were complete, field notes were typed and provided a polished document for the study.

Documents. Patton (2002) encouraged researchers at the beginning of any fieldwork to ensure access to important documents. Documents were not only valuable for what was learned through research, but additionally revealed possible paths to be pursued through observations and interviews. The Wallace Report detailing results of a large Central Office Transformation for District-wide Teaching and Learning Improvement study was analyzed because this document has guided the implementation of central office reform in this district. Additionally, district level data documenting organizational role changes within principal supervisors was analyzed for this study. Survey results compiled from the assessment described above were also a part of the document collection.

Data Analysis

Patton (2002) reminded researchers that during fieldwork, ideas regarding directions for analysis begin to form. Hypotheses may emerge that prompt further field work. Recoding and tracking insights that occur are part of field work, and they are the beginning stage of data analysis (Patton, 2002). The task of the qualitative researcher interested in exploring the meaning of a single phenomenon is to utilize known and accepted data analysis steps (Creswell, 1998).

Organize, prepare, and read data. To begin this step, I gathered all of the interview transcriptions and observation polished field notes, in addition to all the documents, and placed them together to read in the format of a story based on the time I began the study, up until the present.

Code data. As data was transcribed and stories were told, the goal was to encourage participants to make connections or point out disconnects between their perception of preparedness, and the reality they have constructed (Hansen & Kahnweiler, 1993). To begin, I highlighted information that made connections or disconnects in the interview and observation notes. I used different colored highlighters to indicate information that was similar in nature. Upon completion, I began to place highlighted information onto notecards that were sorted and resorted upon reflection.

The experience of coding was reflective in nature as I worked with the data. The themes or categories that were observed during the interviews and observations were part of this reflective process. New themes emerged with the absorption of a few sub-topics that flowed into larger categories. Cutting important quotes out of the transcripts and looking at them by themselves gave clarity to some of the participant responses. I noted potential crossover of topics while extracting pieces from all of the interviews. This process was anticipated and added new dimensions to the data collection process.

By performing these tasks, I had the opportunity to break down data by topics and themes. This revealed comments or responses that I may have missed encompassed by the surrounding responses. The process required time to break apart the data, and sort it into alternate piles to explore themes that surfaced to the top. My hope was to communicate qualitative methods to the readers as authentic and real-life experiences

building principals have on a daily basis, and to explain how the perceptions of support are demonstrated through the newly redesigned role of the ILD.

Generate themes or categories. As additional data was coded, similarities or connections either gained in strength or weakened as a group. I began by placing the data that appeared connected together into categories. At times, the data reflected the need for two categories, and when presented, I copied the card and marked it as a duplicate for categories. Patton (2002) reminds us that without classification, large amounts of information can cause chaos and confusion. Therefore, as data began to form themes, I was able to build the blocks of categories or themes for the data interpretation phase.

Convey findings and interpret meanings. Findings of the data was placed into what Stringer (1996) suggested as concept maps. These maps were helpful as I visualized the various components or themes that affected dimensions of principal support. These maps further added to the consistencies and inconsistencies that existed between the themes. Along with the mapping process, the researcher is positioned as research instrument. This incorporates narrative pieces from the participants while constructed together into categories to add strength to the theme.

Researcher Role

The researcher is the primary instrument for analyzing and gathering data in qualitative studies. This responsibility maximizes the opportunities to produce and collect meaningful information. My role in this study as the researcher required that I address my potential researcher bias and ethical considerations regarding my research efforts.

Researcher Bias

Due to the nature of this type of methodology work, qualitative researchers are encouraged not to bring their own pre-conceived ideas or generalizations about the data to the research process. As with most research phenomenological studies, researchers collecting data must be cognizant of the bias or pre-conceived ideology that can already be in place regarding the phenomenon. When bias is protected, the researcher can see the data in a new and authentic presentation as it is revealed through the research process. Bias awareness was a critical piece during the research of the central office transformational process due to personal experience working in this area.

Having served both as a building leader and a central office leader, I brought perspectives to the study that needed to be acknowledged. While formerly working in these two districts, they both displayed similar high performing characteristics. The demographics of the districts were similar in SES, ethnicity distributions, and parent education levels. Although one district was much larger than the other, neither had the urban setting, nor the total population that was reflected in the study. In preparation of the study, I chose a large urban district similar to the Wallace Study sites to fulfill the course district internship requirement.

Ethical Considerations

As Creswell (2014) stated to aspiring researchers, qualitative design authors must acknowledge the needs, desires, and values of participants. These highlighted ethical considerations involved in the study. I as the researcher respected values and desires of all informants involved in the study. While applying qualitative research measures, study data may be sensitive in nature, and frequently reveals information as the institution and participants are highly visible (Creswell, 2014). To safeguard these rights and

considerations, the objectives of the study and all data use were clearly communicated both in verbal and written form. Written permission was obtained from the participant, and a research exemption form was filed with the International Review Board. Data collection devices and activities were shared with the participant, and all transcriptions were made available. As a participant, all rights and wishes were first when considering decisions made regarding the data. Lastly, anonymity of each participant was protected by the safeguards that were used to ensure privacy of participant names (Creswell, 2014).

Trustworthiness of Findings

Qualitative researchers can facilitate trustworthiness of the findings by using strategies that ensure validity**.** Trustworthiness can be addressed with credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of their studies and findings**.** Guba (1981) created the trustworthiness table below to ensure validity criteria for researchers. While facilitating trustworthiness, I practiced triangulation by looking at all the data and documents to use multiple methods to study the information. Collecting information in more than one avenue strengthens the trustworthiness factor for qualitative researchers.

Table 1

Trustworthiness Criteria and Examples

Criteria/Technique	***Result***	***Examples***
Credibility		
Prolonged engagement	• Built trust • Developed rapport • Built relationships • Obtained wide scope of data • Obtained accurate data	I was in the field from September until December; avenues of communication: emails, appointments, face-to-face, telephone calls.

Persistent observation	• Obtained in-depth data • Obtained accurate data • Sorted relevancies from irrelevancies	I observed participants during day to day supervisory practices of the principalship; ILD/principal meetings; classroom walkthroughs; debrief discussions between ILD/principals after walkthroughs.
Triangulation	• Verified data	I collected multiple sources of data: interviews, observations, documents, website, and email.
Peer debriefing	• Tested	I gathered feedback and discussed questions about my research study with doctoral cohort members and instructors.
Member checking	• Verified documentation and conclusions	I offered participants the opportunity to provide any additional commentary.
Purposive Sampling	• Generated data for emergent design and emerging hypotheses	I selected participants for my study based on years of principal experience.

Criteria/Technique	***Result***	***Examples***
Transferability		
Referential adequacy	• Provided a comprehensive picture of the program	Data gathered from surveys, observations, and interviews helped to provide an overall perception from principals.
Thick description	• Provided a data base for transferability judgment • Provided a vicarious experience for the reader	I provided a detailed description of the sites and participants selected for the study.
Dependability/Conformability		

Access to an audit trail	• Allowed auditor to determine trustworthiness of study	Face to face interview recordings, transcripts, jottings and notes, documents, coding note cards, peer feedback notes, email correspondence.

Limitations of Study

Research in a qualitative manner allows the discovery of principal support perceptions from several angles, and considers the social context in which the experiences occur. Even with these advantages, qualitative research can have limitations. The qualitative researcher needs to display a tolerance for ambiguity (Merriam, 2008). The process from start to finish has no set procedures or protocols that mitigate step by step instructions for data collection or analysis. It has often been said the role in qualitative research is that of a detective. Sensitivity is another trait that aids with this research design (Merriam, 2008). Qualitative researchers need to be sensitive to the variables within a context. Guba and Lincoln (1981), as quoted in Merriam (2008, p.149), make the point that qualitative evaluators do not measure, "they do what anthropologists, social scientists, connoisseurs, critics, oral historians, novelists, essayists, and poets throughout the years have done. They emphasize, describe, judge, compare, portray, evoke image, and create, for the reader or listener, the sense of having been there" (1998) The researcher brings to the research situation a sense of construction, working with others' interpretations of a phenomenon. The qualitative researcher needs to possess highly developed communication skills. Establishing rapport, asking good questions, listening, and writing are needed for this type of research. Guba and Lincoln (1981) infer that researchers with the above qualities would not only be excellent researchers, but proficient with most professional occupations. Considering the description of qualitative

research above, a possible limitation of this research involves the generalizability of qualitative research. Because this study context was a large, urban district in the Midwest, factors outside of the influence of the IDL model could influence results. Care was taken to recognize factors such as high levels of poverty in the district, high student mobility, and high principal turnover as potential intervening variables in the study.

Summary

Chapter III describes the qualitative research methodology used in the study. The purpose and research questions were displayed again to fit within the theoretical perspective utilized. Next, the methods for participant selection were discussed, along with data and collection and analysis. The researcher role in a qualitative study was explored, bias was stated, and limitations were expressed for the study. Lastly, the trustworthiness table is displayed with description of triangulation of data as listed.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The following chapter is devoted to presenting findings revealed in the study. As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore principal perceptions of the influence of supervisory work practices of central office administrators, Instructional Leader Directors (ILDs), in a district working within the Principal Support Framework. This study explored principal perceptions of instructional leadership development and the assistive relationships between principals and principal supervisor (ILDs), one dimension of organizational change within the transforming central office. Data is presented in relation to the study's two research questions, beginning with a review of each question. First, the study population provides a snapshot of the district context in which the qualitative case study took place.

Study Population

As described in Chapter 3, Excellence School District is located in an urban area in the Midwest, and serves approximately 42,000 students. Excellence encompasses approximately 7,000 total employees, 88 school site campuses, and covers 173 square miles. The mission of Excellence School District is to "provide quality learning experiences for every student, every day, without exception" (District website, 2016); and district leaders believe this mission can be accomplished through five core goals: safety

and security, student learning and performance, leadership sustainability, teacher effectiveness, and financial sustainability (District website, 2016).

The district employs 2,120 teachers and 224 administrators. Free and reduced lunch rate in Excellence is 91%, compared to the state average of 61%. Excellence has an average household income of $59,000, and the district reports 49% of homes as single parent homes. Fifty-three percent of students enrolled in K-3rd receive reading remediation, and the average number of absences per student in the district is 13.5 annually. English Language Learners make up the largest population of student programs reporting 18%, followed by Special Education at 16%, and Gifted/Talented at 11%. District leaders comprise 1.8 % of the total budget which is slightly less than the state average of 2.9%, and building administration represents 6.6% of the budget, compared to the state average of 5.7%. Excellence district reports a dropout rate of 26% compared to the state average of 7.8% (OEQA District Profile, 2015). Excellence District advances the goal that every child is on a pathway to success. In the Excellence district, educators are characterized as extraordinary professionals who work with community and families. Their work is described as igniting the joy of learning and preparing each student for the greatest success in college, careers, and life (District website, 2016). Excellence School District supports the premise of providing excellent teachers, leaders, and additional district team members that are committed to providing high quality educational services for all students (District Website, 2016).

During the 2015-2016 school year, the long-term superintendent of Excellence School District left the district to pursue other career opportunities, ushering in a change of leadership at the highest level. The new leader, a veteran from the East coastal area,

began to cultivate a strategic plan for the district in 2016-2017. Subsequently, changes were initiated in the supervision and organizational structure of the principal supervisors, or ILD department. The initial inception of the plan included 11 principal supervisors in the district. However, due to significant budget restraints reflective of the overall financial climate of the state during the 2016-2017 school year, this leadership department experienced a decrease of two ILD positions, down to a staff of nine from eleven in previous years. Currently there are seven ILDs for the elementary schools and two for the secondary schools. One additional director from the central office shares responsibility for alternate sites in the secondary setting. Previous to the 2016-2017 school year, the ILDs had worked under the deputy superintendent. That year, a shift was made moving the ILDs under the Chief of Schools department. Currently, this department is located under the Chief Academic Officer in the Excellence organizational chart.

Data Sources

Merriam (1998) suggested, "Data is nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment" (p.70). Merriam continues to raise researcher awareness by sharing that data is not simply awaiting collection like weekly pick-ups, rather data must first be noticed and acknowledged by the researcher, and then for the specific purpose of the study, designated and labeled as data (1998). The following components of the data reflect my attempt to notice bits and pieces of the school environment and include them as data for the case study.

Observations

It is important to the study context to share some unique opportunities I experienced within Excellence that began in December of 2015. I became aware that the

Excellence School District continues to work with the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), based out of the University of Washington, through a foundation project grant. The purpose for the partnership between Excellence and the foundation project was to gather information concerning implementation of central office transformation, specifically principals working within the Principal Support Framework (PSF) model in the district. As a part of the project, the Center, along with another consulting firm, conducted site visits to glean feedback and information concerning the stages of transformation within Excellence's central office. To facilitate this process, an arrangement between the consulting firm, CEL, and the Excellence district was made, and focus groups were conducted with central office leaders representing multiple departments, including the department containing the ILDs. During their time in Excellence, consultants conducted school site visits to coach and observe the interaction between ILDs and building principals while working within the PSF. I was able to participate in these observations and focus groups. This portion of the data was collected before my study began; therefore, it is presented as "existing data" and will be used only to further inform findings and provide additional context to this study.

During this time as a silent observer, I secured permission from all parties to accompany the team from CEL, the consulting firm, and Excellence to observe and take field notes regarding their work. For one day in December of 2015 and three days in January of 2016, I observed the interactions between the team members, gleaning insight into daily work practices of Excellence's ILDs as they were active in the development of principal instructional leadership. Additionally, these observations revealed different

types of assistive relationships existing in Excellence between principals and their assigned ILD.

Documents

Documents collected during my study include reports, presentations, and district data provided from the above-mentioned groups. These documents detail recommendations from CEL for Excellence as they move forward with their work to transform the central office. Due to Excellence's participation in this study project, research feedback was provided to the district for consideration. Several areas within this feedback target the efforts of the ILDs as they further develop principals as instructional leaders and form assistive relationships, while working within the PSF in the Excellence district. All documents were reviewed for pertinent facts and information. The understandings gleaned from CEL furthered my understanding of program implementation as I moved forward in collecting data for my study. In addition, pre-existing observation and document data was utilized as a part of the triangulation process to enhance reliability and validity of findings in the study. I also reviewed my observation notes and previous documents while designing the district survey that I utilized to provide a "big picture" approach to principals' perceptions of their work with ILDs within the Excellence district. The following information was included in a document that was provided to Excellence as an implementation support provided by the two outside sources supporting the PSF in the district.

Action area one: A shared vision of principals as instructional leaders. The school system has defined, clearly and in detail, what it expects principals to do as the instructional leaders of their schools. It selects and evaluates principals based primarily

on whether they can successfully execute those practices. The goal for this area is for principals to understand the school system's expectations for their roles and effective practices as school instructional leaders. These expectations guide the work principals perform day to day, and the practices can be sustained over time (Principal Support Framework, 2016).

Action area two: A system of support for developing principals as instructional leaders. The school system has created a system of differentiated and targeted support to develop principals' growth as instructional leaders. The goal for this area is for principals to have the skill; tools and support that they need to grow and successfully apply the system's high- priority instructional leadership practices (Principal Support Framework, 2016).

Action area three: A strategic partnership between the central office and principals. The central office develops systemic solutions that ensure instructional leadership is the primary job of principals. The goal for this area is for the central office to deliver effective, integrated support and services that increase the ability of principals to successfully lead their schools (Principal Support Framework, 2016).

Data Collection for Study

In addition to documents that were available to me at the inception of the study, the following survey data enabled me, as a researcher, to further define the study trajectory while constantly considering the research questions to guide my way.

Survey

Following document analysis, the first step in data collection for this study involved developing a survey to capture principal's perceptions of their work with the

ILD. The survey provided both quantitative and qualitative data about principal perceptions. Quantitative survey data revealed the overall principal perceptions from the district as a whole. For example, the survey provided numeric percentages regarding the participants' responses, providing a breakdown of response by years of experience. These results placed in bar graph form provided a quick visual to gain insight into each response. This data was helpful because it gave me the opportunity to dig deeper into the differing results surfacing among the various levels of principal experience categories in the study design. For example, I was curious to see how, if at all, the overall district principal perceptions varied from that of an early career principal, intermediate career principal, and/or veteran principal. These findings are displayed in the following section.

Additionally, qualitative data was gathered through the survey utilizing open-ended response portions to the survey. For example, when asked to describe the relationships between a principal and the ILD, this open-ended response provided rich, thick, description from participants. It is note-worthy to share that I chose to focus primarily on the first four survey questions as they signify principal perceptions that target the research questions. Additionally, while considering the survey findings, it was important to keep in mind that Excellence School District principals and ILDS operate within the PSF. This framework targets instructional leadership support for principals as they work with their principal supervisor, or ILDs. The framework emphasizes the assistive relationship between a principal and their ILD. Detailed specifics for the PSF framework development and model are displayed in Appendix B.

Survey distribution. I developed and distributed the survey instrument to 72 lead building administrators (principals) in Excellence during the fall of 2016. I issued the survey invitation using the Qualtrics survey software program through district email addresses, and all recipients had the option to participate or choose to opt out. Of the 72 lead principals who received the invitation, 38 responded to the survey. Not all principals answered the entire survey, but all participants responded to the first four questions which are key in understanding the overall principal perception in Excellence regarding the principal/ILD relationship.

Excellence principals who chose to respond to the survey fell into the following three categories: three early career principals (0-2 years of experience), 18 intermediate career principals (3-9 years of experience), and 10 veteran principal (10+ years of experience). The following table displays the career distribution among survey participants. Thirty eight Excellence principals responded to the survey invitation. Although it is important to note, not all participants chose to answer every question on the survey. For example, only 31 respondents provided their years of experience in the survey. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the 31 responders. Additionally, ten participants have principal experience outside of Excellence, and 19 principals have experienced all of their career work in Excellence.

Table 2

Principal Years of Experience Category

Experience Title	Years of Experience	Number of Responses
Early Career	(0-2)	3
Intermediate Career	(3-9)	18
Veteran	(10+)	10
Total Responses		31

The first four questions of the survey distributed to Excellence principals help to frame the overall snapshot or "pulse" of Excellence while considering the study research questions. Three of the four beginning survey questions target principals' development as instructional leaders under the ILD influence. The remaining question reveals the overall "pulse" of Excellence principals referencing the partnership between the principal and ILD within the framework. To begin capturing the ILD influence in developing principals' instructional leadership, the following findings reveal overall principal perceptions.

Table 3

Principalship Defined as "Instructional Leadership"

Question 1: Our district has clearly defined the principalship as instructional leadership

#	Answer	*n*	%
1	Strongly disagree	1	2.70
2	Disagree	3	8.11
3	Agree	19	51.35
4	Strongly agree	14	37.84
5	DK/NMI	0	0.00
6	Total	37	100.00

These findings reveal the overall perception of principals who participated in the study. Evidence suggests that the Excellence district has linked the principalship with the task of instructional leadership. Specifically, the agree (51%) and the strongly agree (37%) categories, considered together indicate that 88% of the principals surveyed agree that this foundational instructional leadership piece has been well communicated within the PSF framework. Additionally, survey question number two provides a further look into the how the definition of instructional leadership in Excellence influences the daily work practices of central office leaders.

Table 4

Instructional Leadership and Central Office Functions

Question Two: That definition of the principalship as instructional leadership (referenced in #1) informs all central office functions (principal hiring, evaluation, and professional development)

#	Answer	*n*	%
1	Strongly disagree	2	5.41
2	Disagree	11	29.73
3	Agree	18	48.65
4	Strongly agree	6	16.22
5	DK/NMI	0	0.00
6	Total	37	100.00

This question reveals a division among principals concerning their perceptions of central office responses to the instructional leadership framework. While principals generally agree on the definition of principal practice as instructional leadership (Table 4.2 above), they have split perceptions regarding central office leaders supporting that definition through their work practices. The answers totaled in strongly disagree/ disagree categories account for 34% of the response versus agree/ strongly agree representing the perception of 64% of the respondents. Although split in their responses, the agree responses still approximately double the disagree responses. The third question that targets instructional leadership is displayed below.

Table 5

Central Office Support of Principal Growth

Question Three: We have central office staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals

#	Answer	*n*	%
1	Strongly disagree	1	2.70
2	Disagree	6	16.22
3	Agree	27	72.97

4	Strongly agree	3	8.11
5	DK/NMI	0	0.00
6	Total	37	100.00

According to principal responses to this question, the majority of principals perceive the central office dedicating staff to support their growth as instructional leaders. However, when comparing this response to the previous questions, findings may suggest that principals' perceptions vary as the majority respond positively to the central office being dedicated to supporting principals, while responses reflect more of a range in question two. After these findings, my goal was to uncover additional perceptions in these two questions.

Question four of the survey explores the partnership aspect between a principal and their ILD as they develop assistive relationships. Table 6 reveals the overall perception in Excellence targeting their relationship as a partnership. The partnership between principals and their ILD will be further discussed in the later portion of this findings chapter.

Table 6

Central Office Partnerships

Question Four: The relationship between principals and the central office in this district is a partnership relationship

#	Answer	*n*	%
1	Strongly disagree	3	8.11
2	Disagree	13	35.14
3	Agree	15	40.54
4	Strongly agree	5	13.51
5	DK/NMI	1	2.70
6	Total	37	100.00

As the survey portion of the data collection came to a close, I next chose to analyze the responses not only as overall perceptions, but I was curious to see how findings from the data would differ if I sorted the responses by the years of principal experience categories as discussed in the previous section. The following figures represent the overall district perceptions broken down by early, intermediate, and veteran years of experience.

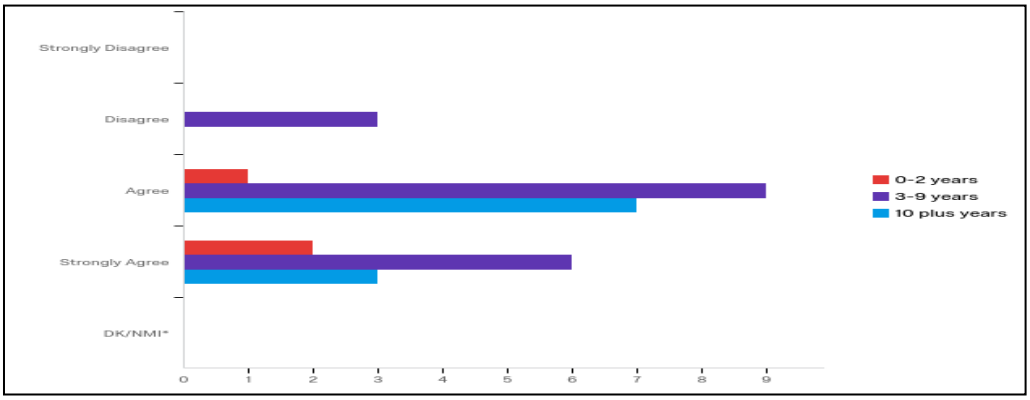

Figure 2. Responses by category of experience level for Question 1: Our district has clearly defined the principalship as instructional leadership.

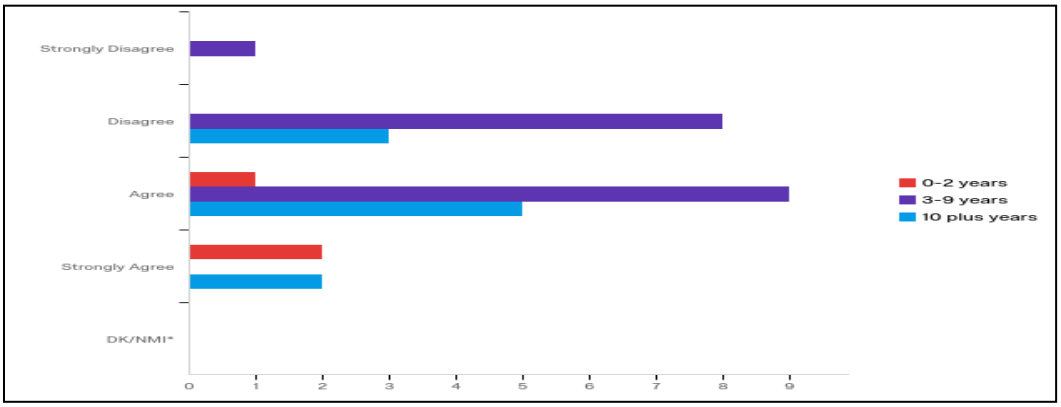

Figure 3. Responses by category of experience level for Question 2: The definition of the principalship as instructional leadership informs all central office functions.

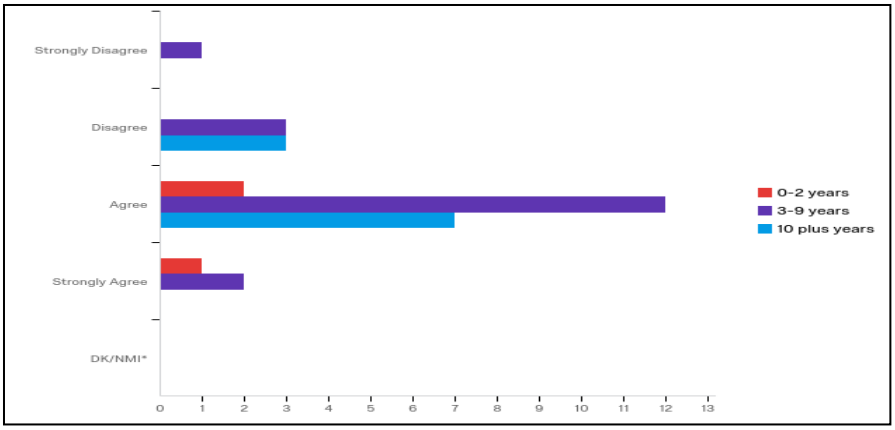

Figure 4. Responses by category of experience for Question Three: We have a central office staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals as instructional leaders.

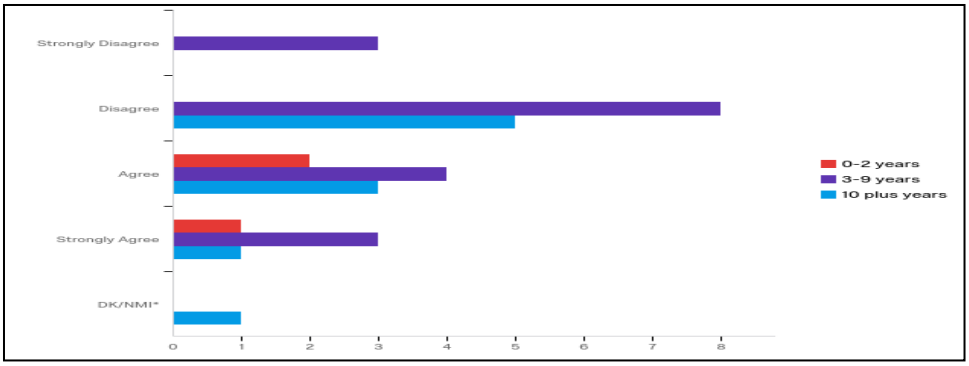

Figure 5. Responses by category of experience for Question Four: The relationship between principals and the central office in this district is a partnership relationship.

The last survey question explored the relationship between principals and their central office leaders. Considering the response pattern above, findings reveal a larger response in the strongly disagree/disagree category. These responses were selected by primarily by the intermediate years of experience group. The veteran responders also show a voice in this question in the disagree category.

Summary of findings by category of experience. Survey responses provided an overall snapshot of the Excellence principals. Additionally, response broken out by years of experience provided additional insight into the perceptions concerning the four core

questions of the survey. The strongest voice in agreement appeared in question one regarding the definition of principalship as instructional leader. No responses were given in the strongly disagree category on this question. The early career principals show consistent positive response throughout questions 1-4.

The intermediate and veteran experience group shared perceptions that were stronger in the disagree/strongly disagree categories, especially in question four regarding the partnership aspect of the relationship between a principal and central office leaders. After considering the response difference, I was interested to see if personal interviews in the years of experience categories provided additional insight into the finding difference between the categories

Survey data was collected to gather principal perceptions throughout the district as a whole and through categories based on years of experience. By extending an invitation for more in-depth interviews to all survey participants, I was able to understand in more rich and meaningful ways the perceptions of individual principals within Excellence district. The following section details the interview process. This opportunity was extended to all survey participants.

Interviews

The interview portion of the study began by extending an invitation to all participants that completed the survey. Each participating principal received an email through campus email addresses inviting him/her to participate in a personal interview with the researcher. As a part of this invitation, all participants could indicate an interest in a personal interview, not respond at all, or choose the opt-out option that accompanied the email invitation. All participants were invited to engage in a semi-structured

interview that addressed ten questions. The interview protocol is included in Appendix A. To ensure comfort and confidentiality, each principal selected the time and place for the interview to take place. Although the study proposal included the plan to include a total of nine principals to participate in the interview process, six responded and accepted the invitation to participate with an in depth personal interview. With these six participating principals, all but two categories in the criterion sampling were fulfilled.

To review the study design, three categories of principal experience were identified: early (0-2) years, intermediate (3-9) years, and veteran (10+) years' experience. My intent was to interview one elementary, one middle level, and one high school principal within each category of years of experience (for a total of nine interviews). However, after extending multiple invitations to participate, only six principals volunteered for the qualitative portion of the study. Despite this limitation, all study criteria were fulfilled with the current participant sample with the exception of a high school principal with zero to two years of experience and middle level principal with three to nine years of experience. However, the participating middle level principal in the early career category had previously worked as an assistant principal at the high school, and the high school principal in the mid-career category likewise had former experience at the middle level. Therefore, their perspectives added insight into each of the missing categories.

As the researcher in this qualitative case study research, I recorded all interviews with permission from each participating principal. Interviews lasted approximately 40-75 minutes and were conducted in the participant's office with little to no interruptions during the scheduled time that was chosen by the principal. To begin the interview data

collection, I considered the following foundational research premise: although interviews are one of the most widely used techniques in qualitative research, researchers must be cognizant that the interviewer-respondent duo is a complex phenomenon-with participants' predispositions, biases, characteristics and attitudes that influence the interaction of the data (Merriam, 1998). Being aware of this aspect of qualitative work, I paid careful attention to be nonjudgmental, respectful, and sensitive to each respondent that participated in the interview process.

Instructional Leadership Practice

While immersed in case study research, the researcher attempting to understand the case in intensity and totality, must practice holistic descriptions to explore the breadth and depth of data collection (Merriam, 1998). Although the researcher may assign scientific sounding terms or categories to activities during qualitative research, Wolcott (1992) reminds researchers that we are always talking about activities during the process that are systematically "watching," "asking," and "reviewing" (p.19). Being cognizant of this foundational practice of qualitative research, I attempt to introduce the holistic descriptions in the following sections of the study. Data and findings of my study were collected as the systematic "watching," "asking," and "reviewing" (Wolcott, 1992) occurred through the lens of the proposed research questions.

To begin, I utilized what Merriam (1998) describes as the constant comparative method of data analysis. This basic strategy of constant comparison is compatible with inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research and has been adopted by many qualitative researchers (Merriam, 1998). This basic strategy involves the method of constantly comparing the data from the field, interviews, observations, and documents.

These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then, in turn, compared to each other until themes and subthemes begin to emerge. As the data analysis process began for this study, I first read and reread all the data from the interview transcripts, the field notes, the observation notes, and the open-ended responses from the survey data. As analysis took place, notes were made regarding common threads that were reoccurring.

This process helped to launch the next stage of data analysis which involved coding the large amount of data collected for this study. According to Merriam (1998), coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of designation to aspects of the data so the researcher can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data. Merriam (1998) continues to share that coding occurs at two levels: identifying information about the data and interpretive constructs related to the analysis. To first identify the data information for this study, I gathered and located the data collected as detailed above, and then sorted the data as it pertained to both the research questions. This process involved data being compressed and linked together with meaning that evolved as the researcher studies the identified phenomenon of the study (Merriam, 1998).

To move beyond the basic identification process, next I started with one category of data identified as the RQ1a, and began to construct categories or themes that captured a recurring pattern that cuts across "the preponderance" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 139). These categories or themes are "concepts indicated by the data (and not the data itself)….. In short, conceptual categories and properties have a life apart from the evidence that gave rise to them" (p. 36). Constructing categories is largely an intuitive process that is informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and

knowledge, and the meaning made by the participants themselves (Merriam, 1998). This process started the second level of analysis as interpretive constructs began to emerge.

Merriam shares with researchers that category construction is data analysis, and it is to be done in conjunction with data collection (1998). Merriam (1998) recommends the following guidelines to determine the efficacy of categories using the constant comparative method as discussed above:

- Categories should reflect the purpose of the research. The categories may reveal answers to your research questions.
- Categories should be exhaustive; all identified relevant data should fit in a category or subcategory.
- Categories should be mutually exclusive. One unit of data should fit into only one category.
- Categories should be sensitizing. The reader should be able to gain a sense of nature by the name of the category. The more exacting in capturing the meaning of the phenomenon, the better.
- Categories should be conceptually congruent. The same level of abstraction should characterize all categories at the same level (Merriam, 1998).

This process of analysis was essential for identification and construction of the themes (categories) and subthemes (subcategories) that are described more fully in the following section. The following findings highlight principal perceptions regarding instructional leadership practices delivered by ILDs in Excellence while working within the PSF. These findings uncover principal perceptions relevant to research question 1a regarding their perceptions of their development as instructional leaders under the

influence of the ILD. The following table displays the overarching theme, or big ideas of instructional practice development that surfaced during the study through interviews, observations, and document review.

Table 7

Research Question 1a: What are principals' perceptions of their development as instructional leaders under the influence of the ILD?

Overarching theme 1: Instructional practice development	Overarching theme 2: Specific Areas of Principal and Teacher Growth
Measuring student growth through data discussions	Evaluation and teacher monitoring growth
Communication as a key for principals/ILDs	Student/Teacher growth
	Principal professional growth

Data Discussions

As I began to reflect and reread the data collected in the area of instructional leadership development, it became clear that principals perceive measuring student growth through data discussions with their ILD as an example of a work practice under the ILD influence. Surfacing through interviews, observations and survey data, principals in Excellence on several occasions referred to student growth on standardized and district benchmark assessments as an instructional practice under the influence of their ILD. For example, a principal stated,

> Of course, we look at the OCCT scores; along with the school grade card with our ILD… we look at district assessments and benchmarks that are standardized because with these, we can see a beginning, middle, and an end to observe overall growth. (Interview, 2016)

Although Excellence principals view the OCCT as just one snapshot of student growth, and they share the school report card is not the most appropriate way to communicate growth, they continue to focus on growth trends as revealed through the analysis of student data. They consider data analysis as evidence of their growth in instructional leadership as they work with their ILDs.

Analysis of student data and the discussions surrounding student achievement in Excellence are viewed by principals as an instructional leadership practice that develops through working with their ILD inside the PSF. Another finding in this area is shared by principals as they meet with their ILDs and have conversations regarding data that supports student learning trajectories. As one Excellence principal stated,

> You can only be as strong as the people that are working with you…the assistant principal and I have weekly data conversations, and I have weekly conversations with my ILD about the assessments results…from district expectations to classrooms, my ILD oversees the trends in data trajectories and adds guidance to them (Interview, 2016).

An additional example of growth in instructional leadership skills is evidenced in the following perception from one principal, "Excellence School District has set a district wide goal of decreasing suspension rates by five percent. At my particular building site, we have decreased the suspensions from last year over 50 percent" (Interview, 2016).

Principals continue their conversation regarding student data and the ILD influence by sharing that ILDs have access to school wide data for their assigned sites. Principals view this accessibility as an example of how the ILD partners with principals

as they measure student growth through data. For example, one principal in Excellence considers the ILD as a data partner by saying,

> We have a low inference gathering when performing practices such as classroom walkthroughs and constantly gathering suspension data that make for a school picture. The data picture with the ILD is a bigger one. The data they gather is like at a 50,000 foot view, and then we zone in from that view in our meeting looking specifically at our building data, and how our students are doing. (Interview, 2016)

Another principal shared that the ILD having access to student data allows him to "quickly access where students are performing in a building" (Interview, 2016). Goal setting between principals and their ILD has been perceived at times as instructional practice that supports student growth and that occurs through data discussions. During an interview with an Excellence principal, she stated, "The goals we set and discuss with my ILD are always fluid and living documents." This principal appreciates the flexibility that is displayed in the goal setting process while measuring student goals.

While the majority of principals perceive student goal setting with the ILD a practice that enhances instructional leadership, a contrasting example is heard from another principal in Excellence. This principal perceived the goal setting process between principal and ILD in the following cycle,

> Here are the superintendents' goals for students, therefore my ILD is the one who makes sure the superintendents goals are initiated… this is an example of how the goal setting process definitely goes more one way than the other…. the goals of

the superintendent become the goals of my ILD; therefore, they become mine. (Interview, 2016)

Although this perception came from a single response, the principal expressed the opinion that he perceives the process of working with the ILD as a constraining practice. This principal expressed that his leadership ability may be curtailed by an organizational structure that intrudes upon his responsibilities as a principal.

Communication

Principals in Excellence share that developing as an instructional leaders requires consistent communication between the principal and ILD. Having consistent communication between principals and ILDs provides additional support as principals are developing as instructional leaders. For example, one principal shared

> When my ILD and I meet on any occasion, they take meeting notes and consistently email them back to me for a reference to keep. This helps me greatly as I need to quickly find information that was discussed without me having to call them again. (Interview, 2016)

This form of communication surfaced as an example of a support that is provided by the ILD. The documentation of meeting notes is a particular style of communication that is appreciated by this building principal.

Another example of communication practiced by an ILD in Excellence provides an additional example of the use of documentation. A principal shared that her ILD highly encourages her as a building principal to document teacher correspondence, parent correspondence, and other stakeholder correspondence to validate important information as it is passed from the district down to the building level. Documenting all professional

development activities such as teacher training, parent training, and community interactions provide evidence for continued instructional leadership development. Principals share that serving in the current litigious environment, such as the environment in Excellence, documentation is a highly encouraged form of communication that can be used to develop instructional practice. One principal chuckled and stated, "My ILD always reminds me it is just better this way, if it is not in writing, it did not happen." This advice from the ILD was perceived as supportive, and this building leader appreciated the expert advice that she received.

Principal Growth through the ILD Influence

In the area of instructional practice, principals referred frequently to the idea of principal growth that they have experienced under the supervision of the ILD. This topic surfaced in three specific areas in which principals perceived growth opportunities: professional growth, evaluation and teacher monitoring growth, and student/teacher growth. The following findings describe these principal perceptions.

Professional Growth

The following finding represents principals' perceptions regarding professional growth opportunities within Excellence School District. There are several areas in which principals perceived their growth as a professional under the influence of an ILD. As the interview process continued, descriptions of these growth opportunities were discussed by principals in Excellence. For example, one principal in Excellence stated that he experiences growth in the area of professional commitment while working with the ILD. He continued to share that, regardless of the budget constraints that impact Excellence this year (specifically the ILD department working with two fewer positions), this

particular principal/ILD team is willing to "go the extra mile" while demonstrating their professional commitment to the model. For example, this may include an ILD serving additional schools, requiring the principal/ILD team to communicate more through email, and daily phone calls, over frequent face to face meetings as the load increases with growing numbers of school sites.

As a result of budget constraints, the number of school sites assigned to one ILD is growing: 12 to 14 schools are assigned to each secondary ILD, and seven or eight school sites are assigned to the elementary ILDs. Despite the increased caseload of individual ILDs, a continued commitment to professional growth was evident in study findings. For example, one principal reported,

> The commitment between my ILD and myself is evident as we both are available for phone calls starting early in the morning and extending through late evening hours if the need arises…not everyone is willing to that, but my ILD is motived to do it for me. (Interview, 2016)

Another principal in Excellence suggested that professional growth through commitment conversation,

> How far are my ILD and I willing to go? Pretty far because that is my job. As a leader, you can't just say, I will not personally improve this year because of ILD position cuts; you can still be committed to making it work. (Interview, 2016)

An additional area of practice that principals perceived as professional growth is that of training and development through the influence of the ILD. One principal shared her perception that, as principals, they are exposed to more divergent way to do their job due to the ILD interaction. She stated, "There is a commitment in Excellence making sure

that we, as principals, are well trained" (Interview, 2016). An example of this training and development in Excellence is demonstrated through week-long summer professional development sessions that provide intense training in instructional leadership development. Additionally, weekly principals' meetings provide support for professional growth. One veteran principal added to the conversation of training and development by stating,

> I think what I need as a veteran principal to be more effective is very different than what a new principal needs from an ILD….at times I think the growth opportunities are driven by what new principals need, and it is not differentiated very well. (Interview, 2016)

This type of principal perception continued by using the term "over trained" on district initiatives in which he was very familiar. This finding identifies a need to differentiate professional development for leaders across varying levels of experience in Excellence school district.

Another example of growth perceived by principals in Excellence occurs when they acquire additional professional development along beside their ILD. For example, frequently during interviews principals referred to the RELAY Leadership Training. Selected Excellence principals and ILD attend this extensive training, and perceive this as a growth opportunity. This training stems from the book *Levers for Leadership* (Banbrick-Santoya, 2012), and it includes an intensive year-long fellowship. Excellence district engages in these levers through their leadership model, and the levers provide key text for driving classrooms in Excellence. Perceptions varied during interviews on growth

opportunities as not all principals from Excellence were selected, out of the pool that applied, to attend the training.

Another example of professional growth shared by Excellence principals that existed previously is the tuition reimbursement program for leaders completing their doctoral degree. Several principals that chose to participate in this research study share that they utilized this offer until current district budget constraints halted the program. Similar to the perceptions shared above regarding not all principals are chosen to participate in training opportunities with their ILDs, one study principal shared,

> Nobody that was anywhere close to retirement age was able to take advantage of the RELAY or tuition reimbursement opportunity…very few principals that were close to retirement applied, and out of those few, none were selected for this opportunity of professional growth. (Interview, 2016)

This finding may indicate perceptions differ between principals regarding the equity of professional growth opportunities in Excellence. This particular principal viewed age and retirement eligibility as factors that may have influenced decision makers in their choices. Several of the study principals mentioned RELAY as well as tuition reimbursement as an opportunity to grow alongside the ILDs in the district. As a researcher, I am curious to see if the education level difference has any effect on principals' perceptions of growth opportunities in Excellence.

Findings from this study reveal that principals in Excellence view their involvement in principal networks as an additional opportunity to grow through the ILD influence. These networks, or previously titled portfolio meetings, provide a venue for principals to participate in leadership institutes together as small groups. These small

groups or networks consist of building principals that are placed together by commonalities that they share. For example, one network may contain principals that serve schools with a high ELL population that are located in close proximity to each other. Another network may contain area schools that are located closely in proximity to each other, or by the type of students they serve. For example, several alternative school settings are located in the same network. Networks in Excellence consist of small numbers of principals that are placed together similar to a cohort model. To continue the training opportunities in Excellence, Assistant Principals receive instructional leadership meetings in addition. These meetings are held on separate dates to prevent both levels of leaders to be out of the building at the same time. Principals use these network groups to learn and receive professional growth from their ILD and from each other. For example, a principal shared,

> My ILD provides targeted training and growth for us in our network meetings that may be very different than what is happening in another group in Excellence….they provide training in such a way that I can take it back to my building and share with my teachers in a meaningful way. (Interview, 2016)

A perception that is shared by several principals in Excellence is experiencing professional growth through the mindset modeled between the principal and the ILD. For example, one principal stated, "My ILD's 'catch phrase' when discussing professional growth is asking the question; 'Do you want me to tell you what to do as your boss, or would you rather me think through the process with you?" (Interview, 2016). This Excellence principal sees professional growth as working together as colleagues. "I use my ILD and network team as thought partners, not crisis interventionists….I may not

need my ILD daily, or call them on a daily basis, but when a crisis comes up you know who your supports are…" (Interview, 2016).

Findings in this study suggest that the "mindset" of a principal is important to his/her acceptance of the support of the ILD. During the tenure of many principals in the district, they have seen the supervisory structure for principals' change from elementary and secondary deputies with four managers on each level, to the current ILD support structure. While discussing organizational structure changes, one principal reflected, "If this ILD/principal framework is done correctly, and you and your ILD have the mindset that we want to model for teachers and students, it doesn't make any sense to be close minded about this structural change" (Interview, 2016).

Evaluation and Teacher Monitoring Growth

Principals in the Excellence school district reveal that the influence of the ILD for evaluating and monitoring teacher performance is another opportunity for growth. The following findings support the growth perceived by principals while performing the instructional practice of evaluating and monitoring teacher growth. The data collected in this growth area impacts or influences the teacher evaluation process of principals and ILDs working within the PSF.

To explain this finding, it is important to share one principal's perception that she views the instructional task of evaluation as a team process. This principal perceives the opportunity to norm the evaluation and teacher monitoring process as an advantage and shared, "Between my experiences, the decade of my AP experiences, and the experiences of my ILD who was a principal and a teacher, we all see things differently" (Interview, 2016). The advantage shared through this perception blends the experience and

backgrounds of the administrators as they perform teacher observations and evaluations. Due to the involvement of this ILD/principal pair and the time developing in this particular situation, the ILD is familiar with the principals' system and can easily "plug into" any part of the evaluation of teacher monitoring cycle. In Excellence, each ILD has access to the district data system, so he/she can review the teachers' data in the evaluation and monitoring process. As an example, this principal stated "It provides a snapshot of each teacher… here is the glow (the positive feedback), and here is the grow (what we are working on)…before this system, my teachers had never heard those terms" (Interview, 2016).

As a part of the change in roles for Excellence principals and ILDs working within the PSF, one principal reflects on how, as a team, they have shifted to a more coaching evaluation paradigm. The shift sprang from the following question shared by a principal,

> How do you wear the hat of evaluator and coach at the same time.... my ILD provides the coaching structure that is currently followed at this school site. First, my ILD and I met in a non-evaluative way and discuss how to improve the teaching and learning at this site… this, in turn, translates into me meeting with teachers in a non-evaluative way, talking about transformation teaching and learning in the classroom. (Interview, 2016)

Another principal in Excellence describes her growth in the evaluation model as a result from the modeling and role play that occurred while learning the evaluation and teacher monitoring from the ILD. She reflected,

> If my ILD had not been so purposeful with the training, and the district had not made me go through the rigor, the learning, or holding me accountable for it, I would not be nearly as good at critical feedback as I am now" (Interview, 2016).

Using the ILD as a role model, this principal shares that she provides "hard core" evidence when evaluating and monitoring teacher performance as experienced in the training provided by the ILD (Interview, 2016). Summarizing this principals' perception, "Under the leadership of my ILD, I have be able to hone in and develop that practice as a part of my evaluation" (Interview, 2016).

While considering principal perceptions regarding the evaluation and teacher monitoring process, one principal viewed the current evaluation system under this framework as another task requiring effective feedback to plan, on top of all the other administrative duties. The increase in required feedback from the current teacher evaluation system is a major part of the "wall to wall" schedule for administrators, leaving little to no time for drop in parents or meetings anymore. A principal stated, "Additionally, to add to my increase in planning, my ILD wants me to do an unannounced walkthrough, come back and plan for the observation, and do a feedback meeting" (Interview, 2016).

This common theme for principals in Excellence is heard through the perception of increased time pressures required to perform the current evaluation system correctly. This demand may be a factor in the varying perceptions gathered from principals concerning the teacher evaluation and monitoring process. For example, one principal shared both a positive and negatives concern regarding the current evaluation system,

> It is very scripted, but time consuming… first, I write out the questions and then my ILD wants me to also include how I think the teacher is going to answer the question…. it does guide the feedback meeting and keeps the meetings from being just check the box" (Interview, 2016).

To continue the discussion of how perceptions of the evaluation system in Excellence vary, one principal noted,

> With my ILD, this teacher monitoring and evaluation system does not let me celebrate the accomplishments. I feel like there is always a 'gotcha' element, and that is not working for my teachers and the culture of my building….. my teachers are happy, my kids are happy… and if this is something my new ILD is shoving down my throat…some of the steps I am required to do, I don't necessarily agree with….If my teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing, meeting the standards, and the students' scores show growth, can we not just let them do their thing (Interview, 2016).

Another Excellence principal viewed the focus of being in classrooms and tracking visits as a positive result of the system. This framework requires a minimum of twenty minutes of observation when doing a formal observation. One principal shared,

> I do not necessarily equate the increase in classroom observations to the ILD framework, but it has evolved while working within the new framework… even though the feedback trackers and observations trackers are a lot of work, we are in the classroom and giving feedback more on a regular basis (Interview, 2016).

Another principal perceived the evaluation system as adding to the "busy work" pile while documenting observations and feedback as a part of this framework. He

explained, “I think we need to focus more on some of our more struggling teachers and spend less time in our successful teachers classrooms….now though with these requirements we are preset with who we see and how often” (Interview, 2016). Finally, principals perceived the current teacher evaluation process as an improvement over a system that was previously lacking adequate observation time. As one principal noted,

> The increase of observation time has led to stronger teacher conferences that are open to different perspectives now. Each new person sees or views things differently…this framework changed how I look through lesson plans. Now, when I look at student lesson plans, I am watching for the actual executed plans, not just what was on the paper…I learned we were spending a lot of times making lesson plans look pretty, but rehearsing and actually following through with lessons are two different things. (Interview, 2016)

Perceptions of evaluation and teacher monitoring growth was summarized by one principal as the following, “Instruction is the heart and soul of what we do, if as leaders we aren’t unified on the evaluation process, we are open to risk… It’s absolutely necessary to have ongoing dialogue with everybody who evaluates, including our ILD” (Interview, 2016).

Other principals in Excellence concurred, “You cannot evaluate a teacher on one or two formal observations a year, it is impossible in that format to get a clear picture (of teacher effectiveness)” (Interview, 2016). As a result of the current evaluation and teacher monitoring system, the “new normal” for one participating principal revealed,

> The teachers in my building have come to expect the level of involvement from the principals and the ILD… teachers expect me to do walkthroughs every two

> weeks at a minimum, and they know they will receive feedback and be held accountable for that feedback…this has been a mind shift for this school. I had a lot of push back at first… now the teachers see a pattern of support, the high expectation and support come together from all the leaders, and they expect it now as the new normal (Interview, 2016).

While concluding the findings regarding principal growth under the ILD influence, an additional theme emerged. Not only did the principals perceive growth for them as professionals, findings support the perception of student and teacher growth under the ILD influence as well. The following section highlights findings related to this area of growth.

Student/Teacher Growth

The following theme began to surface as principals in Excellence responded to interview questions targeting the growth in their leadership efforts working to improve student and teacher growth under the ILD influence. Principals' state the instructional practice of analyzing student achievement growth through district benchmarks and class performance data as a part of weekly ILD meetings while under this framework. For example, one principal stated,

> My ILD and I set student growth goals together, we set a student growth goal around culture, a student growth goal around climate, and a student academic growth goal. We, the ILD and myself, are able to track and monitor student goals through discussions focusing on where we are, and where we need to be next to meet student goals. (Interview, 2016)

Another principal shared how she set student goals jointly with her ILD by analyzing student test data such as the OCCT and district benchmark. The principal added, "Depending on the particular ILD, the experience of measuring student growth on state and district tests somewhat varies on what that looks like depending on the skill set of the ILD" (Interview, 2016). For example, a veteran principal shared, "Training just for training sake can be redundant if the principal already possesses the skill to utilize student data" (Interview, 2016). In contrast, an intermediate career principal reflects earlier on his experience, "I grew as an administrator the first two years under my ILD, and we started to see significant gains in student achievement. We experienced growth utilizing strategies they had taught me" (Interview, 2016).

Growth in student scores brought to mind a specific success in one principal's building, who shared,

> We had a huge growth with student test scores one year, and in part it is due to the type of ILD that we have had…the two ILDs I am thinking of in this scenario purposefully provided training at my building as we began a new program, the training they provided was phenomenal and it excited my teachers as they began to see the students score increase after implementing this particular initiative… As a result, I have seen growth in my teachers, and therefore, growth in the students and our assessments scores validate this. (Interview, 2016)

Lastly, one principal in Excellence reflects on a time when her ILD was helpful in a curricular program decision. This particular principal perceived an ineffective program model was being used in her building and stated,

> A model being used in my building was a remedial model, and the kids were caught in the remedial spiral where they never got out…. I shared this with my ILD and they became involved in the change process by participating in conversations with the district as an advocate for student need…. now we are using a different model that really focusing on building vocabulary and foundational skills and experiencing student growth. (Interview, 2016)

Principals view teacher growth through a wide range of perceptions as they reflect, comment and develop as instructional leaders under the ILD influence. The following scenarios provide the range of responses shared by principals when asked to discuss the influence of working with their ILD on teacher growth in the area of teaching and learning. For example, one principal stated, "In my two decades of being an educator, I have had two ILDs that have influenced my instructional teacher practice development" (Interview, 2016).

As a researcher, the goal is to remain neutral in sharing all perceptions in the data findings. For example, one principal shared student growth perceptions under the influence of the ILD. This Excellence principal perceives the following, "The student growth and culture we are experiencing in my building is not something I attribute to working under the ILD influence" (Interviews, 2016). For this particular principal, the increase in student growth and positive school culture is not an area the assigned ILD had been influential in the growth as perceived by the principal. This particular principal has experienced several ILDs during the first three years of service in the building.

For another principal who perceives her ILD has influenced teacher growth through principal development explains, "Because of the training I have had provided by

the ILD, my teachers are learning to recognize students' strengths and weaknesses closely as I then replicate that level of training I received from the ILD" (Interview, 2016). This particular Excellence principal set the following goal for her teachers,

> If, as a teacher, you are really going to teach a student, you need to know and recognize their strengths and weaknesses... Know your students as readers, writers, scientists, and mathematicians, and that is the level I want my teachers to know their students (Interview, 2016).

Professional development is perceived by principals in Excellence as an area of teacher growth. Building principals agreed that Excellence School District provides teachers with a plethora of growth opportunities. District professional development has a strong presence in Excellence demonstrated by dedicated staff devoted to teaching and learning support, accompanied by stipends that are offered to participating teachers. In addition, Excellence has a teaching and learning academy that is solely devoted to teaching and learning growth efforts. Occasionally, ILDs will work together with the professional development department as a part of the PSF. For example, a principal in Excellence recalls an occasion where, "Our ILD gave a lot of real time training needed for professional development… it was the type I could take right back to my teachers and use in a staff meeting" (Interview, 2016). Teacher growth is perceived from this particular principal,

> One of the ways this framework has changed the way we do teacher professional development…we now have better programs and methods of communication as a result of this framework… at our school site, we frequently deal with students on

a one to one basis, and now we can go deeper into the relationship factor here as a result of the way we do professional development (Interview, 2016).

The following sections focus on the second portion of the research question exploring principals' perceptions of their relationship with their ILD, and how the findings may answer question 1b of the study.

Assistive Relationships between the Principal and ILD

As a review, it is noteworthy that central office transformation in Excellence district presents a roadmap that travels well beyond the typical bottom-up versus top-down reform, or the centralization of decision making. Rather, this transformation demonstrates building leaders and central office staff working together in partnership, forming close assistive relationships around the shared challenge of the principals' role as instructional leadership as the key tool for school improvement (Honig, Lorton, & Copland, 2009). The following section targets the findings related to research question 1b: What are the perceptions of principals regarding their relationships with district level leadership as the transformative role of principal supervisor (ILD) is implemented?

The first overarching theme that emerged, while analyzing the data concerning the relational factors perceived by principals in Excellence as they are working in partnership with ILDs within the PSF framework, was the idea of "collaboration."

Relational Factors

The terms "together" and "collaboration" frequently appeared in the data, as if they are the glue that binds positive relationships together. The following question taken from the district survey in Excellence, displays the overall district "pulse" as discussed earlier in this chapter. These relational factors that are revealed in the data discussions

target the second portion of the study's research question. The following sections in this chapter reveal findings in the area of relational factors. To begin, Table 8 is revisited regarding the term *partnership* in Excellence.

Table 8

The relationship between principals and the central office in this district is a partnership relationship

#	Answer	*n*	%
1	Strongly disagree	3	8.11
2	Disagree	13	35.14
3	Agree	15	40.54
4	Strongly agree	5	13.51
5	DK/NMI	1	2.70
6	Total	37	100.00

The relationship between principals and their ILD reveals a split perception for the Excellence district. The disagree/strongly disagree category together comprise 43% of participant responses, compared to the 53% that agree/strongly agree on the partnership aspect of the relationship.

After considering this survey result compared to the previous survey results displaying more of an agreement among the principals' perceptions, I was curious to dig deeper into this finding. I wondered what about the current structure of supervision in Excellence enabled principals to have more like-minded perceptions regarding their instructional development under the influence of the ILD, compared to the term "partnership" as reflected in the above table indicating a remarkable split of participants' perceptions. I started this exploration by sifting through the data, attempting to see how specific assistive relationship characteristics might or might not provide a better understanding of the results displayed above. Next, as a part of the investigation, I began

to take note of reoccurring data that may appear to be "glue like" for these relationships. Coming to the surface in these data areas, I noted that several terms that appeared more consistently in the data. For example, interview data terms such as "network bonds," "authentic partnerships," and "true collaboration" were several of the terms that provided this visual image as a descriptor. The following section will discuss these "glue like" terms as they may provide further understandings for the research question targeting relationships between principals and their ILDs in the Excellence District.

Principal/ILD Network Bonds

As stated earlier, principals in Excellence are grouped together in what is termed their network group. These groups within the PSF are designed to provide support through peer and ILD collaboration. As the term *bond* begin to surface in the data, I was mindful to record the context in which the term is used among principals. For example, one principal in Excellence recalls,

> Before we had ILDs, the networks were just a group of principals that formed cliques at principals' meetings, and at least for me, that was the only time I really interacted with other principals…Now with our networks, we have a group of principals we see on a regular basis that have formed a bond…I have people I can reach out to any time…we meet every week. (Interview, 2016)

Additionally, the term *partner*s quickly became highlighted in the data as an impactful relational factor for principals and their ILDs. For instance, when asked a question regarding instructional practices that are enhanced under the ILD influence, a principal quickly answered teacher observation as an example of a partner task. He went on to share a description of their process and how it involves joint decision making while

identifying observation rubrics and then debriefing as partners in the hallway after they are finished. “We also will role play at times with one of us talking as the principal, and the other talking as the teacher. We do this consistently together to improve our partner practice” (Interview, 2016).

The “glue like” use of the term “partner” appears to be an authentic, true belief from one Excellence principal. He/she explained, “if I was jumping out of the Titanic into a life boat, my ILD would jump right in after me. I really think we work collaboratively without having to speak… you know like Ying and Yang” (Interview, 2016). “Working together with my ILD does force me to be collaborative with other colleagues,” a principal responds, “Honestly I am one of those people that would stay inside my own building…when I work together with my ILD, it forces me to consider other colleagues and their issues, when we participate in trainings” (Interview, 2016).

Principals perceive then next term *collaboration* as “glue like” in the Excellence School District. They experience ILD collaboration while attending group meetings with parents, teachers, and students. Additionally, the ILDs perform collaborative activities as demonstrated through their attendance at school functions whenever possible. To continue, select ILDs orchestrate trainings for principals that work together. One principal reflects, “My ILD helps with principal collaboration by doing ice breakers and team building activities during our principal meetings. When I was new to Excellence, my ILD helped me connect to other people in the district” (Interview, 2016). Principals commented that ILDs come from both inside and outside the district. The perception shared by a principal regarding outside ILDs indicates their ability to bring principals together by giving fresh ideas, and outside ILDs understand what it is like to be new in

the district. As in any district, not all leaders display the same "glue like" traits when forming partnerships with principals. Considering another principal's perception of this relational factor, the principal shares, "I have to be honest here, I have had two ILDs that were wonderful, and they modeled the best collaborative spirit. We would talk things out and work together as thought partners, but currently I don't have that" (Interview, 2016).

The following section details participants' perceptions about factors that influence relationships between principal and ILDs in Excellence: ILD leadership style, ILD leadership characteristics, ILD/principal fit, and ILD-principal tenure.

ILD Leadership Style

As the data continued to be compiled together in a systematic manner, the leadership style of the ILD working together with the principal appears as a reoccurring theme key to the assistive relationships described by principals working within this framework. The following discussion explores principals' perceptions regarding leadership style.

Principals perceived the leadership style of their assigned ILD as a key factor in working as true partners in Excellence. Positive leadership styles surfaced as principals shared perception in this area of forming true partnerships. This was discussed by one principal while reflecting on her first ILD,

> They had a motto, 'make it happen', this was a real encouragement to me in my role… they would reach out and brainstorm with me while finding that third way of getting tasks accomplished, because we are all about the kids…my former two ILDS took the time to build a relationship the principals in their network, and we would move heaven and earth for them (Interview, 2016).

Another principal in Excellence perceived the ILD's ability to "go above and beyond" trying to make it work for principals as a key factor for their relationship as true partners. "I am sure 'going above and beyond' for principals is not in their job description" (Interview, 2016). Another, principal shared a specific example of the perceived ILD style,

> My ILD is great about being succinct, keeping a schedule, and is on time, and is organized in a way that demonstrates accountability… but not with a whip or an iron fist. I appreciate and need that flexibility of movement because as a principal, I am moving in and out of relationships all day. (Interview, 2016)

Additionally, a leadership style perceived by a principal in Excellence is one termed as symbiotic, "I feel they have learned from me just as I have learned from them…they seem to anticipate my needs… they are always guiding me, never telling me and I do appreciate being pushed in the right area," (Interview, 2016).

Along with the positive aspects of leadership styles demonstrated by ILDs in Excellence, principals also shared leadership styles perceived as less effective as the previously described ILD styles. One principal in Excellence equated differing leadership styles to differing mindsets:

> There are leaders in the district who are authoritative, top down, and micromanaging, while others in the district practice distributive leadership. For example, most teachers don't like to be in a building with an authoritative principal that micromanages them, but with one that gives them some freedom but sets high expectations. I feel that way about the ILDs too. I have had two ILDs

that basically micromanaged or ignored my issues, and focused on what the ILD wants, not the real needs of the building. (Interview, 2016)

Principals in the Excellence district shared their desire to be appreciated for their contribution to the work they are doing. For example, one principal reflected on a recent walkthrough conducted with his/her ILD. After they stepped out of the classroom to debrief, the ILD instructed the principal to "write up" a teacher for a particular issue, in which the principal disagreed. Likewise, another principal shared, "I find the ILD at times more managerial than a partner in instructional leadership. I don't know that this is truly their perspective though, at times I feel they are being more managed as well from their leadership" (Interview, 2016).

Table 9 provides responses given by district wide principals who participated in the survey. They were asked to describe their current relationship with their ILD.

Table 9

Positive Principal Perceptions of ILD Relationships

Response
Not only advocates for scholars and teachers, but for me.
Gives me bite size action steps.
Consistently meets to improve instructional practice and professional advice.
Advises and directs, but gives me freedom to make my own decisions.
Asks the right questions, listens intently and offers solutions when no one else is willing to help.
Gives me autonomy in my area of strength, while supporting me in my weaknesses.

Other perceptions revealed from the survey question reveal relationship factors that are negatively perceived by principals in Excellence. These perceptions reveal the leadership characteristics that reflect the ineffectiveness of the principal/ILD partnership

in Excellence working within the PSF. These perceptions include the following comments.

Table 10

Negative Principal Perceptions of ILD Relationships

Response
My time could be spent interacting with staff and students, but instead, I am in my office with a person that does not seem to know what they are doing and is very negative.
My weekly meetings with my ILD are a waste of time as I am getting nothing from them.
My current ILD is hurting the morale of my staff.
We are being forced to take steps backwards working with my current ILD.
I feel authoritarian people should not be placed in this ILD position as it stunts growth.
My ILD is negative.

ILD Leadership Characteristics

This section focuses on perceptions of principals about specific ILD leadership characteristics as assistive relationships are developed between the principal and the ILD in Excellence. The first characteristic perceived by principals in the assistive relationship is support. For example, one principal stated, "My ILD is super supportive of me… if I am Winnie the Pooh, they are Christopher Robin… this support helps to develop a powerful relationship. It's sad if principals don't have that relationship" (Interview, 2016). Another type of support perceived by principals in Excellence appears to be leadership balance. A principal reflects on this characteristic by using the following scenario as an example during the interview.

> This type of support during principals' meetings is perceived as we hear a nice balance of praise and being told what we are doing right… hearing from the ILD here is an area you might not have thought about… in the past this has been very helpful developing the relationship between me and my ILD… the balance has

made me think outside the box….approaching things in different way. (Interview, 2016)

Another stated, "Positive, supportive ILDs bring new tools for the toolbox and then encourage principals to make it our own, reflects a principal" (Interview, 2016).

Additionally, principals in Excellence referred to the characteristic of trust while discussing assistive relationships characteristics. A principal who is new to the district summarized, "My ILD is critical to me being successful here. They build rapport with me, I felt like I could trust them, be myself, and that is especially important being new" (Interview, 2016). Trust is also evident as a principal shares "I am so glad they are my ILD, having someone that you can fail with is so critical" (Interview, 2016). This finding may signal the level of authentic trust that can be developed between the principal and the ILD. The high level of ILD trust needed by principals is crucial. Principals expressed the need to try new ideas, and possibly failing, in an environment that is safe. Trust is viewed through the lens of a new principal in her reflection, "It is really important if you are new, to develop credibility and have a person you can be yourself around….be vulnerable and be able to say, I don't know what to do here….my ILD has been that person for me" (Interview, 2016).

The quality of listening by their ILD was noted several times during the interaction with principals. Several principals in Excellence reflect,

> They have listened to us about scheduling professional development out of the building…this year they listened to us and we have shorter and smaller training sessions… one thing I really appreciate about the new administration and leadership is that they listen…they ask for feedback and it is visible."

Conversely, in this area of trust, another principal stated, "With my current ILD, there is no trust, no positive culture, and now when they come once a week I run interference for them not to be negative with my teachers" (Interview, 2016).

The following table (Table 11) lists principals' perceptions of ILD leadership styles in Excellence.

Table 11

Principals' Perceptions of ILD Leadership Styles

Positive	Supportive	Empowering	Professional
Courteous Kind	Awesomeness Brave thought partner	Respect Knowledgeable	Growth oriented Student focused Guides my focus
Negative	**Ineffective**	**Forceful**	**Authoritarian**
My ILD is negative My time could be spent interacting with staff and students, but instead, I am in my office with a person that does not seem to know what they are doing and is very negative	My current ILD is hurting the morale of my staff My weekly meetings with my ILD are a waste of time as I am getting nothing from them	We are being forced to take steps backwards working with my current ILD	I feel authoritarian people should not be placed in this ILD position as it stunts growth

ILD/Principal Tenure

Findings about relational factors tied to tenure also revealed how principals perceive and develop their assistive relationships with ILDs. The findings below may reveal district level consideration when planning the pairing of principal with the ILD. Notably, personnel changes occur in any school district due to the normal attrition and

shifting of titles and organizational structures. The findings that touched the subtheme of tenure are discussed below.

One critical factor that was perceived by principals as affecting this relationship is the length of time a principal works with a particular ILD within the framework. One principal stated,

> My ILD and I have been fortunate to have worked together for three years…a lot of principals change ILDs…but being new when I entered the district, my ILD held the knowledge of the past, present, and the future….I know that there are different points in your life where you need different to grow, but I would be hard pressed if they had not stayed with me" (Interview, 2016).

Adding to the perception of length of pairing, another principal summarized her perception in the following way, "When we changed ILDs, we did not think lightening could strike twice, but the new ILD was also phenomenal…this was good news after the tears had already been shed about the previous ILD leaving" (Interview, 2016).

Conversely, one principal shared a concern regarding having a different ILD every year. He/she stated,

> It is overwhelming to try to figure out a new person each year… hopefully when my new ILD gets used to this position, things will improve…this is our fourth year in the district to have ILDs and my network has already been through three. (Interview, 2016)

Another principal continued, "This ILD is my third and we are not experiencing the growth or culture we had before" (Interview, 2016). Stability and tenure at the district level also has an effect on the ILD/principal relationship as perceived through one

principal's comment, "Last year it would have been easier for me to speak to relationships [but]….this year with the reorganization at the district level, I have seen my ILD twice, where [previously]I was able to see them twice weekly (Interview, 2016). Additionally, a principal spoke about the new leadership turnover at the district level, "We also have new leadership at the district level with the ILDs. They are trying their best, but [have] been dropped into programs that were already started… the leadership has experienced a total shakeup" (Interview, 2016).

Finally, principals shared their perceptions about the importance of "fit" between principals and their ILD while working within this framework. The following finding reflects principals' perceptions targeting their ILD fit and the development of assistive relationships. For example, a principal considers fit while reflecting on her ILD "I think it is a big thing to find better fits and making sure we are aligning to the district destination, after all excellence and joy is one of our key five tenants." The principal continues by reflecting on her network,

> I started with different network, but the ILD was dismissed and we were divided among the other networks. I had worked really well with principals in the previous network, and they went to the ILDs requesting I stay in their network, but that did not happen. (Interview, 2016)

The principal continued by sharing, "My building was very similar to the other buildings in the previous networks, and, to me, it made more sense to leave us with the similar buildings and our previous network." The current ILD/principal fit works well for the following principal, "I am much better today because of my ILD, I know not everybody feels that way, but I do. It is like my ILD knows my strengths and weaknesses,

and determines how we match up and help each other" (Interview, 2016). Another perception from a principal regarding the hiring of ILDs was, "I think district leaders really need to think about 'fit' when they are hiring an ILD, thinking is this person going to fit with this group of principals. Just like we do in our buildings when we hire teachers" (Interview, 2016). Summarizing this idea of fit, one concluded, "My ILD is and was the right person for me" (Interview, 2016).

Concluding the assistive relationships findings, Figure 4.5 is a word analysis that is placed in Appendix D. This word analysis was generated by Qualtrics by analyzing all the words generated in the following open ended survey question: *Please describe your perception of the purpose behind central office transformation.* The more times the word occurred in the responses, the larger the font is displayed in the visual. This visualization is helpful as key concepts of assistive relationships appear adding to the triangulation of qualitative data. The words Central, Office, Principals, and Support are the largest in font indicating principals perceive the district leaders in the central office as instrumental in the area of principal support in the Excellence School District. Next in font size are the terms Administrator, Building, People, Job, School, Time, Students, Transformation and Work.

This finding may highlight the immense amount of time and work needed to transform the current structure of educational support, for jobs descriptions of district and building staff/people, and most importantly, the impact for students that must always remain the focus of any school organization. The last terms represented in larger text for this question were the terms Education, and Training indicating perceptions that are held

by principals targeting the training needed for this transformation to occur within education.

Summary of Data Findings

As I collected data in the Excellence district, I explored possible data to answer the study's research questions. Previously discussed in this chapter, principals in the study were given the opportunity to convey their perceptions of their instructional leadership development under the influence of the ILD framework. Many of these perceptions were presented visually in this chapter to synthesize the findings in an organized manner. The collection of data process revealed areas of growth that were perceived by the principals in Excellence: student growth, teacher growth, and principal growth.

Additionally, data analysis revealed that assistive relationships between principals and their ILDs in Excellence are influenced by relational factors that include: leadership style displayed by the ILD, principal/ILD tenure, and the right fit for both the principal and the ILD while working together in Excellence inside the PSF. Chapter V will begin with the overlay and application of the theoretical framework, and then detail the study's implications and limitations. The later portion of Chapter V will discuss further study in the area of central office transformation. Figure 6 combines the data and produces findings synthesized in the following visual.

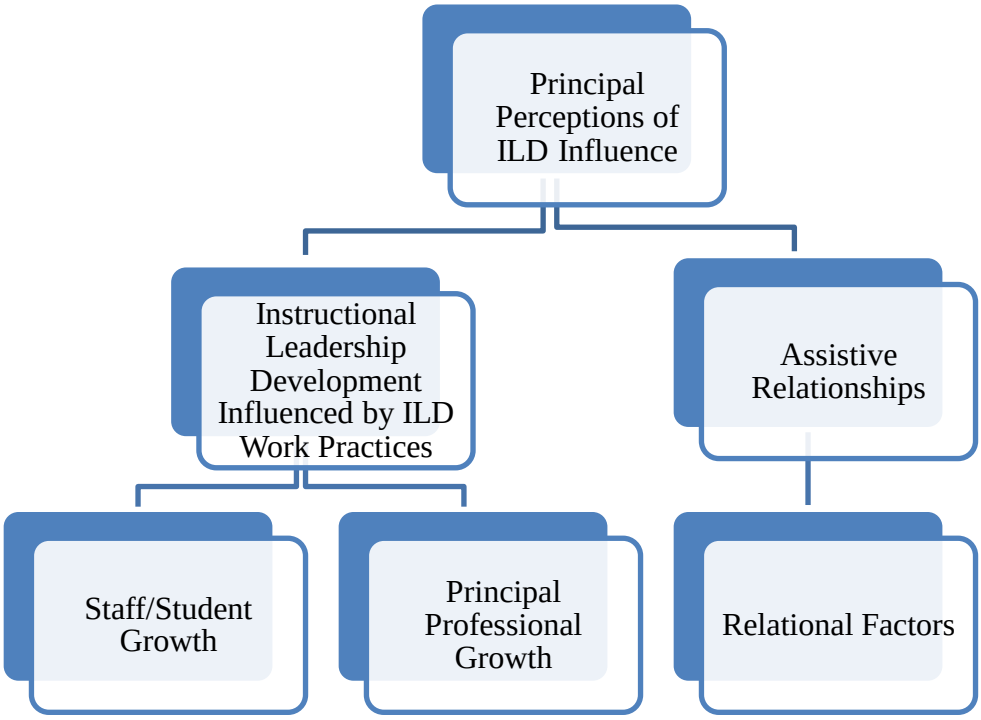

Figure 6. Principals Perceptions by Research Question

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

To present this discussion of the study findings, I considered the study's research questions in terms of two prevalent theoretical frameworks found in the current literature. The sections below will take each theory separately, briefly review the origin, and then frame the findings from my study through the lens of the framework. After each theory has been introduced and findings are discussed, the last portion of the theoretical framework portion considers the study findings through strands of both theories together. Although this blended theory has been used in previously published work (Honig, 2008), the challenge began when synthesizing the data from Excellence, specifically looking through that lens. For example, I used the analogy of viewing the data through a socio-cultural lens and an organizational learning lens. Next, I combined strands of both theories together, and viewed the data through a subsequent combined lens, to complete the analysis (Personal communication, 2017). This study builds on the body of knowledge by applying this blended theoretical framework to the topic of the reorganization of the central office leadership within the Excellence district.

Theoretical Framework

Currently in the literature, the central office transformational work is framed with both the socio-cultural learning theory (Lave, 1998; Rogoff, 1994; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and organizational learning theory (Levitt & March, 1998).

Research from the University of Washington found the socio-cultural learning theory and organizational learning theory both describe work practices and activities that are consistent with redefining central office roles and reform (Honig, 2008). For this study's focus, the work specifically targets district leaders, in a large urban school district, who work in the role of principal supervisors, or ILDs in the Excellence district.

First, existing literature finds socio-cultural theory identifies the needed work practices involved with relationships in which people work together to strengthen their protocol of everyday work (Honig, 2008). Chapter 4 discussed the findings that emerged from data collection while interacting with Excellence principals and ILDs working within the PSF. As a part of this chapter, I will explore the findings and their implications looking through the socio-cultural theory lens to discover these needed work practices that are referred to while developing assistive relationships between principals and ILDs. The goal of this section is to explain what specific work practices are gleaned as beneficial between principal and district level supervisor specific to strengthening relationships; therefore, enhancing the teaching and learning development of instructional leadership.

Secondly, Honig's study reveals district level leaders want to learn from others; thus, their experiences closely align with concepts from organizational learning theory (trial-and-error or learning from experience) (Honig, 2008). Each of these lenses focuses on two dimensions of what organizational learning by central office leaders may look like: socio-cultural learning theory examines the importance of leaders working with school principals to support their teaching and learning improvement efforts, and organizational learning explores how central office leaders use evidence from their own

experiences, including assistance relationships, to help inform district operational performance (Honig, 2008). The following sections will be organized by research question to view and discuss findings through the lens of these two theories.

Discussion of Findings Through the Lens of Social-Cultural Learning Theory

The first lens for this study is socio-cultural learning theory to examine the importance of district leaders (ILDs) while working with principals to develop their instructional leadership capacity. As stated in this study's research question:

1. What are principal perceptions of central office administrators, principal supervisors, as they work daily toward a more efficient and transforming process within the principal support framework?
    a. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their ability to develop as instructional leaders under the ILD model of supervision?

The following discussion will utilize the socio-cultural theoretical framework to view the findings that provide evidence for this question as I, the researcher, share specific, detailed perceptions from principals working within the Excellence School District.

Socio-cultural learning theory, as discussed in Chapter II, emerged in the work of Vygotsky (1978). He posited that social-cultural experience shapes the ways one thinks and interprets the world. He also believed that individual cognition occurs within a social situation (Jaramillo, 1996). In general terms, Vygotsky (1978) answers the main query regarding this process by asking "How do learners construct meaning?" In the domain of social interactions with peers, Vygotsky acknowledges the importance of problem solving as cognitive growth (Jaramillo, 1996). Growth occurs when peers arrive at a common understanding by social negotiation through problem-solving activities.

Vygotsky (1978) believed social interactions invite different perspectives on issues; therefore, by working in cooperative, small group-formats, children and adults learn to solve problems collectively as a group. Thus, one learns more from constructing meaning through social interaction than through a formalized learning environment.

Work Practices

Specifically, findings from this study reveal the construction of meaning occurs through social interaction as ILDs assist in problem solving and demonstrating strategies or work practices, to further develop principals' instructional practice. As discussed in Chapter IV, highlights of the overall theme of instructional leadership development surfaced as principals shared specific work practices that occur through social interactions with their ILDs. The following section details the perceived work practices that fit tightly into the discussion of constructing meaning as ILDs work with principals.

Instructional development work practices. Work practices that surfaced during the data analysis of the study were revealed through principals' perceptions regarding the influence of the ILD as they develop their instructional leadership capacity. For example, the capacity the principals referred to occurred in the following three areas: student growth, teacher growth, and principal growth. Viewing these findings through the socio-cultural theory lens, growth occurs when peers arrive at a common understanding by social negotiation through problem-solving activities. I have selected to share the following scenarios in order to highlight areas of growth perceived by principals while developing their instructional leadership practice under the influence of the ILD in Excellence.

First, student growth was perceived by principals as a common area of professional growth under the leadership of the ILD. For example, principals in Excellence perceive student growth as a primary goal as they work with their ILD to create student-centered goals through analysis of student data. Data sources may consist of standardized and district test scores, attendance monitoring, and graduation rates. Each one of these activities, or work practices, demonstrates problem solving through the social negotiation of working through the chain of assistance: ILDs to principals, principals to teachers, teachers to students. This area naturally invites the social negotiation of theory to practice as educators work, learn, and construct their personal meaning through negotiation occurring in a social school setting. Principals in Excellence were consistently excited by this area of growth when discussing students in their building. Regardless of the building site visited, their passion and energy consistently heightened when principals had the opportunity to discuss their students and the growth that they had experienced in this area as an instructional leader under the influence of their ILD.

Next, the growth that principals perceived in their teachers under the ILD's influence was an important theme that emerged from data analysis. For example, one principal was anxious to share with me an example of how her teachers became excited and enthusiastic while implementing a work practice centered on student literacy. Although this work practice was introduced to the teachers by the principal, this practice demonstrates the chain of assistance referred to in the above scenario. The practice originated with the ILD, was then modeled to the teachers by the principal, and finally, it was implemented for the students. This example represents a best practice approach that

started with literacy exclusively, but quickly became a work practice in other curricular areas as teachers used social negotiation with their peers and constructed meaning in their area of growth. One principal in Excellence reflected that teachers in her building continued their growth. She stated, "The more the students grew, teachers grew as well."

Lastly, Excellence principals perceive their own professional growth as a work practice developed under the ILD's influence. This growth occurs as principals' work in social negotiation with their ILD by learning and performing new practices within the principalship. For example, a practice that requires meaning acquisition as principals and ILDs work together occurs in the area of teacher monitoring and evaluation. To highlight this growth in practice, one principal reflected on the overall goal of the district's definition of the principalship, "Instructional growth demonstrated through the teacher monitoring system is at the heart of what we do here, it is all about student growth in the end" (Interview, 2016). As ILDs and principals in Excellence work together to develop and enhance teacher monitoring and evaluation work practice, their understanding of instructional leadership continues to deepen while under the influence of the ILD.

Assistive Relationships

As a part of this line of inquiry into the type of daily work practices needed for district leaders' to influence the development of principals as instructional leaders, the finding of assistance relationships comes to light. Honig (2008) states assistance relationships seem particularly relevant to the demands of central office leaders as they are developing school building leaders. Honig (2008) continues the conversation by sharing that these forms of assistance are a far cry from the typical call for central office leaders to either coach the school site, or for central office leaders to view assistance as a

set of information or materials that they need to delivered out to schools. The framework described in Honig's (2008) work draws from socio-cultural learning theory by framing assistance relationships in which individuals with more experience at particular practices model to others, therefore, creating valued structures, social opportunities, and tools that reinforce practices for less experienced participants.

In the following section, I will discuss the analysis of findings regarding these assistance relationships between the central office leaders and principals in Excellence through the lens of socio-cultural learning theory. These relationships share features of assistance relationships that socio-cultural theorists have associated with deepening participants' engagement in various forms of work. This association is displayed in Table 12. Although not all participating principals provided evidence or examples of each of these practices, structures, social opportunities or tools, the following themes demonstrate perceptions from the Excellence principals that surfaced during the analysis portion of the study.

As I participated, or in terms of socio-cultural theory "engaged," in multiple social settings, throughout the Excellence district looking for evidence or practices that may support the studies research question, I discovered the following perceptions. Findings suggest that the construction of meaning is influenced through social settings in various learning environments.

The following practices fit closely with theory. When consistently engaged, these practices are perceived as highly assistive to relationships between the principals and ILDs in Excellence.

Table 12

Assistance Relationships with Schools

Practice
Modeling
Valuing and legitimizing "peripheral participation"
Creating, sustaining social engagement
Developing tools
Brokering/boundary spanners
Supporting engagement in joint work

Honig (2008) District Central Offices as Learning Organizations

Modeling. The first practice that can add to the effectiveness of assistance relationships is termed as "modeling." In terms of socio-cultural learning theory, modeling is defined as high-quality assistance relationships (Honig, 2008). For the purpose of this study, modeling is extended by central office leaders (ILD)s through modeling or demonstrating to principals how instructional leaders might act or think (Honig, Lorton & Copland, 2009). For example, multiple interviews in Excellence reveal principals having data conversations with their ILDs. These conversations focused on student data, and ILDs modeled how the thinking and action process looks as ILDs/principals practiced student goal setting and using assessment data to measure results.

Examples of modeling that seemed particularly powerful may involve the central office leader, or ILD, using meta-cognitive strategies of engagement (Honig, Lorton & Copland, 2009). As demonstrated through this research, meta-cognitive strategies of engagement helped principals to understand not only that they were to engage in a particular practice, but *why* they doing so. For example, one principal in Excellence shared that her teachers became excited and invested in a new curriculum program. The principal reflected on the enthusiasm she observed from her ILD while introducing this

program specific to meeting the particular needs of a building. They became invested in the progress monitoring process, not because the district had told them to do so, but because this process was designed to meet the unique needs of students in their building.

Various Learning theorists have argued that meta-cognitive strategies are a critical feature of modeling, and this demonstration deepens the participants' engagement in challenging practices (Collins, Brown, & Holu, 2003; Lee, 2001). This explanation can apply to the principal's scenario above. The teachers fully understood why they were being asked to engage in something new for the students; therefore, they deepened their participation in the program. This particular principal in Excellence was grateful for the influence of the ILD as they had worked together to meet this unique need for the students in their building.

Additionally, researchers found powerful forms of modeling are those that are reciprocal, not only strengthening the principals' practice, but the practice of the ILD as well (Honig, Lorton & Copland, 2009). These researchers (Honig, Lorton & Copland, 2009) observed that district leaders', who demonstrate reciprocity, highlighting transparency to principals, resulted in principals that were far more likely to view their ILD as a valuable resource. Findings from this study support this understanding. For example, a principal specifically reflected on the modeling practices of her particular ILD, "Our relationship is symbiotic, and I would like to think that they learn from me as much as I do from them" (Interview, 2016). According to socio-cultural learning theory (Honig, 2008), district leaders who are willing to become transparent with their principals can enhance the depth of the relationship.

Valuing and legitimizing "peripheral participation". The second assistive practice in terms of school performance can also be explained through the lens of socio-cultural learning theory. Social-cultural theorists Wenger and Lave (1998) do not use the term or label "low performing" when referring to specific school buildings and their performance. Instead, they prefer the term "novice" (as cited in Honig, 2008). These theorists view novices on a trajectory that moves toward engaging in higher levels of teaching and learning; thus, the term "peripheral" signals somewhere within range, but not yet reaching the target (Wenger & Lave, 1998). As participants are valued, they increase their engagement in activities, and perceive themselves as capable regardless of where they started on this forward moving trajectory. Findings from this study suggest that this practice occurs in Excellence. For example, one principal stated, "We are not where we need to be, but we have made progress. Even though I may not feel as valued by my current ILD, I have felt that previously with my ILD and the work we are doing" (Interview, 2106).

Creating and sustaining social engagement. Socio-cultural learning theory posits that social engagement is fundamental to learning. Vygotsky (1978) reflects that active construction of meaning unfolds in the mind as individuals interact with each other, not solely as individuals, but as they engage together in solving problems of practice. In Excellence, social interaction and dialogue between the ILD and principal provided a platform for enhanced practice. Several participants shared that they and their ILD refer to each other as "thought partners." As a part of this finding, one principal recalled her dialogue with her ILD concerning problem solving by stating, "Do you want me to tell you what to do in this situation, or would you rather we talk it through and you

discover the best course of action" (Interview, 2016). This dialogue demonstrates the creation of meaning as the principal and the ILD utilize collaborative problem solving as a work practice in Excellence.

Developing tools. Socio-cultural theory refers to "tools" as the structure and grounding within assistive relationships with principals. Scholars (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003; Wenger, 1998) suggest that tools are particular kinds of materials that users engage intentionally as they act or think in new ways. For example, in Excellence, ILDs relied on protocols to conduct teacher observations along with rubrics that are used to complete the evaluation process. Additionally, district benchmarks utilized by principals and their ILDs to monitor and evaluate student performance were often used as tools in the evaluation process. I observed several tools as I accompanied professional consultant firms on classroom walk-throughs conducted by ILDs and principals in Excellence. For example, the protocol or tools were used to discuss teacher interactions with students after a class observation, and they provided talking points for both the ILD and the principal to calibrate their observations skills.

Brokering/Boundary spanning. Continuing with the socio-cultural lens, Wenger (1998) emphasized the importance of participants in assistance relationships that operate as what is termed "brokers" or "boundary spanners" (p. 52). According to socio-cultural learning theory (Wenger, 1998), these individuals work between the practice (school sites) and their external environments (district office/local communities), helping to bridge new ideas and understanding that might advance their participation. This understanding is consistent with findings in this study. For example, in Excellence a

principal shares that the building parent teacher organization (PTO), along with the district foundation are critical to staff as they may assist with new programs and training. Brokers may also be relevant to the challenges of teaching and learning, by utilizing data and other information about neighborhood and family resources (Honig, 2008). District leaders, or ILDs, work as boundary spanners as they may access programs and outside resources that may not be available from within the confines of the district. District leaders may scan their environment for resources within and outside the district that advance school-community improvement plans (Honig, 2006a, 2006b).

Findings from this study support the idea that ILDs function as boundary spanners. For example, occasionally, ILDs utilized their assistive relationships to access resources beyond those they had available as a single district leader. One principal referred to his ILD's district support team. This team included members of various district departments that work with designated ILDs as they support principals. This team served as a bridge between the particular needs of practice (the building needs) and the resources available from the external environment (the central office). In this particular instance, the support team from the district was called in to assist the principal and building in creating a reentry plan for a student that had been out of school with a suspension. This support team that was familiar with the ILD and the buildings they served worked as a broker to other departments to find resources while the ILDs worked to support specific principal needs.

Supporting engagement in "joint work." According to socio-cultural learning theory (Honig, 2008), joint work is the final strategy or support for assistance relationships. This "joint work" work helps to deepen others through activities as they

work together (Brown et al. 1989; Rogoff 1994; Rogoff et al., 1995; Wenger, 1998). In Excellence, this practice occurs as ILDs work to engage principals in the understanding of the importance and value of instructional leadership. For example, Instructional leadership is generally defined as working closely with teachers inside and outside of the classroom to improve their teaching practice (Honig, Lorton, & Copland, 2009). As a part of this effort, ILDs engage principals in activities that shift them away from the conceptual role of school managers and encourage them to play a key role in improving classroom instruction. For example, one principal in Excellence reflected on the rigor of the current teacher evaluation system in Excellence. He shared that, before this system was in place, the time spent in teachers' classrooms was minimal compared to the time involved in managing the operations of the building. Under the leadership of the ILD, however, this principal began to understand the importance of formative feedback for the improvement of teaching and learning.

Participants in assistance relationships support engagement by creating opportunities for participants to co-construct meaning of the challenges and potential fit of strategies to resolve those challenges (Wenger, 1998). An example from the Excellence school district occurred when one principal found typical district training not as meaningful to teachers teaching in a particular program within the district. The principal shared the concern with the ILD, and as a result, the ILD created a training opportunity that fit the needs of the program; thus, meaning was constructed for that particular principal and staff as ILDs and principals together resolved the challenge with a potential fit for their needs.

In summary, these day-to-day support practices, as demonstrated by ILDs, may result in what Vygotsky (1978) referenced as the rich, deep, sustained social interactions termed assistance relationships. If specific practices are perceived by principals as supportive, ongoing, and differentiated support between principal and supervisor, the relationship may strengthen, therefore, enhancing the teaching and learning development of instructional leadership. In concluding the discussion of findings through this lens, working through the framework of socio-cultural theory, people learn to improve their performance with work practice by engaging in real situations, receiving job-embedded support. In turn, these experiences deepen their engagement in practice (Honig, 2008). Findings from this study can be explained through this understanding. Figure 7 depicts the development of instructional leadership practices through the lens of socio-cultural learning theory (Honig, 2008).

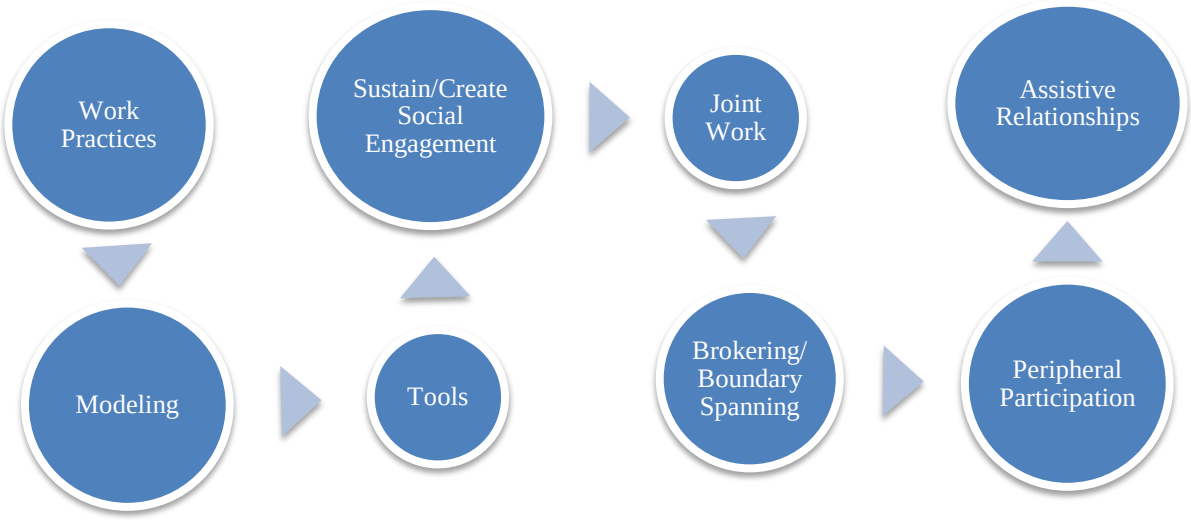

Figure 7. Socio-Cultural Threads Developing Instructional Leadership in Excellence.

Findings Through Organizational Learning Theory

The second lens utilized to consider the findings of the study's research questions focuses on the organizational learning theory (Honig, 2008) while exploring how central office leaders (ILD)s use evidence from their own experiences, including assistance relationships, to help inform district operational performance. This part of the theoretical framework supports research question 1b as stated below:

1. What are principal perceptions of central office administrators, principal supervisors, as they work daily toward a more efficient and transforming process within the principal support framework?

    b. What are the perceptions of principals regarding their relationships with district level leadership as the transformative role of principal supervisor (ILD) is implemented?

As discussed in Chapter II, historically, organizational learning theory emerged largely outside of the school-system setting (Honig, 2008). Additionally, general reflections regarding theory development include ideas that come from successful and innovative private firms across multiple organizational sectors that reveal findings of decision making over time (Honig, 2008). Many organizational learning scholars highlight a formal organization, such as a central office, participates in organizational learning when members draw on and use their experiences of evidence to rethink and perhaps change how they engage in their work (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991, Levitt & March, 1988). Theories of organizational learning suggest that, when looking across learning organizations, members engage in a set of common activities related to the use of evidence from experience, regardless of how the subunits are differentiated in their

work (Honig, 2008). Others rely on "organizational learning" from various fields such as management and administration, organizational sociology, and decision making, (Hannaway, 1989; Honig, 2003, 2004a). Honig (2008) utilized strands of organizational learning theory to elaborate work practices of central office leaders that might support the teaching and learning with the main focus of how leaders search for forms of evidence about supporting teaching and learning, and then how they incorporate those evidences into their work practice. For the purpose of this study, organizational learning theory will be used to explain work practices through the lens of search, incorporation, and retrieval. Table 13 provides an overview of how the theoretical framework of organizational learning theory will be utilized in this chapter. Work practices in Excellence, principals' perceptions of their relationships with their ILDs, will be discussed in the following section.

Table 13

Organizational Learning Evidence of Work Practice

Strategy	Description
Search	Identification of evidence from assistance relationship and other sources
Incorporation	Development of policy, forms of participation, worldview and tools based on that evidence
Retrieval	On-going use of incorporated evidence

Honig, 2008 District Central Offices as Learning Organizations

Search

To begin the exploration of principals' perceptions in Excellence, I first considered the foundational piece of "search," also called "exploration" (Levitt & March, 1988) in organizational learning theory. This term refers to activities by which organizational members, in this case central office leaders, scan their environments for

forms of evidence that they might use to inform what they do. For example, as ILDs in Excellence work day to day in assistance relationship with principals to identify improvement practices, these relationships may inform the work of other ILDs or various central office leaders (Honig, 2008). As a result of this searching for improvement practice, Honig (2008) states activities may surface that contribute to high-quality teaching and learning, or activities could identify missing resources that could aide schools in their improvement (2008). In the organizational structure of this study, a school district setting, knowledge gleaned through this process of principal and ILD interaction may bring new ideas, images, data, examples, and other forms of evidence that inform central office leaders and principals as they go about their work. As a part of this evidence searching, organizations such as Excellence may bring in staff with experiences that are new or different within the organization. These new organizational members may have participated in high yield practice that leaders want to support.

Findings from this study support this understanding. For example, a principal in Excellence reflected on her experience with new ILDs in the district. This principal shared that even though she had experienced an ILD who was new to the district, her second ILD came from a school that had utilized this type of support structure previously. The principal commented, "I did not think we could have lightning strike twice, but we had two excellent ILDs who were new to the district, with different ideas, and brought new tools to our tool belt" (Interview, 2016). Although this principal currently was not experiencing the same type of experience she had with the former ILD who originated from inside the district, the principal was aware that the knowledge gained from the new

ILD's previous experience had an influence on how she grew and performed as a principal leader.

Incorporation

To continue into the next level of analysis of the findings through the lens of organizational learning theory (Honig, 2008), I examined the findings for what Levinthal and March (1993) define as "incorporation." This process involves gathering evidence from experience and other sources when that evidence begins to become a part of what an organization does on a routine basis (Levinthal & March, 1993). Additionally, incorporation occurs when members think about how practices evolve on a routine basis and begin to exhibit what organizational learning theorists call "formal" or "informal" organizational rules (Levinthal & March, 1993, p. 26). Findings from this study suggest that the ILD model has been incorporated into the culture of many of these schools. For example, in Excellence a principal shared, "The frequency in which I conduct classroom walkthroughs, accompanied by my ILD, now is the new norm….. It is just the way we do business now in this building" (Interview, 2016). For the teachers in this building in Excellence, principal and ILD frequent classroom observations was now a part of the participation norm, or "informal" rules of this building. The incorporation of this practice models organizational learning.

Both theories utilized as theoretical frameworks in this study address a dimension of organizational learning with different terms. Organizational learning theorists refer to this work process as "encoding" of evidence into the memory of the organization (Argyris1976; Argyris & Schon 1996; Cohen 1991; Huber 1991; Levitt & March 1988; Miner, Bassoff & Morman 2001). Socio-cultural theorists refer to this as "reification" of

experience into tools (Wenger, 1998) used in the learning organization. Both theories, together, provide an opportunity to understand the decisions and actions within an organization (Honig, 2008). For example, one principal in Excellence reflects that if he falls behind in his classroom observation and feedback, teachers will remind and prompt him to catch up, thus returning to the routine of principal behavior that follows the new informal rules of this building in Excellence. The previous example from Excellence illustrates what March (1994) describes as how evidence may inform commitments, values, or normative perceptions concerning how individuals, such as leaders, should behave in an organization.

Specifically, as members utilize the search process within their environments for improvement, specific ideas are unsurfaced as a result of organizational learning. This understanding is demonstrated in Excellence by a principal while utilizing her own search process and discovering a level of teacher/student awareness. This principal invited teachers to know students and their achievements on a different level when she stated,

> I extend the challenge to my teachers that if they are going to do service to their students, true service, they need to know them as readers, writers, mathematicians, and I will model the progress monitoring and assessment process for them in order to accomplish this goal (Interview, 2016).

Retrieval

Organizational theorists posit that learning occurs over time (Honig, 2008). This process is called "retrieval" (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Levitt and March (1998) stated that during this retrieval process, organizational members draw on incorporated evidence to guide their choices and actions. In this wider view, retrieval is not limited to just thoughts

or decisions, but it extends to actions as well. In sum, retrieval is an internal variation on search and incorporation that involves organizational members uncovering evidence to use as "a how to" guide in making sense of new situations and determining how they should reinforce or change the evidence (Honig, 2008). As my exploration for search, incorporation and retrieval surfaces evidence in Excellence, policy and practice decisions may be considered by district leaders.

One finding resulting from the study revealed principal's perceptions from Excellence regarding the way members learn, or in this study, the way principals learn from each other. Findings in Excellence suggest that principals that work and form networks with specific ILDs develop assistive relationships. This bond detailed by principals is described as "helpful" as weekly meetings are held, and consistent groups of principals interact on a regular basis. An additional example of practice is the work practice of togetherness that emerged in the findings. Several principals in Excellence perceive their relationship with their ILD as "truly working together."

An example was given by a principal as the ILDs assist in the teacher evaluation process. The principal states, "We consistently improve our practice together" (Interview, 2016). As demonstrated in the Honig (2008) study, situations occur where administrators want to learn from others; thus, this practice of togetherness occurs in Excellence and aligns with organizational learning theory as ILDs and principals perceive the value of learning from their experiences with others (trial-and-error or learning from experience). In this study, principals reflected on opportunities where they have learned from each other in their networks. Findings from this study suggest that principal supervisors (ILDs) may consider togetherness as a means to promote instructional leadership that is ripe for

development. This finding demonstrates the retrieval process inside the principal/ILD network group structure in Excellence.

In summary, the strategies for members within a learning organization such as Excellence can be explained through the lens of organizational theory while considering search, incorporation, and retrieval. These work practices within Excellence fit tightly with the organizational learning premise that looking across learning organizations; members engage in a set of common activities and grow through those experiences, (Honig, 2008). Figure 8 depicts how the search, incorporation, and retrieval practices support the development of assistive relationships.

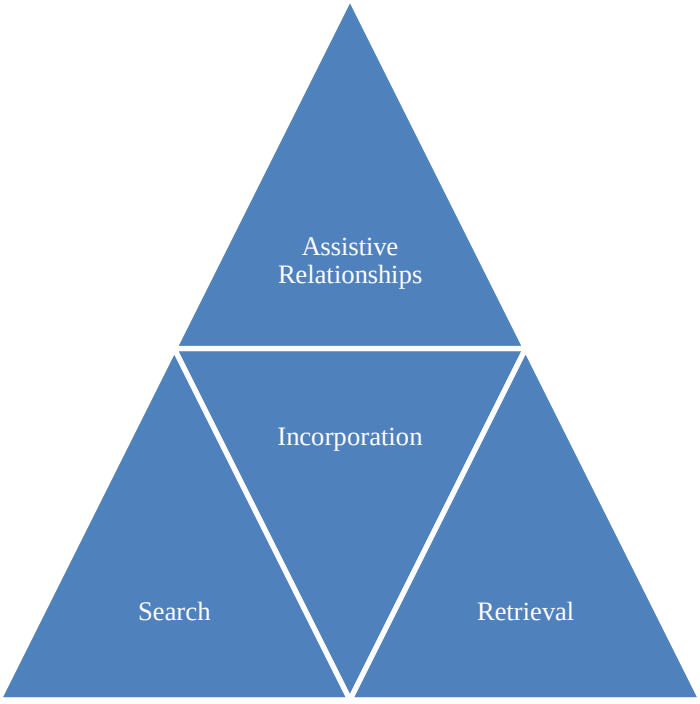

Figure 8. Organizational Learning Work Practices that Support Assistance Relationships.

Discussion of Findings Viewed through Combined Theories

To begin the final segment of my analysis, I want to highlight what Honig (2008), posited as a shortcoming of theoretical frameworks emphasized in the existing research.

Honig (2008) held that most studies of district frameworks traditionally utilize specific learning theories instead of applying two strands of theory together to consider work practices as mutually reinforcing for district central offices. The use of two theoretical frameworks in this study, socio-cultural learning theory (Honig, 2008) and organizational learning theory (Honig, 2008) can provide additional understandings of the findings in this study. Specifically, as districts such as Excellence continue the transformation process while working within the PSF, the findings of the study support using both socio-cultural learning and organizational learning frameworks simultaneously to understand perceptions of principals involved in this model.

To summarize Honig and team's (2010) Wallace Study work discussed in Chapter II, I considered viewing the central office transformational work through both the social-cultural and the organizational learning lens. To start this analysis section of combined theory, I will first review selected Wallace Study highlights as research teams explored district leaders in urban school districts. These particular highlights accentuate how their work and school relationships supported district wide teaching and learning improvements. As introduced in Chapter II, these districts that were a part of the study posted gains in student achievement, and credited partial progress to the change within their central office (Honig et al., 2010). The goal of the work was to uncover daily work practices of leaders while they worked toward a more efficient and transformative level of principal support that assisted schools while improving the quality of teaching and learning across buildings in the district.

Findings in the literature revealed that these schools, whose demographics present similarly to Excellence, generally do not see improvements in teaching and learning

without engagement by their central office leaders helping to build capacity of improvement (Honig et al., 2010). To illustrate this type of work, Figure 9 as displayed in Chapter II and again below, represents the work uncovered by the research team presented in the five dimensions of the PSF framework. The following section for this chapter's purpose will be to look at the relationship of the first two dimensions through the data findings and analysis in Excellence. Findings in the first two dimensions will be viewed with strands from both theoretical frameworks as discussed above.

The five dimensions, illustrated below, are a part of their transformational process.

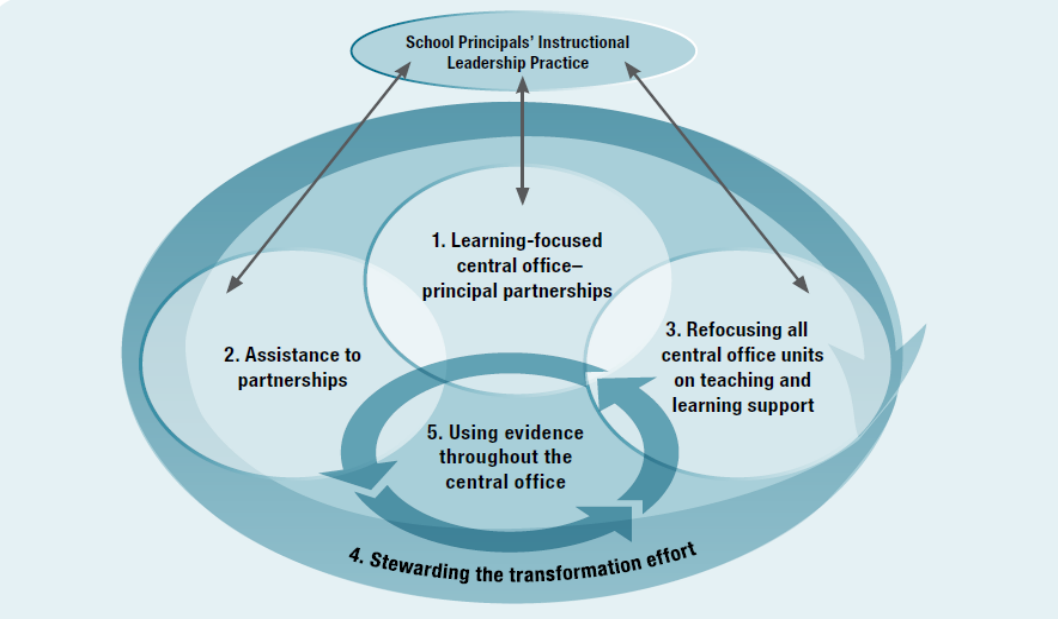

Figure 9. Dimensions of Central Office Transformation. This figure describes the school principals' instructional leadership practice through five dimensions. Retrieved from www.ctpweb.org (2010) Seattle, WA: The Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

Dimension 1: Learning-Focused Central-Office Principal Partnerships

To begin, I considered Table 12 that highlights socio-cultural strands found in the literature that support learning-focused work practices when utilized between principal

and central office leaders (ILD) s. Next, I considered Table 13 which represents leaders' strategies as they search for forms of evidence or work practices that support teaching and learning and then, incorporate those evidences into their work practice. These incorporations of evidence into practice demonstrate the organizational learning strand.

The remaining portion of this theoretical framework section will view both theories working together through the two dimensions of central office transformation shown in Figure 9. First, I will provide a discussion of findings from the Excellence district for both positive and negative perceptions of principal and ILD relationships.

Figure 10. Positive Learning-Focused Practices that Assist Partnerships.

Figure 10 represents the social construction of meaning that occurs for principals in Excellence as they engage in problem solving activities while learning and engaging

with their ILD. The specific data displayed above demonstrates the work practices that are powerful when present in learning focused partnerships that are perceived positively by principals. Additionally, as ILDs use trial-and-error while engaging as a member of a learning organization, data as presented above may prove helpful while making decisions regarding policy and practice. The discussion of findings represents perceptions of the study participants, both positive and negative, in the area of learning-focused practices that influence partnerships. Conversely, Figure 11 gives another view of principals' perceptions, negative perceptions, regarding ILD practices in Excellence.

Figure 11. Negative Learning-Focused Practices as Perceived by Principals.

These negative perceptions represent perceptions of work practices that were shared by several of the Excellence principals. When viewing these learning-focused relationships through the lens of both theories together, I considered the existing data of the action areas that were already present in Excellence through their participation in the larger Wallace Study Project. There were three well defined action areas that were provided to Excellence as participants in the study working within the PSF.

Area 1: A shared vision of principals as instructional leaders. Findings from this study indicate that Excellence has defined what it expects principals to do as the instructional leader of their school (PSF, 2016). As revealed in the first survey question that captured the overall "pulse" of the following, "In the Excellence district, we define instructional leadership as the principalship," indicates principal confidence that a shared understanding of instructional leadership exists in the district. Eighty-eight percent of the principals concur that this definition has been well incorporated in the district. Day to day work practices appear that support this finding. Daily routines have resulted in the new "formal" rule or way of thinking in Excellence.

To explain this finding further, I considered categorical responses as determined by principal experience, and I applied this finding to the question of defining the role of the principal as instructional leadership. Figure 12 is a review of this analysis.

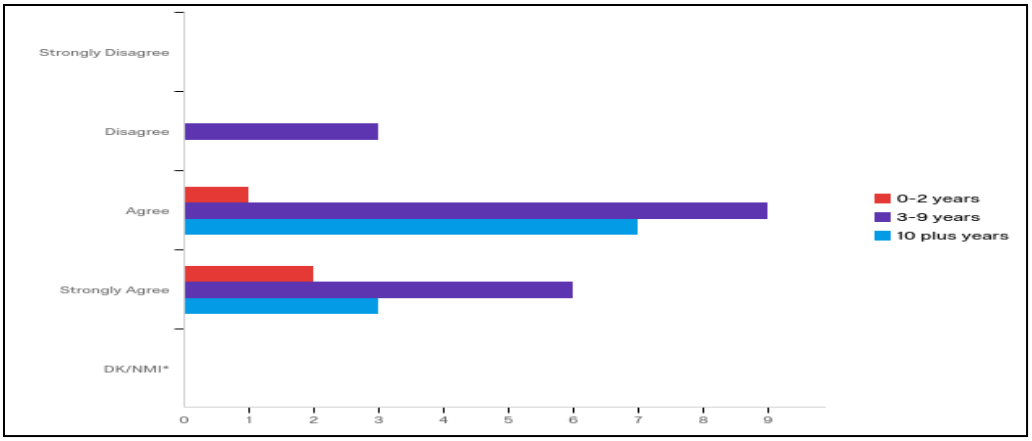

Figure 12. Principal Perceptions of Instructional Leadership by Category

Early career principals, those with zero to two years of experience, agree that the principalship has been defined in the district as instructional leadership. Interestingly, the other group that indicated full agreement for the definition was the veteran principal group, those with ten or more years of experience. It was the intermediate group, those with three to nine years of experience, that placed their perceptions in the disagree range. Possible explanations for these findings may reveal that, if early career principals have only worked under the PSF framework, the framework may have become their world view or "norm" of organizational practices. They may have come to understand this, established work practice as a member of a learning organization. Conversely, the veteran group may have principal experience both inside and outside of the PSF. Previous experience may have influenced their perceptions of an ILD. In Excellence, the veterans may have constructed their meaning from engaging in social interactions while practicing in and out of the framework. If so, retrieving the incorporated meaning from the ILD work may have influenced their learning-focused partnerships. In summary, these combined strands suggest that the majority of the participating principals in Excellence have engaged in social interactions with their district leaders while working to understand

their role as a principal. These leaders have incorporated these expectations for effective practices demonstrated daily as instructional leaders.

Action area 2: A system of support for developing principals as instructional leaders. This finding suggests the goal for the transformational implementation process in Excellence has developed as the school district has created a system of differentiated and targeted support to develop principals' growth as instructional leaders (PSF, 2016). This area is explored through the second question of the survey, providing a wide view of the overall system of central office support perceived by Excellence principals.

Although principals in this study appear to support the idea that the role of the principal as instructional leader has permeated the district, the system of support needed to promote this the role of the principal, has not reached a level of agreement in Excellence. This finding is revealed through the second survey question, delineating that instructional leadership definitions inform all central office functions. The data findings from this question suggest a wider range of perceptions from all the principal participants. Although 34% of the answers represented the strongly disagree/disagree category, leaving 64% in the agree/strongly agree area, I wanted to seek further understandings within the various years of principal experience. Figure 13 provides categorical findings of principal perceptions of support based on years of experience.

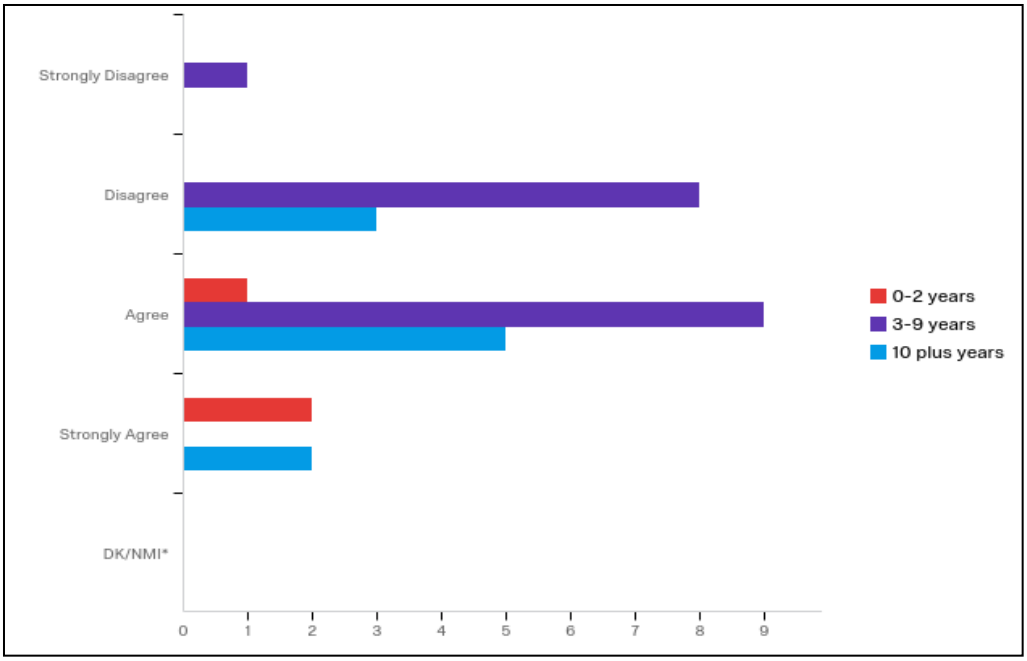

Figure 13. Principal Perceptions of Support Based on Years of Experience

As evident in the findings, the disagree/strongly disagree category represents principals perceptions from both the veteran and intermediate career categories, but it does not represent early career participant perceptions. One possible explanation may be that the definition of principal as instructional leader is more clearly defined in the district, compared to the existing system of support needed to accomplish the role in Excellence. As a researcher, I considered the strands and questioned whether the routines or worldview of central office leaders, as perceived by principals in Excellence had not modeled the joint work of practice, routine, or established "formal" level of support required by principals working within a learning organization.

Viewing Excellence through Dimension 1, the goal of improving the capacity of principals to serve as instructional leaders, study findings reveal that the learning-focused relationships are current, relationships are being established, and the relationships between ILDs and principals provide authentic partnership opportunities. These findings

indicate the central office transformation continues to provide Excellence principals with both a positive and negative trajectory as the implementation process continues. For the principals that perceive ILDs as a learning-focused partner as indicated in Dimension 1, the trajectory appears to be trending upward. For others, the learning-focused partnership provides a different trajectory revealing a need to reconsider the implementation process. Further conversations regarding the influence of the ILD developing principals as instructional leaders through learning-focused partnerships in Excellence is a work in progress.

Dimension 2: Assistance to Partnerships

Dimension 2 looks specifically at the assistance to partnerships between principals and district leaders. In the Excellence study, this dimension was considered by examining the supports provided by the district to promote effective partnerships between the ILD and the principal. Considering the layers of assistance needed in a large urban district challenged by current state and federal mandates, my next area of analysis looked at the last action area stated in the PSF framework that existed in Excellence.

Action area 3: A strategic partnership between the central office and principals. This action area, recommended by CEL, communicates the need for the district to continue providing support as central office leaders deliver effective, integrated support and services that increase the ability of principals to successfully move forward with their schools through instructional leadership (Principal Support Framework, 2016). Findings from the fourth survey question provide the wide angle of principals' perceptions targeting the partnership aspect of the relationship between the principal and their ILD. In sum, the disagree/strongly disagree category comprised 43% of the overall

perception, compared to the 53% that fell into agree/strongly agree category. To further dig into this critical perception, I wanted to see the breakout by levels of experience, to gain another perspective similar to the process in Q1 and Q2.

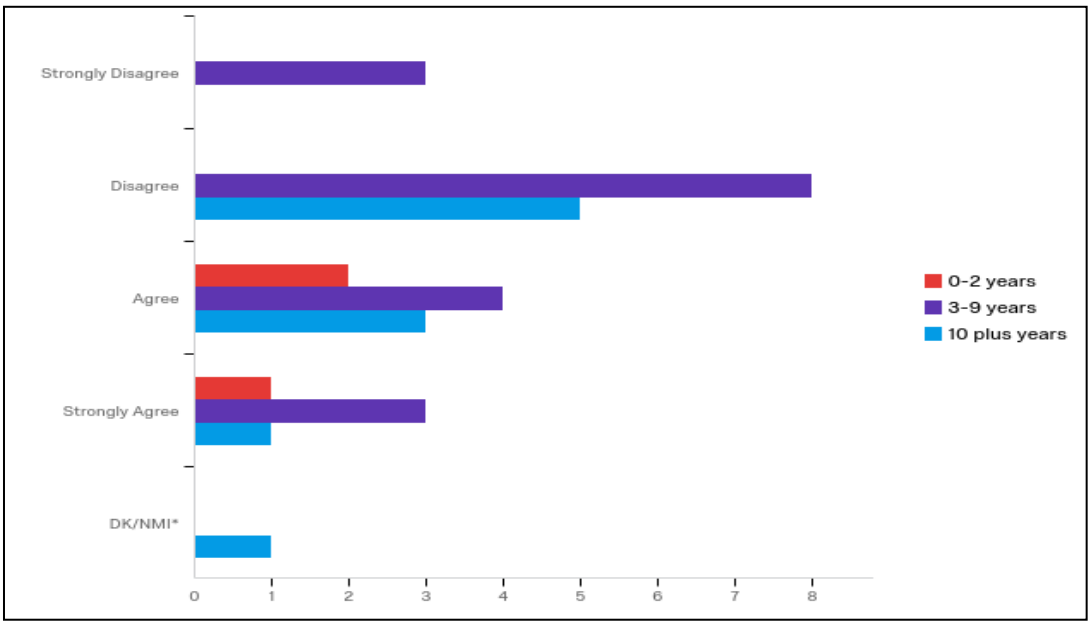

Figure 14. Principal Perceptions of Partnerships Provided by District According to Years of Experience

Intermediate career (3-9) years of experience principals represent the most commonly recorded principal perceptions. These mid-career principals indicated their overwhelming perception of partnership in the disagree/strongly disagree category. Again, similar to the first categorical analysis, the early career (0-2) principals indicated their perceptions exclusively in the agree/strongly agree area. In this area, however, the veteran principals (10+) perceptions indicated that they disagree that adequate partnership is being provided. As discussed above, this study finding may indicate that early career principals perceive their assistance relationship in a positive light working within the PSF. Their world view or construction of knowledge in this second dimension of central

office transformation highlights the effectiveness of ILDS working within the Excellence PSF.

The positive response categories did reflect a presence from all three groups, although the strongest response appeared from the intermediate career placing their perceptions in the disagree category. Additional inquiry is needed to understand the perceptions of principals in this intermediate category as to why the assistance to the partner relationship has not been perceived as effective. It is possible that this category of principals may not have had the level of social engagement needed to provide problem-solving activities that provide the social feedback needed for growth. Additionally, this category of principals may have not experienced the ILDs "search" for improvement strategies within their environment; thus, the level of incorporation may not have been modeled through joint work, or other socially engaging activities needed for meaning.

Lastly, this section of the findings discusses the relational factors that surfaced in Excellence regarding how principals perceive assistive relationships.

Relational factors that influence assistive relationships. Concluding the study findings in Dimension 2, support for assistive relationships between principals and ILDs in Excellence, analysis uncovered several relational factors that influences this relationship as a work practice. To communicate through visual representation, I displayed the four most used terms that were described through the data highlighting ILD leadership styles while providing assistance. Figure 5.9 reflects four positively perceived leadership styles: supportive, encouraging, trusting, and empowering.

The leadership style of the ILD appeared crucial to the assistive relationship development. The principals in Excellence revealed their perceptions regarding ILD

characteristics that enhance relationships. (These characteristics were listed in table form in Chapter IV). For illustrative purposes, I have placed the leadership styles in Figure 15. The circular motion of the arrows indicates the fluidity of the relationships.

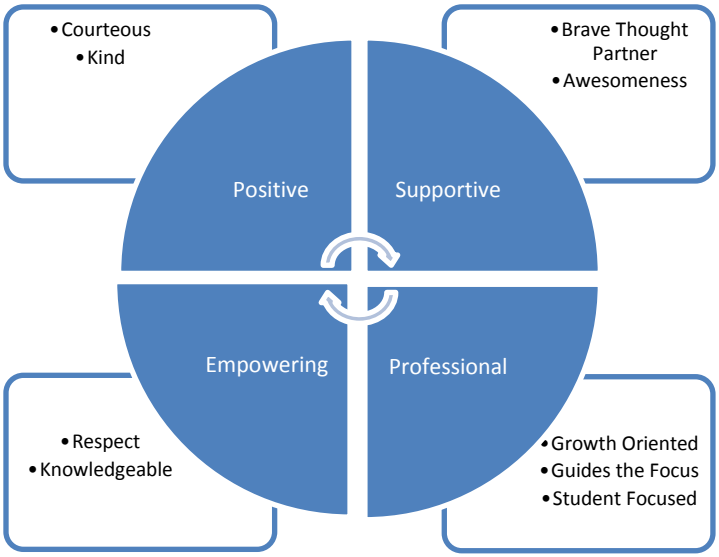

Figure 15. Leadership Style

Presently, these leadership styles that influence relationships between principals and ILDs have become a routine as social interactions help to construct meaning for principals in Excellence. Further, study findings may provide additional understandings for executive level central office leaders who are active in recruiting and retaining ILDs in Excellence. Additionally, relational factors such as ILD tenure/stability influence assistance relationships in Excellence. The length of time the principals and their assigned ILDs have to cultivate assistive relationships impacts the overall impact of the relationships. As mentioned in Chapter IV, all school districts experience leadership turnover and personnel shifts, thus, careful consideration is needed prioritizing tenure and

stability as ILDs assist principals. A powerful quote was shared in Chapter IV that encapsulates this study implication, “My ILD and I have been fortunate to have worked together for three years…and with a multitude of principal changes, my ILD held the knowledge of the past, present and the future” (Interview, 2016).

Conversely, frequent change in leadership brings frustration to principals in Excellence as they are required to become familiar with new supervisors on a yearly basis. “It is overwhelming to figure out new people each year…this is our fourth year in the district having ILDs in place, and my network has already been through three” (Interview, 2016). These considerations may assist executive district level leaders when prioritizing personnel factors. Developing instructional leadership capacity through assistive relationships demonstrates learning via experiences of other executive level leaders within the district. This type of learning has the potential to strengthen the organizational effectiveness if viewed as a means to facilitate authentic partnerships between members of the organization. Figure 16 provides an overview of both theoretical frameworks utilized for this study, socio-cultural learning theory (Honig, 2008) and organizational learning theory (Honig, 2008).

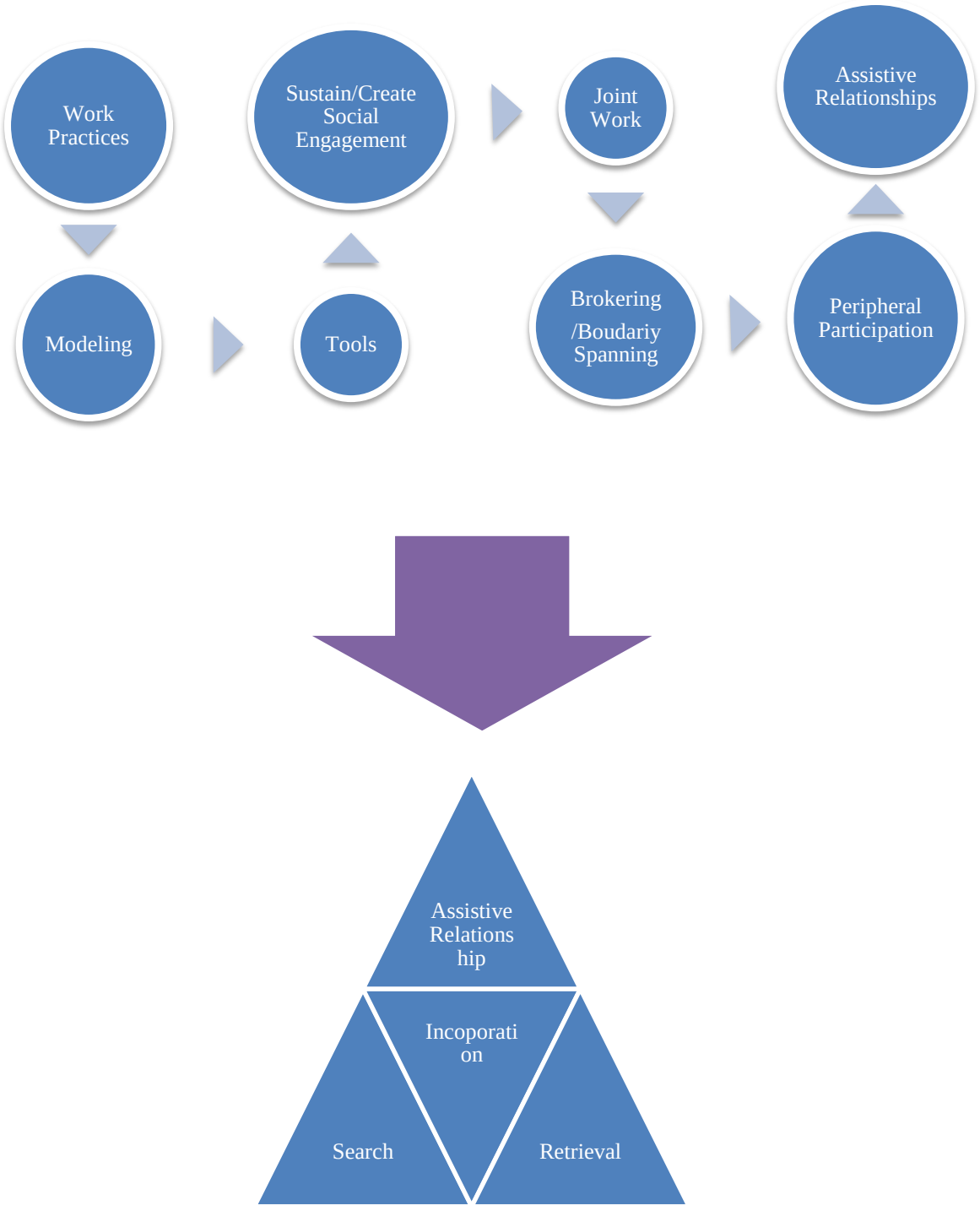

Figure 16. Blended Framework.

Summary of Findings through Both Theoretical Frameworks

Viewing central office transformation by overlaying both theory theoretical frameworks, offers a snapshot of perceptions of building level leaders as they work with central office leaders (ILDs) to develop capacity of instructional leaders. Findings from this study suggest that most principals in the district (n = 33) perceive the implementation of the model to influence their daily practices. Additionally, most principals in this district (n =30) perceive district level staff support dedicated to the development of assistive relationships. However, alternate perceptions were uncovered through data collection that suggests that not all principals in this district perceive their work with ILDs as productive.

Select principals in Excellence attribute their success as an effective and growing instructional leader to the influence of the ILD, while others perceive the influence of the ILD to be absent from their personal growth and development. The implementation of the principal/ILD relationship as assistive in nature, may be influenced by particular leadership styles and characteristics of the ILD assigned that is assigned in the partnership. State budget constraints may contribute to the implementation process as ILDs in Excellence are working with two less positions in the 2016-2017 school year. The influence of the ILD provides a variety of perceptions reflected in the Excellence study. Utilizing both strands of the theoretical frameworks together help to highlight specific work practice findings needed to develop assistive relationships within the Excellence principalship. Study findings revealing both the upward and downward trajectory for principals and ILDs provide key information regarding the process of central office transformation.

Specifically, positive and negative perceptions of work practices modeled by ILDs in Excellence provide foundational talking points for organizations working as a learning organization. Strategies from both theories depict roadmaps for further learning within the Excellence district. As Excellence continues with the transformational process within the central office, principal perceptions may further uncover strategies to support instructional development through assistive relationships.

Study Implications

Implications for Practice

This study provided insight into the growth and development of principals as instructional leaders under the ILD model. It also provided insight into what effect assistive relationships have between central office supervisors, or ILDs, and principals for instructional leader development. The study in Excellence identified support strategies, or work practices that influenced principals' perceptions of supervisory relationships and what type of instructional leader development support is needed from the perspective of the principal.

Improvement initiatives often depend on significant changes that occur within a district's central office within any school district. Specifically, in Excellence, the PSF model encourages district leaders, or ILDS, to work with principals in a different manner than what has been traditionally practiced. This shift from a traditional top-down supervisory relationship with schools to close partnerships is centered on improving instructional leadership capacity, and ultimately, teaching practice and student learning (Elmore & Burney, 1998; Hightower, 2002; Hubbard et al., 2006). This study explored the influence of assistive relationships between central office supervisors and building

principals on principal instructional leadership development, as they worked together in Excellence to emphasize the importance of classroom teaching and student learning.

Findings in this study suggest that central office leaders who are assigned specifically to assist principals may be a work practice that enhances principal instructional leadership capacity. These district leaders became familiar with principals in their specific contexts, increasing the efficiency of work through established procedures developed to target the different building needs within a large urban district such as Excellence. Understanding principals' perceptions regarding their ability to develop as instructional leaders through assistive relationships may be helpful to executive level leaders considering this framework as districts' central offices reflect, reorganize, and work to support improved teaching and student learning in their districts.

Highlighting strategies from social learning such as modeling or joint work, ILDs may consider the data from principals, as members of their learning organization, as they learn from trial-and-error experiences or from each other as they strive to incorporate additional positively perceived practices into their daily work. This study may help to inform central office leaders (ILDs) as they change the way they utilize work practices on a daily basis. Instead of serving in a traditional, managerial, top-down role in hierarchical structure, this study suggests that principals have learned more from "partnership" relationships. This understanding provides a framework for the development of effective assistive relationships.

Implications for Research

Most recently, current research has provided more focused attention on the role of the central office in promoting student learning outcomes in districts across the nation

(Honig, 2013). This focus is the result of the spotlight of high-stakes policy environments mandating enhanced student performance. Federal and state policy mandates have placed demands on United States' school district central offices. These initiatives require schools to go beyond basic minimum standards to reach higher levels of achievement. As a result, increased emphasis has been placed on the role of the central office in promoting reform efforts to enhance student success.

Educational research of the past decade has identified principals' instructional leadership as a contributor to improved teaching, with select studies highlighting student achievement gains (Heck, 1992; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood, et al., & Wahlstrom, 2004; Murphy, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987, 1988; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). Literature details the link between strong principals and their staff as it relates to student effectiveness. This study conducted in Excellence provides an understanding of principal perceptions of district level administrators or ILDs, working to facilitate instructional leadership with job-embedded support for principals (Honig, 2013).

Implications for Theory

This study examined findings through the lens of both the socio-cultural and organizational learning theory (Honig, 2008). In this study, select central office leaders or ILDs, participated in "hands-on," direct assistance relationships with principals in Excellence that focused on teaching and learning. The utilization of both frameworks indicates a novel approach to understanding central office/building partnerships. Understandings or strands from both sociocultural learning theory and organizational

learning theory highlight a foundation for understanding and developing effective district and building partnership practices.

Limitations

Considering limitations that are addressed in qualitative case study, this study in the Excellence District provided one glimpse of a large urban school in the Midwest. The findings in this study may not be generalizable to additional settings. Data discussed in this study is limited to the volunteer participants in Excellence. Additionally, every attempt was made to fill each of the nine criterion stated in the study design. All but two areas of criterion were covered with the participants. Further, elementary principal/ILD ratios indicating the number of school sites per ILD vary from secondary principal/ILD ratio. Perceptions gleaned from this study reflect central office transformation within a district working within the PSF for three consecutive years. Further, additional training and support has been provided to Excellence as a participant in the larger Wallace Study discussed in Chapter II. School districts that display demographics differently from those in Excellence, may consider their readiness and resources considering this central office transformation.

Summary

Chapter I introduced the study focus by sharing the current high-stakes mandates and accountability measure have recently placed additional pressure on central office leaders to focus on relationships and supports for principals as they develop as instructional leaders. Historically, select school reform initiatives have proven to be successful (Bryk & Schnieder, 2002: Mintrop, 2004; Minstrop & Trujillo, 2007; O'Day, 2004), while other have been unsuccessful (Mintrop, 2004; Finnigan & Gross, 2007;

Lankford, et al., 2002; Sunderman et al. 2005). This qualitative case study has aimed to look at one such shift in structure, requiring district leaders to be active in the development of principals as instructional leaders. This study conducted in Excellence, utilized principals perception to gain insight into the inner workings of a much larger scale process occurring as within the central office transformation work.

Chapter II reviewed the history of school reform in general, the history and reform of the central office, and how accountability measures influence successful and unsuccessful school reform initiatives. The later part of Chapter 2 described the transformation or reconfiguration of the central office through the new roles, rules, roads, and relationships, as framed in the Wallace Report of 2010. Chapter 2 concluded with the introduction of the theoretical framework, and the implications of practice, policy and research.

Chapter III described the methodology of the study reviewing the purpose of the questions and the design of my qualitative case study. The study took place in Excellence, which is a large urban school located in the Midwest. All study procedures were discussed including the study population, the data collection which included observations, interviews, surveys, and document use for existing data shaped my study. The analysis process that was chosen for this case study followed the framework of Merriam (2008). Chapter III concluded discussing my role as the researcher in this qualitative case study, and the trustworthiness of the findings that were utilized in the Excellence study.

The epistemological perspective that helped as a guide for my study is constructionism. In this study, worldview knowledge was constructed through the

Excellence ILDs, principals, and district leaders that interacted with each other during my time spent in the district. Meaning was assimilated as the participants shared their perceptions of their relationships and development under the ILD influence.

Chapter IV presented the data organized by the study's research questions. In depth data provided rich, thick, perceptions of principals in the Excellence district as they shared their development as an instructional leader through assistive relationships under the influence of their ILD. Careful attention was made to present the findings in fair and equitable manner, not to influence the presentation with bias as I interacted with the data represented by perceptions from Excellence principals.

Chapter V involved the theoretical framework being placed as an overlay to the study findings. First, the socio-cultural theory was applied to the findings, second, the findings were viewed through the organizational theory lens, and third, both theories were applied and the findings were viewed through the lens using strands from both theories. The data analysis process was discussed, and visual representations were used to visually display the complexities of the relationships viewed by principals. To end the study, I summarized the implications of the study, and will conclude with future research opportunities below.

Recommendations for Further Research

My work within one area of central office transformation has provided several options open for consideration. First, the topic of central office transformation is deep and complex, and includes many layers of organization and position shifts within daily practices. The perceptions of principals that have been shared in the study highlight areas that merit further study. One particular interesting theme that was discussed briefly in the

findings chapter was that of ILD tenure and fit with the building principal. Currently, this aspect of the relationship has yet to be explored. Several principals in Excellence emphasized the advantages and or disadvantages of working with a particular ILD for a period of time. Reassignment or frequent personnel changes within this role may affect the leaders' ability to develop or maintain assistive relationships with principals. From the principal perspective, tenure and stability of the ILD, along with fit may be two areas that further uncover additional relevant findings regarding relationships and instructional growth perceived by principals as they work within the PSF.

Second, the relationship between ILDs and executive level leaders while working within districts currently involved in a transforming central office may prove an addition to this topic in the literature. As principals' perceptions have now been explored in the Excellence district, researching the perceptions of ILDs in a district similar to Excellence may provide additional evidence for executive level cabinet members, superintendents, and other stakeholders involved in current policy and practice decisions. This research opportunity may add to the overall understandings in districts working within the PSF.

Third, an area of study that may further define the role and relationships between ILD and the principal is needed. This line of inquiry could provide further understandings of the factors that help or hinder the developing relationships as both participants work within the PSF. Factors such as state budget restraints that shape the ratio of ILD to principals, current district climate and culture, and the readiness of additional central office departments as they fully understand and commit to the transformational process, could add an additional layer of richness to the area of central office transformation. As districts continue to face the pressures of high stakes accountability, the district office

will remain a critical piece for building principals as they further develop as instructional leaders.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions for Participants

1. What evidence is there that leadership efforts are resulting in the improvement of teaching practice and student learning from this change in support structure?
2. How does the new form of leadership ensure collaboration and collective leadership through the tasks of instructional leadership between principal and ILD?
3. What evidence and data is collecting to analyze trends in instructional practice that impact student performance shared between principal and ILD?
4. What role does a research-based instructional framework play in the collaborative data discussions between principal and ILD?
5. How is the monitoring of teacher instruction and evaluation utilized in the principal as increased instructional leader within the framework?
6. What evidence is there between staff that new effective teaching and learning has been improved by the increased level of instructional leadership demonstrated by the building principal?
7. How has instructional time increased within the new framework as instructional leadership has become the emphasis and priority between the ILD and building principal?
8. What evidence shows the implemented strategic efforts to recruit, retain, induct, support and develop high quality building principals

9. What data and processes are supported by the ILD's while building principals plan for instructional and school improvement planning?
10. What evidence exists of the principals' access to professional growth opportunities?

Appendix B

ASSESSMENT PART 1:

Learning-focused Partnerships

Central offices that support effective teaching at scale support all school principals in leading for such results, through roles for principals that some call "instructional leadership" or "strategic human capital management." We have found that one effective way to increase supports for principals' development as such leaders is to create learning-focused partnerships between principals and executive-level staff who help principals grow in that capacity. These central office staff, whom the research refers to as Instructional Leadership Directors (ILDs), dedicate the vast majority of their time to hands-on work with principals, one on one and in principal professional learning communities, with the express focus on helping principals develop as instructional leaders. In very small districts, central offices productively create an ILD function by having the superintendent and one or two other top-level administrators carve out significant time for such work. You may or may not already have staff in place whose job is to support principals. The questions below will help you take a deeper look at the scope of your current work in this area and compare it with what we have found about how learning-focused partnerships can support principal instructional leadership at scale.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DK/NMI *
1. Our district has clearly defined the principalship as instructional leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. That definition of the principalship as instructional leadership (referenced in question #1) informs all central office functions (e.g., principal hiring, evaluation, professional development, facilities).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The relationship between principals and the central office in this district is a *partnership* relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. We have central office staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals as instructional leaders. *If you agree/strongly agree with question #4, please address #5-15.* *If you disagree/strongly disagree with question #4, skip to #16-21.*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

***DK/NMI = Don't Know; Need More Information**

Those Staff (referenced in question #4, above):	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DK/NMI
5. Are in positions that sit on or report directly to the superintendent's cabinet or the equivalent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Were hired for their orientation to the work of principal support as teaching as opposed to mainly supervision or evaluation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Are formally charged with spending at least 75% of their time working directly with principals on their professional growth as instructional leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Actually spend at least 75% of their time working directly with principals on their professional growth as instructional leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Have a low enough number of principals for whom they are responsible that they can be successful at helping all their principals grow as instructional leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Have a strategic mix of principals necessary for building a strong principal professional learning community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Actually approach their work with principals as teachers and learners rather than mainly supervisors or evaluators.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Have relationships with their principals around principals/professional growth as instructional leaders that are high in trust.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Receive professional development that helps them engage in their work as teachers and learners.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Have the support of the superintendent and other senior central office leaders who proactively protect their time for work on principals' growth as instructional leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Are held accountable for helping principals grow as instructional leaders using specific, meaningful metrics of such performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you do not yet have staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals as instructional leaders (referenced in question #4):	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DK/NMI
16. The superintendent and other key central office leaders are aware of the need to have executive-level staff dedicated to supporting the growth of all principals as instructional leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Our district has staff in other positions who could serve well in these dedicated principal instructional leadership support positions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Our district should be able to attract people to these positions who have the ready capacity to help principals grow as instructional leaders.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Our principals are open to having a central office staff person working with them as a partner to strengthen their instructional leadership practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Key central office staff are aware of the need to provide professional development and protection of staff time to help these staff be successful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Our principals are currently organized into subgroups whose composition can compromise a strong principal professional learning community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix C

PrincipalSupportFramework

VERSION 2.0

The Principal Support Framework describes key actions of central offices that effectively support principals as instructional leaders. Based upon a broad understanding of how principals work to improve teaching and learning at scale, this framework provides guidance so that central office leaders can do the following:

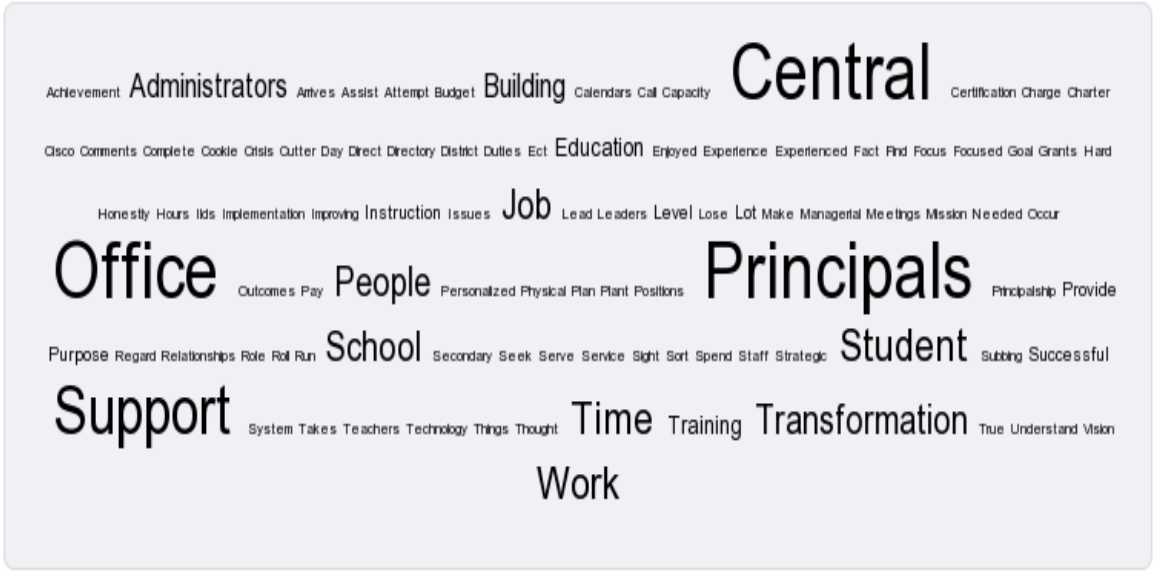
- Develop a vision of what it means to support principals.
- Assess and determine strengths and next steps in their school system's approach to supporting principals as instructional leaders.
- Surface technical assistance needs.
- Highlight areas for inquiry and next-stage policy development.

ACTION AREA	THE VISION	GUIDING QUESTIONS
Action Area 1: A Shared Vision of Principals as Instructional Leaders The school system has defined, clearly and in detail, what it expects principals to do as the instructional leaders of their schools. It selects and evaluates principals based primarily on whether they can successfully execute those practices. **Goal:** Principals understand the school system's expectations for their roles and effective practices as school instructional leaders. These expectations guide the work principals perform day to day, and the practices can be sustained over time.	• High-priority practices of instructional leaders drive the day-to-day work of principals. • High-priority practices of instructional leaders drive the professional development of principals. • School system leaders understand and communicate both broadly and uniformly the vision of instructional leadership. • Principals are hired based on criteria and processes aligned to the research-based practices of instructional leadership. • Principals assess and measure their own performance in relation to high-priority instructional leadership practices defined by their district. • Personnel decisions are determined by principal performance measures in alignment with high-priority instructional leadership practices.	1. In what ways do high-priority instructional leadership practices drive principal goal setting and professional development? 2. To what extent is principal evaluation driven by researched-based practices? 3. How do high-priority instructional leadership practices guide candidate acceptance into the principal hiring pipeline and the selection and placement of principals? 4. How do principals and supervisors access data on principal performance in relation to high-priority instructional leadership practices? 5. How does principal performance in relation to high-priority instructional leadership practices impact retention and career ladder opportunities for principals? 6. To what extent do principals' calendars reflect an emphasis on high-priority instructional leadership practices? 7. In what ways do school system leaders communicate the role of principals as instructional leaders?

ACTION AREA	THE VISION	GUIDING QUESTIONS
Action Area 2: **A System of Support for Developing Principals as Instructional Leaders** The school system has created a system of differentiated and targeted support to develop principals' growth as instructional leaders. **Goal:** Principals have the skills, tools and support that they need to grow and successfully apply the system's high- priority instructional leadership practices.	• Principals receive the tools, targeted professional development and other support they need to apply the high-priority instructional leadership practices into their day-to-day work as instructional leaders. • Principals work with principal supervisors able to provide differentiated support through teaching, modeling and coaching. • Principals have ownership for driving and prioritizing their own growth and improvement as instructional leaders. • The work of principal supervisors, staff providing professional development, and others supporting principal growth is coordinated and tightly aligned to developing principals as instructional leaders. • Principals are engaged in collaboration with other principal colleagues to improve practice and rely on each other as support and resources.	1. To what extent do principals receive differentiated support focused on their development as instructional leaders? 2. How does the school system ensure that principal supervisors have the requisite skills and disposition to support principals' growth as instructional leaders? 3. To what extent do principals have frequent opportunities to access and utilize each other as resources for learning and performance improvement? 4. In what ways do principals have access to quality professional development tools and resources needed to improve their performance? 5. How do principal supervisors collaborate with other central office staff to align systems and resources to support principals as instructional leaders? 6. To what extent is principal supervisor evaluation tied directly to the instructional leadership success of the principals being supported? 7. To what extent are principal supervisors able to prioritize working with principals as the day-to-day focus of their work? 8. To what extent do principal supervisors receive the resources, support and professional development they need to successfully support principals as instructional leaders?

Action Area 3: **A Strategic Partnership Between the Central Office and Principals** The central office develops systemic solutions that ensure instructional leadership is the primary job of principals. **Goal:** The central office delivers effective, integrated support and services that increase the ability of principals to successfully lead their schools.	• Schools receive differentiated and integrated services rooted in an understanding of the needs of each school. • Central office services are designed to anticipate and proactively meet the needs of each school. • Central office relationships with principals add value to the work of the principal and school. • The central office has a culture of continuous improvement and can learn, adapt and respond to the changing needs of schools. • There is an efficiency created by a well-coordinated and defined set of operational systems.	1. To what extent can central office staff articulate the connection between their work and supporting principals as instructional leaders? 2. How does the central office provide differentiated and integrated service to schools rooted in an understanding of the needs of each school? 3. How do high-priority instructional leadership practices and an underlying theory of action guide decisions about principal responsibility and what responsibilities are streamlined or deprioritized? 4. To what extent are central office teams equipped with the skills and tools to do their jobs? 5. How does the school system invest in developing the skills of central office staff? 6. To what extent are central office staff members empowered to innovate services to better support principals as instructional leaders? 7. How does the central office assess its performance at making it possible for principals to spend the majority of their time focused on instructional leadership?

Appendix D


Achievement Administrators Arrives Assist Attempt Budget Building Calendars Call Capacity Central Certification Charge Charter
Cisco Comments Complete Cookie Crisis Cutter Day Direct Directory District Duties Ect Education Enjoyed Experience Experienced Fact Find Focus Focused Goal Grants Hard
Honesty Hours Ids Implementation Improving Instruction Issues Job Lead Leaders Level Lose Lot Make Managerial Meetings Mission Needed Occur
Office Outcomes Pay People Personalized Physical Plan Plant Positions Principals Principalship Provide
Purpose Regard Relationships Role Roll Run School Secondary Seek Serve Service Sight Sort Spend Staff Strategic Student Subbing Successful
Support System Takes Teachers Technology Things Thought Time Training Transformation True Understand Vision
Work

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Tuesday, October 04, 2016
IRB Application No	ED16133
Proposal Title:	Central office transformation: Principals perception of instructional leader director influence
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved **Protocol Expires: 10/3/2019**

Principal Investigator(s):

Becky Slothower
Stillwater, OK 74078

Katherine Curry
306 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1.Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2.Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3.Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4.Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Recruitment to Survey and Interview Script

Researcher:

Email Recruitment Script for TPS Principals:

Good Afternoon/Morning,

I would like to introduce myself. I am an Educational Leadership & Policy Study doctoral candidate from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. My research area focuses on central office transformation; specifically, principal supervision through Instructional Leader Directors (ILDs) within the principal support framework. I am very interested in the work TPS is actively involved with in the area of central office transformation. The purpose of my study is to gain a better understanding of principals' perceptions of how Instructional Leader Directors (ILDs) have influenced their instructional leadership development. Additionally, I will seek to understand daily practices that may enhance the assistive relationships needed to support principals in their work practices.

The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in the survey portion of this study. All head principals in the district have been invited to participate in the Readiness Assessment survey, and you are receiving this email because you are the lead principal in your building. The survey contains prompts that explore varying levels of central office transformation readiness through the ILD/principal dimension. The survey will take approximately five minutes to complete. I have been given permission by the district and Oklahoma State University to collect this data.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary, and you may skip any question that you do not wish to answer. Also, you may discontinue participation at any time. Answers on the survey will be known only to the researcher, and no one from the district will know whether or not you chose to participate, and no one from the district will have access to your answers. Only aggregated findings will be reported in any written reports.

There are no direct benefits to participants. However, findings from this study may help to inform understandings about transformational processes that begin at the central office level. Additionally, this study may provide a better understanding of assistive relationships as they develop between principals and district principal supervisors (ILDs).

If you would like to participate in the survey portion, a link is available for you at the end of this email. If you do not wish to participate, please choose the "opt out" link at the bottom of the page. If you choose to "opt out" of the study, you will not receive any further emails about this study.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact me at _____, or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Katherine Curry, 306 Willard Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078; phone (918)520-9217 or email: Katherine.curry@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Your consideration of this request is sincerely appreciated,

Becky Slothower, Ph.D. Candidate
Oklahoma State University

Recruitment Script for the Interview:

Good Afternoon/Morning,

I would like to introduce myself. I am an Educational Leadership & Policy Study doctoral candidate from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. My research area focuses on central office transformation; specifically, principal supervision through Instructional Leader Directors (ILDs) within the principal support framework. I am very interested in the work [redacted]s actively involved with in the area of central office transformation. The purpose of my study is to gain a better understanding of principals' perceptions of how Instructional Leader Directors (ILDs) have influenced their instructional leadership development. Additionally, I will seek to understand daily practices that may enhance the assistive relationships needed to support principals in their work practices.

The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in the interview portion of this study. Interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes, and will take place at a convenient time and location. Interview questions will contain prompts targeting your perception of the principal role within the principal/ILD framework as your instructional leadership is developed, and the work practices needed to form assistive relationships with principal supervisors. You may skip any questions on the interview that you do not wish to answer, and you may discontinue your participation at any time. We ask permission to record the interview simply because we will not be able to remember everything that you say. A recorded e-file will provide a transcript of our interview.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary, and you may skip any question that you do not wish to answer. Also, you may discontinue participation at any time. Interview responses will be known only to the researcher, and no one from the district will know whether or not you chose to participate, and no one from the district will have access to your answers. Only aggregated findings will be reported in any written reports.

There are no direct benefits to participants. However, findings from this study may help to inform understandings about transformational processes that begin at the central office

level. Additionally, this study may provide a better understanding of assistive relationships as they develop between principals and district principal supervisors (ILDs).

If you would like to participate in the interview portion, a link is available for you at the end of this email. If you do not wish to participate, please choose the "opt out" link at the bottom of the page. If you choose to "opt out" of the study, you will not receive any further emails about this study.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact me at _____, or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Katherine Curry, 306 Willard Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078; phone (918)520-9217 or email: Katherine.curry@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Your consideration of this request is sincerely appreciated,

Becky Slothower, Ph.D. Candidate
Oklahoma State University

VITA

Becky Sue Slothower

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: CENTRAL OFFICE TRANSFORMATION: PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER DIRECTOR INFLUENCE

Major Field: Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in August, 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Counseling & Guidance at University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 1988.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Education at Southern Nazarene University, Bethany, Oklahoma in 1987.

Experience:

Teaching:	Putnam City Schools (2nd-3rd) 1987-1989
	Deer Creek Schools (1st grade) 2006-2007
School Counselor:	Jones Public Schools (K-8) 1989-1991
	Bethany Schools (Middle School) 1991-1993
School Psychologist:	Bethany Public Schools (K-12) 1993-2006
Building Administrator:	Deer Creek Public Schools (K-8)
	Assistant Principal Elementary/Middle 2010-2012
District Administrator:	Deer Creek Public Schools 2008-2010, 2011-2012
	Edmond Public Schools 2012-2014
University GTA/GRA:	Oklahoma State University 2015-2017
Graduate Program Developer and Adjunct Instructor:	Southern Nazarene University 2017-current

Professional Memberships: Association of Curriculum and Development, Council for Exceptional Children, Cooperative Council of Oklahoma School Administrators, Oklahoma Directors of Special Education, University Council of Educational Administrators, American Educational Research Association