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A Tale of Two Schools and Their One Journey to Improvement

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ABSTRACT

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In accordance with the accountability measures required for public education by the United States Federal Government, the State of Colorado has developed a system for ranking school performance based on academic achievement, academic growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Schools are rated as Turnaround, Priority Improvement, Improvement, or Performance status (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Schools in Turnaround or Priority Improvement status must move to Improvement or Performance status in less than five years (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). The focus of the study was on the leadership skills and behaviors of principals in schools that have successfully moved from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Performance status.

A case study was conducted using two schools in similar urban settings that had moved from Turnaround to Improvement status. While both principals assumed it would be important to address instructional leadership first, both found that they had to address climate and culture and mission and vision first before they could make lasting and impactful changes in instruction and curriculum. Five areas in which principals focused their leadership in order to foster student achievement emerged. These areas included mission and vision/strategic leadership, school and staff culture/cultural leadership,

instruction and curriculum/instructional leadership, teacher efficacy/transformational leadership, and management and resources/managerial leadership. This work is significant in that it would provide direction for leaders of schools in need of improvement.

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In her book, *Wholly Unraveled*, Keele Burgin (2019) wrote, “It is a miracle that any book makes it into the world.” That is also true of the dissertation. It is especially true when the doctoral candidate is a full-time principal. It has taken 6 years of my life with innumerable obstacles along the way that caused me to take a semester off, fall behind in my writing, or simply not have the mental and emotional capacity to think straight. Burgin also wrote, “If I have learned one thing about myself it is that I am resilient. I am resilient because I know the following people will carry me if I can’t get up. And they have.” I am equally blessed to have the following people carry me when I could not get up.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public education in America has been under attack for at least the last 70 years beginning after World War II with the start of the Cold War (Bracey, 1997). This negative perception of public education was further fueled by the launch of Sputnik in 1957 (Bracey, 1997). The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESSA) of 1965 was created to allow federal funding to be administered through state and local education agencies to bolster achievement (Mehta & Teles, 2011). *A Nation at Risk* served as an indictment of public education and the inherent failure of the system (U.S. Department of Education, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Some data have suggested that the American public was still dissatisfied with the education system as a whole (Gallup News, 2017). In the 2017 Gallup Poll, 52% of respondents stated that they were dissatisfied with the quality of kindergarten through 12th grade education in the United States today, while 79% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with their own child's education (Gallup News, 2017).

The public's dissatisfaction with public education has persisted despite conflicting data. "A trait common among people is a penchant for promulgating 'bad news' which makes it even easier to believe that American public schools are failing to educate our children" (Anderson, Evans, Kozak, & Peterson, 1999, p. 1). Because this perception has endured for so long, attempts to fix education or the perception of education have not been successful. "The public's distrust of schools, and their willingness to believe the

worst, has solidified into a perception so negative that any attempt to shed light on the subject is dismissed as educators' attempt to refute the 'facts'" (Anderson et al., 1999, p. 2). Anderson et al. (1999) wrote that three important forces have had a profound impact on the perpetuation of public perception. Many reports and studies have used selected facts to further their agenda. "Depending upon the purpose of the organization disseminating the information, certain details may be glossed over or go unmentioned" (Anderson et al., 1999, p. 3). A second powerful force has been core values. Parents have wanted what was best for their children, but many were wary of government programs (Anderson et al., 1999). Finally, fear has played a role in the distrust of public education. Parents have feared that their children would not be properly prepared for success in the future. Parents has also feared an unknown future in which some predictions were bleak (Anderson et al., 1999). These forces combined have helped the idea that public education was failing to persist (Anderson et al., 1999).

One of the first federal plans for addressing the public education system was President George H.W. Bush's convention of the nation's governors at the Charlottesville Education Summit to set goals on how to go about fixing the public education system in 1989 (National Education Goals Panel, 1999). In 1992, President Clinton followed up by proposing the *Educate America Act* with similar goals and an incentive program for states in the form of grants to develop systems of standards (New York State Archives, The Clinton Years, Goals 2000, 2009). In 2002, George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was signed into law and promised that increased accountability would improve student outcomes (Jorgensen & Hoffmann, 2003). In 2009, President Obama put forth the *Race to the Top* (RTTT) competitive grant fund to support educational reform at the state

level (U.S. Department of Education, Programs, Race to the Top, 2009). In 2015, President Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which maintained reforms like standards and accountability, while easing the amount of standardized testing slightly (U.S. Department of Education, Programs, Race to the Top Fund, 2015a).

At the heart of these initiatives and laws has been the concept of accountability (Manna & Wallner, 2011). "At its core, accountability requires people to answer to others for their actions and the ensuing results they produce" (Manna & Wallner, 2011, p. 156). Accountability works on the assumption that the fear of reprisals would inspire student achievement (Manna & Wallner, 2011). While the federal government has been good at holding states and districts accountable for protecting the rights of children and making sure that constitutional protections were not violated, the federal government has not shown evidence that the policies or reforms of the last nearly 30 years have made a difference in student success (Hess & Kelly, 2011).

Improving Student Achievement

Over time various strategies have been proffered to improve student achievement. There has been a focus on professional learning for teachers, teacher evaluation, curriculum, standards, charter schools, and the changing role of the principal (Blankstein, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Chenoweth, 2007; Gawerecki, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2003; Senge et al., 2012; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Education researchers and various foundations have sought to determine which factors most strongly impact student achievement and, while many reforms and initiatives have been put in place as a result of this research, no one factor holds the answer due to the complexity of teaching and

learning (Marzano et al., 2003; MET Project, 2013; Senge et al., 2012; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). The way to transform troubled schools can be a complicated process involving many factors at the school level, including school leadership (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivki, 2013).

Making the Case for a Focus on the Principalship

Accountability has rested on student achievement and improved student achievement has rested on an array of dynamics including high expectations for students, school-based improvement initiatives, and especially, effective leadership (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Branch et al., 2013; Condon, 2009; Delaney, 1997; Edmonds, 1979; Gawerecki, 2003; Hallinger; & Heck, 1996; Hattie, 2009; Levacic, 2005; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2003; Nettles, & Herrington, 2007; Ross, & Gray, 2006; Trider & Leithwood, 1988). The principal has directly been involved and responsible for improving student achievement through high expectations, promoting importance of education, data analysis, personal accountability, leveraging resources, impacting school culture, being an instructional leader, leading professional learning, and even overseeing the maintenance of the physical environment (Chenoweth, 2007). Successful leadership has been second only to classroom instruction as a contributing factor in raising student achievement (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Some researchers have suggested that school improvement was not possible without the presence of an effective school leader (Louis et al., 2010).

Because significant relationships have existed between school leadership practices and student learning, improving principal practices would improve student outcomes (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). “Of all the variables that influence student achievement,

the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality" (Reeves, 2009, p. 67). There has been sufficient research to show that the principal was crucial to school success and student achievement (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). And yet, the role of the principal has largely been left out of the school reform conversation (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). "Ten years ago, school leadership was noticeably absent from most major school reform agendas, and even the people who saw leadership as important to turning around failing schools expressed uncertainty about how to proceed" (The Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 4). In 1992, Hallinger wrote that, if the nation committed to treating the principal as an instructional leader and focused on the importance of the role, school improvement would be increased.

Traditionally the role of the principal has been to be the building manager and disciplinarian, however, the role has changed to include a number of other responsibilities that make the position more challenging than ever before (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). "Until now, no one has sufficiently clarified the new role of the principal and given principals the detailed attention required in order to enable schools to thrive under the new conditions" (Fullan, 2014, pp. 8-9). Because the principalship has been linked with student achievement, it has become a complex job that has changed over time, and the position has not been the focus of school reform, it was important to understand how to capitalize on using the principal to move improve student outcomes.

Problem Identification

The federal government has created an accountability system, in part, to provide the public with data about student achievement and school success (Hess & Kelly, 2011). Principals have been an integral part of the improvement process and schools could not

improve without good leadership (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Research on the skills and behaviors of effective principals has been significant (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Blankstein, 2004; Bolman, & Deal, 2013; Branch et al., 2013; Gawerecki, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Kotter, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Levacic, 2005; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2003; Nettles, & Herrington, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Ross, & Gray, 2006; Senge et al., 2012;The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Among schools that have shown growth from failing to successful, a link to effective school leadership was evident in multiple studies (Brown, 2016; Ediger, 2004; Fink, 1999; Murphy, 2009; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011). It was not clear, however, if the leadership skills and behaviors of principals in schools that have high achievement was similar to that of schools that have moved from low to high achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE, 2016b) has ranked school success based on academic achievement, academic growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness. Schools have been rated as Turnaround, Priority Improvement, Improvement, or Performance status (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Schools in Turnaround or Priority Improvement status must move to Improvement or Performance status in less than 5 years (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). The focus of the study was on the leadership skills and behaviors of principals in schools that have successfully moved from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Performance status.

While the principal was not the only factor that impacted student achievement, principals were at the forefront of leading the school improvement efforts (Branch et al., 2013). The available knowledge on educational leadership in Turnaround schools was a weakness (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). Understanding the strengths of principals who were successful in this kind of challenging environment would be helpful for school districts and school in Turnaround or Priority Improvement status.

Nature of the Study

The study was a qualitative case study examination of two schools that have moved from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Performance status. While school improvement has been a complex process involving many factors, the focus of the study was on the leadership behaviors and skills of the principal. Two schools were selected in order to examine two different leaders. The demographics of the schools were noted but were not a part of the selection process. The selection criteria focused on whether or not the school improved and if the principal was in place during the improvement process (the detailed discussion of the methodology for this study is found in Chapter III).

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to understand the reasons that schools were successfully able to move from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Performance status and to specifically examine the skills and behaviors demonstrated by principals who led the schools' efforts to improve student achievement:

Q1 What do principals perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

Q2 What do teachers perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

Q3 How was the role of the principal important to this academic turnaround process?

Definition of Terms

The CDE has created accountability terms specific to Colorado schools and school districts. While the meaning behind the terms and purpose for the ideas has been similar across the nation, some states have specific definitions. Since the focus of the study was on two schools in Colorado, it would be important to understand what the terms mean in this context.

In Colorado, the Educational Accountability Act of 2009 required all schools and districts to implement a plan for the school based on the results of standardized test scores. There were four types of plans: Performance Plan, Improvement Plan, Priority Improvement Plan, or Turnaround Plan. Schools that met the state's expectations for attainment on the performance indicators were assigned a Performance Plan. Elementary and middle schools that earned at least 59% of their framework points on the school performance framework report were assigned to the Performance Plan category. High schools that earned at least 60% of their framework points on the school performance framework report were assigned to a Performance Plan category. Schools that earned between 47% and 59% of their framework points on the school performance framework were assigned to the Improvement Plan category. Elementary and middle schools that earned between 37% and 46% of their framework points on the school performance framework report were assigned to a Priority Improvement Plan category. High schools that earned between 33% but less than 46%, of their framework points were assigned to a

Priority Improvement Plan category. Finally, Elementary and middle schools that earned 37% or less of their framework points and high schools that earned less than 33% of their framework points were assigned to a Turnaround Plan category. The category determined the type of Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) that schools created to chart their improvement process and what requirements, such as notification of parents and public meetings, schools must adhere to (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).

According to *The Education Act of 2009*, Article 11 of Title 22, C.R.S., schools may not implement a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan for longer than 5 consecutive years before the district or Institute was required to restructure or close the school. According to State Board of Education rules, 1 CCR 301-1, section 10.05, the 5 years would begin July 1 of the summer immediately following the fall in which the school was notified that it must implement a Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan. This timeline was referred to as the Accountability Clock (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). The accountability process and the CDE's support for schools going through this process are discussed in further detail in Chapter II.

Conclusion

The American public had continued to be dissatisfied with the public education system (Gallup News, 2017). Accountability systems have been meant in part to provide data, which could show whether or not students were achieving on par with other, international systems (Hess & Kelly, 2011). Principals have been an important part of raising student achievement (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Branch et al., 2013; Condon, 2009; Delaney, 1997; Edmonds, 1979; Gawerecki, 2003; Hallinger; & Heck, 1996; Hattie, 2009; Levacic, 2005; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2003; Nettles, & Herrington,

2007; Ross, & Gray, 2006; Trider & Leithwood, 1988). School leadership has been important to turning around failing schools (Branch et al., 2013). Examining the leadership skills and behaviors of principals would support principals, which would support increased student achievement.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins with an explanation of how school accountability came about and why state and federal governments find measuring and monitoring student achievement to be important to public education in the United States. Also included in the literature review is an overview of the accountability process in Colorado. The varied and diverse roles of the principal were explored through the literature review. The studies incorporated here document the attributes of successful leaders and include multiple aspects of leadership as well as characteristics of ineffective leaders. Finally, the literature review concludes with an examination of leadership skills specific to leaders of turnaround schools and ways in which state departments of education and individual school districts have worked to support principals who are leading schools in turnaround status.

Accountability in Public Education

With the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, public schools in the United States standardized testing has been used to measure whether students were meeting specific state benchmarks and were being taught to state standards (Mintrop, 2002). Accountability was intended to make sure students were learning and, in part, to motivate teachers to do better (Mintrop, 2002). In examining this idea of accountability, Mintrop (2002) found:

> When a school is publicly labeled as deficient, teachers after going through a whole range of emotions accept the urgency of improvement. . . . Teachers and administrators want to repair their public image, but they also take responsibility for the quality of their work. So, they take a critical look at their own work and reflection the valid performance demands of the accountability system. They finally decide to increase effort in their own classroom and get involved in the improvement of their school. (p. 10)

Unfortunately, in many instances labeling a school as failing has had a demoralizing impact on the climate and culture, which has had a negative rather than motivational effect (Ediger, 2004; Mintrop, 2002; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011).

The perception that public education was failing has been a constant in America since the 1950s and became increasingly more politicized starting in the 1980s and 1990s. Gerald Bracey (1997) wrote:

> People had already hopped on the schools-are-awful bandwagon shortly after World War II ended and the Cold War began. The early 1950s saw the publication of Author Bestor's, *Educational Wastelands;* Albert Lynd's, *Quackery in the Public Schools;* and, of course, Rudolph Flesch's, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. (p. 62)

The launch of Sputnik in October 1957 exacerbated this perception as the United States was falling behind our cold war foes because America was failing to produce high quality mathematicians and scientists (Bracey, 1997). "We were not getting them in sufficient numbers and of sufficient quality, while the Russians were. Thus we were in trouble. And schools were to blame" (Bracey, 1997, p. 54). Being behind in the space race was the fault of public education, not the federal government (Bracey, 1997).

Federal involvement in public education grew when President Carter and the 96th Congress created the U.S. Department of Education in 1979 (National Education Goals Panel, 1999). At this point, the federal government started to have indirect input into public education (National Education Goals Panel, 1999). In 1983, the National

Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform: A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education* (U.S. Department of Education, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report claimed that, "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (U.S. Department of Education, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 9). It was a scathing indictment of how the public education system in America was failing to educate children. Some professional researchers and academics raised concerns that, because of the provocative nature of the claims made in the report, the panel was interested in gaining attention and had not implemented the usual standards of scientific scrutiny (Mehta, 2015). Questions about the panel's motives and methods have continued to be discussed (Mehta, 2015).

In 1989, President George Bush gathered the nation's governors at the Charlottesville Education Summit (National Education Goals Panel, 1999). During the summit, the group created goals focused on early childhood education; high school graduation rates; educational competencies; improvement in math, science, and literature; and school safety (National Education Goals Panel, 1999). Having helped to craft the goals at the Charlottesville Education Summit, when Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States 3 years later in 1992, his first legislative proposal was called *Goals 2000: The Educate America Act*. The Educate America Act utilized the six goals created at the 1989 Charlottesville Education Summit and added two more goals focusing on teacher quality and parental responsibility (New York State Archives, The Clinton Years, Goals 2000, 2009). This act included a grant program to support state development of

standards and standardized assessments (New York State Archives, The Clinton Years, Goals 2000, 2009). The *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* authorized grants to states to support the reform movement by creating standards and assessments linked to those standards (Superfine, 2005). "Together, standards, assessments, flexibility, and accountability were thought to be key components that could spur systemic reform in the American education system" (Superfine, 2005, p. 10). *Goals 2000: The Educate America Act* would soon be replaced by the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which would continue the focus on standards and assessment (Superfine, 2005).

In 2001, George W. Bush took office and immediately put forth a proposal on education, which became the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that was signed into law in 2002 (Jorgensen & Hoffmann, 2003). The legislation would ultimately include a highly specific metric based on standardized testing and schools not meeting this metric would be subjected to a series of punishments ranging from offering school choice to restructuring of the school (Jorgensen & Hoffmann, 2003). "But several barriers have prevented NCLB from producing the desirable outcomes to improve educational opportunity and quality that its advocates had envisioned" (Manna & Wallner, 2011, p. 155). No Child Left Behind has had an impact on state and local policymaking, however, the large-scale improvements anticipated by the accountability system have remained to be seen (Manna & Wallner, 2011).

When President Obama was sworn into office in 2009, he created the *Race to the Top* (RTTT) fund (U.S. Department of Education, Programs, Race to the Top, 2009). This competitive grant program incentivized states to create educational reforms including the use of standardized assessment and the recruitment and retention of

effective teachers and principals, the adoption of data systems to track student progress, and the improvement of low-performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, Programs, Race to the Top, 2009). In 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which maintained high standards, accountability, state and local decision-making, access to preschool, but slightly decreases the amount of standardized testing (U.S. Department of Education, Programs, Race to the Top Fund, 2015a). Every Student Succeeds Act was meant to ease school accountability but ranking based on testing has by no means been removed (U.S. Department of Education, Programs, Race to the Top Fund, 2015a).

School Accountability in Colorado

The Education Accountability Act of 2009 provided accountability for public education in Colorado through "consistent, objective measures and report performance in a manner that is highly transparent and builds public understanding" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b, p. 4). The Education Accountability Act of 2009 provided for alignment between the Colorado accountability measures and that of the federal government. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE, 2016b) has been responsible for accrediting each school district in the state every year based on the performance of the schools in the school district. The CDE (2016b) would review school performance based on academic achievement, academic growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness. Schools and school districts have also been held accountable for the participation of students in state assessments (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). If a school district did not meet 95% participation rate in two or more content areas, then the school district's plan type would be lowered by one level (Colorado

Department of Education, 2016b). Students who have been excused from testing by their parents have not been presently factored into these calculations (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). In August 2017, the U.S. Department of Education sent a letter to Colorado state education officials stating that the Colorado policy of not including students who have opted out of testing was not acceptable. Colorado could potentially stand to lose federal funding if the policy remains (Garcia, 2017).

Academic Achievement Indicators

The Academic Achievement Indicator has used the mean scale scores and percentile ranks of each school on the Colorado standardized tests (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). The CDE (2016b) has relied on the results from the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests in English language arts and mathematics, as well as the Colorado Spanish Language Arts Assessment, CMAS science, and two alternative assessments called the Dynamic Learning Maps/Colorado Alternative Assessments (DLM/Co-Alt) to determine a school district's mean scale score and percentile ranking. School performance has been determined by content areas, and disaggregated by English learners, free/reduced price lunch eligible, minority students, and students with disabilities (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). The Academic Achievement Indicator has been just one part of the accountability equation (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b).

Academic Growth Indicators

The Academic Growth Indicator has measured the progress of the school toward improving students' scores compared with other students in the state with similar proficiencies and score histories (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b).

> This Indicator reflects normative (median) growth; how the academic progress of the students in the district compared to that of other students statewide with similar content proficiency (CMAS PARCC) score history or similar English language proficiency (ACESS) score history. (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b, p. 9)

Results were calculated for overall level and disaggregated by the same student groups as the Academic Achievement Indicator (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). The Academic Growth Indicator was independent of the Academic Achievement Indicator (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b).

Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness

The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Indicator measured how prepared students were for entering college or career after they had graduated from high school (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Graduation rates for all students as well as rates disaggregated by historically disadvantaged populations like free/reduced lunch, minorities, English language learners, and students with disabilities have been used (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Dropout rates, American College Testing (ACT) exam, composite scores, and the percent of graduates who went on to technical programs, community college, or 4-year schools were also used to measure this indicator (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). This indicator was only applied to high schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b).

Public School Accreditation

Each year the CDE (2016b) would use the School Performance Frameworks to review each school's performance on the Academic Achievement, Academic Growth, and Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Indicators. The State Board of Education would assign schools to the type of plan they would be responsible for implementing (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Plan types included Performance Plan, which was the highest rating, Improvement Plan, Priority Improvement Plan, and Turnaround Plan (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). If a school district disagreed with the CDE's (2016b) assignment of school plan, they could submit additional information to be considered. "Districts should not submit a request unless they believe that they can make a compelling case to change a school's plan type based on information that the Department does not already have or has not considered" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b, p. 22). The final assignment was based on the school's results according to the School Performance Frameworks and any additional information provided by the school district (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Districts and schools were not allowed to be on Priority Improvement or Turnaround Plan status for more than 5 consecutive years before facing penalties directed by the State Board of Education (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). Schools that were assigned to Priority Improvement and/or Turnaround Plans that did not progress to Improvement or Performance status within 5 years could be subject to district re-organization, which could mean closing or restructuring the school (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b).

Unified Improvement Plan

Public schools in Colorado must submit a Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) annually (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). School plans would first be reviewed by the school district and then submitted to the state department of education. Schools on Performance or Improvement status would submit their plans by April 15. Schools on Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status must submit their plans by January 15 (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). The plans were reviewed by the CDE (2016b) to be sure that trends, root causes, targets, and improvement strategies were all included. The CDE (2016b) may require changes to the plan. School plans were posted on the CDE website for the public to review (Colorado Department of Education, 2016b). The CDE (2016c) Turnaround Network provided support for implementing the UIPs to schools and school districts.

Failing Schools in Colorado

Colorado state law has required that the state board of education and the CDE (2016e) hold schools accountable for student success. "The state annually evaluates student performance in districts and schools through a set of consistent, objective measures, and then uses this information to inform rewards, sanctions, and supports" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 4). Using the three key performance indicators (academic achievement, growth, and post-secondary and workforce readiness), the state assigned the Priority Improvement or Turnaround status to the lowest performing schools in the state (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). For the lowest performing schools, those in Priority Performance or Turnaround status, there

were additional requirements in addition to what was expected of higher performing schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).

Accountability clock. The timeline that schools must show improvement from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Improvement or Performance status was referred to by the CDE (2016e) as the Accountability Clock. The Education Act of 2009 outlined the specific timeline and possible sanctions (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). School districts with schools on a Priority Improvement or Turnaround plan for more than 5 consecutive years would be required to restructure or close the school (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). Because the state was changing its accountability measures by moving to the CMAS and PARCC tests in the 2015-2016 school year, the 2015-2016 ratings were not assigned to schools and the year did not count toward the accountability clock (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).

Throughout the course of the school year, schools on the Accountability Clock would have requirements and deadlines, which were different from schools in Improvement or Performance status (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). In October or November, the school district would be required to notify parents whose children attended Priority Improvement or Turnaround schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). The notification must include the plan type, information on the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) process, as well as information that the school board would hold a public hearing to approve the UIP in the coming months (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). A public hearing on the school's UIP must be held at least 30 days after the parental notification has been made (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).For schools on year 5 of the accountability clock, a Turnaround

Support Manager would visit the schools during October through December to help plan for the Commissioner of Education's recommendation to the state board of education and to develop a pathway proposal, which would outline the next steps for the school (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).

In January through April, the CDE and State Review Panel (SRP), which was comprised of experts from the field of education, would examine the UIPs for schools on the accountability clock (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). Feedback from the CDE (2016e) was shared with school districts, however, the school district must request to see the review from the SRP. For schools on year 5, panelists from the SRP would visit each underperforming school and school district at the end of the Accountability Clock period prior to making any recommendation to the Commissioner of Education or the State Board of Education, if funds were available (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). Between February and July, the State Board of Education would hold Accountability Hearings, where they would consider the recommendations of the SRP and Commissioner of Education as well as the school district's own plan. The State Board of Education would then direct schools and school districts as to what actions needed to take place. (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). During year 6, CDE (2016e) staff would periodically monitor the school district to be sure the actions were being implemented with fidelity. The school district would also provide updates on the implementation process to the State Board of Education (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). "If the district does not implement the school pathways(s) as directed by the State Board, the district's accreditation rating may be lowered" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 12).

Improvement planning. All schools in the State of Colorado were expected to create an UIP, however, the CDE (2016e) paid special attention to schools in Priority Improvement or Turnaround status. In order to impress the importance and seriousness of the need to drastically improve upon Schools in Priority Improvement or Turnaround status, the plan must show an understanding of the magnitude of the issues facing them (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). "This is an acknowledgement that for schools and districts to exit Priority Improvement or Turnaround status, dramatic change is necessary" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 14). Some schools would need to address all three of the Performance Indicators and implement changes across the system that addressed all aspects of achievement for all groups of students (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).

Schools in Turnaround Status were required to include and implement specific strategies provided by the CDE (2016e). According to the Colorado Department of Education (2016e), the state-required improvement strategies included:

- Employing a lead turnaround partner that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with districts under similar circumstances. The turnaround partner will be immersed in all aspects of developing and collaboratively executing the plan and will serve as a liaison to other district partners.
- Reorganizing the oversight and management structure within the district to provide greater, more effective support for district schools.
- Recognizing individual district schools as innovation schools or clustering district schools with similar governance or management structures into one or more innovation school zones and seeking designation as a District of Innovation pursuant to Article 32.5 of Title 22.
- Hiring an entity that uses research-based strategies and has a proven record of success working with districts under similar circumstances to operate one or more district schools pursuant to a contract with the local school board or the Charter School Institute.
- Converting one or more district schools to a charter school(s).
- Renegotiating and significantly restructuring a charter school's charter contract.

- Other actions of comparable or greater significance or effect. (p. 15)

Schools in Turnaround Status were required to implement one or more of these strategies with fidelity and were reviewed by the CDE (2016e) to see that they were in compliance.

Support for change. The CDE (2016e) offered a support network for schools, which was differentiated based on need. "This tiered approach focuses the most intensive support to the lowest-performing schools and districts and allows for greater autonomy for the highest-performing schools and districts" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 26). The most intensive level of support provided help from the Turnaround Network, Turnaround Leadership Development, and School and District Improvement Grants (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).

The Turnaround Network provided professional learning opportunities as well as site-based work (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). "Schools develop a rigorous improvement plan and utilize a performance management model based on four research-based conditions: culture of performance; academic systems; talent; and operations" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 26). The Turnaround Leadership Development system utilized a group of approved providers who offered leadership development to teacher leaders, principals, and district level personnel (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). The School and District Improvement Grants were, "A variety of federally funded grants to provide diagnostic reviews, improvement planning, implementation, and more intensive change" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 26).

The CDE (2016e) offered a team of Turnaround Support Managers that provided specific, customized support to districts with the most needs. "This support may include

the analysis of performance data, coordination of diagnostic review support, design and/or updating of Unified Improvement Plans, and the brokering of resources and services" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 27). At the district level, the CDE (2016e) also offered a Turnaround Leadership Academy, which worked with district level personnel to examine their challenges, build capacity, and provide learning around best practices.

> The program will provide relevant, research-based professional development for district leaders who oversee key functions such as general academics, school supervision, curriculum, student services, accountability, student assessment, human capital management, and community engagement. (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e, p. 28)

The hope was that this learning would lead to redesigning the district systems that support improvement in schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e).

Solutions for Improving Failing Schools

Alongside the accountability process and school reform policies, any number of solutions for improving education in America have come about in the form alternative licensure, charter schools, model schools, teacher evaluation, and international benchmarking. (Burnette, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2011; Jankov, & Caref, 2017; La Londe, Brewer, & Lubienski, 2015; Sahlberg, 2011; Troppe et al., 2015; Wakelyn, 2011). Some of the solutions have inadvertently decreased student achievement or, at best, promoted the status quo (Blazer, 2010; La Londe et al., 2015; Raymond, Fletcher, & Luque, 2001). No one, single, factor has been found to be responsible or raising student achievement. A sampling of innovations is explored here.

Alternative Licensure

Teach for America (TFA) was conceived by Wendy Kopp as her Bachelor of Arts thesis at Princeton University in 1989 to address sub-par teaching as well as a teacher shortage in America's urban centers (La Londe et al., 2015). Teach For America was started with philanthropic donations from the Gates, Walton, and Broad Foundations as well as federal funding as an AmeriCorps organization (La Londe et al., 2015). Teach For America recruited recent college graduates who had a successful academic record in a rigorous content area, leadership experiences, and a willingness to teach in under-served areas (La Londe et al., 2015). College graduates hoping to join TFA went through an extensive interview process and a 5-minute mock sample lesson (La Londe et al., 2015). Those who were accepted into the program attended a 5-week summer training on TFA's pedagogy and participate in a limited amount of student teaching, which amounted to approximately 125 of teacher training and 18 hours of student teaching (La Londe et al., 2015).

While some research has found that the TFA teachers could have a positive impact on student achievement, this impact was not statistically significant (Raymond et al., 2001). Some research did suggest that students being taught by a TFA teacher did better in math but not in reading (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004). However, this finding may be the result of the TFA emphasis on achievement testing data as the standard of success. "Given the immense focus on testing that is synonymous with TFA's pedagogical approach, any test score gains could likely be illusory and temporary, providing little to no lasting benefit for students" (La Londe et al., 2015, p. 7). Research

has also found that TFA recruits had similar outcomes as other un/under-certified teachers, while certified teachers had better outcomes (Raymond et al., 2001).

> Taken alone, the data on the effects of TFA teachers on student achievement are reason for pause: until they become fully certified, TFA recruits are neither teaching students any better than their certified counterparts nor are improving larger school climate and improvement issues (e.g. absenteeism, discipline). (La Londe et al., 2015, p. 9)

Charter Schools

Charter schools have been public schools that had their own "charter" or agreement with an authorizing educational authority such as a state or school district (Blazer, 2010). Under this agreement, charter schools were not required to adhere to the same regulations and policies as traditional public schools and, with the oversight of their own board, determine their own budgets, staffing, class sizes, curriculum, school day, school year, and internal policies (Blazer, 2010). Charter schools operated in 43 states and the District of Columbia (Thomsen, 2017).

The question of whether charter school students out-performed traditional public school students was difficult to answer since charter schools varied so much from state to state and school district to school district, because the student populations at charter schools were often quite different from traditional public schools, and because often the research was conducted or funded by either advocates or opponents of the charter school movement as opposed to independent evaluators (Blazer, 2010). In some states charter schools were required to accept all students who applied and to provide similar services as public schools for students who were more difficult to educate, whereas in other states, charter schools may not be providing a high quality education (Darling-Hammond, 2017) Blazer (2010) also wrote:

> Results of studies conducted on charter school student achievement are mixed. Most studies have concluded that charter schools produce achievement gains that are about the same or lower than those found in traditional public schools, although a few studies have reported that charter schools have a small positive effect on student achievement. (p.15)

Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, and Dwover, (2010) conducted a study of middle school students who were admitted to charter schools through lottery as well as a group of students who were not admitted and found little difference between the two groups. "Students admitted to participating charter middle schools through lotteries scored about the same on state reading and mathematics assessments as did the students who applied but were not admitted" (Gleason et al., 2010, p. 41).

Program or Model Schools

Program schools were public schools that had adopted a prescribed systemic approach such as International Baccalaureate (IB), Expeditionary Learning (EL), or Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), among others. The IB, EL, and AVID programs were not free and had very specific requirements for teacher professional development, curriculum, and student expectations (ibo.org; eleducation.org; avid.org). Each of the IB, EL, and AVID organizations has conducted research into their programs showing excellent results (ibo.org; eleducation.org; avid.org). While all three programs were fee based, only the IB website actually showed the cost of their programming.

The IB program focused on academic rigor and personal development (ibo.org). Students were provided a global perspective by developing intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and multi-lingual learning (ibo.org). International Baccalaureate offered programming at the elementary, middle, and high school level and each program included extensive professional learning, curriculum, and resources (ibo.org). There were very

specific requirements for teaching time, student tasks, and staffing requirements (ibo.org). In order to become an IB school, there was a lengthy authorization process, which entailed significant commitment from school leadership, teachers, and community (ibo.org). The cost of the application was $4,000 (ibo.org). Once authorized, schools must pay an annual fee of $8,520 for the Primary Years Program, $10,050 for the Middle Years Program, and $11,650 for the Diploma Program at the high school level, which included professional development, coaching, and educational resources (ibo.org). In addition, there were required fees for consultation, assessments, and a periodic evaluation (ibo.org).

The EL program was created in 1991 through a partnership between the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Outward Bound, United States of America and focused on engagement and achievement (eleducation.org). The focus of EL was on mastery of skills, character development, high quality work, a connection to nature, and service learning. Expeditionary Learning provided professional development, curriculum, and resources (eleducation.org). Schools that were not part of the EL network could also access some resources for free (eleducation.org).

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) began over 35 years ago in one classroom in a public high school in San Diego (avid.org). Since then, it has grown to a global non-profit organization serving students in elementary, middle, and high school. The mission of AVID has been to prepare students for high school, college, and career (avid.org). The focus of AVID was on traditionally underrepresented students such as students in poverty, first in family to attend college, and minority students (avid.org). The focus was on fostering academic skills, study habits, and positive peer groups in order to

enable students to enroll and persist in college (avid.org). While AVID did have certain requirements as to professional development, teaching time, and enrollment in advanced classes, the organization promoted itself as a philosophy rather than a program (avid.org).

Teacher Evaluation

In 2009, Race to the Top (RTTT) emphasized more rigorous evaluation systems, the use of multiple measures, and use of student test score data and states began to examine evaluation practices (Jiang, Sartain, Sporte, & Steinberg, 2014). "Increasingly, state and local education agencies are replacing traditional teacher evaluation approaches in order to incorporate multiple methods of assessing and evaluating teachers" (Jiang et al., 2014, p. 1). The strategies most commonly adopted were training for evaluators, defining teacher quality through indicators, broadening participation, parents, citizens, students, and teacher associations on the design committees. Less frequently adopted were peer review, portfolios, career ladders, and incorporating student achievement data. (Hazi, & Rucinski, 2009).

Also in 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation began the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) study to improve the quality of information about teacher effectiveness. The goal of the MET study was to provide information that would inform the creation of systems for measuring effectiveness to enhance feedback, professional learning, and teacher improvement. The study included almost 3,000 teachers in large, urban school districts across the country and focused on inclusion of student achievement data in evaluation, relating observation, and feedback to student achievement, and the inclusion of feedback on teacher practice to support improvement. (Learning about teaching: Initial findings from the measures of effective teaching project, 2010). The

MET project found a connection between student achievement and student feedback. “In other words, it is possible to combine in a coherent package a teacher’s student achievement results with feedback on specific strengths and weaknesses in their practice” (Learning about teaching: Initial findings from the measures of effective teaching project, 2010, p. 31).

Spina, Buckley, and Puchner (2014) found that, in Illinois, some teachers and administrators welcomed a more robust evaluation system as a form of accountability. “They felt that a new, more rigorous, more demanding teacher evaluation model is needed to increase credibility and improve the perception of the public regarding education” (Spina et al., 2014, p. 119). Teachers and administrators felt that an evaluation system that had a decreased emphasis on teacher tenure, accountability for student growth, focus on professional learning for teachers, better identification of teaching strengths and weaknesses, increased objectivity for evaluators, and emphasis on data would positively impact teaching and learning (Spina et al., 2014). Multiple teachers welcomed a model that required evidence of teacher performance and student growth, and outlined dismissal procedures for teachers who were not performing up to standards regardless of tenure. Teachers felt that some veteran teachers did not value student achievement and did not want to change and improve their teaching practices (Spina et al., 2014).

Implementing a new evaluation system was not without challenges. “Administrators and teachers expressed concern over trust issues, the teacher union, lack of teacher training, apprehension about the student achievement component, and the

amount of time for administrators to be potential barriers in the successful implementation of the new evaluation system" (Spina et al., 2014, p. 122).

There was also concern that certain practices such as walkthroughs, multiple measures, customer service data, student achievement data, peer reviews, portfolios, goal setting, and reflection, added to the evaluation procedures and made evaluation more complicated and ritualistic (Hazi & Rucinski, 2009). "While each practice is well-intentioned, when introduced into the arena of teacher evaluation as mandated practice, it can be misused" (Hazi & Rucinski, 2009, p 12). As a result, Hazi and Rucinski (2009) found that more intensive evaluation practices may not lead to improved teaching. "It seems unlikely to us that the state department involvement viewed as increasingly invasive and controlling will lead to the development of ideal learning conditions aimed at improving teacher capacity" (Hazi,& Rucinski, 2009, p. 14). Jiang et al. (2014) found that, while the Illinois state evaluation system did appear to have a positive impact on student achievement in some schools, not all schools were impacted in the same way. Schools that were high achieving and had low levels of poverty showed more improvement after the implementation of a new evaluation model. "This finding suggests that an intervention such as teacher evaluation requires high levels of capacity in the school building in order to affect student learning" (Jiang et al., 2014, p. 4). The impact of teacher evaluation on increased student achievement seemed inconclusive.

International Benchmarking

Learning from other nations that had built successful educational systems, as evidenced by producing students who performed well on international standardized tests, was another idea for improving America's public schools (Darling-Hammond, 2011;

Sahlberg, 2011). Finland, Singapore, and South Korea have often been cited as countries that have made vast improvements in their public educational systems since the 1970s (Darling-Hammond, 2011; Sahlberg, 2011). However, there were important differences between these countries and the United States, which made trying to adopt their methods difficult (Darling-Hammond, 2011; Sahlberg, 2011). Darling-Hammond (2011) and Sahlberg (2011) wrote about school funding, equity, curriculum, teacher pay, teacher preparation, and school culture. Darling-Hammond (2011) wrote:

> All three nations have undertaken these elements in a systematic fashion, rather than pouring energy into a potpourri of innovations and then changing course every few years, as has often been the case in many communities in the United States, especially large cities. (p. 23)

Sahlberg (2011) wrote that trust in schools was one fundamental difference between the United States and Finland, which prevented the current reform efforts in America from working and made copying the Finnish system impossible. As noted earlier, trust in American public education has been lacking since the 1950s. In Finland, parents, students, and governmental authorities trusted the education system (Sahlberg, 2011). "The culture of trust meant that education authorities and political leaders believe that teachers, together with principals, parents and their communities, know how to provide the best possible education for their children and youth (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 130).

Principals and Student Success

Having explored the accreditation process in Colorado and some of the attempts at addressing failing schools, attention now must be paid to the role of the principal and the impact principals have on student achievement. Principals have been responsible for putting systems in place to provide students with what they needed to be successful (Gawerecki, 2003). "The skills, knowledge, and personal capabilities that students obtain

in school should enable them to thrive now and in their future" (Gawerecki, 2003, p. 1). High expectations for all students have been essential to student achievement in that the academic press of a school created a culture of success for all students (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). In the era of school accountability, schools that did not demonstrate student achievement may be punished and face sanctions or loss of important supplemental funding (Peterson, 2011).

Part of the accountability process was to create school-based initiatives that increased achievement and principals played a large role in that improvement (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Branch et al., 2013; Condon, 2009; Delaney, 1997; Edmonds, 1979; Gawerecki, 2003; Hallinger; & Heck, 1996; Hattie, 2009; Levacic, 2005; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2003; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Ross & Gray, 2006; Trider & Leithwood, 1988). "Effective educational leadership makes a difference in improving learning; there is nothing new or especially controversial about this idea" (Nettles & Herrington, 2007, p. 725). However, the pressure to perform could sometimes cause principals to look for the popular fix and make changes based on the fear of sanctions and to appease public perception instead of sound data analysis and research on what was truly best for their schools (Peterson, 2011).

The difficulty in understanding the principal's impact on student achievement depended on unraveling the multitude of factors involved with school success (Branch et al., 2013). "The fundamental challenge to measuring the impact of school leaders is separating their contributions from the many other factors that drive student achievement" (Branch et al., 2013, p. 64). Principals have had an indirect impact through their work with teachers and their leadership in general (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The

Colorado Department of Education (2015a), as well as the Council of Chief State School Officers (2015) have created evaluation rubrics based on leadership areas that address the principal's work with teachers, students, and general leadership skills.

Achieving results through others has been the essence of leadership and although the impact of the principal might be mediated by other in-school variables did not diminish the importance of the role of principal (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Principals have influenced student achievement through high expectations, emphasizing the importance of education, utilizing data, being accountable, utilizing time wisely, leveraging resources, creating a positive and respectful school culture, supporting teachers, providing professional development, and even focusing on the physical environment of the school (Chenoweth, 2007).

The Role of the Principal

In order to determine how principals impacted student achievement, it would be important to first know what effective principals do. An expanding base of knowledge from research and practice has shown that educational leaders exerted influence on student achievement by creating challenging, as well as caring and supportive, conditions conducive to each student's learning (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The Council of Chief State School Officers (2015), the Colorado Department of Education (2015b), and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) included strategic leadership, cultural leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and managerial leadership, which included budgeting and human resources, as areas which were important to the success of schools as evidenced by the inclusion of these areas in the evaluation process.

> In the research that has been done in this area, significant relationships have been identified between selected school leadership practices and student learning, indicating that evidence existed for certain principal behaviors to produce a direct relationship with student achievement. (Nettles & Herrington, 2007, p. 724)

The leadership practices outlined included: safe and orderly environment, mission and vision, stakeholder involvement, monitoring school progress, instructional focus, high expectations for student performance, and professional development (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). All of the ways that the principal impacted student achievement need to be considered in order to enhance the ability to continue to improve schools (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Nettles and Herrington (2007) concluded that successful leadership was second only to classroom instruction in contributing to the achievement of students.

In 2003, the McREL Organization prepared a detailed examination of the link between school leadership and student achievement (Marzano et al., 2003). "The data from our meta-analysis demonstrate that there is, in fact, a substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement" (Marzano et al., 2003, p. 3). The analysis considered studies conducted over a 30-year period beginning in the 1970s. The McREL group found 21 leadership responsibilities associated with student achievement (Marzano et al., 2003). The leadership responsibilities identified by McREL included: culture; order; discipline; resources; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; focus; knowledge about curriculum, instruction, and assessment; visibility; contingent rewards; communication; outreach; input; affirmation; relationship; change agent; optimizer; ideals/beliefs; monitors/evaluates; flexibility; situational awareness; intellectual stimulation (Marzano et al., 2003). Many of these responsibilities were similar to attributes found to be important to leadership in education and in business by other researchers (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 1994; Kouzes &

Posner, 2012). These attributes could also be seen in the professional standards used in principal evaluation (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

Principals have relentlessly developed and supported teachers and created positive working conditions for the employees (Delaney, 1997). “While there are many factors that influence school-based management and school improvement, the participants in this study clearly stated that the leadership style of the principal is most important” (Delaney, 1997, p. 110). School leaders have effectively allocated resources and constructed and carried out organizational practices and systems within their schools, which informed how the school ran (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Principals have engaged in other deep and meaningful work outside of the classroom that has had a powerful impact on what happens inside it (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Teachers have believed that an effective, capable, and dedicated leader was essential to school improvement because the principal’s leadership style effected instruction and student achievement (Delaney, 1997).

The Wallace Foundation commissioned a 6-year study of educational leadership intended to “identify the nature of successful educational leadership and to better understand how such leadership can improve educational practices and student learning” (Louis et al., 2010, p. 7). The findings were conclusive in that school leadership did have an impact on student achievement (Louis et al., 2010). “To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership” (Louis et al., 2010, p. 9). There were a number of implications for both policy and practice that encouraged legislators to take the views and experiences of school district and school leaders into account. Louis et al. (2010) concluded that:

> Reform in the U.S educational system is both lively and messy but, as educators grapple with emerging demands, we found that leadership matters at all levels. Leaders in education provide direction for, and exercise influence over, policy and practice. Their contributions are crucial, our evidence shows, to initiatives aimed at improving student learning, and of course ultimately to the future in which we all share. (p. 283)

In another study by the Wallace Foundation (2012), it was noted that very little of school reform focused on leadership. "Ten years ago, school leadership was noticeably absent from most major school reform agendas, and even the people who saw leadership as important to turning around failing schools expressed uncertainty about how to proceed" (The Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 4). Research has validated the connection between leadership and student achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2012). "In a detailed 2010 survey, school, and district administrators, policymakers, and others declared principal leadership among the most pressing matters on a list of issues in public school education" (The Wallace Foundation, 2012, p. 5). Quantifying how much principal leadership impacted student achievement was more difficult (Branch et al., 2013).

Branch et al. (2013) determined not only that effective principals made a difference in achievement, but how much difference they made, which provided an additional answer to whether or not principals impacted achievement. "Our results indicated that highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount" (Branch et al., 2013, p. 63). Other researchers also found that effective principals made an impact on student achievement (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). "Indeed, there is ample evidence in the body of research and in educational practice to confirm that the school principal is regarded as critical to school success and student achievement" (Nettles & Herrington, 2007, p. 729).

Good leadership was essential to improved achievement (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). “There is a general belief that good school principals are the cornerstones of good schools and that without a principal’s leadership, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed” (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 43). Effective school leadership was essential to student achievement, which was tied to school accountability.

The job of the principal was varied, which made the position challenging (Louis et al., 2010). The role of the principal was to assume a number of roles including that of a manager, politician, and instructor (Hallinger, 1992). Most policy initiatives have focused on teacher effectiveness, not school leadership (U.S. Department of Education, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). “Perhaps, if the nation's commitment to the principal as an instructional leader persists for another generation, we will begin to see more significant changes in professional practice” (Hallinger, 1992, p. 4). The role of the principal should be supported in the same way as good instructional practices for teachers (Hallinger, 1992).

The role of principal has changed over time from that of an administrative manager from the 1920s until the 1960s (Hallinger, 1992). As the federal government became more involved in public education and sought to improve education through policy initiatives, the principal came to be viewed as a change agent (Hallinger, 1992). “Thus, studies of change implementation began to codify what many practitioners already believed; that principals make a difference in the quality of schools as experienced by teachers and students” (Hallinger, 1992, p. 2). The role of the principal began to be utilized for the implementation of increasing federal policy and initiatives (Hallinger, 1992).

Where principals may have been seen as managers or bureaucrats in the past, they must be leaders and educational professionals in the present (Reeves, 2009). "Of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality" (Reeves, 2009, p. 67). Spiro (2013) noted changes in how the principalship has been viewed:

> The ways schools were managed began to shift in the 1970s, as influential studies showed that effective schools are characterized by a learning-oriented culture. Still, the idea that principals should focus sharply on teaching and learning did not emerge prominently until later, when educators and policy makers became persuaded that school leadership matters to student achievement. (p. 28)

Further refining the principal's role and specific leadership skills that contributed to student achievement, Grissom and Loeb (2011) used survey responses from principals, assistant principals, and teachers to isolate which skills and behaviors of the principal correlated most highly with the success of the school. Grissom and Loeb studied an encompassing set of leadership skills that principals must be proficient with to be successful by conducting a survey in which instructional leadership as well as managerial skills, vision, and relationship building were examined. "While instructional leadership is important, our understanding of principal effectiveness might benefit from incorporating examination of those pieces of principal practice that fall outside what traditionally has been understood as instructional leadership . . ." (Grissom & Loeb, 2011, p. 1094). The examination of all the different aspects of the principal's role was intended to determine where principals should spend their time (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). The results did not indicate that spending more or less time on any one aspect was indicative of success (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). "In other words, for many principal job tasks, time allocation might be a very poor indicator of job performance" (Grissom & Loeb, 2011, p.

1094). All of the skills that were examined were important to successful leadership (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

The role of the principal has expanded to include instructional leadership and responsibility for school accountability measures, but managerial tasks have also continued to grow (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). In their 2003 study, DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) wrote:

> The managerial tasks of the principals have also been expanding, as regulations, reporting requirements, and e-mail access to the principal have increased. Principals are charged with maintaining safe school environments and are spending more time coping with the student behavior problems. Finally, principals are expected to respond to accountability measures imposed by external constituents by acting as agents of change. (p. 44)

While the traditional responsibilities of the principal, such as being the building manager and disciplinarian were still parts of the job, the myriad of other responsibilities that currently encompassed the job made being successful at the full spectrum of the job more difficult than ever (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Balancing between instructional leadership and management responsibilities was difficult for school administrators to master (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

In the face of a public critical of education, the principal was responsible for building culture within the school, creating a learning community of high standards, and engaging the broader community in helping meet the school's vision, which was a lot to ask of one person (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). "It seems that various stakeholders have created expectations for the position that are unrealistic" (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 46). Stakeholders, as well as federal, state, and local politicians, all had a hand in expanding the role of the principal (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). "Policymakers need to recognize the extensive responsibilities of

principals and the real limitations of time" (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 59). DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) advocated for a narrowing of the job description in order to enable principals to be more successful. "The principal's role should be defined more narrowly, not more broadly. If instructional leadership, community leadership, and visionary leadership are the hallmarks of the principal of the 21st century, then define the role as such" (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 59). The principal's responsibilities have been broaden and have not always been easy to fulfill (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Characteristics of Effective Principals

There have been scores of leadership frameworks that outlined the behaviors and skills that leaders should employ (Blankstein, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Collins, 2001; Kotter, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2008; Marzano et al., 2003; Reeves, 2009; Senge et al., 2012; Sergiovanni, 1990; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Despite the difficult and diverse nature of the principal's role, there have been some characteristics, which were the hallmarks of successful leaders and principals alike (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 1994; Colorado Department of Education, 2015b; Kouzes & Posner 2012; Senge et al., 2012). "A consensus on the definition of effective school leadership is far from being reached; however, there are several identifiers that are commonly held as being critical factors on effective leadership" (Nettles & Herrington, 2007, p. 726). Nettles and Herrington (2007) included in these factors: safe and orderly environment, mission and vision, stakeholder involvement, monitoring school progress, instructional focus, high expectations for student performance, and professional development opportunities. These areas also

correlated with many of the evaluation rubrics created for the role of principal (Colorado Department of Education, 2015a; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

The Colorado State Model Evaluation System has utlized six major areas in which principals must be proficient in order to be successful (Colorado Department of Education, 2015b). These areas included: strategic leadership, instructional leadership, school culture and equity leadership, human resource leadership, managerial leadership, and external development leadership (Colorado Department of Education, 2015b). Brown, Finch, MacGregor, and Watson (2012) used some of the same leadership characteristics throughout their research including shared leadership, participatory leadership, and open communication. Other research on the characteristics of good leaders could be classified into very similar areas (Artiles, 2013; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Branch et al., 2013; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Ross & Gray, 2006; Sweeney, 1982).

Strategic Leadership

Creating a vision, mission, and goals has not been unique to education and was essential to a successful organization (Brown et al., 2012; Collins & Porras, 1994). “In a visionary company, the core values need no rational or external justification. Nor do they sway with the trends and fads of the day” (Collins & Porras, 1994, p. 75). Visionary schools, like visionary companies, have had core values that all stakeholders understood and believed in (Brown et al., 2012). “What separates a learning community from an ordinary school is its collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create” (Brown et al., 2012, p. 4). All

of the members of that learning community need to be involved in creating the goals or guiding principles because people would work harder to reach a set of goals that they have ownership of whereas working to please someone else by achieving the goals they have set feels different (Senge et al., 2012). The principal have sat the vision and was responsible for getting teachers to follow (Weiner, 2016).

Since the early 1970s, studies of educational leadership in challenging settings have found that leaders must understand where they were going and believed wholeheartedly in their mission, while having a firm and realistic grasp on the challenges ahead in order to succeed (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; State of New York, Office of Education Performance Review, 1974; Sweeney, 1982; Weber, 1971). "Principals must act not only with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of students but also with an understanding of the change process. Because of changes, disquiet and contentious issues emerge" (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 45). Strategic Leadership included stakeholders in the vision and change process (Brown et al., 2012).

The Stockdale Paradox, named for Admiral Jim Stockdale, who was a prisoner of war in Vietnam, described the contradiction between believing that success would happen in the face of great odds (Collins, 2001). "You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND *at the same time* have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality" (Collins, 2001, p. 13). As the role of the principal has expanded and criticism of public education has continued, this paradox was applicable for effective leaders to follow. Principals

themselves need to have unwavering faith in their mission and create that same faith in their stakeholders (Senge et al., 2012).

Cultural Leadership

Culture has an impact on success (Brown et al., 2012; Collins, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Culture has been comprised of physical objects that held meaning for the organization, norms, and what the organization valued (Burke, 2014). In their research, Brown et al. (2012) wrote:

> The school system also has its own culture. Each school has its own mascot, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths. Therefore, creating a collaborative culture where all members of the organization have the same beliefs, rules, policies, mission, and goals is vital. (p. 4)

Culture have brought stakeholders together with a common purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Principals have been strategic, instructional, transformational, managerial, and human resource leaders through the culture they created (Senge et al., 2012). Leaders must be able to self-reflect so that they understand the impact they were having and the ways in which their impacted changes over a period of time (Senge et al., 2012). Bryk and Schneider (2002) wrote about a culture of trust in schools:

> If desirable outcomes are advanced, but the processes by which this occurs leave individuals uncertain as to another's real intentions, trustworthiness may not be achieved. For example, whether teachers embrace a reform depends in part on how they perceived their principal's motives in advocating change. (p. 22)

So much has depended on leadership creating a healthy, trusting, and thriving culture (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). "We need to stop depending on Band-Aid remedies, and instead focus on changing the culture itself" (Fullan, 2014, p. 33). Principals must focus on the culture of the school in order to make lasting change (Fullan, 2014).

Instructional Leadership

As noted earlier, the principal must be well-versed in what happens in the classroom every day in order to understand instruction (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). “Because the primary activity in schools is instruction, instructional leaders must be steeped in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to supervise a continuous improvement process that measures progress in raising student performance” (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 45). This did not mean, however, that principals spent all of their time in classrooms, but it meant good leaders taught frequently enough that they did not lose touch with their skills in the classroom (Fullan, 2014). Being an instructional leader meant that principals developed a system that allowed teachers to learn together (Fullan, 2014). “First this body of research establishes that groups of teachers, working together in purposeful ways over periods of time, will produce greater learning in more students” (Fullan, 2014, p. 65). As educational leaders, principals were responsible for leading the learning (Chenoweth, 2007).

Instructional leadership would create a system of learning important to success (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). “When you fully engage in learning--when you throw yourself wholeheartedly into experimenting, reflecting, reading, or getting coaching--you are going to experience the thrill of improvement and the taste of success” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 202). Regularly, deliberately, and habitually talking about issues of learning would be instructional leadership (Senge et al., 2012). “The heart of team learning is regular willingness, as a recurring group of people, to think and act together as a living system” (Senge et al., 2012, p. 115). As instructional leaders, principals would provide teachers with time to meet and collaborate, they seriously would consider

professional development for teachers, and they would continually learn themselves (Chenoweth, 2007).

Transformational leadership. Artiles (2013), as well as Ross and Gray (2006), found a significant relationship between the actions of leaders, teacher self-efficacy, and academic press. "Our results indicate that principals who adopt a transformational leadership style are likely to have a positive impact on teacher beliefs about their collective capacity and on teacher commitment to organizational values" (Ross & Gray, 2006, p. 812). Transformational leadership has related closely to instructional leadership in that transformational leaders created a system in which teacher efficacy enhanced instruction (Artiles, 2013). Teachers need to believe they had the ability to create an environment in which deep, high-level student learning was happening (Artiles, 2013). Sweeney (1982) found that in half of the schools studied the principal's support of teachers was notable.

Ross and Gray (2006) also found that teachers who believed that they were part of an effective instructional team were more likely to take responsibility for school outcomes than to make excuses for school failure. Effective principals would communicate, empower, and give teachers meaning (Artiles, 2013). "Major internal transformation rarely happens unless many people assist" (Kotter, 2012, p. 105). Leaders could not affect change alone, but must have a coalition of support (Collins, 2001; Kotter, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Burke's (2014) definition of transformational leadership included qualities like perseverance and clarity of vision that were important and applicable to education. "They stayed the course, kept people focused on the mission and strategy, dealt with directly

with resistances, and bounced back when mistakes were made" (Burke, 2014, p. 288). Transformational leadership would go beyond just the development of the organization and would include allowing teachers to contribute to the improvements and changes taking place in the school (Artiles, 2013).

Managerial leadership. As stated previously, the role of the principal has evolved to include much more than just management (Hallinger, 1992). However, successful principals still need to excel in managerial leadership (Colorado Department of Education, 2015a). Budget, human resources, conflict resolution, communication, school policy, and safety have all been areas the principal was chiefly responsible (Colorado Department of Education, 2015a; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The Colorado State Model Educator Evaluation System 2015-16 Users Guide (Colorado Department of Education, 2015b) called for principals to be able to:

> Marshal resources . . . manage complex human interactions . . . facilitate the design and utilization of various forms of formal and informal communication . . . ensure that clear expectations, structures, rules, and procedures are established . . . update their knowledge of federal and state laws and School District and board policies . . . ensure that the school provides an orderly and supportive environment.(p. 133)

As much as the role has evolved, the principals must still be able to manage.

School communication has been both internal, communicating effectively with staff and students, and external, communicating effectively with parents and the community at large (Colorado Department of Education, 2015a). Communication has been a vital part of managerial leadership that impacts both teacher satisfaction and student achievement (Brown et al., 2012). Teachers have cited open communication as vital as it allowed them to communicate openly and honestly to their principal about their

ideas, concerns, and opinions without being concerned with reprisal (Brown et al., 2012). The importance of internal communication has been addressed repeatedly in research conducted by Brown et al. (2012). “This theme emerged from teachers’ satisfaction or desire to be able to openly speak or be heard by administration without feeling they would be reprimanded for their opinions. Teachers indicated this was the most effective method to create a sincere learning culture” (Brown et al., 2012, p. 11). Brown et al. (2012) also found:

> Data gathered from the qualitative questions clearly indicated teachers placed an emphasis on shared and participatory styles of leadership with an emphasis on open communication. Teachers valued an ‘open door policy’ where they could walk into a principal’s office and share their opinions and concerns. (p. 12)

Communication did not just entail sharing information but listening and making teachers feel that their input was desired and valued as well (Brown et al., 2012).

Human Resources Leadership

Because good teachers have had the largest effect size on student growth and achievement human resources management was essential to ensuring the best teachers were in classrooms (Branch et al., 2013). “Human capital is essentially about the quality of individual teachers--the personnel dimension, if you will” (Fullan, 2014, p. 74). Effective principals have retained successful teachers and were often cause for ineffective teachers to leave voluntarily or not (Branch et al., 2013). In schools with effective principals, teachers who left tended to be the less-effective teachers in their schools compared with teachers leaving schools run by principals who were not effective (Branch et al., 2013). Collins (2001) also emphasized the importance of personnel management.

> We expected that good-to-great leaders would begin by setting a new vision and strategy. We found instead that they *first* got the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and then the right people in the right seats--and *then* they figured out where to drive it. (p. 13)

Before the vision could be fully implemented, the right personnel must be in place (Collins, 2001).

Principals needed to know what made a good teacher in order to hire the right people and shape those who were already on the team (Fullan, 2014). Principals needed to look for teachers with a commitment to high expectations for all students, strong instruction, good teamwork and collaboration skills, and a desire for continual learning (Fullan, 2014). "Even if some of these qualities are wanting at the onset, it is the principal's job to foster them once people are hired--again using strategies to develop both human and asocial capital" (Fullan, 2014, p. 74). Long-term success has centered on investing in employees and responding to their needs (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The ability of the principal to hire, train, and retain quality teachers was an important way in which principals supported successful schools (Branch et al., 2013).

Characteristics of Ineffective Principals

Ineffective leaders have been frustrating to teachers and have gotten in the way of effective education (Brown et al., 2012). In their 2012 research, Brown et al. (2012) wrote:

> In 2004 the U.S. Department of Education published national statistics, which summarized that there was a shortage of top-notch principals to meet the demands of *No Child Left Behind* . . . the real challenge became finding effective leaders to facilitate successful learning environments for teachers and students to learn. In the meantime, teachers became frustrated and angry with the weak leadership and promised changes with no results. (pp. 1-2)

Ineffective leaders have been unable to support teachers in a way that would create a successful learning environment (Davila, 2010). Just as effective principals would improve student achievement, ineffective principals have had the opposite effect (Branch et al., 2013).

Blase, Blase, and Du (2009) found principal behavior that contributed to a negative environment was damaging to student achievement. These behaviors included failure to recognize or praise work-related achievements (69.7%), favoritism toward select teachers (62.7%), intimidation (58.8%), non-support with difficult parents and students (57%); and ignoring or snubbing teachers (55.2%). Similarly, Davila (2010) found lack of ability to build relationships to be evident in ineffective principals. "Principals can also cultivate a sense of mistrust with capriciousness and favoritism" (Davila, 2010, p. 29). The five most frequent reasons that school districts separated from principals founded by Davila (2010) included a failure to communicate in a way that built positive relationships, failure to use good judgment in understanding the issues at hand, failure to build a strong base of support, repetitively making mistakes and using ineffective practices, and being unable to motivate stakeholders.

Knuth and Banks (2006) suggested three different scenarios in which ineffective principals fail. The first was a new principal who focused exclusively on instructional leadership to the detriment of important management duties:

> They dutifully convene school improvement teams and concentrate their time and energies on curricular and instructional issues. Often however, they are the last to know that their principalships are in trouble because of chaos and dysfunction resulting from their neglect of basic management issues. (Knuth & Banks, 2006, p. 6)

In the second scenario, principals had instructional leadership and management skills but fell short in the areas of honesty, fairness, and ethics (Knuth & Banks, 2006). The lack of integrity caused mistrust and stopped the organization from moving forward (Knuth & Banks, 2006). The third scenario illustrated principals who were instructional leaders, fair and honest managers but lacked political skills (Knuth & Banks, 2006).

Ineffective leaders may also be less able to improve or assemble a highly skilled teaching staff because they did not know what to look for in good teaching (Branch et al., 2013).

> Less highly rated principals may be less successful in raising the quality of their teaching staffs, either because they are less skilled in evaluating teacher quality, place less emphasis on teacher effectiveness in personnel decisions, or are less successful in creating an environment that attracts and retains better teachers. (Branch et al., 2013, p. 66).

Talented employees did not feel valued or desired to remain a part of the organization if less skilled workers were allowed to remain (Collins, 2001).

Part of the reason that ineffective principals have been allowed to lead may be a shortage of qualified leaders as a result of an undesirable work environment, an impossible task, or because not every educator was suited to lead (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) surveyed 4,237 principals in Virginia to explore their experiences and understand their perceptions of the growing shortage of principals. Nearly one-half of respondents stated that they knew individuals who held principal licenses but did not hold a principalship, ". . . either because of an inappropriate disposition or temperament (48%) or because the person exhibited poor judgment or common sense (38%)" (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 58). Without a strong labor market and an abundance of qualified leaders, ineffective principals have

had difficulty in eliminating from the field (Branch et al., 2013). “Constrained by salary inertia and the historical absence of good performance measures, the principal labor market does not appear to weed out those principals who are least successful in raising student achievement” (Branch et al., 2013, pp. 63-64).

Common Factors in Failing Schools

Failing schools have lacked structures, systems, and resources to make large-scale change (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). Peurach and Neumerski (2015) wrote:

> This includes weak capabilities among teachers and school leaders; incoherent instructional programs, assessments, and resources; norms that favor teacher privacy and autonomy over collaboration; low expectations and lack of responsibility for student success; and a lack of relational trust among teachers, school leaders, parents, and community members. (p. 382)

Common factors such as these have been found in a number of studies (Ediger, 2004; Fink, 1999; Murphy, 2009; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011). Failing schools usually have had a combination of ineffective leadership, ineffective teachers, and a lack of high-quality instructional resources (Wakelyn, 2011). In addition to leadership, teaching, resources, and cultural issues, many failing schools have also had high poverty rates (Ediger, 2004; Mette & Scribner, 2014; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011).

Culture

Because of the many challenges faced by failing schools, the climate and culture in the school have frequently been very negative (Mintrop, 2002; Murphy, 2009; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). “In this way, it can be argued that each school’s problems were unprecedentedly linked with the schools’ internal conditions: their unique culture” (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005, p. 236). Failing organizations have frequently rationalized

poor performance or deflect and place blame elsewhere (Murphy, 2009). The same could be said in turnaround schools. Many times, staff members wanted to reject the status of their school and attempted to remove themselves from being responsible for students' learning, instead seeing the issues as the responsibility of other forces, policies, or entities (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). The negative climate of a failing school must be addressed in order for the school to grow (Murphy, 2009). "In short, the success of particular recovery initiatives is linked to contextual factors" (Murphy, 2009, p. 819). Addressing these cultural issues has been the job of the principal, but unfortunately, many failing schools have also suffered from a lack of effective leadership that would be needed to change the culture (Mette & Scribner, 2014).

Ineffective Leadership

Lack of leadership has sometimes been the cause behind a failing school and has certainly been an obstacle to turning the school around (Brown, 2016). "Indeed, leadership structures were at such a low level that in effect one could say that there was no presence of a leading figure or of any management strands at all" (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005, p. 240). The principalship must be addressed in order to turn the organization around (Murphy, 2009). Implementing an improvement strategy that has not been related to leadership has been open to doubt (Murphy, 2009). "Although management change is not the answer in every turnaround, it nonetheless appears to be justified in many cases, and in nearly all of those situations that have progressed to the crisis phase" (Murphy, 2009, p. 805). Much like in the business world when a failing company brought in new leadership, oftentimes the principal was replaced in failing schools in order to adopt new ideas and change the climate and culture (Murphy, 2009).

Ineffective Teachers

Working conditions in failing schools have generally been much more difficult than in schools that were succeeding (Wakelyn, 2011). "In the state's lowest-performing high schools, teachers report they are less likely to have a common vision, less likely to have sufficient access to instructional materials, and less likely to have leadership that shields them from interruptions" (Wakelyn, 2011, p. 5). As a result, failing schools often have had the least effective and least experienced teachers because more experienced teachers have taken jobs in schools with better working conditions (Wakelyn, 2011). Talented teachers have had no problem finding better jobs elsewhere and have often decided to leave due to the extreme pressure they felt they must address at their schools (Mintrop, 2002). Failing school also have had extremely high rates of attrition (Wakelyn, 2011). "Not surprisingly, the nation's lowest-performing schools have an annual teacher turnover rate of between 30 percent and 50 percent" (Wakelyn, 2011, p. 5). Recruiting top teachers to low-income areas and keeping them has required an incentive since the work was so difficult (Ediger, 2004).

Demographics

Failing schools have also been frequent schools with high levels of poverty (Ediger, 2004; Johnson, 2011; Wakelyn, 2011). While poverty should not be used as an excuse for lack of performance, it should be a factor that must be addressed in the turnaround process (Ediger, 2004). "Transformational leadership drives real change in the sense that it must address cultural components of leadership that question democracy, social justice, and equity promoted by our public education system" (Mette & Scribner, 2014, p. 14). While principals of turnaround schools must exhibit an ability to transform

the culture, be an instructional leader, and address climate and culture, they must also have a strong sense of social justice (Mette & Scribner, 2014). "Compared with a typical school, a failing school often has twice the number of high-poverty students and many more students who enter the school below grade level" (Wakelyn, 2011, p. 1). Principals in turnaround schools with high levels of poverty must address the unique issues that come with these challenging demographics (Mette & Scribner, 2014).

Effective Efforts to Improving Academic Performance

There have been numerous similarities in the efforts to improve failing schools, which were effective (Ediger, 2004; Fink, 1999; Murphy, 2009; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011). These efforts included effective leadership, effective teachers, partnerships external to the school district, focus on a common mission, and a culture that promoted the desire, adaptability, and agility to change (Ediger, 2004; Fink, 1999; Murphy, 2009; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011). The term "turnaround" has implied a rapid change of direction that would increase performance, however, the school improvement process has been extremely complex and did not take place quickly (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). The work of turning around a failing school has been challenging, each situation and solution has been different, and the solutions must be tailored to the individual sites (Burnette, 2017; Murphy, 2009; Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). Important lessons have been learned from those states, school districts, and individual schools that have shown improvement (Wakelyn, 2011).

Leadership

Effective school leadership has been a recurring theme among schools that have shown improvement (Brown, 2016; Ediger, 2004; Fink, 1999; Murphy, 2009; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011).

> Developing school leaders who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to effectively lead and turnaround low-performing schools had become a critical goal for local educational agencies (LEAs) intent on dramatically improving student outcomes. (Brown, 2016, p. 101)

Principals who have been able to turnaround low-performing schools needed support and skill development specific to the type of school they were leading (Brown, 2016). Many states have created systems for training principals specifically for turnaround schools (Brown, 2016; Burnette, 2017; Wakelyn, 2011).

In North Carolina, the state department of education created Regional Leadership Academies (RLA) in order to help principals gain the skills they needed to lead turnaround schools (Brown, 2016). "Almost a decade of turnaround policy literature supports the notion that there are two main components to school turnaround: (a) technical improvements and (b) cultural improvements" (Mette & Scribner, 2014, p. 11). Principals have had direct impact on both areas in that they must be both instructional leaders and transformational leaders in order to bring about the necessary change (Mette & Scribner, 2014). Leadership has been at the heart of systematically improving the culture and bringing about school change (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). The principal has been at the heart of every level of change that moved the school from failing to succeeding (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005).

Advocacy Leadership

Many turnaround schools have had similar demographics in that they faced high levels of poverty, were situated in less desirable neighborhoods, and lacked the parent and community involvement that were prevalent in more affluent schools (Anderson, 2009). As a result, in addition to the leadership skills demonstrated by all effective principals, leaders of turnaround schools must also practice advocacy leadership. "Employing intentional and political skill within the school while also operating intentionally and strategically with the district and community are essential but challenging aspects of leadership, specifically Advocacy leadership" (Grant, 2013, p. 183). Advocacy leadership has reached beyond the school walls to support students on a larger community scale (Anderson, 2009). "But an advocacy leader also sees the systemic problems that exist in a classroom, a school, a district, a community, and they seek solutions that address causes, not just symptoms" (Anderson, 2009, p. 492). In schools that faced high rates of socio-economically challenged students, majority minority enrollment, and community issues of drugs, violence, and poverty, the school leader must use his or her position to perform as an activist and educator (Anderson, 2009). "An advocacy leader would believe in the basic principles of a high quality and equitable public education for all children and was willing to take risks to make it happen" (Anderson, 2009, p. 475).

Culture

School culture has been comprised of attitudes, relationships, and expectations (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). "What the case studies suggest is that the schools, and in particular the schools' leaders, needed to take into consideration such matters when

trying to establish their 'new' ways of working" (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005, p. 241). Because, as discussed earlier, failing schools often have had a culture of recrimination, negativity, blame, and disenfranchisement, leaders must address culture in order to bring about change (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). "Such findings regarding the role of school leaders underscore the importance of building system-level educational infrastructure to support deep change in the culture, capabilities, and structures in schools" (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015, p. 410). Making deep changes to culture would be challenging as it has happened in the presence of the current views and the shared history of the staff members, students, and community that made up the school (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). Since whole schools have been held responsible for student achievement, the principal must address school-wide improvement, which could only be successful if the culture was one of positivity and all of the individuals therein were involved and onboard with the change (Mintrop, 2002).

Partnerships

Because the turnaround process would require deep changes and enormous effort, schools and school districts have often not been able to do it all on their own (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). Lead turnaround partners have either been private companies or units or sub-units within the state education department (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015).

> We define educational infrastructure as the basic, foundational resources that support teachers and school leaders in focusing on the core educational activity in schools: advancing the knowledge and skills of students through high-quality classroom instruction aligned with policy-specified standards for student performance. (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015, p. 380)

Some partnerships were created when colleges and universities partnered with states or school districts (Burnette, 2017). "Building educational infrastructure often exceeds the

capacity of schools, districts, and state education agencies, thus, requires collaborating with 'lead turnaround partners' with specialized capabilities for such work" (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015, p. 379). The turnaround process has been complex and schools need multiple layers of support in order to successfully change (Mette & Scribner, 2014).

Another important partnership has been with parents, since nearly all parents recognized the importance of quality education and wanted for their children to attend successful schools (Johnson, 2011). Parents' concerns have generally been about teacher quality, lack of high expectations, negative school culture, and a mistrust of the school district that it did not genuinely care about the success of their children (Johnson, 2011). Communicating with parents and building support in the community could be vital to the turnaround process (Johnson, 2011). A lack of communication has been cited as a long-standing problem in reforming public education (Johnson, 2011). Parents and community members need to trust the school leaders, understand the vision and direction and feel that they have had a hand in the turnaround process (Johnson, 2011).

What Not to Do

In many states, if failing schools did not show improvement within a set time period, the state either took over the schools or turned them over to charter school operators, however, this has not shown to be effective and, as a result, several states have been adjusting their processes due to community criticism and lack of results (Burnette, 2017). Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, Nevada Tennessee, and North Carolina have all been changing how they addressed failing schools (Burnette, 2017). In Louisiana, the planning and decision-making process has been given back to a board of community members working with state officials (Burnette, 2017). "'We're putting faith in the idea

that people closest to students have the best plans for those students,'" (Burnette, 2017, p. 16). The community saw closing schools or turning them over to charter companies as a huge loss (Johnson, 2011). The community often could not understand why schools should not be fixed instead of closed down (Johnson, 2011). The prevailing idea in these states was that there was not one solution that fit all schools (Burnette, 2017). "Communities and situations differ, and few experts would argue that one kind of solution fits all" (Johnson, 2011, p. 2). The solution to improving failing schools was unique to each school and each community (Burnette, 2017). Whether school improvement efforts were successful depended upon contextual factors specific to the site (Murphy, 2009).

Leadership Skills Specific to Turnaround Schools

Turnaround schools oftentimes have had more challenges than higher achieving schools including lower graduation rates, higher suspension rates, higher number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, more minority students, and fewer highly qualified teachers (Brown, 2016). "These conditions create challenges for school districts when they attempt to recruit and retain principals and teachers who will accept offers and remain long enough to make a difference in student learning outcomes" (Brown, 2016, p. 104). Because there have been so many different issues that needed to be addressed and the principal would impact all of them, turnaround schools needed a leader with a specific skill set (Murphy, 2009). A lack of focus on leadership has been an impediment to the ability of some school turnaround measures (Murphy, 2009).

Leadership has been important to comprehensive turnaround plans (Murphy, 2009). In addition to the conditions that might make the position of leading a turnaround

school an unattractive proposition, leading a school with these challenges sometimes would require a particular set of leadership skills (Brown, 2016). “Unique circumstances warrant specialized and contextual knowledge and unique dispositions on the part of the leader to move schools from negative trajectories to positive ones” (Brown, 2016, p. 105). Effective leadership in failing schools has been an important force in the improvement process (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). Results from other areas such as business or government have shown that leaders who were able to affect turnaround have different skills from leaders who might be successful in different ways (Wakelyn, 2011). Not all principals have been prepared for the challenges of leading a failing school. Only a small number of principals have been able to turnaround a failing school because they lacked the professional preparation and experience (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). Many states, including Colorado, have been providing support for principals to address the special skills they need to bring about dramatic change and raise student achievement (Brown, 2016; Burnette, 2017; Colorado Department of Education, 2016e; Peurach & Neumerski, 2015; Wakelyn, 2011; Weiner, 2016).

Principals in turnaround schools have had to address personnel issues, organizational issues, cultural issues, issues of power, and personalities (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). “In schools in crisis, therefore, we believe there is a role for such a leader who can work on three levels: personal, group and organizational” (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005, p. 242). Labeling a school as failing could be an emotional issue for the staff, students, and community and could mean that drastic change was going to be necessary (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). Leadership has to involve the use of different approaches in schools that were failing compared with successful schools (Nicolaidou &

Ainscow, 2005). During the beginning stages of turnaround, emotions could likely run high and the staff may be resistant, and the leader may need to be more prescriptive (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). As new systems have been put in place and staff buy-in has grown, the leader could begin to create a shared vision to inspire (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). Once the systems were working and improvement began, a more distributive leadership style could be adopted (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005).

If, "Every system is perfectly designed to get the results that it gets" then turning a school around will require changes and improvements in order to see different results (Deming, 2017, p. 1). "Almost a decade of turnaround policy literature supports the notion that there are two main components to school turnaround: (a) technical improvements and (b) cultural improvements" (Mette & Scribner, 2014, p. 11). Changes and improvements have been the result of transformational leadership. However, principals in turnaround schools were often forced to make decisions based on accountability requirements rather than what might be more practically useful to students (Mette & Scribner, 2014). Principals may be influenced by accountability policy and, therefore, made decisions that were best for satisfying the accountability requirements rather than the students' needs (Mette & Scribner, 2014). Accountability expectations have been tied to funding, which has created an environment of transactional leadership instead of transformational leadership. Principals have been made to create a situation in which outcomes were exchanged for resources (Mette & Scribner, 2014). Transactional leadership has not supported the need to address issues of race, socio-economic status, or segregation which when addressed with transformational leadership skills, were more likely to lead to lasting school reform (Mette & Scribner, 2014).

Principals of turnaround schools have been tasked with deciding on the direction and goals for the school, developing human resources, improving culture, implementing professional learning, and being an instructional leader (Weiner, 2016). Teachers have seen instructional leadership as a key (Weiner, 2016). "When asked, 'What do you think is the main role of the principal in a school?' all referenced instructional leadership and the principal's responsibility to enhance teaching and learning at the school" (Weiner, 2016, p. 482). Teachers also felt that the principal was responsible for convincing teachers to accept the vision for the school and to build a culture of teamwork and to insulate them from needless school district bureaucracy (Weiner, 2016). Teachers often saw the role of the principal as protecting teachers from district initiatives tied to policy (Weiner, 2016). Principals have desired autonomy to run their schools as they have chosen, but they also have valued school district level supports (Weiner, 2016). Unfortunately, many turnaround schools have been in school districts that did not offer many principal supports (Weiner, 2016).

Conclusion

There was significant research on how principals impacted student achievement and on what good principals do (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Blankstein, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Branch et al., 2013; Condon, 2009; Gawerecki, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Kotter, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2008; Levacic, 2005; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2003; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Ross & Gray, 2006; Senge et al., 2012; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). State and national standards have exemplified what principals need to strive for in order to be successful (Colorado Department of Education, 2015b; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015; National

Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Attracting and retaining effective principals was a priority (Branch et al., 2013). Effective leadership was especially important in schools that were deemed to be failing according to current accountability measures (Weiner, 2016).

Moving from Turnaround Status to Improvement or Performance status was dependent on a large number of factors (Chenoweth, 2007). High expectations for students, emphasizing the importance of education, utilizing data, being accountable, utilizing time wisely, leveraging resources, creating a positive and respectful school culture, supporting teachers, providing professional development, and even focusing on the physical environment of the school impacted student achievement (Chenoweth, 2007). "We argue, therefore, that leadership in such schools is an important lever in facilitating improvement efforts" (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005, p. 242). Ultimately, the principal's leadership was the driving force as an instructional leader, transformational leader, or managerial leader (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Principal impact on student achievement was intertwined with the array of factors involved with school accountability and improvement (Branch et al., 2013).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The literature reviewed in Chapter II helped to establish a strong link between the role of the principal and student achievement, as well as the skills and behaviors demonstrated by successful principals (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Blankstein, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Branch et al., 2013; Gawerecki, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Kotter, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2008; Levacic, 2005; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano et al., 2003; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Ross & Gray, 2006; Senge et al., 2012; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Hattie (2009) found in his meta-analysis that the effect size of a proficient teacher on student achievement was significant. However, some researchers contended that the principal, who directly influenced teachers and students, actually had a greater impact on student achievement (Branch et al., 2013). "Teachers affect only their students, however, while principals affect all students in a school. The overall impact from increasing principal quality therefore substantially exceeds the benefit from a comparable increase in the quality of a single teacher" (Branch et al., 2013, p. 66). Principals affected the achievement of all students in the school both directly and indirectly, thereby, impacting student achievement overall (Branch et al., 2013).

Less well-represented was research detailing the leadership behaviors and skills of principals, specifically in failing schools, who have improved student achievement in

such a way that the school has been moved from being considered a failing school to being a successful school according to state guidelines in Colorado. Much of the research on how principals impacted student achievement has been generated by examining principals and leaders in successful schools (Alig-Mielcarek, J., 2003; Blankstein, 2004; Branch et al., 2013; Canole & Young, 2013; Fullan, 2014; Gawerecki, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2008; Spiro, 2013). Moving a school from failing to successful was different from leading an already successful school (Brown, 2016; Mette & Scribner, 2014; Weiner, 2016).

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has set forth how schools and school districts were to be held accountable in accordance with first the *No Child Left Behind Act* and then the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (Colorado Department of Education, 2016a; U.S. Department of Education, NCLB, 2010, U.S. Department of Education, ESSA Progress Report, 2015a). Schools were given ratings based on academic achievement, academic growth, academic growth gaps, and college and career readiness (Colorado Department of Education, 2016d). "State identified measures and metrics for each of these performance indicators are combined to arrive at an overall evaluation of a school's or a district's performance" (Colorado Department of Education, p. 1, 2016d). These school accountability rankings were made public by the state department of education, were published by other organizations, and were often published in newspapers and reports.

In the State of Colorado, the CDE has ranked schools using District and School Performance Frameworks as outlined in the Education Accountability Act of 2009. (Colorado Department of Education, 2016a) "The district and school performance

frameworks provide a snapshot of the district or school's level of attainment on academic achievement, growth, growth gaps and postsecondary readiness" (Colorado State Department of Education, 2016d, p. 1). School districts and schools were required to create a Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) based on this ranking. School improvement plans fell into four different categories: Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, and Turn Around (Colorado Department of Education, 2016d). "Improvement plans provide information on the district or school's data trends, root causes and targets, and identify strategies and resources the district or school will use to improve student academic outcomes" (Colorado Department of Education, 2016d). The CDE reviewed the improvement plans and provided support to school districts and schools in Turnaround or Priority Improvement status.

School-based initiatives may include creating a culture of academic press, realigning curriculum, improving hiring and evaluation practices, providing additional teacher resources, and increased, targeted professional development (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Blankstein, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hattie, 2009; Levacic, 2005; Senge et al., 2012). Schools in need of improvement often faced multiple challenges that required a comprehensive approach to address academic, social-emotional, socio-economic, and language needs. There were a multitude of factors that could influence student achievement and lead to improved status including high expectations, emphasizing the importance of education, utilizing data, being accountable, utilizing time wisely, leveraging resources, creating a positive and respectful school culture, supporting teachers, providing professional development, and even focusing on the physical environment of the school (Chenoweth, 2007). The principal was responsible, in one way

or another, for all of these factors. The principal may not only lead these initiatives, but may provide for the implementation, support, and accountability so that the improvement strategies were enacted with fidelity.

The CDE (2016c) emphasized the importance of leadership to school improvement. “Boards and superintendents should select district and school leaders with successful track records in this work and provide support as they lead” (Colorado Department of Education, 2016c, p. 1). Understanding the leadership skills and behaviors exhibited by principals with successful track records was important to raising student achievement. Troen and Boles (2012) wrote:

> There is no hotter seat in all of education than the principal’s, nor one more closely examined by professional researchers who, after decades of research, agree that, by gosh, principals can make a difference in school improvement and student achievement. (p. 27)

While there were many factors that impacted student achievement, principals were at the forefront of leading improvement efforts. Identifying the leadership strengths of successful principals who led schools from failing to success based on state frameworks would be helpful for school districts and schools in Turnaround or Priority Improvement status.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed to understand the reasons that schools were successfully able to move from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Improvement or Performance status, and to specifically examine the skills and behaviors demonstrated by principals who lead the schools’ efforts to improve student achievement:

Q1 What do principals perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

Q2 What do teachers perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

Q3 How was the role of the principal important to this academic turnaround process?

Research Process

Based on the theoretical premise of constructionism, qualitative data has been utilized to address the research questions (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative methods have been used to document the role of the principal who has led a school that moved from Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status to Performance Status. Qualitative research has explored the problem and develops "a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon" and analyzes the data "for description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings" (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). The understanding of what successful principals who move schools from failing to succeeding did has been constructed from analyzing the data to comprehend the leadership behaviors and skills of the principal.

Epistemology

Epistemology is "the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology" (Crotty, 2013, p. 3). In order to make meaning of the data and add to the body of knowledge, I had to understand what counted as knowledge, be able to justify claims as knowledge, and understand the relationship between themselves and what was being researched (Creswell, 2013). This study used

constructionism as knowledge which came to light through the subjects. Crotty (2013) found:

> It is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted with in an essentially social context. (p. 42)

Addressing the question of what skills and practices were demonstrated by successful principals of Priority Improvement or Turnaround schools was contingent upon the human practices therein (Crotty, 2013). Meaning was constructed from an examination of the interactions between the human beings and drawn from interacting with those people firsthand (Crotty, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical perspective, or the philosophical stance behind the methodology, would provide a framework for the research process (Crotty, 2013). The theoretical perspective behind this study was interpretivism. I explored the leadership skills and behaviors of principals and meaning has been constructed from this examination. "The image evoked is that of humans engaging with their human world. It is out of this interplay that meaning is born" (Crotty, 2013, p. 45). Meaning has been constructed by engaging with a principal who led his or her school, as well as the teachers who were involved in the process of moving a school from being considered a failing school to being considered a successful school according to the CDE.

The research questions at the heart of this study asked for the perceptions of the participants based on their experiences and their interactions with the reality at their schools. "Questions appropriate to interpretive inquiry allow researchers to link participants' meanings and actions in a time and place of interest in ways that may offer

insightful explanations of events" (Macdonald et al., 2002, p. 138). The results of this study provided a way to construct new meaning around the role of the principal to help improve leadership and, thereby, raise student achievement. This new meaning was created from the interactions with the participants and the data gathered, rather than uncovered or discovered objectively (Crotty, 2013).

Methodology

The research approach of this study was a case study of two school sites that have shown similar growth during a similar period of time. Yin (2014) wrote that case study should be employed when the research question(s) asked how or why, the researcher did not have control of behavioral events, and the focus was on a contemporary event rather than a historical event. Examining two schools that had moved from Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status to Improvement or Performance status according to the Colorado Department of Education School Performance Frameworks was asking how and why in relation to a contemporary event in which there was no control over the behaviors of the participants.

The case study was bounded by time, achievement, and personnel. The case study included two schools that showed similar improvements over a period of less than 5 years (the accountability clock) and were led by one leader during that time. The limited time period and exploration of the leader's behaviors and skills provided a definite boundary, beginning and ending to the case (Yin, 2014). "A case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide and in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases" (Creswell, 2013, p. 100). By

means of a case study, I identified why the two schools in the study were able to move forward and how the leaders of the schools helped make that change possible.

Because there were indefinite differences among schools examining two cases allowed for a depth of understanding into how the school leadership moved the school forward. “Case study research into issues of educational leadership and management is vitally needed today because of the intense political scrutiny to which educational leaders are subjected” (Bassey, 2012, p. 167). Instrumental case study was used to understand a specific issue by utilizing a case that would illuminate the issue at hand (Creswell, 2012). Bassey (2012) found:

> Case study is arduous and demanding of both researchers and researched. It should not be wasted on trivial pursuits, but should aim to contribute to understanding in greater depth than hitherto some aspect of what educationalists (in the widest sense) actually do. (p. 157)

I gained greater insight related to two points. First, the factors that contributed to the turnaround of the school as identified by the principal and teachers. Second, I explored what successful principals at schools that needed improvement actually did to turn the schools around.

Setting

For this study, two elementary schools, Garden Hill Elementary School and March Elementary School, were studied in depth. Garden Hill Elementary School and March Elementary School are pseudonyms being used to protect the identity and location of the research sites and staff. These sites were chosen because they moved from Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status to Performance status according to the Colorado Department of Education School Performance Frameworks. Because the number of elementary schools that moved from Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status to

Improvement or Performance was much larger than the number of middle schools, the pool of potential research sites was much larger. These two schools were chosen because they were similar in size, resources, and demographics. Since these factors had differing effects on student achievement, it was important that the schools be similar (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Delaney, 1997; Levacic, 2005).

The research sites were located in two different school districts, both of which were large, urban areas. The school district in which Garden Hill was located had 56 schools and approximately 27,000 students (Colorado Department of Education, 2018). March Elementary School was located in a district of 30 schools, with approximately 16,000 students (Colorado Department of Education, 2018). Schools were not required to be in the same district because, while the school district provided supports were noted, the focus of the study was on school level initiatives and leadership. Both sites were on the accountability clock for 4 years. Both schools have had the same principal for 5 years. Coincidentally, both principals have taken jobs elsewhere and was leaving at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

Garden Hill Elementary School and March Elementary School were small, neighborhood schools serving students in preschool to fifth grade. Garden Hill had 338 students in the 2017-2018 school year, 74.3% of students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and 58% of students were minority. March Elementary had 254 students in the 2017-2018 school year, 88% of students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), and 70% of students were minority. Both schools were Title I schools and received additional federal funding as a result of this designation. Both schools also

received funding from the State of Colorado Turnaround Network, which supported schools in Priority Improvement and Turnaround status.

Teachers in the school district in which March Elementary School was located went on strike shortly before the interviews were conducted. The teachers' union was asking for a pay increase and better benefits, which had been recommended to the school board by a third party fact finder. There had been tension between the union and district, which nearly led to strikes in the past. The strike was ended when the union members voted to accept a step on the pay scale for all teachers, a cost of living increase, and an increase in insurance benefits. The impact of the strike on March Elementary School teachers and principal is discussed further in Chapter IV.

Participants

One of the main foci of the study was to examine the role of the two school principals who have been the leader for the duration of the change process that moved the school from failing to successful. To best interpret the impact of the principal's role in change, it was necessary to have had only one leader in place during the change process. Both principals have been in place for 5 years. Basil, the principal at Garden Hill Elementary School, had been a principal at another school in the district for 5 years previously and was placed at Garden Hill specifically to improve the school because of his experience with school improvement. Prior to Basil, there had been a transitional principal in place for 1 year to help start the improvement process. Emily, the principal at March Elementary, had no previous administrative experience and was hired to replace a failing principal and improve the school. The principal prior to Emily was described as being aloof and unapproachable. Colleen, a veteran teacher, said, "She was kind of forced

to take it [the principalship]. She begged actually not to. And so, she never really guided us. She was placed here and so it was really hard." Both principals, Basil and Emily, were brought to their schools specifically to facilitate the change process and improve the school.

Participants also included a number of teachers who have been employed at the school during the change process. At Garden Hill, only two teachers were able to participate. At March Elementary, five teachers participated. While it was unfortunate there were a disproportionate number of teacher interviewed at March Elementary School, the teachers at Garden Hill Elementary provided a wealth of data which correlated with the data gathered at March Elementary School. Had the interviews with the teachers at Garden Hill not been so rich and detailed, it might have been necessary to return to try to conduct more interviews. Because of the timing in the school year, this would have been quite difficult. Teacher viewpoint from inside the classroom was important to compare with the self-perception of the principal as well as to compare with the other school. Gathering teacher input provided a fuller picture and helped with triangulating the data.

Data Sources and Collection

In this case study, three types of data were collected. Interviews, field notes, and additional documents have been included. Formal interviews were conducted with principals and teachers. In the case of March Elementary School, additional insight was also provided by the superintendent who was in place at the time that Principal Emily was hired. Additional documents included Unified Improvement Plans, school mission and vision statements, as well as school board of education meeting minutes, newspaper

articles, and television news segments related to the two schools. “The data collection in case study research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials” (Creswell, 2013, p. 100). The purpose of case study was to provide a rich description and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being examined (Bassey, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In addressing a case study of curriculum effectiveness in several schools in order to disseminate the practice to other schools, Yin (2014) wrote,

> Covering such a breadth of topics would likely require a variety of field-based evidence, such as classroom observations, teacher interviews about their instructional strategies, student interviews about their learning strategies, and data about potentially relevant school and community conditions. (p. 216)

This depth and complexity were similar to studying leadership practices and strategies for improvement and could not have been achieved without multiple data sources.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with principals and teachers using a semi-structured model (see Appendix A for interview questions). Most of the questions were written out ahead of the interview; however, a few open-ended questions were included, which required some follow-up discussion at the time of the interview (Merriam, 2009). The questions were piloted before data collection began with other teachers and principals. Because of a strike in the school district that included March Elementary School, additional questions regarding the impact of the strike as it pertained to the school culture and leadership of the principal were included. A professional transcriptionist transcribed the interviews. Two different devices, an iPhone and a digital cassette recorder, were used to ensure each interview was documented and that it was not compromised by any electronic malfunction.

The interviews were conducted one-on-one, except for the teachers at Garden Hill Elementary School. Both teachers who volunteered for the study were interviewed together due to a lack of availability. They were taking their students on a field trip and had only 45 minutes at the beginning of the day available. While a larger number of participants would have been preferable, the principal, Basil, explained that there were a great number of activities planned, teachers felt stressed at having lost instructional time to state testing, so many teachers felt overwhelmed and did not want to participate. The two teachers who were interviewed confirmed that several others would have liked to participate but did not feel they had the time.

Field Notes

Any field notes collected at the time of the interview have become part of the case study (see Appendix B for field notes template). Field notes included notation of important comments made by the interview subject, the interview subjects body language, and researcher observations. Further questions were included in the interview notes and transcripts. Field notes that were completed at the time of the interview were recorded on the interview questions document. Impressions or notations were added directly after the interaction and added to upon reflection to the field notes template.

Additional Documents

The Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs), school achievement data, or resources that the school used, such as SchoolCity assessments, were also examined. These documents helped to complete the picture and to provide further information into how the schools' efforts helped raise student achievement (Fitzgerald, 2012). The CDE required all schools to submit a UIP each year. Plans from schools that were in Priority

Improvement or Turnaround status were carefully scrutinized and the state review information was available to the public. An examination of these plans for each year that the principal was leading the school yielded important information about the principal's leadership priorities.

Other documents such as school board and public meeting minutes, newspaper articles, press releases, and public relations materials were also examined. Public information such as this deepened the context of the case study by providing a community perspective on both the failure and successes of the school. Understanding how the school was perceived in the community and what sort of support was provided or was lacking helped to complete the picture being produced through the case study.

Data Analysis

Each of the three sources of data (interviews, field notes, and additional documents) have been analyzed to bring all of the data together in order to convey a thorough understanding of the cases (Merriam, 2009). The sources were carefully organized into a case record, so that it was systematically arranged and could be easily examined. Because there were two school sites in this study, both within-case analysis and cross-case analysis was necessary for each type of data. Analysis began before the end of the data gathering process. Merriam (2009) wrote:

> To wait until all the data are collected is to lose the opportunity to gather more reliable and valid data; to wait until the end is also to court disaster, as may a qualitative researcher has been overwhelmed and rendered impotent y the sheer amount of data in a qualitative study. (p. 207)

Since there were multiple participants across two different sites, organization of the material and on-going analysis was crucial to the study.

Interviews

The interview data and field notes were analyzed using coding procedures (Briggs, Coleman, & Morrison, 2012). "The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). The first step in analyzing the interview data was to read the transcripts while listening to the recorded interviews to ensure that nothing was lost during the transcription process and to review for tone and meaning. Some of the terms, names, and sentence structures were different between the recording and the transcript. These differences were corrected as the participants were quoted in the final study and were checked with the participants. I conducted open coding on the interview transcripts in which I read them while making notations about parts of the data that seemed relevant to answering the research questions (Merriam, 2009). "Because you are being open to anything possible at this point, this form of coding is often called *open coding"* (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). The themes seemed obvious during the start of the coding, however, after examining the transcripts from Garden Hill Elementary, it became clear that the themes were not exactly as I had anticipated and needed to be reexamined.

Transcripts were read and highlighted for emerging themes (Coleman, 2012). Using the words of the interview subject in naming or *in vivo* coding was used to look for likenesses among subjects (Creswell, 2013). During this process, words such as mission, systems, family, culture, and process arose. The next step was to utilize axial coding to group together the codes that were similar into categories and subcategories (Merriam, 2009). "Multiple levels of coding are possible for the same unit of information"

(Merriam, 2009, p. 183). A thorough interview or interviews would be expected to yield multiple levels of coding (Merriam, 2009). The next level of coding revealed five themes, which included mission, vision, and goal setting; culture; instruction and curriculum; teacher efficacy; and management. These themes were very similar to the five areas of leadership used by The Council of Chief State School Officials, the Colorado Department of Education, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in their evaluation processes for principals. These themes included strategic leadership, cultural leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, managerial leadership, and human resources. Each of these areas was reflected in both the interviews and the supporting documents.

Field Notes

Field notes were analyzed as soon as possible after the interview was conducted in order to be sure that all relevant data was recorded. "Describe what happened and also reflect on these aspects, including personal reflections, insights, ideas, confusions, hunches, initial interpretations, and breakthroughs" (Creswell, 2013, p. 167). Analysis included reading, re-reading, and highlighting the field notes for emerging themes as was used to analyze interview transcripts (Merriam, 2009). Careful analysis of field notes, especially as body language, tone, and attitude provided an additional layer of description for the case.

Additional Documents

Additional documents, such as UIPs, student assessment data, resources used by the principal and teachers to aid in planning and improvement strategies, mission and vision statements, and other documents posted in the interview areas were analyzed using

a template (see Appendix C for document analysis template). Unified Improvement Plans were of particular interest because the document explained the school's strategy for improvement and document the growth over time. The language of the UIP was also compared with the themes found in the interviews, as well as the actual language used by the interview subjects. Analysis of the additional documents took place simultaneously as all of the data was being collected and analyzed.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is, in part, achieved by the ability for other researchers to replicate the study (Bassey, 2012). "'Reliability' is an impractical concept for case study since by its nature a case study is a one-off event and, therefore not open to exact replication" (Bassey, 2012, p. 158). Because replication was not necessarily possible in a case study, trustworthiness must be achieved through copious detail, repeated checks with subjects, triangulation, and a careful and conscientious audit trail (Bassey, 2012). The participants reviewed the report in order to assess their perspectives. "The informants and participants may cling to their own perspectives and disagree with your conclusions and interpretations, but these readers should have the opportunity to challenge a study's key findings" (Yin, 2014, p. 199).

Member checking provides trustworthiness by making certain that the researcher has interpreted the interview data appropriately. "Also called *respondent validation*, the idea here is that you solicit feedback on your emerging findings from some of the people that you interviewed" (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). The researcher may use different words from those of the interview subject, but the meaning must ring true. It was important to know that the subjects felt their words had been properly interpreted (Merriam, 2009).

Triangulation uses multiple sources of data to provide legitimacy to the process and findings. “Probably the most well-known strategy to shore up the internal validity of a study is what is known as *triangulation*” (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). This study used interviews, field notes, and additional documents as separates sources of data. “With regard to the use of multiple methods of data collection, for example, what someone tells you in an interview can be checked against what you observe on site or what you read about in documents relevant to the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). When the multiple sources of data supported one another, the interpretation and analysis of the data could be trusted, if not replicated. For instance, the UIP documents verified what the teachers and principals said in regard to the goals and priorities that helped to move the schools forward. The depth and breadth of the detail obtained in the case study provided reliability. Explaining the research process and how the information was gathered is discussed in Chapter V. The use of triangulation and member checking was meant to help minimize researcher bias. It was important to listen carefully to the comments and edits gathered through member checking in order to check the researcher bias and minimize personal interpretation.

The audit trail provided a map that could be examined by other researchers to understand how the findings were arrived upon. In order to authenticate the findings of the study, other researchers could recreate the path that was taken to gather the data, analyze the data, and present the findings (Merriam, 2009). “An audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). Field notes, transcripts, and documentation provided important details to creating this trail.

Confidentiality was also important. The principal and teachers must feel safe to speak freely; therefore, the participants' identities were protected using aliases as well as by being certain not to include identifying characteristics in the writing. "A researcher develops case studies of individuals that represent a composite picture rather than in individual picture" (Creswell, 2013, p. 174). I explained to each of the interview subjects that I would be using pseudonyms for the schools and all participants. In two or three instances, interview subjects asked again if they would be anonymous before answering. The case study was meant to form an understanding of the leadership skills and practices that the principal has employed to move the school forward. It was not meant to be an evaluation of the individual. Information gathered in the interviews was not shared with anyone except in the context of the final report.

Multiple methods of data collection was one step in the triangulation of data and the corroboration of findings. Merriam (2009) found:

> With regard to the use of multiple *methods* of data collection, for example, what someone tells you in an interview can be checked against what you observe on site or what you read about in documents relevant to the phenomenon of interest. (p. 216)

The UIPs were useful in this way since they clearly laid out the principals' goals and intentions. Because a professional transcriptionist transcribed the interviews, I also reviewed the transcripts against the recordings to be sure they were correct. Finally, I used member checking or respondent verification to help ensure that my interpretation of the data felt true and accurate to the subjects and to allowed them to suggest edits or further clarification when it did not. I sent my preliminary findings to the subjects for their feedback and incorporated their edits where needed (Merriam, 2009).

Data were stored securely. Hard copy data was stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Electronic data was stored on a password-protected computer and on password protected cloud services provided by Apple Computer. Because there was confidential and personal information shared in the interviews, this security was important to the research.

Appropriate approvals and consent were also important to the trustworthiness of the study. The Institutional Review Board approval is found in Appendix D. Sample consent forms are found in Appendix E. Consent was obtained from the school district, the principals, and the individual teachers. The signed consent forms were kept in secure file cabinet in the researchers office.

Researcher Stance

I was interested in examining the leadership skills and behaviors of principals who were leading schools out of failing status because of my personal connection to the profession. I have been a building level administrator for 12 years and felt strongly that the principal was an extremely important, yet was an underrated part of the education system. The strong connection between principals and student achievement could illustrate the importance of the position. However, in my experience, very little attention has been paid to the development and support of good principals and administrators. I believed that principals were an undervalued resource in public education and that more attention needed to be paid to helping principals cultivate good leadership practices.

As a teacher I received regular professional development to improve my skills and practices. As a principal I am responsible for providing weekly professional learning to my staff, which is directly related to our school based strategic plan. The teacher leaders

in my building receive regular professional learning in how to help other teachers to be more effective. However, in the eight years that I have been a principal, I can only think of one instance in which the school district provided professional development to me that was intended to improve my leadership skills and behaviors.

As a principal, I receive 360 surveys from my staff but have never received any coaching or professional learning to help me improve my practices based on that feedback. I felt that I have been left to my own devices when it came to improving my practice, which was part of the reason I decided to pursue my Doctorate of Education at the University of Northern Colorado. I felt that the opportunity to continue my study of leadership would help my own practice. I believed that understanding more about the leadership of principals under some of the most difficult circumstances, i.e., moving a school from Turnaround to Performance, would provide much needed information that was currently missing from the literature available to principals. My hope was that it would help make the case that school districts need to do more to grow principals professionally in the same way that we grow our teachers.

I believed that case study was an excellent way to tell the story of successful principals. I am interested in using case study, in part, because of my previous life experience as a producer of large-scale live events, museum exhibits, and documentary films. As a producer, part of my job was to interview people in order to tell their story. It was my job to assemble interviews, documents, and research in order to write a script or create the arc of a documentary. I saw the same kind of work in the case study methodology. I am creating a documentary of sorts in which the two principals are the main characters.

It was important for me to put aside my preconceived notions and my own experience as a principal and, instead, to put on my producer hat in order to listen carefully and tell the story of the two schools truthfully. As a producer, I sometimes found that my personal ideology conflicted with the story I was asked to tell, but it was important to the success of the project that I put my personal feelings aside and focus on the event at hand. This was easier to do in this instance than I anticipated. While I had some preconceived notions of certain aspects of the schools' change process and ideas about how I would react in a similar circumstance, I found that I could easily relate to what the teachers and principals had to say and understood where they were coming from.

In one interview the subject, who was a teacher leader, was quite upset about the fact that the principal was leaving and worried about how she might work with the new principal. I could relate to this completely as I had been through a similar situation as an assistant principal. I did not change my line of questioning and was conscious to remain objective about her answers, however, I did recommend some reading I thought might help. In another interview, a veteran teacher reminded me very much of a teacher in my own school who could be quite difficult. I started to feel defensive for the principal and had to remind myself to put my personal feelings aside and focus on the teacher's words. Her part of the story was every bit as important as the others. There could always be some dissenting opinions, which are important to portraying the truth. I was able to examine my biases and be honest about what I was feeling, and then put my biases aside to listen intently and honestly to what was being said.

This was especially true during the member checking part of the research. I could not be defensive or argumentative when someone disagreed with my interpretation. As Yin (2014) wrote, “Such a review is more than a matter of professional courtesy” (p. 199). The validation process was an opportunity to check my biases and make sure that I had listened and analyzed with an open mind. I found I was able to see where I had misinterpreted and made minor adjustments that accurately both reflected what was said and what I felt I heard.

Conclusion

With an anticipated shortage of teachers and administrators in the coming years, it would be important to help principals succeed in order to preserve the good administrators who were already in place and to attract new leaders (Martin & Mulvihill, 2016). The goal of the study was to understand what leadership behaviors and skills a principal used to turn around a failing school. Because of the connection between principals and student achievement, principals who found themselves in the position of needing to improve their schools needed support in knowing how to do that. The results would be used to catalogue the different kinds of leadership skills a successful principal used to change the climate and culture of their school in order to raise achievement. The results would provide principals with information about how they could best raise achievement and improve their school’s results.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This qualitative case study has been developed to help understand how previously failing schools have been able to move from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Performance status and to specifically examine the skills and behaviors demonstrated by principals who led the schools' efforts to improve student achievement. When schools were failing, the leaders, teachers, and community members must examine all aspects of the educational process, including academic press, curriculum, data analysis practices, accountability, scheduling, human resources, culture, professional learning, and the physical environment (Chenoweth, 2007). Ineffective teachers and principals, disorganized instructional programs, lack of formative assessment and data analysis, deficiency in teacher efficacy, and the absence of mission and vision have been common factors among failing schools (Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). Challenges in all of these areas were present in both schools and were addressed throughout the change process.

Data collection included interviews, document analysis, and field notes, as described in Chapter III. Through coding the interviews and examining other documents, five themes emerged including: (a) mission and vision, (b) school culture, (c) instruction and curriculum, (d) teacher efficacy, and € resource management. Resource management was further divided into budget, time, communication, and human resources. In relation to principal leadership, these themes were closely aligned to the areas of evaluation included in the Colorado State Model Evaluation System for principals. All of the themes

were represented in the data from both schools, by both principals and teachers. There were two study sites and both were similar in the challenges that were present and the process that was used to address the challenges at hand.

Participants

Two principals and seven teachers were interviewed in this case study. There were two different school sites, each in a different Colorado school district. This section describes the schools, principals, and teachers. Both of the schools moved from Turnaround Status to Performance Status under the leadership of the principals. The teachers and principals were all employed at the schools during the duration of the change process which for each school was 5 years.

The Schools

Two elementary schools, Garden Hill Elementary School (GHES) and March Elementary School (MES)[1], were studied in depth. The schools were located in two different large, urban school districts. Garden Hill Elementary School and March Elementary School were similar in size, resources, and demographics and were small, neighborhood schools serving students from preschool to fifth grade. Garden Hill Elementary School and March Elementary School were housed in older buildings that sat on tree lined-streets in quiet, residential neighborhoods. Although the buildings were older, the physical spaces were tidy and functional. Modern security measures had been added to the entryways at both schools, but the entries still remained welcoming and functional. Based on the local media reports and school board minutes, both schools

[1] All names are pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants in this study.

appeared to be important to the surrounding community despite having been low performing schools at one time.

Table 1 shows the School Performance rating by year for each of the schools. This table includes all of the data available from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). The 2014-2015 school year was considered a hold harmless year because the state standardized test changed significantly and the CDE had to determine metrics by which to compare the results to the previous assessments.

Table 1

School Performance

School Year	Garden Hill Elementary School	March Elementary School
2009-2010	Improvement Plan	Performance Plan
2010-2011	Priority Improvement Plan Accountability Clock--Yr. 1	Performance Plan
2011-2012	Priority Improvement Plan Accountability Clock--Yr. 2	Priority Improvement Plan Accountability Clock--Yr. 1
2012- 2013	Priority Improvement Plan Accountability Clock--Yr. 3	Priority Improvement Plan Accountability Clock--Yr. 2
2013- 2014	Priority Improvement Plan Accountability Clock--Yr. 4	Turnaround Plan Accountability Clock--Yr. 3
2014- 2015	Hold Harmless	Hold Harmless
2015-2016	Performance Plan	Improvement Plan
2016-2017	Performance Plan	Performance Plan
2017- 2018	Performance Plan	Performance Plan

Table 2 shows the demographics of both schools including the number of students, free and reduced lunch status, and minority students.

Table 2

Comparison of School Demographics

School	Built	Students	Free and Reduced Lunch %	Minority %
Garden Hill Elementary School	1971	307	74	58
March Elementary School	1940	254	88	70

Garden Hill Elementary School. The school district in which Garden Hill Elementary School was located had more than 55 schools and approximately 27,000 students (Colorado Department of Education, 2018). Garden Hill Elementary School had 338 students during the 2017-2018 school year. At GHES, 74% of students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) and 58% of students were students who identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or two or more races.

Garden Hill Elementary School was on the accountability clock for 4 years and was in Turnaround Status when the principal began his tenure. Garden Hill Elementary School received additional federal funding as a result of being designated as a Title I school. Garden Hill Elementary School also received funding from the State of Colorado Turnaround Network which supports schools in Priority Improvement and Turnaround status. However, because the school achieved Performance Status, the Turnaround Network would no longer provide grant funding. This was a concern for the teachers and principal at GHES.

Garden Hill Elementary School has been the community school in that area of the city for many years. The local television station ran a story in September of 2017 about a student who was the third generation in her family to attend GHES. In the television interview, the mother of the child addressed how important it was for her family to continue the tradition at the school because it was such a wonderful experience for her when she attended elementary school there. There were pictures, plaques, and memorabilia in the office area and in display cases that pointed to a rich history of community involvement. At GHES, there were signs and pictures of adults who had volunteered at the school over the years and awards for volunteerism.

March Elementary School. The school district in which March Elementary School was located was comprised of less than 35 schools, with approximately 16,000 students (Colorado Department of Education, 2018). March Elementary School had 254 students in the

2017-2018 school year. At MES, 88% of students qualified for FRL and 70% of students identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or two or more races.

March Elementary School was on the accountability clock for 4 years and was in turnaround status when the current principal began working at the school. March Elementary School was a Title I school and received additional federal funding as a result of this designation. March Elementary School also received funding from the State of Colorado Turnaround Network which supports schools in Priority Improvement and Turnaround status. However, once the school achieved Performance Status, the Turnaround Network no longer provided grants which was very concerning for the

teachers and principal at MES as they feared the school and school district would no longer be able to fund some of the additional supports and resources that they had come to rely on.

Teachers in the school district in which March Elementary School was located went on strike during the 5 years prior to the research study. The strike was ended fairly quickly but had an impact on the culture of the school and the relationship between the principal and teachers. The impact of the strike is examined later in this chapter.

In 2012, the board of education considered closing March Elementary School but decided to keep it open, in part because of public opinion and the long, rich history of the school according to the local newspaper. At MES, one picture in the office showed a city council member dressed as Santa Clause handing out presents to students at the annual Christmas celebration. March Elementary was one of three schools in the school district that have been supported by a local foundation which was started by the long-time city council member in order to provide resources for economically disadvantaged students. The local newspaper reported that, when the council member was not able to continue organizing the annual Christmas party or play Santa Clause due to his declining health, the staff and leadership at MES and the other schools involved in the foundation made sure that the celebration continued since it had become such a beloved community event.

The foundation also sponsored a vocabulary program for elementary schools, as reported on the local television station. March Elementary School principal, Emily, discussed with the media how excited kids were by the program and how it helped to stimulate a desire to learn in the students. She related a story about a group of boys who told her they were going to have a sleepover on Friday to study as many vocabulary

words as possible. She said, “They came back Monday, showed me the sheets and said, “Look what we did all weekend.’” Colleen, a veteran teacher, also mentioned the work of the foundation and the positive impact it has had on the school during her interview.

The Teachers and Principals

The participants in the study included the principals at both schools and a variety of teachers with an array of perspectives based on their teaching experience, the length of time they taught in each of the two buildings, and their teaching duties. Information about each participant, including years in education, years at the present school, and number of principals each participant had worked with is included in Table 3. It was important to the study to garner perspectives from a variety of teachers in order to create a fuller picture of the change process and the work of the principals.

Table 3

Interview Participants

School	Name	Title	Years in Education	Years at Present School	Has worked at Other Schools	Number of Principals in Career
Garden Hill Elementary	Basil	Principal	31 (10 as principal)	5	Yes	
Garden Hill Elementary	Gardenia	5th Grade Teacher	11	4	Yes	4
Garden Hill Elementary	Hyacinth	5th Grade Teacher	28	15	Yes	6
March Elementary	Emily	Principal	25 (5 as principal)	5	Yes	
March Elementary	Alice	4th Grade Teacher	10	8	Yes	4
March Elementary	Betty	3rd Grade Teacher	4	4	No	1
March Elementary	Colleen	Kindergarten Teacher	16	12	Yes	4
March Elementary	Donna	3rd Grade Teacher	4	4	No	1
March Elementary	Francesca	Instructional Coach	21	7	Yes	5

Garden Hill Elementary School principal.[2] When the principal, Basil, started work at Garden Hill, the school was already on the accountability clock. The previous principal was replaced prior to the 2013 school year. A transitional principal was put in place for part of the school year, while the school district re-organized principals at all of the elementary schools in the school district. Hyacinth, a fifth-grade teacher at Garden Hill, explained that the previous principal continued to celebrate the teachers as if the school was being successful. "We thought we were doing great and didn't realize we were already in, I think it was our second year of priority improvement status, and we didn't even know as a staff." When the building level leadership was reorganized across the school district, Basil was placed at Garden Hill Elementary with the charge to turn the school around.

Basil was one of 27 principals that the school district decided to re-locate to different schools. Neither the principals nor the personnel at the schools had any voice in the decision which resulted in some negative feelings for many teachers and principals. Because the teachers did not understand that the school was failing, they were unclear about the change at first. Basil did not report having felt unwelcome at the school, but he did report that there was confusion among the staff.

Basil is a veteran principal who had been at Garden Hill Elementary School for 5 years at the time of the interview. He was a principal at a different elementary school in the school district for 5 years prior to being placed at Garden Hill. Basil was not soft spoken but not gregarious either. He appeared to be even-keeled and, although passionate

[2] The pseudonyms for the participants from Garden Hill Elementary School have been created using plant names to differentiate them from the participants from March Elementary School.

about his work, he was reserved. Basil was extremely knowledgeable about educational leadership, the change process, and evidence-based practices. Both Hyacinth and Gardenia agreed that Basil researched practices thoroughly before putting anything in place. He was popular among the staff and well-liked by students and parents. Basil left Garden Hill at the end of the 2017-2018 school year and took a job in a different school district closer to where his home was located.. Basil said he felt he could leave GHES because the school was in a good place academically and culturally.

Garden Hill Elementary School teachers. Hyacinth was a mid-career teacher who had been at Garden Hill Elementary for 15 of her 28 years in education. She has taught at all grades in elementary and was teaching fifth grade at the time of the interview. Hyacinth was very energetic and animated when she spoke. She was dedicated to her students and school. Hyacinth was a strong team player. She described Basil asking her to move from third grade into fifth grade. She did not really want to move because she felt she had just gotten the curriculum, data analysis, and lessons in place. However, she said, "My mentality was I'll do whatever he asked me to do because I know why he's doing things the way he does." Hyacinth was extremely proud of the work that she had done at Garden Hill and the improvements that the school had made. Hyacinth and her fifth-grade teammate, Gardenia, appeared to work well together and genuinely enjoyed one another's company.

Gardenia was also a veteran teacher who had been in education for 11 years and spent the last 4 years at Garden Hill. Gardenia worked for Basil at his previous school and came to Garden Hill as soon as there was an opening because she wanted to continue to work with Basil. She had taught nearly every grade level in elementary school and was

teaching fifth grade at the time of the interview. Gardenia appeared to care very much about her students. She was genuinely excited and pleased as she described the smiles, high-fives, and celebrations her students had when they were successful. She also talked about using Professional Learning Community (PLC) data to differentiate for both struggling students and for students who were high achieving and needed extension and enrichment. This awareness and ability to focus on students of all levels was an indication of her expertise and experience.

Gardenia also talked about how much she has learned and grown as a teacher at Garden Hill. When she spoke about the work that she had done at the school, she said, "It's just been life-changing for me. I feel it's just brought me so much further along as a teacher." While some veteran teachers might feel that they were experts in the field and did not need to continue learning and adapting, Gardenia demonstrated a love of learning and a desire to continue to grow professionally. Before the interview started, she expressed an interest in furthering her education formally by exploring doctoral programs; however, she said she has no desire to ever leave the classroom so she was not certain that was a path she wanted to pursue.

It would have been ideal to have more than two teachers participate in the study at Garden Hill Elementary. Basil explained that it was an extremely busy time of year at the school and that many of the teachers were feeling overwhelmed. Not wanting to add more stress to any of the staff, Basil apologized that he had not pushed harder to have more teachers participate. Despite the limited number of participants, the information gleaned from Basil, Hyacinth, and Gardenia was quite detailed and provided a detailed story about the school.

March Elementary School principal. The search for a new principal at March Elementary School began when the school was on Priority Improvement status and the school district leaders became aware that the principal was ineffective. The school had been in Priority Improvement status for 2 years and was being designated as a Turnaround School at the time Emily started her work as principal. "I really did not know what I was getting into," said Emily. "I knew that I was getting into a turnaround school. They were part of the improvement (in the school district) at the time and so, I knew that it was going to be tough just instructionally." The magnitude of the work ahead would prove to be daunting, but Emily would prove to be perfectly suited to tackle it.

According to several of the teachers at MES, the previous principal had not been engaged as a leader and, as a result, the school lacked vision, the culture of the school was dysfunctional, teamwork was non-existent, and even the physical look of the school was messy and rundown. Emily further explained,

> The overall attitude of teachers was, "we do what is best for adults, not for kids." The culture was very poor. Everyone did their own thing; there was no alignment. I didn't really notice anyone working as a team."

Emily described having come from a school where the staff felt like family and she desired to emulate that at MES. She clearly cared very much about the staff and students and knew them each personally.

Emily was a very involved leader who was dedicated to her school, students, and staff. She was outgoing and personable with an extremely strong work ethic. Each of the staff members who were interviewed described the long hours and hard work that Emily put in as a leader. Emily mentioned that her work had taken a great deal of time away from her family which was difficult. Several of the staff members also mentioned how

much time Emily put into work and how difficult that must be on her family. Emily was leaving March Elementary at the end of the year to take a position as a school district-level leader. When discussing her plan to leave at the end of the school year, Emily said she felt the school was in a good place and that she was already working with the new principal to create a smooth transition. Clearly, leaving was a difficult and bittersweet decision for Emily. It was interesting that there was not a mention of long hours having an impact on the time spent away from the family for the principal during any of the interviews at Garden Hill Elementary where the principal is male.

March Elementary School teachers. The teachers at March Elementary School were enthusiastic to participate in the study and represented a cross-section of the staff including a variety of experience, grade levels, and teaching styles. Betty and Donna were young, novice teachers, who both started their careers at MES. They were both in their fourth year of teaching and were third-grade teachers at the time of the interviews. Having started their careers at March Elementary School, both young women had only known Emily as a principal so were not able to compare her leadership to anything else, but they were able to clearly articulate what systems and leadership behaviors they felt helped make them successful. Both were proud of their work at MES and felt they had become better teachers over the 4 years they had been at the school.

Betty started at March Elementary as a fourth-grade teacher, but she had been moved to third grade in her second year. She was hired at MES during Emily's second year as principal after there had been a fair amount of turnover. Betty described herself as a very outgoing person but said she struggled a bit when she was first hired. She described what it felt like when she first arrived at MES by explaining, "A lot (of

teachers) had been here for a while, so when you're new you kind of have to show what you know and put yourself out there." She described being a little unsure of the culture of the building at first, but she soon found most of the staff to be friendly and helpful. Betty said that she had an extremely difficult group of students her first year. She said that the instructional coach and special education teacher were especially helpful but all of the staff and Emily were very supportive. She described learning a great deal about teaching from Emily as a leader. Betty served on the Building Leadership Team (BLT) and appeared to have potential as a growing teacher leader. She described enjoying her work on the leadership team and felt it was important to moving the school forward. Betty was disappointed and sad that Emily was leaving at the end of the year and hoped to help the new principal in the transition.

Donna, also in her fourth year of teaching, served 2 years as a second-grade teacher before moving to third grade with Betty. Donna felt that the culture was positive at the time she joined the staff at March Elementary, but she was aware of the dysfunction among the staff before she arrived. "When I first got here, there was a huge turnover the year before. Everybody who was left here was very positive, and they continued to talk about how much better the culture was than the previous year." She also described the staff as being very close, accepting, and helpful. Because Emily was the only principal that Donna had ever worked with, she described feeling sad and apprehensive that Emily was leaving. She hoped that the new principal would not change a lot of their systems but would adopt what was already in place. She also said, "I guess my biggest fear is that his expectations won't be so high, so people will get lax." This spoke to the high expectations that Donna had for herself which was also clear in the

interview as she spoke with pride about how much she had grown as a teacher since she was hired.

Alice, a fourth-grade teacher, had taught for 10 years. She taught for 8 years at March Elementary, so she had been at MES before it was designated as a Turnaround school and had worked for several different principals. Alice had been involved with the BLT since she first arrived at MES. She was proud of her work with the BLT and felt that they had created many of the improvement systems and strategies along with Emily. While Alice was sad that Emily was leaving, she felt the strength of the leadership team would allow the staff to carry on with their work. Although involved with the building leadership, Alice was clearly a classroom teacher first and foremost. She was very serious about her work and dedicated to her students. She spoke at length about building relationships with her students and clearly loved all aspects of being a classroom teacher.

Colleen was a veteran teacher who had a very strong bond with March Elementary school as both her mother and her daughters attended MES. Colleen started her career in middle school in the early 1990s and has been in education for 16 years. After 4 years of teaching, she took time off to be a stay-at-home mom. She returned to education as a kindergarten teacher at March Elementary school after 9 years away from the workforce. She described her position in kindergarten at MES as an “accident of fate position.” When her daughters were in school at MES, the kindergarten teacher quit her job after 2 weeks. Colleen was hired as a substitute teacher until the principal could find a replacement. A replacement was found, but resigned in February, so Colleen was hired to finish the school year and has been a kindergarten teacher at March Elementary ever since.

Colleen had strong convictions and principles. She enjoyed working with her teammate in kindergarten, but she did not seem to enjoy change. She stated in the interview that she had refused to teach any other grade and seemed quite unsettled that her teaching partner of many years was retiring and she would need to work with a new person. Colleen and her teaching partner had done their own book studies and professional development, but she did not seem to want to be involved with the broader, all-school professional learning or improvement process. Colleen definitely seemed like a teacher who wanted to be left alone to teach her kids. She appeared skeptical of some of Emily's efforts and did not seem open to new ideas or ways of teaching.

Francesca was serving as an instructional coach and interventionist at the time of the interview. Francesca had also served as a classroom teacher in multiple grade levels throughout her career. She was in her seventh year at March Elementary School. Francesca described her job as sometimes more coaching and sometimes more intervention depending on the year. She said that sometimes she taught small group instruction while other times she was co-planning, modeling, co-teaching, or coaching teachers to improve instruction. Francesca was very involved with the professional learning, improvement efforts, and change process at March Elementary School. She appeared to be a strong leader in the building and was obviously very dedicated to her work and to her colleagues, especially her principal.

Francesca had clearly built a very strong relationship with Emily. She was extremely fond of Emily as a leader and became emotional at several points during the interview, especially when talking about Emily leaving at the end of the school year. Francesca served for many years on the Building Leadership Team (BLT) and described

her work as a leader at MES in maternal terms. She was clearly very proud of her work and felt strongly that she was a vital part of the leadership team. As a veteran teacher, Francesca seemed very different from Colleen in that she was not tied to her own way of teaching and was quite open to new ideas and practices. She saw part of her work as bringing those ideas to other teachers.

Themes

The first attempt at coding the data resulted in three themes centered around culture, instruction, and teacher efficacy. Further analysis of the interviews, as well as additional documents, suggested that utilizing five themes, rather than three, provided a more accurate portrait explaining why these schools experienced the increase in academic performance. The themes were consistent at both sites and were echoed throughout the interviews of both principals and teachers. The five themes included strategic planning and leadership, culture, instructional leadership, teacher efficacy, and resource management. A comparison with the Colorado State Model Evaluation rubric for principals showed that these themes closely resemble the five Quality Standards included on that rubric and reflected the actions taken by both staff and leaders.

Mission, Vision, and Goals/Strategic Leadership

Mission, vision, and goals would guide the growth of the organization and were an important part of the change process (Brown et al., 2012; Collins & Porras, 1994; Senge et al., 2012; Weiner, 2016). Interview subjects from both schools mentioned mission, vision, and goal setting as part of the improvement process. Teachers mentioned the words “goal” and “goals” 35 times throughout the course of the interviews. Teachers at both schools knew and fully understood the mission, vision, and goals. Both principals

spoke explicitly about dedicating a great deal of time to intentionally creating the mission, vision, and goals. Teachers and principals were able to articulate the schools' goals as they were presented in the Unified Improvement Plans (UIP).

While Emily thought her first priority would be to focus on instruction, she soon found she was terribly mistaken. "I jumped in thinking I'm going to go right to instruction. Before you can even get to instruction and make that achievement increase, you've got to get these systems in place." Both Emily and Basil found that they had to focus on the vision and goals, which made an immediate impact on school culture, before they could address instruction and curriculum. The changes in culture, expectations, and teacher efficacy also led to sizable teacher turnover in both schools.

While in some situations the leader must work to create a sense of urgency in order to begin the change process, at Garden Hill the urgency was clear. Hyacinth explained, "When we realized how desperate our situation was, that it was our third year that we were on the clock, and we were kind of hit with, 'you've got to make changes, and it's got to be yesterday.'" Basil immediately set about helping the staff to understand the reality of their situation. "I think I represented [the data] in such a way that it created a sense of urgency but not a paralyzing sense of fear," Basil said. Hyacinth's teaching partner in fifth grade, Gardenia, came to the school after Basil had been hired. "I didn't know the status of the where the school was. I learned immediately. It was their fourth year, and I already knew we were in deep, deep trouble, like yesterday we had to do this work." Understanding that he had to address the vision and culture before he could make lasting changes, Basil decided to start with creating a vision for the school.

Basil knew that the school needed a vision in order to guide the rest of the work. "I've been in multiple buildings and if there's a vision statement that somebody can only find on a shelf, then it is not a player," he said. Creating the school vision started with a parent survey. Parents were asked what they valued about their school and what they wanted to see replicated. Then Basil surveyed the teachers. He interviewed every teacher in the school individually before bringing them together as a group. Gardenia said, "The question was given to us, 'What do we want Garden Hill to be known for?'" Next, the teachers studied vision statements from other industries, and finally they created a draft, which they word-smithed until they could agree on a vision. The vision statement at Garden Hill, which was prominently displayed on their website was:

- COMMITMENT TO MEASURABLE LEARNING--WE GET RESULTS
- HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF
- A WARM, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
- MAKE NO EXCUSES

When Basil talked about creating the vision with the staff, he admitted that it was not always easy work. "I'd say, okay, 'We're going to do vision work now,' and it was like, ahhhh, and groans." But he was clearly proud of his staff and felt that the time spent was well worth the outcome. Basil made the following observation, "Here it's [the vision] got legs, it truly does. I hear people talking in the hallways about no excuses, about what does that mean for us, about warm and nurturing for kids, the high expectations." At Garden Hill Elementary School, the vision was part of the UIP and the goals outlined in the improvement plan were in alignment with the vision statement.

In the Garden Hill UIP, the vision statement was specifically referenced as a strength in the Culture of Performance and Academic Systems sections. Under Culture of Performance, the high expectations and warm and supportive environment were

mentioned. In addition, the way in which the staff was to achieve the vision was also explained. “To attain our vision, our staff strives to use standards-based data to inform and evaluate learning experiences we provide our students.” Knowing the children as learners and keeping them safe was also listed as a way in which the staff strived to meet their vision.

As March Elementary was being designated a Turnaround school, the most pressing issue was creating a functional and useful UIP. Prior to Emily’s arrival, the UIP was not shared with the staff and none of the teachers knew anything about the school’s needs or goals. Emily described how staff members first reacted, “Some of them didn’t even know what a UIP was. You know, and that’s the plan for the whole year.” Some staff members had never been informed that they were listed in the UIP by name with specific responsibilities. Francesca, who served as an interventionist and instructional coach said, “There were things on there [the UIP] that I was supposed to be doing, and I’m like, I didn’t even know I was supposed to be doing that!” Emily utilized the teacher leadership team to create the UIP and school goals.

After looking carefully at the UIP that was in place and beginning to understand how uninformed the staff really were, the magnitude of the work ahead became clear. Emily recalled, “I said, ‘You know what? I think we need to just start from scratch and rewrite it.’ And so, we spent hours upon hours rewriting it.” Several of the teachers also recalled the hours of work that was put into creating the UIP. Francesca and Emily examined the school’s needs and discussed what high leverage strategies might move the school most quickly. They then discussed their thinking with the BLT which was comprised of classroom teachers and was open to anyone who wanted to participate. As

part of the UIP and goal setting process, Emily led the BLT in creating a school vision. They chose to use the acronym, CHAMPIONS, which stood for:

- Creating school wide success
- High expectations for all
- Accountability for all
- Meeting goals
- Parent involvement
- Individualized instruction
- Ownership of student learning
- No excuses
- Safe learning environment.

The leadership team also created hand motions that matched the acronym which was taught to students and staff and used to reinforce the vision. This vision was referred to frequently, was prominently displayed on the school website, was included in both internal and external school emails, and was part of the current school UIP. It was interesting that the term, "no excuses" was also part of the Garden Hill Elementary School vision statement.

Emily described using the vision statement on the morning announcements and in an automated parent phone call that went out to the school community every Sunday. Emily said she also used different parts of the acronym in the way she addressed issues with the staff. She described talking with staff members by saying, "We expect high expectations. I need accountability' from you guys." The way in which the vision was communicated was also described in the UIP. "We continue to communicate this vision to be sure it is a living and breathing force in our school. All students, staff, parents, and community members are aware of our vision and goals" The teachers confirmed in their interviews that the vision was referred to weekly, if not daily.

"High expectations" was the portion of the vision statement most frequently mentioned in the interviews at March Elementary School. Three of the five teachers interviewed described Emily as having high expectations for the staff and students. These teachers also described having high expectations for themselves and their students. Although the other two teachers did not use the term "expectations," they described what they expected from each other, themselves, and their students in similar terms.

When interview subjects talked about the school goals, they used the language that was included in the UIP. In the UIP, the goals included using data, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and Teach Like a Champion (TLAC) training. Each of the teachers interviewed described the importance of the PLCs each week and how they used data analysis in their classrooms. They also discussed the TLAC workshops that they had been to and the importance of that work in their teaching. Colleen said, "So, we all have the same goal. We have a school goal, and then we have our individual goals for our classrooms and she [Emily] just kind of pumps us up for that." She also described goal setting at the school and classroom level for both long-term and short-term goals.

School and Staff Culture/Cultural Leadership

Teachers and administrators at both Garden Hill Elementary School and March Elementary School pointed to a lack of cohesive and positive culture among students and staff as a reason the schools had been previously failing and improvements in culture as a reason the schools were able to move forward. Mette and Scribner (2014) wrote that cultural improvements was one of the main components in turning around schools that were failing. School culture could be seen in the norms that the members of the organization followed, the values they held dear, their beliefs, organizational traditions,

and even objects of importance (Brown et al., 2012; Burke, 2014). Organizational culture has had an impact on success in that it brought the members of the organization together with a common purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Collins, 2001). School culture was also reflected in the way in which staff members were able to think and speak honestly about their successes and challenges (Senge et al., 2012).

Prior to Basil's arrival at Garden Hill Elementary, the staff were blissfully unaware of the school's situation. Hyacinth described feeling shocked, because she thought the staff was very strong and the school was doing well. "For so long here, we were just being fed how wonderful we were and celebrated every year, and then all of a sudden it was, 'Wow, what happened?'" Although the staff felt good about themselves and celebrated their perceived successes, the true state of the culture would be exposed as Basil brought the data to the teachers and the real picture came into focus.

When confronted with the facts, members of failing organizations would sometimes rationalize their poor performance or deflect and place blame elsewhere (Murphy, 2009). Garden Hill's culture among teachers showed many of the unfortunate hallmarks Peurach and Neumerski (2015) wrote about, such as lack of collaboration, lack of trust, low expectations, and an unwillingness to be accountable. Hyacinth remembered some of the difficult conversations that took place early on. "So we took a hard look at ourselves and had some really hard conversations just within the staff." Basil remembered some fairly shocking conversations with staff members. He said, "At the time I remember hearing a teacher saying, 'Oh we're always going have burger flippers. Well, I've done what I can. They're not going to learn.' There was somebody who couldn't wait to get me in a car and drive me over to the trailer park. That was the excuse,

the poverty piece." Basil knew he needed to rely on data, strong instructional practices, and changing the culture in order to move the school forward.

Basil remembered that getting the staff on board with a data-driven model was a very hard sell at first.

> Those are some hard conversations with teachers that say, "Well, I really think that kid needs to be in [this class]. Are you questioning my professionalism, my decisions?" So, we came back to the data. And that, in hindsight, was a big part of changing the culture.

Basil also remembered trying to balance the negative with the positive and helping teachers to see the good that was already happening at Garden Hill. Basil shared how he tried to help teachers see the positives in their work:

> I was also able to say, "You know what, this is what you celebrated about each other, this is what you appreciate, and the research indicates a lot of these things you already have in place. These are exactly the things that if we capitalize on them--collaboration, a sense of collective efficacy--if we focus on those, those are the things that are going to get us out of this.

By helping teachers to see the positive, Basil hoped to get more buy-in from the staff and build a strong foundation for change and improvement.

Hyacinth agreed that Basil was able to get enough teachers on board to make a change in the culture. She said, "And so he was really the right person for the job when he came in because of the experience he had, but also just being willing to jump on board and really buy into something." She also recalled that Basil used a book study to help shape the culture.

> Basil also brought in a book study for the staff which is *Teach Like a Champion*. And what we did is we just pulled from it what really worked for us. I think just the buy-in that from the staff and kids, they know that when other teachers from other classes see them in the hallway, the expectations are still there."

Basil explained in his interview that he used the book to both show teachers what they were doing well and where there were still challenges.

Gardenia agreed that changing the culture meant changing how teachers viewed themselves and their students. She said, “That was really changing the culture with each teacher, that’s not just their kids. It’s our kids as a building, and we care about all of them, and we’re going to do whatever it takes.” Basil said, “They’re no longer using poverty as an excuse. I don’t hear that trailer park mentioned anymore.” Basil, Hyacinth, and Gardenia all recalled changing the culture as a difficult, stressful, and awkward time but felt it was absolutely necessary to improving the school and were proud of their work. Basil said, “As scary as it was and stressful as it was, I don’t think the stress ever got through to the kids. We were really mindful of the student culture. The stress did not get to our kids. I feel really good about that.”

At March Elementary School, changing the culture was a top priority for Emily when she arrived, but she knew she had to tread lightly. Emily said, “I know there’s lots of tradition here, lots of history. This building has been here for a very long time. I tried not to change the traditions, but I had to get some systems under way.” The year before Emily arrived at MES, the school was almost closed. After a lengthy debate, the school board voted to keep the school open, according to the local newspaper and school board minutes. Unlike at Garden Hill, the staff at March Elementary School was well aware of their predicament.

Colleen, the most veteran teacher interviewed, described the school when it was very successful approximately seven or eight years previously. She then shared her perceptions of the principal prior to Emily,

> She was placed here and so it was really hard. And as teachers, some of our teachers, I think, failed the school at that time because unless they were being told what to do, they said, 'Nobody told me to do that, so I'm not going to do it.'"

Colleen further explained how the lack of leadership led to a staff culture that was not cohesive or collaborative. Colleen said, "It was really hard because we had to reunify ourselves. We really had to get back on the same page." It was a difficult period because not everyone wanted to be in alignment which is discussed further in section on management and resources.

Nicolaidou and Ainscow (2005) wrote about the importance of instituting building level systems and infrastructure but also of being sensitive to the shared history of the staff. Understanding this concept, Emily started by getting to know the staff long before the first day of school. She described having contacted every single staff member over the summer and meeting with them in coffee shops, at school, wherever they felt comfortable in order to get to know them. "I made sure I met with every single, not only teacher, but support staff, custodian, secretary, everybody." Emily used an interview template to ask each person about the strengths and challenges at the school and to get their input on how she might best help and support them. "I think that was very valuable because I wanted to start by letting people know that, 'Hey I care. This isn't just a job to me. I really want to make it better. And what can I do?' We're all a team." These interviews helped Emily to start to see the culture of the school.

The teachers acknowledged that Emily worked hard to build relationships in order to change the culture. Alice said, "You can get them [teachers] to do anything if you have that relationship. If you don't build that relationship, I think that's where the backlash is. I think that's how she honestly got everyone on board." Betty added, "Just making sure

we know that she's there for us is a really big thing." Donna described Emily's ability to build relationships this way:

> She makes it so you can talk to her as a friend, but also there's times when it's purely business. And, so, that makes you more open to when she is giving you feedback to accept that because five minutes later you could be talking about your kids.

Francesca said, "She's just always about building those relationships as a staff. And that's what we do with our kids, and I think it just carries over." Relationships among adults and between adults and kids, as well as the community, was a clear theme in the interviews.

Every one of the teachers interviewed at March Elementary School used the word "family" when describing the staff. Alice said, "Now, we have such a wonderful staff that it's like a family." Betty stated, "It [getting to know Emily] just made me feel so much more confident in this school, and it made me feel like I was a part of a family." Colleen said, "We have a very strong family bond here at this school. We have each other's backs." Donna said, "It's like a family. It's--we're very close." Francesca said, "From our custodial staff to our secretaries to our para-pros, it doesn't matter what your title is, you are a member of our family and our team and we all work together." Because family was such a strong refrain in the teacher interviews, when I asked Emily about it, she said, "I want to say that that was our goal. Is to become a family. I think that that's where we are at this time." Emily also mentioned that she came from a school that felt like family and creating that same culture had been one of her goals when she was hired.

At both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary, the staff and administrators pointed to the importance of culture as it related to a common purpose, collegiality, and supporting students. At March Elementary, Alice noted, "I feel like we

are a strong team here, and we're all on the same page, and we all believe the same things, like student achievement." When schools were deemed as failing, it was a difficult time for staff (Mintrop, 2002). Both schools made significant changes to the culture and climate in order to move forward.

Instruction and Curriculum/ Instructional Leadership

The chief purpose of schools has been to instruct children (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). However, instruction, curriculum, and instructional leadership encompassed more than just what happened in the classroom (Fullan, 2014). Teachers would need professional learning, time to collaborate, useful systems and programs, curricular alignment, and resources (Chenoweth, 2007; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Fullan, 2014; Senge et al., 2012). Both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary Schools lacked Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curricular resources, support systems for teachers, and instructional leadership when they were on Turnaround Status. Basil and Emily both came to their respective schools with ideas on how to make a difference instructionally.

At Garden Hill Elementary School, Basil brought ideas on how to improve the teachers' PLC time and data analysis procedures, as well as a reading intervention program. Basil started by helping the staff understand the data and the situation they were in. Basil explained what he did as follows:

> It was a little bit of a shocker because what I did was try to compare them, not just to other schools, but to other schools with similar demographics. There are 17 districts here, and I showed them every elementary in the region. And based on the SPF, we were the lowest performing one. And that was unnerving and scary and generated a lot of well, "What happens if we get to five years?

After looking at the whole-school data, Basil started to help teaches to look at their own classroom and team data.

Professional Learning Communities were a school district initiative, so teachers had met with their teams previously, but there were no protocols or procedures in place. The meetings focused more on managerial issues like organizing field trips and discussing student behavior than on instruction. Basil wanted teachers focused on things that would improve student achievement. He said, "There was some pushback there, too. I'm a professional. Who are you to tell me if I can appropriately use time?" Basil not only talked with teams that were resistant but helped them to set priorities. Basil said, "I did everything I can with communication to try to say this really what--is what your work should look and feel like. Let me help you do that work. It's all important, but this is the most important." Basil helped teams to shift toward focusing on student achievement. "I would have to come and say, 'You can talk about planning a field trip. You can talk about who's going to cover duty. Those are not going to impact student learning.'" This was both a procedural and philosophical shift for teachers.

Basil described some of the conversations he had with teams, "Yeah, you really do need to have an agenda. Yeah, that one doesn't work because you didn't say anything about what you did here." Basil explained it was a big change for some teachers and not all were on board with making that change. "There were teams that I really felt like I don't see an indication that you guys are moving, you're not doing this stuff, then, those are the teams I would make sure I was present at." Basil described how he tried to move the resistant teams ahead, "I'd ask the right questions, give choices of different protocols they may use. The message being you got to have one [PLC]." Basil demonstrated his

commitment to the process and helped teams understand what it should look like. Basil also provided professional learning for staff and had sent almost all teachers to PLC conferences so that they could continue to learn about the process.

While some of the teams were resistant, others jumped right in. Gardenia described her team's reaction this way, "We wanted to do it with fidelity, really, so the right way. So we began with our team, our own grade-level teams, having our meetings." Gardenia's team was very organized and disciplined in how they used their PLC time. They met regularly and had an agenda. That practice has grown so that now it was second nature for the teachers. Gardenia said:

> We have a planning calendar that we put all of our assessments on. Then once we give our assessment, we quickly, I mean literally either that day or the next, we are digging deep into the data looking at the skills that kids are still needing. We group them, and then we quickly go into intervention mode.

Gardenia admitted that having to stop instruction to provide intervention and reteach was not always easy, but she felt it was the only way to get kids to meet their high standards. "We shoot for 80% of kiddos to meet the standards and if they don't then that is when we do the work," Gardenia said. The reading intervention block built into the schedule has also helped.

At Garden Hill Elementary, Basil wanted to include a reading intervention program that he had done in his previous school. Basil said:

> So I said, you know what, (my previous school) was about to do this, I have a pretty good idea of what it would look like, and there's a school across town if we need to show up and visit, we certainly can, how about we do that. I described it to them and they said, "Sure, let's do it."

Both Gardenia and Hyacinth described the reading intervention program as being a good fit for their school.

In discussing the reading program that Basil brought to Garden Hill, Gardenia said, “So, when he was coming in, he really had a good idea of how to help get that going.” Hyacinth said, “Him having he background that he had with the school-wide reading intervention program that we really wanted to implement, and he was somebody that really put in those expectations and held us accountable.” Gardenia said about Basil, “He doesn’t just implement something. He’s done tons of research. He was looked into it. He has talked to everybody. He knows what it takes and then he starts to put things in.” The reading program and the intervention block, as well as robust PLCs, were on-going at Garden Hill.

Similar to Basil at Garden Hill Elementary, at March Elementary, Emily focused on PLCs, utilized the TLAC program, and helped teachers to understand how to use data. Because March Elementary was part of the Colorado Department of Education’s Turnaround Network, they were also provided with money to utilize Achievement Network (ANET) which was a non-profit organization that used assessments, data, and instructional coaching to support struggling schools. Emily also had very specific expectations about lesson planning and utilized the instructional coaches to provide frequent observations and feedback to teachers called observation feedback cycles.

The staff at March Elementary had not been given direction before Emily arrived. As Emily described it, teachers were allowed to teach whatever they wanted. “I think that the staff just –they had been doing what they wanted for--I’m not sure how long, but it had been some time.” Emily described herself as a very enthusiastic person. She remembered wanting to change things quickly when she first arrived and coming to understand that the work was not going to move as quickly as she hoped. “And, then to

come in to kind of a mess was just - I had to just take it a piece at a time and just peel back those layers and it just took a while to get down in there." To "get down in there," Emily had to focus on instructional practices.

In order to change instruction, Emily made her expectations clear. She started by implementing the TLAC model. Emily remembered, "Over a two-year period--we all did the Teach Like a Champion train the trainer. And so, most of us in this building are trained." Getting everyone in the building trained on the same philosophies and structures helped to get buy-in and make sure everyone was clear on the expectations.

Teachers were expected not only to use the training in their classrooms but also with one another. Emily said, "When we teach a professional development, we're using those strategies. You know, we're doing a do now, a show me, a cold call, habits of discussion –we use that wording when we're teaching." Emily helped to model the language and structures during the professional development (PD) time. "And so, we use that in our adult PD like we do with our kids. So, we're using that same language." Emily described the importance of modeling for her staff, "If I'm teaching it, I'm modeling the way--they're my students. I'm modeling the way I want to see it taught in the classroom."

As teachers were learning new instructional strategies, they also had to learn about analyzing and using data in their classrooms. March Elementary School teachers used School City assessments in both math and language arts. These assessments helped teachers to analyze the growth and achievement of their students to determine appropriate interventions. Francesca described wanting teachers to move beyond just looking at numbers but digging into using the data to inform instruction. "How do you even look at data? We could sit here all day and look at numbers, but what does that mean? We taught

them how to dive in and figure out, what are the holes and why?" To get more support on formative assessment and data, Emily teamed the school with ANET which many of the teachers interviewed credited with improving their instructional practices.

Achievement Network is a national organization that works with schools and school districts to help teachers with coaching and support. "ANET provides you with practical guidance, user-friendly data tools, and resources screened for quality and alignment to the standards" (Achievement Network, 2018, p. 1). Donna described her experience with ANET by sharing that, "They built up to really trying to get us to get those complex texts and those complex questions and all that stuff." She described the importance of the work with ANET and the impact it has had on her classroom. "I also know that we all have a lot more strategies than we did 4 years ago as teachers, and I think that most of us are not going to want to lose that."

In addition to providing resources and supports like TLAC and ANET, Emily focused on teacher lesson plans. Emily recalled:

> When I came here, another thing that was not in place were lesson plans. There was not a system where teachers turned in lesson plans. And so, that was tough because now I'm the new principal coming in and I'm expecting lesson plans and they haven't done lesson plans for I don't know how long. So, we have to think of how do I do that and get that in place slowly so that they are accountable. We started basic, and now we're pretty detailed with our lesson planning.

None of the teachers expressed pushback or resentment about Emily's expectations on lesson plans. They were, however, very clear about the details of Emily's expectations.

Alice described how the staff came up with a lesson plan template that everyone started to use. Betty shared other expectations, "She [Emily] makes sure that we have our lesson plans on a clipboard at the front of our room. She expects our lesson plans to be done the week that we're doing our lesson." Betty's tone and body language did not

indicate that she resented the level of detail but rather that she found it helpful. Betty said:

> We have to make sure we have our "I can" statements, and if they're not, she'll make sure to email us and say, "Hey, I like this, but maybe you should add this to it." And so, she's always making sure that we're doing the best that we can as far as lesson planning goes.

Emily viewed the lesson plans as a way to hold teachers accountable for what they were teaching, as this had been lacking in the past. "The lesson planning, that was a huge piece. So, that accountability." Emily and Francesca also described giving feedback on lesson plans to improve teaching practice.

Francesca described the process that she and Emily used to give feedback on lesson plans. She said, "Sometimes we spend hours going through and giving feedback. And we'll say, 'Where's your writing exemplar for this week?' Or, 'You're missing this.' Or, 'Tell us about this.' Or, 'We noticed this doesn't really align with your objective.'" They provided support on lesson plans each week as part of the feedback cycle.

The observation and feedback cycle were important parts of improving instruction. "Walk throughs are huge. That this is the way we're going to do things and we're not doing it as a 'gotcha' but we're doing it because we want--I want you to grow as a teacher." Emily and the instructional coaches provided regular feedback to teachers in addition to the formal evaluation process.

In describing the observation and feedback cycle, Emily described providing small pieces of information to teachers that they were able to address immediately. She said that this process helped teachers to improve without feeling overwhelmed or becoming negative. Emily said:

> We do what's called observation feedback here where we videotape--we just do like a 15-minute, 10-minute time of taking and then we come back in. We have a template that we follow, and we actually watch the video with the teacher. And they kind of point out a few things, and then I've already, before they come in, I know what I want to focus on. And it's just a little bite-size piece.

Francesca, who served as an instructional coach, described the feedback cycle. She said:

> We have implemented, the last few years, observation feedback cycles. And so, that was a big part of our focus that we would go in and observe and pick a bite-size piece of feedback that would be high leverage to help teachers really focus on one little, tiny piece that could really improve management or instruction.

The observation and feedback cycles were also mentioned by several of the teachers. Alice described videotaping a lesson and then discussing it with Emily. "That's what we were doing a lot of, is videotaping and then we'd meet and go over the teaching strategies and see what things we could tweak in their strategies. I think that, too, has been a huge help." Betty described tying the observations to the school and classroom goals. "We would discuss the goals, and then she would come in and make sure we were meeting those expectations in the classroom as we were teaching." Donna talked about the TLAC strategies and how Emily looked for those in her observations. "She does make sure that we're using different strategies and she's willing to help us when we're struggling with those also." None of the teachers spoke negatively about the observations and feedback.

Donna said that, even when the feedback might be something she needed to work on, Emily always started with a positive. Donna reported that Emily might say, "These are things I saw you doing well. These are things that I think can make it better. And this is how--some ideas how I think you might be able to implement that." Betty said, "It's nice because her or our instructional coach, they'll leave little notes for us on what they liked, and so that's a really cool positive feedback right away." She said that Emily had been working for the last few years to leave feedback in notes before she left the room or

a follow-up email right away so that the feedback was immediate and could be implemented instantly.

Alice described Emily's feedback as helping her to grow. She said that Emily's feedback might feel like she was saying, "I'm here to help you improve. I saw you doing this, but I think maybe if you tried to do this, you'd probably see better outcomes." Emily described the process as constantly looking for growth and improvement, "We have that growth mindset which is I think really plays into our success." Emily described always looking for ways to improve. Colleen, however, did report that she felt sometimes Emily's expectations for continual improvement were too high.

Colleen expressed some frustration at continually being challenged to improve. Her frustration was not related to the observation and feedback cycle but to the expectations that Emily had for her. Colleen said that her class's score on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) was quite good and felt that perhaps Emily's expectations were not realistic. She recalled a conversation in which Emily said, "You know, 85 percent seems easy for you. I want you to do 95 percent." Colleen felt frustrated that, although 85% was a good score, Emily pushed her to do more. Colleen said, "It's like you're never good enough, almost." Colleen did say, however, that Emily's expectations did motivate her. She said, "I think a lot of our success is fighting to prove that we are good enough."

Emily indicated that the systems she had put in place instructionally, have become engrained in the teachers' work. She said:

> We were really looking at the standard, breaking it down, writing our PLCs, looking at our data, having weekly data meetings, quarterly data meetings--really getting to what is the problem? How can we re-teach it? Developing read re-teach

> plans--so, I think it's come from just foundational to now, we're really working on that instructional piece.

Emily described all of the pieces they had focused on, including PLCs, TLAC training, ANET, lesson planning, and the observation and feedback cycle as being successful. She said, "And that has been huge for the teachers instructionally-- really digging into those standards, having actually an Achievement Network coach that comes in, helps us with walkthroughs, and planning, and things like that." She also said that, because their practices have become so engrained, she felt confident that she was leaving the teachers in a good place for the new principal to pick up.

Both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary Schools focused intensely on instruction and curriculum to increase student achievement. Both schools utilized the PLC and data analysis processes. Both schools utilized, TLAC. Both schools used some kind of formative assessment and intervention process. Garden Hill Elementary used more internal structures by doing a book study, creating a reading intervention block, and utilizing their own formative assessment process. March Elementary School utilized more outside resources by sending all teachers to TLAC trainings, partnering with ANET, and using SchoolCity assessments.

Teacher Efficacy/Transformational Leadership

Teacher efficacy has been defined as the collective belief among teachers that they can make a positive impact on students (Donohoo, 2017). Transformational leadership has been the way in which school leaders help teachers to develop collective efficacy (Ross & Gray, 2006). When principals supported teachers in leadership roles, teachers felt they were a part of the instructional team and had a positive impact on

student achievement (Artiles, 2013). Both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary Schools lacked teacher leadership and teacher efficacy when the new principals arrived. Basil and Emily utilized their Building Leadership Teams (BLT) to help chart the course of the school and to build teacher efficacy.

At first, Basil opened up the leadership team to anyone who wanted to participate. He reported that it was very cumbersome and not very effective. As a result, he changed the selection process. Basil said

> I read the PLC research that indicated if you want to have a committee that really drives PLC, you handpick them according to who has the influence, whose bought in, who has training, who's going to really advocate for PLC, not just who's been in the building the longest.

Basil found that, when he recreated the team with a much smaller group, it was more effective. Handpicking a team was a risk, and Basil feared that there might be pushback, but there was not. He said, "I also didn't get a lot of complaint from, oh, you're playing favorites. I tried to make the criteria selection real transparent. They knew that I was picking. They knew why I was picking." Although, Basil admited that could change. "That's always feels a little thin underneath you because I know that could turn." Basil worked to make sure teachers felt they were a part of the process. He created the agenda, but all teachers had input. Basil said that he always asked, "What else needs to be on there? What do we need, so that they're not being dictated the agenda? I'm not the sole gatekeeper." Shared leadership was important to Basil.

Basil talked about using transformational leadership to help teachers improve. He said, "You know, as a leader, I always grapple with how best to influence adults. You know because we have people telling us, oh, it's through evaluation process. I don't think so." Teacher efficacy was important to Basil's work. He said, "My job was to get some

success and build on that and celebrate that, so they could really feel it and know, wow, that's true. I can make a difference even with these kids." He felt strongly about the abilities of the staff from the beginning. Basil said, "What I had to do is get them to think about and do their jobs differently. Because everything we had in place already. We haven't gone out and bought a lot of stuff." Basil also understood that it was important that teachers were proud of their work and was accepting of giving credit to the teachers for the work. He said:

> You know another thing that I feel really good about is, the honest to God truth is, and this sounds very immodest, if I hadn't come and done these things, this school would not have progressed, but the teacher answer would be we did this. That's good. That's the way you want it.

Basil asked for input from the staff which Hyacinth and Gardenia appreciated.

Hyacinth said, "One of Basil's big strong assets that he brings is he's built the BLT leadership team, so he really does look for the input of the staff. It's not just him deciding." Hyacinth also felt that Basil used the input he got from the staff, even when he had to actually make the decision. She said, "We know that he makes the decisions when he needs to make the decisions, but he's really good about coming to the staff and really making sure that everybody has that input." Gardenia felt that the teacher efficacy that Basil built would be important to keeping the school on track after he left at the end of the school year. She said, "And that's what he wanted, to make sure the staff was ready, that they could continue the work even when he's gone. It's not about him." Both Hyacinth and Gardenia expressed some apprehension at having a new principal but felt confident that the gains they had made would continue after Basil's departure.

At March Elementary School, there was a BLT in place when Emily arrived, but it was not functioning well. The leadership team had been hand-picked by the previous

principal. Contrary to Basil's decision to select the members and not have an open invitation, the situation at MES required Emily to make the leadership team more open to all staff. Emily said, "I realized that they didn't represent every grade level, and I really wanted to get grade level representation and just make sure I had that from all over the building." Emily did not want to hand-pick members for the team, so she continued to encourage teachers from all grade levels to participate. "The next year I said, 'Here's an invitation guys. If you want to do this, this is what we do.' So, I got a few more. And so, every year it's just gotten better." Emily described the importance of having every grade level represented in the following, "With my leadership team, every grade level is represented, so I know that if I can get them on board, that they'll get their team on board." Having all grades and specialists represented created a sense of equity.

Betty, who represented the third grade said, "We share the roles pretty equally when we come and sit down about things that need to be worked on in our school. We all listen to each other, and someone is always stepping up to be that leader." Betty also agreed that everyone had opportunity for leadership. She said, "It's been very rewarding to see every single teacher take on some kind of leadership role." She also said, "Emily always gives us the opportunity to be a leader." Alice also mentioned how Emily stressed the importance of teacher leadership. "She always gives us the opportunity to be a leader," Alice said. She went on to add, "We, as a team, decide if that's something we want to do. It's kind of us all leading together and deciding on things for the school, and then we present it to our teachers." Francesca said, "We're a team. No one knows more than someone else. Whether you've been here a year or 20 years, we all have something to offer. She's always just really made it known that there's nobody better than anyone

else." By keeping the BLT open to anyone who wanted to attend, teachers had the opportunity to have their voices heard in the decision-making process which was important to building efficacy among the staff.

Because the staff had not been closely managed in the past and was not required to work together, Emily utilized the opportunity for input to help get buy-in from everyone. She said, "A lot of people were telling me the way things should be. My answer was, 'Well, we have our Building Leadership Team. Come join us. I'd love to hear what you have to say. We're working as a team.'" Emily reported that one of the resistant teachers attended one meeting but did not come again. Colleen referred to the group of teachers who were resistant to change as the "freedom fighters" which will be discussed further under management and resources.

Eventually the staff did come together as a team. Alice described teacher efficacy as a factor in student achievement. She said, "I think that's where we made a lot of our gains. It's because, as a whole school, we all can come together to improve our student achievement." Emily described the sense of family and working together in the following:

> As a staff--as a leadership team first, and then as a whole staff, we really tried to get the buy-in from different people. And I think that created like, were all here, we're all on the same team and we're all going to move forward and do what's best for kids.

Francesca also echoed the feeling of togetherness by saying, "I really feel like it was never about her and her [Emily] being like, 'I'm principal. This is how it is.' I think it was always a team effort."

The strength of the team or family feeling among the March Elementary School teachers was further exemplified by a school district-wide teacher strike. Most of the

teachers went on strike, some did not, and some were more vocal about their feelings than others. Colleen described how the staff decided to deal with the differing opinions:

> We only had two not go on strike. So, we discussed it on the strike line that, when this was over, that we are still family and we don't know private issues on why they decided not to go. So, we have just continued the same way that we always have.

Colleen, who had been a teacher in the school district for 16 years, also described how the experience at March Elementary was different from other schools. She said:

> I had friends in the district that half the school went and half the school didn't. And they are still having issues. One of my friends was written up because she won't smile at anybody and she's like, "I think I'm the same," but the people who didn't go are the ones that-- they turned their back on her and--so, it's been hard.

All of the teachers who were interviewed described the feeling of family and the trust in their leader during the strike. There were differing opinions within the staff. "Some of us didn't see the point in doing that [a sick out] when we're getting ready to go on strike anyway," Donna said. "There was a meeting where it seemed like it kind of put a rift in things and there was strong personalities coming out. But it felt like we recovered pretty quickly from it."

The strike also strengthened the staff's respect for their principal. Colleen said, "Emily was fabulous. We went to her before and talked to her. She's like, 'I'm not really supposed to talk to you about this.' We said, 'We want you to know it's not personal.' She said she completely understood." Alice, Donna, Francesca, and Colleen all discussed how supportive Emily was even though she represented management in the dispute. Colleen explained that the union asked teachers to start their picket each day in front of the school and that every morning Emily would yell, "Good luck!" and "I miss you guys!" from her office window. Colleen also described the way in which the staff

respected one another and their principal during the school district-wide teacher strike by saying, “It was just more proof of what a strong family we are.”

Management and Resources/Managerial Leadership

The appropriate management of funding, human resources, time, and communication have all been important to the success of any school (Colorado Department of Education, 2015b; Hallinger, 1992; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). At both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary, the staff described the principals’ ability to marshal monetary resources, take on human resource issues, be creative with scheduling, and communicate clearly as part of the schools’ success. Budget, human resource management, scheduling, and communication came up in several ways throughout the interviews.

Funding. Both schools have received Title I federal funding, as well as additional resources from the Colorado Department of Education as part of the Turnaround Network within the state. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Programs, Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (2015b):

> Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended (ESEA) provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. (p. 1)

These funds were used in Garden Hill and March Elementary Schools to fund intervention programming. The Turnaround Network funding was used at March Elementary to fund ANET and instructional coaches within the school. Basil used the Turnaround Network Grant money to pay teachers for putting in time out of contract and for substitute teachers to provide release time to staff. Emily also used Turnaround

Network funding to create time for teachers to collaborate. She said, "I also used some of that money for substitutes for like, the data days and things that we did, or if we wanted to do some walkthroughs with different teachers." While Title I funding was predicated on demographics, which could fluctuate but has been mostly steady at both schools, the Turnaround Network funding was removed once the school was rated as a Performance School. Emily admitted it would be hard to provide some things moving forward as the support from the Turnaround Network was no longer available. Garden Hill Elementary was located in a wealthier school district than March Elementary, so the overall operating budget was higher than March Elementary School.

Basil did not think that allocation of monetary resources was as much of an issue at his school, although Garden Hill was in a much wealthier school district than that of March Elementary. He said, "Getting resources has never been--I wouldn't put that on my challenge list." However, Basil said that creating time for teachers to have professional learning, collaboration, and work on data analysis was difficult. He said, "We would build in workdays and pay teacher time with our Title I budget or a CDE Turnaround Network grant that we have, because they do not have enough time in the day to do this work." The teachers at Garden Hill were complimentary of Basil's ability to allocate resources. Hyacinth said, "Making sure that when he comes to us, he's asking, 'What do you guys need?' It's constantly, 'What can I do to support you?' He's just really good about pulling in what resources we need."

The teachers interviewed at March Elementary felt that resources were important to their turnaround process and were respectful of Emily's allocation skills. Donna described the lack of money in the school district. She said, "Resources are hard. As a

district, that is our biggest struggle. We have very high expectations that we have to meet, but our resources don't always support that." Alice said of Emily, "She's pretty good about moving the money around. If she can't get the money, we raise the money." At March Elementary, Emily instituted "Casual Pass Fridays" so that students could pay to not wear uniforms and teachers paid to dress casually. This program successfully raised money for Chromebook carts in classrooms, field trips, and supplies. Betty said, "She pretty much always makes a way. I don't remember any time where I went to her, and she just said we didn't have it. She found a way." Collen agreed saying, "She's never turned me down for anything." However, making up for the loss of Turnaround funds to pay for instructional coaches and interventionists has been much more difficult. These positions were eliminated or significantly pared down during the current school year.

Human resources. Another type of management that emerged as a theme at both schools was human resources management. Branch et al. (2013) wrote that ineffective teachers tended to leave when a more effective leader was hired. At both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary, there was a great deal of turnover after the first year that the new principals arrived. Teachers at both schools described there being a group of teachers who were resistant.

At Garden Hill Elementary, Basil said that he knew he would have to start the change process quickly and understood that not everyone would be on board. He said, "I thought, 'I'm really going to have to go in there and push,' and I knew that was going to make some people mad." Basil described how good teaching had previously been seen by explaining that, "Teachers were defined as good teachers if parents liked them and they got along and everybody else liked them. Data really wasn't a player. Student

achievement didn't figure into that definition of good." He used data to illustrate the need for improvement to teachers whose students were not performing well. He said, "I don't tell them how to teach. I tell them let's look at the data at the end of the unit, and if that is not good, then, you better teach differently somehow." Because Basil was pushing teachers to improve, he was somewhat concerned that the resistant teachers might utilize their union representation to push back.

Anticipating that the teachers' union might become involved, Basil approached his superiors. He said:

> In a district with a strong union presence like this, I needed to feel like someone had my back. I went to my superiors and said, "I'm going to have to push here. I'll do it with every bit of diplomacy and skill that I have and I think that's pretty good, but some people are going to get torched off and you're going to hear about it.

Basil did not receive the support from the school district management that he had hoped. He said, "I was actually told, 'I don't think you have to push. I don't think you have to push in both practice and culture.'" At this point, Basil stopped the interview to make sure that his real name would not be used. Then he continued, "In fact, I did it anyway, but it was a little tenuous. I'm not sure had they [the teachers] really fussed, I don't think I was protected." School board minutes indicated that six teachers resigned, were non-renewed, or retired in the first year of Basil's administration. There were no grievances filed against him.

The tension was no secret among the staff. Hyacinth described what it felt like, "It was creating some really hard emotions going on where people were getting really stressed and feeling the pressure." Gardenia described staff members as holding one another accountable by having difficult conversations with one another. "So, we really

took a hard look at ourselves and had some really hard conversations just within the staff." Hyacinth added, "The hard conversations that we had with each other, they were led by us." Hyacinth and Gardenia both felt proud that the majority of the teachers wanted to make changes and improve the school. In their view, it was not Basil who forced teachers out, but teachers who held their colleagues accountable. Hyacinth also said, "We called out the people on the staff that we felt were not dedicated." The resistant teachers did not feel a sense of power and those who were not on board either changed or left. Basil reported feeling pleasantly surprised at how the teachers held one another accountable. He said, "When I started the backstory from a lot of the legitimately well-regarded, good teachers was, we have these three staff members, we just don't think there in it like we are, and they're not performing." The support of the core group of teachers provided Basil with the backing he needed to coach these teachers out of the school without pushback from the teachers' union.

The interview subjects at March Elementary School talked similarly about a group of teachers who were resistant to change. Their tone and demeanor suggested that they supported the change and found positive benefits from the turnover. Betty described the turnover at the beginning of Emily's tenure at March Elementary. She said:

> I think it was just because, when someone comes in and they're new, and they have different ideas than you, and you've been here for a while, I think older teachers are kind of set in their ways, and they don't like change. And so, I think that was hard for them to adjust to someone who maybe had different ways than them that they had been used to.

Colleen's description of the turnover was slightly more direct. She said, "We had a lot of staff change. The freedom fighters, I'm going to call them, wanted the freedom to do what they wanted ended up leaving the school." She also said, "Teachers that have not

been on the same page have not lasted." Francesca suggested a reason for the turnover. She explained, "I think she [Emily] had to be so strict and so regimented that it rubbed some people wrong. But I think that's why she moved the school in the way she did because she was so strict."

Francesca also equated being strict with high expectations. She did not indicate that this was a negative attribute but that it was necessary for the improvement process. She said of Emily:

> She has very high expectations for people. Lots of our staff did not like that. They wanted to continue to do the things that they've always done, in the way they've always done them. And bless her heart, she had a lot of people that didn't like her.

None of the teachers interviewed at MES suggested that Emily was unfair in any of her practices but that she did have high expectations and held everyone accountable.

Emily was somewhat surprised by the resistance and staff turnover at the start of her principalship. She said, "I had talked to some teachers privately during their evaluations--just like, 'You know, this may not be the best place for you. If you don't believe it is, then I respect that.' I had that conversation, and I guess I didn't expect that many to jump ship." Emily went on to describe the staff who were resistant. She said, "Well, there were several strong personalities at the time. There were lots of, how would I say this? Lots of people telling me the way it should be and the way they've done it." Emily described how she would address the resistant teachers:

> My question was always, "But is this what's best for kids?" A lot of times they couldn't answer me. And so, I said, "Well, let's talk about this." You know, I said, "It's not a gotcha, but let's talk about this because we do what's best for kids here." I tried to deal with it that way.

While Emily hoped the focus on students would pacify some of the resistors among the staff, she was not naive enough to think she would not be challenged.

Emily said that she was regularly challenged by the teachers' union during her first years. She said, "There were lots of incidences where the union was called, and they accused me of not obeying the contract or not following the contract. I had that book in my hand all the time." Several teachers did try to file grievances against Emily. She recalled, "They tried to grieve me for different things. And I'd say, 'Look, it says right here. . . .' I'd go through HR and so, I never had an official grievance." Emily felt supported by the school district level management, but she also said that knowing the contract and following it was important. She said, "Lots of trying to get the grievance –to push that. But really I followed that contract and just made sure I was doing what I was supposed to be doing." Emily did not describe feeling that her work was limited in any way by the teachers' contract, but she did need to be cognizant of the language of the master agreement. The school board in March Elementary School's district discussed personnel matters in their executive session and did not make those minutes public, so it was not possible to know exactly how many teachers resigned, were non-renewed, or retired.

The teachers at March Elementary who were interviewed saw the turnover as a positive for the school in that it allowed them to create a team of like-minded individuals. Alice said, "I've been on every interview and committee, and that's what we're looking for: Somebody that has the same beliefs and same outcome for students." Betty described the kind of teachers that interview committees at MES looked for, "Very positive and upbeat. Someone who is a hard worker. Someone who isn't timid. Someone who's open to learning." She went on to describe looking for candidates who did not have their own set way of teaching. Betty said, "Some teachers, they like what they've been doing for a

while, and when you come into a different school, there's different expectations and different things that we do. So, I think just being open to new experiences." Emily and Francesca both referenced the importance of having the right people in the right positions or the right people on the bus (Collins, 2001).

Francesca said, "The last two years, maybe two and a half years, we have the right people on the bus. And that's when we really seen the big improvement." In reference to the teachers who were resistant to change, she said, "I think that's why a lot of people left. And good because you have to have the right people, who work in that same kind of way or at least respect that way that your leader is." Emily also mentioned having teachers who were the right fit. She said, "You know you just have to get the right people on the bus." Emily went on to describe what she and the interview committee members looked for in candidates. She said:

> Is this person a team player? A teacher can teach, they know their content. That's great. But you have to always want to do what's best for kids, and always be a team player and get in there and be very collaborative. So, we were very strategic about picking the right people to get on the bus.

Alice said, "I think that's a lot of it, too, is the hiring." Betty, Collen, and Alice all agreed that intentional hiring has been important to the improvement at MES.

Scheduling. Principals must manage the schedule and utilizing the available time to provide the most opportunity for students and staff. Not having enough time for learning, teaching, data analysis, PLC, and collaboration was a theme at both schools. All of the teachers interviewed addressed how their principals worked to creatively schedule to provide more time. Both principals mentioned scheduling and creating more time for teachers as an important aspect of their work.

At Garden Hill Elementary, Hyacinth and Gardenia mentioned having intervention time and time to meet with their PLCs as important to the school's success. Gardenia said, "We meet once a week and it was actually built into our schedule." Hyacinth and Gardenia described how Basil created an intervention block and how the schedule increased the time that students were in specials classes like art and physical education to allow teachers more time to work. Gardenia said, "Because of the importance of that kind of work, actually our kids go to a special, so we have a longer block of time to do our PLC work." Hyacinth agreed that this was valuable time in which to do the planning and analysis they needed to help improve student achievement.

Basil also saw this as time well spent. He said, "If they asked me for time, I try to make sure [they get it]. Like we would build in work days and pay teacher time with our Title I budget or a CDE turnaround network grant that we have because they do not have enough time in the day to do this work well." Basil also pointed out the importance of the intervention block. He said, "When I came here, they had already redone their schedule, so that they had a hole there for reading intervention block." But at that time, there was no program being utilized in that period, so Basil introduced a school-wide reading intervention that he had used at his previous school.

The teachers and principal at March Elementary School also felt that time was an important resource that needed to be carefully cultivated. Francesca said:

> The biggest thing that gets in the way, of course, is time, which we have no control over. There's never enough time. It feels like we don't have enough time to train. We don't have enough time for PD. We don't have enough time to plan.

Emily echoed the sentiment saying, "I think that's education in general. We currently just have 40 minutes per week of PLC time, and that's really not enough to do what we have

to do." Francesca also mentioned how teaches could be resistant to changes in the schedule. She said, "'This is how we've always done the schedule.' Well, we're not here to serve your needs. The schedule is here to serve our students. And that's hard. And we still have one staff member that struggles with that." Emily agreed that being creative with the schedule could be hard for some teachers to adjust to, but it was necessary for creating time in which to get everything done.

Emily also talked about ways that she had been creative in making more time for teachers to do their work outside the classroom. She said, "I've utilized subs. Like I said, and we have our quarterly data meetings, we'll get subs and we'll sub out for a half day to look at that data." She added that time was not built into the system and she felt that was an issue the school district as a whole needed to examine. She said, "And so, we're constantly having to look it schedules and thinking outside of the box." Although the school district did have an early release for students that allowed for staff development time, it still was not enough.

Communication. The final theme that emerged in the management area was communication. Teachers and principals at both schools mentioned clear and frequent communication as having positively impacted the improvement process. At Garden Hill Elementary, Basil described trying to put more into staff communication than just logistics and notifications. He said, "I do a weekly communication piece and I try to put in encouragement and research and please, read this article, and here's a PLC nugget, and if you're not doing this, please consider it." Hyacinth and Gardenia also mentioned the amount of research that Basil looked at and the importance of the information he passed on.

At March Elementary, all of the teachers spoke to the importance of communication in their success. Colleen said, "We have a lot of communication through email, text messaging, she does a call every weekend telling us what's up for the week." Betty and Donna both said that Emily was a great communicator and that communication was a strength of their principal that had contributed to their improvement. Alice said, "She puts all the information out, she sends emails every day about what she expects, what are we supposed to look like. She has good communication." Francesca pointed out that this was a change from the previous administration. She said, "In the beginning people were annoyed because she communicates so much, like emails and announcements and phone calls." Francesca felt, however, that, once the staff got used to the increased communication, the substance of Emily's messages helped to move the staff forward. She said, "Every week, she communicates, and it's not fake, it's real. And she's very specific. She means it in a very genuine way. It's not just to say the words." The staff also gave examples of other ways in which Emily used communication such as bulletin boards with positive messages, a board where staff could leave encouraging notes for one another, and signs around the school with the vision and expectations.

Answering the Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Q1 What do principals perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

Q2 What do teachers perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

Q3 How was the role of the principal important to this academic turnaround process?

Answer to Research Question 1

Q1 What do principals perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

When they were hired, Emily and Basil both had distinct ideas about how they would go about improving the schools, but each admitted there were some unforeseen issues and surprises along the way. Their perceptions about what created change in their schools was different upon reflection than it was at the beginning of their tenures. Both Basil and Emily stated in their interviews that they had not intended to make huge changes in their first year, but they knew that the schools were on the Accountability Clock, so change needed to happen quickly.

Coming into his position, Basil's top foci were using data as a driver, as well as initiating an all-school reading intervention program that he had used previously. The schedule already had a built-in intervention block, so Basil introduced the intervention program and supported it with resources including interventionists at every grade level to provide small group, specifically targeted instruction. Just as Basil had anticipated, the interventions were successful. He said, "We saw significant changes right away." However, Basil did not anticipate the pushback he got from some teachers. He said for some teachers it was a hard sell initially because they were not used to using data. He said, "It was read data-driven, and got away from a teacher gut thing." Basil said he was surprised that some teachers preferred to rely on their instincts rather than numbers, so he also wanted to get the PLC work moving. He found, however, that the process was not as straightforward as he imagined.

As a first-year principal when Emily arrived at March Elementary School, she also thought her focus would be on instructional leadership. She quickly discovered that there were things that had to be in place first before she could focus on instruction. She described feeling frustrated at first. She said, "You go to school to be a principal, and they all talk about all the books and everything instructionally--you're an instructional leader, you're not a manager." But Emily found she needed to focus on the culture and to be a manager. She said, "The overall attitude of teachers was we do what's best for adults, not for kids." Emily described the school that she had come from as very close knit. She said, "I'd come from a cult; a place where the culture was great. We all worked as a team. And then it clearly wasn't that way here." Emily tried to be respectful of the history and traditions at the school but knew she had to make significant changes.

Basil knew that, before the PLC work could begin, he needed to create a mission and vision with the staff. He said, "An initial and important step in doing PLC work well is to make sure your vision is clear and compelling." He was surprised that this work took longer than he hoped but found it was well-worth the effort. Basil involved the entire staff in creating the vision statement and, although it took a long time, he said, "I think it was worth it to put in all the time and effort because now it's a filter through which we can have our conversations, we can make decision, we can hire." Once the vision was in place, Basil could successfully establish PLCs.

One of Emily's first changes was to establish the BLT with representation from all stakeholders. She said, "I think that created like, we're all here, we're all on the same team and we're all going to move forward and do what's best for kids." Emily credited the work of the BLT with advancing the changes at March Elementary by shifting culture

and creating a vision. Emily used the BLT to create the vision statement as part of the work of creating their UIP. The leadership group sat the goals and expectations for the school and also wrote the CHAMPIONS vision statement. Emily perceived this as using strategic and cultural leadership to create a common vision and bolster the sense of teamwork. She did not necessarily perceive this as transformational leadership creating teacher efficacy; however, a strong sense of teacher efficacy was an outcome.

In addition to helping teachers to understand the importance of data and how to analyze it, Basil credited the PLCs with building a sense of team among staff. He said, "I think one of the critical things I did, as we focused, is we're going to be a PLC." Basil sent all of his staff members to PLC trainings and made sure that there was a focus on teaching children in poverty. He saw the impact of the PLC work on instruction but also on the culture of the building. Basil said that, while creating the reading intervention system showed immediate results, creating the vision in order to get teachers focused on data and working together created long lasting results. He said, "And that, in hindsight, was a big part of changing the culture." Basil came into the position thinking that instructional leadership would make the most significant change but found that strategic and cultural leadership was just as important and that all three were interrelated.

Creating a sense of family was a goal for Emily and she credited the way in which the staff in turn worked as a team with improving the school. She said, "I want to say that was our goal. To become a family. I think that is where we're at this time." Emily spoke at length about making sure that her staff knew how much she cared about them both personally and professionally. She also perceived that having common goals had moved the school forward. She said, "We always look at our goals for the year. And so

that's--everything is driven around that." Emily was pleased that once she felt the staff had been successful at creating a sense of teamwork and common goals, she was able to focus on instructional leadership by coaching teachers on lesson planning, providing feedback, and modeling instruction. She said, "I'm modeling the way I want to see it taught in the classroom." But she admitted that the vision and sense of family had to be in place before she could focus on being an instructional leader which she clearly enjoyed the most.

Basil saw teacher efficacy as important, especially in light of his departure from the school. He said, "They won't worry too much when I leave because they'll think, 'Oh, I can do this. I got it.'" Overall, Basil perceived the intervention program, vision statement, PLCs, and cultural shifts as the most important factors in the school improvement process at Garden Hill Elementary. He believed that his leadership, which resulted in teacher efficacy, would cement the change firmly in place.

Emily felt that the sense of family that has been built at March Elementary would keep the school in Performance Status after she left. She said, "It's hard to leave family, but I know that we're such a strong unit that it's not over." Emily was most proud of her strategic, instructional, and cultural leadership. She felt that she had put systems in place that would carry on with the new principal. She also felt that, because the staff had done so much of the work through the BLT, they would help guide the new principal and keep the school on track. Emily did not speak directly to teacher efficacy, as Basil did, but what she described certainly fit with transformational leadership. Emily's teachers certainly felt that the sense of efficacy she instilled in them was a part of the school's improvement. While both Basil and Emily were proud of their accomplishments and

perceived their leadership as a component in the school improvement process, they both gave most of the credit to the work of their teachers.

Answer to Research Question 2

> Q2 What do teachers perceive as the reasons why the schools where they work were able to move from the Priority Improvement or Turnaround designation to the Improvement or Performance designation?

The teachers who were interviewed at both schools identified instructional changes, refining vision, and cultural shifts as important to the improvement process. Without necessarily naming it, teachers at both schools also discussed teacher efficacy. All of the teachers praised their principal and credited their leadership with bringing about improvement. The perceptions of teachers from within the classroom was in alignment with the perceptions of the principals in terms of what pieces of work were important.

At Garden Hill Elementary School, Gardenia and Hyacinth talked at length about the importance of the reading intervention program and PLCs to the improvement process. They were knowledgeable about formative assessment and data-driven instruction. They felt that the conferences and professional learning they had received was extremely helpful. They also thought that Basil was well-versed in the programs and procedures they followed and respected his understanding of their work. They respected Basil's experience with the reading intervention program and his knowledge of instruction and leadership. Hyacinth said, "He doesn't just implement something. He's done tons of research. He has looked into it. He has talked to everyone body. He knows what it takes." They both said that Basil made sure teachers had the professional development they needed to feel confident about their work.

At March Elementary School, the teachers discussed the instructional systems such as lesson planning, observation and feedback cycles, data driven instruction, and formative assessment. Their work with ANET was important to the school improvement. All of the teachers who were interviewed described the expectations for lesson plans at length but did not necessarily connect it with school improvement. They credited the professional learning such as the TLAC and PLC trainings with making them better teachers and leading to school improvement. They also felt it was important for new staff to be properly trained. The most prominent reason for school improvement, which was cited by every teacher interviewed, was the shift in culture.

Each of the teachers at March Elementary used the term "family" when talking about the staff and most of them credited Emily's leadership for creating that sense of connectedness and collaboration. All of the teachers, including Betty and Donna who had not worked at March Elementary before Emily became the principal, talked about how divided the staff had been in the past and what a strong team they were now. Betty said, "It's just a big relationship that we have with everyone now. It is so cool to see that grow and blossom into what it is now, and I think a lot of it is because of her." They all described how Emily went out of her way to get to know them and to support them both personally and professionally and pointed to the changes in culture as important to the school's improvement.

Each of the teachers also discussed teacher efficacy, although they did not use that term. Instead, they described how empowered they felt by Emily and how confident they felt in their skills. Alice, Betty, Colleen, and Francesca all discussed the BLT and how Emily guided the decision-making process, but generally it was the teachers who actually

made the decisions. Francesca, in particular, discussed the role of the BLT in determining the vision for the school and creating the UIP and school goals. In one part of the interview, Colleen questioned whether it was really Emily's leadership that brought about the change or whether it was the work of the teachers. She said, "I don't know if it's all Emily or it's all of us stepping in." However, later in the interview, Colleen discussed Emily's ability to bring everyone together around a common goal. She said, "If she didn't have that skill, we would still all be scattered." It seemed that, as Basil mentioned, when asked sometimes teachers think, they did all the work themselves and that was an acceptable response since good leaders wanted their staff to feel empowered.

Answer to Research Question 3

Q3 How was the role of the principal important to this academic turnaround process?

The clearest indication that the role of the principal was important to the turnaround process could be seen in the teacher behaviors that changed from one administration to the next. While there was significant turnover at both schools, the teachers pointed out systems, strategy, and culture that were the result of leadership actions and changes in teacher behavior. While the staff at Garden Hill did not understand that they were a failing school prior to Basil's arrival, the staff at March Elementary knew they were a failing school but were unable to turn themselves around without Emily's leadership. At Garden Hill, once the staff understood the data, they still needed direction in creating a common vision, putting intervention systems in place, and changing the culture and expectations.

The role of the principal was important to the turnaround process in that they act as a director or guide for the organization and the people in it. Just as a captain of a ship

would be ultimately responsible for safely and effectively navigating the vessel to its final destination, the principal was ultimately responsible for all of the functions of the school in order for students to be successful. In the two Turnaround schools in this study, the principal's strategic, cultural, instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership skills contributed to the positive change. In particular, creating a common vision, creating a positive culture, and providing instructional systems were the most important aspects. Practicing transformational leadership, which led to teacher efficacy, as well as managerial leadership to marshal budgetary resources, time, and human resources played an important role.

Principals would serve the school in ways that teachers were sometimes unable. It would be the principal's responsibility to provide human resource leadership by guiding unproductive teachers out of the organization. The teachers in the study spoke to holding one another accountable, but ultimately it was up to the principals to make the personnel decisions to non-renew or terminate a teacher or to help teachers make the decision to resign or retire. Leaders also have had the responsibility to build consensus around a common vision and to steer the organization toward that vision. If every teacher was navigating their own path there would be no "collective commitment" (Brown et al., 2012, p.4). At both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary Schools, the creation of a common vision and the shift in culture toward achieving that vision were essential to the improvement.

Finally, teacher efficacy could not exist without a leader who empowered teachers and helped them to believe in themselves. Both Emily and Basil felt that there were numerous highly talented teachers on their staff before they arrived; they utilized

intentional hiring practices to replace the teachers who were not effective and provided the training and resources so that their staffs were able to recognize their own talents. The role of the principal in the improvement process, therefore, was to be in charge of all of the different aspects of the change process, to make command decisions when necessary, to empower the staff to believe in themselves, and to enable teachers to be as effective as they possible could through the utilization of all available resources.

Conclusion

This study was developed to better understand how previously failing schools improved and to specifically examine the role of the principal in that process. The research process provided a look inside two schools to determine what fueled the improvement process. Through the interviews, five themes emerged which were similar to the Colorado State Model Evaluation System Rubric for principals. These themes are compared with the literature in Chapter V.

Teachers and principals at both schools were able to clearly articulate the process and to provide their perceptions as to the reasons why the improvement was possible. The contributions of the teachers and principals through their interviews provided answers to the research questions. Additional documents, such as UIPs, school board minutes, and news articles, also supported the findings. The implications of these findings are explored further in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After carefully examining the findings from the data, there were two findings. The first, and more important finding, was that culture, climate, mission, and vision, were of the upmost importance in creating lasting change. Before instructional change could be addressed, the culture and climate, for both staff and students, needed be addressed so that there was a positive and supportive environment for teaching and learning. In addition, the staff and students must understand and accept the mission and vision. Everyone in the school community would need to know where they were heading and be willing to support one another in getting there.

The second finding was that improvement at both schools was closely tied to five themes. The themes that were found in the data illustrated the change process and highlighted the leadership skills and actions of the principals who led that process. Strategic planning and leadership, cultural leadership, instructional leadership, teacher efficacy, and resource management were evident at both Garden Hill Elementary School (GHES) and March Elementary School (MES). In this chapter, the study's findings are connected with the supporting literature and the implications of these findings, including recommendations for leaders and recommendations for future research will be shared.

Connections to the Literature

The literature related to the five themes found in the data supports effective leadership, especially in Turnaround Schools. As I reviewed the literature, I also found it

interesting how the literature on accountability related to the findings and to the conditions of the school culture and climate. In addition, I was looking for areas in which the data did not align with the literature. The area in which the schools and school districts that participated in the study did not align with the literature was in that they did not attempt any of the more popular solutions for improving failing schools, such as creating a charter school, buying into program or model schools, focusing on teacher evaluation (although both schools did focus on feedback to improve teaching), or trying to replicate international benchmarking. Each of the school leaders did, however, rely on the effective leadership practices outlined in the literature.

Accountability

The literature provided by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) surrounding the improvement planning and strategies for improvement was evident at both schools. According to the CDE (2016e), the Unified Improvement Plans (UIP) must demonstrate an understanding of the magnitude of the issues at hand and acknowledge that significant changes need to be made. The UIPs at both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary showed that the need for change and magnitude of the issues was apparent. Emily and several of the teachers at March Elementary School mentioned the amount of time and effort that was put into the UIPs and what a guiding force the document was for their work. At Garden Hill Elementary, the staff was unaware of the magnitude of the issues facing them until Basil used the accountability data provided by the state to illustrate just how dire their situation really was and then used the UIP to layout their plan for improvement.

Both schools also utilized the supports described in the CDE literature. Schools in Turnaround Status were required to choose one of seven different strategies, which included partnership, reorganization, hiring an outside entity to operate the school, or converting to a charter school (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). The boards of education in both school districts where Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary were located both chose to employ a partnership with Achievement Network to use research-based strategies to improve instruction and student achievement. Both schools also worked with members of the Turnaround Support Managers team to analyze data, diagnose challenges, and organize resources and services (Colorado Department of Education, 2016e). The steps set forth by the CDE, some of which were required and some of which were elective, provided significant support for the improvement process at both of the schools included in this study.

The Role of the Principal

Leadership practices that have been found to impact student achievement included: mission and vision, monitoring school progress, instructional focus, high expectations for students, and professional learning (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Each of these practices was present at both research sites. Teachers and principals at both schools included in the case study emphasized the importance of the school vision, progress monitoring, high expectations for students, and professional learning. McREL also added school culture, resource management, communication, affirmation, and situational awareness to the list of important leadership responsibilities (Marzano et al., 2003). Again, each of these items was apparent in the data. These attributes were also evident in the Colorado State Model Evaluation System for principals, as well as the

National Policy Board for Educational Administration's (2015) evaluation for principals. The five themes that emerged from the data were closely aligned with the Colorado State Model Evaluation System rubric for principals.

Leadership and Achievement

The connection between effective school leadership and student achievement has been repeatedly illustrated (Branch et al., 2013; Delaney, 1997; Fullan, 2014; Gawerecki, 2003; Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Louis et al., 2010; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Branch et al. (2013) found that the impact of effective principals on the achievement of students in one year was between 2 and 7 months. For principals who were tasked with moving a school from Turnaround Status to Performance Status, that amount of additional achievement was essential. Both schools were nearing the end of their time on the accountability clock when Basil and Emily were hired. It was imperative that they raised achievement by more than one year's growth in one year's time in order to save the school from being closed or reorganized. Nettles and Herrington (2007) and DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) also wrote about the importance of leadership to improved achievement and that because the principal was at the root of school improvement, without strong leaders school improvement was not possible. At both Garden Hill Elementary and March Elementary, the change in leadership was what brought about the change. The staff on their own was not able to make the changes necessary to bring about the improvement they needed.

Leadership in Turnaround Schools

The leadership that would be necessary to improve a failing school would be somewhat different from effective leadership under other circumstances. When a school

was found to be failing, it could be devastating to the culture of the school (Ediger, 2004; Mintrop, 2002; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Wakelyn, 2011). Failing schools were often plagued by ineffective teachers, demographics that included high levels of poverty, more minority students, and higher levels of disciplinary issues (Brown, 2016). These conditions existed to some extent in both Garden Hill and March Elementary Schools. Both Basil and Emily had to address personnel issues, changing teacher mindsets about students who lived in poverty or were minorities, and setting high expectations for students. They had to decide the vision and direction for the school, improve the culture, and implement professional learning, all of which Weiner (2016) described as tasks specific to improving a failing school. Chenoweth (2007) wrote that high expectations, data analysis, leveraging resources, and creating a positive and productive school culture were all essential to the turnaround process. The interview data, as well as the UIPs, School Performance Frameworks (SPF) for both Garden Hill and March Elementary Schools showed that these were all areas in which Basil and Emily lead the school in a new direction which ultimately brought the school out of Turnaround Status.

Implications

Two of the most striking implications from this study were how similar the order in which the principals thought they would address the change process compared with how it actually unfolded and how closely the themes resembled the Colorado State Model Evaluation Rubric for principals. Each of the principals who participated in the study were very different but the process they each followed, somewhat inadvertently, was similar. Both had similar expectations about how they thought would effect change and

both found that, rather than addressing instruction first, they needed to change the culture and create a vision instead.

The first implication from the study was that both principals assumed they would need to address instruction first as they began to lead the school but found instead that, in order to make lasting change, they needed to address culture and vision first. The sense of urgency to improve teaching and learning has been intense in the public-school setting. The accountability clock, the finite amount of time teachers would have with their students and the annual standardized testing in the spring of each year in Colorado, provided very real deadlines. Given these time constraints, instructional leadership might seem like the logical place to start the change process to improve student achievement, which was what both Basil and Emily first assumed. However, teacher efficacy was ranked as the most impactful influence on learning outcomes (Visible-learning.org, 2018, p. 1). A healthy culture and clear vision would be necessary supports for teacher efficacy (Donohoo, 2017). It was important for school leaders to understand that addressing instruction alone, or without the presence of a healthy culture and school vision, would not lead to lasting change and improved student achievement.

Secondly, five themes emerged from the data analysis that strongly resembled the Colorado State Model Evaluation Rubric for principals. While the themes were not perfectly aligned with the six Quality Standards included in the rubric, the leadership skills and actions demonstrated by each of the principals in the study was found throughout the rubric. The rubric was comprised of six quality standards including: strategic leadership, instructional leadership, school culture and equity leadership, human resource leadership, managerial leadership, and external development leadership. Each of

the Quality Standards were then supported by various elements. The first five Quality Standards and the supporting elements were encompassed in the five themes found in the study.

The sixth Quality Standard, external development leadership, focused primarily on family and community involvement as well as advocacy for the school to outside entities. It was not surprising that this standard was not found in the analysis of the interviews since it was not a focus of the interview process. There was evidence of family engagement and advocacy for the school with the public in the related news articles and videos, however, this was not explored in depth. The alignment of the majority of the rubric with the findings of the study supported the validity of the rubric as a measure of principal effectiveness.

Recommendations for Leaders

The intention of this study was to explore the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the school improvement process and to better understand how the role of the principal was important to this academic turnaround process. The results showed that cultural and strategic leadership, as well as teacher efficacy, need to be in place in order for changes in instructional practices to be effective. Leaders would need to think about creating a healthy culture and clearly articulate the vision of the organization so that instructional changes could take place with fidelity and would be long lasting. This may feel frustrating as instructional practices seem like the most obvious choice in making a positive impact on student achievement. However, the process of improving student achievement would not be an overnight endeavor and taking the time to create a clear vision and improving the organizational culture would be worth the time it took.

School districts should consider how to attract and retain effective principals who would be able to improve student achievement. The herculean effort that would be needed to move a school from Turnaround Status to Performance Status would not necessarily be sustainable over the long term. Both principals in this study had been in their current position for 5 years and were moving on to other jobs. Not every leader would be capable of or interested in the dedication and effort that would be necessary to implement this kind of change. Both principals questioned the support that they received from the district level. Basil did not feel he would have been supported if the teachers' union had pushed back. Emily felt supported by the district, but she also felt that she had to know the contract and stay within it or she might not have been supported. School districts should assess how to best support successful principals and how to retain quality leaders to keep them from moving elsewhere. By making the improvement and change process less stressful, it might be possible for districts to retain high quality leaders.

A recommendation for government leaders at the state level would be to examine ways in which schools that have moved from Turnaround or Priority Improvement Status to Improvement or Performance Status might continue to receive funds in order to maintain the programs, professional development opportunities, and personnel that they have come to rely on. Teachers and leaders at both schools were concerned that the loss of additional funding would have an adverse impact on student achievement. The Turnaround Network grants were largely federally funded. The state legislature should consider how to continue additional funding to schools that have shown growth as a result of additional programming and/or personnel.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to the study. A major focus of the study was on the leadership practices and behaviors of the principal. However, there are many factors that lead to school improvement (Visible-learning.org, 2018). Nowhere in the literature or supports provided by the CDE was the role of the principal directly addressed. The State of Colorado Turnaround Network provided support for district level leaders and teachers, but the building-level leadership was largely ignored. Because of my interest in and passion for the principalship, I focused my curiosity on this role. There were, however, many factors present in the complicated change process of improving student achievement of which the principal was only one aspect.

The study focused on two elementary schools in large, urban school districts. Although there was a body of literature that showed consistency in aspects of leadership that supported school improvement, it might have been possible that the specific leadership skills that contributed to improvement at Garden Hill and March Elementary Schools would not transfer to schools in smaller districts or in rural areas (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Branch et al., 2013; Chenoweth, 2007; Colorado Department of Education, 2015a; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015; Delaney, 1997; Hattie, 2009; Louis et al., 2010; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Some of the leadership practices that were successful for the schools in this study could potentially not be as successful in a secondary setting. However, it would seem that leaders in different settings could still apply leadership strategies that fit with the setting, size, and culture as necessary.

Finally, the small data set at Garden Hill Elementary School, with only two teachers participating, was a limiting factor. Although the data gathered from the teachers at Garden Hill Elementary School correlated with the data from March Elementary School as well as the UIP and SPF for Garden Hill, it would have been ideal to have more input from teachers. It might also have been helpful to have added interviews with district level personnel on their perceptions of the role of the principal in the success of the schools. However, in large, urban school districts, it might be possible that the district level personnel might not have a close enough relationship with the school-level leadership to have provided useful information about the day to day practices.

Recommendations for Further Study

It was notable that the principals at both Garden Hill Elementary School and March Elementary School would be leaving at the end of the school year. It would be interesting to monitor the progress of the schools to see if they maintained Improvement or Performance Status. It would also be interesting to monitor the turnover of the staff and to repeat the interviews in 1, 3, or 5 years to see if the culture and vision had endured.

Better understanding the role of the principal in the improvement process might also lead to additional studies on how to attract and retain good principals. It would be useful to have a better understanding of why the principals were both leaving their schools and what might have enticed them to stay. Additionally, assessing principal preparation programs to find out if principals understood all the parts of good leadership might also be useful. Exploring the new principal's understanding of cultural and strategic leadership as it then related to instructional leadership could be useful in making sure principals were well-prepared for the work ahead.

Finally, additional study into the funding provided by the State of Colorado for schools in Turnaround Status and what happens to the schools once that funding was no longer available could have important implications. Both schools received additional funding from the Turnaround Network. However, once the schools achieved Improvement or Performance Status additional funding was no longer available. Many of the programs, professional learning, and intervention and coaching positions that were part of the improvement process were funded with Turnaround Network Grants. Teachers at both school bemoaned the idea that these supports would no longer be financially viable without the additional state funding and feared student achievement would be adversely impacted. A study of the impact that losing additional funding has on schools would help government leaders at the state level to understand the importance of funding to school improvement efforts. Exploring what programs, professional development opportunities, and positions were eliminated and how that impacted student achievement in 1, three3 or 5 years might be useful information.

Reflection

As a first-time researcher, I was quite nervous about the data collection and analysis processes. I worried that I would not find clear answers to the research questions or that the themes would not be obvious. As soon as I began interviewing, I felt more confident. The information offered by the participants was easily understandable and I could see how it related to the research questions. During the data analysis, I first tried to force the information into a fewer number of themes, which I had assumed would be obvious. After having coded the interviews once, I found that the organizational structure I envisioned was not complex or comprehensive enough. Although it was frustrating, I

decided to abandon my presuppositions and start again. That was when I discovered that the information fell more neatly into five themes, which related to the Colorado State Model Evaluation Rubric for Principals. This was extremely exciting as I could see how the work would help inform supporting the work of the principal.

Another pleasant surprise was how relevant the study was to my current work as an Assistant Superintendent of Schools. Part of my work has been centered on coaching principals, and I found myself frequently thinking back to the study as I support principals in increasing student achievement. On multiple occasions, I have talked with principals about the importance of addressing culture and mission in order to make sustainable and meaningful changes in instructional practices. It felt a little shocking each time I see this study fitting in with my work. The process of completing this study has greatly reinforced my passion for educational leadership and my continued desire to help principals to be successful.

Conclusion

The practices that Basil and Emily engaged in with their schools aligned with the literature in these areas. The implications of the study, the similarities in the way in which Basil and Emily lead the improvement process and the importance of addressing culture, mission and vision before addressing instruction, and that the themes aligned with the Colorado State Model Evaluation Rubric for principals were clear. Although each school and situation was unique, recommendations for leaders, at the school, school district, and state level could be applied. Cultural and strategic leadership were of the utmost importance for principals to be effective at a turnaround school. Teacher efficacy was also of primary importance. Instructional leadership, managerial leadership, and

human resource leadership were also important pieces of the change process for improving school achievement. While it might look different in every situation, if these five areas were addressed by an effective school leader, schools could move from Turnaround Status to Performance Status in a timely fashion. There were many parts to the improvement process but, without these five leadership skills, improvement would be difficult if not impossible.

The work of turning around a failing school migt be challenging and the solutions must be tailored to the individual sites (Burnette, 2017; Murphy, 2009; Peurach & Neumerski, 2015). Teachers and administrators should reflect on what has gone wrong, take responsibility, and increase their efforts. Both Basil and Emily addressed this through rebuilding culture, creating a team atmosphere where everyone was in it together, and having a common vision and purpose. At March Elementary School, Alice acknowledged the difficulty Emily faced when she arrived saying, “I think it took a lot--changing our climate and our culture here. It was a big challenge for her.” This work was extremely hard and time consuming, but in the end, it paid off as both schools were able to move from Turnaround Status to Performance Status. Other leaders could use the lessons learned at Garden Hill and March Elementary Schools to improve their own organizations.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date and time of interview: Location of interview:

Pseudonym:

Current Position:

Years in current position:

Other positions held in this school or school district:

Years total in education:

Principals

1. How long have you been a principal?
2. What was your position before you became the principal here at this school?
3. How would you describe the culture and climate of this school when you arrived?
4. How would you describe the culture and climate of this school now?
5. Why was the school able to move from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Improvement or Performance status?
6. What is the biggest strength of the school as a whole?
7. What is the biggest challenge of the school as a whole?
8. Have those strengths and challenges changed over time?
9. Why is that?
10. What are your biggest strengths as an educational leader?
11. What are your biggest challenges as an educational leader?
12. Has your leadership style changed over the time you have been in this position?
13. Why is that?

Teachers

1. What do you teach?

2. How long have you been a teacher?

3. How long have you been a teacher at this school?

4. How many different principals have you worked with in your career?

5. How many different principals have you worked with at this school?

6. How would you describe the culture and climate of this school when the principal arrived?

7. How would you describe the culture and climate of this school now?

8. Why was the school able to move from Turnaround or Priority Improvement status to Improvement or Performance status?

9. What are the principal's biggest strengths as an educational leader?

10. What are the principal's biggest challenges as an educational leader?

APPENDIX B

FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE

FIELD NOTES

Date and Time:

Location:

Pseudonym:

Comments to Note	
Body Language	
Tone and Attitude	
Follow-up Questions	
Other Observations	

From Merriam, 2009

APPENDIX C

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

1. Type of Document

Newspaper	Letter	Memorandum
Report	Meeting Minutes	Other (Specify)

2. Unique Physical Qualities of the Document (check all that apply)

Logo, letterhead	Notations	Handwritten
Typed	Electronic	Seals
Stamps (date received)	Signatures	Other (specify)

3. Date(s) of Document:

Reference (for retrieval purposes)

4. Author or Creator of Document:

Position or Title:

5. Audience for whom the document was intended:

6. Analysis

(a) Key ideas/themes/issues identified in the document

1.

2.

3.

(b) Why was the document created? What was the purpose? What evidence supports this conclusion?

(c) What questions are left unanswered by this document?

(d) How does this document relate to other data such as interviews, other documents, or observations?

From Fitzgerald (2012, p. 303)

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

DATE:	April 18, 2018
TO:	Catherine Jarnot, M.Ed.
FROM:	University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[1177899-1] A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS: THE ROAD TO IMPROVEMENT AND THE PRINCPALS WHO LED THE WAY
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:	April 18, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE:	April 18, 2022

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Thank you for your patience with UNC IRB. Your application materials and protocols are verified/ approved exempt. You may begin participant recruitment and data collection.

Best wishes with this study.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORMS

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
(District)

Research Study Title:	A Tale of Two Schools: The Road to Improvement and the Principals Who Led the Way
Researcher:	Catherine M. Jarnot (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Research Advisor:	Spencer Weiler, Ph.D. (970) 351-1016 spencer.weiler@unco.edu

I am a graduate student at The University of Northern Colorado conducting research on the leadership skills and behaviors of principals who have led a school that moved from Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status to Improvement or Performance Status. The _____ school in your district meets this criteria and I would like permission to speak with the principal there about being part of this research study. Participation in the study is strictly voluntary.

This study will document experiences with the change and improvement process. If I am granted permission to research in your district, I will conduct 30-60 minute interviews with the principal of the school as well as any teachers who were a part of the improvement process. The interviews will take place between April 1, 2018 and June 30, 2018. I will also be examining documents such as Unified Improvement Plans (UIPs), school based strategic plans, and achievement data.

Every attempt will be made to maximize confidentiality. The names of the schools and participants, as well as any other links to the district, school, or personal identity of the participants will not be used in the study. All comments and answers will be recorded and transcribed. The notes will be stored in on a password-protected computer and on password-protected cloud services. Data, including interview recordings, consent forms, transcriptions, etc., will be stored on the UNC campus in a locked and secure location and will only be accessible to the researcher and research advisor named above.

Participants will be asked to give a pseudonym for use in any publications or presentations related to the study topics to be discussed in the interviews. The responses will be summarized and combined with others in the study to gain a deeper understanding of this topic. District, school, and individual names will not appear in any professional report of this research.

This study and its' procedures have been approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board. Participants face no foreseeable risk and nothing beyond what might occur in normal daily routine. Participation in this study may provide insight into the leadership behaviors and skills of principals who, with their staffs and district support, improved their school performance. This knowledge may be used to help guide your future practices.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study, and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having carefully read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to grant permission for the principal and some teachers at _____ to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research site, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, in the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639: 970-351-1910.

SIGNAURE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE	DATE
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER	DATE

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
(Principal)

Research Study Title:	A Tale of Two Schools: The Road to Improvement and the Principals Who Led the Way
Researcher:	Catherine M. Jarnot (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Research Advisor:	Spencer Weiler, Ph.D. (970) 351-1016 spencer.weiler@unco.edu

I am a graduate student at The University of Northern Colorado conducting research on the leadership skills and behaviors of principals who have led a school that moved from Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status to Improvement or Performance Status. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have important views and experience with this topic since you led the change process in your school. Your participation in the study is strictly voluntary.

This study will document experiences with the change and improvement process. If you agree, you will have a 30-60 minute interview with me. The interviews will take place between April 1, 2018 and June 30, 2018.

Every attempt will be made to maximize confidentiality. Your name and any other links to your identity will not be used in the study. Your comments and answers will be recorded and transcribed. The notes will be stored in on a password-protected computer and on password-protected cloud services.

Data, including interview recordings, consent forms, transcriptions, etc., will be stored on the UNC campus in a locked and secure location and will only be accessible to the researcher and research advisor named above.

 _____ please initial

You will be asked to give a pseudonym for use in any publications or presentations related to the study topics to be discussed in the interview regarding your understanding

of leadership skills and practices. Your responses will be summarized and combined with others in the study to gain a deeper understanding of this topic. Your name will not appear in any professional report of this research.

This study and its' procedures have been approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board. Your participation poses no foreseeable risk and nothing beyond what might occur in normal daily routine. Your participation may provide insight for you into your own beliefs about school leadership. Benefits of this study may include new knowledge and a better understanding of school leadership skills and behaviors. This knowledge may be used to help guide your future practices and enhance your work as a principal.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study, and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having carefully read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, in the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639: 970-351-1910.

SIGNAURE OF PARTICIPANT	DATE
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER	DATE

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
(Teacher)

Research Study Title:	A Tale of Two Schools: The Road to Improvement and the Principals Who Led the Way
Researcher:	Catherine M. Jarnot (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Research Advisor:	Spencer Weiler, Ph.D. (970) 351-1016 spencer.weiler@unco.edu

I am a graduate student at The University of Northern Colorado conducting research on the leadership skills and behaviors of principals who have led a school that moved from Priority Improvement or Turnaround Status to Improvement or Performance Status. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have important views and experience with this topic since you were a part of the change process in your school. Your participation in the study is strictly voluntary.

This study will document experiences with the change and improvement process. If you agree, you will have a 30-60 minute interview with me. The interviews will take place between April 1, 2018 and June 30, 2018.

Every attempt will be made to maximize confidentiality. Your name and any other links to your identity will not be used in the study. Your comments and answers will be recorded and transcribed. The notes will be stored in on a password-protected computer and on password-protected cloud services.

Data, including interview recordings, consent forms, transcriptions, etc., will be stored on the UNC campus in a locked and secure location and will only be accessible to the researcher and research advisor named above.

You will be asked to give a pseudonym for use in any publications or presentations related to the study topics to be discussed in the interview regarding your understanding of leadership skills and practices. Your responses will be summarized and combined with others in the study to gain a deeper understanding of this topic. Your name will not appear in any professional report of this research.

This study and its' procedures have been approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board. Your participation poses no foreseeable risk and nothing beyond what might occur in normal daily routine. Your participation may provide insight for you into your own beliefs about school leadership. Benefits of this study may include new knowledge and a better understanding of school leadership skills and behaviors. This knowledge may be used to help guide your future practices and enhance your relationship with your principal.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study, and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having carefully read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, in the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639: 970-351-1910.

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