

How Experiences Influence and Inform School Principals' Actions to Further Develop
Teachers' Instructional Practice

by Adam Sommer

B.A. in English, May 2003, The George Washington University
M.Ed. in Secondary Education, August 2004, The George Washington University
EdS in Educational Leadership and Administration, May 2008, The George Washington
University

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Dissertation directed by

Patricia S. Tate
Associate Professor of Curriculum & Pedagogy

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of The George Washington University certifies that Adam Sommer has passed the Final Examination for the degree of Doctor of Education as of March 16, 2017. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

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Adam Sommer

Dissertation Research Committee:

Patricia S. Tate, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Dissertation Director

Sylvan S. Beck, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Committee Member

Karen Kortecamp, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Committee Member

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Dedication

The author wishes to dedicate this document to all his teachers for providing guidance and nurturing a life-long love of learning and to his parents for being his initial learning leaders.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge and thank numerous people for their help throughout this academic journey. First and foremost, I want to thank my parents for their never-ending support and help through this experience. If it wasn't for your love and assistance, I never would have reached this accomplishment. Thank you for your constant support and patience.

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Abstract of Dissertation

How Experiences Influence and Inform School Principals' Actions to Further Develop Teachers' Instructional Practice

Previous research illustrated how principals effectively facilitate the development of teachers' instructional practice through actions such as differentiating professional development, providing continuous professional development, establishing learning communities and using supervision/evaluations to help modify instruction; however, what is missing from that research is how personal/professional experiences influence specific principal behavior and actions in regards to facilitating the development of teachers' instructional practice.

The idea of school principal as teacher-educator is supported within the requirements to become a principal (ISSLC Standards, 2015) as well as within daily necessities of school leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fullan, 2012, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, believes the best way to get strong teachers is to adopt a “fundamentally different way of looking at teachers, how we recruit, *train and support them and give them the latitude and tools and conditions to do their jobs*” [emphasis added] (Layton, 2015). The question that remains is how specific experiences influence the actions of principals to focus on the development of teachers' instructional practice.

Potential influential personal or professional practices might include: principals' teacher and administrative training and experiences, mandates from central administration vs. local needs, the context and community of school and/or the personal life experiences of the principals. Hence, it is imperative to take a closer look into what

experiences influence principal actions to facilitate the development of teachers' instructional practices.

This study employed narrative inquiry methodology and analysis to examine personal and professional experiences of three selected principals who have been identified as outstanding in their field. Findings provide detailed insight into how personal and/or professional experiences influence their actions in regards to the development of teachers' instructional practice. The results of this study unpack the journey these individuals took in becoming learning leaders of their school community. Additionally, the results are informative to the field of educational leadership.

We have two lives, Roy, the life we learn with and the life we live with after that.

Bernard Malamud, *The Natural*, p 152

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I began my professional career in education as an English Language Arts classroom teacher at the secondary level. Although being a teacher is a very rewarding experience, I felt isolated due to the fundamental lack of opportunities to gather, discuss, learn from, and explore pedagogical ideas with colleagues. To have an enhanced interaction with my peers, I decided to step outside of the classroom. I enrolled in coursework in educational leadership and administration to further the knowledge base of how principals collaborate with teachers to help further their instructional practice. In my doctoral studies, I sought to learn about the specific personal and professional experiences of accomplished principals that influence their orientation towards developing, assisting, and facilitating teachers' instructional practice. This study addressed my interest in learning about personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals, specifically in regards to their orientation to develop teachers' instructional practice.

Overview

Historical trends in developing school leaders show the evolution and shift in thinking of the essential roles of a school leader (Hallinger, 2003, 2005). A principal working closely with his or her teachers poignantly contrasts a binary construct of teachers working under the principal. School leadership scholars Hargreaves and Fullan state that school improvements “can therefore never be done to or even for teachers. It can only ever be achieved by and with them” (2012, p. 45). To maximize teaching potential, principals should work closely with their teachers to help further their instructional practice.

The concept of principals working with teachers to develop instructional practice is supported in the work and requirements to become a licensed school administrator through the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 2015). In the 1990s, collaboration between the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Policy Board on Educational Administration helped establish the ISLLC standards for educational leaders. Led by faculty members at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Vanderbilt University, these groups developed standards for school principals to follow. Eight states initially adopted these standards outright, whereas twenty-three other states added or slightly modified them and ten states developed their own standards in alignment with these. Within ten years the ISLLC standards became ubiquitous throughout the United States—46 states either adopted these standards or used them to create their own (Canole & Young, 2013).

These standards have been used to not only help train future principals, but also provide states with leverage to create changes in their accreditation policies and procedures. Since 2001, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), later known as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), has used a modified version of these standards to “guide their leadership preparation program” (Canole & Young, 2013, p. 5), which has “solidified their role as the de facto national leadership standards” (p. 6). Subsequently, these standards have been utilized to help prepare, set best practices, and evaluate future educational leaders (Canole & Young, 2013). However, a review of relevant literature shows that these standards are not infallible.

Even though principals face continuously evolving responsibilities, they all must maintain a paramount focus on developing teachers' instructional practices. According to Canole and Young (2013), the ISLLC standards have raised concerns from educators, including: (a) a lack of connections between leadership, teacher development and student achievement (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Gronn, 2003); (b) insufficient instruction regarding how school and community context impact style of leadership (English, 2003; Gronn, 2003); and (c) the assumption that leadership is not a shared practice (Pitre & Smith, 2004). However, these objections fail to address the reason for these standards: "The goal has been to generate a critical mass of energy to move school administration out of its 100-year orbit and to reposition the profession around leadership for learning" (Murphy, 2005, p. 180). In response to critics, in 2008 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) adopted the Educational Leadership Policy Standards, which incorporate a revised version of the ISLLC standards and are currently used to train and evaluate school principals and leaders.

According to the educational reform group, the Center for American Progress under the banner TeachStrong, effective classroom instruction is only possible if there are excellent teachers. Carmel Martin, the executive vice president of the Center for American Progress, recently suggested, "What we need now is to focus on high-quality instruction, and there's a lot of agreement that the way to do that is to get strong teachers in every classroom" (Layton, 2015). The Center for American Progress, along with Randi Weingarten, the current president of the American Federation of Teachers, believe this is possible if we adopt a "fundamentally different way of looking at teachers, how we

recruit, train and support them and give them the latitude and tools and conditions to do their jobs” (Layton, 2015). This perspective stems from an idea originally examined by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) and corroborated by Shen et al. (2012), who found school leadership is “second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning, accounting for about 25 percent of total direct and indirect effects on student learning” (p. 3). Based on actual history and context of the ISLLC standards, the ideas expressed by the Center for American Progress as well as the American Federation of Teachers, and scholarship encouraging sound school leadership, every principal should have an orientation towards the development of teachers’ instructional practice. However, individual actions and approaches will vary based actual history and context of personal and professional experiences (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kohler-Riessman, 1993).

Statement of Problem

Research identifies highly qualified teachers as the basis for school improvement (Coburn, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, La Pointe, & Orr, 2010). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) reported, “We’ve learned that it’s meaningless to set high expectations for student performance unless we also set high expectations for the performance of adults. We know that if we are going to improve learning, we must also improve teaching” (2002, p. 2).

The idea that school principals assist the development of teacher instructional practice is supported by the requirements to become a school principal (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) as well as within the daily necessities of said school

leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fullan, 2012, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). Work completed by Darling-Hammond et al. (2010), asserts that school leaders get the most out of their staff and faculty when they work in support of their teacher's instructional practice. Therefore, to improve teaching and instructional practices, teachers need principals who can help facilitate the development of their instructional practice. One way this can be accomplished is by having a principal who is concerned with becoming a "learning leader" (Fullan, 2014).

According to Fullan (2014), a "learning leader" creates learning opportunities for staff to further develop their instructional practice. Through these learning opportunities, the principal leads teachers through the development of their instructional practices and assists them in becoming better instructors. This perspective—the principal as an agent of change—mirrors the relationship teachers have with their students. In each scenario, the learning leader guides the participants through a topic or idea with the intent to potentially modify the participants' actions, thoughts, and/or behavior. First introduced by academic leadership scholar Glickman (1981), this ideal principal–teacher relationship is a model for creating learning opportunities to further develop teachers' instructional practice.

Although facilitating instructional development is a vital area within the role of school leaders, we do not yet know how personal or professional experiences of school leaders influence what they do to develop teachers' instructional practice. This study saw to understand how personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals' (in this study, accomplished is synonymous with winning a local leadership

award and being considered a “learning leader”) influence their actions in regards to the development of teachers’ instructional practice.

Purpose and Research Questions

This research explored how the personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals inform and influence their actions and perspectives regarding their role in the development of teachers’ instructional practice. The research question for this dissertation was: *What personal and professional experiences inform and influence accomplished principals’ efforts to develop teachers’ instructional practice?*

Statement of Potential Significance

This study informs those who would be future principals and school administrators how personal and professional experiences can influence an individuals’ perspective regarding their role and responsibility in the development of teachers’ instructional practice. By closely examining the personal and professional experiences related to the development of teachers’ instructional practice, this research seeks to uncover and understand the relationship between principals’ experiences and actions. This knowledge will help current and future principals and administrators gain a better idea of what experiences influence their actions regarding the development of teachers’ instructional practice. This research engaged participants in meta-cognition which centered on articulating individual experiences of a school principal and how these experiences shaped and influenced decisions they made regarding developing teachers’ instructional practice. This research provides a deeper understanding regarding principalship and the actions of learning leaders.

Epistemology

The epistemological framework that guided this study is generated from ideas associated with constructivism. This epistemological stance focused on how humans generate knowledge from interaction between experiences and ideas. This philosophical perspective implies that people use their experiences to help describe, understand, and solidify their worldview. In other words, people learn from their experiences. The historical underpinnings that form this perspective stem from the separate works of Dewey, Piaget, and Bruner.

According to Dewey, one way to accrue knowledge is through experience (2009). He believed that an idea or theory alone was not enough to help someone truly understand a phenomenon; rather, Dewey asserted the only way to know something is through experiencing the phenomenon:

An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance. An experience, a very humble experience, is capable of generating and carrying any amount of theory (or intellectual content), but a theory apart from an experience cannot be definitely grasped even as theory. (2009, pp. 79–80)

In terms of his perspective on the influence of experience, Dewey stated, “We simply do something, and when it fails, we do something else, and keep on trying ’til we hit upon something which works, and then we adopt that method as a rule of thumb measure in subsequent procedure” (p. 80). To encapsulate the concept of constructivism, Dewey argued that experience informs someone of whether their idea or theory is plausible.

Without the experience, ideas are only half-conceived. Dewey further addressed this point:

We get so thoroughly used to a kind of pseudo-idea, a half-perception, that we are not aware how half-dead our mental action is, and how much keener and more extensive our observations and ideas would be if we formed them under conditions of a vital experience which required us to use judgment: to hunt for the connections of the thing dealt with . . . Hence the deluge of half-observations, of verbal ideas, and unassimilated “knowledge” which afflicts the world. (p. 79)

As is evident in this quote, Dewey believed that the vital experience is paramount for truly understanding and supporting what constitutes knowledge. In other words, for this researcher’s epistemology, one needs to have a deeper understanding of their actions and the rationale behind them. Without deep thinking about ones’ actions, one cannot clearly articulate the rationale for why they do what they do. This perspective on the value of experience connects the work of Dewey to that of Piaget.

Piaget believed that through experiences, people construct new knowledge or reaffirm current perspectives (1952). According to this view, learners fit new information into an already established heuristic (assimilation) or learner modify their heuristic (accommodation) to include the new experience. In either scenario, the learner uses the experience to modify their perspective or create new ones, essentially solidifying and generating knowledge. Like Piaget, Bruner believed effective instruction must include the experiences and contexts that allow a person to learn.

Bruner explored the importance of experience when addressing and outlining his ideas associated with being ready to learn. In his text, *The Process of Education* (1960),

Bruner described three tenets of learning: acquisition of new knowledge, transformation, and evaluation. In this approach to learning, the first step is for an individual to acquire knowledge, which includes information that “runs counter to or is a replacement for what the person has previously known implicitly or explicitly.” The second step revolves around transformation, or “the process of manipulating knowledge to make it fit new tasks.” This allows the learner to delve deeper into the idea or concept being examined by applying the new idea to a familiar intellectual concept. The last step of this approach to using experiences to expand knowledge is evaluation. In this step, Bruner noted we “check[s] whether the way we have manipulated information is adequate to the task” (p. 48). Through acquisition of knowledge, transformation, and evaluation the learner connects their idea with their experiences to ensure the material fits their understanding of the world.

Each of these three theorists argued the educational value of an experience. They believed that encountering an idea alone is not enough to learn; rather, learning happens when the individual experiences something that forces the learner to either solidify or modify her or his perspective. The crux of constructivism is that experiences can influence a perspective or understanding of the material or situation. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how personal or professional experiences of accomplished school principals influence actions regarding how they develop teacher instructional practice. Dewey recapitulated, “When an activity is continued into the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance. We learn something” (2009, p. 77). Taking the viewpoint of knowing as it pertains to this study required the researcher tap into the

principals own recounting of experience, both personal and professional, that led to significant actions addressing teachers' instructional practice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this research was derived from the work of two academic theorists, as well as an orientation to those theories. The theoretical work of Dewey (experiential learning) and Knowles (adult learning theory) inform the initial part of this framework, while their orientation to constructivist grounded theory connects them.

Dewey believed that people can learn from their experiences (2009). As discussed in the prior section, Dewey thought that the abstract idea of something was not enough; the actual experience of the idea, however, allows the participant to claim ownership of that material. Through these experiences—and their consequences—an individual can learn about their world. Dewey's point follows:

To “learn from experience” is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction-discovery of the connection of things. (p. 77)

This approach to learning implies that true mastery of an idea or theory requires one to practice and/or have an actual, lived experience. Being able to learn from experiences, moreover, requires a learner to have a rich history of experiences. This study explored the experiences of accomplished school principals and how those experiences influenced their actions regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice. Banking on a

wealth of experiences is a critical concept that influences ideas associated with adult learning theory, also known as andragogy (Knowles, 1980, 1984).

Andragogy, or the theory of adult education, differentiates between adult and children learners. While adult and children learn from visual, auditory, and kinesthetic approaches, adult learners differ from child learners in significant ways. In particular, adults: (a) have a psychological need to be self-directing; (b) use their expansive reservoir of experience to assist in the learning process; (c) seek knowledge in order to solve real-world problems often related to developmental tasks; (d) and desire to apply this new information (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, 2013; Knowles, 1980, 1984). This is not to say that children cannot also learn with these approaches. Indeed, Knowles came to realize that “differences between adults and children as learners may be a matter of degree and situation rather than a rigid dichotomy” (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014, p. 60), but these concepts are more typically associated with adult learners, and in this case, the learning of school principals. What is not in dispute, however, is that people of all ages can learn from their experiences. Because adults have a richer, longer history with experiences, they tend to accommodate and assimilate their experiences based on prior knowledge, perspective, or lived experiences. This allows adult learners, in this circumstance those learners are school principals, to construct an understanding of the world through their specific life filter, which is based in constructivist grounded theory.

Building on constructivist theory, constructivist grounded theory provides a method for investigating principal’s personal and professional experiences. This

theoretical approach to learning provides a method to collect and analyze data. Three theorists argue for application of a constructivist approach:

The researcher analyzes data by constant comparison, initially of data with data, progressing to comparisons between their interpretations translated into codes and categories and more data. This constant comparison of analysis to the field grounds the researcher's final theorizing in the participants' experiences. (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 3)

This theoretical perspective validates and understands that each person's experiences will influence them differently based on their own histories, values, culture, and more. This implies that there is no "pre-existing reality 'out there.'" To think otherwise is to take a positivistic position that . . . we reject . . . Our position is that truth is enacted" (Strauss & Corbin, 2011, p. 279). Although the multiple truths of the event are explored and examined in this research, the researcher acknowledges that constructivism does not imply that there is an actual Truth embedded within the narrative. By understanding that the experience and perspective will be germane to the individual, rather than universal, both participant and researcher can focus on the details of the narrative. This implies the research is solely focused on understanding the key influential moments within each principal's narrative rather than trying to create a grand universal theme or approach to learning.

Conceptual Framework

This dissertation study focused on the personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals and how these experiences influenced their perspectives to develop teachers' instructional practice. The conceptual framework that is the basis

for this research is centered on effective principal actions regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice and how personal and professional experiences influenced their actions and perspectives. Based on the theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1980, 1984), which posits experience as central to adult learning, a school principal's personal and professional experiences influence their approach to the development of their teachers' instructional practice. What is currently missing from the available research on this topic is how their personal and professional experiences influence their actions regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice.

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptualization of effective principal actions that help further teachers' instructional practice. These actions are guided by four major concepts derived from the literature: the historical context for understanding principal actions that facilitate the development of teachers' instructional practices; current national standards (ISLLC) for school leadership that address the development of teachers' instructional practice; personal experiences that influence how principals assist the development of teachers' instructional practice; and professional experiences that influence how principals assist the development of teachers' instructional practice.



Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for How Experiences Influence and Inform the Actions of Accomplished School Principals Regarding the Development of Teachers' Instructional Practice

Methodology

The research explored how personal and professional experiences of an accomplished school principal informs and influences their actions and perspectives regarding their role in the development of teachers' instructional practice. This investigation into understanding how the experiences influence principal actions calls for a qualitative research design that employs a narrative inquiry. Specifically, the research design is centered on a biographical study, which "is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life" (Creswell, 2007, p. 55). As narrative inquiry is the study of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), narrative inquiry methodology allows for a detailed contextual focus on a specified selection of individuals (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), which in this case are accomplished principals. The selected principals shared with the researcher personal or professional experiences that influenced their work regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice. Although the details of experiences are important, narrative inquiry is not solely about *what* happened, but also *what meaning* the participants make of those experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Sample Selection

Only principals that have previously been identified as accomplished by their peers and are recipients of the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award (WPDELA) were invited to participate in this study. This award is based on peer nominations and qualifications that stipulate the principal must "keep abreast of developments in the field of education; continue to play an active role in the classroom; demonstrate and encourage creativity and innovation; encourage team spirit and

demonstrate leadership and exemplify commitment” (“Distinguished Educational Leadership Awards,” 2015). After the nominations are submitted, “the school districts make the final decisions, meaning the award-winners receive the honor from the communities they serve” (“Distinguished Educational Leadership Awards,” 2015).

Eligibility of the WPDELA aligns with the first two ISLLC standards (2015): (a) a school leader promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community; and (b) a school leader . . . promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (FGCU, 2015). Additionally, these principals exemplified characteristics of a “learning leader” as they were as concerned with the development of their teachers as they were with their students.

Participant selection. Since *The Washington Post* annually awards approximately 20 principals this prestigious designation, going back two years provided an initial applicant pool of 38 principals. These principals represented public, charter, and private schools and spanned elementary, middle, and secondary levels. Once that list of 38 principals were collected, each recipient received an introductory email describing the nature of this study (see Appendix B: Introductory Email/Letter and Appendix E: Analytic Memo for more detail regarding the recruitment process). This introductory email asked them if they would like to volunteer for this study. Once the researcher obtained a list of previous winners who volunteered to participate in this study, the researcher employed a purposive, rather than random, sampling method to narrow down

the list of potential participants (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2007; Pinnegar & Dayness, 2006; Patton, 2002; LeCompte & Preissley, 1993; Chein, 1981).

Through purposive sampling, this researcher was not looking to get an average opinion, but rather these participants were selected or “called in precisely because of their special experience and competence” (Chein, 1981, p. 440). Through these information-rich cases, “one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling” [emphasis in original]” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). To ensure this process is successful, this researcher incorporated criterion-based selection to help the recruitment process.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to learn how experiences influenced principal actions regarding how they develop teachers’ instructional practice. To ensure that this study had a diverse group of participants, the researcher incorporated criterion-based purposeful sampling. This process is detailed in Chapter Three.

Data Collection and Analysis

Utilizing narrative inquiry, the researcher asked selected principals to describe and discuss their experiences regarding their perspective on their role in the development of teachers’ instructional practice. These sessions occurred as often as necessary to acquire the appropriate details of each participant’s narrative. If necessary, the researcher had prompts ready to assist in extrapolating details from the narrative (See Appendix C). Lastly, these sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. In addition to recording each session, the researcher guided participants in following Kohler Riessman’s (1993) five-step process:

1. Attend: Gather one’s thoughts prior to starting the narrative.

2. Tell: Converse with the researcher.
3. Transcribe: The researcher transcribes the narrative.
4. Analyze: Look for influential experiences (Creswell, 2007) that can be triangulated through temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).
5. Read/review narrative with the active participant.

These steps provided a foundation for collecting and analyzing the narrative of each participant.

The researcher worked closely with each participant to ensure that their narrative was accurately portrayed. The researcher explored the narrative for experiences that influenced and shaped their actions related to the development of teachers' instructional practice. Using narrative inquiry methodology, both personal and professional experiences were examined through the three-dimensional space of temporality, place, and sociality to further investigate the experience (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher also placed the experiences in a chronological order to illustrate the impact the experience had on their leadership in facilitating the growth of their teachers' instructional practice.

The researcher shared the transcribed narrative with the participants in addition to the highlights of perceived important experiences and notes or comments the researcher had in the margins. All data from conversations with participants was validated and checked in recursive sessions with participants to complete a final narrative. Lastly, the final narrative created by the researcher was shared and verified by each participant as being accurate.

Issues of Validity and Generalizability

As this final narrative is personal to the participant, the researcher has an ethical obligation to shield participants from any potential harm from this study. The researcher intends to accurately represent the narrative of the participant in an ethical manner.

However, due to the nature of narrative inquiry, this work will not be generalizable as each person has his or her own unique story (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). The purpose of this study was to learn a great deal about the personal and professional life experiences that influence their actions regarding how they assist the development of his or her teachers' instructional practice. It is important to ascertain that the voice of the participant is accurate, authentic, and portrays their experiences. The only person who can confirm the validity and reliability of the project are the participants themselves.

Therefore, the researcher worked closely with the participants to ensure that the interpretation of the narrative was accurate, and that it incorporated aspects related to temporality, sociality, and place and how those factors influenced the understanding of the experience. As a pioneer of narrative inquiry methodology, Clandinin (2013) stated:

Because narrative inquiries attend to individual's lives, as they are composed over time in relation with people, situations, and particular places, the focus remains on lives as lived and told throughout the inquiry. The knowledge developed from narrative inquiries is textured by particularity and an incomplete nature of knowledge that leads less to generalizations and certainties (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007), and more toward wondering about alternative possibilities (Bateson, 2000).
(p. 52)

The narrative approach to generating data in this study is extremely concerned with

representing the story directly from the participant. Through this perspective:

. . .traditional notions of reliability simply do not apply to narrative studies, and validity must be radically re-conceptualized (See Mishler, 1990) . . .

“Trustworthiness,” not truth is a key semantic difference: The latter assumes an objective reality, whereas the former moves the process into the social world.

(Kohler-Riessman, 1993, p. 65)

Thus, the literature about narrative methodology is explicit in stating that as the researcher examines the findings, the researcher knows that he or she will not find a capitol T truth that is universally applicable.

Limitations and Delimitations

One major limitation to this work is the number of participants. As the work is focused on learning about the process and journey embarked upon by accomplished school principals the sample size for this work was limited (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Murphy, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Huber & Whelan, 1999; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Kohler-Riessman, 1993). This limited sample size allowed the researcher to fully explore and examine the rich data gathered through the narrative of each participant. Creswell (2008) appropriately states this point:

The elements of focusing on a single individual, constructing a study out of stories and epiphanies of special events, situating them within a broader context, and evoking the presence of the author in the study all reflect the interpretive biographical form of study discussed by Denzin (1989b) and many core elements of narrative research. (p. 88)

The limited number of participants is critical for an authentic narrative inquiry, as each narrative requires intense focus (Creswell, 2007). This intensified focus on the life experiences that influence and inform the current perspective regarding the role of the principal towards developing teacher instructional practice will not lead to a universal truth or roadmap for every accomplished principal. Additionally, even though the researcher worked closely with the research participants to ensure authenticity and validity, this does not mean the narrative can be interpreted only in the manner the researcher displays. “In short, the acknowledgement of alternate interpretations in narrative inquiry reminds the audience members that any story is a partial telling and viewpoints other than those named also exist, despite those vantage points not being featured in a particular account” (Craig, 2012, p. 4). This study required qualitative analysis as this research explored the journey, experiences and the meaning associated with those experiences of the participants.

Glossary of Terms

Accomplished School Principal: This term refers to school administrators who help oversee and govern the school community. These leaders are considered accomplished because they have received recognition from their peers as an excellent principal. In addition to peer recognition, they are all recipients of the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award (WPDELA).

Adult Learning Theory: A change in behavior, a gain in knowledge or skills, and/or an alteration or restructuring of prior knowledge that is concerned with a deep understanding of an issue.

Andragogy: A specific approach to adult education based on autonomy and continuous education of adults that incorporates the value of experience to further learning (Knowles, 1980, 1984).

Learning from Experience: To use experiences to help solidify or modify one's perspective or understanding of a phenomenon.

Learning Leader: A school leader who models learning and shapes the conditions for adults as well as students to learn on a continuous basis (Fullan, 2014).

Personal Experience: an experience that occurs outside the work environment that influenced a principal's leadership approach to the development of teacher instructional practice

Professional Experience: an experience that occurs within the work environment that influenced a principal's leadership approach to the development of teacher instructional practice

Teacher Instructional Practice (TIP): This term is used throughout this study to refer to teaching practices that are directed toward and associated with teaching and learning.

Chapter Summary

This research project explored the personal and professional experiences that influenced principals in their efforts to develop the instructional practices of teachers.

This chapter addressed the research methodology that supports this inquiry, provided a conceptual and theoretical framework, and outlined potential limitations.

This work illustrates how the personal and professional experiences of principals influenced their actions in developing teachers' instructional practice. Although no two

principals share the same experiences, learning how their experiences influenced their actions provided insight into how they became learning leaders.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research explores the actions of principals' take to develop teachers' instructional practice. Through this literature review, the following topics are explored: (a) the search of the literature; (b) theoretical framework; (c) conceptual framework; (d) reasons why principals should focus on developing instructional practice; (e) a historical context of principal actions, responsibilities and duties; (f) what actions current principals take to further instructional practice; (g) articles that explore the lives of principals through the use of narrative inquiry; and (h) a chapter summary. This project is guided by the following research question: *What personal and professional experiences influenced accomplished principals' effort to help develop teachers' instructional practice?*

Search of the Literature

Literature searches were primarily conducted at the Gelman Library of The George Washington University (GWU) research databases, specifically: Academic Search Premiere, JSTOR ERIC, Dissertations and Thesis Online, and Proquest. Keywords for these searches included "school principals," "current practices principals," "principal development instructional practice," "instructional practice," "teacher professional development," "narrative inquiry and education," and "narrative inquiry and principal." In addition to these research databases, seminal texts were consulted to research principal actions, professional development of educators, and narrative inquiry. Between both research articles and seminal texts, the literature review helped create a holistic understanding of how school leadership concepts changed over time, and how

those changes influenced the way principals are prepared. All references within these research articles and seminal texts were examined to further the review.¹

Theoretical Framework

This study connects ideas associated with John Dewey's theory of experiential learning, Malcolm Knowles theory of adult learning, and the theory of constructivism (Mills et al., 2006).

As previously addressed, Dewey believed that people can learn from experience. However, he made it clear that the actual experience is not enough to create a mental schemata or heuristic of how this event (or a similar event in the future) can play out. To make the experience informative, the learner should reflect on the experience to place the new experience within their understanding of the world. This view of reflective thinking is key to "the interpretation of data, application of facts and principles, and logical reasoning (Knowles, 1975)" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 103). According to this ontological approach to learning, people "respond to an intermediate situation by formulating hypothetical courses of action, anticipating the consequences of each, acting upon the most plausible hypothesis, and testing its validity" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 73). Through this testing process, people can deduce generalizations based on hypothesis of outcomes. This perspective influenced Piaget, who "described this hypothetical-deductive form of reasoning in terms of "formal operations" and saw it as a final developmental stage in humans" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 73).

The ability to reflect upon previously held perspectives or assumptions is a key concept within this framework. Dewey (1933) believed reflective thought was "active,

¹ For more detailed information, please see Appendix A.

persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (p. 9).

He refers to this reflective process as “critical inquiry.” Mezirow (1991), a current scholar in adult learning theory, believes critical inquiry is paramount for adult learners:

Reflection involves a review of the way we have consciously, coherently, and purposefully applied idea in strategizing and implementing each phase of solving a problem. This process follows the hypothetical-deductive model, which as we have seen, is integral to instrumental learning: identification and formulation of the problem, reasoning from evidence, developing hypotheses, testing of hypotheses, and their reformulation based on feedback from research.” (p. 101)

This perspective furthers Dewey’s (1933) understanding that learning is both continuous and reflective:

A person in pursuing a consecutive train of thought takes some system of ideas for granted (which accordingly he leaves unexpressed, “unconscious”) as surely as he does in conversing with others. Some context, some situation, some controlling purpose dominates his explicit ideas so thoroughly that it does not need to be consciously formulated and expounded. Explicit thinking goes on within the limits of what is implied or understood. Yet the fact that reflection originates in a problem makes it necessary at some points consciously to inspect and examine this familiar background. We have to turn upon some unconscious assumption and make it explicit. (p. 281)

This process of reflection, and bringing to light previously held ideas or assumptions that influence or inform our perspective, is part of the adult learning process. This research

asks the research participant to describe specific experiences that informed and influenced their perspective or actions—past, present, or future—regarding how they develop teachers’ instructional practice. The ability to reflect upon hidden assumptions, perspectives, experiences, actions and/or beliefs allows people to grow, mature and develop intellectually.

Because every experience is constituted by interaction between “subject” and “object,” between a self and its world, it is not itself either merely physical nor merely mental, no matter how much one factor or the other predominates . . . experiences are the products of discrimination, and hence can be understood only as we take into account the total normal experience in which both inner and outer factors are so incorporated that each has lost its special character. In an experience, things and events belonging to the world physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the live creature is changed and developed through its intercourse with things previously external to it. (Dewey, 1981, p. 251)

This Deweyan perspective of experience acknowledges that people interact and test their perspectives or assumptions in the world. “Framed within this view of experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals’ experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, pp. 42–43). Taken together, these ideas stipulate that experiences—and subsequent reflections upon those experiences—will be understood through the personal, social, cultural, and institutional narratives that the individual has created.

Understanding how cultural and experiential vagaries influence ones' perspective, is an idea that differentiates child learners from adult learners. Adult learning theory stipulates that adults: (a) have a psychological need to be self-directing; (b) use their expansive reservoir of experience to assist in the learning process; (c) seek knowledge in order to solve real-world problems often related to developmental tasks; (d) and desire to apply this new information (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, 2013; Knowles, 1980, 1984). Adults use their past experiences to assist in their learning process. Using past experiences to advance ones' perspective or knowledge is possible through reflection. A metacognitive reflection process enables the adult learner to generate a clear perspective. This illustrates how experiential learning and adult learning theory connect to constructivism. Constructivism is based on the idea that humans create understanding and meaning based on their experiences. As every person has their own experiences and perspective, this allows for individuals to craft their own understanding of reality. This epistemological stance aligns with narrative inquiry as there is no singular truth in narrative inquiry. Rather, the goal is to understand the world of the research participants through their perspective, experiences, and cultural context.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research endeavor is to discover what personal and/or professional experiences influenced and informed principal actions regarding how they develop teachers' instructional practice. As illustrated in Figure 1, there are four influences on effective principal actions regarding how they develop teacher instructional practice: (a) historical influences that guide past behavior and therefore influence current actions; (b) ISLLC standards that specifically address the development of teachers'

instructional practice; (c) personal experiences that influence the actions of the principal; and (d) professional experiences that influence the actions of the principal. What is currently missing from the research is how personal and professional experiences influence accomplished school principals' actions regarding how they develop teachers' instructional practice.



Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for How Experiences Influence and Inform the Actions of Accomplished School Principals Regarding the Development of Teachers' Instructional Practice

Historical Context for Principals as Instructional Leaders

The idea of the principal as a learning leader is not a new concept within the realm of education or educational leadership. Although Fullan recently coined and defined the term, the idea of the principal as the instructional leader of the school has been around since the late 1970s (Hallinger, 2003, 2005) and started to gain momentum in the 1980s (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Van de Grift, 1990). Key scholars began to understand a relationship between instructional leadership and improvements to teaching and learning (Heck, 1992; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987, 1988; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). For example, in their review of research on how leadership influences student learning, Leithwood et al. (2004) examine the evidence that connects leadership practices that help shape and promote instructional behaviors of teachers, which ultimately yield improvements to student learning. While there are variations in defining instructional leadership, scholars noted above agree this construct involves principals working closely and continuously with teachers to help them examine their teaching using data and evidence (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Davis et al., 2005; Heck, 1992; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marsh et al., 2005; Waters et al., 2004).

From 1985–2012 studies consistently affirm that as instructional leaders, principals are responsible for coordinating, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Honig, 2012). In one of those studies, Honig (2012) examined how central office administrators develop principals as instructional leaders. Through 283 in-depth interviews “with 162 central office administrators, school principals, and representatives from outside

organizations” (p. 742), more than 260 hours of school observations and document analysis of more than 250 documents, Honig identifies a key function of being a school principal—to help develop teachers’ instructional practice. If the school is going to be measured on student achievement, then the school must provide or create opportunities for the school to continue the development of their teachers’ instructional practice. In addition to the function of developing instructional practice, patterns in the literature point to instructional leaders as culture builders. That is, principals build culture by helping to establish high expectations and standards for students, as well as teachers (Mortimore, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Of the dimensions of leadership that emerge in the literature, three areas stand out as related to impacting culture: (a) defining the school mission; (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school-learning climate. Based on the aforementioned studies that examined the principal as instructional leader, three dimensions were clearly defined (Hallinger, 2000, 2003, 2005) and are discussed in detail below.

Hallinger acknowledges previous work by Barth (1990) when he states, “Principals who exercise effective instructional leadership are those who have the capacity to motivate teachers to step out beyond the boundaries of their classroom to work towards the transformation of the school from a workplace into a learning place” (Hallinger, 2005, p. 232). The ability to transform and improve the instructional practices of teaches’ requires professional development opportunities that are aligned with the needs of the teachers. Helterbran (2010) directly addresses the issue of effective professional development when referencing work completed by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2001), specifically how only “12–27 percent of teachers in 2000

believed that the professional development provided by their districts actually improved their teaching” (p. 369). Such a discrepancy should not occur if the instructional leader is concerned with creating appropriately based activities to develop instructional practice.

Instructional leaders prioritize learning for students and staff as the core of the scholastic environment (Leithwood et al., 2004). In this environment, teachers feel supported and respected, focused on developing their teaching expertise, and driven to give all they have for their students (Grissom, 2011). Effective school principals create and allow the conditions for maximized learning for everyone under their care. They understand that facilitating instructional development is the best way to improve student achievement (Khan & Iqbal, 2013; Lazaridou & Iordanides, 2011; Shen et al., 2012; Terosky, 2013), and therefore make it a priority to help teachers improve their instructional practice. The current literature suggests principals influence the development of teacher instructional practice using differentiated professional development, continuous professional development, creating and establishing learning communities, and evaluations and supervisions. Although these are not the only means of assisting the development of teacher instructional practice, they are the ones most frequently discussed in the literature.

Standards Influencing Why Principals Should Develop Teachers’ Instructional Practice

The historical context described in the previous section provides the necessary foundation to understand how the ISLLC standards came into existence and how principals focus on the development of instructional practice.

The first two ISLLC standards and the actions associated with them are used to

anchor the actions of accomplished school principals to further develop the instructional practice of their teachers. These actions are supported in the literature for impacting teacher learning and development. As this paper is concerned with the personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals, only the standards that deal with the development of teachers' instructional practices will be addressed. This is not intended to invalidate the following standards: (a) managing the physical property; (b) working with the greater community; (c) acting with integrity and in an ethical manner; and (d) understanding the greater political culture of the school environment. Rather, these aspects of being a principal are not directly connected with how principals help further develop their teachers' instructional practice.

ISLLC Standard 1

A school leader promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community (FCGU, 2015). This standard is centered on creating a vision for learning that includes all members of the learning community.

A learning vision inclusive to all members of the school is an idea supported by educational leadership scholar, Calder (2006), who states, "You will never be greater than the vision that guides you" (p. 83). The developmental growth and learning patterns of adults should be included in this vision to reach the highest potential of this standard. This builds off an idea from Fromm (1955), a psychoanalyst, who observed "Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of adults of all ages?" (p. 300). This study supports the notion that educators need to honor teachers' developmental needs when crafting professional development opportunities.

One way to create an inclusive learning community is by taking the stance of a “learning leader” (Fullan, 2014). As defined by Fullan, a learning leader is “one who models learning, but also shapes the conditions for all to learn on a continuous basis” (2014, p. 9). Learning leaders possess a clear vision of teaching and learning that encapsulates every member of the school. Through an academic vision that encapsulates both adults and students, it becomes clear that the school has high expectations for everyone, not just the students.

When school leaders work closely with faculty to improve instructional practice, it conveys a high expectation for staff performance. High standards for faculty help establish and confirm a rigorous learning environment. This perspective “conforms to the notion that effective schools create an ‘academic press’ through the development of high standards and expectations for students and teachers” (Hallinger, 2005, p. 226). Through this academic press, teachers begin to feel supported as their development and growth is not a byproduct of the teaching process, but rather part of the equation.

When school leaders prioritize learning for students and staff as the core of the scholastic environment, teachers feel supported and respected and can focus on developing their teaching expertise (Grissom, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004). This perspective regarding the importance of an academic vision that is inclusive to all lends credence to a previous study that examined the impact a school vision can have on the classroom performance when it is inclusive of teachers and students. “According to Leithwood et al. (2004), leadership is found to be second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning, accounting for about 25 percent of total direct and indirect effects on student learning” (Shen et al., 2012, p. 3). In

congruence with research conducted by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), 6.25 percent of the variance in student achievement is accounted for by principal leadership (Shen et al., 2012). Furthermore, a plethora of scholarship holds that accomplished school principals establish and promote an academic vision that reinforces the link between professional learning for staff and achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Donaldson, 2013; Hallinger, 2005; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Neumerski, 2012; Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Terosky, 2013; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004).

For example, the Terosky (2013) study explored instructional leadership and its impact on learning. Through her qualitative approach which included interviews, surveys, observations, and document analysis of 18 New York City K–12 public school principals, Terosky found that participants who initiated a learning imperative which valued the development of professional growth for the adults as locations where scholarship flourished. In another article, Donaldson (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 principals over two states to understand how they approached cultivating teacher effectiveness. Donaldson found that those principals who experienced more professional development that focused on how to improve teacher effectiveness encountered fewer barriers to developing teacher instructional potential.

Facilitating adult, as well as student development with the academic vision requires principals to plan, create, and implement an appropriate plan for teachers to develop their instructional practice. Researchers Kose and Lim (2011) found key practices that support helping teachers to transform their instructional practices:

Quality professional learning engages teachers in job-embedded active learning

through activities such as discussing student work, co-planning, sharing teaching practices, and observing teachers. Rather than short-term or one shot professional development, teachers have extended time to enhance their knowledge and skills in learning contexts such as staff meetings, in-service days, study groups, mentoring, coaching, planning teams, or interactions with education specialists. (p. 201)

When a principal institutes an academic plan that values learning goals and personal growth for staff and students, the message communicated is that school is a place where everyone is supported in their educational development. To maximize its effectiveness, an academic vision must be applicable for all. This all-inclusive academic approach helps to establish a larger school culture.

A recent literature review of teachers' innovative practices supports the idea that school leadership influences the development of teachers' instructional practice. This review by Thurlins, Evers, and Vermeulen (2015) concluded "the absence of a learning culture and cultural constraints hindered teachers in demonstrating innovative behaviors. To sum up, culture should be supportive of teachers' innovative behavior" (p. 457). They further state that:

In order to innovate, teachers need support, guidance, and feedback from others and need to share and talk with these others. Colleagues seem to be the greatest influence; however, managers, school leaders, students, and external agents also need to provide by sharing and talking with teachers. (p. 462)

This concept of helping the teachers work cohesively is directly connected to the second ISLLC standard.

ISLLC Standard 2

A school leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. The second standard is centered on the school culture and those who make up the school community (FCGU, 2015). This standard is centered on creating a positive school climate that is conducive to student and adult learning.

The impact of a positive school culture cannot be mitigated as a vital aspect of the learning process. In her autobiographical account of her teaching experiences, Urban (1999) stated, “Unless students experience a positive and supportive climate, some may never achieve the most minimum standards or realize their full potential” (p. 69). For students to experience a supportive teacher, school leaders must also attend to the learning and development of the teachers. Thus, this standard aligns with leadership practices that create a school culture that is conducive to adult, and student learning.

A key function of effective school leaders is to maintain and create a positive school climate (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Lieberman et. al., 2014; Murphy, Goldring, Elliot, & Porter, 2006). The research discussed above furthered work of Ubben and Hughes (1992), as well as Freiberg (1998), whose work in school culture concluded that principal actions create a school atmosphere that increases both student and teacher productivity. Recent scholarship continues to reinforce the ideas that accomplished school leaders establish and promote a scholastic climate that reinforces achievement and learning for everyone (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Donaldson, 2013; Fullan, 2012; Hallinger, 2005; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Neumerski, 2012; Odhiambo & Hii, 2012;

Villa, 1992; Waters et al., 2004). For example, Klar and Brewer (2013) looked at successful leadership in three high-needs schools representing geographically diverse populations of a southeastern state. Using multiple linear regression, interviews with principals, teachers, other school faculty and parents they found that good leadership focuses on helping the individual to further develop their instructional practices. “Thus, a key implication is that good leaders are adept at listening to stakeholders and understanding the nuances of the contexts in which they work” (p. 801). In other words, a successful principal works with the knowledge and understanding of the individual teacher and her needs to help further develop that teachers’ instructional practice. This approach establishes a positive school culture dedicated to assisting every member of the community, which reinforces an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

Studies show that school principals influence teaching and learning through supervision and management of instruction that fosters the positive learning environment (Bush, Kiggundu, & Moorosi, 2011; Drysdale, Goode, & Gurr, 2009; Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood & Levin, 2005; May & Supovitz, 2011; Supovitz et al., 2010). The Bush et al. (2011) study was “intended to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the first pilot cohort, which comprised of 430 participants” (p. 33) who are school leaders. Their intention was to determine how well the piloted program prepared them for school leadership. Their paper presupposes that effective leadership and management are essential for good schools as they help establish productive learning environments. Many studies validate that a productive learning environment supports learning opportunities for students as well as adults (Desimone, 2009; Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000; Hallinger &

Murphy, 1987; Heck, 2000; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998; Lane, 1992; May & Supovitz, 2011; Supovitz et al., 2010).

The May and Supovitz (2011) study specifically explored and examined the scope of principal efforts to improve classroom instruction. Their findings were that principals who worked closely with their staff had a greater impact on transforming the teaching practice(s) than when they solely provided universal professional development for the entire faculty. Their findings were the result of using data from “principal web logs and teacher surveys conducted in 51 schools in an urban southeastern district” (p. 1). Part of making adults feel like part of the school culture means planning learning activities that are aligned with their specific developmental needs regarding the improvement of their instructional practices.

The work of Goldring, Cravens, Murphy, Porter, Elliott, and Carson (2009) illustrate how “school leaders help develop professional community through their attention to individual teachers’ development and by creating and sustaining networks of conversation in their schools around issues of teaching and learning” (p. 35). Their review of research on school leadership practices concludes that the best way to meet the demands of the twenty-first century student is by having a principal who can “effectively guide instructional improvement” (p. 1). This perspective is supported by the work of Supovitz et al. (2010), who analyzed teacher surveys (n=721) and student achievement data (n=11,397) to determine that principal and peer influences can modify the instructional ability of the teacher; but only if the teacher believes the principal and their colleagues have their best interest at heart. This can be accomplished by creating

learning opportunities that are in alignment with the needs of the teachers, such as offering professional development opportunities that are constantly evolving based on specific areas or needs of the teachers.

Based on their personal experiences as educational leaders, DuFour and Fullan (2013) state that school principals should focus their energy on creating the environment necessary for teachers to further their pedagogical knowledge on an on-going basis. They believe that through the establishment of learning communities, the school environment becomes one where all educators and staff support each other to succeed (Fullan, 2011). Through these learning communities, teachers and principals can increase their opportunities to work together and build trust.

Hord (1997) initially described a learning community as an entity that encompasses the following characteristics: supportive shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, and constructive conditions for working together. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) defined teacher communities as those in which “teacher isolation was less pronounced and collegiality more normative” (as cited in Lieberman et al., 2014, p. 7). One benefit of establishing a learning community is that it puts people at different stages of their professional career in contact with one another and facilitates dialogue and sharing. They foster interaction amongst peers and planning interventions to support classroom and school improvement and help create and establish a positive school culture. An effective principal recognizes the benefits of teacher interactions and supports and/or creates opportunities for teachers to network (Dumay, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010). Current literature bolsters the idea that developing school culture is synonymous with creating opportunities for teachers to work across educational

communities (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Dufour & DuFour, 2012; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Glatthorn & Jailall, 2009; Glickman et al., 2014, 2010; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; King, 2004; Lieberman et. al., 2014; Sullivan & Glanz, 2013). Working with others to develop the instructional practice of teachers requires teachers to work within a team approach.

In their text discussing and examining how school leaders can help facilitate the development of their teachers, DuFour and DuFour (2012) defined a team as “a group of people working interdependently to achieve a common goal for which each member is mutually accountable” (p. 15). According to DuFour and Fullan (2013), when teams are united by common content, they are more likely to be successful in achieving their goals. These goals consist of “clarifying essential outcomes, gathering evidence of student learning, assessing the effectiveness of varied instructional strategies, engaging in action research, and learning from one another” (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 68, referencing Fulton & Britton, 2011; Little & Bartlett, 2010). These interactions foster a sense of trust within the school culture and between the teachers and principal.

Principals and teachers begin to develop a collective trust with one another when they work collaboratively on a regular basis to address issues facing the school community. Collective trust has been defined as “a stable group property rooted in the shared perceptions and affect about the trustworthiness of another group or individual that emerges over time out of multiple social exchanges within the group” (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011, p. 22). By working in learning communities, the teachers develop a stronger trust with one another to solve academic problems.

A recent literature review (Thurlings, Evers, & Vermeulen, 2015) that examined research on teachers’ innovative behavior, the idea of having teachers work in groups is a

repeated construct. According to their analysis of recent studies, colleagues provide teachers an opportunity to discuss and modify their classroom actions. As Thurlings et al. (2015) conclude, “collegial support influences learning behaviors (Evers, 2012) and learning behavior is, in some ways, related to innovative behavior” (p. 465). They further this point by later providing more detail about the potential benefit of having teachers regularly interact with one another about best practices:

Giving each other feedback, developing a learning climate, and facilitating autonomy and task interdependency promote innovative behavior. Finally, the development of a leadership style (e.g. transformational leadership) that supports instead of controls behavior of teachers can promote teacher innovative behavior that is suitable in the knowledge society as we know it today. (p. 465)

Trust amongst peers is reinforced through this collaborative work. Forsyth et al. (2011) stated “collective trust is an example of an intangible resource that enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of schools” (p. 136). Trust amongst the staff is paramount for any professional development opportunity to become a success.

While conducting a mixed methods examination of transformative learning in connection with educator professional development, King (2004) discovered that while principals may create the learning opportunities for their staff “that can lead to transformation, the learner has to make the decision to take the risks, and initiate action” (p. 171). In other words, if any learning, growth, or development is to occur, there must be a level of trust amongst the staff and administration to take an academic risk. An example of trust is when teachers feel comfortable moving beyond their traditional comfort zones of teaching to try a new pedagogical concept.

One aspect of innovative teacher behavior is when teachers take pedagogical risks within the classroom.

Risk-taking is part of learning, and it is a pedagogical tool effective teachers ask of their students. This dynamic is also applicable for adult learners. By supporting the teachers as they move beyond their comfort level, school principals illustrate that they are personally invested in helping the teacher improve and grow as an instructor. This reinforces the idea that school leaders should be focused on the teaching and learning process for everyone as they foster a positive school culture and environment.

While conducting a survey analysis of 420 schools using the tool of shared instructional leadership, Printy and Marks (2006) concluded that the “best results occur in schools where principals are strong leaders who . . . are active in instructional matters” (p. 130). That is applicable for students as well as adults. The desired growth of instructional practice cannot happen unless the teachers have trust in the principal. This trust improves the school culture as well as the quality of instruction. Printy and Marks (2006) also noted, “When principals are involved in matters of instruction, curriculum, and assessment, they signal the importance of activities related to teaching and learning” (p. 128).

In their mixed methods study, Day, Gu, and Sammons (2009) noticed a correlation between staff development and increased student achievement. The data set for this study consisted of two phases: in phase one, surveys with heads of school (n=20), key staff (n=70), and colleagues (n=80) were collected. Phase two focused on case studies of the schools that employed those who completed the survey. The surveys asked the participants to report on the extent of academic change over the previous three years.

This led to the subsequent follow-up interviews and observations (case studies), which were conducted over the next two years. Findings indicated that accomplished school leaders personalized learning for each student, which was then attributed to the impact of supported teaching. This personal attention reinforced the commitment of the school community to improving the teaching and learning process.

This study by Day et al. (2009) concluded that teachers' working together as colleagues creates a strong foundation of community, which improves the culture of the school. This sense of communal trust can positively impact the scholastic setting. The idea of "communal trust" emerges within the findings from the aforementioned studies. Fullan (2014) elaborates on the impact trust can have on the greater school culture:

Trustworthiness goes beyond integrity to include real competence as well. You have to be true to your word, but also very good at what you do . . . spreading trust also entails mastering directness and honesty about performance expectations; following through with actions on commitments made; ensuring clear understanding of key communications; and being comfortable in dealing with conflict. (p. 130)

This idea of trust, and the impact it can have on the school culture is only possible when the teachers and administration work in collaboration with one another. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest, "Successful and sustainable improvement can therefore never be done to or even for teachers. It can only ever be achieved by and with them" (p. 45). Leaders improve instructional practice by working with the teachers. As adult learning theory holds, adults want to work with others, rather than being told what they need to improve. Through a vision of leadership that is inclusive of all and is

centered on an academic vision, “the goal is to change the thinking of others in a way that generates more positive peer power and leads to partnership with former adversaries” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 151).

Through the lens of the ISSLC standards, actions associated with school leadership should focus on improving the professional capital of the staff. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) define professional capital as consisting of three parts: (a) “human capital,” the ability of individuals; (b) “social capital, the quantity and quality of interactions and social relationships among people;” and (c) “decision capital, the ability to make discretionary judgments” (pp. 89–93). Creating and maintaining a positive school community and culture is connected to helping develop teachers’ instructional practice, which in turn improves the professional capital of the teachers.

During this research, the ISSLC standards were revised by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration and the standards are now referred to as Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). Although they now use 10 standards rather than 6, the ideas associated with the previous first two standards are interwoven throughout the new criteria. Examples of the new standards include:

Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values: Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student; Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms: Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student’s academic success and well-being; Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness: Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally

responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being; Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being; Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students: Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student; Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel: Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being; and Standard 7: Professional Community for Teacher and Staff; Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student’s academic success and well-being (NPBEA, 2015).

These new standards provide a more detailed and explicit context for how school leaders can use a vision to create and sustain school cultures that are conducive to student and staff learning, growth and development.

Effective Principal Actions to Develop Teachers’ Instructional Practice

Differentiate Professional Development Opportunities

As Kalule and Bouchamma (2013) state, “maintaining and nurturing quality instruction represents a major trend in today’s educational organizations and thus calls for . . . knowledge regarding the teaching and learning process” (p. 89). Later in the same survey study that examined the perceptions of supervisors in regards to instructional supervision from 45 secondary schools, they assert that, “to successfully develop

professionally, teachers need many learning opportunities, including reflection, dialogue and collaboration, particularly amongst their peers and with their supervisors” (p. 90). This is important for principals to understand when they create, plan, and/or design professional development, because “research has shown that the principal has the greatest impact on teaching and learning, as their feedback has a definite influence on these two processes” (p. 91, citing Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007; Ovando, 2005). This tacitly suggests, “teaching should be contextualized and even differentiated so that it is adapted to the milieu as well as to the targeted teacher” (Kalule & Bouchamma, 2013, p. 91). The idea of differentiated professional development is one approach principals employ to help develop teachers’ instructional practices.

Differentiated professional development is based on the idea that “individual teacher characteristics including age, teaching experience, working conditions, qualifications and individual teacher needs, as well as available time and resources and related learning opportunities” (Kalule & Bouchamma, 2013, p. 90) will be different based on the need(s) of each individual. Understanding the importance of differentiated professional development is a recent trend within literature, as scholars believe that when professional development is not differentiated, individualized teacher improvement can be compromised (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Fleming, Shire, Jones, Pill, & McNamee, 2004; Fullan, 2010, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Zepeda, 2012).

School leaders concerned with differentiating professional development opportunities consider the uniqueness of each student and instructor, and that every classroom experience will be different. Understanding why differentiated instruction is

necessary for professional development is contingent upon the staff realizing that differentiation does not mean differentiation of results or expectations; it refers to helping an individual teacher to develop based on their current pedagogical needs. Kelley, Thornton, and Daugherty (2005) expanded on this when they examined instructional development opportunities and realized that “differential treatment is needed based on the developmental level of the teacher or the task in question” (p. 23). This should help teachers understand that just like with their students, differentiated opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge does not hinder the quality of professional development they are offered.

According to Fisher, Lapp, Flood and Moore (2006), professional development programs can maximize potential when the staff has “an understanding that differentiating instruction is not reducing expectations for failing students, but an approach that allows teachers to meet students where they are and extend their learning” (p. 121). Differentiated professional development conveys the message that individual growth and development of the teacher is the core of the professional learning opportunity. The perspective of differentiating professional development based on teacher needs stems from an idea originally expressed by theorist Carl Glickman (1981), in which principals cater professional development opportunities for teachers based on their need, much like they ask teachers to do for their students. Differentiating professional development recognizes that teachers may be at different points on their professional journey. Similar to how teachers recognize each student as unique and at a specific developmental level, a principal who is concerned with establishing efforts to improve teachers’ instructional practice also recognizes teachers have unique skills.

Glickman (1981) maintained “the goal of instructional supervision is to help teachers learn how to increase their own capacity to achieve professional learning goals for their students” (p. 3). Current scholarly work illustrates that when professional development is not differentiated, individualized teacher improvement can be compromised (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Fleming et al., 2004; Fullan, 2010, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Zepeda, 2012).

In addition to recognizing the benefit of offering specific professional development opportunities to address the varied needs of teachers, the literature (and adult learning theories) suggests professional development opportunities should also include numerous opportunities rather than isolated predestinated times to develop instruction (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Fullan, 2010, 2014; Glatthorn & Jailall, 2009; Glanz, 2013; Glickman et al., 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2013; Zepeda, 2012).

Provide Continuous Opportunities for Professional Development

Reports by Learning Forward (2011), an organization devoted to supporting staff development and professional development, Joyce and Calhoun (2010) and Garet et al. (2010) state the most effective means of professional development are continuous, on-site opportunities for teachers to collaborate. School principals maximize their influence on the development of teachers’ instructional practice by creating repeated opportunities for teacher and staff collaborations that are centered on improving and developing the instructional process (Rosenberg, 2011).

While investigating the relationship professional development has on student achievement, Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) found that sustained and

continued professional development over a period of six to twelve months has a greater positive impact on student achievement than isolated professional development. In other words, to influence change, teachers need time to understand and implement the new pedagogical ideas or skills. Continuous professional development provides teachers with the time necessary to understand how to best utilize the new skills and concepts they are learning. One way principals directly impact the development of instructional practice of teachers is by having them work together on a regular basis.

Case study work by Blanton and Stylianou (2009) examined professional development opportunities for faculty professional development at a mid size state university and concluded that effective professional development should allow for “teacher learning as a process situated within a community of practice” (p. 82). Their grounded theory work also addressed how “developing a culture accepting of faculty professional development, which means a culture of learning, also requires institutional leadership to support the institutionalizing of professional development so that communities of practice can be sustained over time” (p. 85). This study stressed the importance for school leaders to understand that development and growth are less likely to occur during preplanned, isolated opportunities. This reinforces that the ideal means for teacher development is continuous, on-going job embedded professional development opportunities (Blasé & Blasé, 2004, 2009; Glickman et al., 2014; Sullivan & Glanz, 2013; Zepeda, 2012).

Continuous professional development can be the basis for establishing a community of professional learning that enables teachers to increase their knowledge through peer interaction. Kose and Lim (2011) observed how effective professional

development is applicable to the needs of the teachers by providing ample time to fully develop and explore the professional development. “Rather than short-term or one shot professional development, teachers have extended time to enhance their knowledge and skills in learning contexts such as staff meetings, in-service days, study groups, mentoring, coaching, planning teams, or interactions with education specialists” (p. 201). Continuous professional development opportunities can help transform the school into a learning community.

Create Learning Communities

Continuous professional development can be the basis for establishing a community of professional learning that enables teachers to increase their knowledge through peer interaction (DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Lieberman et al., 2014). These learning communities consist of teachers and school staff at various stages of pedagogical development, and encourage dialogue and sharing. They foster interaction and plan interventions to support classroom and school improvement. An accomplished principal recognizes the benefits of teachers interacting with each other and supports opportunities for teachers to network (Dumay, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010).

In their handbook on professional learning, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010) state that effective learning communities utilize six traits: (a) shared mission, vision, values and goals, centered on student learning; (b) collaborative culture with a focus on learning; (c) collective inquiry into best practice and current reality; (d) action orientated; (e) commitment to continuous improvement; and (f) result orientated. These traits provide a framework for teachers to discuss their instructional practices through a variety of academic disciplines. By crossing the educational community and creating a

hybrid of different teachers at different stages of development, teachers gain a more complete understanding of teaching, which can lead to transformations of practice.

Current literature bolsters the idea that effective school leadership involves working across and within educational communities to transform teacher performance (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Dufour & DuFour, 2012; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Glatthorn & Jilall, 2009; Glickman et al., 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; King, 2004; Lieberman et al., 2014; Sullivan & Glanz, 2013; Zepeda, 2012). Through the creation of learning communities, teachers are provided opportunities for ongoing discussions with peers and colleagues about pedagogical practice (Attard, 2012; Cole, 2004, 2013; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Fullan, 2014). Through his participation in a seven-person case study of a learning community of teachers associated with the same school, Attard (2012) witnessed firsthand how learning communities provide teachers opportunities to develop as an instructor through collaborative analysis of professional experiences. This learning community was better at helping improve instructional practice than the use of formal and informal evaluations.

Use of Evaluations and Supervision Processes to Influence Teachers' Development

Principals use evaluations to determine the “competencies of a teacher and functions as an accountability measure” (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013, p. 28). This contrasts with the practice of supervision, which is defined as “a process that engages teachers as professional colleagues for the purpose of encouraging instructional dialogue so as to improve teaching practices” (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013, p. 28). When used properly, principals can further instructional practice with evaluations and supervision.

Negative use of evaluation and supervision to limit the development of teacher practice. According to an international survey of 23 countries conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that covered secondary education, 22 percent of teachers never received any supervisory feedback on their instructional ability (OECD, 2013). This summative evaluation also reported that over 50 percent of teachers never received any external feedback on their teaching practice. The study noted that 79 percent of teacher participants stated that feedback would be beneficial for their improvement. The OECD report reinforced that although formal evaluations or checklists can be valuable tools to transform the quality of instruction, that correlation is contingent upon the evaluation checking appropriate teacher actions.

In her book about improving professional development for teachers, Timperley (2011) stated how the ideal professional learning opportunities for teachers should cover habits of mind rather than an active checklist of activities. “Coherence across professional learning environments was not achieved through the completion of checklists and scripted lessons but rather through creating learning situations that promoted inquiry habits of mind throughout the school” (2011, p. 104). This perspective expanded on the ideas expressed by Leana (2011), who examined evaluations and supervision to discover that “the more effective principals were those who defined their roles as facilitators of teacher success in terms of accessing resources, focusing on teachers’ teamwork, and building relationships with parents and the community” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 145). When evaluations are connected to student performance rather than for purpose of promoting teacher learning, the integrity of the

evaluation can come into question.

Neumerski (2012) examined the impact of using a developmental approach to help advance the instructional practice of teachers. Her work explored how evaluations and supervision develop teacher instructional practice, and why those “conditions alone may be insufficient for instructional change” (p. 333). She stated that modifying structures, such as evaluations, “can create the necessary conditions for teachers to learn to improve their instruction” (p. 333). Modifying the use and function of evaluations is something that Donaldson also addressed.

Positive use of evaluation and supervision to further teacher practice. In his text, Mehta (2013) examined the historical overview of educational reform. He hypothesized that evaluating teacher performance based on students’ standard exam results was a weak strategy for driving education reform. Countries with a strong teacher profession, such as Singapore, Finland, and Canada, use a developmental approach to help teachers be more effective (Mehta, 2013).

Through semi-structured interviews with 30 principals, Donaldson (2013) explored the barriers that principals encountered while they were trying to evaluate and develop teachers. She concluded that principals who understood how to effectively use evaluations to assist teachers based on their needs, were better able to develop the “human capital” (p. 839). The idea of promoting the human capital is an action of effective principals. However, there are limitations to using evaluations as the only means of helping further teachers’ instructional practices.

In their study, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) indicate that collaboration amongst teachers can be lessened as a result of principals relying too heavily upon evaluation and

supervision as a means of evaluating their staff. This is due to the teachers perceiving the evaluations as a competition. “The higher the stakes of evaluation in terms of pay and punishment, the less likely it is that teachers will share the strategies that give them comparative advantage or protection, or that they will seek the help that might expose them as weak or as failures” (p. 108). Subsequently, although evaluations and supervisions can be beneficial in furthering the instructional practice of teachers, they should not be viewed as the magic bullet that will solve all pedagogical development problems.

A summary of the research surrounding the use of formal and informal techniques in supervision illustrate that effective principals understand that teachers and students alike benefit from working on developing instructional practices on a regular basis, rather than at preconceived, arbitrarily assigned moments. They also understand that the sole practice of administering evaluations is not more influential in developing instructional practice than creating opportunities for teachers to discuss their teaching within a learning community.

Narrative Experiences of Principals

A search of narrative inquiry and principal experiences provides very limited studies. The importance of the study of experience is inextricable from a constructivist approach to learning, as theorists agree that experiences influence perspectives (Dewey, Piaget, Bruner). After engaging in an experience, the participant can reflect upon the actions and ultimately forge new or add to existing knowledge. Through this process, the experience is inextricably connected to learning.

This constructivist approach to learning is established upon learning based on the

experience, not the individual. The experiences, as well as the learning from the experiences, are key aspects to adult learning theory, as “any life experience, then, has the potential to be a learning experience” (Hoare, 2006, p. 30). This perspective is perpetuated by Jarvis (2011) who stated, “Learning, then, is of the essence of everyday living and of conscious experience; it is the process of transforming that experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and beliefs” (p. 11). Jarvis (2011) later continued the exploration between an experience and learning when examining how experiential learning allows opportunities for people to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, and/or beliefs. The cache of information gathered from learning from past experiences is what separates adult from child learners.

According to adult learning theorist Knowles (1968), when experiences are not incorporated in the educational plan, adults feel rejected as a person because “my experience is me,” Lindeman (1926/1989) regarded adult education as a collaboration between formal education and personal experiences. This connects back to Dewey, who advocated that experience is only educational to the degree that it either modifies or solidifies the learner’s perspective. In that environment, learning is inextricably connected to experience.

The story of an individual’s life can be reduced to their experiences. A life-story is another term for the narrative that connects experiences and choices. The work of Clark and Rossiter (2008) examined narrative learning to conceptualize adult learning. They contend that humans tell stories to serve the function of deriving meaning from their experiences. These stories are used to make connections between our past, present, and future selves.

Narrative Inquiry and School Principal Research

Narrative inquiry as a qualitative research methodology was chosen to address the question for this study. This methodology uses the life-story of the individual to help provide context and understanding within the perspective of the individual. Over the past few years, this methodology has been used in education to provide a voice for the actual lived experience from that participant's perspective (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Used in qualitative methodology, narrative inquiry explores the lives of the participants by providing them an opportunity to state their history in their own terms without prompting. To date, only a handful of studies have employed narrative methodology in the study of principals. These qualitative studies address the following topics:

- Principal leadership (Slater, 2011);
- Principal and teacher image (Craig, 2012);
- Principals and a metacognitive connection to curriculum (Korach, 2012);
- Principal succession (Steyn, 2013); and
- School evaluations (Weisblat & McClellan, 2013).

Slater (2011) states that school principals exert influence on teachers, who in turn impact and influence student achievement. He believes that effective leadership is paramount for student achievement. His literature review of Principal Leadership focuses on work conducted in American schools and suggests that research needs to be done on international principals to see if the studies can be duplicated. "Too often, writers in the USA presume to speak for the world, and English-speaking writers presume to speak for all languages" (p. 221). Slater believes that narrative inquiry on international school

leaders is paramount because each school provides their own context, which therefore creates an individual analysis of the school principal using narrative inquiry. He also found that these leaders each employed a type of transformational leadership that allowed others to develop their own sense of practice that is unique to the individual school and person. Through this leadership, professional development opportunities are effective as they focus on the individual rather than “specifying every detail” and acting as if professional development is nothing more than a checklist. Through this approach, “Both the leaders and the followers are transformed” (p. 225).

Craig’s (2012) study examined identity within curriculum reform. This narrative inquiry followed one teachers’ understanding of how professional development centered on her improving instructional practice was not meant to harm her, but rather to help her become a better instructor. The article focuses on her transformation of perspective. While the results of this study are not generalizable due to the small sample size, the idea of transformation of perspective is universally applicable. However, the idea of transformation is universally applicable. Additionally, the researcher discovered that even with an $n=1$, that “narrative inquiry is a defensible form of empirical research producing insights that can be disseminated” (p. 100).

Korach (2012) used narrative inquiry to examine how principals can use past experiences to help further their own understanding of the effectiveness of their leadership or program. This study started with an introductory survey of 64 school leaders; which was narrowed down to 20 participants based on survey responses. What she found through the collection of these narratives was that the ability to look back and reflect upon their choices “is an example of equity pedagogy (Banks & Banks, 1995) and

has greatly improved the quality and depth of work” (p. 157). This ability to learn from reflection happens because “learning involves the awareness and correction of error, and when things go wrong, people have a tendency to look for a strategy that is compatible with their mental models and/or the rules of the organization (Senge, 1990)” (p. 157).

Steyn (2013) used narrative inquiry to focus on principal succession within one South African school. This data was collected through interviews and photographs with the outgoing and incoming principal respectively over a three-year period. This article used temporality, place and sociality to provide context to properly detail the growth and development of the principal. Through the dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality, the author can show how education and experiences can be inextricably linked. The author was also able to demonstrate “how school principals play a key role in the quality of education in schools” (p. 1). This article was also able to illustrate how a narrative inquiry can be used in “understanding and exploring the complexity of school leadership practices, in particular in the case of the principal’s socialization into his leadership role” (p. 5).

Weisblat and McClellan (2013) used narrative inquiry to explore the evaluation process of a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) high school in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. In this case, the principal worked with the researcher to create a candid assessment of the students’ progression through “notes taken by both the researcher and the principal” (p. 139). They found that when they used student case studies in addition to the participatory research, they were afforded a deeper opportunity to get to know the students. This allowed the researcher to have a better understanding of the “non-academic factors that motivate academic success” (139). The

findings show that “the success of the school rests on the success of the students” (p. 147). Therefore, it can be correlated that if the success of the school rests on the students, schools must ready their teachers to meet that challenge.

Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted literature that covered historical context for school leadership preparation, current standards of practice for school leaders and effective actions of principals that address the development of teachers’ instructional practice. Next this chapter included studies that have used narrative inquiry in research of principals to show how valuable these studies can be in furthering the understanding of the complex professional life of an effective principal. The literature shows that an effective principal can have a profound impact on the learning of both students and teachers, therefore there is a need to learn more about the specific experiences that effective school principals have that helped create and define their actions regarding how they develop teachers’ instructional practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology for Narrative Inquiry

Chapter 3 is divided into two parts. While the first part introduces the narrative inquiry, the second focuses on the methodological procedures that were employed (Creswell, 2007). Within both parts, details provide an overview of narrative inquiry for qualitative research. The research design, participant selection process, procedures for the study, and how the researcher verified the findings and conclusions with the participants. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical and political implications of this study, as well as the limitations of the study.

Research Question

The research question for this dissertation is: *What personal and professional experiences influenced accomplished principals' efforts to help develop teachers' instructional practice?*

The Narrative Turn

The term “narrative turn” acknowledges how traditional notions of research moved away from quantifiable statistics towards qualitative work that values people’s stories. This shift gained momentum in the 1960s when sociologists noticed how quantitative work was isolated from the actual experiences of the individuals. This refocus on the actual experience of the individual was defined as the “narrative turn” (Berger & Quinney, 2005). Clandinin, a pioneer of the narrative inquiry movement, suggests four parts to this turn in narrative inquiry.

The first part is the relationship between the researcher and the subject. This specific relationship is transformed from one where the participant and researcher are viewed as unequal to one where they are both valued. In other words, they both

understand that the traditional relationships between researcher and participant will change and that they will learn and grow from one another.

Once this transformation has occurred, the research becomes more concerned with language than numbers and the second part of the narrative inquiry process is possible. Clandinin (2007) recognized the difficulty in trying to quantify the human experience. She also saw a problem with traditional quantitative research in that numbers do not necessarily convey deep understanding of individual experiences.

This leads to the third part of the narrative inquiry process, which transforms research data from “the general to the particular” (Clandinin, 2007, p. 22). At this part, the researcher has a nuanced and precise understanding of the value of individual experience based on specific details regarding temporality, place and sociality, which will all be further detailed in the following section.

The final part of this process is a shift from a positivistic view of the world, where there is a clear reality, to one that allows for multiple—equally valid and valued—ways to understand and see the world. To ensure that this work employs that ideal, narrative inquiry demands that the researcher fully examine and explore the narrative of the participants by extracting details of the narrative such as temporality, place, and sociality.

Describing Narrative Inquiry Methodology

This study employed qualitative methodology because “qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experiences” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 137). As narrative inquiry is the study of experience, this approach to the work is appropriate (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). People understand their world and the events in their lives through interpretations of narratives, whether their own or others (Bruner,

1991). Through these narratives, people can link their actions to a greater picture that helps define their lives (Polkinghorne, 1988). As Rosewald & Ochberg (1992) observed, “Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one’s life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned” (p.1). The narratives of each selected principal provide an understanding of what influenced his or her actions in guiding the development of teachers’ instructional practice. This study is appropriately qualitative in nature, as it is focused on understanding how prior experiences influenced principal efforts towards the improvement of the instructional practices within their school.

Narrative inquiry is an appropriate method to explore how the personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals influence their efforts to develop instructional practices of their teachers, as narrative inquiry is a study of experience (Clandinin, 2013).

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experiences as phenomenon under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375)

As stated previously, the researcher can “provide the grounding for attending to a narrative conception of experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 12). Through this perspective, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reconsider how the context of temporality, sociality and place influences each experience:

[we place] temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third. Using this set of terms, any particular inquiry is defined by this three dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places. (p. 50)

Narrative inquirers understand that temporality, place, and sociality form the larger context of the participants' world.

Using the stories of their participants, narrative inquirers create an encompassing understanding of the person, process, and phenomenon by situating it within an appropriate context. Since every experience is shaped and understood within social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional stories, the ability to fully understand these experiences is contingent upon exploring the temporality, place and sociality of each experience (Clandinin, 2013). Once the context of the situation is understood, one can start to examine and understand the experience from the perspective of the narrator.

To obtain the narrative of each participant, the researcher will employ a five-step narrative inquiry model based on work by Kohler-Riessman (1993). The context of events within the narrative will be enhanced by including contextual ideas associated with temporality, place, and sociality as suggested by Clandinin's (2013) three-dimensional narrative inquiry process. This is important to the narrative process because "individuals' narratives are situated in particular interactions but also in social, cultural, and institutional discourses, which must be brought to bear to interpret them" (Kohler-

Riessman, 1993, p. 61). Based on her work in the field of narrative analysis, Kohler-Riessman (1993) proposes five steps:

1. Attend—participant gathers thoughts prior to starting the narrative.
2. Tell—participant converses with the researcher.
3. Transcribe—researcher documents participants’ narrative.
4. Analyze—researcher reviews transcript for influential experiences.
5. Review—researcher and participant read narrative analysis.

As the researcher and participant transitioned through the five-step process, a beginning, middle, and end, to each narrative emerged. “In the end, the narrative study tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set within their personal, social, and historical context” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Since “narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20), this insight enables the researcher to understand the experiences of the participant. These lived stories are the data (or field text) within narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly “began to use the term *field texts* (2000) rather than the term data many years ago to signal that the texts [they] compose in narrative inquiry are experiential, intersubjective texts rather than objective texts” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 46). Examining the context of the events within a narrative transforms the narrative from a field story to a field text, then to an interim research text, and lastly to a research text (Clandinin, 2007, 2013).

Research Participants

The purpose of this research is to learn how the personal and professional experiences of selected accomplished school principals influence their actions to further

teachers' instructional practice. As narrative inquiry is the study of experience, this allows for a synergistic relationship between research and design.

Participants

For the purpose of this study, the researcher explored the narrative of three accomplished school principals. The selection of the research participants began by inviting only those who have previously won The Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award (WPDELA) to participate in this study. This award is earned by those who are deemed exceptional school principals by their peers and “demonstrate and encourage creativity and innovation, maintain a continuing dialogue with students and parents as well as faculty and staff, keep abreast of developments in the field of education, and continue to play an active role in the classroom” (*Washington Post*, 2015). Receiving the WPDELA is a significant accomplishment in the field of education because this recognition is aligned with the first two ISLLC standards. Standard 1 states, “A school leader promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community, and Standard 2 extolls “a school leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.” One could also state that winning this award makes a principal a “learning leader” as this award requires principals to be cognizant of student as well as teacher needs. Although Kohler-Riessman (1993) suggests that a narrative should not be collected until the story is complete, receiving this award implies the recipients have

reached a certain level of success within the education field. Therefore, their narratives can provide valuable information for the field of education leadership.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

As *The Washington Post* annually awards approximately 20 principals this prestigious designation, looking back two years provided an initial applicant pool of 38 principals from public, charter and private schools, spanning the elementary, middle, and secondary levels. From the initial group of principals that volunteered for this project, the researcher employed a purposive sampling approach to help find the ideal research participants. (Please see Appendix: E for a detailed chart illustrating how the participants were selected and invited to this study).

Two approaches to finding potential research participants are probability or random sampling and purposive sampling. Probability or random sampling is when the researcher randomly selects participants for their study either from the general population or from a selected group of volunteers. This contrasts with purposive sampling, which is when the researcher “selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Although there are different ways to filtering out potential participants, this study implemented a participatory filter to help the researcher obtain a diverse group of participants for the study (Creswell, 2007). This makes sense for the qualitative study at hand as the life histories of the experts will help identify how personal or professional experiences influenced these principals’ actions regarding how they further develop teachers’ instructional practice. This is aligned with the overarching concept of qualitative research which “is not to generalize the information (except in

some forms of case study research), but to elucidate the particular, the specific (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). By purposefully narrowing down the list of potential participants, this research did not seek to obtain an average opinion, but rather “they are called in precisely because of their special experience and competence” (Chein, 1981, p. 440). Through these information-rich cases, the researcher learned as Patton emphasized “a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling” (2002, p. 230, emphasis in original). To ensure this process was successful, this research incorporated criterion-based selection to help the recruitment process.

Criterion-based selection allowed the researcher to create a list of the attributes that were essential to the study and “to find or locate a unit matching the list” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 70). Through this approach, the criterion established for purposeful sampling directly reflected the purpose of the study and guided the identification of information-rich cases. This process allowed the researcher to identify criteria to be applied and to explicate why the criteria were important (Merriam, 2009).

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to learn how experiences influence principal actions regarding how they help develop teachers’ instructional practice. To ensure that this study has a diverse group of participants, the researcher used criterion-based purposeful sampling. This included a four-step process to assist in participatory selection.

The first point of narrowing down the field of potential participant invitations is winning the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award. This award is presented to principals who have been deemed effective by their peers. Furthermore, as

stated previously, to be nominated for said award, principals must “keep abreast of developments in the field of education; continue to play an active role in the classroom; demonstrate and encourage creativity and innovation; encourage team spirit and demonstrate leadership and exemplify commitment” (Distinguished Educational Leadership Awards, 2015). These actions are aligned with the first two ISLLC standards that influence principal actions: (a) a school leader promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community; and (b) a school leader . . . promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (FGCU, 2015).

Since *The Washington Post* annually awards approximately 20 principals this prestigious designation, going back two years provided an initial applicant pool of 38 principals. These principals each received an introductory email describing the nature of this study and were invited to participate (see Appendix B: Introductory Email/Letter). At this point, to ensure a wide range of participants within the field of WPDELA winners, the researcher employed the second point of the criteria-based selection process.

The second approach to narrow the list of potential participants was to select at least one primary and one secondary principal. Additionally, the researcher wanted to ensure that both male and female leaders were represented in this study.

To recapitulate, the four selection criteria were applied following these steps:

- 1) Identify all principals in the DC area who have won the WPDEL award.
- 2) Identify those who have won this award and who volunteer to participate.

- 3) Identify at least one primary and one secondary principal.
- 4) Identify at least one female and one male participant.

Thankfully, the first three people who volunteered for this project covered those four steps. Each of those three participants recently won the WPDEL award, volunteered for the study, cover both primary and secondary schools and provide both male and female participants. This recruitment process remained open until the participants were found who could participate in this study. As soon as the selection process was completed, the researcher scheduled time with each principal to collect his or her narrative(s).

Data Collection

The field text (data) for this research is the narrative of the participant. As Van Manen (1990) observed, “The narrative power of story is that sometimes it can be more compelling, more moving, more physically and emotionally stirring than lived life itself” (p. 129). This means the researcher met with each participant as often as necessary to ensure an authentic narrative. It is anticipated that each participant will meet with the researcher three times with each session lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. Kohler-Riessman’s (1993) narrative inquiry model, in tandem with Clandinin’s three-dimensional narrative inquiry process, will guide the collection of the participants’ narratives to ensure as much detail about the experience as possible. As mentioned previously, the first three steps of Kohler-Riessman’s process are:

1. Attend—prior to the initial meeting, the participants will receive an overview of the project so they are aware of where to begin their narrative and what the researcher wants to learn. This will enable the participant to create an outline. If the participant finds difficulty in attending to their story, the researcher will have

- prompts (see Appendix B: Prompts) ready to trigger their memory banks.
2. Tell—prior to starting the data collection, the researcher will establish rapport with the participant through emails and phone conversations. This rapport will assist the telling of the story by making the participant comfortable with the researcher. The participant and researcher will then begin their process of collecting the narrative of the participant, making sure to address issues related to temporality, place, and sociality of the experience. To ensure validity of the narrative, the narrative will be recorded.
 3. Transcribe—the researcher transcribes the audio recording of the narrative verbatim.

Thereafter, the next steps in Kohler-Riessman’s narrative inquiry model are the analysis of data, followed by the retelling of the narrative with the participant.

This methodology did not want to provide any influence on how these individuals made meaning of their experiences. Therefore, the methodology for data collection did not ask them about their knowledge of the theory of andragogy as the researcher was interested in finding the meaning they made and attributed to significant personal and professional experiences; and he did not want to influence their answers. Subsequently, the interview prompts and questions were open ended (See Appendix: C). The field text of this narrative inquiry was based on narrative interviews with each participant and analytic memos by the researcher designed to capture researcher thoughts, questions and ideas during the interviews (Appendix F). These included a pre-meeting list of questions, note taking during the narrative collection, and a post meeting reflection on the conversation. This information can be found in Appendix F: Analytic Memo.

Data Analysis

As previously mentioned throughout Chapter 1, Dewey viewed experience as a key aspect of an education. Clandinin (2013) furthered this point by explaining how “experience is often viewed differently by narrative inquirers and research of other methodologies, we trace how a Deweyan view, in which “experience is understood as the continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment” (p.39), shapes “the kinds of questions asked and methods employed” (p.43) across methodologies. This point was made previously by Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) who presented the idea that narrative inquiry:

. . . is a quintessentially pragmatic methodology. What genealogy is to poststructuralist Foucauldian sociology, what critical ethnography is to critical theory, what experiments are to positivism, narrative inquiry is to Deweyan pragmatism” (p. 42). Viewed through this prism, “narrative inquiries begin and end in the storied lives of the people involved. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18)

The field text (data) generated from narrative inquiries can be analyzed through two distinct approaches—narrative analysis and analysis of narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995). “The aim of narrative analysis is to produce stories as the result of research. The focus is on constructing a narrative configuration of the data into a temporally organized whole” (Leeferink, Koopman, Beijaard, & Ketelaar, 2015, p. 338). This approach contrasts the analysis of narrative in that the goals are “to identify themes and patterns across the stories. The focus in this kind of analysis is on unraveling the storied data into different categories, and on identifying relationships among the categories” (Leeferink et al., 2015, p. 38). This study will employ the narrative analysis approach to the data.

The work of Kohler-Riessman (2008), Creswell (2007) and Clandinin & Connelly (2000) was used to analyze the individual life-stories told by the participants. Kohler-Riessman understood the uncertainty of using a thematic approach to narrative inquiry analysis as lives are constantly unfolding throughout the entire data gathering process. To Kohler-Riessman, the description of the experience is not to be reduced to themes, but rather the description itself is the data. Subsequently, *the most important aspect of narrative inquiry is focusing on the details provided by the participant*. The researcher examined the transcribed stories and highlighted actions and experiences which appeared to be influential and meaningful. These experiences were then expanded upon through the three-dimensional space of temporality, sociality and place. Per work by Creswell (2008) and Clandinin & Connelly (2000) this approach assists the analysis of the data. As Creswell (2007) stated:

The second approach was found in the three-dimensional space approach of Clandinin & Connelly (2000) that involved analyzing the data for three elements: interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present and future), and situation (physical places or the storyteller's places. In these approaches, we saw common elements of narrative analysis: collecting stories of personal experiences in the form of field texts such as interviews or conversations, retelling the stories based on narrative elements (e.g., three-dimensional space approach or the five elements of plot), rewriting the stories into a chronological sequence, and incorporating the setting or place of the participants' experiences. (p. 158)

Creswell continued this thought by adding:

Stories and epiphanies will emerge from the individual's journal or from interviews. The researcher looks in the database (typically interviews or documents) for concrete, contextual biographical materials. During the interview, the researcher prompts the participant to expand on various sections of the stories and asks the interviewee to theorize about his or her life . . . Then, narrative segments and categories within the interview-story are isolated by the researcher, and larger patterns and meanings are determined. (p. 158)

Meanings derived and lessons learned from these experiences were emphasized throughout the narrative analysis to understand how the experiences discussed by the participants informed or influenced their current actions or behavior towards how they develop the instructional practice of their teachers.

Throughout the data analysis, the researcher mined the experience “for life-course stages or experience to develop a chronology of the individual's life” (Creswell, 2007, p. 158). From this life narrative, “stories and epiphanies will emerge” (Creswell, 2007, p. 158) that help the researcher understand the impact those experiences had and have on their leadership approach to the development of teachers' instructional practice. These experiences were connected to current actions regarding how the participants approached the development of teachers' instructional practice. These influential experiences believed by the researcher will then be shared with the participant to ensure authenticity. Through this process, the researcher and research participants whittled down the narrative to the core experiences that were influential to how they facilitate the development of teachers' instructional practice. This process was repeated as often as necessary to gain the accurate data for each narrative collected. The researcher's intention was that,

whenever possible, the veracity of the narrative was supported using field texts (collected narrative), documents, and field notes (notes written by the author during the narrative collection) to support the narrative analysis of the participant. Throughout this methodological process, the researcher must address the uncertainty of analyzing narrative inquiry by consistently clarifying the narrative with the participant.

As each of us has a unique perspective on the world based on life experiences, it makes trying to create a clear, linear plan for analysis impossible. Each narrative will have its own issues, themes, ideas, experiences and reactions to experiences that are specifically connected to that one narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) addressed this issue when they wrote:

As one begins to work on analysis and interpretation, this transition is filled with uncertainty. There is no clear path to follow that works in each inquiry. The circumstances surrounding each inquiry, the relationships established, the inquiry life of the researcher, and the appropriateness of different kinds of interim and final research texts mean that the inquiry is frequently filled with doubt. (p. 134)

Clandinin and Connelly furthered this point by stating:

It has been written, characters' lives constructed, social histories recorded, and meaning expressed for all to see. Yet, those engaged in narrative inquiry know that the written document, the research text, like life, is a continual unfolding in which the narrative insights of today are the chronological events of tomorrow. Narrative inquirers know in advance that the task of conveying a sense that the narrative is unfinished and that stories will be told and lives relived in new ways is likely to be completed in less than satisfactory ways. (p. 166)

The uncertainty within the narrative was something that Merriam (2009) also discussed when she stated “First-person accounts of experience constitute the narrative ‘text’ of this research approach” (p. 32). Hence, the researcher tried to keep the data collected in the original words of the participants as often as possible. However, this leads to more uncertainty about absolute findings within each participants’ narrative and personal and/or professional experiences. As understood by Coffey & Atkinson (1996), “There are no formulae or recipes for the ‘best’ way to analyze the stories we elicit and collect. Indeed, one of the strengths of thinking about our data as narrative is that this opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies” (p. 80).

This doubt and uncertainty is beneficial for this research process as it constantly reminds the researcher to confirm his findings or ideas with the participants. This additional and repeated sharing of the material with the participant is the final step in Kohler-Riessman’s (1993) approach to narrative analysis. It should be noted that all three participants stated their segment was authentic.

Researcher Bias

To ensure that the researcher authentically represents the narrative of the participant, the researcher will share the experiences analyzed with the participants on an ongoing basis. Additionally, the researcher kept a journal of the narrative collection sessions to capture his thoughts or ideas about the narrative as it is being told or analyzed.

Ethical and Political Considerations

The researcher intends to accurately represent the narratives of the participants in an ethical manner by working closely with each participant to ensure accuracy within the narrative. Once participants agree to and sign the consent form, the researcher has an

ethical and professional responsibility to not only portray that narrative as it is told, but to protect that participant from potential harassment or harm from their choice to work on this endeavor by ensuring their anonymity.

The George Washington University IRB Process

As this study only had three participants, the approval of the University IRB was not necessary. Even still, the researcher submitted the necessary documentation to the IRB office located within the Office of Human Research (OHR). The documentation included the study proposal, a study synopsis, the narrative process, information regarding the study, and participant consent forms. Because this study will not include any scientific research regarding medical testing, the researcher also submitted an exempt review status application.

The participant consent form used for this study was based upon a template used in a prior research endeavor by this researcher. This form indicated that the purpose of this study was research and is voluntary. Furthermore, it described the procedure and activities involved and any foreseeable risks or adverse effects for the participants. The researcher also included a section on this consent form explaining that the participants, as well as their school name, will be shielded through pseudonyms, the narratives are kept in a secure location, and the researcher will destroy the data once the project is complete (See Appendix: B for more info on consent form).

Limitations and Validity

This study is centered on the personal and professional experiences of the participant. Therefore, there will not be a definitive final answer or solution to the researcher's inquiry. Furthermore, as the number of participants is limited, it is

impossible to make grand generalizations based on the findings (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). Although this methodology does not produce findings that can be generalized, the knowledge gained from each narrative is indeed valuable and significant. It can be used to help further the development or actions of other principals, teachers, or school personnel. Furthermore, regarding this issue, Kohler-Riessman (1993) explained that because of the ever-changing perspective of an experience, in narrative inquiry “meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal” (p. 15).

Much like Dewey and Kohler-Riessman, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) describe experience as something that is not finite. Per their perspective, experience is “indefinitely elastic” and extends into realms of “personal, aesthetic, and social meaning” (p. 41). This point was furthered by Creswell (2007), while referencing work done by Richardson (1994) when he stated, “The best writing acknowledges its own “undecidability” forthrightly, that all writing has “subtexts” that “situate” or “position” the material within a particular historical and locally specific time and place” (p. 179). Qualitative writing, especially narrative inquiry, understand this uncertainty and work within it. Referencing van Manen (2006), Creswell broadens this concept by stating; “Language may “kill” whatever it touches, and qualitative researchers understand that it is impossible to truly “say” something (2007, p. 179). While a grand theme or universal concept will not necessarily be the outcome of this study, this research will illustrate and detail the professional educational journey of each principal.

To ensure authenticity of the reporting, the researcher will share the findings with each participant. It is paramount to understand that through narrative inquiry, the participant has final say in how the story is analyzed. This ensures that each participant’s

experience is incorporated and honored, rather than skewed to what the researcher is hoping to find.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology employed for this study which is narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is the study of experiences and the meaning those individuals place on their experiences. Narrative analysis as a methodology does not seek to find commonality across the stories or experiences of the individuals, but rather to identify significant aspects of experiences that were impactful in the individual's development. This study explored how the personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals influenced their actions and perspectives regarding their efforts to improve teachers' instructional practice.

Chapter Four: The Stories They Carry

Overview

Everyday people construct their story through actions and choices. Any experience can be influential and informative or it can be meaningless; that decision is up to the individual and the context of the situation. This is how lives unfold and develop throughout our existence. As stated earlier in the dissertation, Dewey, Piaget, and Bruner all believed that humans construct, develop, and advance their understanding of the world based on their lived experiences. These experiences, however brief or meaningful, or regardless of when they occur in one's life, all help the individual assimilate or accommodate information into their own world perspective.

As narrative inquiry is the study of experience, this approach to the work is appropriate (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). People understand their world and the events in their lives through interpretations of narratives, whether their own or others (Bruner, 1991). Through these narratives, people can link their actions to a greater picture that helps define and illustrate their lives (Polkinghorne, 1988). Since every experience is shaped and understood within social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional stories, the ability to fully understand these experiences is contingent upon exploring the temporality, place, and sociality of each experience (Clandinin, 2013; Creswell, 2007). Once the context of the situation is described, one can start to examine and understand the experience from the perspective of the participant.

The narratives of each principal provide an understanding of what influenced his or her actions in becoming a "learning leader" (Fullan, 2014); and how these narratives guide and facilitate his or her development of teachers' instructional practice. As each

person has a unique perspective on the world based on life experiences, trying to create a clear, linear plan for analysis is almost impossible. This is because experiences and lessons learned from experiences do not always flow, move, or happen in a quick or chronological manner. Sometimes decades and lives pass before the lesson we had previously learned becomes clear. However, these experiences can still be influential in helping that person develop into the principal they were destined to become. Learning, especially from experiences, is not necessarily a linear or clear transition. Therefore, each narrative will have its own issues, themes, ideas, experiences and reactions to experiences that specifically connect to that one narrative. As discussed in Chapter Three, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) address this very issue:

As one begins to work on analysis and interpretation, this transition is filled with uncertainty. There is no clear path to follow that works in each inquiry. The circumstances surrounding each inquiry, the relationships established, the inquiry life of the researcher, and the appropriateness of different kinds of interim and final research texts mean that the inquiry is frequently filled with doubt. (p. 134)

This doubt and uncertainty is beneficial for this research process as it constantly reminds the researcher that each participant will have his or her own unique set of events and circumstances that led him or her to become the school principal they are today.

Purpose and Research Question

This research explores how the personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals inform and influence their actions and perspectives regarding their role in the development of teachers' instructional practice. The research question that guided this dissertation is: *What personal and professional experiences*

inform and influence accomplished principals' efforts to develop teachers' instructional practice?

Principal's Life Stories and Experiences

The rest of this section focuses on the life stories and experiences—also known as field texts or data in narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) of the three principals as told and transcribed by the researcher. Clandinin and Connelly “began to use the term *field texts* (2000) rather than the term data many years ago to signal that the texts we compose in narrative inquiry are experiential, intersubjective texts rather than objective texts [emphasis in original]” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 46). Subsequently, the researcher tried to keep as much of each participant's own words as possible in this chapter so that the reader can see the connections between each individual's experiences and his or her actions. As noted above, narrative inquiry always begins and ends amid ongoing experiences:

In narrative inquiry, the story itself stands, shifting the focus of the inquiry to understand the many stories it stands on, beside or among, to render an account of life as it is lived. (Clandinin, 2013, p. 44) (Downey & Clandinin, 2010, p. 387)

The uniqueness of narrative inquiry is that “rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer, narrative inquirers frame a research puzzle that carries with it a . . . sense of continual reformulation (Clandinin, 2013, p. 42 (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124). Using the direct language of the participants illustrates their understanding of their life puzzle and how their experiences influence their actions and perspective regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice.

These participants were selected from a list of winners of the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award, after being identified by their peers as outstanding in the field. The researcher then narrowed the list of potential participants using purposeful selection to ensure the participants covered a diverse range of educational settings and styles.

Participant's stories were collected through conversations in which the researcher prepared questions to learn more about their experiences that influence their approach to helping develop instructional practice. In addition to this semi-structured approach, the researcher let the conversation flow in an extemporaneous fashion when appropriate. The researcher also created an ongoing analytic memo of his experiences throughout the data collection process to help gain insight and details into the narratives (Appendix F). To assure accuracy, each conversation was recorded, transcribed and verified by the participant. Although each participant provided numerous life experiences with the researcher, careful consideration went into selecting which specific experiences to highlight. Experiences were selected by using the following criteria: (a) the manner and fervor in which that experience was described; (b) how the experience described clearly influenced them based on repeating actions or significance of that story; and (c) lastly, the researcher reflected on the field text and analytic memo in terms of experiences that held significant value to the participant (Appendix F). At the end of each subsection within each person's vignette, the researcher connects the examined experiences to current actions that illustrate these principals as "learning leaders".

John's Story: Field Text

John was a principal for 13 years at a large suburban high school. He stands and holds himself like a former athlete, masking his true age and the countless hours of work and preparation he put into transforming his school into a regional powerhouse of education. His school had approximately 3000 students and he helped improve the scholastic offerings at this school by raising available AP exams from 600 – 1200 over his tenure. Prior to working as a teacher on an administrative assignment, John worked as a tax consultant. When he decided to become a teacher, he enrolled in graduate classes in education and became a certified business teacher. Along with teaching business, John became a basketball coach. He described his good fortune in having great mentors and a graduate program that initiated and influenced his inevitable step into school leadership. Although he loved being a school principal for slightly more than a decade, he recently transitioned to a new job within the school system, one that affords him the opportunity of working closely with the staff and students of a new high school that he is assisting in opening.

John's First Experience with Personalized Education

John's first encounter with personalized education came while a student in high school. Although he was a star athlete and someone that was given certain liberties due to his star status, John still needed to earn athletic eligibility by obtaining passing grades. He always viewed himself as a math/science person and found English to be a particularly challenging subject. That was until his junior year when he had a teacher—who he would have again as a senior—who would ultimately change his perspective on teaching, learning, and the humanities.

I think it was 11th grade, the class name was English 11 and she was the first teacher to take an interest in me as a person in English classes and everybody else was all about the... didn't really care about the kid. When you look back on it and they didn't really care about the kids, they just cared about covering, again covering, covering, covering, covering. She would take the time to get to know me, she would get the time, take the time to assess not just me; she knew all her kids and her kids inside and out. Though she made things where I understood them, she made things where her tests were exactly as she, wherever she was teaching us whatever notes we were taking, whenever you were reading, whenever you were learning that was all the assessment that she gave us. There was no surprises. (Field Text, TJ2, pp. 9–10)

This same teacher and his experience with her was one that John previously spoke about during our first conversation.

Speaking of leaders and teachers, I did not have good experience[s] in junior high school and high school with English teachers. So to that, that's turned it off, you know until my senior year [when]... I took her again in 12th grade in an elective class. And she was the one that, the only person I really enjoyed my whole junior high school, high school career in English. (Field Text, TJ1, p. 14)

At that point and moment in his life, having this teacher allowed John to grow and develop as a person, but not just within that moment; she inspired and showed him how to become a lifelong learner.

But she inspired me to the point where I took an elective class which was the light of me, and ironically I would not say that it was easy reading novels...[each

student was] given [a] choice of novels...*Again she made things easy for me to understand and she knew me* [emphasis added]. (Field Text, TJ2, p. 10)

This teacher showed John that teaching does not have to be a script, or that everyone learns everything at the same time; but rather that teaching and learning can be tailored to the individual. This teacher exemplified the benefits of catering curriculum to the needs of the student. This was a key lesson for John as it shaped his understanding of the potential of teaching and learning when one has an effective instructor who takes the time to learn about a student as an individual. This lesson was immediately incorporated into what would become John's coaching philosophy.

As a star basketball player, John had an opportunity to work teaching basketball to youth in summer camps throughout his high school career. His experiences with his high school English teacher helped reinforce for him that the goal of teaching is to help move people along the development ladder based on where they currently are and what they need to develop their skills.

I thought that I at first and foremost, I thought that I wanted to, to be a coach, coach basketball. I thought I had something to give and give back to kids. I [found through the experience coaching basketball]...[that] I love doing that [coaching and teaching]. (Field Text TJ1, p. 13)

Subsequently, John catered his coaching to the needs and skill level of his players.

I wasn't a crazy [Duke and Team USA men's basketball coach] Mike Krzyzewski but I did do things like . . . if I had a couple of big kids that might not have been block players that sit down there, I might do a high-low so I can get those two to go like this and if they could put the ball on the floor, they were doing right by the

other team's big man. Meanwhile I had my guards on the outside. *So I did adapt to what kind of players I had all the time* [emphasis added]. (Field Text, TJ1, p. 8)

This experience helped John to discover that teaching and coaching go hand-in-hand with one another.

So it's interesting because you know as any type of coach, if we do it the right way . . . it is teaching, because you are . . . your season starts here. You are here. You have got to map out what you need to get done by this date, right? And yeah, it's the same. It's the same thing. (Field Text TJ1, p. 5)

These lessons carried over to his leadership style as a principal in that he was willing to do whatever it took to help his teachers improve. John quickly realized that coaching and leading teachers along a path of development is a very analogous activity. In each case, they require the leader to honestly assess the skills and talents of those being supervised and then to plan an action to help them improve. Reinforcing skills and tools already known can only get one so far; to grow and develop as a person, let alone teacher, one needs to be challenged and to push oneself to become better than one's previous self.

In the real world of standards based [teaching], if you are working with me and these components throughout the year and at the end of the year you give me something to write...and I am getting "As" and "Bs" on these components, then [these grades] should not have a factor on what I did at the end of the year. [this is] Much like a basketball team that is a bunch of individuals [that you] are trying to teach to play as a unit. And you are working at that throughout the whole year and all of a sudden, three-quarters of the way to the year, they start understanding it . . . hey you know what?...(it) might not be that way in the beginning of the year,

but at the end of the year, those teams are going to get on a roll...So it's just the same thing with the kids. (Field Text TJ1, p. 6)

This approach to leadership has coaching and school principal practices mirroring one another. In each case, John's expectations were for his players and teachers, to be better at the end of the season/year than they were at the start. He explained that the individual steps along the way might not always be moving upwards, but if you help others reach a higher level by the time your season or year is completed, you have succeeded. This belief in leadership practice was influenced by his experience with his high school English teacher as he truly believes that effective education is catered to the needs of the individual. The tricky part of this is to know how to help develop adult behavior as kids and adults learn in different manners.

Learning About Adult Learners

John was recruited to play basketball by numerous college teams. After all his high school success as a player—along with the experiences of the summertime basketball coaching—John felt like he knew a lot about the game of basketball. During his freshman year in college, the players on his team decided that they no longer liked or wanted to play for their coach and signed a petition to get him removed. He later elaborated:

...this is a Division Two college but I am [was] a naive freshman coming into college so I think it was more, it wasn't my push it was more of an upperclassmen push so to speak where I, again, I was naive I am signing a paper not realizing the implications of signing this paper with this gentleman to keep his job but it is what it is. (Field Text, TJ2, p. 4)

The consequence of that choice was that everyone on the team lost their scholarships and were no longer members of the basketball team. Among the numerous lessons learned from this experience, one lesson stuck out more than others: how to talk and work with adults with whom you disagree and who you want to change. The problems the players had with the coach were not personal, but rather stylistic. They asked him to change his style, he balked, and so rather than trying to work with the coach to show him why he should change his approach, they went over his head. A major lesson learned from this experience is that adults are not children and do not learn or act like children. When teaching youth sports, the coach can tell a child to do something, and the child will follow the direction unconditionally. Adult learners do not operate that way, as they want to understand why they are doing what they are being asked to do and how this activity will help solve their problem(s) (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, 2013; Knowles, 1980, 1984). This is a fundamental difference between pedagogy and andragogy. And a lesson that led John to become a “learning leader.”

As noted in John’s field text, one key difference between pedagogy and andragogy is that adult learners tend to be self-directing and motivating. Rather than trying to force an adult to do something, it is easier if that adult chooses to change. John saw this firsthand with his basketball coach, as well as with his peers and how he got them to buy into his perspective regarding school changes, a lesson reinforced later in his career by his administrative mentors.

The Career Switch

Although John was invested in working with others as a basketball player and coach, upon his graduation from college he took a job as an accountant. Working in

isolation, doing routine and monotonous paperwork day after day made him second-guess his career choices. He often thought back to his coaching days and realized that those experiences brought him more joy than his current profession.

I was an Accountant for two years . . . could not stand it. I always wanted to be a teacher and a coach but my parents were saying . . . you are not going to make any money teaching. You know . . . it's not going to be something that's going to be fulfilling and after a year in accounting, I already knew I was out. So, I moved down here and went back to school and became . . . got my teaching degree and then found a job as a business teacher. (Field Text TJ1, p. 4)

This sojourn from coaching allowed him the space and opportunity to realize and discover what he wanted to do, which was to teach. As he stated, “Yes I was one of those career switchers” (Field Text A, p. 4). But this change was more than just a change in profession; it was also a change in the adult he wanted to become.

Professional Mentors

While John was working up the educational ranks, i.e. moving from teacher to administrative leadership, he came across four influential individuals; Austin, Willy, Lou and Jerry. These four people are all contemporaries of John and helped guide his thinking about leadership and form his leadership style to develop teachers' instructional practice.

Show interest in your teachers. Austin was the first person John mentioned as he talked about who influenced his approach to leadership. Austin was a special kind of school principal who was constantly trying to improve any situation and “was the one that taught me that status quo is Latin for the mess we are in . . . he used to say, okay?”

He never ever rested on his laurels” (Field Text TJ1, p. 1). Austin also had this idea that the school should function like of a family—“He was a big believer in . . . he still is till today, in family and a partnership between the school and families” (Field Text TJ1, p. 1). John learned to treat the faculty and staff like his family. He learned about their life and interests away from school and would even notice new clothing they wore to school all as a means of showing investment in the individual. Come special occasions, he would craft handwritten notes to his teachers to help show his appreciation for all their hard work.

Yeah I used to, before Christmas couple of times a year, I write handwritten notes to each teacher, put it in their mailbox and say, you know, thank you. And I always remember something that I could always pick out, they’d always laugh because I’d always say that’s a new dress or that’s a new tie or something and they feel, wow, how does he know that? But I catch those things all the time.

(Field Text TJ1, p. 17)

This was a lesson he initially learned from his high school English teacher and that was later reinforced by Austin. This led him to believe that to facilitate the development of his teachers’ instructional practice, that John had to show investment in the actual individual.

I mean I think working with that one gentleman, I was lucky to do that. Could I have done all that without working for him? Probably . . . but I can tell you it’s . . . I mean you are working with certain leaders; *it’s what you pick up from those leaders* [emphasis added]. (Field Text TJ1, p. 2)

Another mentor, Willy, an assistant principal, had a different approach to grading and understanding achievement than John.

Differentiate expectations based on skill. John explained a valuable lesson he learned from Willy, about differentiating grading. John detailed an example from Willy, about how to differentiate assessment. In the example provided, John discussed an assignment of creating a chair to illustrate the importance of differentiating based on skill. If the assignment was to make a chair, how does one differentiate when grading a students' construction of a stool in contrast to a recliner? Technically speaking, they are both chairs and deserve an A; however, one is clearly much more elaborate and dedicated than the other. Should these two people be graded, viewed and evaluated the same way? John elaborated:

For example, a target is to make a book case or a chair and the targets are laid out on how everything goes together. One kid just makes a chair or a bookcase, that's Plain Jane, and you have another kid who's grandfather or father helped him do all this lather work and it comes back and looks absolutely gorgeous...[how do you address the differences while still acknowledging that each earned an A?]

(Field Text TJ2, p. 3)

The importance of this anecdote is that John believes an A isn't always a true reflection of the work and effort by the student. And it requires a teacher or school principal who is cognizant of differentiation within the students and therefore grading. Willy helped John understand that the academic targets for individuals as well as the school are and should be constantly moving based on the individual, their needs, and their current level of ability. Much like a teacher does with his or her students, John interprets Willy as an effective principal who guides the development of his teachers' instructional practice by

working with them based on their needs. This means for John, one should listen to those they lead, including the students.

Another one of John's mentors was a school administrator named Lou. Lou "was an Assistant Principal when I was a teacher on administrative assignment" (Field Text TJ1, p. 12). Lou helped teach John an invaluable lesson for effective school leadership: developing and cultivating teacher leaders.

Develop teacher leaders. Hearing John talk about Lou, you could immediately understand why Lou had such an appeal to a teacher on an administrative assignment. John noted, "I tried to gain as much knowledge from him as far as [the] instructional piece because he was just brilliant . . . just absolutely brilliant and a very hard worker" (Field Text TJ1, p. 13). He furthered this point when stating, "but he really was kind of like a mentor as well to me, if you really want to put it into a word, he [was] more like a mentor to me" (Field Text A, p. 13). Even though John viewed Lou as a mentor, they were contemporaries with Lou only having a few more years of experience on the job.

One influential experience for John was when Lou invited him to take teachers to a conference in Portland, Oregon. John observed the teachers from both schools collaborating in the workshop activities at the conference. It was at that moment that he realized how teamwork and collaboration can be an effective means of developing teacher instructional practice. John knew he had to bring this perspective on teamwork back to his school. John described how when he and Lou were working on developing teacher leaders in their respective schools, they decided to collaborate. John also recognized that teacher development can be enhanced by working with colleagues outside of their respective school building. John and Lou then developed a plan to get

both schools working together for the benefit of the teachers' instructional practice. John said about Lou: "He and I were always trying to connect on things and...[to] ...*bring the teachers from both schools together [emphasis added]*. (Field Text TJ1, p. 2)

John's leadership perspective became one that included teacher leadership as an important aspect to being an effective principal. This is why John believed taking fellow teachers to this conference became an invaluable opportunity. It showed the teachers that he cared about their well-being and development. But more importantly, it showed them that he trusted them to work on improving their abilities to do an excellent job. John expressed this belief: "That's why you put the teachers in leadership positions because then they know you know that this guy cares about me. Mr. John took five of us to Portland Oregon to learn and we're going to come back and present" (Field Text TJ1, p. 17). This furthered an earlier idea John discussed in his first narrative collection:

I am going to believe that you are going to find that your very good leaders are people who, like we talked about, don't believe that when they get the job that they are above everybody, that they don't lead from up here, that they don't talk down. They are leaders, but they are involved with their staff and they believe that the staff . . . the administrative staff and the teachers are all one. (Field Text TJ1, p. 11)

These lessons were furthered by Jerry, to whom John often referred to as his "Guru of gurus." Jerry was a keynote speaker at the Portland conference. They had similar backgrounds in that they both coached sports prior to becoming a school administrator.

When John heard Jerry speak he was impressed with his point about building up the teachers because without their help and support nothing can get accomplished. John's

viewpoint on leadership practices emerged here: "It's building up your teacher leaders by taking them out there and getting them to understand your vision and where you want to go and it's like their 'Aha' moment when you see these guys talking about what a difference it makes" (Field Text TJ2, p. 2). John viewed Jerry as a passionate school administrator who wanted to make a difference at every school. But Jerry also understood that to reach that goal, he had to help the teachers become better educators and leaders, especially when it came to assessments. John's narrative explains this point:

Jerry, again and again he was so passionate. He made us think. The part of this training was, "I want you to go back to when you were in high school, you went to college, you studied for an assessment and you went in, you opened, you got the piece of paper that was the assessment and you looked at it and you went, "What the hell is this, I've never seen this?"

Based on his observations of his own teachers, John said:

There [are] two things with education today, one is we keep doing what we've always done and two is our schools do not teach [i.e. schools of education], they might have one class on writing assessments, but they don't go in depth on how to write assessments."

He said:

"Don't even get me started on professors in college about how they teach, and how they assess because we talk about college tests or how kids are not prepared for college, well they're not really prepared for the way these people teach which is you have a midterm and you have a final and you can come to my class and listen to me talk blow steam for two hours, but then you can figure out through

yourself what you think might be on the test about, just read everything. (Field Text TJ2, pp. 2–3)

This last comment by John illustrates why he believes principals must work in tandem with their teachers to help improve their instructional practices. He is concerned that they enter the work force unprepared for the realities of teaching and therefore need guidance to further develop instructional practices. John doesn't view this as a deficiency; rather, this is an opportunity for him to work collaboratively with his teachers in furthering their instructional practice. It is the action of working with the teachers, instead of having the teachers just work for him, that John believes assists the development of instructional practice.

Working Together

Through his experiences as an athlete, coach, teacher and teacher leader, John learned that when people collaborate they can be much more effective than when they work by themselves. He realized that to maximize the potential of the school, he had to get his teachers working cohesively, which is not an easy accomplishment in a high school context. John reached this goal by establishing Professional Learning Communities in his school. However, rather than jump right into this plan for getting the teachers to work together, he took his own experiences into account and used them to guide his actions. He explained:

I guess just trying to, we see the whole, the whole, the whole reason why professional learning communities and doing this stuff together and grading together [is important]...I remember being the first year teacher, I remember going down to the classrooms and this is your classroom, your books are in that

book room and there's some paper down there for the bulletin board. (Field Text TJ1, p. 17)

John's negative experience as a first-year teacher influenced how he would support first year teachers in his own school. As a school administrator, he knows now that first-year teachers need support and that was the plan he put into effect. He knew that he did not want new teachers to work in isolation. He assigned new teachers to work with veteran teachers in a professional learning community. John articulates the benefits for new teachers being paired with veteran teachers at the start of a new school year.

Because what happened was these teachers all had their ducks in a row, [and a] new teacher walked in and...[the veteran teachers would say] here are the first three units, kind of laid out, we can—won't be [meeting] at every week, [but] we'll talk. And I want you to look over these first couple of units and tell me what you think. So that [this way] you weren't overwhelmed from day one. (Field Text TJ1, p. 17)

John recognized the value of context, i.e. professional learning community, where seasoned teachers can share their work with novice teachers. He took his time to methodically study the benefits of professional learning communities and implemented them throughout the school.

Now I could see, I knew that our school was going to be going through some changes, our school was going to lose about 600–700 students to a new high school being built and our social economic plan would not be the same. Now I would tell you that I was to do this [professional learning communities] regardless of whether or not the 600 or 700, I've been reading about [them] for two years

prior to me getting the job, but I would have done it no matter what...the staff needed to be together and working together. (Field Text TJ2, p. 5)

John explained the concept of a professional learning community to his teachers. He then let the teachers decide on formulating a title so they could develop their professional learning community. By doing it this manner, he enabled the teachers to buy into the concept and develop ownership of the idea for their professional learning community. He described his reasoning:

I wanted the teachers to recognize for themselves that it was a good thing. I think that they even came up with a name as we sat in a room, Subject Area Improvement Team, I am not even sure I came up with that . . . The name of it which is why it's so powerful and they come up with. Teachers come up with their own version of things. (Field Text TJ2, p. 5)

John believed that once teachers took ownership, i.e. developed their own group identity, they would thrive due to the naming and therefore owning of their actions. To accomplish this, the teachers needed opportunities to work together. John described his overarching leadership goal of teacher collaboration:

So, my goal was to get everybody...working together in their own world to start seeing and working together, teaching together and that's where this data comes in finding out what's the teacher's doing with how their kids are doing on their assessments and so on and so forth. (Field Text TJ2, p. 6)

Additionally, John expressed that he did not care if everyone taught and assessed the same material at the same time and pace. Rather, he wanted to make sure that each professional learning community had teachers at different phases of their career as that

would help them lean on one another and their expertise and experiences to help further their instructional practices. John explained how he derived his own leadership practice from his own experiences:

Now I wish way back when I had that back then when I had assessment training, everything I had in these last five years to go along with the Subject Area Improvement Teams but I did not, it was more of just making sure we were pacing together, it didn't mean you have to be doing the exact same thing if you're a week behind, it is what it is but because classrooms are filled with different types of kids. So that was more of what I was trying to do, our teachers needed to work together for the success of both themselves and the students. (Field Text TJ2, p. 6)

John's observation about the impact of his professional learning community follow:

Yeah, I think the blatant nature of teachers are very protective of what they do in their classroom, so what we found was, it was the first-time teachers were actually talking about what they're doing in their own classroom. I think to be honest with you what we all saw from the get go, it helped all teachers because some are better teachers. I think we've talked about this, some of the teachers [that we] know are really good teachers, we don't spend a whole lot of time with... we're trying to help the ones that need the help. I think this [professional learning community] gave the better teachers...a chance to assist to be there to help.

For John, his professional learning community provided a safe place for his more novice teachers to learn from the more seasoned colleagues. He describes the experience and

context of a first-year teacher who has a professional learning community as a support system.

In year two [if] you had a brand-new teacher walk into a school [right] out of college and gone was the norm of here's your books, here's your classroom, be at Chapter Eight by the end of the year, something like that. [In a professional learning community] it was, "Hey, come on in here, we're going to talk about the first two units and this is what we've been doing for the last year.

So, that level of "Oh my God what am I doing, how am I going to start the year?" kind of went away so that they can just rely on the things they need to use is ready for the kids to come in and what not but that I thought it was very powerful that there were new teachers coming in, it really benefited them, and it benefited . . . I remember sitting at some conversations because at the beginning I would send both myself and my assistant principals into some of these meetings to listen to the conversation but I can remember the conversations being had were all and of course revolving in the room they're all going to talk right [*laughter*]. *But to have a first-year teacher with zero experience talking about curriculum and the pacing and not feeling threatened to talk to you these and the so-called veteran teachers I thought was very powerful.* [emphasis added] (Field Text TJ2, p. 6)

By being cognizant of his staff and their needs and where they were along their own path of development, John created professional learning communities originally based on subject and called them Subject Area Improvement Teams. For example, one professional learning community was the English department. Within that professional

learning community were then smaller professional learning communities comprised of teachers from the larger department based on number of teachers. The smaller groups were designed to foster collaboration between the members of the community. These smaller groups were initially established by schedules and available time. John observed these meetings to ensure they were effective in developing teachers' instructional practice. When necessary, teachers moved in-and-out of these small groups based on their individual professional needs. The professional learning communities provided the opportunity for teachers to have informal discussions and to discover their mistakes on their own. John would observe his teachers in their classrooms, which would be followed by a post observation conversation, and the teacher would then work on his or her development within the professional learning community.

John's Experiences Illustrated

To assist understanding how temporality, sociality and place influenced John's perspective as a school principal, the following table synthesizes the experiences John described that influenced his approach to leadership. These events are not the only moments of influence in his life; however, they are the ones discussed in this chapter.

Table 1

Narrative Analysis of John's Experiences through the Three-Dimensional Space with added Influence of those experiences

<u>Experience</u>	<u>Temporality</u>	<u>Sociality</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Lessons Learned</u>	<u>Influential ideas/practices</u>
English 11 teacher	High school (specifically during his junior and senior years)	Ms. "Abair", his English teacher who opened his eyes to individualized education	High school	Teachers who take a personal interest in their students can have a greater impact on that students learning	She also helped him to read/see between lines, to become a lifelong learner and to see the value of teaching to the individual
Basketball player – coach	College (in his late teens/early 20's)	Teammates and the coach	College/ high school and as an adult	You can't force someone to change. And you need to get people working together to maximize potential.	Realized to help others he needs to work with them on an individual basis, not just have them work for him.
Becoming an accountant	20's	Office mates – but mostly cubicle work	Office setting	I want to continue working with kids and become a coach/teacher.	Moved him back into the world of education – liked working as part of a team
As the basketball coach	Teaching at summer camps while in high school and after being an accountant	His staff and players	High school players and fellow coaches	You should cater the plan to the skills of the individuals on the team, a lesson that carried over to school	Know your team so you can place them in positions to succeed. Know what areas they need help with so you can further their skills.

				leadership.	
Working with professional mentors	While transitioning to a school administrator	“Jerry, Willy, Lou & Austin”	Conferences and local gatherings to discuss work - throughout America	Working together allows for more to happen than working in isolation	Having teachers work in teams can be tremendously beneficial – use PLC’s strategically
Becoming a school leader – working together	High school dean and principal (early to mid 30’s)	Working in isolation, yet alongside others	At his school	Bringing others along for the journey and process. The more people you have working synergistically, the better the outcome.	Working together allows for greater accomplishments than working in isolation; we need others to reach our potential.

Interpretations for John

John is a genuinely nice person who has a lot of concern for the growth and development of the people he supervises and leads. His leadership style and perspective on education were a learned behavior. As illustrated in his field texts, the moments John discussed in his narrative collection were mostly professional and showed him learning how to be a school principal. He believes that growth and development are more important factors than final scores on a quantifiable assessment. If a student struggles with something early in a unit, only to master that concept by the end of the unit, John believes that the final score is the only one that should matter and that the student should

not be penalized or docked points (for the final grade) because of something that happened days, weeks or maybe even months prior.

. . . so in other words, you have me write an essay at the end of September and whatever the components in the essay are, the bottom line is I get a 'D or 'C' in multiple components of that essay. In the real world of standards-based [teaching], if you are working with me and these components throughout the year and at the end of the year you give me something to write...and I am getting 'As' and 'Bs' on these components, then this should not even have a factor on [on his final grade] (Field Text TJ1, p. 6)

This metaphor extends to how he helps the development of teachers' instructional practices as he wants each teacher to continue their instructional growth throughout the year(s).

So it's interesting because you know as any type of coach, if we do it the right way . . . it is teaching, because you are . . . your season starts here, you are here, you have got to map out what you need to get done by this date, right? And yeah, it's the same. It's the same thing. You are mapping it out and if you think about it . . . in a way I used to describe standards-based. (Field Text, TJ1, p. 5)

Continuing the principal or teacher as coach metaphor, John viewed assessments as a way of evaluating his own performance. He always tried to take blame for students mistakes and allow them to revel in their own successes.

I always said if a kid made a mistake on a basketball court, it was my fault... not the kid's fault because I am the one that's supposed to be watching and making sure at practice that they are doing the right thing. So I would say, if a kid made

a mistake on an assessment, it's my fault as a teacher that I made a mistake somewhere. This kid is just not getting it. Where am I making a mistake? (Field Text, TJ1, p. 5).

In this manner, John takes ownership of his actions that are geared towards the development of others. He realized that mistakes will be made, however, it doesn't help to blame the participant; rather, he looked inwards to see how he could better assist that individual.

To help a teacher improve their teaching practices, John believes in a hands-on approach that shows each person how valuable they are to him, as well as the overall well-being of the school. As noted in earlier in Chapter 4, John made personal connections with his teachers by writing hand-written notes expressing how he valued them as individuals. Through these personal interactions, John models how he wants to be seen as working with his teachers. He furthered this point about working with teachers a little later in that initial conversation when he stated:

...the hardest thing I think for some principals because you – I think some principals are afraid to let their guard down and now all of a sudden they become they're not up here anymore, but they're crept down here towards the workers, you know what I mean? (Field Text, TJ1, p. 20).

In addition to working with individual teachers, John cultivated leadership in his teachers to make them feel more of the team than just a cog in the machine. "That's why you put the teachers in leadership positions because then they know you know what this guy cares about me, Mr. John took five of us to Portland Oregon to learn and we're going to come back and present" (Field Text TJ1, p. 17). This perspective most likely stems from his

basketball background (as a player and coach) as teamwork is the fundamental aspect of basketball. According to John and one of his coaching idols, Dean Smith, any one person might be amazing, but it is the team record and performance that matters.

if you think about Dean Smith . . . he was the ultimate teacher . . . because it was the same . . . it might have been the same system, but you are talking about those players had to buy into that system and the Michael Jordan's of the world who could have scored 40 points a game, were scoring 17 and 18 because Dean Smith's system. (Field Text TJ1, p. 7)

Hence, even if the school was running smoothly based on test scores, John would not feel comfortable unless his teachers were working in a synergistic (i.e. all working together) manner with him, rather than for him, such as the work his teachers do in professional learning communities.

I am going to believe that you are going to find that your very good leaders are people who like we talked about, don't believe that when they get the job that they are above everybody, that they don't lead from up here, that they don't talk down. They are leaders, but they are involved with their staff and they believe that the staff . . . the administrative staff and the teachers are all one. (Field Text TJ1, p. 11)

He later further elaborated on this point:

So, my goal was to get everybody to working together in their own world to start seeing and working together, teaching together and that's where this data comes in finding out what's the teacher's doing with how their kids are doing on their assessments and so on and so forth. (Field Text TJ2, p. 6)

Working as a cohesive unit was something that drew John into the world of coaching and teaching. Initially, he was an accountant who worked in isolation. He quickly realized this was not the job or life he wanted and he transitioned into the world of education. This was an important decision to note as John isn't sure how successful he would be in his position if he wasn't a career switcher.

I wish I would have went to school become a you know a teacher and a coach, but I think the journey getting me to become a teacher and the hard work and the ups and the downs and then back up again, and then become an assistant principal and the principal, I think it was has meant more to me than just going, doing it from day one (Field Text, TJ1, p. 14).

John is a leader who takes an invested interest in not only the teacher, but the person as well. John feels he was inspired by his high school English teacher who took a personal interest in his academic and overall development by personalizing assignments, his experiences as a college athlete and basketball coach, and what he learned from his professional mentors. John is very quick to point out that other people have something to teach you and is therefore always trying to learn as much as he can from those he encounters. One of the first things John said during the initial interview was “I mean you are working with certain leaders; *it's what you pick up from those leaders* [emphasis added]” (Field Text TJ1, p. 2). Because John is always trying to learn from those he is working with, he models what he preaches, assisting in getting his teachers on board with whatever instructional practice development he suggests or wants to implement.

John's Narrative

John's experiences led him to become a teacher/coach and then later a school principal who develops the instructional practice of his teachers' by never forgetting his athletic beginnings.

So it's interesting because you know as any type of coach, if we do it the right way . . . it is teaching, because you are . . . your season starts here, you are here, you have got to map out what you need to get done by this date, right? And yeah, it's the same. It's the same thing. You are mapping it out and if you think about it . . . in a way I used to describe standards based . . . I used coaching (Field Text TJ1, p. 5)

Through his athletic career, he could see how an effective leader is one who brings others together to help make something bigger happen than any of them may have accomplished alone. From his high school experience, he understood the importance and value of a teacher taking an interest in the individual student rather than just treating them as another statistic in their classroom. Subsequently, he brought this metaphor of the principal as coach to his role as school leader and constantly worked with his staff on their individual needs and allowed them opportunities to collaborate so that they could improve their teaching practices through informal discussions and by working in the professional learning community. This was one of the reasons his teaching staff viewed him with such esteem as a principal and nominated him for the WPDELA. John approached being a principal like he would a great sports coach. And fostered individual development plans for his teachers based on the individual needs of his "team". He forged his identity as an outstanding principal through creating an environment catered

towards learning for both novice and veteran teachers, providing his teachers an opportunity to work together in professional learning communities and by collaborating with external learning communities. Through these communities, he fostered teacher instructional development through continuous collaboration with peers and by allowing the teachers an opportunity to work on areas that needed to improvement.

Stacey's Story: Field Text

Stacey has been an educator her entire adult life. In fact, working in a school setting is the only real job she has ever held. She has worked in the greater DC area for her entire academic career and started as a teacher with no intention of ever leaving the classroom. In addition to having two master's degrees in education, she was an elementary classroom instructor for five years, a middle school special educator who worked with children who had behavioral and emotional issues for five years, a floating administrator splitting time between two schools for two years and then a full-time school principal of a K-5 program, which is where she has been for the past nine years. Her elementary school serves a diverse student population and she is always looking for ways to bring the community into her school. She accomplishes this feat by inviting local artists and other community members to interact within her school. She was fortunate to have a few mentors in the county that helped develop her leadership style. What makes Stacey an amazing "learning leader" is her understanding of family and how she has worked at making the entire school community feel like one large family.

It All Starts with Family

Stacey grew up in a blended family. She has her biological parents, as well as a step-dad—who she calls her father—whom she grew up with. All three of her parents had

a large influence on her life as they worked together in raising Stacey and her five biological siblings. Stacey's family description illustrates that to her, it didn't matter the actual role one was born into, but rather that everyone works together to help make the best of every situation. She explained:

I have a biological dad who my mom and my dad were divorced when I was very, very, very young and my mom met my stepfather who I called my father. So, I have my dad and my father. And my stepfather and my dad were very close...So I have three parents. They raised us together. (Field Text TS2, p. 2)

In addition to her parents, her siblings and their relationship dynamics also played a key factor in her upbringing. She stated:

So, it's like two different families because the oldest two were so much older. And then the middle two, the boys were, they were so close with each other that they kind of seem like their own little sibling stuff was going on and then there's kind of me and then there was my little sister . . . Sometimes you start relying on your elder siblings to take care of you and guide you and I definitely did that for my little sister. (Field Text TS2, p. 1)

This influenced her inevitable role as a school principal in that she ensured everyone was being looked after and cared for.

I mean my big sister even though she's a lot older than I am, definitely, I mean she is like [a] second mom. And then one of the boys, he's eldest of the boy and he was a lot older, but we didn't have that close of a relationship, but we're definitely siblings. And he was a lot, at the time I'm growing up, he was a babysitter to us. If my parent[s] had to go out, he would be the babysitter or my

sister, my elder sister. But one of the middle brothers that came in the middle, one definitely was my caretaker. (Field Text TS2, p. 2)

This family dynamic taught Stacey that regardless of age or place in the family, everyone had a role and responsibility towards one another. This was something reinforced by her grandmother (her mom's mother), also known as Grand-glue, who had a big influence on her as well.

Grand-glue was a very interesting person. As Stacey described her and her life, it became clear that Grand-glue was way ahead of her peers in regards to equality and equity. The meaning attributed to the influence of her grandmother had a profound impact on Stacey and how she looks at the world. She explained:

My mom's mom was essentially a single parent to her, her whole life because her father, I don't know exactly all the details, but he was not around. He sort of— what I understand is that he took off. And so my mom and her mom, my grandmother lived with my grandmother's mother. So my great grandmother; and that's how my mom grew up. She grew up just her and her mom and her grandma. And my grandmother was very much about her family. She didn't live with us, but she visited with us a lot, we went and stayed with her a lot as well. And she was sort of the one who is, if somebody was feeling overwhelmed or underwhelmed, *she was the one that would like notice it right away and sort of focus on the problem . . . She was kind of the one who always sort of problem solved and wanted to make everyone happy* [emphasis added] and she was very respected amongst all of the siblings . . . And she is kind of like one of these women who, she's going to do it, she's going to do it. She was very big influence

on my life. She always said, “the only thing that can stop you is yourself”. (Field Text TS2, p. 3)

This mentality is what Stacey brought to her years in the classroom, as well as her years as a school principal. She wanted to make sure everyone knows they are being cared for, that she has their best interest at heart and that she respects them. However, to learn the lesson about the value of respecting others, she had to have an uncomfortable experience with her mother.

During her “rebellious” teenage years, Stacey can recall the first time she talked back to her mom. And her mom responded in such a way, that Stacey can still vividly recall the experience. She related the following story:

The first time it happened, I’ll never forget because I talked back to her when I was a teenager and she was like, oh, I don’t know who you are, you’re a stranger to me. And I was like, oh come on and she is like, no, you’re a stranger to me, so you can call me Mrs. Nelson . . . And then of course five minutes later I’m like, mom, mom, mom and then I hear her like Mrs. Nelson, oh, Mrs. Nelson. She’s always one step ahead of us as well, which is where she needed to be. (Field Text TS2, p. 4)

In this anecdote, Stacey observed how her mom reacted in a patient and caring way – and used that as a teachable moment. This lesson is invaluable for school principals because it helps them focus on the individuals rather than the teachers as a collective unit. This experience reflects Stacey’s perspective of her role within the school. “I do feel like the mom of the school. I do, I see myself in that role for sure” (Field Text TS2, p. 4). She elaborated on this point in greater detail:

I feel like these are my people to take care of. You know and you need to take care of your family, then things are better for everybody, right?...So [for a young teacher], they're kind of always looking for another adult's influence in their life and I feel like I've [got] to know a lot about everybody. I take a lot of times to do that. So, I do feel like I am sort of the mom of that. And if there is a problem, I want people to come to me to get help. If there is a problem and I don't know about it, I can't help fix it and I do see myself as part of the fix. A lot of times, a lot of problems that you know get fixed themselves, right? But if they're something that people are struggling with, we don't have to struggle, we've got lots of really smart people who can help us out here. So, I mean I do see that, I do see myself as a mom in the school. (Field Text TS2, p. 5)

This story illustrates two fundamental parts of what Stacey brings to her leadership practice; modeling problem solving and a resolve to be there for her teachers. Through these actions her desire to be a “doer” within the school informs her teachers that she is willing to help them in any manner possible, just like a mother does for her family.

All I Ever Wanted to Do

Stacey knew early in her life that she wanted to be a teacher. In fact, as one of the youngest children in her family, growing up she saw her siblings attending school and this inspired her to want to know more about where they were going and what they were doing. Once she started kindergarten, her destiny was practically sealed. She explained:

I'll be honest with you. I wanted to be a teacher from the moment I walked into my kindergarten classroom. I knew instantly-- Like honestly within five minutes. I was like “This is my place.” This is where I belong. I have five siblings. I'm

number five of six. I watched four of them go off to school every day . . . I wanted to know “What is that magical place?” My brothers would come home and complain about their homework and I'd ask them if I could do it for them [*laughter*]. That kind of thing. I just couldn't wait to get to school. I literally walked in the room and I said “This is my home. This is where I want to be.”

(Field Text TS1, p. 2)

This helped Stacey get excited about starting school, so much so that she still remembers the experiences of her kindergarten teacher. She stated:

Yes, my kindergarten teacher Miss Walsh. I have no idea what her first name is. She's Miss Walsh. She was just an angel. I even wanted to dress like her. I was just enthralled by this woman. I used to say to my mom when we're shopping “That looks like a skirt Miss Walsh would wear. May I have that?” kind of thing. I just wanted to be her. (Field Text TS1, p. 3)

In this quote, Stacey refers to Miss Walsh as an angel, as she was there for you, watched out for your well-being and protected you. Thanks to her orientation of the magic of school and learning and Miss Walsh, Stacey knew what she wanted to do with her life from a very early age and took full advantage of all opportunities presented her. She relates how this early experience with school impacted her development as a teacher:

I spent the next twelve years studying school. Just sort of looking around and seeing the things I liked about school or teaching styles. Things that I didn't like about school or didn't like in teaching styles. I literally analyzed every teacher growing up and couldn't wait to either emulate them or do completely the

opposite of what they do. *I kind of kept a mental notebook—if you will—of the do's and don'ts in my mind of what I wanted.* [emphasis added]

The do's were to make every child feel like they were the special child in the classroom. That's I think the greatest gift that any teacher or administrator can give to anybody. If you feel like you're the greatest teacher in this school, you're going to work your butt off to be the greatest teacher in the school. Same with the children. If every child in my classroom felt like they were the favorite student, I've won. (Field Text, TS2, p. 5).

Stacey believes developing teachers bring a “mental notebook” based on what they have experienced into their orientation to their teaching practices. This orientation to practice includes creating an environment where every child feels special and can thrive. As Stacey continued her story, she began to attribute her personal experiences in education to her teaching practices. She continued thus:

That's a win, right? So, same thing with the staff. If everybody knows how valuable they are and how wonderful they are, then they're all going to tell you “Who doesn't want to work knowing that they're the best of the best?” So, that was one of the things making every child feel like they were the special one. Making every child feel like they were successful. And that when they needed help it was okay because really that's the teacher's job is to help the child learn. Not make the child feel like they can't learn or that they are behind kind of thing. I think the other thing I really, I admired the teachers who were able to sort of pull more out of out of children. I was kind of a shy kid.

So, I wasn't volunteering to raise my hand all the time. I wasn't the one who wanted to like get up in front of the class and read such and such. But the teachers that made me feel comfortable enough to do that or maybe want to show them more, those are the teachers that I admired the most. (Field Text TS1, pp. 2–3)

The meaning Stacey made regarding her “mental notebook” of what good teachers do was revisited during the second interview. In this anecdote, she discussed how the teachers could go about making her feel special as a student:

The teachers that I was really interested in and the teachers I think I really learned a lot [from were the ones] who took the time. They weren't just there to like talk, talk, talk. They were the ones that were creative, they were the ones that you felt warm and fuzzy about and they were the ones that took special notice of kids.

And so, I kind of always wanted to be that teacher, the one that had the time and took the time to pay attention to the small things because it meant a lot to me. If a teacher said, hey you know, I heard you got a new puppy or whatever, that meant the world to me because then I could have this conversation with this person.

And I was kind of a shy kid too. So, like it meant a lot to me because I could have very easily have been ignored because I was quiet. I was easy, I got good grades. I feel like I was [an] easy kid to ignore. (Field Text TS2, p. 11)

Stacey would further elaborate on this experience with an anecdote about her eighth-grade English teacher due to the special interest this woman took to all her students.

One teacher in particular...[my] eighth grade language arts teacher. And you always heard about the Grinch, the Grinch, the Grinch, oh, I have the Grinch and I was like, oh no, what if she is mean because I couldn't stand [a] teacher that yell and stuff because it really, honestly, it scared me. Like I was not a kid who could tolerate [that], I think that would really scare me and would stress me out. So, I was like oh no, oh no, oh no.

Well, it turns out...[that] she was just the loveliest lady. She took so much time to learn about each student and she just had all this little quirks about her and I just really admired her because she really seemed to know a lot about the kids that were in the class and I don't know exactly how she did that except for that when we were doing our writing or reading, she would go around and chatting with people and just having like real quick little specific conversations, right? So, like, tell me why you're writing about that or why did you choose this? But she also would—when we would hand in our writing assignments, she would almost write an assignment back to us in some ways to reflect our writing...just like these quick little conversations just kind of like a quick little thing and then she [would] check in on the same thing the next time that she met with you or had a quick conversation. (Field Text, TS2, p. 11)

Stacey furthered her experiences and the impact of this teacher when she discussed an essay assignment. The following story framed by this example of an impactful experience with a teacher whom she was initially afraid of continued with great details of how her teachers' attitude to Stacey's writing and ideas influenced her development and

confidence. She described the feedback she received on an essay she wrote about wanting to be a fashion designer and the faulty reason she chose this topic:

...I remember when she assigned us one essay. I'm not even sure why I did this, but she said "I want you to do a research project, and this is sort of whole class on the career that you want. Whatever career you decide, you want to be, I want you to do research project and write about it". (Field Text, TS2, p. 12)

Stacey explained that she chose the job of fashion designer; however, she chose it because she had no confidence in how her teacher would perceive her desire to become an educator. She noted:

I did this research project on fashion designer and her note back to me was, "great technical job, no problem that I could see. These little issues here and there, but why on earth did you write about being a fashion designer when you want to be a teacher?" (Field Text TS2, pp. 11-12)

This experience illustrates how and why Stacey believes that having a personal relationship with your students is an invaluable aspect of being an effective classroom instructor. This was a powerful experience for her, because she knew that this teacher *really* knew her and who she was. She implements this model as a school principal because by knowing who you are teaching, you can gain a better insight into how to help them grow and develop by nurturing their interests and likes. As a key observer throughout her school age years, Stacey also saw and experienced negative teaching traits that she took note of.

One of the biggest problems Stacey saw as a student was teachers who had already given up or stopped caring for the students and treated their job like a steady

paycheck. Those were the teachers she dreaded because she knew even as a young girl, that this was not right. She reflected on this experience this way:

Still to walk into a classroom as a little kid [and] know your teacher was pretty much already done for the year in September was pretty disheartening. So, those teachers and the ones that raise their voice or belittle children unfortunately I think everybody has those experiences.

This environment had a serious impact on her own type of leadership practices.

I hope I don't have that here. I've never heard of it in any way shape or form but it does happen. So those teachers that are kind of already bored with their jobs or are just kind of doing it to go along with the day to day thing --just their job-- just doing it. *[laughter]* This is not a job they have [that's] just a job. (Field Text TS1, p. 3)

Not only did Stacey, as a student, look to her teachers for what she believed were effective or non-effective teaching practices, she was also studying the principal and the way he interacted with his teachers and the students. In hindsight, she was amazed at how her elementary school principal acted because she never saw him do anything. She said:

... I know my principal was that way. He was a man. I couldn't tell you his name but he had two doors. So, he had a door into his—main office...but there's also like a side door that was in the hallway. If the side door was open, you could look in. He was always at his desk staring at what? I don't know because he didn't have a computer . . . I don't know what he was doing. What was he doing? What

did a principal do then? Because nobody cared if we were learning or not. (Field Text TS1, p. 31)

Stacey continued her analysis of her elementary principal and provided an interesting anecdote that is the antithesis of the teacher and leader she became.

I was terrified of the man...and the only time I ever interacted with him was there was a reporter in the school. Literally my friend and I were coming in from recess to wash our hands—I don't know I was covered in dirt...So we went in to wash our hands and when he saw us coming out of the bathroom he said “Girls, girls come here. They want to take a picture.” So, we stood with him with. He put his arms around us and we stood and we smiled for the reporter. He didn't know my name. He didn't know who I was. We may not even have been students at that school. (Field Text TS1, p. 31).

In contrast to how he acted, Stacey uses this story to make the point that she learns as much as can about her students and faculty. She does this for a very simple reason: “If [I] don't know them how can I help them? I can't keep track of them” (Field Text TS1, p. 31). All her hard work and observations paid off when she started to transition from classroom teacher to administrator.

The Career Move

Stacey always wanted to be a teacher and never thought about being anything else. When she was approached by a mentor about being an administrator she had some reservations because she had only wanted to teach, rather than lead a school. A conversation she had with her husband about this opportunity changed the way she perceived the job, and therefore the duties within the job. She explained:

I really thought it over a long time had a lot of conversation[s] with my husband. I said 'I'm a teacher. I'm a teacher. I'm a teacher. That's what I am.' My husband's the one who's not in education in any way shape or form. He's never considered being a teacher. He said 'Don't you think that administrators are still teachers?' I said 'Of course they are' [*laughter*]. Of course—it scared me the thought of leaving a classroom. It really, really scared me. (Field Text TS1, p. 5)

She further elaborated on her role as a principal and what she sees as responsibilities of anyone who runs a school.

Right now my job is a principal. I feel like even with parents and with teachers ultimately I'm a teacher [*laughter*]. Sometimes you have to teach people what your expectations are or maybe teach them a different thought process or something—I don't know if I'm saying it right but ultimately I'm a teacher.

That's what I do. So a lot of that is teaching teachers and a lot of that is teaching parents or community members what we're all about...I think I'm a good teacher [*laughter*]. So, I hope that, that lends to being a good administrator (Field Text TS1, p. 4).

These experiences made a profound impact on Stacey as a leader as she constantly wants to help her staff grow and improve as people, as well as teachers. And the only way to do that is by getting to know your staff.

Getting to know your Community Through the Magic of Music

Stacey uses music in her school in two completely different fashions. The more common use of music is for her Friday dance parties in the cafeteria. During this time, she sits on stage playing music while the students dance, or talk or just have a moment to

sit back and listen to the music. This is not a typical practice by other elementary principals in the county. She does this because she feels the students and teachers work so hard on their academic practices, she believes they deserve an opportunity to unwind and relax.

One of the things we do here at Bell is on Fridays we do Dance Party Fridays. Literally every Friday at the cafeteria I'm the DJ. I play music and the kids when they're done eating they can dance or not...They can just listen to music. It's up to them. I chose to do it because it's a really fun way for me to get to know the kids in a different way than I would know them as a principal. So you'd be shocked at the things—I just sit on the stage with my iPad literally playing music over the P.A. in there. They'll tell me things that I wouldn't normally know about them. I see them making connections with people that they might not make connections for except for that that person is also dancing.

So, I'm going to go join them. The big kids tend to like the group dances for wobble or they like the safety in numbers dance where everybody's doing the same thing at the same time. So, you can see as the kids are little and their feet fly high when they dance and they do whatever. As they get older it starts to get a little less individual and a little more group wise as they get towards middle school which isn't bad at all.

It sort of developmentally makes sense but it's interesting to watch. It's interesting to have the conversations with the kids that I have. Sometimes I'll be knitting onstage and they'll want to know about that or I'll be crocheting something. Something that I have these great conversations with the kids but my

colleagues out there—other principals then their community here is that we're doing this really fun thing. Then a community member might say to you as the principal of another school “They're doing it at Bell. Why can't we do it here?” So, then I get from the other principals “Shut that down.” (Field Text TS1, pp. 27–28)

The value of this anecdote is to show that Stacey wants her students and her staff to feel like they all are one big family. A weekly event that is exclusive to her school, is exactly the type of activity that can bring a community together. It is why families have traditions and rituals. This weekly event is something that she brought to the school to help make their school a unique place. Another way that Stacey makes Bell unique in regards to music is in who takes music lessons.

A few years ago, Stacey had an idea and collaborated with the music department at Bell to see if it was feasible. What she wanted to do was to open the music lesson classes to the faculty. In her vision, teachers and students would be sitting in the same room at the same time, learning the same material. This had numerous benefits to it, but Stacey saw this experience as an invaluable tool and asset for her teachers for two reasons. One, they would be able to make a strong connection with a student in a completely different manner than usual. And two, it helped the teachers remember what it is like to learn something new and to struggle with learning something.

I don't know, I can't remember exactly how it came out, but somehow we came up with this idea that it'd be great to have access to kids in that way and to sort of learn along with them. And then for me it became a lot about like, we're teachers, we don't necessarily remember what it's like to be a student and learning an

instrument is just like, learning foreign language in my opinion. It's so different...I really enjoyed that time so much and sometimes... you feel like, okay, I have to go to a flute lesson....And [when I could not go to a lesson] they [the students] would come and teach me what I missed. And we would have conversations about the song. It was just—it was a really unique thing to do. I really liked it a lot. And I know the kids did too because we talked about it all the time . . . I think that people kind of went into it thinking like, that'd be fun and then realize like—and we purposely didn't say a lot about it because we wanted people to have their own aha moment. But I think that when people got into it and then like, oh wow, it's kind of hard and then we have great conversations about being learners and the challenges of that and practice and not practicing because the adults were not very good at practicing either. (Field Text TS2, pp. 16–17)

This anecdote illustrates an important aspect of Stacey's leadership perspective. She wanted the faculty to remember the difficulty one can have learning something new. Through the music course, the teachers remembered what it was like to struggle with learning, which helped them become better instructors as they were more cognizant and sympathetic to the plight of the struggling student. Another benefit of this experience is that it helped Stacey further develop the instructional practice of her teachers.

Helping Develop Teachers' Instructional Practice

Stacey's narrative and the meanings she derived from those experiences, show a strong belief in getting to know an individual before starting to help develop a teacher's instructional practice. Stacey described it this way:

I think most important one is just taking the time to have conversation, right? And there's a—when I first went in to grad school, I heard somebody say that people don't care what you know until they know you care and then the other thing that I heard was that if you spend like five minutes, twenty times in a row with somebody just talking to them like you have enough of a relationship with them to gain trust and I don't know where that came from, I have no idea. A long time ago, but I always practice that with my students, just taking the time to get to know them, talking about the new puppy or the cousin coming to visit.

Grandma's visiting, how's that going, tell me something great about your grandma—and it was always enough for me to get to know students and for the students to get to know me because I also would share things back with them.

That really helped to hinder problems...*There's a relationship up there. So, it's kind of the same with the teacher.* [emphasis added] (Field Text TS2, p. 5)

Stacey's perspective regarding how she helped develop a teacher's instructional practice is illustrated in her anecdote about Barry, a teacher in her school. Stacey understood that before she could help this teacher, she had to have a relationship with him and know his areas of strengths and weakness. It was only after a relationship was cultivated did Stacey feel as if she could truly assist the development of his instructional practice. Barry was a relatively new teacher to the building and community. He started his tenure there as a school-based sub while hoping to earn his credentials as a secondary special education teacher. After his experience within this specific school community, and working with Stacey, Barry decided he wanted to become an elementary school teacher, an outcome Stacey was sure would happen based on his experiences within her

school. Hiring him, however, was a little trickier than one would initially imagine due to him not having coursework in early childhood education.

So, it turns out he had to take few more classes and during that time, he had a couple different jobs here. At one point he was working as an assistant and he was working in the front office. So, he was like a half time, he's a help assistant, half-time secretary and he was finishing up school, finishing up schools, every chance he would get, he would go into the classrooms to learn more about teaching younger children while he is finishing up getting his license for now elementary. And then I was able to hire him in—as a first-grade teacher and he taught first grade and he was fine, typical first-year teacher issue like everybody has, but he did a great job. And then we departmentalized in the upper grades and he said I really want social studies, is there any way I could do social studies elementary and I said sure. So, he went in to teach fifth grade social studies.

(Field Text TS2, p. 8)

Although this was what Barry wanted, that maxim by Oscar Wilde unfortunately came true: “There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.” As he was transitioning to becoming the full time social studies teacher, there was some initial resistance from the parents due to a misperception of his ability.

And at the time that we had the conversation, to be perfectly honest with you, he was a little bit getting beat up by parents and not because of social studies, but because of writing. Also, he did social studies and writing. And parents were getting kind of—they were getting on him and one of the things that happened

and this is kind of like the backstory to it. So, a lot of the parents start talking about how when their kids are getting to middle school, they're worried about their writing. They feel like the kids weren't where they needed to be for sixth grade. (Field Text TS2, p. 8)

As a lifelong member of this small county's education department, Stacey could verify these concerns by contacting the middle school principals that accepted the kids from her school. They assured her that there was no additional concern about students from her school or that their writing was behind the other students.

And so we have a lot—I have lots of conversation[s] with parents about it. And what it ended up kind of getting to be in the neighborhood was that it was just [this] teacher's fault. And it also turned in to like, somebody said that the middle school teacher said that Bell kids were not ready in writing.

And both Middle Schools were like, your kids come to us just like all the other kids. There's no, nobody is talking about Bell kids, nobody is worried about Bell kids over other kids, you know that's silly. And I was like, I thought so, but wanted to confirm because my expectation would be that if my kids were coming to the next level sub-par, then somebody would come and tell me so I could fix it, to have them ready because that's my job here to get them ready for middle school. (Field Text TS2, p. 8)

Stacey brought these revelations back to her community and tried to explain how it could not all be this one person's fault as writing is a school wide based instructional practice that is built upon throughout their entire elementary experience. She explained to the parents:

There [has] never been a conversation about our kids not being where they need to be. And I said my other concern is that Barry is getting really beat up over this issue. And in fact, writing instruction starting in kindergarten through elementary. It doesn't start in fifth grade. So, to put it on one person is really unfair. (Field Text TS2, p. 8)

Stacey passed this along to Barry and told him exactly how he could solve this issue by sharing with him about how she reported to the parents, she let him know that she regarded him as a good teacher and was supporting him.

I said to Barry, you know I had the conversation in June with the parents. I think they're a bit better. I said, but you know, you need to be confident in what you're doing and you need to have your writing program down pat, you know that whole thing. Gave him a lot of coaching on it and then he looked to me and he said, 'I'm doing the best I can'. And I said 'that's not good enough' and said 'they deserve more. They deserve for you to be doing everything you can'. And he said, 'okay, okay, okay'. He leaves and then two days later came back and said, you're right, maybe it wasn't two days later, it was a couple of weeks later, right. He said, 'you're right, you're 100 percent right. I'm going to do everything I can' and he had a great year. (Field Text TS2, p. 8)

This anecdote illustrated how Stacey worked with Barry to help develop his instructional practice, in addition to developing his confidence as an instructor. In this manner, Stacey saw herself not only as a mentor, but as a coach to maintain his confidence. Her coaching continued and she never gave in until Barry started to grow and develop as an instructor.

I guess—I really do see myself in the coach a lot, like I feel like I'm here to like, those people kind of feel like, positive motivation and send them on their way. We talked a lot about his organization and how he—because he did half a quarter of social studies instruction, half a quarter of writing instruction and with integration of the two, right. We talked a lot about being organized about that, using Google Docs, making sure that the parents had access to the Google Docs so they could see the writing that their children were doing, and also about a weekly newsletter to the parents to make sure that they are reminded repeatedly that they have access to their children's writing because not a lot goes home now because it's all done on Google docs . . .

And so, lots about communication about what's going on and newsletter informing them of what's happening in his classroom each week. We talked about his plan from the beginning [of the school year]...So we talked about [pacing], we talked about the units start with, we talked a lot about thing that I like to use when I was a teacher with my kids. (Field Text TS2, p. 9)

Stacey proceeded to elaborate on her perspective regarding how she helped Barry grow his confidence, by focusing on coaching him up in three separate incidents during the conversation.

I just try to like coach him through it to help him how to implement rapid turnaround and grow their confidence . . . I think in this case, I think he needed the extra help because his confidence was shot . . . I think his confidence, he just—he felt beat up and I think he just needed a little confidence boost. (Field Text TS2, p. 9)

Stacey helped him gain confidence because she knew him well enough to know that's what he needed to become a better instructor. Stacey is the type of leader teachers want to work for as she makes all of her relationships with them personal to the point that they are like a giant family.

And that's the thing I like about my staff right now, like we have this—I mean I could probably tell you ten things about him right now in his life. And he could probably do the same about me, but even within that like I can still also let know when he's not where I want him to be. We have a good, a safe relationship I guess, right? I am always a little surprised when a teacher—have a teacher come in and say, oh my God I had a nightmare. You're yelling at me about blah-blah-blah and I'm like, had I ever yelled at you? I'm always shocked by that. I'm like, I don't remember. I was the only the teacher that ever—I don't believe in fear, right? I'm like, I'm always shocked when people have that because I'm like, what, I would never do that, but like that, we did have great conversation about things and it's safe. I can criticize or correct and it's not a threatening thing, it's more of, we have talk about this, it has to get corrected, let's get going. If he doesn't get corrected, then we're going to have a different conversation, kind of deal. And I find it very effective. That's kind of just who I am. (Field Text TS2, pp. 10–11)

Through her experiences with her family, her years as a classroom instructor and as an administrator, Stacey believes that without a safe environment in which people feel protected and cared for, learning is impossible. Therefore, she puts in the effort to create a familial environment within her school community. This was one factor in the school implementing professional learning communities.

Professional Learning Communities

In addition to getting to know something about every one of her teachers, Stacey also takes the time to place them in professional learning communities [based on grade] to create a family atmosphere amongst that team of teachers. While making, and mapping out the master schedule for the year, she also includes sacred time for her teachers to interact with one another. She does this as she believes the informal discussions that take place amongst staff can be invaluable for teachers, regardless of their current level of development.

I designated specific time for their professional learning communities. These were the color times. This is a rough draft of it. So, this is first grade. This is kindergarten, third grade, fifth grade, fourth grade, second grade and these are times that cannot be touched. So no matter what these are sacred times. You cannot touch these times because those are professional learning community times. By doing that it also told the reading specialists, the ESOL teachers and the gifted teacher, these are the times you need to be at these meetings . . . They're held the same time every week—no questions that kind of thing. (Field Text TS1, p. 25)

In addition to these professional learning communities, she also asks her staff once a month to have a cross-over meeting so that first grade can meet with second grade, second can meet with third and so on. This is to ensure that the years are scaffolding off each other.

They're not the same times each year but they have designated time—sacred time—plus one staff meeting each month is designated. So, that they can meet with the third can meet with fourth, and fourth can meet with fifth and

kindergarten can meet with first. First can meet with second. Second can meet with third because we're not our own little islands of grades....We have to scaffold. We need to know what each other is doing. One staff meeting a month goes to that and then each week they meet twice a week to talk about language arts one week and math the other. (Field Text TS1, p. 26)

To bolster and supplement the professional learning community work, Stacey also asks her staff to use Google Docs for all these meetings so that anyone in the school can see how and what the other grades/classes are doing and how their work fits into the scope and sequence for the bigger picture.

Stacey’s Experiences Illustrated

To assist understanding how temporality, sociality and place influenced Stacey’s perspective as a school principal, the following table synthesizes the experiences Stacey described that influenced her approach to leadership. These events are not the only moments of influence in her life; however, they are the ones discussed in this chapter.

Table 2

Narrative Analysis of Stacey’s Experiences through the Three-Dimensional Space with added Influence of those experiences

<u>Experience</u>	<u>Temporality</u>	<u>Sociality</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Lessons Learned</u>	<u>Influential ideas/practices</u>
Grand-glue	Young girl	With her grandmother and extended family	Home	One person can be the bridge that brings many people together.	As a school leader, she wants everyone working together as a cohesive, family unit.

Her elementary school principal	During her childhood	Just him	School	Principals should not just sit in their office all day – they have to interact with the staff and students.	To help her teachers, she has to know them and be approachable.
Her kindergarten teacher	Entering school for the first time	Ms. Walsh	Elementary School	How to be a teacher.	How to bring out the best in everyone – giving people individual attention and making them feel special.
Experience – fight with her mom	When she was a teenager	Mom	Home	Her mom felt like she was disrespected and waited for Stacey to act properly again before continuing to talk with her. This taught her to always treat others with respect.	Stacey learned how to talk to people, even when you are frustrated or annoyed at them
Talk with husband about administrators being teachers	10 or so years ago	Her and her husband	Private conversation	She understood that the role of a principal is fundamentally the role of a teacher.	It helped her understand how she didn't have to give up being a teacher to become an administrator.

Music class	Over the past few years	Her, staff and students	At the school	They all took beginning lessons together so that the teachers would remember what its like to be a struggling student	Sometimes teachers need to remember what it is like to learn and this experience put them into positions to learn alongside their students.
Encounter with a teacher in her school	Two years ago	“Barry”, parents, scholastic community	school	Some teachers need coaching and help with self-esteem, in addition to pedagogy. This is important as principals have to be able to assist in a myriad of ways.	Doing whatever is necessary to help her teachers grow and improve – sees herself as a coach/mentor for students and teachers.
Create professional learning communities	The past few years	Her staff	At the school	Working together enables more to get done than working in isolation	Put the teachers into teams to help them grow and develop their instructional practice

Interpretations for Stacey

One can immediately understand how or why people would want to work for Stacey and in this building. Although Stacey presents herself in a subdued and reserved manner, her passion for children and helping them grow is the fulcrum of her leadership.

This makes her very cognizant of the needs of the teachers in her school as she believes the best way to prepare the students for their next step is by having a great teacher in every classroom. She also believes that for a teacher to become excellent in their craft, she needs to be aware and concerned with the development of that teacher's instructional practices. As she stated in her second narrative collection, "I feel like these are my people to take care of. You know and you need to take care of your family, then things are better for everybody, right?" As she detailed her perspective on this topic, she made it clear that she wants to be part of the solution to any problem her teachers might encounter. "If there is a problem and I don't know about it, I can't help fix it and I do see myself as part of the fix" (Field Text, TS2, p. 5). Stacey made it clear she views herself as the mom of the school, and like every good mom, she takes an individual interest in all of her "kids." "So I do feel like I am sort of the mom of that" (Field Text TS2, p. 5). She further stated:

The do's were to make every child feel like they were the special child in the classroom. That's I think the greatest gift that any teacher or administrator can give to anybody. If you feel like you're the greatest teacher in this school, you're going to work your butt off to be the greatest teacher in the school. Same with the children. (Field Text TS2, p. 5)

As a mother's job is never done, Stacey is always looking for ways to help her students, teachers, and the greater community of her school. She views an important part of her job is "to teach people what your expectations are or maybe teach them a different thought process... So I hope that, that lends to being a good administrator. (Field Text TS1, p. 4). Albeit every teacher wants to succeed, there will be times when they struggle or have

moments of doubt about their teaching. Stacey is sensitive to those needs and takes on the role of academic coach.

When teachers need assistance in their instructional practice, Stacey does not want to yell or scream or write them up and make them feel small. Rather, she wants to help them stand tall by allowing them to see their mistakes and how to correct them. “So I guess—I really do see myself in the coach a lot, like I feel like I’m here to like, those people kind of feel like, positive motivation and send them on their way (Field Text, TS2, p. 9). She also knows that if her staff is going to listen to her advice or opinion, then they have to trust her. “The trust that you have is really probably the most important thing about the success of this job or the lack of success of this job” (Field Text, TS1, p.1). Trust amongst and between the members of her school community was something very important for Stacey to cultivate as she was aware that if they didn’t trust her, they would not work up to their potential. Therefore, she ensured that everyone has someone they can go to for help. She was quick to point out that each teacher has “somebody trusted that they can go to as a mentor to help them with the things they need help with or to guide them in the curriculum areas that they need guidance for” (Field Text, TS1, p. 2).

Stacey knew as a child observing her teachers in her school environment that she wanted to be a teacher and took note of what she liked and disliked about her school experiences. Between her family upbringing and her early experiences with education, helping others and being willing to help them are traits that permeated Stacey’s life. It is interesting from Stacey’s story, how she acknowledges her mental notebook that represents her childhood observations of teachers and principal practices.

I literally analyzed every teacher growing up and couldn't wait to either emulate them or do completely the opposite of what they do. I kind of kept a mental notebook—if you will—of the do's and don'ts in my mind of what I wanted.

(Field Text TS1, p. 2)

Stacey's personal and professional experiences clearly influenced her life and perspective as an educator, let alone a school principal. Because her teachers feel supported, valued, and cared for, she has very little teacher turnover.

I don't have staff turnover. That's the other thing --that's I think the biggest thing that I have going for me here [*laughter*] is that I don't have staff turnover...

Teachers don't typically leave which is the best thing I have honestly that's the hardest thing I think is to constantly fill your school with new teachers. We've been a growing school. So I've been able to add teachers but I'm not losing my solid base (Field Text, TJ1, pp. 8-9).

This is an important aspect to Stacey as she believes that if you can't maintain your staff, then every year is like a brand-new year and the students are the ones who suffer as the new teachers learn about their environment and community. Due to her ability to work with the teachers on an individual basis and to make sure they are each paired with someone who can assist them when necessary, she also works hard on keeping her staff together, just like a family. When talking about her grandmother, Stacey commented about why she was so beloved and the same could be said for Stacey amongst her school community. As she said about the role her grandmother played in influencing her life, “She was kind of the one who always sort of problem solved and wanted to make everyone [was] happy and she was very respected” (Field Text, TS2, p. 3). Stacey is

successful in her position as a school principal because she has a genuine care and concern for her students, which is expected, but those feelings also extend to her staff, teachers and greater community.

Stacey's Narrative

Stacey is an excellent leader of adults because she takes the time to get to know each member of her community or family. Much like her large, blended family, she views the school community in a similar manner. Everyone might have their own agenda and belief in the best way to get something done, but when necessary, everyone will push their ego and agenda to the side and work together for the greater cause and good. Stacey created an environment where this could thrive by helping her staff to communicate with one another through formal and informal scenarios, by having them take classes with their students and by remembering what it was like to be a student, but more so a struggling student. In some scenarios, the creaky wheels get the grease and the same analogy could be used for students: the best and the worst get most of the attention while the average student can blend into the picture. Not so in Stacey's school. She makes sure that every child knows they are cared for and known by their teachers. She models this behavior by not only knowing every child in her school, but the teachers as well. Furthermore, she provides her teachers with opportunities for them to acknowledge and understand where they need to improve without having to talk down or yell or reprimand the teacher for a poor performance. She gives the teachers the latitude to be self-directing of their growth to help them solve current problems in their classroom. This understanding of how to reach adults was influenced by her experiences with her family as well as her work.

Jean's Story: Field Text

Jean's story begins with her family. She has two parents and an adoptive brother who have clearly influenced her perspective and views on the world, how to treat others, and what or who defines a family. In addition to her family playing a large role in her professional orientation towards the development of teachers' instructional practice, her religious views have also influenced her choices. Due to these influences, Jean has always been a natural leader and one who looks for positions of leadership in whatever group she decided to participate. Additionally, Jean has educated herself to the pinnacle of her profession and earned a Doctorate in Administration and Supervision. She is currently the principal of an extremely diverse (both culturally and socio-economically) Pre-K-5 elementary school for the past seven years and her leadership goals are focused on how she can "help you help the student" (Field Text, TJJ1, p. 5). Additionally, her focus as a school leader is centered on eliminating the achievement gap.

Family

Jean's parents and upbringing are a large part of who she is and how she became the person she is today. Her parents always encouraged her (and her brother) to see the best in others, to try to see things from their perspective and to be non-judgmental towards others as you will never truly understand the totality of what that other person is going through. She began her story detailing the influence of her family:

My mom was a teacher and my dad was in the military and they were always respectful of others and their differences, being open-minded, modeling that for my brother and myself, making sure that you listen to people, learning that you

learn from mistakes but that is learning. They're really amazing. So, they were a very positive influence.

Being generous, generous, generosity. They always said, that reminded my brother and myself that part of what we have is that who we are, but it just happened to be the times and place and to whom we were born, so not to get too proud of yourself but remember that, you need to be grateful that we happened to be very lucky and should keep that in mind, not to take anything for granted.

(Field Text TJL2, p. 6)

She furthered the influence of her parents a little later by stating:

And my parents are very, very, very nonjudgmental. Constantly reminding, well, I'm sure that person is doing the best, you know, that they can do or that's their background...but [understanding] that no one wants to not do their best. (Field

Text TJL2, p. 6)

This perspective influenced Jean to be aware of her blessings; not everyone has the same opportunities and empathy for the struggle that others are experiencing, is a valuable lesson for everyone to learn. Her empathy towards others and the desire to help them is one of her guiding principles. Her father would remind her:

I will never know his story because only he has lived it . . . Oh, but I don't even know it because I know—no, I don't have his—I didn't experience. I didn't experience it, we each experienced our own thing, so even his childhood or his middle years and his adulthood or even his interactions with me come with his own experiences, history, understanding, it's really phenomenal if you think about

it, right? Like, that we each go through the world connected but living our own view of things. (Field Text TJL2, p. 8)

Another family lesson she learned is that family is not necessarily a blood relation. This lesson was illustrated through the adoption of her older brother, but also through the repeated actions of adoption throughout her family. She described her family thusly:

Actually, all of both sides of my family, my dad's side and my mom's side, all have adopted children in their family. Like my cousins, they're adopted, biological and adopted children from both sides, which is another testament to my family, both nuclear and extended being really open to accepting others and wanting to share their care. (Field Text TJL2, p. 7)

Through the lessons she learned from her family, she forged a bigger understanding of what the term family means and who it includes. As a school principal, she wants to make everyone feel like they are part of her family. She took these familial lessons to heart as family and religion are a major aspect of her core values.

Congruence of Family and Religion

Jean grew up in a religious family that practiced a Jesuit faith. Those religious teachings she encountered, were similar to the lessons her family expressed. This caused her to see an overlap between family, religion and what was important to her in life. "My core values are find God in all things . . . find God in all things, that the world is beautiful and take care of others, take care of others always" (Field Text TJL2, p. 5). When asked to further elaborate on this idea, she stated: "Probably my Jesuit upbringing. My family always, always encouraged us, my parents always, to be kind, to seek understanding, be

patient” (Field Text TJJ1, p. 1). She further elaborated on this point when talking about what she sees as her main priority to being an effective school leader:

You have a core of who you are but then a public reflection and with learning from experiences, you can go back to that core but you are constantly evolving. People are constantly learning. My leadership style is to find people who know more than I know, and about different content areas, the experts in the classroom, the expert leads and to facilitate the conversation and to really have a clear vision. Like my goal is to keep the focus on student learning and high expectations and helping people to grow as in their teaching or their leadership. So, my goal is to help facilitate that. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 1)

As she articulates so well, although she has core values, she is also very open to experiencing new things or perspectives as that is how she can better herself as a leader, and therefore better help the students. Her willingness to admit that she doesn’t have all the answers and is continuously working on improving herself and her knowledge base allows her to have honest relationships with her faculty about their instructional practice. What is interesting about Jean’s story is that wanting to help others is not something that Jean picked up as an adult, but was always a part of who she is.

High School and College

During her formal schooling years, Jean was a coxswain on the crew team and was an officer for her sorority. When asked why she chose those positions, it became clear that Jean was starting down a path of leadership that ultimately helped her reach the apex of her profession. As she stated:

I think a combination of things and it's hard to think about my 16-year-old self as a 41-year-old. Just so thinking back, it's hard for me to think what I was thinking then. Does that sound cerebral, but I think being a part of things perhaps or friendships being involved, current friendships being involved, future friends, I don't—honestly, I don't know. *I think it was just, I don't know, part of who I was* [emphasis added]. (Field Text TJJ2, p. 4)

Jean has searched for leadership positions all her life. Whether it was her professional or personal role, this was the persona she adopted. She furthered this point when later stating:

I think being the role of a coxswain was about bringing people together right? And that is part of what I do now also. And that you're part of a true team knowing that one person is the boss and the rest have to vote, so that function well so the coxswain is really to make sure everyone is together. And that, that was my job as the coxswain, and that's kind of what my job is now. (Field Text TJJ2, p. 4)

Jean could clearly articulate and explain how she found these positions and why they appealed to her. "In my sorority, I was in charge of, what was my job, Vice President of something or the other. And like in my dorm I was an RA. . . like, *I've always had leadership experience* [emphasis added] (Field Text, TJJ1, p. 16). Jean knew, early on in her life, based on her upbringing, family values and knowing herself that she was born to lead.

Learning How to Lead a School

Jean's experiences prior to starting her career in education provided an opportunity to hone her leadership skills. As she clearly articulated, her experience on the crew team taught her that to maximize potential, everyone needs to be working together. Albeit a coxswain is not a coach, it is a position that brings the team together. Some of the skills she learned as a coxswain she later adapted to formulate some coaching skills into her leadership role. Before everyone can work synergistically, an effective leader must know their staff so that they can help develop their skills along the way. She explained:

You have to follow where they are and know where they are and adjust your instruction to meet their needs with the goal in mind, like whatever they needed to learn, having—and then figuring out what you needed to do to get there, but you have to know where they are to get there. And then going with it like recognizing having feedback loops, having an understanding of what they know and what they don't know... letting them show you where they are and then going from there to get that goal. (Field Text TJJL1, p. 3)

She continued explaining how knowing the individual and trying to understand the world and therefore their actions from their perspective is only possible if you know that other person. This causes her to cater her work with her teachers based on their needs, a trait of a "learning leader" and a way of bringing everyone together because they trust her. As she described her actions in regards to helping facilitate teachers' instructional practice:

If you need work on classroom management in transition times; then I will call a behavior specialist; or have a staff member who really has quite a bit of training

in responsive classroom; or we'll ask for someone from the district to come; or I'll send you to a workshop for a couple of days; or we'll print out articles; or I'll pair you out with the teacher who has a great classroom management with transitions and you can spend the day going through different classes. I'll send you to another school and you can observe there. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 4)

She continued the idea of how knowing the staff and providing options based on their needs is the only way to effectively lead. She makes the point that without knowing who they are, you would not know how to help them. She further elaborates on her leadership practices:

I know them, like I spend time with them. I attend meetings with them. I will—if you need to go do something, I'll take over your class if you're behind...or need to go finish paperwork I'll pop in and do that. I spend a lot of time walking and talking and knowing people. It's challenging. When we have this, it's more challenging now. Like now, I feel like my job isn't necessarily that I have to know everybody, but I have to make sure that everybody knows someone. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 6)

Due to this intimate knowledge of her teachers and staff, Jean implements coaching practices as one of the skills to develop instructional practice based on their individual need. Jean explained:

Everyone has strengths and if you can just capitalize on their strengths and find their strengths, nobody wants to do a bad job when they're working with children. So, they're open to coaching. They're open to professional development. They're open to conversations with colleagues. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 21)

Based on this story, one can say that Jean believes one person who is not in sync with the goals of the group can literally cause a hindrance in reaching the set objective. This requires a principal who is willing to bring the different groups of people together and to help them see that together they are stronger than they are separate. Jean ensures that everyone is working together by bringing everyone into the fold. She accomplishes this by treating her teachers, assistants, custodians, classroom aids, etc. as equal partners in helping the kids reach their potential. When asked how many teachers do you supervise, she provided an interesting answer:

I don't even—it's funny because people ask like how many classroom teachers do you have? And I actually have to think about that because they're all working together. Like it's not like I know off hand how many assistants I have, how many classroom teachers I have. I know how many people I have that are working towards helping children and teaching children. So, I don't know. I don't know. Like, I don't know. People asked me that and it annoys some people, like, how many teachers I have. I don't keep a tab of that . . . Yeah, we don't separate by skill. Like everybody, like, we make sure that there are lunchroom teachers and recess teachers, like the hourly employees who work in the cafeteria, the assistants, *everybody is a teacher. Like, the kids don't differentiate by pay scale or degree. They're just all my teachers.* [emphasis added] (Field Text TJL1, p. 7)

This inclusive perspective on her school helps foster a sense of community and togetherness that makes her school the success that it is. When teachers work together, are treated and viewed with respect, and treated professionally, anything is possible. This

is why Jean works so hard on making her school as inclusive as possible. Jean elaborated on how she came to learn this lesson over time on the job.

I am here to make sure that everyone is happy, engaged, healthy and learning.

And this is—and as a professional, this is what the research says. So, I went to do what we need to do to make sure that children are in those things. So, it's just a process. But seven years ago, I would have been faster through that process to get to the end. Now I realized people need time to catch up . . . I would want to just get there and do it because I was the—we're going to do it because I was the principal and I could. But now I realized if I really want people to come along with me, I'm going to have to meet them where they are. I knew that . . . I knew it, but I didn't practice it. Now, I practice it. That's a big change. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 27)

She continued this thought by further connecting the importance of relationships within teaching and how those relationships make learning possible. Even though she knew she had to work with her teachers rather than having them work for her, it still took her some time to understand how the individual relationships she has with the faculty make all this possible. This lesson in teamwork and working together was heavily influenced by her prior experience as a coxswain. As she related this connection:

And I think when it comes to education that is key. That's it, like, I said like there you go. For instance, when you're talking about relationships, I know that team [work] is a value that you mentioned and to me. We have that shared value. That teacher still doesn't know everything [about what] those children are bringing and

children don't know everything that adults are bringing and you have to make that connect—you have to find that connection.

You have to put the time into learn about the child, and I have to put the time in to learn about the teacher and the child, that we all have to find those relationships and connections if we're to . . . crew is a perfect example. If we are all going to start at the exact same split second so the boat moves forward because if someone is behind, they often have trouble with the water and that slows everybody else down, you won't get anywhere. You have to work together towards the greater good. (Field Text TJL2, pp. 8–9)

Part of leading a school is getting the teachers to work together. Jean's experiences address how she learned this lesson and why the meaning of that lesson was so valuable. Relating it back to her coxswain days, she extended the metaphor of the oars in the water all hitting their stride at the same time to maximize speed and movement; this is incredibly analogous to how she works on getting her teachers to work as a cohesive unit, while also helping them as individuals to continuously develop their teaching practices. Jean organized professional learning communities within her school based on grade. Through these informal conversations the teachers discuss student work and performance to ensure they are all reaching the same goals.

Developing Teachers' Instructional Practices

Jean was able to get everyone to work together by first taking the time to get to know them as individuals, and she used that knowledge to facilitate them working closer together in professional learning communities. Her decision to use grade based professional learning communities came from her own research into how to help develop

teachers. Jean schedules time for teachers in a grade to work together in a small professional learning community as well as time for the entire school to meet in a larger professional learning community.

Oh, that just—that's just through research based practice, but that it's been around for years into just good practice. So, we really needed to get on board with that, having teachers having time for reflection and sharing a student work and reflection on their practice has been shown again and again to be so important for student learning. (Field Text TJL2, p. 15)

She explained how her school goes above and beyond in regards to teacher collaboration time as it is beneficial for teacher discussions about students and best practices that can lead to changes in classroom practices.

Well, there's planning time for teachers. They have a certain—there's a policy in the county that has how many minutes they get. But reflection is really a part of a conversation we have at two meetings a week that are PLCs, Professional Learning Communities, where we will reflect on the student learning or what went well or what didn't go well. And then we also meet quarterly in addition to that. Once a quarter we meet as a team and really talk about it and then we reflect midyear on what's going well and what we need to change. We do that quarterly too and we reflect at the start of the next year on what went well, what we're going to keep or we're going to tweak. (Field Text TJL1, p. 3)

What makes Jean's professional learning communities so effective are that they are solely focused on the students and teaching. As she described a typical professional learning community meeting, it became clear that these informal gatherings were not only to help

further the development of the staff, but to also create stronger bonds between the teachers.

Sharing student data, being able to really talk about the camaraderie, having that shared focus on student learning, to having set up a time that's really dedicated to those conversations that's not interrupted by other things, like, we don't talk about field trips. We don't—or school things. We talked about students and their learnings . . . People have that peer accountability that all of the staff knows, what, where the children are and where are they headed. It's no longer my classroom. It's our students from my class versus your class, your students versus my student; it's our students, our children and that is priceless. When everyone knows the children and where they're headed. And it helps throw us new teachers to have someone who knows or the teachers who aren't as experienced to be on a team with other colleagues who do have a better understanding. (Field Text TJJ2, pp.15–16)

This is not to imply that there were no bumps along the way with implementing and using the professional learning communities approach in her school. As she described:

At the start, yes because they had to develop trust in the process and each other . . . I think the negatives would be at the start, feeling uncomfortable, their students weren't doing as well as other student or that mentality versus we're all working together for our students, but your class is better than my class, that's why they are doing better, sort of, conversations that were at the start of this process, making sure that we really focused on what we needed to focus on and not get

distracted by field trips or assemblies or conversations that were not directly related to student learning, that took time. (Field Text TJL2, p. 16)

By keeping the focus on the teachers, their actions and student learning, the professional learning communities provided an invaluable resource for helping to continuously develop teachers' instructional practices. And an effective school leader understands that this continuous development is a vital part of the learning process—especially when modeled by the “learning leader”—for everyone involved. As she described her own ongoing development as a leader:

It's continuous improvement. Like I'm continuously improving, the staff is continuously improving, teachers are continuously improving...So, I think every teacher is improving, struggling or experience for all growing and changing. What do I do to help teachers? Well, you have to have a positive presupposition that they didn't join the profession for anything other than helping children to learn and making sure that everyone is working and meeting the goal no matter what it takes, that it isn't based on the children's effort but it's based on their skills. (Field Text TJL1, p. 1)

This was later furthered when she stated:

I just needed to find a way to articulate my passion, which is children and learning. And it's not because—it's because it's right and good . . . it's really that I've always been passionate and empathetic for the underdog, and so I don't like to admit it but I'm kind of competitive. So, I want to do it and I want to do it really well. Like I want kids to learn and I want them to really learn like not just fluff. I want them to get it, love it, learn it. I want them to go out into the world and not

have any disadvantage because we didn't do our job teaching them something.

(Field Text TJJ1, p. 18)

Jean summarizes her responsibility towards helping teachers improve, as that will help students improve. "Yeah, like because you got to do it, like, it's not my job to stop the progress. *It's my job to facilitate it*" [emphasis added] (Field Text TJJ1, p. 19). This facilitation is fundamental towards improving teaching, and Jean has a great means of determining the quality of a teacher in her school.

Continuous Development of Instructional Practices

As previously stated by Jean herself, her goal is to eliminate the achievement gap (Field Text TJJ1, p. 1). Due to the diverse nature of her school, this is a daunting task, but one that Jean is passionate about. She believes that everyone should receive a top-notch education, regardless of race, culture or socio-economic-status. Subsequently, she is constantly working on helping her staff develop because she understands the damage a bad teacher can impose on a student and their learning potential.

There's some research that says that one bad year of teaching takes children two years to catch up (Muhammad, 2015), so on the third year they are behind of where they should have been . . . So, one year of a bad teacher and me knowing the bad teacher isn't good, it's really painful because I know that the children aren't learning. (Field Text TJJ2, p. 13)

Due to this knowledge, Jean is passionate about making sure every class is run by a quality instructor. "Like, I'm going to push you and if you don't know it, I'm going to help you learn it so that the child can learn. But you're not going to blame the kid" (Field

Text TJJ1, p. 17). She continued her explanation for why she pushes her staff to continuously develop as instructors.

The teachers here are, again, like, this is the hardest working staff. When we interview people, I'll say to them like, they'll ask about the school culture and I'll say, this is the hardest working staff. They are smart and they will do whatever it takes, like, we know how to have fun. We have a lot of fun. But we also know that this is a calling, like, this just isn't a paycheck, like, this is our calling.... We, those kids, they are going to—the children here are going to leave better people. They're going to leave reading on grade level, above grade level. They're going to know their math. They can compete with anyone. It doesn't matter. All that other baggage doesn't matter. We're going to do it. The counselors believe it . . . we are RAMP certified...people are allowed to be their own leaders here...if you want to do something, great . . . you want to do that? great, go do that. You want to do it, that's great. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 19)

As is evident in the anecdote above, Jean is aware that her staff is hard working and willing to try new things to help the students improve. What makes Jean an amazing leader is that she is willing to facilitate this idea, so long as it will benefit the children. She does not have a clear or predetermined set of teaching practices that she looks for in her staff, but rather allows them to grow as individuals, which means their ideas might sometimes not meet academic expectations. Those moments are times when she can step in to help that teacher understand how or where the lesson did not go according to plan. She further assists in teacher development by facilitating their instructional growth any

way she can, which is her duty as the school's "learning leader." As she stated regarding her actions to assist instructional practice:

Oh, buy the books. I'll attend one of the classes. I know when it's time for me to show up and when it's not. It depends on that if I want people to just freely, like, they're pretty free here actually with their conversation, but sometimes they just don't want me there. (Field Text TJL1, p. 19)

These are all approaches to how she goes about facilitating teacher growth and development of their instructional practice, but the question remains why is this so important to her?

As a principal Jean understands the important role of running a school. As a parent, she also understands where the parents are coming from; they want what is best for their children. Subsequently, Jean can relate to the anxieties and fears of parents sending their children, their most prized possession, into the care of someone else. Because of that, Jean tries to alleviate their concern.

First and foremost, she makes herself available to her staff, as well as the parents and the people within her community. This makes them feel like they can trust her as she is living in the moment with these parents, experiencing the same issues they have with their kids. In this regard, she very much sees herself as the matriarch of the school community as related in the following quote:

Oh, my goodness, the matriarch . . . seeing children at a boys scout, they had a boys scout game for all of the local troops in [referring to school system county] and I went with my son, my daughter, my husband and my son's troops and lo and behold a section over was the Grafflin troop. So, I had to play both roles,

take care of my family as a priority, but also take care of them. Say hello, talk to parents, talk to the children and receive emails from families on the weekend [when] their families are concerned...about health issues or deaths in families, divorce, illness, just being there. Not always having the answers but helping them to find someone who does . . . Being available, being loving them knowing that—knowing that I am available to hear their concerns and worries and that I love them unconditionally . . . Yeah, it's takes time and trust. My actions being a thing, seeing me at the baseball—at the baseball game Saturday night and knowing that I'm going to stop and say hello, that they can stop and say hello to me, knowing that I'm a person, I think that helps parents to connect with me, that I'm right there with them living, walking the life, living the parenting life with them. (Field Text TJL2, p. 19)

This approach to how she views herself within the school factors into how she helps develop teachers because of one very simple belief: is this teacher good enough for my children? If the answer is no, then she knows she has work to do to help that teacher grow. If the answer is yes, she can take solace in knowing that the kids are being well taken care of. As she articulated:

And what in—and would I would my children, my seven-year-old and my nine-year-old in that teacher's class, that's my, that's why I can honestly say about every teacher at Grafflin, I would be more than happy if my children had that teacher. Right, because if it's not good enough for my own two children, how could it be good enough for somebody else that's been trusting me to take care of their child. (Field Text TJL2, p. 13)

Whether they like or dislike her, agree or disagree with her choices as a school leader, knowing that the filter for excellence is whether she would be comfortable with any teacher in her school teaching her kids illustrates how hard she works at ensuring each teacher is reaching their pedagogical potential. She realizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to this development.

Just like her students, her teachers are going to need individual care and attention if they are going to continue their development as everyone is at their own place along the developmental line or scale. She is also aware that some teachers might need more help than others based on where they are with their own teaching development and experience. Hence, she looks at teacher professional development in a very similar fashion to how her teachers look at student development. As she detailed:

I was talking about defending the least or working for the least. And I thought that really resonated with me because that is really my job. Like what does the least need to make it equitable? It may not be the same, right? Like you might need five teachers to work with you and you might [need] some program that costs thousands of dollars in professional development to make sure that Adam is learning. But if that's what Adam needs to learn then we're going to do that.

Whereas this Adam might already know how to read and so we're going to give him a little more freedom in what he's doing. He's going to get some work with other people but not as intense. And he's going to be okay too. He's going to be engaged. He's going to have a lot of growth, but it's not my resources and time and energy are going to go into making sure that the least rises up to the one who

has the most. Like that's my job to help the teachers get that child here. (Field Text TJL1, p. 29)

This statement provides a wonderful illustration of how and why Jean is such an outstanding school leader. She is clearly concerned with her students, but she is just as concerned with her staff, her greater community and all the little pieces that go into making a school successful. Teachers want to work for her because they know she has their best interest at heart. This makes learning from her easier as she facilitates their learning based on their needs rather than dictating what she believes they need to know.

Jean's Experiences Illustrated

To assist understanding how temporality, sociality and place influenced Jean's perspective as a school principal, the following table synthesizes the experiences Jean described that influenced her approach to leadership. These events are not the only moments of influence in her life; however, they are the ones discussed in this chapter.

Table 3

Narrative Analysis of Jean's Experiences through the Three-Dimensional Space with added Influence of those experiences

<u>Experience</u>	<u>Temporality</u>	<u>Sociality</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Lessons Learned</u>	<u>Influential ideas/practices</u>
Family and God	Entire life	Family	Everywhere	Always look/find the positives in people. Never turn your back to someone in need. Be compassionate and generous.	Help everyone you can whenever you can and however you can.

Adoptive brother	Since he was 7	Family	Everywhere	Love has no bounds and it is important to make everyone feel loved and special.	Go the extra mile for your teachers as they are your work family. Treat them like you would your actual family members.
Coxswain	High school	Crew team	Water, high school	Working together and in synergy can maximize potential – when everyone works together anything is possible.	Helped create a team environment especially with plc which she oversaw to help get everyone working together
Sorority officer	College	Sorority sisters	Everywhere	Getting people to work together for a greater cause	How to keep people invested in activities they might not care for
Becoming a parent	Recently	Family	Everywhere	Being a parent is hard and constant. But also very rewarding. This changed her perspective on what was important.	Wants to be like a mom of the school – helping everyone reach their potential, but this work is hard and constant

Wanting her kids to be taught well	Recently	Family	Her school specifically	My teachers need to be good enough that I would feel comfortable sending my kids to them	Helps rededicate her energy to continuous professional development of staff and teachers
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Interpretations for Jean

Jean is warm, energetic, excited about teaching and clearly committed to not just helping students grow, but the staff as well. She talks with enthusiasm about her development and growth as an individual, and how that helped her grow as a leader. She takes an invested interest in her school, but more so, in the community her school creates. She has the best interest of everyone under her care and wants everyone to feel like they are part of the solution. She is incredibly self-aware and because of this she cultivates skills and talents of her staff that she believes would benefit the community. As she said, "...you are who you are, right? And then you hone those [skills] and reflect on them and you create a team that's balanced around that" (Field Text, TJJ1, p. 2). Her personal experiences growing up and later becoming a mother greatly influenced her actions and perspective regarding how to help facilitate the development of her teachers' instructional practices.

When she started discussing the influence of her parents, one could sense that they instilled in her a strong set of core values that she carried over in becoming a school principal.

My mom was a teacher and my dad was in the military and they were always respectful of others and their differences, being open-minded, modeling that for my brother and myself, making sure that you listen to people, learning that you learn from mistakes but that is learning. (Field Text TJL2, p. 6)

The lesson about learning from mistakes had a profound impact on the way she views the development of teachers' instructional practices as it shows how she views mistakes as part of the learning process. Not every administrator or school leader is that open-minded when it comes to learning from pedagogical mistakes. Thankfully, she uses herself as an example of this to help illustrate the potential of learning from a mistake.

But now I realized if I really want people to come along with me, I'm going to have to meet them where they are. I knew that . . . I knew it, but I didn't practice it. Now, I practice it. That's a big change. (Field Text TJL1, p. 27)

In addition to learning from ones' mistakes, her parents also taught her to be grateful for what they have and to be generous to those not as fortunate; "...so not to get too proud of yourself but remember that, you need to be grateful that we happened to be very lucky and should keep that in mind, not to take anything for granted (Field Text TJL2, p. 6). Because of this lesson, she is always willing to help those in need, whether it is classroom related or not. As she sees it, her responsibility is to facilitate the growth of her staff in any way she can; something that is only possible if you know them as individuals. This desire to help others is a way of life for Jean. Through her experiences and upbringing, the approach to always want to help has been instilled in her. She provided a clear explanation of her leadership practices:

I know them, like I spend time with them. I attend meetings with them. I will—if you need to go do something, I’ll take over your class if you’re behind how or need to go finish paperwork I’ll pop in and do that. I spend a lot of time walking and talking and knowing people. (Field Text TJ1, p. 6)

She later added to this when discussing developing instructional practices of her teachers: “it’s not my job to stop the progress. It’s my job to facilitate it” (Field Text, TJL1, p. 19). She spends time and energy getting to know something about everyone in her building, whether they are a child or adult. “You have to put the time into learn about the child, and I have to put the time in to learn about the teacher and the child, that we all have to find those relationships and connections” (Field Text TJL2, p. 8). Once she knows the teacher, she can then assist their instructional development by focusing on areas they need to improve. This personalized approach to developing instructional practice is a key tenet of her learning theory and role as principal. “So, it’s whatever the teacher needs to make sure that the student is learning. It’s never the students’ fault...the onus is on the teacher to figure out how to help the student” (Field Text, TJL1, p. 4) and the onus is on her to figure out how to help the teacher. Regardless of whether she is working with children or adults, she follows the ideal that she will “do everything we can to make sure that kids' needs are being met” (Field Text, TJL1, p. 9). In this manner, much like John and Stacey, Jean sees herself as a coach to her staff.

All three participants in this study believe that being a good coach means you know the strengths and weaknesses of individual staff so that you can put them in positions to succeed. Jean illustrated this perspective when she commented:

Everyone has strengths and if you can just capitalize on their strengths and find their strengths, nobody wants to do a bad job when they're working with children. So, they're open to coaching. They're open to professional development. They're open to conversations with colleagues. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 21)

During the first narrative collection Jean commented almost immediately on her perspective regarding professional growth as a teacher and school principal.

It's continuous improvement. Like I'm continuously improving, the staff is continuously improving, teachers are continuously improving....So, I think every teacher is improving, struggling or experience for all growing and changing.

What do I do to help teachers? Well, you have to have a positive presupposition that they didn't join the profession for anything other than helping children to learn and making sure that everyone is working and meeting the goal no matter what it takes, that it isn't based on the children's effort but it's based on their skills.

(Field Text TJJ1, p. 1)

This is a key factor in Jean's role as facilitator of teachers' instructional practice because it shows them that she is working in the trenches with them. Not only does she expect her staff to improve, but she is also constantly working on developing her leadership. Working in this honest manner with her staff and greater community helps make her approachable outside of the school, something that becoming a parent helped establish.

Becoming a parent changed the way she views her responsibilities in regards to the development of teachers' instructional practice. Jean works hard to ensure that every teacher in her school is good enough that she would feel comfortable if they taught her children. As she stated in her narrative:

...I would [want] my children...in that teacher's class, that's my, that's why I can honestly say about every teacher at Grafflin, I would be more than happy if my children had that teacher. Right, because if it's not good enough for my own two children, how could it be good enough for somebody else that's been trusting me to take care of their child. (Field Text TJL2, p. 13)

She hopes these actions show the parents and the greater school community that she is living their life, going through the same concerns and issues they have. She believes this makes her a stronger leader because the teachers, the parents and the greater community all understand that her actions are aligned with her core values of helping others, being generous and being available whenever they need assistance or help. Jean reveals her passion for connecting with her community.

Being available, being loving them knowing that—knowing that I am available to hear their concerns and worries and that I love them unconditionally . . . Yeah, it's takes time and trust. My actions being a thing, seeing me at the baseball—at the baseball game Saturday night and knowing that I'm going to stop and say hello, that they can stop and say hello to me, knowing that I'm a person, I think that helps parents to connect with me, that I'm right there with them living, walking the life, living the parenting life with them. (Field Text TJL2, p. 19)

Because Jean lives within close proximity to her school, she is highly visible to the parents, the teachers, and the children. She sees this as an asset because it humanizes her and makes her a member of the community, rather than just the principal of a school.

Jean's Narrative

Jean's story is a culmination of her life. Her actions have led her to where she is currently, a "learning leader" deeply concerned with ensuring every student and teacher under her care gets the attention they need. As she stated in the first meeting:

Everyone has strengths and if you can just capitalize on their strengths and find their strengths, nobody wants to do a bad job when they're working with children.

So, they're open to coaching. They're open to professional development.

They're open to conversations with colleagues. (Field Text TJJ1, p. 21)

Her boundless energy and genuine desire to help others makes people want to do their best, whether they are a child or adult in her building. She is a leader who models what she preaches and who is constantly learning on the job.

Chapter Summary

The question that framed this chapter is: *what personal and professional experiences inform and influence accomplished principals' efforts to develop teachers' instructional practice?* By using a narrative approach, the three principals who participated in this study identified and explained which personal and professional experiences influenced their actions to develop teachers' instructional practice. The researcher explored each participant's understanding of the creation of their leadership practice through their description of the context of each event through the three-dimensional sphere of temporality, sociality and place. The researcher organized the events discussed of each narrative in a chronological manner to illustrate how the experiences scaffolded off one another to help each participant define their principal identity.

Although these participants lead different schools with different populations and different age students, all three of these “learning leaders” recognize that to help improve student performance, students need well informed teachers. To facilitate the development of teachers’ instructional practice, principals need to create a safe learning environment.

Due to the inclusive atmosphere created by these leaders, each of their schools transformed into a location where staff and student performance thrive. The purpose of narrative inquiry is not to just record the life narrative of another; it is to see how that person made meaning of their experiences and how those experiences influence their perspective. These leaders independently reached the belief that making a personal connection with each teacher is a fundamental aspect of facilitating the development of teachers’ instructional practice and therefore a high functioning, quality school.

Even though these principals are all viewed as accomplished in their field, it was not the intent of the research to find commonalities among each story that was told; rather, the goal was to uncover how personal and professional experiences forged their identities as learning leaders. However, after reading these stories, it became clear that there were three commonalities throughout the narratives.

The first commonality that surfaced, was that each participant understood that great school leaders care about furthering the development of everyone in their building, not just the students. Each of these individuals created safe learning environments that fostered opportunities for the development of instructional practice using professional learning communities, continuous professional development, and individualized professional development.

The second commonality was that each principal became a unique learning leader created through their personal and professional experiences. As mentioned, each participant transformed into a learning leader, yet they each have their own style of a learning leader based on their own history and experiences.

The final commonality was that each principal made a conscious effort to cultivate relationships with their staff. This was due to their belief that if they did not know the individual teacher, then they could not help advance that person's instructional practice.

In the following chapter the researcher examines these stories in relation to the literature on how principals can facilitate the development of instructional practices and provides the essential meanings which surfaced during the overall narrative analysis and within each narrative collected.

Chapter Five: Interpretations, Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview

This research explored and examined how personal and professional experiences of accomplished school principals influence their actions regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice. This was accomplished by identifying principals who won the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award. Using those winners from 2014-2015, the researcher sent out invitations asking those principals if they wanted to participate in this study. The researcher used purposive sampling in making the final participant selection as described in Chapter 3, to assure diversity amongst the participants. The researcher then set up times with each participant to collect his or her narrative. This process was repeated as often as was necessary for the researcher to feel comfortable with understanding the narrative expressed by the participant. The data set, which consisted of field texts and analytic memos, was analyzed through the three-dimensional space of temporality, sociality and place as described by Clanindin (2013). This chapter details the connection to the literature discussed in Chapter Two, Researcher Interpretations, Interpretations for John, Stacey, and Jean, Researcher Bias, Conclusions and Recommendations.

Connection of Findings to Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to learn how personal and/or professional experiences of accomplished principals impact their actions in regards to the development of teachers' instructional practice. Accomplished principals, those defined as recipients of the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leader Award for the

years 2014-2015, were invited to share personal and/or professional experiences that influence how they facilitate the development of teachers' instructional practice.

Educational research implies students learn more and reach greater achievement when they have a highly qualified instructor (Coburn, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). The principal as instructional leader gained more importance when scholars began to examine the relationship between instructional leadership and improvements to teaching and learning (Heck, 1992; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987, 1988; Supovitz et al., 2010).

Further studies affirm, a principal should be an instructional leader responsible for coordinating, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Honig, 2012). The significance for a principal to take the role of instructional leader was made evident by a study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) which found that only "12–27 percent of teachers in 2000 believed that the professional development provided by their districts actually improved their teaching" (p. 369).

Effective school principals create and allow the conditions for maximized learning for students and teachers. They understand that facilitating instructional development is the best way to improve student achievement (Khan & Iqbal, 2013; Lazaridou & Iordanides, 2011; Shen et al., 2012; Terosky, 2013), and therefore make it a priority to focus on the development of teachers' instructional practice. As stated in Chapter One, school "leadership is found to be second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning, accounting for about 25 percent

of total direct and indirect effects on student learning” (Shen et al., 2012, p. 3). These findings bolstered previous research conducted by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), who found that 6.25 percent of the variance in student achievement is accounted for by principal leadership (Shen et al., 2012). There is a strong correlation linking school principals who establish, promote and reinforce an academic vision with professional learning for teachers and student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Donaldson, 2013; Hallinger, 2005; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Neumerski, 2012; Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Terosky, 2013; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004).

As stated in Chapter Two, Terosky conducted a qualitative study that included interviews, surveys, observations, and document analysis of 18 New York City K–12 public school principals, and found that participants who initiated a learning imperative which valued the development of professional growth for the adults, student scholarship flourished. In another study, conducted through semi-structured interviews with 30 principals over two states, Donaldson (2013) found that principals who focused on professional development encountered fewer barriers to developing teachers’ instructional practice.

Klar and Brewer (2013) noted in their mixed methods study of three high-need schools, that developing teachers instructional practice is possible when principals focus on helping individual teachers develop instructional practice. “Thus, a key implication is that good leaders are adept at listening to stakeholders and understanding the nuances of the contexts in which they work” (p. 801). An effective principal is one who develops the instructional practice of a teacher based on the needs of that individual teacher. This

study continued work by May and Supovitz (2011) whose study explored and examined the scope of principal efforts to improve classroom instruction. Their findings were that principals who worked closely with their staff had a greater impact on transforming the teaching practice(s) than when they solely provided universal professional development for the entire faculty. These findings illustrate that effective practices for principals to further the instructional practice of their teachers' follows the idea initially expressed by Glickman (1981), who believed that the principal should have the same relationship with his or her teachers that they ask teachers to have with their students. This behavior was evident in the participants' choices regarding how they develop teachers' instructional practice.

All three participants in this study acted in a manner consistent with the literature regarding how effective principals further the development of teachers' instructional practice. They each created environments where learning flourished for students as well as adults by: establishing professional learning communities; providing opportunities for collaboration; developing teachers instructional practice based on pedagogical needs; and emphasizing that professional development is an ongoing process for themselves, as well as their teachers.

Documented in educational studies of principal experiences regarding their actions in the development of teachers' instructional practice are historical trends and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, formerly known as the ISLLC standards. What remained unclear was how personal and or professional experiences influenced principal behavior regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice. Therefore, this study made contributions to our understanding of how three principals'

experiences shaped their actions to develop teachers' instructional practice (See Figure 1). Figure 1 represents the researcher's conceptual framework for the study and is consistent with the literature on effective principals.



Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for How Experiences Influence and Inform the Actions of Accomplished School Principals Regarding the Development of Teachers' Instructional Practice.

This was the original conceptual framework for the study. It included four spheres of influence on effective principal actions to develop teacher instructional practice. These actions originally included spheres for: historic context for principal actions to develop instructional practice; national standards influencing principal actions to develop instructional practice; personal experiences that influence principal actions to develop teachers' instructional practice; and professional experiences that influence principal actions to develop teachers' instructional practice. After conducting the study and

reviewing the answers provided from the participants, it became apparent that the conceptual framework needed to be revised.

The revised conceptual framework includes the data found within this research project, which is that although historical context and standards influence principal actions, the major factor in how principals develop instructional practice was their personal and professional experiences. The personal and professional experiences influenced principal actions by guiding their behaviors that create a safe learning culture and environment as those are paramount in developing teachers' instructional practice. If the staff does not feel safe or supported, it is difficult for learning to occur. This is not new information for principals. The ISLLC standards for principal actions included creating a safe environment for both students and teachers (standard 5). In 2015, when ISLLC evolved into the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, creating a safe learning environment became dispersed throughout the standards as a safe environment fosters the opportunity to learn. Creating a safe working atmosphere for the teachers in the school means the principal shows care and concern for teachers. Additionally, this assures the teachers that they will not be disciplined for taking an academic risk or attempting a new teaching design or approach. The teachers also know the principal will support them in their development of instructional practices and that the principal has their best interest at heart. These are traits associated with being a caring leader (Uusiautti, 2013; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Blasé & Blasé, 2000, 1999; Hargreaves, 1998; Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992).

These three participants ensured they had a safe learning environment for their teachers by: taking the time to learn about the individuals who make up the staff;

modeling what they preach (walking the walk); treating the teachers in a manner they ask the teachers to treat the students; working with the teachers on an individual basis based on their instructional needs; and by creating professional learning communities that were dedicated to learning. They reached these decisions based on historical context for principal actions, standards that guide principal behavior and their personal and professional experiences. Ultimately, these principals acted in a manner consistent with an idea initially stated by Theodore Roosevelt and will be further discussed later in the paper: “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”. Although the historical context for principal actions and the standards that influence principal behavior do impact principal actions regarding how they develop teachers’ instructional practice, the biggest influences in the actions of these three participants were their personal and professional experiences. Thus, a modified conceptual framework was needed to illustrate the key findings of the study, which is available on the following page.

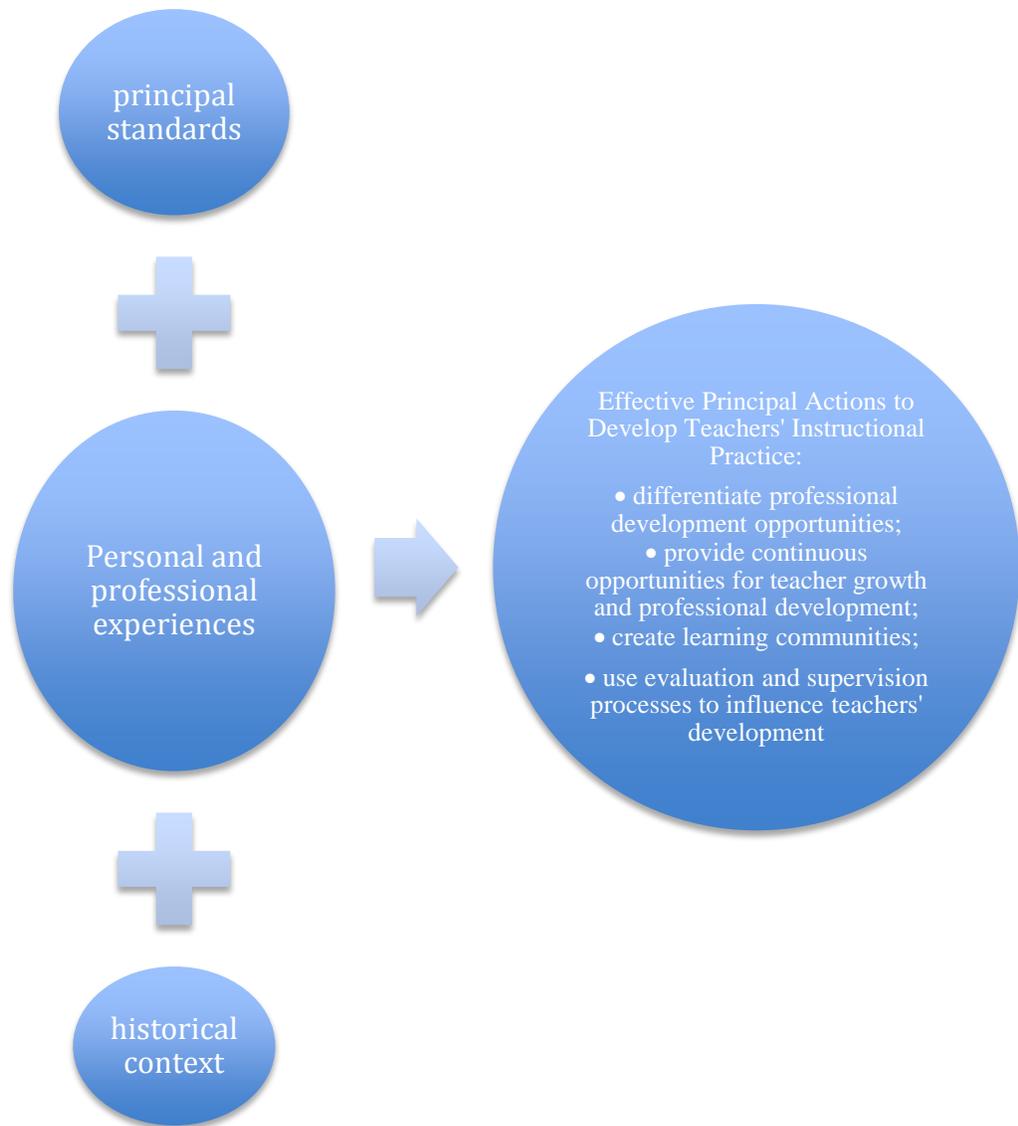


Figure 2. A Revised Conceptual Framework for How Experiences Influence and Inform the Actions of Accomplished School Principals Regarding the Development of Teachers' Instructional Practice.

This framework modifies the original material found when investigating the actions principals take to develop instructional practice. The stories that the principals told, indirectly included historical context of principal actions and principal standards; however, these influences were much less prevalent in their stories while personal and/or professional experiences dominated their narrative. What this study further illuminated is that personal and professional experiences have a larger influence than historical context of principal actions or principal standards on principal behavior regarding how they facilitate the development of teachers' instructional practice.

Researcher Findings

This study explored what experiences influenced three school principals to become “learning leaders”. The researcher understands that each participant has taken an individual road to reach their current perspective as a learning leader and the investment they've made in the development of teachers' instructional practice. The researcher is very thankful that the participants were willing to share their narrative of what experiences influenced their actions or perspective regarding their role in the development of teachers' instructional practice. It must also be noted that experiences have ripple effects on any individual. Meaning, that an experience one has as a child can drastically impact their life or perspective as an adult. Therefore, these interpretations can be challenging—it can be difficult to understand how an event that occurred 20 years ago is still influencing the actions of today. This Deweyan perspective on the influence of experience was explored by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) who stated:

Experiences do not simply appear to be connected through time; they are continuous . . . Narrative inquiries explore the stories people live and tell. These

stories are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person's inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history. (pp. 40–41)

They furthered this point a little later by stating:

Framed within this view of experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted." (pp. 42–43)

By its structure, narrative inquiry is a singular focus. Individuals create their own perspective on the world based on their experiences. "People's narratives reflect not only their own meaning making but the scripts of society or culture in which they live" (Bach, 2007, p. 292). This point was bolstered by Elbaz-Luwish (2007) who stated, "the understanding of the individual cannot be fully realized without a simultaneous consideration of context" (p. 359). This is why temporality, sociality and place play such a vital role in understanding and analyzing the context of each narrative. It is through these pieces of information that a larger understanding of an event and its context is possible. It was through these stories and their larger context of temporality, sociality, and place that these individuals could articulate, understand, and create their leadership identity.

It is important to recall that this study employed a form of narrative analysis where the result of the research is to create a story detailing key moments of the individual's experiences through the ideas of temporality, sociality and place. As stated in Chapter Three, "the aim of narrative analysis is to produce stories as the result of research.

The focus is on constructing a narrative configuration of the data into a temporally organized whole” (Leeferink, Koopman, Beijgaard, & Ketelaar, 2015, p. 338). This means that each participant will have their own story as their journey and experiences are specific to that one individual. Subsequently, “the participant is the authority on the meaning in the text,” however, “after meeting(s) with the participants, the text belongs to the researcher and what we write is our interpretation of it. We take full interpretive authority for our understanding of it” (Josselson, 2007, pp. 548–550).

General Findings and Case Specific Findings

The participants in this study were identified as outstanding in their field, therefore the researcher can interpret that they are each excellent school principals. The conceptual framework that represented the research undergirding this study aligned with the findings of effective principal actions. Specifically, these participants established and created valuable professional development opportunities based on the needs of the teachers, such as an individualized professional development plan and the use of professional learning communities. These approaches to the development of the staff follow the tenets of andragogy. These leaders each had experiences that led them to realize that the best way to help their students is by helping their teachers. Subsequently, it should be stated that the following three findings emerged from the investigation: 1) effective school leaders care about furthering the development of teachers and students; 2) each principal needs to become their own style of learning leader; and 3) each principal should cultivate relationships with his or her teachers.

Finding 1: Effective school principals care about furthering the development of teachers and students.

The Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award is a peer given accolade and recognizes principals who “go beyond the day-to-day demands of their position to create an exceptional educational environment” (“Distinguished Educational Leadership Awards,” 2015). Being focused on the development of teachers’ instructional practice was one of the ways in which these principals went above-and-beyond to create an exceptional learning environment. This environment was influenced by ideas associated with andragogy as professional learning communities provide teachers an opportunity to solve real world problems, to use their experiences to solve problems and to use their own experiences to help others.

Albeit this should be an integral part of the life of a school principal, being focused on creating an exceptional educational environment specifically designed to facilitate teacher learning and development is an aspect of the job that can get overlooked due to the numerous demands placed on school principals. Hence, before these principals could help further advance the teaching practices of their staff, they worked on forging and creating relationships with their teachers so they would know how to assist their development of instructional practice.

It is understood that experiences influence ones’ perspective. Furthermore, it is these experiences that help us decide who we wish to be. These three participants all had different backgrounds and experiences that led them to enter the realm of education, and eventually to be considered an outstanding principal. However, even with those personal experiences providing different lessons, each participant recognized they had to create an atmosphere that was conducive for adult learning. John showed this through interactions with his staff, taking teachers to conferences and by working with teachers on an

individual basis to help further their pedagogical techniques; Stacey showed this through her music class, her conversations with her faculty and her mentoring of a new teacher; Jean showed this by being willing to cover class, bring in an expert, work with an individual or the professional learning community and by making sure that each teacher would be “good enough” to teach her own children. These actions reinforced the safe learning environment for teachers and allowed them safe opportunities to grow as educators. A thread discovered through this study, was that these principals held an orientation to developing teachers instructional practice, as that is inextricably linked to student accomplishment. It is important to understand that within these narratives, the development of instructional practice is more than just facilitating content knowledge. It is about helping the teachers to develop a learner centered approach to their teaching practice. What is interesting is that each participant *chose* to become a learning leader, meaning, they each modeled learning and shaped the conditions for adults as well as students to learn on a continuous basis; however, they did not become the same type of learning leader.

Finding 2: Each principal’s approach to leadership was influenced by their personal and professional experiences’.

Each participant chose to become the learning leader of their school. However, each person created their own definition of what a learning leader does based on their own experiences. By listening to their narratives, it became clear that each of the participants created their own identity as a learning leader based on their own individuality and experiences. John accomplished this through extending the metaphor of principal as coach to how he interacted with his teachers; Stacey brought an idea of

family to the principalship and worked with her teachers in a manner that she did with her siblings and extended family; Jean became a learning leader who brought the idea of continuous development and the ability to always help those in need. All three participants were cognizant that individual teachers respond and/or relate to different approaches. Based on individual needs of a teacher, each participant would become a; coach, cheerleader, or nurturer /parent to facilitate the development of instructional practice. All three participants focused on learning something personal about each teacher and the individual skills he or she need to reach his or her pedagogical potential and adapted their leadership style accordingly.

Finding 3: Each principal focused on cultivating relationships with their staff.

All three participants' narratives focused on creating, cultivating and nurturing relationships with his or her teachers. Each participant, acted out an idea that moved beyond the original conceptual framework that related to the notion of caring. As initially proposed by Theodore Roosevelt: "people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" (Analytic Memo). This maxim guided the participants' actions towards their colleagues and teachers as they believed that without trust and rapport with the teachers, they could not facilitate the development of instructional practice. All three participants shared this perspective on the value of caring for his or her staff and teachers. John demonstrated his care through personalized notes to his teachers, Stacey illustrated it through her efforts with helping a mentee-teacher, and Jean constantly displayed her caring through her personal involvement with the teachers both in and outside the school. By developing these relationships, these participants created safe environments for the teachers. All three participants believed they were

approachable to the staff and because of that, there was ongoing communication between themselves and their teachers.

General Findings: Conclusion

The action of caring about his or her staff provided and created the educational environment for ideas associated with adult learning theory (andragogy) to further the development of teachers' instructional practice. This was accomplished through the following actions: creating professional learning communities; covering class for a teacher so they could catch up on paperwork or observe a colleague; inviting experts in the field of education to talk with the teachers; pairing teachers to work in teams; creating needed professional development opportunities; and by continuously working on improving their own practice. To recapitulate, these principals all chose to act in a caring manner towards their teachers. By acting in this manner, they established an exceptional educational environment that was conducive to both student and adult development (Uusiautti, 2013; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Blasé & Blasé, 2000, 1999; Hargreaves, 1998; Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992). That is one key finding from this study; however, this is not to imply that these interpretations would be universal or duplicated if this study was repeated.

Due to the small sample size of this study and that the findings within each narrative are unique to that individual, and might not have been seen or found through the perspective of a different qualitative researcher, it is inappropriate to make any generalizations based on the information uncovered throughout this narrative inquiry. What was already known was how national standards for school leaders and historical trends for principal behavior shaped principal actions. What this study examined was

how the personal and professional experiences of these three principals influenced their actions towards the development of teachers' instructional practice. Whether these concepts and ideas were taught to these individuals at a specific moment or the lessons permeated their lives, these three individuals all chose to become a learning leader. These individual approaches to becoming a unique learning leader provides each principal with a perspective that is aligned and influenced by their experiences. They took aspects of what they personally viewed as effective leadership and refined those lessons into actions they could implement in their school.

Examples of the key personal and professional experiences follow for each participant.

Findings for John

John's story begins by introducing him as a basketball player and coach. This was because this was where he started his story; and it was the filter he initially used to learn that he wanted to become an educator. Therefore, his actions to develop teachers' instructional practice mirrors that of a sports coach. In this manner, John learns enough about each person to cultivate a personal relationship. Once that relationship is developed, he starts to develop their instructional practice by catering their discussions to the needs expressed by that individual. John then works with them individually, places them into a professional learning community that he thinks would benefit this teacher or he connects them with an individual teacher to further develop instructional practice. This is an approach one would take as a coach; first you learn about your players and then you cater your game plan based on the skills of your team. This was something John discussed in his narrative through the example of NCAA men's' basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski.

Coach Krzyzewski is an extremely successful coach who earned that reputation by creating an offensive plan that was catered to the skills and strengths of his players. This contrasts to a coach who has a system and forces their system onto the players, regardless of fit. This was something John brought up in the conversations for he believes good coaching is similar to good school leadership. In both cases, the leader evaluates the team for strengths and weaknesses and then goes about creating a game plan catered to their strengths. Through this approach, John works with individual teachers to better understand their strengths and to maximize their knowledge and skill set through an individual learning plan. John does this as he believes an effective leader works on fitting the teacher to the curriculum rather than fitting the curriculum to the teacher. This was one of the ways John brought teachers onto his “team”.

John was clearly influenced by sports and his experiences as an athlete. This is clear in his actions as he acts like a coach for his teachers. He is constantly working with them to help further their ability. He emphasizes that the teachers work with him, not just for him. John is a learning leader who works in the trenches with his teachers, knows his teachers as well as his students, and wants them to reach their potential and to maximize their abilities. Like every good coach, John knows that he is only as good as his “team”, and therefore allows them opportunities to revel in their success while taking responsibility for their failure.

Findings for Stacey

Stacey’s story begins with family because that was where she began her narrative. She provided detail information about her family members, their dynamics, and the positives and negatives of growing up in a large family. Stacey was influenced on how to

help others based on her experiences as a child. Her mother taught her how to show and demand respect, while still illustrating care and a willingness to always help and assist. Her siblings taught her that you always support your family. Her grandmother taught her, keeping a family together means showing love, support and respect even during turbulent times. This is not to suggest that her family was her only source of influence.

Stacey knew she wanted to be a teacher after her first day of school. Subsequently, she kept a mental notebook of the things she liked and disliked about her teachers, principals, and the greater school community. The actions of the teachers and principals that she observed showed her what to do and what not to do in regards to treating students and each other. This is important as she never forgot what it was like to be a student, in a school, and therefore works diligently on making sure every person in her school feels special. This was particularly clear in her anecdote about assisting Barry, a new teacher at her school, to develop his teaching confidence. Applying the lessons she learned from her family, she provided professional guidance to this teacher while showing him support and respect. Her support was evident when she spoke to the parents on his behalf. The result was that Barry gained confidence in his teaching and his teaching abilities and became a better instructor.

Stacey works with her school family by talking with them, both informally and formally, and through constantly interacting with the students and teachers. Stacey implemented the staff-student music classes to create an informal positive environment for the students and teachers to interact. This interaction allowed principals to create opportunities for teachers to remember what it is like to be a learner/to be vulnerable. This activity was designed to facilitate teacher instructional practice to help further student

achievement. This fostered a family-like atmosphere and the teachers not only supported the students but the students supported the teachers. This collegial atmosphere between the students and the teachers was further enhanced by the Friday dance parties. Much like her family structure was important for her growing up, Stacey carried this concept over to her leadership of a school.

Stacey views everyone under her care, regardless of age or position, as her extended family. This is conveyed through meetings, conversations, observations, and impromptu events. Following the model her grandmother left, Stacey acts like the “glue” of the school by keeping everyone invested and integrated. She makes sure that her teachers have adequate time for their professional learning communities, both grade and school wide. Because of the positive atmosphere which permeates continuity, family and comradery, there is low teacher turnover. Hence, Stacey can work on a continuum with teachers to develop their instructional practice. Stacey became a learning leader who is invested in her teachers and their professional development because that is what parents do for their children: invest in developing their potential.

Findings for Jean

Jean’s story begins with family because it was her family that taught her to be non-judgmental, love others unconditionally and to always be willing to help. Her parents, and larger family for that matter, taught her to be open to others, and to welcome them into your family through the act of adopting her brother and other cousins. Her parents also instilled in her the value to always be generous with your time, energy, money, and/or knowledge. The value of generosity formed her approach to helping others and

influenced her actions as a young woman to take positions of leadership within her crew team and sorority before becoming a school principal.

Jean's familial background prepared her for her role as a learning leader. She is willing to do whatever it takes to help further the instructional practice of her teachers. She has covered class for teachers, brought in experts to talk to teachers, allowed teachers to observe colleagues, bought books/materials for teachers, and sent teachers to workshops designed to further their instructional practice. Jean has created an academic atmosphere that is conducive to adult and student learning. She realizes that even though she is the principal, and therefore, "in charge", she can maximize teachers' ability if they feel like they are working with her, rather than for her.

Jean is committed to reducing and eliminating the achievement gap within her school and community. This is a daunting task as her school represents a wide range of student cultures, languages, ability and skills. Therefore, her goal is for every student who leaves her school to be on or above grade level so that they will be prepared wherever they go next. Jean has a low teacher turnover rate, which benefits the students and the teachers. Due to the low turnover, she can spend more time learning about the individual teachers in her school, and therefore knows how to create a lesson plan catered to the needs of that individual. Jean believes her role in the school is similar to that of a matriarch in that she believes it is her responsibility to help each person, regardless of their age, reach their potential.

Jean has chosen to reside within her school community. She is constantly interacting with the parents and extending herself into the immediate community. She role-models appropriate parental behavior for parents through interactions with her own

children, by establishing rapport with the parents in a casual and social manner, and is highly visible to the academic community so much so that the lines between the school and the community are blended, just like a family has blended ties in a community.

Jean's perspective is that everyone who interacts with her students is an educator. This includes all her staff: custodians; lunch room; aids...etc. This inclusive approach to the school community furthers the positive work environment Jean facilitates to further instructional practice. Just as she grew up in an extended family, she has created an extended school community.

Researcher Bias

Throughout this study, the researcher learned that being an effective principal is a journey of self-reflection, in knowing who you are and who you want to be. It requires a lot of introspection and education, being approachable, open to new ideas and self-awareness.

Each school principal decides how they want to help facilitate the development of his or her teachers' instructional practice. Throughout this process, the researcher was interested in what experiences influenced these principals to become learning leaders, as that concept is where principalship is heading (PSEL, 2015). The researcher learned that being a learning leader should be the goal for every principal as they should facilitate the development of students as well as adults under their care. These personal relationships should be the fulcrum that enable the principal to advance the instructional practice of the individual teacher. This became apparent to the researcher as he was collecting the data.

The researcher was focused on finding three participants for this study. Initially, the researcher planned to ask participants to complete a Likert scale survey about

principal actions. The researcher then planned to review the responses to find principals dedicated to the improvement of instructional practice. This approach was worrisome to the researcher; in that he did not believe he would have a large enough applicant pool. The researcher therefore changed the recruitment and asked those who have won the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award if they would volunteer for this study. He then planned on using purposive sampling to ensure diversity amongst the participants. The first three people to respond represented the diversity required. After the initial meeting with the three participants, it became apparent to the researcher that these were three individuals who were dedicated to their careers in education and proud of their school, staff and accomplishments.

Prior to the researcher starting doctoral work, he taught for five years in schools with principals who did not exhibit the traits of a learning leader. The researcher began a personal search to investigate and learn what actions principals can take to create positive learning environments for teachers and students. Through this research with articles, textbooks, conferences and journal readings, the researcher learned that there are skills that can be utilized to create a positive school environment that is conducive to adult learning and student achievement.

When the researcher initially met with each participant, he immediately understood what made these leaders so special was their passion. They were passionate about their school; overall building; their teachers; their students; and the work they do to improve their community. They instantly extended themselves from their very busy positions to welcome the researcher into their school, and to share their life experiences.

The researcher is aware that by the participants taking the time to meet with him, that he becomes part of their narrative.

The researcher understands that his participation in this research project makes him a part of the principals' narrative. The researcher recorded the conversation, transcribed the words of the individual, and left the ideas as complete as possible to show the thought process and the meanings each principal derived from their experiences. This makes for longer quotes; however, the researcher was sure to include quotes that incorporate reader aspects of temporality, sociality and place within their answers, therefore creating context for their lessons learned from previous experiences.

Conclusions

As stated previously, it is difficult to make grand conclusions based on this study as narrative inquiry is a singular focus on one individual and therefore the interpretations and conclusions might be radically different if this study looked solely at learning leaders across the profession. However, there were three ideas that were pervasive amongst the three participants: to recognize each teacher in their school as an individual; to adapt their approach to helping each teacher based on his or her needs; and to role model appropriate educational skills.

Each of these school principals takes the time, energy and effort to know every individual in their school. They view teachers, aids, custodial staff etc. as an integral part of the school and therefore make sure to learn something about these individuals. Each of these leaders intrinsically knew based on their personal experiences as a coach, teacher, parent, and/or educator that to maximize potential of learning and development, that they had to extend their assistance to the adults within their school community. Once that

personal connection was made, the individual was willing to work harder because they felt valued. Furthermore, these principals realized their responsibility extended to an awareness of the adults' well-being and not just their supervision. In this manner, these principals worked with their staff based on the needs of the individuals so every teacher could reach their teaching potential.

Each principal that participated in this study realized that to maximize the potential of the students, and therefore the school, each classroom deserves a high caliber instructor. Subsequently, these three participants were willing to do whatever necessary to help the individual instructor develop their instructional practices. Once the principal knew the individual, an individual action plan could be developed. As stated in Chapter Two, administration is second only to classroom instructors for the development of the student. Therefore, an effective school principal is one who learns about the needs of his or her staff so they can help individual teachers improve, which helps the students learn.

These principals independently chose to become the "learning leader" (Fullan, 2014) of their school. They recognize that for them to improve the teachers' instructional practice, they, as professionals, also need to grow and develop. These leaders do not ask anything of their staff that they are not willing to do themselves. Due to whatever experiences or influences impacted their lives, these three participants realized the best way to help students develop their academic skills is by ensuring the teachers were getting professional development catered to their needs.

The principals who volunteered for this study all had different backgrounds in education. Each taught different grade levels, subjects and students. They are now principals at different schools with diverse staff and student populations. Even though the

three participants are all master level school administrators, it was unclear how much of their education background included the theory of andragogy. However, based on the actions described in their narratives, each applied tenets of andragogy to their leadership style, specifically in regards to how they further develop teachers' instructional practices. This conscious decision to facilitate the development of the teachers' instructional practice is why each of them was recognized as outstanding in their field. Expressed by all the participants' narratives, what became important was that their actions could facilitate the development of instructional practice. Whether as a coach, an inspiration, a cheerleader, a positive role model, or a combination of all, their actions helped foster a positive school climate, which allowed growth to occur.

Recommendations

The findings of this study are about the role of a principal as a "learning leader" (Fullan, 2014). Principals already have many responsibilities. This study brings out the essential role a principal can play in creating an effective school. This responsibility can be extremely beneficial for the overall well-being of the school and the school community. To ensure that the students are getting the education they need, the school should maximize the potential of professional development by catering the activities to the needs of the staff. Integration and strengthening of professional development opportunities requires principals be open to the knowledge base about adult development, i.e. andragogy (Knowles, 1984). This is an important concept for principals to embrace as adults learn differently from children; specifically, adults use their experiences to either assimilate or accommodate (Piaget, 1952) new information. Through assisting the development of teachers instructional practice, whether in individual work or in

professional learning communities, these principals provided opportunities for the teachers to direct their own path of development, solve their real classroom concerns or problems, collaborate with colleagues, and to use their own experiences to help others. These behaviors are all consistent with actions associated with adult learning theory. In addition to incorporating these ideas, this study also found that these principals engaged and acted in caring ways in their leadership practices.

Based on the thread of practices that align with adult learning theory, I recommend that principals learn about the theory of andragogy and become oriented to the implications of this theory for leadership practice. The following graphic (Figure 2) illustrates the researcher's thinking about how the theory of andragogy has the potential to enhance the development of teacher's instructional practice. The connection and link between professional development, teachers' instructional practice, and the role the principal can play in facilitating teacher development through application of the theory of andragogy must be in tandem with a positive work culture that promotes professional growth and development.

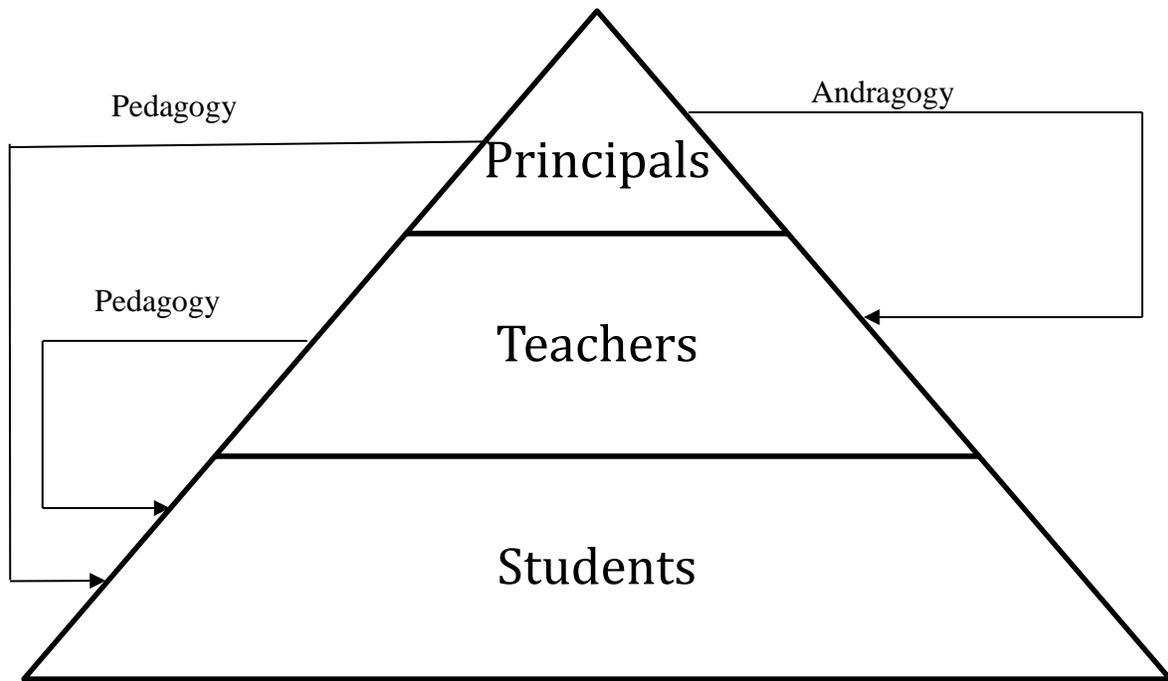


Figure 2. *Modified principal perspective of androgical benefits for teachers' instructional development*

The left side of the diagram represents the current perspective regarding the relationship between principals, teachers and students. Through this viewpoint, principals and teachers are aware of pedagogical needs of the students, making sure that the teachers are teaching the appropriate material and incorporating pedagogy associated with that age group. However, this omits the work principals should do to create an exceptional educational environment. This safe learning environment for adults can be reached by using aspects related to the theory of andragogy when schools offer professional development opportunities. By incorporating the theory of andragogy into the school professional development plan, principals establish a safe working environment. This safe working environment then enables opportunities for professional growth to occur as

the teachers know the principal is working in support of their pedagogical development. The right side of the graphic represents the additional layer of scaffolding that principals should employ to ensure teachers are continuing to develop as instructors. Through the actions associated with the right side of the image, principals become learning leaders that are invested in furthering the knowledge and skills of their teachers, as well as their students. This theory in practice would include actions such as: the principal working with a teacher on an individual basis; allowing the adults to be self-directing with their development; providing opportunities for them to use their vast experiences to learn new material; providing opportunities to solve real world problems and opportunities to apply their new knowledge.

The following ideas are recommended for consideration to help maximize the potential of all personnel within a school:

- (a) principal and administrative graduate programs should expose the theory of andragogy: if it is included, that area should be expanded upon;
- (b) school district central offices should provide principals with ongoing training in andragogy;
- (c) principals should know the different stages of learning development from pedagogy through andragogy; and
- (d) principals should create and offer professional development opportunities specifically catered to the improvement of individual needs of their staff.

Albeit the theory of andragogy was never addressed by name in the narrative collection process, each participant detailed actions associated with the theory of andragogy. These

principals were viewed as outstanding in their field *because* they cared about assisting the development of adults as well as the students.

There are also additional suggestions based on the overarching ideas found within these three narratives. Another recommendation is for school leadership programs to incorporate autobiographical work of principals that detail their experiences in their schools. This would provide real world experiences, case studies and scenarios that novice principals could benefit from examining. Rather than just relying on theory to help develop principals' orientation to the development of instructional practice, these autobiographies could provide personalized examples that detail the benefits of this approach. As the researcher was collecting this data, he realized that the stories shared by the participants contained anecdotes of their involvement with teachers. Due to the personal nature of the anecdotes, this was the part of their stories that seemed relevant to the focus of the study. The anecdotes provided real-life situations that could be further explored.

A third recommendation is school districts should schedule seminars for principals. Principals would write reflective case studies of instructional practices with individual teachers and share them with their colleagues. This would provide an opportunity for them to support, advise and discuss best practices.

In addition to concepts related to andragogy, a fourth recommendation is for schools and programs that develop and train principals should devote time and resources to helping future principals understand that a fundamental aspect of their role is to develop teachers' instructional practices. Schools of higher learning create administrator programs for "student" principals. This would include scheduled observations by college

professors and seminars at the colleges for these “student” principals to share their experiences.

A fifth recommendation could be for future principals to shadow a currently recognized accomplished school principal. This would allow students an opportunity to gain real world insight into the life and action of a school principal. This could also be extended to creating a mentor-mentee relationship between veteran and novice principals.

If the goal of school is for improved student achievement, then principals need to know this can only happen with continuous development of teachers’ instructional practice. These are a few recommendations for how to improve the understanding of the theory of andragogy.

This study could be ongoing to promote more qualitative research that examines the experiences of principals. It would be interesting to see what various levels of success they have had as school leaders and what influenced their actions towards the development of teachers’ instructional practices. Additional studies could also explore the student perspective of effective school principals, or the perspective of parents about the role of the principal. Another idea could be for an ethnographic long term study that closely monitors the professional development of teachers within one school or district. Another study could follow a similar methodology but incorporate Seidman’s interview protocol for data collection. Or one could follow the ideas associated with a case work study to follow up on and add more information and or insight into this completed study. In other words, there are numerous studies that can further expand on the ideas explored within this project.

This study explored the personal and professional experiences of three accomplished principals and how those experiences influenced their actions regarding the development of their teachers' instructional practices. An overarching theme from the stories was that each principal took the time to learn about the individual teacher so they could cater professional development opportunities to fit his or her needs. Each of these three principals represents a model of a learning leader in action and follow the leadership concept proposed by Glickman (1981) in Chapter 1. All three principals made sure to have the same relationship with their teachers, they ask their teachers to have with their students. For this researcher, this study reinforced the power of stories and how each person's individual story helps define who they are, what they believe and who they choose to become.

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Appendix A: Literature Review Chart

Topic	Sources	Keywords
Principal Effectiveness – specifically in regard to developing teacher instructional practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search Premiere • JSTOR • ERIC • Dissertation and Thesis Online • Proquest • Education Journals • Books covering teacher professional development, teacher evaluation, principal effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Principal and teacher professional development • Current principal practice • Effective principals • Principal historical role • Principal evolution • Principal learning • Preparing principals • Principal development of teacher instructional practice • Transformative learning • Adult learning theory • Guiding learning of teachers • Principal leadership • Principal curriculum leader

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional leadership • Supervision that improves teaching • Rethinking leadership • Principals improving instruction • Successful principals
Development of Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective teacher
Instructional Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Premiere • JSTOR • ERIC • Dissertation and Thesis Online • Proquest • Education Journals • Books covering teacher professional development, teacher evaluation, principal effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> professional development • Professional development as transformative learning • Instructional practice • Better teaching • Learning communities • Differentiate instructional practice • Continuous professional development • Maximizing teacher effectiveness • Teacher growth
Principal and Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative inquiry and

Inquiry

Premiere

- JSTOR
- ERIC
- Dissertation and Thesis

Online

- Proquest
- Education Journals
- Books covering teacher

professional development,
teacher evaluation, principal
effectiveness

education

- Narrative inquiry and principals
- Narrative inquiry and teacher
- Principal experiences
- Principal experience and narrative inquiry

Appendix B: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Narrative Inquiry of Effective School Principals

IRB # _____

Principal Investigator: Patricia Tate, Ph.D., 202-994-1542

The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human
Development

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Pat Tate, Ph.D. from The George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development. You are being asked if you want to take part in this study because you have direct, current experience as an identified effective school principal. Please read this form and ask any questions that will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Taking part in the research study is completely voluntary and even if you decide you want to participate, you can quit (withdraw) at any time. Should you decide to quit (withdraw) from the research study, there will be no penalties.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to learn about the personal and professional experiences of effective school principals regarding their role in the development of teacher's instructional practice. The principle objectives of the study are to:

1. Learn how you became the leader you are today.
2. Understand the experiences you have had in preparation to be a school leader.
3. Reflect on the processes that led you to develop your leadership practices.

Procedures

The first step to participate in this project is to email the researcher back expressing interest. The researcher will then employ purposive sampling with those who have volunteered to participate in this study to ensure a diversity amongst the participants. The initial narrative collection will last approximately 30–90 minutes and will cover, in greater detail, your experiences and influential practices in developing instructional practice. This follow up session will also require the researcher to set up additional meetings to verify and check for accuracy. These follow up meetings will be scheduled as needed and will last approximately 30 minutes. The number of follow up sessions will be arranged based on need.

Risks & Confidentiality

The study has the following risks:

1. There is minimal risk of emotional discomfort, anxiety, or other affective risk from survey or providing ones narrative. This will be minimized by allowing participants to withdraw from the process at any time by notifying the researcher that they wish to withdraw.
2. There is a small chance that someone not on our research team could find out that you took part in the study or somehow connect your name with the information we collect about you, however, to reduce this risk, information you provide will be protected and coded to preserve anonymity outside those who are participating. The records of this study will be kept private. In any published articles or presentations, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.
3. Your records for the study may be reviewed by the department within the University responsible for overseeing research safety and compliance.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit for participating in this project. There is a benefit for the research team however, in that we will be able to gain a greater insight into how principals understand their role in the development of teacher instructional practices.

Questions

Talk to the research team if you have questions, concerns, complaints, or think you have been harmed. You can contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Patricia Tate, identified above and on the front of this form at 202-994-1542. You may also contact the

student investigator, Adam Sommer, at 202-997-1970. For questions regarding your rights as a participant in a human research study you can call the GWU Office of Human Research at 202-994-2715.

Documentation Of Consent

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign below:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Appendix C: Prompts

The goal is for the participant to name and describe their experiences as an effective school leader who facilitates the development of instructional practice. To reach this goal, open-ended questions will be used to help the participant gather their thoughts. The following questions will be used to assist the participant at the onset of the conversation.²

1. Tell me about your experiences in learning to become the leader you are today.
2. Can you tell me about the most influential experiences you have had in preparation to be a school leader?
3. What processes led you to develop your leadership practices?
4. Describe how you develop teacher instructional practice?

To help further the details provided, the following questions might be used as prompts to solicit additional information:

1. When did you know you wanted to be an educator?
 - a. When did you know you wanted to be a principal?
2. What personal and/or professional experiences most influenced your teaching and teaching philosophy in your early career?
3. Did you have a mentor or school leader who assisted in your professional development?
4. What was your most beneficial professional development experience? Why?
What was your least beneficial professional development experience? Why?

² The verbiage of the questions and prompts are influenced by the Narrative Inquiry work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Clandinin (2013), and Kohler-Riessman (1993).

5. What is your perspective regarding the professional development of your teachers?
6. What is your responsibility regarding the development of teachers' instructional practice? Where did that perspective come from?
7. What advice would you pass along to fellow school principals regarding their orientation to the development of instructional practice?
8. Who most influenced your perspectives regarding your orientation to the development of teachers' instructional ability?

* Sommer, A. (2015). Prompts List.

Appendix D: Introductory Email/Letter

This was the email for Principals who do not work in Arlington

Dear colleague,

I am a doctoral student at The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development and am hoping you might be interested in participating in my research study that is looking at how personal and/or professional experiences influence school leaders' efforts to develop teachers' instructional practice.

In addition to being an Ed.D. student, I taught English Language Arts in the DC area for five years and have earned a degree as an Educational Specialist in Administration and Leadership. I intended to become a school administrator, however, before I could fulfill that position, I felt like I needed to learn more about how to help other teaching disciplines improve their instructional practices. I have since started working on this doctoral program as a means of learning more about how to help develop teaching practices in educators. I am hoping that this research will help improve graduate schools of education, current school administrators, and prospective teachers understand the valuable role a strong leader can have on teacher development and growth.

If you are willing to participate, please email me back the attached consent form. I am also happy to send information or talk to you more about the study itself. I can be reached at this email address or by calling (202) 997-1970. Interview dates, times, and locations would be at your convenience.

Again, thank you for considering my request. I hope that participating in this research will help give a voice to the important job School Principals have in developing the instructional practices of their teachers'.

Sincerely,

Adam Sommer

This was the introductory email for those Principals from Arlington County

Dear Principal X:

As you know from Ms. Skinner, I am looking for research volunteers for a doctoral dissertation centered on how experiences influence principal actions regarding how they assist the development of teachers' instructional practice.

You would be an extremely valuable participant in this endeavor based on your recognition as an outstanding school leader. Subsequently, I am hopeful you will be willing to participate in this endeavor.

If you could please let me know if you are interested in participating in this endeavor I would be greatly appreciative. Once I know if you are willing and able to participate, we can then coordinate time/place to meet.

I can be reached at this email address or at 202-997-1970.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider this proposal.

Sincerely,

Adam Sommer

Appendix E: Study Invitations

The following matrix illustrates previous winners of the WPDELA going back 2 years. This chart includes school, level (primary or secondary), type (public, charter, independent), and gender. All names of individuals, schools and email addresses have been deleted from the matrix to ensure participant anonymity.

Principal Name	School	Level	Type	Location	Gender	Email Address
2015						
1		Elementary	P	MD	F	
2		Secondary	P	VA	M	
3		Ages 6-21	I	MD	F	
4		Elementary	P	MD	F	
5		Elementary	P	MD	F	
6		Secondary	P	VA	M	
7		Secondary	P	MD	M	
8		Elementary	P	DC	F	
9		Secondary	P	MD	F	
10		Secondary	P	MD	F	
11		Elementary	P	VA	M	
12		Secondary	P	VA	F	
13		Elementary	P	VA	M	
14		Secondary	C	DC	F	

15		Grades 1-8	P	VA	F	
16		Elementary	P	VA	F	
17		Secondary	P	VA	M	
18		Elementary	P	VA	F	
19		Elementary	P	MD	F	
20		Elementary	P	MD	F	
2014						
1		Elementary	P	DC	F	
2		Elementary	P	VA	F	
3		Secondary	P	MD	M	
4		Secondary	P	MD	M	
5		Ages 6-21	C	DC	F	
6		Elementary	P	MD	F	
7		Elementary	P	VA	M	
8		Elementary	P	VA	M	
9		Secondary	P	MD	M	
10		Elementary	P	MD	F	
11		Secondary	P	VA	M	
12		Elementary	P	VA	F	
13		Secondary	P	MD	F	
14		Secondary	P	MD	F	
15		Secondary	P	VA	F	
16		Secondary	P	VA	M	

17		Elementary	P	MD	F	
18		Elementary	P	VA	F	

Appendix F: Analytic Memos

6/23

I sent a second email invitation to winners from the past two years. Sadly, I have yet to hear back from anyone from this new round of emails with a positive response. In fact, I only received one response which was sadly a no. I also got work from Arlington County Public Schools asking me to not email principals directly unless I received permission from the county. This additional step was something I never considered since both GW and their IRB gave me permission to start recruiting participants. Needless to say, I am in the process of finishing the necessary paperwork so that I can submit the documentation by their deadline of June, 30th.

Starting this paperwork has made me realize that my criteria for helping to narrow down potential applicants needs to be slightly tweaked. Although this award can be won by public, charter or independent school principals, there were only 3 (2 charter and 1 independent) school leaders who have won this award from outside the public sphere. Subsequently, I believe that narrowing down potential volunteers by the type of school (charter, independent or public) might be unnecessary. By using the other filters, those who have won this award, those who volunteer, age of students and gender, I should be able to locate a diverse group of school leaders.

Speaking of school leaders, although the recruitment process is going slower than I hoped, I have my first official narrative collection scheduled for Tuesday, June 28th. “John”, the

person I am meeting with, is a wonderful candidate for this project for a few reasons. For starters, he won the WPDELA and is willing to meet with me. More importantly, he used to be a principal and is now an athletic director at a different school. This means I should have no problem with finding the next two participants (assuming I can find people who volunteer for this project) as John's unique circumstance makes his case such an outlier that the next two people are almost guaranteed to represent a diverse group of school leaders. If not, perhaps I can use John's narrative in a singular case and provide much more detail and analysis about his leadership and ability to improve the instructional practice of those he supervises. Either way, I am very excited to record his narrative.

Pre meeting with “John”

I am very excited to learn more about the experiences and people that influenced John’s leadership style. Hopefully, his story will include rich details that explain and provide context for the learning within each moment he describes. John is no longer serving as a principal, however, he led one school for three years and was at another for nine before he decided to take another job within the county as an athletic director. He has the belief that running a school, especially one as large as Greeley, is like being the mayor of a small city and subsequently, he has a global perspective when making decisions – this means he thinks of “teachers, cafeteria workers, parents” when making a decision.

Notes During Meeting

- Teachers as leaders

top 15 leaders or so to help develop teacher professional development

(standards based teaching and assessment)

- PLC (professional learning community) subject area improvement teams – each year, he would anoint a new set of teachers to cultivate a broad sense of leadership – a core group of teachers worked together to backwards design and create learning goals/targets – this led to a 5 year plan of development and growth for the faculty

- Teachers led the training – this got them invested in the project, which led to more teachers being interested as they thought they were working with colleagues rather than for their boss

- keep pushing teachers as leaders – empower those who work for you – eventually, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the staff held some leadership position

- learning targets infused in the curriculum – where am I going? (they called this GPS) what are our goals?

- Fox Lane HS Principal – “Austin”: “status quo means the mess we are in” – never rest on laurels (On a side note, much like myself, Austin’s professional mentor/hero was John Wooden)

- School community as family

- Won Time magazine School of the Year award

- Austin saw something in John that he helped cultivate – this was how

John got into Administration

- John took Austin’s ideas and ran with them

- Teachers had a change in tone and attitude when given more responsibility
- John worked with the AP teachers to make all students AP caliber (this led growth from 600 – 1800 AP tests)
 - a manager needs to manage the egos of the adults
 - Another mentor, Lou, a fellow AP, was big on quality assessment
 - Lou currently works at Central office in Williamsburg, VA
 - John was a basketball coach, then a student dean (where he mostly wrote up discipline referrals) to then Assistant Principal. He was the assistant principal for 2-3 years. His promotions were all natural and he never intended to become a school leader. Prior to this career path, John was an accountant.
- Much like how John started off as a coach, Austin worked with Track and Field and Lou was the band director. These leaders had school interests other than leadership.
 - There is a difference between growth and development and test scores.
 - There should be an open learning process.
 - What does X mean to you? What does X mean to us? (questions he would ask his teacher leaders to gage their understanding of the bigger picture)
 - Dean Smith was no better a coach the day after he won his first title, a perspective John shares about his own leadership – he was no better after winning the award than he was before it.
 - Student involvement in quality assessment was missing.
 - Good leaders work with and for their staff.
 - Austin and Lou were very influential in the development of John as a leader.

- John and Lou work well together, even if Lou is a mentor, because it wasn't about ego or doing it one way...it was about doing what's best for the school, students, staff and greater community.

- Leadership is about motivating others to work for/with you.

- Rob Benson worked with Bill Bixby.

- John was more involved as a principal than AP

- Professional development should be continuous rather than preplanned.

- Adult professional development is about showing care for their development (the same thing is applicable for putting teachers in leadership positions) – not forcing them to do something in a specific manner.

- On that note, personal relationships foster professional development. Working with rather than for.

- Getting kids/adults/teachers involved makes them more excited and invested.

- Likes the book, Grading smarter, not harder by Robert Dueck.

Post meeting

John is a genuinely nice person who has a lot of concern for the growth and development of the people he supervises and leads. He believes that growth and development are more important factors than final scores on a quantifiable assessment. If a student struggles with something early on in the unit, only to master that concept by the end of the unit, John believes that the final score is the only one that should matter and that the student should not be penalized or docked points (for the final grade) because of something that happened days, weeks or maybe even months prior.

John also believes in a hands on approach that shows each person how valuable they are to him, as well as the overall well-being of the school. John cultivated leadership in his teachers to help make them feel more of the team than just a cog in the machine. This most likely stems from his basketball coaching background as teamwork is the fundamental aspect of basketball, at least according to John and his coaching mentor, Dean Smith. Individuals might be amazing, but it is the team record and performance that really matters. Hence, even if the school was running smoothly according to test scores, John would not be comfortable unless his teachers were working with him rather than for him.

July 18th

Today was a very exciting day for my project. I officially (and positively) heard back from two more potential research participants, bringing the total up to the desired number of 3. I was somewhat starting to wonder if I would be able to reach my goal of an $n=3$, so this is wonderful news. On that front, I am especially glad that we removed the initial survey as a means of further finding an ideal candidate, as that would have resulted in an $n=0$. Although the plan was to employ a more purposive sampling methodology to ensure a diverse group of participants, the final 3 participants still represent a wide range of experiences. The three participants range in gender, student population and location. Granted I would have preferred to have a representative from the public, charter and independent school system, having three public school employees makes for a more detailed analysis based on the additional scrutiny, pressure and responsibilities placed on these public employees.

7/18

Pre meeting with Jean – participant #2

I am very excited to meet with Jean, who is the second participant in my study. She is a current elementary school leader, with 7 years at her current school. In regards to finding diverse participants, she is the opposite of my first participant in gender and age of students (John led a high school). I am really curious to see how their leadership styles compare and contrast due to the age of the students.

7/19

Meeting with Jean

- constantly evolving leadership style and approach (like John)
- likes to learn from others – as well as help facilitate learning
- continuous improvement and learning/reading
- positivity is key
- personality is important (nature vs. nurture)
- had key mentors (NEED MORE ON THIS)
- who you are is an important part of the job – but to succeed, you need to be

egoless

- what students need – must know where they are to know how to help them
- uses PLC's and reflection of students and teachers
- listens to many different perspectives – kids/students first
- believes that it is never the students fault
- acts under the guise of how can I help you help them?
- 7th year as principal...excellent retention rate
- hand on leader – walking/talking/knowing everyone [in total about 900

people...with 130 adults]...the school also serves a diverse group of socioeconomic classes

- constantly praising staff
- has high expectations for all – which are clearly explained and outlined
- the PLC's tend to assist in helping teachers improve

- sense of community – shows love/care/support

- meeting peoples needs
- always looking ahead
- How can I help? (this is a repeated phrase or idea that clearly influences her actions)

- has no tolerance or flexibility when it comes to blaming children
- wants teaches to try their best
- who are we? What are our goals?
- spent time in high school as a coxswain for crew and in a sorority as a leader
- leadership is part of who she is...natural tendency to lead
- roots for everyone
- goal is to eliminate the achievement gap
- passionate about helping students and adults
- uses autonomy to get students/teachers motivated...allows them space to make their own decisions

- never says no to teachers (within reason of course)
- “my job is to facilitate the progress” (excellent recapitulation of her leadership beliefs)

- kids are honest
- forgiving of staff – mistakes are nothing other than lessons learned (similar to Oscar Wilde – experience is simply the name we give our mistakes)

- egoless – this is about them, not her
- how can I help?
- what's better (or best) for students? Teachers? Staff?

- want to be heard
- happy and engaged leads to learning – maslov
- the goal of an effective teacher or leader is to bring or guide the students to

where you want them to be

- support is a two way street
- the job should entail whatever it takes to help individuals succeed
- class protocol – teachstone – headstart program (teacher evaluation program that

moves beyond the standard approach)

- understands the importance of knowing what you know and how you think –

this helps with teacher retention

- time management and the ability to compartmentalize is key
- trust in others/ find and advocate for diversity – you learn more from people

who are not like you than from those who blindly follow

7/19

Post Meeting with Jean

I walked out of that interview understanding why others or outsiders would consider her a rock star amongst principals.

Interpretation for Jean

She is warm, energetic, excited about teaching and clearly committed to not just helping students grow, but the staff as well. She talks with enthusiasm about her development and growth as an individual, and how that helped her grow as a leader. She takes an invested interest in her school, but more so, in the community her school creates. She has the best interest of all peoples under her care in mind and wants everyone to feel like they are part of the solution.

7/26 – pre meeting with Stacey

Today, I am meeting with the third and final member of my research participants. This is an exciting moment as I was somewhat worried about finding three participants, however, that is clearly not an issue. Like the second participant, she is an elementary school principal in Arlington County. Based on her geographic location, the age of the students, and her gender, I am curious to see how her experiences compare and contrast to that of Jean.

7/26 – meeting with Stacey

- Inclusive – all part of a team (shared outcomes/goals – she makes connections and trusts her staff)

- teacher leaders – instructional leaders – leaders who are peers
- observed numerous schools and school settings prior to taking the job
- similar ideology to Glickman (treat staff like you ask staff to treat students)
- you should be working for the children
- likes teachers who help kids
- doesn't like or support a negative vibe
- “ultimately, I am a teacher” for parents, teachers, students...
- never the kids fault (like Jean)
- extremely empathetic
- administrators are still teachers – something her husband said when she was

thinking about taking the job

- transitioned to admin as a behavior specialist
- Assistant principal for two years as a floater between two schools
- has little staff turnover
- connects the curriculum to where she wants the students to be going
- the goal of the curriculum is to prepare the students for the next step/phase
- heavy use of quantifiable data
- pulled the community into the school
- SMART school (science, math, art and technology)

- creating a cross subject curriculum
- everything is designed to help kids and/or their family
- brings the entire community into the school
- maintaining staff is key- if you cant maintain its like a new year every year
- collaboration is key – connections with other adults
- hires staff that represents the community
- her father was an educator
- online catalogue for PD options – every teacher has to complete 180 hours of pd

every 5 years

- festival of the mind – end of year pd by fellow teachers
- school as neutral ground for learning and safe place for ideas
- Arlington mentors – small school system

Angela– principal mentor

Brooke– principal mentor

Brian – High School principal mentor

- the job of an administrator can be a lonely road
- her assistant principal has been here for 14 years – great example of everyone

growing together

- provides planning time for whole team – PLC – a 21st century approach
- AYP is now AMO annual measurable objects
- music department opened up lessons for teachers

- Wonderful example of everyone learning together

- student excitement is contagious
- can always come here for help
- always learning and growing (connection to John and Jean)

fear of complacency

7/26 – post meeting with Stacey

I can immediately understand how or why people would want to work for Stacey and in this building. Whereas Jean was full of energy, Stacey is more subdued and reserved; however, their passion for kids and helping them to grow is exactly the same. (different approach yet same fuel) Her willingness to not only share and discuss failures and disappointments, but to use them as a learning example is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to see how she is not out to get them or to make them understand that she is better than they are. Rather, she uses those examples to help relate to the situation of the other person. She is incredibly empathetic and caring, two traits that would make anyone proud and excited to be working for her.

7/31 – second conversation with John

list of questions I wanted to address in this conversation:

- What inspired the subject area improvement teams? When did this occur?
- What happened with your basketball team? What lessons did that teach you?

Who was involved? When did this happen?

- What lessons did each of your gurus teach you? When?
- Can you recall a specific lesson you learned from Steve? How about from Bill?

(one of his mentors)

• Can you discuss a specific moment where you helped a teacher improve their instructional practice?

- Can you provide an example of your open door policy as a leader?
- How did you adapt your assistance based on the needs of your staff?
- How did the thought of the day translate to your leadership?
- How did you follow up with teacher development?
- How did you convince your staff you were more concerned with them than

yourself? (or being with them instead of over them)

- How did you make pd meaningful to your teachers?
- Can you tell me about a time you were not able to help a struggling teacher?

When did this happen? How did you fail?

- What did your favorite high school English teacher inspire within you?
- Who have you mentored? What lessons have you tried to pass along?

- What inspired the epiphany to work with good teachers as much as the bad ones?

- Working with others shows care...how did you learn this lesson? From where? When?

- When did you specifically understand that helping adults goes beyond the classroom? (English teacher from his experience)

7/31 – notes from conversation with John

- be a straight shooter – lesson from Ken
- Willie: grading smarter, not harder – example of targets (bookcase/chair anecdote)

anecdote)

- Tommy: conference in Portland – building team leaders through participation
- Jerry: guru of all gurus – most influential

• assessment is the key to learning and therefore students should have a say in this topic

• 2 things wrong; a) no innovation and b) schools do not teach how to write assessments

- joined an open twitter conversation that is held on Wednesday's at 9
- what inspired the coaching change?
 - move us along or up the ladder
 - successful second coach – no direct impact
- PLC name was changed to keep it more personal
 - read about them for 2 years before using them
 - this happened at the end of SOL implementation
- use of data to help teachers plan
- pacing together does not equal universal actions
- working together for success of teachers and students
- PLC's allowed an opportunity for teachers to discuss their approach – this helps

all teachers

- PLC's were very helpful for new teachers
- listening to the PLC's allowed John and other teachers to see where new teacher

were in their development as instructors

- listening was the key aspect of the PLC
- PLC's were used to help identify issues or concerns
- PLC goal is to help any teacher improve
- PLC was to get them to work together
- teachers want to cover things – John wants them to go deep on each topic
- SOL helped push teacher development to succeed
- curriculum management system (quarterly test) – teacher questions from the

county

- ownership is what helped inspire the teachers to take control of their

material/future

- English teacher took an interest in him
 - no surprises with assessment
 - showed that teaching goes beyond the text
 - he felt like she knew him

7/31 – post meeting with John

I walked away from this conversation thinking that I have the pieces to start putting some events together to help illustrate and identify some major experiences in John's life that have influenced how he treats and helps his teachers. He is clearly someone who takes an invested interest in not only the teacher, but the person as well. A lesson taught to him from his high school English teacher as well as his experiences as a coach.

8/16 – second conversation with Stacey

list of questions I wanted to address in this conversation:

- Describe your concept of family? Where did this come from? Please tell me more about the relationship you have with your parents? How about your brothers? Are you close as adults? Were you close as children?

- Trust of your staff is paramount for success, where did this belief come from?

- What school experiences helped bring you out of your shell? Who was responsible for this change?

- You are obviously a teacher at heart...describe a lesson for adults you think went very well? What caused this success? Was there a lesson that did not go very well? How come?

- Where did the idea/belief come from that its not enough to just do your job?

Who modeled this for you?

- How did you specifically help that 1 teacher to improve his craft?

- How did your work with special needs students prepare you for the job of principal?

- Did you have similar thoughts or a similar checklist in regards to scoping out the schools as you did with Ms. Walsh?

- If the school is like a second family, what role do you think you play? Why?

- Please tell me more about the consulting you had with worried teachers about transitioning to year round school? How did you help assuage their concerns?

- Preparing people for what's next seems to be a reoccurring event, where did this come from? Why are these transitions so important to you?

- What scholastic achievement are you most proud of for your students? What about the staff?

- What was the teacher reaction after being asked to become an expert in a field? How were you able to help them understand or see the benefits of this approach?

- What influenced the use of an integrated curriculum? Is this only a K-5 thing in your school?

- Communication is a key aspect of your responsibilities, can it be hard having to keep so many people in the loop?

How deep do you go with your staff on these communications?

How is your communication approach influenced by being the child of an ESL family?

- Other than valuing their time, how do you show thanks/appreciation for your staff?

- Are you ever amazed at the final image of the yearly puzzle you help frame?

- What are some of the lessons you learned from the kids? What about the adults?

- Have you ever led a PD course? How did it go? What was the topic? If not, how come?

- Has school ever been a non-neutral ground for learning? Was this due to teacher or parent?

- Do the middle/high school students really understand how well prepared they are?

- How do you help the community when horrible things happen?

- Can you provide a specific moment where either Angela, Brooke or Brian helped you? What did you ask them about? What was the outcome?
- When did you know that your AP was your right hand gal? why her?
- What are some of your favorite questions to help you learn more about your staff?
- How did you help the teachers to see the benefits of interdisciplinary and inter-grade planning?
- Have you ever tried to not be you? As a teacher or administrator? What inspired that momentary change in persona?
- What is your relationship like with your fellow principals? I gather that some of them are envious of some aspects of your community, like the dance parties, and was curious if that impacts the relationship you have with them?
- What was the inspiration for opening up the music class for adults? Was this a hard sell for either the staff or the music department?

Can you please describe some of the conversations that came from these experiences?

- How do you keep track of your staff?
- What has been the greatest teacher development of instructional practice that you have seen? How did that transformation occur?

8/16 – post second interview with Stacey

Stacey has some great stories and experiences that clearly influenced her life and perspective as an educator, let alone a school leader. Her personality is perfectly suited for her position as she has a genuine care and concern for her students, which is expected, but those feelings also extend to her staff, teachers and greater community. I was also happy to hear her mention how her position was influenced by a mentor, Michelle, who told her that “kids don’t care what you know, they just want to know you care” (which is a line told to me from Dr. David Martin, but one that really comes from Theodore Roosevelt).

8/18

General note to self about this process

I have decided to collect a second narrative from each participant prior to starting the thematic analysis (as detailed by Creswell, 2007, pp. 170-171), as I wanted to have a larger data pool to work from. What I realized throughout this process is that boiling down moments/experiences for epiphanies that help influence and guide our actions can be a daunting task. In essence, I am asking for these participants to share with me moments of growth that might not always look pretty...it's also difficult to translate the impact of an event/moment for future purposes. Additionally, some of these lessons might seem superficial or concepts that the participants should have known already; however, it is much more difficult to read a lesson from a book to apply to your life rather than the actual experience. In other words, reading a fable does not give me the same moral as experiencing the events of the fable as one of the characters in the tale.

Subsequently, I am going to collect the second narrative and try to organize the two tales into a longer, coherent story of the participant's life. Showing them this more detailed perspective of their narrative should help to show them how I am understanding their story. Hopefully, I will be able to accurately portray their experiences in a manner that is reflective of their perspective. Of course, I also have the luxury of time/distance to help see their life; but that does not guarantee that my conclusions will be shared by the actual participant.

8/22 – pre second meeting with Jean

I have a few questions I specifically want to ask, specifically focused on events she brought up in our first conversation. These events include; her being a coxswain, being a part of student government, and her sorority – why did she join these groups? What did these experiences teach you?

8/22 – Notes from second conversation with Jean

- she agreed with the idea discussed by David Martin, but thinks adults need to know that you know what you are talking about before they will take you seriously

- bringing people together is her focus – started as a coxswain and she likes teamwork

- affinity for leading and yet still feels like part of the team

- core value; find god in all things...the world is beautiful and take care of others

this came from her upbringing/family (very positive) and they preached understanding context

- listening and learning from mistakes is learning

- non-judgmental parents – clear influence on her

- brother was adopted at 7 – has a large extended family (lots of adoption)

- always more to the story than first seen/collected

- teachers don't know everything and a connection can go a long way

- group efforts make anything possible

- gradual release model with staff – just like with children

- “some people you just can't reach at the job”

- as a mom and leader, she wants every teacher to be good enough for her kids; if

she wouldn't trust them, why would others?

- children are always first – constantly asking what's best for them

- plc's were a research based decision

right time and place to use it

sharing data

comradery (shared accountability)

dedicated time

helps with new teachers

- always keeps team involved in big decisions (all big decisions are teaching related)

- acts like the mom of the school

- being available to everyone

- “living the parenting life” with them; whats best for kids?

8/22 – post second conversation with Jean

It is clear why Jean is viewed as a superstar principal and instructional leader. She is willing to help anyone, even when that puts her own ego and needs aside. She is focused on making sure her school runs well, but also that the teachers are constantly growing and developing as instructors. She likes to use consensus building and involves many stakeholders in key decisions.