



University of Kentucky
UKnowledge

Theses and Dissertations--Educational
Leadership Studies

Educational Leadership Studies

2014

Fostering Organizational Learning: Superintendent and Principal Relationships

Ryan P. Clark

University of Kentucky, ryan.clark@bardstown.kyschools.us

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Clark, Ryan P., "Fostering Organizational Learning: Superintendent and Principal Relationships" (2014).
Theses and Dissertations--Educational Leadership Studies. 9.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/edl_etds/9

This Doctoral Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Leadership Studies at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations--Educational Leadership Studies by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Ryan P. Clark, Student

Dr. Lars G. Bjork, Major Professor

Dr. John Nash, Director of Graduate Studies

FOSTERING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING:
SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIPS

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Educational Leadership in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
Ryan P. Clark

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Lars G. Björk, Professor of Educational Leadership Studies

Co-Director: Dr. Tricia Browne-Ferrigno, Professor of Educational Leadership Studies

Lexington, KY

2014

Copyright © Ryan P. Clark 2014

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

FOSTERING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING: SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIPS

Schools have a responsibility to prepare students for the 21st century because the global economy demands a workforce that can adapt to a constantly changing and increasingly complex environment. High-stakes accountability for student learning is the United States' strategy to ensure that schools adequately prepare students. This high-stakes environment requires school leaders to make curricular and instructional decisions intended to simply prepare students for tests. Yielding to the pressure to perform on tests often neglects students' opportunities to think critically or engage in complex problem solving, which are both important skills for today's workplace.

Some school and district leaders do not succumb to a narrow curriculum nor do they dictate tight instructional practices in response to high-stakes tests. They realize that they must adapt to external pressures while also preparing students for the challenges they will face. These schools and districts rely on organizational learning to identify problems and develop solutions. All members of the organization engage in a cycle of error detection and correction as a means to better navigate a complex and changing environment. This kind of school and school district work environment requires that the superintendent and principals lead in a way that fosters organizational learning.

This case study uncovers the relationship characteristics between three former superintendents and five principals in a central Kentucky school district that fosters organizational learning. The study of this district found that key components of these relationships were (a) decisions based on what is best for kids, (b) a reliance on continuous professional learning, (c) a desire to constantly challenge the status quo, and (d) a genuine respect for each other personally and professionally.

KEYWORDS: organizational learning, superintendent, principal, relationships

FOSTERING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING:
SUPERINTENDENT AND PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIPS

By

Ryan P. Clark

Dr. Lars G. Björk

Director of Dissertation

Dr. Tricia Browne-Ferrigno

Co-Director of Dissertation

Dr. John Nash

Director of Graduate Studies

February 9, 2015

To my Dad, he inspired others to be better than they are . . . especially me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There have been many individuals that have supported me during my doctoral studies. First and foremost, the support of my wife, Beth, has never wavered during this journey. She never failed to understand when I had to read, study, and write even when life was hectic and pulling us in different directions. The completion of my dissertation would not have been possible without her love and understanding. I hope that completing my doctorate has also taught my kids a life lesson that hard work is always necessary to succeed. Over the past few years they have heard me countless times say, “I can’t because I have to write;” and even though I often felt guilty, I hope they understand that sacrifice is often required for success. Beth and I want more than anything to raise thoughtful and responsible kids and I believe the work they saw their dad commit to will help shape them into the kind of adults we pray they become.

To Dr. Lars Björk and Dr. Tricia Browne-Ferrigno, I have had the honor to have your guidance from the first day I decided to embark into school leadership. I have deep respect for both of you and am proud to have you as my mentors and friends. Dr. Björk, it has been humbling for me to have your trust and encouragement as I strived to compliment some of your scholarly work with this dissertation. I hope I have made you proud! And Dr. Tricia, your support and guidance has been invaluable in completing this dissertation; you have inspired me to be more confident about what I can accomplish. Thank you and know that your support over the years has helped me beyond completing a dissertation; I am a better leader thanks to both of you.

To the rest of my dissertation committee, Dr. Wayne Lewis, and Dr. Sharon Brennan, thank you. Your thoughtful feedback strengthened my understanding and my work. I am so grateful to have had the pleasure work with both of you.

Finally, my reflection recalls countless memories of kind and encouraging words I have received over the years. I want all of those that have encouraged me along the way to know your words always came at the right time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| Table of Contents | v |
| List of Tables | vii |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Problem | 2 |
| Pressure to Reform | 3 |
| Organizations that Respond to Complex Problems | 7 |
| Purpose and Significance of the Study | 9 |
| Research Questions and Design | 10 |
| Summary | 11 |
| CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE | 13 |
| The Roles of Superintendents and Principals | 14 |
| The Superintendent | 14 |
| The Principal | 15 |
| Compare the Characteristics | 15 |
| Teacher-Scholar | 17 |
| Superintendent as Teacher-Scholar | 17 |
| Principal as Teacher-Scholar | 18 |
| Manager | 19 |
| Superintendent as Manager | 19 |
| Principal as Manager | 20 |
| Democratic Leader | 20 |
| Superintendent as Democratic Leader | 21 |
| Principal as Democratic Leader | 22 |
| Applied Social Scientist | 24 |
| Superintendent as Applied Social Scientist | 24 |
| Principal as Applied Social Scientist | 25 |
| Communicator | 26 |
| Superintendent as Communicator | 26 |
| Principal as Communicator | 28 |
| The Learning Organization | 28 |
| Leadership from the Superintendent and Principal | 33 |
| Leader Relationships in a Learning Organization | 34 |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY | 39 |
| Research Question | 39 |
| Rationale for Case Study Design | 40 |
| Research Context | 42 |
| Research Participants | 43 |
| Data Sources | 45 |
| Data Analysis | 47 |
| Quality and Verification Checks for Reliability and Validity | 49 |
| Triangulation of Data | 49 |
| Expert Review and Instrument Field Testing | 50 |
| Member Checking | 51 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Comparing Participant Descriptions | 52 |
| Role of the Researcher | 52 |
| Protection of Respondents Rights | 53 |
| CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS | 55 |
| Worthy of Study..... | 56 |
| Shared Vision and Mission: Articulating What is Important | 57 |
| Best for Kids | 57 |
| Instructional Leadership..... | 61 |
| Mechanism for Change: Learning | 64 |
| Learning is Essential | 64 |
| Reliance on Learning | 66 |
| Commitment to Innovation and Challenging the Status Quo | 69 |
| Innovation and Challenging the Status Quo | 70 |
| Positive Superintendent and Principal Relationships | 73 |
| Superintendent Perspectives | 73 |
| Principal Perspectives | 74 |
| Summary..... | 76 |
| CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS | 78 |
| Discussion..... | 78 |
| Organizational Learning | 78 |
| Shared Vision and Mission | 79 |
| Embrace Learning | 84 |
| Encouraging Innovation..... | 85 |
| Mutual Respect | 87 |
| Conclusions..... | 88 |
| Recommendations for Practice | 90 |
| Lessons Learned..... | 92 |
| Recommendations for Future Research | 94 |
| APPENDICES | 96 |
| Appendix A-Communications and Community Relations | 96 |
| Appendix B-Superintendent Semi-Structured Interview Protocol | 97 |
| Appendix C-Principal Semi-Structured Interview Protocol..... | 99 |
| Appendix D-Document Analysis Form..... | 101 |
| References..... | 102 |
| VITA | 115 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 2.1 - Alignment of Superintendent and Principal Roles..... | 16 |
| Table 3.1 - Responses to Findings..... | 51 |
| Table 4.1 - Superintendent Participants Demographic and Professional Information..... | 55 |
| Table 4.2 - Principal Participants Demographic and Professional Information..... | 56 |
| Table 4.3 - Superintendent and Principal References to Innovation..... | 70 |
| Table 4.4 - Superintendent and Principal References to Challenging Status Quo..... | 71 |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Continuous improvement is a phrase commonly used to describe the commitment expected from educators in the current era of reform. This concept implies that an educator's work is never done—that there are always opportunities to improve (Alexander, 2007). Organizations that embrace the notion that continuous improvement is necessary often reinvent themselves in their continual analysis of problems and the implementation of solutions, that in some cases results in changing organizational behaviors (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A learning organization that cyclically engages in the continuous improvement process prioritizes professional learning as a means to develop solutions to complex problems (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge et al., 2000). District and school leaders that purposefully engage stakeholders in organizational learning understand that this process may result in redefining the organization's operational norms. This kind of reinvention occurs only when collaboration and distributed leadership remain a cultural norm (Alexander et al., 2007; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge et al., 1999). This case study is directed to identify the relationship attributes between superintendents and their principals in a district that embraces organizational learning.

Isolating the relationships that exist between these school leaders in a district that utilizes organizational learning is significant. A superintendent and a principal hold hierarchal positions within a school district, and their leadership is required to sustain a learning culture (Senge et al., 1999). Therefore, identifying specific characteristics in the relationship between the superintendent and the principal within a district that fosters organizational learning contributes to the existing knowledge base.

The understanding of the relationship between superintendents and principals is accomplished through a case study in a central Kentucky school district. In 2000, a distinguished scholar (citation not provided for anonymity of school district) conducted a case study in the same district and concluded that the transformational change of the district to a community of learners was largely due to the deliberate efforts by the board of education and the leadership of successive superintendents. This dissertation provided a unique opportunity to conduct an exploratory case study in the same district through interviewing individuals that have served as superintendent or principal. In addition, performing document analysis of artifacts such as meeting agendas, improvement documents, and such helped the researcher gain keener insight into those relationships. The rich description of superintendents' and principals' professional relationships collected from interviews and documents provides understanding about the relationships between these educational leaders.

Problem

School reform has driven educators' decisions and practice, especially over the past three decades (Björk, Kowalski, & Young, 2005). It is important to recognize that the process of reforming public education is complex but is undeniably needed to prepare students for the demands of the 21st century (Wagner, 2008). The subsequent discussion includes the impact of legislation intended to initiate school reform and the consequences of high-stakes accountability. The literature regarding the way in which school organizations respond to the complex problems they face are also discussed. The problem is defined in a broad educational context that supports the relevance of this

dissertation. The evolution of general approaches to school reform and how schools respond to legislative and local mandates is also be discussed.

Pressure to Reform

The call for school reform yielded intense pressure on legislators and school leaders after the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983). The report contended that public education in the United States was not providing an education that kept pace with other developed countries, and thus precipitated the perception that public education was negatively impacting our nation's economy. Björk and colleagues (2005) suggest that public education reform occurred in three waves (1983–1986, 1986–1989, and 1989–2003), which began with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. “These first-wave reports called for improving student test scores, assessing school-wide performance and tracking progress, increasing graduation requirements, lengthening the school day and year, and increasing the rigor of teacher licensure requirements” (p. 47). With these reforms, there was a shift from a reliance on district-level policy to state and federal policy mandating change in schools (Björk et al., 2005).

The second wave of reforms (1986–1989) occurred after additional reports called for specific actions and greater accountability for-schools. These actions included (a) an emphasis on higher-order thinking skills, problem solving, computer competency, and cooperative learning; (b) greater focus on students at risk of learning and redesigning teaching and learning to meet their needs; (c) decentralizing decision making and adopting a site-based management approach; and (d) standards-based assessments in schools to hold them accountable for improving student test scores (Björk et al., 2005).

The third wave of reports (1989–2003) challenged public education to focus primarily on students and their learning (Björk et al., 2005). During this period, the 2002 signing of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation further solidified the focus on improving education for all students. NCLB legislation was passed to ensure that states reformed their teaching standards, chose a test intended to measure student performance against the reformed standards, and held schools accountable for the results (Lee, 2008). Reporting the results and ranking schools placed intense pressure on superintendents, principals, and teachers to make these improvements to public school education (Björk, 2010; Schlechty, 2005).

Impact of reform. Today, education professionals continue to be challenged to improve education while meeting the needs of all students in a rapidly-changing society (Wagner, 2008). The passage of NCLB legislation intended to create a reform environment by mandating accountability through high-stakes testing (Lee, 2008; Watanabe, 2007). Educators are under pressure to take action to fix education (Fullan, 2011; Schlechty, 2005; Schmoker, 2006; Wagner, 2008). However, does high stakes accountability truly fix education? Lee (2008) argues,

high-stakes testing works not only as an intervention but also as an instrument to measure the outcome of the intervention. On one hand, high-stakes testing generates enormous pressure for educators to improve test scores by means of narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test. On the other hand, any inflated test scores that can result from intensive drilling and coaching under this pressure generate an illusion of real progress and give the false impression that the intervention is working. (p. 610)

In a study by Lee and Reeves (2012), they analyzed the accountability test results in all 50 states from 1990–2009 and compared these results to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). The authors found mixed results in terms of improving

mathematics and reading achievement. Their findings suggest that the reforms imposed by NCLB are not necessarily leading to improved achievement as was originally hoped.

To further complicate the impact of education reforms, many scholars maintain that current reforms exacerbate the outdated traditional industrial schooling model, and contends that schools as a whole are not preparing students for the 21st century knowledge based economy (Senge et al., 2000, Wagner, 2008). According to Wagner, “our system of public education—our curricula, teaching methods, and the tests we require students to take—were created for a different century for the needs of another era. They are hopelessly outdated” (p. 9). He further asserts that there are demands on educators that have produced two achievement gaps in our education system. The first achievement gap is the disparity in achievement between middle class students and poor or minority students, whereas the second achievement gap is that many schools are not preparing children and youth to use the skills that matter most in our society and our economy. Although both of these achievement gaps are critical to address, the legislative steps taken to address the socioeconomic and minority disparities in academic achievement have devalued the teaching of skills that students need for the 21st century workplace. Legislation that was written to ensure all children achieve in school by focusing on the results of standardized tests may result in teaching practices that focus significantly on preparing students to perform well on very specific state tests. This approach may not be best when teaching the skills necessary to survive in our 21st century economy (Wagner, 2008).

Unintended response of educators. Educators feel the pressure of high stakes testing and want to ensure their school and district maintain high scores and rankings.

Thus, many educators spend large amounts of time teaching strategies that help their students perform well on the test but do not prepare them for college or careers. “Test preparation, which teachers feel is necessary to respond to state policies, narrows the curricula and displaces other important priorities” (Watanabe, 2007, p. 356). A major problem is that the strategies teachers’ utilize to prepare students for high-stakes testing trains “our students to forego independent thinking” (Watanabe, p. 357). Many classroom teachers and educational leaders face a dilemma: feeling the need to prepare students for state tests and close achievement gaps, while at the same time forgoing innovation that may engage students in deeper thinking (Lee, 2008; Wagner, 2008).

Scholars argue that high stakes testing seems to have unintended and potentially devastating consequences for our students who are competing for jobs in a knowledge-based economy (Lee, 2008; Watanabe, 2007; Wagner, 2008). Unlike the former industry-based economy, a knowledge-based economy requires an extensive list of survival skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration across networks, leading by influence, agility, adaptability, initiative, entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analyzing information, curiosity, imagination).

Tragically, most schools are not developing those skills and strategies because state tests do not measure them (Wagner, 2008). Ensuring students learn 21st century skills requires educators to engage in more professional collaboration to discover approaches that promote students’ independent thinking and deeper learning (Schleicher, 2011; Wagner, 2008; Watanabe, 2007).

How educators should respond. Analysis of the Teaching and Learning International Survey was conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and

Development in 2007-2008. More than 70,000 teachers and their principals in 23 countries were surveyed, and results indicated what teachers need to ensure effective learning in the 21st century (Schleicher, 2011). Schleicher concluded that

equipping teachers for effective learning in the 21st century will require the rethinking of initial teacher education programs, redesigning and strengthening investment in professional development, and providing effective and ongoing support and feedback for teachers in every aspect of their work. These endeavors need to be closely aligned with the requirements of the global knowledge economy, 21st-century skills development, and the role of technology, as well as equipping teachers to face the challenge of increasing diversity within the classroom. (p. 220)

Many scholars agree that the way in which education organizations respond to these complex needs requires them to understand the concept and foster the conditions of organizational learning (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Barth, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Easton-Watkins, Fullan, Lezotte, Reeves, Saphier, Schmoker, Sparks, & Stiggins, 2005; Fullan, 2001a; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Schmoker, 2006; Senge et al., 2000).

Organizations that Respond to Complex Problems

Over the last three decades (1981-2014), the public demand to change schools cannot be disputed. Change is demanded by education experts, politicians, and business leaders to ensure that schools can meet the challenges of the future. Education must change so future generations can compete in a new economy that requires employees to continually adapt to meet the demands of competition, technology innovations, and consumers (Fullan, 2001a; McCain, 2005; Senge et al., 2000; Wagner, 2008). As a result, education must respond by creating environments that engage students in the curricula that prepares them for adult success in the 21st century, (McCain, 2005; Wagner, 2008), employing measures to gauge the level of learning (DuFour et al., 2005;

Schmoker, 2006), and meeting the learning needs of a diverse student population (Blankstein, 2004; Wagner, 2008; Wong, 2008). This complex work requires educational organizations to create and support environments where professionals engage in continual improvement by learning, and then putting the learning into action to meet challenges (Buffum et al., 2008; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge et al., 2000).

The concept of organizational learning is complex, but the potential rewards of its characteristics becoming the norm can be profound (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2000). A commitment to utilize organizational learning requires deliberate transformational leadership (Matthews & Crow, 2010). Sustaining the characteristics of organizational learning also requires a commitment by the education leaders to work collaboratively to engage all stakeholders in the problem-solving process (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge et al., 2000). The difficulty however, is that multiple obstacles are often encountered as an organization takes the steps towards building and sustaining an organizational learning culture (Senge et al., 1999).

Initiating and sustaining the norms and behaviors needed to foster a learning organization can be challenged by sudden changes in the work environment (Senge et al., 1999). For example, when school principals and district superintendents are facing accountability and are desperate to improve test scores, the pressure to mandate improvement policies and programs can cause leaders to look for quick solutions to very complex problems (Fullan, 1998). This is a difficult situation for many leaders as they fall victim to dependency on external solutions. This kind of top-down-solution can undermine a reliance on individuals in the organization who are engaged in learning, and

collectively implementing a possible solution (Fullan, 1998; Senge et al., 1999). Fullan (1998) contends that leaders must come to the realization that

giving up the futile search for the silver bullet is the basic precondition for overcoming dependency and for beginning to take actions that do matter. It frees educational leaders to gain truly new insights that can inform and guide their actions toward greater success, mobilizing resources for teaching and learning with children as the beneficiaries. (p. 8)

Purpose and Significance of the Study

School leaders face many challenges as they work to improve the education of a diverse group of students in a high stakes accountability environment (Blankstein, 2004; Wong, 2008). Hence, school and district leaders must support continual efforts to improve, often requiring the professionals not only to change their behaviors (behavioral change) but also to alter their thinking (cognitive change). An organization that can meet the demands of externally mandated change while fostering further change by seeking and discovering organizational problems requires both individual and collective commitment to learning (Collinson & Cook, 2007). The process of implementing meaningful solutions can be extremely complex and requires an organizational culture that fosters individuals working collaboratively (Buffum et al., 2008; Fullan, 2001b, 2008; Gruenert 2007; Senge et al., 1999).

This study is significant because schools and districts fostering organizational learning is necessary to reform education and meet the challenges of the 21st century (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Wagner, 2008). Implementing this type of leadership style in schools and districts is however, very difficult and even more difficult to sustain (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Fullan, 2008; Senge et al., 1999). Most schools still operate in a way that supports and prepares students for an industrial economy, rather than the 21st

century knowledge-based economy that is demanded today (Wagner, 2008). Therefore, a case study that explored the relationship attributes between the district superintendent and school principals in a district that fosters organizational learning provides insight for district and school leaders that strive to transform their school system into a learning organization.

Research Questions and Design

An exploratory case study was conducted in a central Kentucky school district. A pseudonym for the central Kentucky School District is used to protect the identity of the district. Jameson County Schools, which currently educates over 7,500 students, was identified as one operating as a community of learners in a case study conducted by a distinguished scholar. His study focused on the transformational leadership of a board of education and the superintendents hired over a span of 17 years (1981–1998). In 1981, several new Jameson County Board members were elected. These new members were not connected to any local factions that wished to maintain the status quo and resist community growth. Rather, they believed that growth in the community was inevitable and wanted to manage it rather than allow others to do it for them. They also expressed a commitment to improve schools and recognized they could not succeed without a strong superintendent. Nearly 16 years (1998–2014) later this case study focused not only on the superintendents that served Jameson County Schools, but also on principals in the district.

Using an exploratory case study design to investigate my research question (*What is the relationship between superintendents and principals in a district that fosters organizational learning?*) allowed me to adapt my research approaches based on what I

learned from the individuals I interviewed, and on documents I reviewed. Also, because the focus was on the relationship attributes between superintendents and their principals in a single school district, the use of a case study is appropriate. Studying phenomena like how leaders interact and work in a district that fosters organizational learning is a research task suitable for a case study design (Merriam, 1998).

I had the unique opportunity to interview former superintendents and principals in a district that was transformed into a community of learners. This series of interviews was coupled with discoveries made while reviewing relevant district documents. Collecting qualitative data from multiple sources allowed for a stronger convergence of evidence through triangulation and more deductive conclusions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

While it is my goal to provide conclusions that contribute to further understanding a phenomena that support the existence of organizational learning, case study research does have limitations. My findings were bound to a specific group in a single school district; therefore, my conclusions may be only generalized to the isolated group I studied. Because case study research intentionally focuses on a bound system, the results often cannot be generalized to other external populations (Maxwell, 2005). The conclusions from my findings are focused primarily on internal generalizations specific to this Kentucky school district. However, some external generalizations were made but are limited to the application of current theory (Maxwell, 2005).

Summary

This chapter provided an explanation of a problem worthy of investigation: explaining the demands on school leaders to engage in significant reforms in a complex

educational environment. Generally, this introduction explained that the high stakes accountability environment is intended to spur reform, but further argues that fostering organizational learning allows for more profound change. An overview of how this case study was designed to better understand the relationship attributes that exists between superintendents and principals in a district that operates as a learning organization was also presented. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature concerning the work of a superintendent and a principal, while also reviewing how literature describes the deliberate characteristics individuals possess and how they approach work in a learning organization. Chapter 3 discusses the research design for this study. Chapter 4 presents findings after interviewing former superintendents and both former and current principals in the Jameson County School District. The final chapter discusses the findings and conclusions and suggests future research that may reveal deeper understanding about how a district may foster organizational learning.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Since publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983), widespread concern for the condition of American public education launched reforms in the United States that are unprecedented in scope, duration, and demand for school accountability. The report was released at a time of growing concern for the nation's ability to compete in a global economy and adapt to an accelerated pace of technological change. Taken together, these concerns compelled schools to alter conventional approaches to teaching, and school leadership (Wagner, 2008). These reforms reconfigured how schools and districts are organized, governed, and lead (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). These decades-long education reform efforts not only changed the way schools operate, but also raised awareness of the need to equip the next generation of students with 21st century skills in order for them, and the nation as a whole to prosper in a dramatically different economic environment (Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2010; Wagner, 2008). These reforms heightened attention to the roles of superintendents and principals in not only launching and sustaining reforms, but also in how they collaborate when building the capacity of their staffs to function as learning communities (Collinson & Cook 2007). The notion of changing the culture of schools to embrace the connection between leadership and learning is one of the field's most compelling needs issues (Sergiovanni, 2005).

This review of literature provides a framework for understanding the nature of leadership, the roles of superintendents and principals, and how their professional relationships may support the development of schools as learning organizations. This review of literature helps to identify areas in which their respective leadership roles are

complementary and may contribute to a better understanding of how school districts support the development of organizational learning.

The Roles of Superintendents and Principals

Superintendent and principal roles have evolved throughout the history of public education (Kowalski, 2006). The work of contemporary superintendents and principals has become increasingly complex and more demanding because local, state, and federal reforms mandate that all students are prepared to meet the demands of the 21st century global economy. (Alsbury, 2008; Björk & Gurley, 2005; Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2010). The complexity of this work is heightened by the condition of student socio-economic status (SES) and circumstances associated with an increasingly diverse population (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). School and district leaders are expected to ensure that no matter the complexity of students needs, rigorous 21st century curriculum is taught, and that all students are successful (Blankstein, 2004).

The Superintendent

Superintendents are embracing the complex challenges they face: “It is remarkable that, knowing the turbulence that faces these jobs, a newer generation keeps coming to take it on” (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p. 190). Scholars concur that successful superintendents have five definitive roles including: teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. Superintendents enact these roles individually or in combination depending on their respective goals or tasks (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski, 2006). Each of these roles are discussed more completely in the following sections.

The Principal

For many years scholars have observed that effective principals are expected to be effective managers as well as strong instructional leaders (Barth, 2001; Crow, McCleary, Crow, & Matthews, 1996; Collinson & Cook, 2007; DuFour, Eaker & DuFour, 2005; Fullan, 2001). Research findings further describe the complex day-to-day management of schools as well as the instructional leadership role educational leaders assume in order to guide their staffs in improved teaching and learning. During the last several decades, the notion of instructional leadership has broadened. Consequently, principals have adopted more democratic styles, often acting as a leader of leaders (Crow et al., 1996). Scholars suggest that the empowerment and development of teacher leaders is central to them providing effective and continuous instructional leadership (Barth, 2001; Crow et al., 1996) and is crucial to the success of a school (Edmonds, 1982). In sum, many believe that principals who serve as democratic leaders foster a positive school environment in which student learning can thrive (Gruenert, 2007). Principals' work and their roles are described and pertinent literature is displayed in Table 2.1.

Compare the Characteristics

For this review, the superintendent roles and characteristics are used to describe the work of the principal, aligning the description with literature regarding effective principal's roles. A table for comparing the similarities of superintendent and principal roles was created using the definitive roles of superintendents: teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. Björk and Kowalski (2005) identified these definitive roles to describe the work of the contemporary superintendent. The following table labels the literature that aligns to these roles.

Table 2.1**Alignment of Superintendent and Principal Roles**

| Role | Superintendent Literature | Principal Literature |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Characterizations | | |
| Teacher-Scholar | Hoyle, Björk, Collier, and Glass (2005); Kowalski (2006); Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010); Petersen and Barnett (2005) | Andrews, Basom, & Bason (1991); Björk (2010); Dwyer (1984); Fullan (2001); Glanz (2006); Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005); Matthews and Crow (2010); O'Donnell and White (2005); The Wallace Foundation (2013); Williams-Boyd (2002) |
| Manager | Bennis and Nanus (2007); Björk and Kowalski (2005); Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005); Hoyle et al. (2005); Kowalski (2006); Kowalski et al. (2010) | Björk (2010); Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003); Daresh (2002); McCleary, Crow, and Matthews (1996); Marzano et al. (2005); Matthews and Crow (2010); The Wallace Foundation (2013) |
| Democratic Leader | Björk and Gurley (2005); Blase and Björk (2010); Bolman and Deal (2008); Kirst and Wirt (2009); Kowalski (2006) | Björk, (2010); Buffum et al.(2008); Daresh (2002); Fullan (2001); Glanz (2006); Marzano et al.(2005); Matthews and Crow (2010); McCleary et al. (1996); Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, and Louis (2009); The Wallace Foundation (2013); Williams-Boyd (2002) |
| Applied Social Scientist | Björk and Kowalski (2005); Doyle (2002); Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005); Kowalski (2006) | Björk (2010); Buffum et al. (2008); Marzano et al. (2005); Matthews and Crow (2010); Wagner (2008) The Wallace Foundation (2013) |
| Communicator | Björk (2001); Conrad (1994); Hoyle et al. (2005); Kowalski (2005, 2006); Kowalski and Keedy (2005) | Argyris (2001); Björk (2010); Marzano et al. (2005); Matthews and Crow (2003); Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, and Valentine (1999); The Wallace Foundation (2013); Williams-Boyd (2002) |

Teacher-Scholar

The role of teacher-scholar recognizes that superintendents (Petersen & Barnett, 2005) and principals (Glanz, 2006) must understand that districts and schools exist to provide systems where teaching and learning can take place. School and district leaders that embrace the role of teacher-scholar, provide instructional leadership intended to improve teaching and learning (Peterson & Barnett, 2005; Glanz, 2006).

Superintendent as Teacher-Scholar

During the late 1800's, superintendents were often selected because they were viewed as highly effective teachers and were charged by local school boards with the task of supervising teachers and the curriculum. These early superintendents often engaged in research and authored their work in professional journals (Kowalski, 2006; Kowalski et al., 2010). A contemporary interpretation of the teacher-scholar role is that of an instructional leader who focuses on their involvement in, and support of teaching and learning across the school district (Petersen & Barnett, 2005). Like principals, a superintendent's influence on teaching and learning is indirect; nonetheless, the instructional leadership role is viewed as being critically important (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Superintendents engage in instructional leadership practices often by using district-level managerial levers (Hoyle et al., 2005). These levers are managerial in nature because they include funding of instructional initiatives, hiring of quality educators, supervision and evaluation of principals, and articulation of teaching and learning expectations. A recent nationwide study of superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2010) reported that 20% of boards of education chose their superintendent because of their capacity to serve the district as an instructional leader.

Principal as Teacher-Scholar

For nearly three decades, scholars have reported that effective principals are involved in teaching and learning as a way to improve student academic achievement in their school (Fullan, 2001). Their role as instructional leader requires them to have a strong understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Glanz, 2006). When principals have the ability and willingness to address instructional issues and offer suggestions regarding teaching and learning, classroom teachers value their expertise (Matthews & Crow, 2010; Williams-Boyd, 2002). Consequently, the term instructional leadership is widely used in literature and practice to describe the role school leaders have when they positively affect teaching and learning in schools (Andrews et al., 1991; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Dwyer, 1984; Glanz, 2006; O'Donnell & White, 2005).

When principals assume the role of teacher-scholar, they engage in actions and responsibilities that require relevant knowledge and skills as well as the ability to recognize and communicate effective teaching and learning strategies (Glanz, 2006). In addition, principals as teacher-scholars must be able to identify and celebrate academic accomplishments, acknowledge failures, and offer corrective action (Marzano et al., 2005). Furthermore, they also must be able to collaborate with teachers and others in modeling a collective vision that reflects the school's goal. Finally, they must assure that school staffs are committed to continuous improvement and remain focused on ensuring that all students are academically successful (Björk, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Manager

Effective management is essential to the smooth operation of districts (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005) and schools (Daresh, 2002). The management scope for superintendents in many ways is different from principals for reasons such as the size of staffs or the allocation of resources; nonetheless, without effective management organizations become less stable (Browne-Ferrigno, 2005; Daresh, 2002).

Superintendent as Manager

Superintendents' managerial role has remained a central aspect of their work for decades (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2010). In small districts, for example, the superintendent may be very involved in the management of food service and transportation, while in larger districts additional staff may be responsible for these services (Kowalski et al., 2010). In the 2010 decennial study Kowalski and colleagues reported that superintendents perceived that their school board's primary expectation was for them to be effective managers, with 78% rating it to be highly important. The role of superintendent as manager can actually be traced to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when school districts paled in size and complexity.

Consequently, superintendents acquired managerial knowledge and skills that enabled them to endure board and public scrutiny. By 1920, superintendents were expected to be scientific managers (Kowalski, 2006) or good managers (Kowalski, 2006; Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005; Hoyle et al., 2005), who ensured that the right things are done (Bennis & Nanus, 2007). Kowalski (2006) suggests that if the budgets are not balanced, facilities are in disrepair, and personnel issues progress to litigation, then leadership from the superintendent is insignificant. In other words, effective

management of the school district is an essential characteristic of contemporary superintendents (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005).

Principal as Manager

Scholars have contributed to an understanding of the depth and breadth of principals' work as manager. For example, the principal is expected to manage the school by planning, coordinating, and monitoring tasks (Crow et al., 1996). In addition, they need to possess skills in the areas of finance, budgets, the supervision and evaluation of teachers and staff, school law, and multiple other skills to be able to manage situations and the day-to-day operations at school (Daresh, 2002). Furthermore, scholars view effective management as essential to creating and sustaining a positive climate for teaching and learning (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003) and for supporting professional learning communities (Matthews & Crow, 2010). The notion of effective management also extends to student discipline as well as protecting teachers from issues that may intrude upon teaching and learning. In addition, teachers' time and resources must be managed to ensure opportunities for continual improvement in teaching and learning. In sum, effective management of the school, resources, time, personnel, and student behavior are essential to enhancing student academic achievement (Björk, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Democratic Leader

Contemporary school leaders understand that leading democratically is essential in an environment where continuous school and district improvement is expected (Björk, 2010; Kowalski, 2006). Superintendents and principals must skillfully accommodate for different interests and include a diverse group of stakeholders to determine the change

initiatives needed to reach district and school level goals (Björk & Gurley, 2005, 2010; Crow et al., 1996).

Superintendent as Democratic Leader

The superintendent role of a democratic leader encompasses two dimensions. First, the contemporary superintendent leads democratically by galvanizing diverse stakeholders (teachers, parents, board members, policy makers, etc.) in support of school district initiatives (Björk & Gurley, 2005; Kowalski, 2006). Second, engagement with these individuals and interest groups requires an understanding of the nature of organizational politics and an ability to work in shifting contexts (Björk & Gurley, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Kowalski, 2006). In order for superintendents to be effective democratic leaders, they must understand the multiple and diverse interests of the community as well as how they may politically influence district policymaking processes. Because politics in organizations largely occur when decisions are made about the allocation of scarce resources (Bolman & Deal, 2008), the contemporary superintendent must understand the interplay between individuals and or groups who vie for scarce resources (Blase & Björk, 2010).

The contemporary superintendent also understands that political processes and complexities are different at the macro and micro levels. *Macro politics* are described as legislation and policy that impact schools and originate from local, state, and federal government levels. *Macro politics* also implies an influence relationship that may exist between school-district superintendents and legislators and policymakers. *Micro politics* on the other hand, refers to the political structures and influence patterns that may exist among members of school or district organizations. The micro-political structure within

a school or district may allow for, or hinder the implementation of local, state, or national policies as well as district change initiatives (Björk & Gurley, 2005; Lasswell, 1936).

Superintendents recognize that conflict in school and district organizations is inevitable (Blase & Björk, 2010; Kirst & Wirt, 2009), and leading democratically requires a distinct skill in order to enhance superintendents' effectiveness (Björk & Gurley, 2005; Kirst & Wirt, 2009). Policy and decision-making processes are inherently political as they determine who gets what, when, and how (Lasswell, 1936).

Consequently, individuals and interest groups that compete for scarce resources attempt to influence policy-making processes, which may result in conflict. If conflict is too severe, it can be destructive and ultimately undermine the organization. However, if conflict is embraced as a natural aspect of organizational life and managed constructively, it can lead to creativity and innovation (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Kirst and Wirt (2009) persuasively argue that contemporary superintendents must be adept at responding to the needs of the communities they serve and be able manage conflict. They observe that the role of the superintendent may be defined as a power-sharing politician, able to navigate a rapidly shifting political landscape and handle conflict in constructive ways through coalition building (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). The broad role of power-sharing politician suggests superintendents possess a wide array of political skills.

Principal as Democratic Leader

Meeting the complex educational needs of students in the information age requires democratic leadership (Plomp, 2011; Wagner, 2008). The contemporary principal is expected to lead democratically because transformational reform does not occur by dictating change in an authoritarian manner (Buffum et al., 2008; Crow et al.,

1996; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Daresh, 2002; Fullan 2001; Glanz, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Murphy et al., 2009; O'Donnell & White 2005; Williams-Boyd, 2002). Collaboration or leading collaboratively is often used to describe the characteristics needed by principals to effectively facilitate change in schools (Buffum et al., 2008; Matthews & Crow, 2010). In this regard, it is critical that stakeholders are deeply involved in reforms to ensure that substantive changes occur and that they are lasting (Fullan, 2001). Consequently, contemporary principals include others in substantive school changes as a strategy to gain support and thus ensure sustainability. Effective democratic leadership is vital advance student achievement (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008) and establishes the kind of culture necessary to meet 21st century challenges (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Buffum et al., 2008; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Fullan 2001).

Engaging teachers in continuous change processes that focus on improving learning and teaching requires working democratically (Matthews & Crow, 2010). An important dimension of democratic leadership includes the development of, and effective communication about a school's vision to ensure that all students are academically successful. Principals must have ability for cultivating broad-based school constituency groups who are engaged in policy and decision making processes. Including community constituency groups and educators in the school decisions requires democratic leadership that embraces the notion of collaboration (Björk, 2010; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Applied Social Scientist

The communities that principals and superintendents serve are increasingly more complex, requiring leaders to develop deeper understandings of those they serve (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). Consequently, school and district leaders have to be deliberate in their understanding of diverse needs and sensitive to varying values and beliefs.

Superintendents' and principals' abilities to learn about, and remain sensitive to the needs of their communities are more successful when developing strategies to improve learning and teaching (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005; Doyle 2002; Björk, 2010).

Superintendent as Applied Social Scientist

The superintendent role as applied social scientist was added as a distinct dimension to superintendents' responsibilities when scholars recognized the scope of societal factors that impact decisions and influence the success of school district education initiatives (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005; Kowalski, 2006). Contemporary "superintendents are expected to have expertise necessary to deal with the effects of poverty, racism, gender discrimination, crime, and violence" (Kowalski, 2006, p. 46) on children and academic achievement. For example, between 1955 and the 1980s, the expectation that superintendents have a broad understanding of these influences changed their administrative preparation disciplines to include the areas of psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and criminology so that superintendents could better understand problems and improve education for all children (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski, 2006). Today, systems theory is more prevalently taught to enable aspiring administrators to understand the complex relationships between multiple societal factors that influence schools, learning, and teaching (Björk & Kowalski, 2005).

Contemporary superintendents are expected to utilize research findings to address a wide array of the societal problems encountered in their work (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005; Kowalski, 2006). Thus, the role of the superintendent as an applied social scientist is viewed as an essential dimension of their work in overcoming the effects of poverty, crime, discrimination, etcetera that impact public education. Effective superintendents utilize research findings to better understand the nature and scope of problems as well as form viable solutions (Kowalski, 2006). The implementation of solutions may naturally be very difficult, but also politically and emotionally charged (Doyle, 2002). Consequently, the contemporary superintendent must understand multiple and diverse perspectives of parents, teachers, students, and community citizens to successfully craft, facilitate, and sustain change strategies.

Principal as Applied Social Scientist

Principals are also aware of the importance of understanding the complexity of communities and the influence of societal factors and school contexts in launching, facilitating, and sustaining lasting change (Buffum et al., 2008). In this regard, scholars note that effective school administrators are aware of how the beliefs and values of those with whom they work influence their behavior (Daresh, 2002) as it relates to the adoption of change strategies (Fullan, 2001). An effective leader promotes a collective vision of the organization by identifying common beliefs and values and then utilizes collaborative strategies to influence those who may be reluctant to accept a new mission and vision of the school (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Wagner (2008) also contends that the ability to recognize diversity and then work collectively to solve complex problems is a critical skill to be a successful change agent and participant in the global economy. In this

regard, he not only stresses the need to teach students collaborative skills, but also challenges schools to practice these same skills in teaching and learning.

The principal role as an applied social scientist also suggests that principals engage in research to learn more about the impact of learning and teaching on those they serve. As principals think like a social scientist, they develop intuitions about their work (Marzano et al., 2005). One of the most critical skills that a principal needs is a deep understanding of the community they serve as well as the needs and background of the staff that they lead. Taken together, these levels of understanding help to ensure that the school's collective vision has relevance to both students and the staff members who implement change processes (Björk, 2010; Matthews & Crow, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Communicator

Communicating an organization's vision cannot be taken lightly because the message stakeholders receive can either foster hope or stifle it completely (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Therefore, effective communication from the superintendent (Kowalski, 2006) and the principal (Matthews & Crow, 2003; Williams-Boyd, 2002) are critical to the effectiveness of their leadership.

Superintendent as Communicator

The superintendent role of communicator is a recent addition to contemporary descriptions of the dimensions of their work. This role heightens attention to their need to serve as effective communicators with multiple stakeholders and is essential as collaborative work environments become the norm (Kowalski, 2006). This role is particularly important as superintendents are expected to not only build collaborative

cultures with the increasingly diverse communities, but also to communicate effectively with these diverse cultures (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Scholars concur that communication must be done deliberately, but they also caution that deliberate communication may be carried out either well or poorly (Conrad, 1994). Consequently, on one hand, effective communication may yield a healthy and responsive culture, while on the other; ineffective communication may fuel a toxic culture that undermines the purpose of the organization. Effective communication creates a culture which in turn fuels either positive or negative communication patterns (Conrad, 1994). Attention to maintaining positive communication channels has become increasingly important in an environment of continual change (Reeves, 2006). In these circumstances, in order to change and improve the local school district as a whole successfully, it is essential that superintendents assume a leadership role that creates, nurtures, and sustains communication with a wide array of stakeholders throughout the change process (Björk, 2001). Kowalski (2005) posits that “necessary improvements are highly improbable unless negative school cultures are transformed through communicative means” (p. 106).

Hoyle and colleagues (2005) list communication and community relation indicators that a superintendent should know and practice (see Appendix A). This seemingly exhaustive list provides evidence of the importance of superintendents being effective communicators. The list also suggests the importance of not only communicating the right message, but also understanding that various stakeholders need to receive the message in unique ways that coincide with their needs and perceptions of reality.

Principal as Communicator

Effective communication is also a critical dimension of a principal's work and contributes to the health of the school culture by making the purpose of the school's work and its vision clear (Matthews & Crow, 2003; Deal, 1999; Williams-Boyd, 2002). It is important to understand that communication is not simply providing accessible information; rather, communication is about engaging in open dialogues that elicit trust and inspire learning and change (Argyris, 2001; Buffam, 2008). Effective communication takes many forms (Bolman & Deal, 2008), and an effective principal communicates through their words, actions, listening, feedback, trustworthiness, and respect (Matthews & Crow, 2003). Scribner and colleagues (1999) perceive that effective communication may be considered the glue that holds together the roles and responsibilities of leadership.

Effective communication is essential to being an effective leader, and its importance is woven throughout the roles and responsibilities of effective principals (Matthews & Crow, 2003). Thus, in order to effectively communicate the school's vision and high expectations for student achievement, a principal may use a wide range of strategies. A key element of effective communication is being able to identify the audience and knowing how to communicate a message, whether verbal, written, or through administrative decisions (Björk, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The Learning Organization

Educating students for the demands of the 21st century is complex, requiring school leaders to embrace learning as a means to respond to the needs of student (Reeves,

2006). Organizations that recognize that learning is the catalyst for improvement engage in organizational learning. Organizational learning is defined by constant and deliberate engagement of error detection and correction (Collinson & Cook, 2007). This seemingly simple definition is in fact very complicated. Error detection is uncommonly difficult, and strategies for undertaking corrective action may be equally complex. Organizational learning is rather elusive because it exists only when every employee seeks to find solutions to complex problems collaboratively, which in turn result in cognitive and behavioral changes (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge, 1999, 2006). This process is known as double-loop learning (Argyris, 2001). The organizational learning required by everyone demands individual reflection about their approaches to work and behavior that may inhibit substantive renewal of the organization. The evolution of schools to embrace organizational learning requires a paradigm shift in the way school professionals work. This shift is consequential in and of itself, but is nonetheless essential if schools intend to equip students with skills to compete in a global economy, and handle issues inherent in a more complex society (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Wagner, 2008).

Society has moved from an industrial society to a knowledge-based, technological society that demands new ways of doing work, and a continuous search for new knowledge (Jacobs, 2010). Most public schools remain deeply entrenched in cultures that support preparing students for the industrial era (Jacobs, 2010; Wagner, 2008). Schools have been slow to shift the way they complete their work for a number of reasons. Perhaps one of the most significant reasons is the politically charged high stakes accountability movement that shifted responsibility for reform from the schools to the legislators (Ravitch, 2010). In this environment, a student's test scores determine the

success of schools and dominate the national debate on educational reform (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). Wagner (2008) also observes that many educators feel they cannot take the time or risk becoming involved in working through the complex process of organizational learning: There is too much at stake.

Most leaders of contemporary K-12 schools in the United States are keenly aware of their responsibility to assure students learn and achieve performance goals, typically set by policymakers. Nonetheless, principals often face resistance to transforming school cultures into learning communities – particularly in high schools. Many educators are reluctant to abandon traditional teaching approaches and replace them with strategies oriented toward learning. Equally problematic is the discomfort educators have with openly sharing their practices and inviting criticism of their colleagues (DuFour et al., 2005). Schools are often reluctant to embody a new way of doing their work even though they are continually faced with complex problems (internal and external) that adversely impact teaching and learning (Senge, 2006; Wagner, 2008). Some scholars note that the only way for schools to respond effectively to these complex problems is through their commitment to organizational learning (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge, 2006). Notwithstanding these difficulties, the creation of a culture where professional learning is ongoing and collaboration is central to the continuation and creation of effective schools, is a highly promising reform strategy. Education professionals that engage in this kind of work have achieved positive impacts on student learning (Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2005).

Organizational learning is described as a deliberate process of error detection and correction. Collinson and Cook (2007) acknowledge that learning must be a priority for

all members of the school organization. Each organizational member must be an active learner for collective learning to occur. Collective learning includes inquiry and sharing of individual and group learning, which are essential community practices in a learning organization. When all members of the organization engage in inquiry and share their insights with others, critical thinking and successful problem-solving can occur (Wenger & Snyder, 2001). The engagement in organizational learning is fostered by a commitment to (a) prioritizing learning for all members, (b) fostering inquiry, (c) facilitating the dissemination of learning, (d) practicing democratic principles, (e) attending to human relationships, and (f) providing for members' self-fulfillment. When these practices become commonplace in schools, the improvement culture is continuous (Collinson & Cook, 2007).

Prioritizing learning for all members. Organizational or collective learning requires that all members of the organization use information to make sense of the internal and external environment before taking action that influence the environment. Individual learning must occur to actively and deliberately practice organizational learning, but individual learning alone is not sufficient (Collinson & Cook, 2007). For organizational learning to occur the environment must support all members of the organization relying on learning as a required step toward improvement (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Fullan, 2005). When an environment prioritizes learning by all members of the organization, mistakes are accepted as part of the learning process (Fullan, 2005). Leadership that encourages members to openly detect errors and then take action, challenges the status quo and fuels improvement (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Heifetz, 1994; Senge, 2000).

Fostering inquiry. Inquiry ignites learning. When organizational learning is practiced, the idea of fostering inquiry is a natural phenomenon (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge, 2000; Wenger & Snyder, 2001). Collinson and Cook further explain that “the act of engaging in inquiry strengthens the attitudes and ways of thinking valued in organizational learning: curiosity, learning, open-mindedness, searching for evidence, generating multiple possible solutions, considering consequences, taking action to correct errors, and continuing to improve” (p. 94). Fostering inquiry increases the capacity for a deeper understanding of problems and the potential for more innovative solutions (Austin & Harkins, 2008).

Facilitating the dissemination of learning. Collaboration for the purpose of identifying problems and developing solutions is an undeniable characteristic required for organizational learning to take place (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Dufour et al., 2005; Senge, 2000). However, if what was learned is not shared with those affected by the identified problem then the potential to increase the organizational learning is diminished (Collinson & Cook, 2007). The institutionalization of organizational learning is further realized when members openly share what they learned with other members for the benefit of the organization (Argyris & Shön, 1978). It is common for educators to keep their innovations to themselves for reasons such as, not wanting to appear boastful or thinking that other organizational members may not be interested in what others have to teach. The common norm of keeping innovation isolated in schools can be combated when leaders are purposeful about facilitating the dissemination of learning (Collinson & Cook, 2007, Dufour et al., 2005).

Practicing democratic principles. Adhering to democratic principles supports organizational learning (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge, 2000). A top-down social structure squelches learning, inquiry, and dissemination (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Leaders that practice democratic principles provide a more open environment in which communication flows and the participation of all is encouraged (Buffum et al., 2008; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Matthews & Crow, 2010; Senge, 2000).

Attending to human relationships. “Knowing people – professionally, but even more important, personally is fundamental to establishing relationships” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p.167). Establishing and attending to relationships supports the ability to have meaningful dialogue, to question others, to argue points of view, and to build trust (Collinson & Cook, 2007, Sergiovanni, 2005, Fullan, 2008). Learning occurs because of the actions of people and collaboration is supported by collegiality, which in turn is strengthened by attending to human relationships (Collinson & Cook, 2007).

Providing for members self-fulfillment. Organizational learning thrives when all members engage in their personal learning and concurrently commit to the learning of the entire organization (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Sergiovanni (2005) posits that a collaborative culture is better able to support improvement when the competence of the organization increases. The competence of the organization results from both collective and individual learning.

Leadership from the Superintendent and Principal

Recent literature related to democratic leadership suggests that it is a highly effective leadership style, fundamental to sustaining a learning organization, (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Dufour et al., 2005; Fullan, 2001) and central to bringing about significant

school change that contributes to student learning at high levels (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Stoll, & Louis, 2007; Murphy, 2005). The professional relationship between the superintendent and principal is critical to a learning organization (Boris-Schacter, 1999). When the superintendent and principal become mutual learners, they engage as partners in reflection and discussion about how their administrative behavior may change organizational norms and beliefs to improve teaching and learning (Jones, 1999). Although many factors may influence creating and sustaining the cultures necessary to becoming a learning organization (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge 1999), several scholars note that without support from the district superintendent, educational reform initiatives at the school level may not only be slow to develop, but also more difficult to sustain (Björk, 1993; Blase & Björk, 2010).

To establish and maintain organizational learning, Collinson and Cook (2007) assert that superintendents and principals must model what they expect from all members of the organization. “They model and champion learning, support inquiry, ask good questions, build community, care about other members, and inspire others to question and develop a vision of how they would like the organization to work” (p. 140).

Leader Relationships in a Learning Organization

Individuals need to feel not only connected to the direction the school and district are moving, but they also need to feel as if they are included in decision-making processes that help to define the future of the organization. Consequently, leaders must invite and embrace the contributions of coworkers by providing opportunities for them to have a voice shaping the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Buffum et al. 2008; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Fullan, 2001, 2008). A leader’s awareness of individuals’ needs

and feelings can prove to be powerful as they engage in meaningful, continuous, and sustainable change processes (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). When school districts are faced with unrelenting demands for change, leaders must be adept at deliberately nurturing relationships, as they are a critical ingredient in successful change efforts (Fullan, 2001).

Rost (1991) conducted a comprehensive review of leadership studies and defined leadership for the 21st century as an influence relationship. Burke (2008) further supports that influence is multidirectional, stating....

Leadership has more to do with the person and less to do with the role and position. Leadership is about influence, not command and control. To be successfully influential requires personal skills such as active listening, persuasion, empathy, and awareness of how one as leader is affecting others and in turn how one is personally affected by others (p. 233).

This kind of persuasion requires strong understanding and trusting relationships between leaders and followers.

If 21st century leadership is based on an influence relationship, then followers must feel safe in the actions they choose. Without having a level of safety, staffs may be reluctant to take risks or explore new ideas (Goleman et al., 2002). When leaders support followers, they are more likely to engage in high levels of learning and enable the organization to adapt to changes in their external environment. Followers must trust leaders as a pre-condition for establishing a mutual purpose, and they should experience a risk free environment to participate in overtime (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Goleman et al., 2002; Rost, 1991).

In schools where democratic leadership supports and empowers teacher leaders to positively impact teaching and learning, a learning culture where students reach high

levels of achievement is achieved (Buffum et al., 2008). Literature supports school leaders engaging in practices that model trust through shared decision-making, supporting teachers when they take risks, and acknowledging efforts when teachers take on leadership roles and responsibilities related to teaching and learning (Muijs & Harris, 2003; Murphy, 2005; Pellicer & Anderson, 1995; Smylie, 1992). What is not clear in the literature is the impact of a superintendent's leadership on a principal's ability to lead in a way that supports creating and sustaining a learning organization. In a qualitative study, a distinguished scholar argued that the leadership of three superintendents over 17 years in a small rural community in Kentucky was key to transforming the district culture into a community of learners. These three superintendents embraced and supported the collaborative culture that became the norm for the district's schools.

These findings may be juxtaposed with other districts that were faced with a high stakes testing environment which expected principals to opt for formalized programs, purchase test preparation packages, or rely on experts endorsed by the district (Fullan, 1998) instead of supporting teachers working collaboratively and charting the next steps for instruction. When district leaders create an environment that simply searches for the next quick fix, it becomes difficult to nurture collaboration. DeMoss (2002) concluded that districts "should actively and vocally support principals' continued efforts to pursue holistic, complex improvement efforts focused on instruction, even in the face of high-stakes testing" (p. 130). He also notes a tendency among principals to look for quick fixes rather than engage in meaningful and sustainable improvement. DeMoss postulates that a district may be held partly responsible if the focus is placed exclusively on the high stakes testing program rather than on systematic long-term improvement. In this regard,

the district superintendent has to actively support the principals' school improvement efforts through vocal encouragement, and by providing professional development that focuses on how learning organizations may be formed.

District or system constraints also may present obstacles to a principal's ability to develop an effective instructional team. If district-level leadership does not provide support for school-level collaboration, it may be very difficult to achieve a learning community (Anders, Cetofante, & Orr, 1987). Successful collaborative practices require principal's support, team member's commitment, and a district-level system that supports collaboration (Turk, Wolff, Waterbury, & Zumalt, 2002). Although scholars recognize that superintendent support is essential to successful innovation and change, there is a scarcity of research on the kind of system supports that are needed, and the types of relational leadership of superintendents and principals that are essential to developing learning communities.

District superintendents may have a powerful influence on school-level improvement efforts (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005) when their work aligns with that of their principal. To be a strong instructional leader, a principal may have the support of superintendents who are also strong instructional leaders (Björk, 1993; Thompson, 2013). This connection between the type of leadership styles from the principal and superintendent may explain why some schools move more quickly towards improvement. It may be reasonable to assume that leadership from district superintendents may provide a critical level of support to principals engaging in the cultivation of a collaborative culture in their school and the development of learning organizations (Mangin, 2007).

There appears to be a paucity of research about the relationship between superintendents and principals engaged in fostering organizational learning. Research findings regarding their relationship would make a significant contribution to the knowledge base on transformational leadership and fill a gap in the leadership literature related the role of superintendents working with principals to foster a learning organization. Chapter 3 provides a methodology for conducting a case study focused on the relationship between superintendents and principals.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

During the last several decades, district and school leaders have been faced with implementing complex mandates intended to increase accountability, improve schools, and enhance the academic performance of children. Continuous pressure to reform America's public schools may have strained relationships between superintendents and principals when pressure is placed on simply meeting mandates and not on identifying the improvement needs of the school. Some superintendents, however, may evaluate mandates, identify the issues and opportunities, and then work collaboratively with school principals to implement solutions that positively impact school improvement (Boris-Schacter, 1999).

This chapter describes the methodological design of an exploratory case study conducted to examine the relationship attributes between superintendents and principals who serve in a school district that has a long history of fostering organizational learning. Organizational learning relies on identifying problems then collaborating to seek solutions by putting value on learning and attending to human relationships in the process (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Case study methods are appropriate for exploring contemporary phenomena (Yin, 2009), such as learning organizations, because such methods enable a researcher to examine and understand relationships between individuals. The following sections present the rationale and setting for this study and the methods that were utilized to collect data.

Research Question

The design of this exploratory case study allowed the researcher to gain knowledge of superintendent and principal relationships in a school district operating as a

learning organization. The overarching research question was, *What is the relationship between superintendents and principals in a district that fosters organizational learning?*

Rationale for Case Study Design

Selecting the most appropriate research design requires thoughtful reflection (Yin 2009), which includes evaluating research question(s), determining whether or not the exploration of behavioral events require control, and determining if the topic of study is focused on contemporary phenomena. Reflection on these criteria supports the researcher's decision to select a case study design for this proposed study.

Evaluation of the research question. Questions that seek more general and unspecified answers lend themselves to more interpretive methods and allow for adjustment in the research design as needed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). The case study method allows for adjustments in data collection if the researcher deems it necessary to better understand the phenomena under study (Merriam, 1998). Study participants' commentaries and explanations about their experiences and interactions with each other serve as the major data sources for the case study. The exploratory nature of case study methodology allows a researcher to make adjustments in data collection approaches based on discoveries.

Exploration of events. An investigation of relationship attributes among individuals over an extended period of time is complex due to contextual variables and multiple constructed realities of diverse individuals (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009; Merriam, 1998). Thus, the study of relationship attributes within a district that operates as a learning organization requires the researcher to immerse himself into the setting as

an observer as well as function as an anthropologist examining prior events. The behavior of those being studied were not be controlled.

Focus on a contemporary event. This study focuses on contemporary issues and events; a district operating as a learning organization is a contemporary concept. Characteristics of a learning organization have had the contribution of several organizational theorists such as Argyris (2001), Schön (1983), and Senge and colleagues (2000), all of whom study and describe these characteristics in contemporary settings. Argyris contends that some management practices that have been in existence for more than 20 years can adversely affect the creation and/or maintenance of organizational learning. Therefore, the way in which leadership is approached and embraced is a very different way of operating for most organizations. Schön discusses the complexities that exist in understanding fully how a learning organization works, suggesting that modern organizations that operate as a learning organization are more competitive and responsive to change. Senge et al. assert that today's schools are expected to foster organizational learning organization, but contend that it is very difficult for schools to move away from historical approaches of educating students. Schools evolving towards a learning organization in which education methods adapt to prepare 21st century students is difficult and complex. Nonetheless, several theorists acknowledge that fostering organizational learning is a contemporary way of doing work.

Utilizing the case study method to identify relationship characteristics between a superintendent and their principals allows the researcher to be very close to the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1988). The strength of case study research as “a means of investigating complex social issues consisting of multiple variables of potential

importance in understanding the phenomenon” and if anchored “in a real-life situation, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon” (Merriam, p. 32).

Research Context

In 2000, a distinguished scholar published a case study about the transformative role of four superintendents in a central Kentucky school district, which is the setting for this research. This case study spanned a period of 17 years (1982-1999) and analyzed the impact of how a board of education and superintendent leadership transformed a district from a “good ol’ boy system” into a community of learners in which student learning was the district’s primary focus. This case study concluded that consistency of the board of education’s policies and continuity in superintendent leadership characteristics enabled the school district to be transformed from a focus on maintaining the status quo to becoming a contemporary community of learners.

This case study discussed not only the impact of superintendents’ visionary leadership but also underscored the importance of support and commitment from a board of education and revealed significant change in the nature of professionals’ work. This distinguished scholar’s study also supported the notion that substantive change must be sustained over time and requires transformational leadership (Fullan, 2005). The exploratory case study reported through this dissertation was conducted in the same district and may contribute to scholars and practitioners’ understanding of leadership when organizational learning is supported. More specifically, understanding the relationship attributes between district and school leaders may advance understanding about how superintendents may institutionalize the practice of organizational learning in a school district (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Senge et al., 2000).

According to the 2013 district report card provided by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), this school district has an estimated enrollment of 7,574 students distributed across 11 schools including an early childhood center (Preschool-Kindergarten), 5 elementary schools (Preschool-Grade 5), 2 middle schools (Grades 6-8), 2 high schools (Grades 9-12), and an alternative school (Grades 5-12). The number of students served by this district has grown 11% from 6,800 students in 1998 to its 2014 enrollment.

Research Participants

Three former superintendents, two former principals, and three current principal who worked with each other participated this study. The service of the successive superintendents began in 1991 and 1993 for one of the principals. See tables 4.1 & 4.2. Pseudonyms are used for the names of superintendents and principals as well as the school district.

Superintendents. Superintendent Laura Yates served as superintendent of Jameson County Schools for nine years before retiring in June 2013. She served in the district for 30 years, beginning as a Spanish teacher and then rising through the ranks before assuming her role as superintendent in 2004. She was the fifth superintendent since 1982 when Dusty Miller became the superintendent. According to the author of the 2000 case study, beginning with Miller there was a succession of superintendents (i.e., Miller, Adkinson-Richards, Anderson, Franklin) that empowered others to lead and encouraged ideas from student centered professionals in the district to improve learning.

Leslie Franklin was the superintendent prior to Yates, assuming her position in July 1998 and serving for five years. Franklin had been a teacher under Miller whose

leadership started the transformation in the school district. Lucas Anderson was Franklin's predecessor, serving as superintendent from 1991-1998. Unlike Franklin and Yates, he had not worked for Jameson County Schools prior to becoming superintendent but he "distinguished himself as an outstanding educational leader in Kentucky" (Case Study, 2000, p. 46).

I had a unique opportunity to learn more about the specific relationship that existed between these superintendents and their principals. Anderson, Franklin, and Yates still live in Kentucky and thus were accessible for individual interviews. Other former superintendents that were part of study (2000) both reside outside of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and thus are not readily accessible.

Principals. The author of the 2000 case study discusses at length how Tim Walton became principal of East Jameson High School and how the superintendent at the time, Lucas Anderson (1991-1998), recruited Walton based on his commitment to school reform. A glimpse into the relationship between the superintendent and principals can be gleaned from Walton and several of his colleagues who stated that Anderson and the two preceding superintendents "empower others to lead before anybody used that phrase. Not just principals but teachers—anybody who had an idea about improving learning and was student centered" (Case Study, p. 49). This quote is an example of the evidence the 2000 case study author collected when he concluded the existence of the seemingly deliberate leadership that transformed the district to a community of learners.

Tim Walton, who was principal under Lucas Anderson and Leslie Franklin, is currently the owner of his own international educational consulting firm. In addition to Walton, all principals that were interviewed served under one or more of the

superintendents being studied. The other principals include: (a) Orin Samuels principal under Franklin and Yates, (b) Julie Gabbert principal under Franklin and Yates, (c) Kathy Simmons principal under Anderson, Franklin, and Yates, and (d) Debbie Abell principal under Franklin and Yates.

Data Sources

Data used in this study are derived from three sources: (a) superintendent interviews, (b) document analysis, and (c) principal interviews. Utilizing three sources allowed the researcher to determine corroboration or contradiction of findings about superintendent relationships.

A semi-structured interview approach was utilized. A mix of structured and open-ended questions (see protocols in Appendix B and C) allowed for a common focus for all interviews, but also allowed for conversation depending on the responses from individual participants. Conducting interviews is one of the most widely used forms of case study data collection (Merriam, 1998) and can prove to be a rigorous research tool for learning how people feel about and understand the world in which they live (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The protocols were designed to uncover relationship attributes, but the questions were embedded in an organizational learning context. A semi-structured interview approach using a protocol provided rich descriptions about the relationships of superintendents and principals.

Superintendent interviews. Three former superintendents of Jameson County Schools were invited to participate in private interviews: Lucas Anderson (1991-1998), Leslie Franklin (1998-2004), and Laura Yates (2004-2013). The purpose for interviewing

these individuals was to gather first-person reflections about principal and superintendent relationships between 1991 and 2013.

Document reviews. Using documents to study superintendent and principal relationships may be critical (Riley, 1963) because document analysis plays an explicit role in corroborating evidence from other sources. Although documents cannot be treated as literal evidence of what was said or done (Merriam, 1988), they are used to corroborate or contradict other sources. Corroborating other findings through document analysis supports reliability of findings. In contrast, discovering contradictions can result in the need for deeper investigations (Yin, 2009). Using document analysis to uncover corroboration or contradiction improves the validity and reliability of the overall study (Merriam, 1988, 1998; Yin, 2009).

The documents available for analysis included a historical account about the opening of the early childhood center, principal meeting agendas, and some e-mail communications. These documents were reviewed and analyzed using a document review form (Appendix D). The form included a rubric to identify relationship attributes between principal(s) and the superintendent leading the district at the time as well as evidence of organizational learning. The documents revealed evidence of intentional foci and discussions that occurred between principals and superintendents. Reviewing these documents enabled the researcher to reconstruct events, add context, and corroborate interview data.

Principal Interviews. Five school principals that served under Anderson, Franklin, and Yates were recruited for private interviews. Debbie Abell was principal of an alternative school for 14 years (2000-2014) under Franklin and Yates. Three high

school principals were interviewed: Julie Gabbert (2003-present), Orin Samuels (2000-2004) who also worked with Franklin and Yates, and Tim Walton (1993-2000) who worked under Anderson and Franklin. Kathy Simmons served as principal of an early childhood center (2000-2014) under Franklin and Yates. The commentaries derived from these interviews were used to ascertain the relationship attributes that existed between them and the superintendent(s) they served under. Interviewing multiple principals that worked under these superintendents provided connections between relationship attributes. Choosing these principals is expected to provide specialized perspectives about the principal and superintendent relationship attributes in this school district (Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis

The intention of qualitative research is to discover people's opinions, feelings, beliefs, and knowledge. Common, and sometimes exclusive, approaches for collecting data for understanding phenomena are document analysis and interviews (Merriam, 1998). The uses of these data approaches are intended to provide rich data and allow for triangulation. The interview and document analysis procedures are described.

Interview data analysis. Yin (1994) explains that it is not uncommon that novice researchers become overwhelmed with the amount of data that results from interviews and struggle with completing the task of analysis. He contends that the problem is that "there are few fixed formulas or cookbook recipes to guide the novice. Instead, much depends on the investigator's own style of rigorous thinking, along with the sufficient presentations of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations" (p. 102).

Analysis of interview data relied on the theoretical proposition that Rubin and Rubin's (1995) describe in three steps for analyzing interview data: (a) recognizing concepts, (b) hearing stories, and (c) hearing themes. The coding analysis was aided by the use of NVivo, which allowed for better organization of data and cross analysis of transcripts. The analysis began with recognizing concepts, "picking out words the interviewees frequently use that sound different from your ordinary vocabulary" (p. 230). This provided evidence that concepts were appearing. As Rubin and Rubin suggest my analysis found nouns or noun phrases that were repeated frequently providing more insight into concepts and developing themes. To help solidify the emergence of concepts and themes I asked myself, "what is the interviewee talking about? Then, is this idea important? If it is important, can I summarize this idea with a word or phrase that suggests the meaning of the underlying idea" (p. 231)?

Interviewees also shared stories that provided deeper meaning to concepts and themes. Whenever stories were told during interviews it was important that I paid close attention. Typically, a story was told to communicate a specific theme that could not be shared in word or phrase (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The further analysis of stories communicated important lessons that enriched emerging concepts and themes.

Document review data analysis. The use of a document review form ensured a specific analysis procedure. The procedure included: (a) sorting documents by type, (b) identifying if they were primary or secondary sources, (c) determining whether they are edited or unedited, (d) coding for evidence of relationship attributes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and (e) coding for evidence of the organizational learning context. Identifying the

purpose for putting the artifact in writing as well as the intended audience was also critical in analysis (Yin, 2009).

Quality and Verification Checks for Reliability and Validity

The question of reliability for qualitative researchers is viewed as “a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 36). This means that two qualitative researchers may study the same phenomenon and have different findings yet both studies may still be reliable. Questionable reliability occurs if results provide contradictory conclusions.

Insuring the validity of any case study requires thoughtful planning and design because the researcher strives to understand a phenomenon as it occurs in reality (Merriam, 1998). It is first important to remember that there is not a set procedure or method that ensures validity (Maxwell, 2005). However, being mindful of design and including quality and verification checks will yield a valid study.

Triangulation of Data

The use of multiple sources of data allows for triangulation and increases validity (Yin, 2009). Document reviews and interviews with superintendents and principals ensured the identification of commonality between the individuals being interviewed. The emergence of superintendent and principal(s) relationship evidence in a organizational learning context may provided an opportunity to identify themes and concepts. Comparing findings from multiple data sources validates discoveries.

Expert Review and Instrument Field Testing

While having the qualitative researcher as the data collection instrument is considered a validity strength (Merriam, 1998), a threat to validity may still exist because a single researcher is collecting all data. My personal bias does exist, and thoughtfully planning out interviews was necessary to avoid pitfalls such as leading questions. For this study, my dissertation chair and co-chair provided feedback on my semi-structured interview questions as well as for questions included on the document review form. This review improved the interview protocols (Appendix B & C) and document review form (Appendix D), consequently improving the validity of the data collected.

In addition, a field test of interview protocols for superintendents and principals was conducted in the researcher's home district. Following the interviews, I requested the respondent's thoughts and opinions about the protocol. Based on suggestions provided by individuals involved in the field test and by my dissertation chair and co-chair, both experienced researchers, the interview protocols were adjusted to reduce redundancy and clarify terms used to ensure the interviewee more clearly understood what was being asked.

The collection and analysis of documents was also field tested. The expertise of my chair and co-chair were also utilized to discuss the document analysis form and its effectiveness. Before beginning the case study, only slight editing adjustments were needed for the document analysis form.

Member Checking

Two opportunities were provided for respondents to provide feedback, (a) interview transcript review and (b) the review of findings. After transcription of audio-recorded interviews, the respondents were invited to review their interview transcript to ensure responses were accurately recorded. I received feedback from 2 of 8 respondents suggesting minor revisions to their transcripts. In addition, respondents were contacted and asked to review findings. They were encouraged to respond if they felt findings were misrepresented. Responses were received from 6 of 8 respondents were very positive and expressed that the findings accurately represented the relationship of superintendents and principals in Jameson County.

Table 3.1

Responses to Findings

| Respondent | Response After Reviewing Findings |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Lucas Anderson, Superintendent | “You have done an excellent job of capturing the essence of the situation” |
| Leslie Franklin, Superintendent | “You did an amazing job of capturing the essence and spirit of the work in Jameson County” |
| Debbie Abell, Principal | “I feel like you have represented my experience well, and believe your comments are reflective of what we discussed” |
| Julie Gabbert, Principal | “I am very proud of this district and the leaders we have had” |
| Kathy Simmons, Principal | “I believe you truly captured leadership in Jameson County” |
| Tim Walton, Principal | “it really reinforces what a special time and place that was” |

Comparing Participant Descriptions

A comparison of responses was conducted from superintendent and principal interview transcripts to validate the codes identified about relationship attributes. Thick, rich descriptions collected from these respondents allowed for in-depth comparisons. This quality and verification check also provided for triangulation based on commonalities that emerged.

Role of the Researcher

Learning more about the relationship attributes between a superintendents and principals in a school district that fosters organizational learning is important to me. I have been interested in understanding the kinds of relationships that might exist between superintendents and principals since I became a principal myself. My work as a principal is challenging but also very rewarding, and like many other principals, I am committed to assuring student success. I recognize that effective leadership from the principal is critical to ensuring a well-managed school with a positive learning environment where students are challenged and are academically successful. I have also learned that distributing leadership among the professionals in the school, and building their capacity to learn and respond to the needs of students can be uncomfortable and difficult—yet essential.

I believe that if a school functions in a way that fosters organizational learning, the educational process becomes more intentionally focused on the needs of students. Functioning this way also creates an environment where professionals work collaboratively to continuously improve. My experience is that creating an environment

like this must be intentional and takes time if this way of working is going to be sustained.

The obstacles to schools operating this way can come from the pressure to perform in a high stakes accountability environment. I believe that superintendent leadership and how they expect schools to be led by principals can either support organizational learning or stifle this way of doing work. If the pressure to achieve immediate success on high stakes accountability assessments manifests to looking for quick fixes like program or management mandates, fostering organizational learning is put in jeopardy.

It is essential I control for bias. While I hope to discover the relationship that exists between a superintendent and principal in a district that fosters organizational learning, I must engage in critical and rigorous thought about my discoveries. Since I conducted my research independently, I relied on my dissertation committee to provide support and keep me grounded in my data. Thoughtful reflection on my discoveries, quality and verification checks, and the support of my committee helped me to maintain an independent and unbiased role as a researcher.

Protection of Respondents Rights

It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure the protection of the rights of subjects being studied in interviews and document analysis. The steps to ensure that individual rights were protected began with the submission of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application. The IRB application required how subjects were able to review any data collected that pertains to them as well as findings uncovered through analysis. It was important that the researcher was accessible throughout the research process and

provided as much transparency in the work as possible. I was always mindful that it is researcher's responsibility to ensure that subjects were assured that their rights were at the utmost importance.

The methods described provided a solid research framework for doing a reliable and valid case study. The analysis of interview data from superintendents and principals revealed clear and compelling concepts and themes about their relationship. Documents provided more confidence in the data that emerged. In chapter 4 the findings are organized into the concepts and themes that surfaced about superintendent and principal relationships in Jameson County.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This case study was conducted to understand the relationship perspectives of principals and superintendents in a district identified as a community of learners (Case Study, 2000). The exploratory case study design was used to generate rich descriptions used by study participants to describe their relationships. Data sources included eight interviews and document analysis. The transcribed interviews were coded using NVivo, which allowed for cross analysis of interview transcripts. Documents were analyzed to provide additional insight into the relationships between principals and superintendents in the district under study.

To provide anonymity in this case study, pseudonyms are used for the central Kentucky school district and the study participants. The study participants served as either the superintendent or a principal for Jameson County Schools. In total, two former principals, three current principals, and three former superintendents participated in this study. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide each participant's pseudonym name, gender, position held, and years in the district; Table 4.2 also displays the superintendent(s) under which the principals worked.

Table 4.1

Superintendent Participants Demographic and Professional Information

| Pseudonym | Gender | Years in Position |
|-----------------|--------|-------------------|
| Lucas Anderson | Male | 1991 – 1998 (7) |
| Leslie Franklin | Female | 1998 – 2004 (6) |
| Laura Yates | Female | 2004 – 2013 (9) |

Table 4.2

Principal Participants Demographic and Professional Information

| Pseudonym | Gender | Years in Position | School Level | Superintendents Served Under |
|---------------|--------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Debbie Abell | Female | 2000 – 2014 (14) | Alternative | Franklin, Yates |
| Julie Gabbert | Female | 2003 – Present (12) | High School | Franklin, Yates |
| Orin Samuels | Male | 2000 – 2004 (4) | High School | Franklin, Yates |
| Kathy Simmons | Female | 2000 – 2014 (14) | Early Childhood | Franklin, Yates |
| Tim Walton | Male | 1993 – 2000 (7) | High School | Anderson, Franklin |

The analysis of interviews and supporting documents that follow provide consistent findings about the relationship between superintendents and principals. The characteristics of their relationship are described under four themes: a) mission and vision, b) learning is the mechanism for change, d) commitment to innovation and challenging the status quo and e) relationships were positive.

Worthy of Study

The interviews conducted with the administrators, ranged from one-half hour to nearly one hour in length. All study participants were very open to being interviewed and seemed excited to discuss their relationships while working for Jameson County Schools. At the conclusion of my interview with Kathy Simmons she stated, “I am really interested in your work...now is this strictly Jameson County? When I answered yes, she replied, “How exciting!” These leaders had the opinion that not all districts operated like Jameson County Schools. Leslie Franklin expressed that the way Jameson County has been led for more than three decades is not by accident: “the board . . . started to look for superintendents who would be change agents . . . change agents looking at standing on

the shoulders of the superintendent before them and leading the way.” At the conclusion of Laura Yates interview, she added, “I think it's [studying superintendent and principal relationships] a good study. I think it is an important study. A distinguished scholar [researcher for 2000 case study on Jameson County] has impressed on us over time that we were unique in a lot of ways.” These leaders conveyed a lot of pride talking about their district. They were also eager and open to discuss their working relationships with each other. They all painted a picture about how Jameson County Schools are unique.

Shared Vision and Mission: Articulating What is Important

Reoccurring themes that I heard throughout my conversations with superintendents and principals includes (a) a broad vision used throughout their work that guided decisions or simply, *what is best for kids* and (b) a recognition and articulation of their work mission that *instructional leadership* was essential. When I asked superintendents and principals to talk about their interactions when engaging in work together, all described how they thoughtfully considered if the direction they were contemplating was *best for kids*. They also described the work they engaged in and how they believed it impacted students. Doing what *is best for kids* was always on the minds of these leaders, or in some cases used as a reminder in making leadership decisions. And their mission, being *instructional leaders*, guided these leaders in their work.

Best for Kids

Superintendents and principals articulated the phrase *best for kids*, when they talked about their relationship and interactions with each other. These specific words or some paraphrasing of this vision was heard more commonly than any other.

Early Learning Center. One example was the creation of an early childhood center described by Franklin, (former superintendent) and Simmons, current principal of the center) in separate conversations. They both described their vision, doing what is *best for kids*.

Jameson County had been wrestling with the dropout rate and put forth most of their energy to combat this problem in the secondary schools. However, Simmons described how they began to investigate deeper into the districts K-12 programs, realizing they needed to better prepare students for entry into school. “Our kids were not doing well. We also looked at dropout rates, they were huge; so we were spending all this money on dropout prevention.” The focus then began to shift as they thoughtfully evaluated what the district could do to ensure more students are successful. However, constructing an early childhood building and investing in preparing kids for school was not an immediate realization. The focus instead was, “What do we need to do for these kiddos to build the foundation so that they are stronger as third, fourth and fifth grade?”

Franklin described working closely with Simmons as the building of an early childhood center became a reality: “through the shared vision, the collaborative partnership between the superintendent and principal, we opened that school . . . [and] that school has been a model for the state of Kentucky.” Simmons defines the shared vision she and Franklin had, describing their work chairing a committee of community stakeholders for up to two years, and coming to the realization that building an early childhood center was the right thing to do.

Even though working through this process was at times conflict ridden and very expensive, this superintendent and principal proudly share an admiration for each other

and the shared vision, *what is best for kids*. In addition to the interviews with Simmons and Franklin, a district document was shared that outlined the history of how the early childhood center came to be. It provides an account of the two-year study that was conducted to support the early learning of students, thus further evidencing of a very deliberate and thoughtful focus on *what was best for kids*.

Alternative program. Another example of this child-focused vision is how the alternative program was expanded to include more students and staff in a larger, but older building. Abell, principal of the alternative school explains how Yates (former superintendent) reminded her to be always mindful of the students she served. Although Abell did not report fond memories of working through the process of expanding the alternative program, she did provide evidence of the vision, doing *what is best for kids*. Her comments suggest she does not think most people outside of the alternative program understand the kinds of students she serves. She recalls discussing with Yates some of the difficulties she was encountering when administrators at two of the districts high schools wanted to place students in the alternative school. Abell recalls that Yates reminded her, “I really hired you to advocate for your school and that's what you need to do is advocate for [school name].” Abell explains, “Laura was always very, very supportive in saying to the other (high) schools that the ultimate decision rested with our (alternative school) committee on who we took . . . [Laura] was very clear that we served the district, the community of Jameson County, not [the demands of two high schools].” Abell’s discussion how they determined whether or not a student came to the alternative school provided evidence she did not like the conflict that sometimes ensued but does reemphasize a vision of making decisions that are *best for kids*.

Principal hiring. Another example doing *what is best for kids* in the district was during Anderson’s tenure as superintendent when he hired Walton to be principal of a new high school. Walton asserted that he and Anderson share a common philosophical view that decisions need to be made base on what “would be best for students.” When the new high school was being designed, the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 had set out to change fundamentally the way schools educated students in the commonwealth. Walton recalled what Anderson hoped for the new Jameson County High School:

He really wanted a place where kids could thrive as learners and he believed very strongly in the opportunities that were opening up under KERA and wanted somebody . . . who was very committed to students and student learning to give that a try.

In my conversation with Anderson, he also briefly discussed working with Walton when a second high school was being added to the district stating: “We all knew that in the end [transitioning from one high school to having two] it was going to be best for kids.”

Summary. These leaders maintained a focus in their work to ensure they were making decisions that were best for kids. The work was not easy, but they maintained their focus and stayed motivated to complete their task. When superintendents and principals described their vision of doing what is best for kids, they relied upon instructional leadership and a commitment to continuous learning to guide actions and decisions in their work. These leaders gave value to the phrase best for kids by committing to seek opportunities to improve, not claiming to have all the answers. The following section explains how instructional leadership was viewed and expected as these leaders did their work to improve learning opportunities for students. The sections that follow provide data about engagement in learning and a commitment to continuous

improvement, which further guides these leaders to make decisions that they feel are best for the students they serve.

Instructional Leadership

When I asked superintendents to describe the roles and responsibilities they expected from principals, and similarly when principals were asked to describe what superintendents expected from them, all described *instructional leadership*. They reported that this leadership focus was essential to impact positively on student achievement.

I asked Anderson, superintendent from 1991-1998, what he expected from his principals and he quickly responded, “I expected the principals first of all to be instructional leaders.” Anderson then explained he told the principals that, “half of your evaluation will be on student performance.” He perceived the district, “went from a good system, a solid system to one that really ratcheted up the focus on what was happening with kids.” Similarly, when Walton (principal 1993-2000) was describing what he thought superintendents expected from him, he described, “the support of this amazing superintendent [Anderson]” and how they “were able to create something really different.” Walton enthusiastically described opening the new high school and how he was given autonomy to establish leadership that recognized the most important things occurred in the classroom. He believed this so deeply that he and his two assistant principals taught one instructional block per day.

Franklin and Yates, the two other superintendents interviewed, also described instructional leadership as a distinct expectation they had for principals. Franklin, who led the district from 1998 to 2004, explained that her focus as superintendent was to

develop instructional leadership. “We [superintendent and principals] spent a lot of time early in my tenure as superintendent talking about what it looked like to be a preeminent instructional leader.” Yates, who served as superintendent from 2004 to 2013, quantified how much time she expected principals to spend on instructional leadership.

I expected that they would spend at least 50% of their time in the domain of instructional leadership . . . included evaluating teachers, being in classrooms, doing walk-thrus, spending time with professional learning communities looking at student data, (and) their own professional learning related to instructional leadership.

When principals described their responsibility to be instructional leaders, they seemed to embrace this role, often expressing an opinion that having an instructional leadership focus was the right thing to do. Principals often described situations in which they had worked for the innovation of learning processes; they reported having unwavering support from their superintendent(s). Gabbert, currently principal of a high school, described the support of Yates: “She keeps you focused on what's important, which is student achievement and as long as what you're doing ties into improved student performance and what can we do to make our kids better, then she will support you.” Gabbert created a new opportunity for her students to use technology to expand learning and virtually move beyond the high school curriculum. She wanted to use iPads to give identified students the opportunity to earn college credits. This initiative was expensive, but with the support of Yates and the board, they developed a plan to make this opportunity a reality for students.

Samuels, a former high school principal, described how Franklin expected him to be an instructional leader and improve teacher quality. “Her expectation was that principals were going to be instructional leaders first . . . [and] we framed our

professional growth around improving teacher quality as our number one priority.” He knew that his responsibility was to improve teachers, explaining that at times he had to address situations in which teachers were not improving. He was committed to improving teachers’ performance and when he had situations in which teachers were not improving; he did not hesitate to work more closely with them.

I was bound and determined that I wasn't going to let fear of taking on personnel issues stand in the way of what's right for kids and she [Franklin] kinda liked that about me...improving teacher quality was always the forefront for me.

Creating an environment where students can thrive is difficult in any school, but Abell recalls a different level of difficulty when she was establishing a new alternative school. She made it clear that determining the direction of her school was a huge and sometimes lonely challenge. She reflected about working through the process of setting her school’s purpose, recalling that “everybody felt like they knew how alternative education should work from their past experience and nobody was very willing to work with others and so forming the staff into a cohesive working group was a huge challenge.” Ironically, she received help from a former Jameson County superintendent when Anderson volunteered to help her work with her staff in articulating the purpose for the alternative school. She appreciated his help and said she and her staff reached a pivotal crossroad where, at the conclusion of their work, Anderson coached her to say,

now if this isn't where you find your pride and purpose . . . make the moral decision, the only morally right choice you have is to move on to another school and let somebody who does believe this come in and take your place and at that point we lost two really good teachers.

Establishing a commitment to how alternative education was going to be carried out was a difficult time for Abell, but she believes with the support of the former superintendent she established a positive course for her school.

Mechanism for Change: Learning

Fostering a learning culture is intentional in Jameson County Schools.

Throughout my conversations with principals and superintendents, they described learning as a key element of their work with each other. While referring to learning was regularly communicated during interviews, the engagement in learning while working was referenced for two purposes. First, all the principals and superintendents discussed learning time when they met in their regular meetings. This was further evidenced in principal meeting agenda documents. This time focused on learning about leadership and change. In addition, learning was relied upon when problems were encountered or a new innovative initiative was being introduced. In other words, using learning to build capacity was ongoing and also learning was relied upon to sustain innovation. Evidence of the reliance on learning was also found in the document that described the two-year self-study about early childhood education.

Learning is Essential

The former Jameson County superintendents all referenced engaging in learning as very intentional. Yates recalled, “I really felt like my role as the superintendent was to invest in the learning of the principals.” She explained that she looked forward to meeting with principals every month where she often planned and participated in professional learning with them. She described this time as being very collegial and not unidirectional: “I learned as much from principal participants as they ever learned from me.” Franklin, who was superintendent prior to Yates, shared her belief that learning is essential for improvement: “If you’re not improving, you are moving in the opposite

direction.” This learning culture was cultivated with Anderson, superintendent prior to Franklin, who stated “the expectation was that we would continue to be learners.”

The principals who served under more than one of these superintendents referred to learning continually in my interviews with each of them. Prioritizing learning was the second most common code after references to vision and mission. Each of the principals explained that learning was very intentional, explaining that superintendents they worked for made learning a key part of the work they did.

Abell, principal of the alternative school, assertively stated, “Our district is very intentional about professional learning.” Walton, principal of new high school that opened in 1993, added, “We were a community of learners, professional learning was a part and parcel of our identity . . . superintendents [did an] amazing job of reinforcing that notion in every single way.” Gabbert, a current high school principal, supported this notion stating, “professional learning is very, very important to [Yates] . . . when she was superintendent” Gabbert added that she felt all the superintendents she worked under were “trying to keep us on the cusp of what's coming up, new directions, [and] what research says.” Simmons, current principal of the early childhood center, supports a commitment to learning saying: “I feel . . . Jameson County is really strong [in professional learning]. I really do.” Samuels added that the superintendents he worked with

saw the organization as a true professional growth unit and that's what we were all about. That [learning] was the essence of everything. What were we doing to learn, not only what kids were doing to learn but what we were doing to learn and grow professionally.

Several principals I interviewed stated that the focus on learning seemed to increase over time and become more of an emphasis with each successive superintendent.

Simmons, a current principal, explained that devoting meeting time regularly to learning became more a part of the administrators' work together over time: "Our principals meetings really transitioned over the years. They [transitioned from regular] meetings [and] they turned into professional learning." Samuels, a former high school principal, supported that professional learning became more and more intentional during Franklin's tenure (1998-2004). She "wanted principals to be learners, Anderson started it, she completed it. She wanted everybody to be a learner, and she expected to see [us] growing." Walton, a former high school principal under two superintendents, speculated that the focus on learning may have been very different if Franklin and Yates had not followed Anderson as superintendents.

If the superintendency had gone to somebody from outside when Anderson left, or even when Franklin left, it could have made it very very difficult for . . . a [community of learners] mindset to continue because . . . [someone from outside the district may not have] shared that original philosophical commitment to what we were trying to do.

Reliance on Learning

Superintendents and principals were asked questions about their work together. When they identified problems or tackled large-scale initiatives, learning was always part of the process. In some events discussed by superintendents and principals, they described engaging in the learning process together, sitting alongside each other as equals. In other examples, the superintendent initiated, guided, or supported learning for the principal. In either scenario, learning from books, learning from other successful schools or districts, identifying external factors that were affecting Jameson County, and relying on each other's personal experience and understandings were all considered in the solution-finding process.

In separate interviews, a former superintendent and current principal of the early childhood center reflected about the enormous and innovative undertaking it was to create the center. They both described events during a two-year learning process. Simmons explained that a community study group was formed and that “Ms. Franklin and myself . . . chair[ed] this group.” Simmons explained that they did not set out to build a new early childhood center; instead they came to this realization by “visiting other schools that had strong preschool and kindergarten programs, [looking] at the most current brain research [and] what's happening with children [age] three to five.” They also contacted and worked with an outside expert from a local university that specializes in systems change. Simmons describes this experience with a lot of enthusiasm, but remembers that coming to the conclusion to build an early childhood center had been very long and sometimes conflict-ridden process. However, she gave boastful credit to Ms. Franklin’s vision to see the process through completion: “This place would not be here if it hadn't been for her.”

Gabbert, a current high school principal, shared an experience about wanting to use technology to support excelling students by providing them a way to earn up to 15 college credits while still in high school. She discussed working through a critical step, deciding what device would support this initiative. She recalled, doing “a bunch of research on different things and deciding to go with iPads.” The problem was that these devices were very expensive, and the board did not approve Gabbert’s request for funds to purchase them. She recalled, “Yates was backing us when [the board] said no.” So Yates facilitated the district finance officer working with Gabbert to discover alternative ways to purchase the iPads. The end result was the board accepting a compromise where

Gabbert would pay the board if they took out a low interest loan through Apple, Inc.

With the support of Yates, Gabbert was able to start her new blended-learning initiative.

Another example of relying on learning to evoke change can be described when the new high school was built in Jameson County. Anderson, superintendent from 1991-1998, had convinced Walton to become the new principal of the new high school that would become the second high school in Jameson County. He believed that Walton was the right person. Anderson knew that Walton believed in the opportunities KERA could create, and he wanted this new high school lead by this kind of person. Walton recalled a meeting with Anderson and a board member: “They wanted to create a place where all of the opportunities of KERA could be realized in the school.” So with Anderson’s encouragement, Walton set out to envision this kind of school. He “began to work with the faculty and the architects on what would it mean if we could build a school that would reflect this (KERA) idea . . . which meant a strong commitment to learners.” As Walton talked about the design of the new high school, he expressed gratitude for Anderson and superintendents that followed him for their support in creating the new high school. He explained that through their support he was able to learn about things, such as proven approaches to teach mathematics and science by touring a nationally recognized academy and by reading. Through working with Anderson in the design of the new high school, Walton was able to learn, design, and create the kind of place he had been given the charge to create.

Abell, a current principal in the district, also found that learning was a key ingredient in establishing an alternative program that met the needs of the unique population of students she serves. Abell recognized that many of the reforms and ideas

for improving public education were intended for mainstream education. The population she served needed alternative approaches because they typically were not successful in traditional schools. She expressed some frustration, explaining that she often felt on her own when it came to professional learning. For example, she recalled how “NCLB was tough for us because it obviously was written with traditional schools in mind and reform always is. And so then alternative principals have the challenge of saying how do we make this work here?” Abell shares that when something did not seem to fit the alternative setting, she would be given support by having central office staff work with her. She expressed that sometimes it did not feel like she was getting enough support. However, she recalled when she shared this frustration with her superintendent:

Yates . . . really pushed me and supported the minute I mentioned it [my need to learn more about alternative approaches] she was all for going to national alternative conferences and in fact even supported all three principals going to those together.

For Abell, learning needed to go beyond what was happening in the state because they already had a good grasp on approaches to alternative education in the state; they had to look nationally. The opportunity to learn more about alternative education was supported by the superintendent.

Commitment to Innovation and Challenging the Status Quo

All of the respondents interviewed believed Jameson County Schools was focused on learning and they were also deliberated about relying on learning when working through problems or initiatives. In addition, respondents also very often asserted that challenging the status quo was a means to improving what they did for students and described innovative thinking and approaches to meeting the needs of students.

Respondents often used the words *innovation* and *status quo* or explained ways they were

moving in directions that many traditional districts and schools were not. They described the innovation and challenging the status quo activities within the district with pride and excitement. Superintendents and principals also shared that they supported each other in times of innovation and challenging the status quo. Principals often described a genuine sense of appreciation for being encouraged to challenge the status quo, and superintendents expressed that they expected principals to be innovative and not be satisfied with the status quo.

Innovation and Challenging the Status Quo

During interviews with superintendents and principals, they defined Jameson County Schools as an innovative district. In fact, three of the eight individuals interviewed specifically referred to innovation while four described challenging the status quo. The following tables provide quotes for how innovation and status quo were reported.

Table 4.3

Superintendent and Principal References to Innovation

| Respondent | Innovation Quotes |
|------------|---|
| Simmons | “Franklin...she is an innovation vision queen.” “we met with 21st century folks...It was way before it's time, it was innovation.” |
| Walton | “support of the superintendents for innovation” |
| Yates | “one [problem solving protocol] that Franklin used a lot was a "what if" protocol to cause people to really think big and innovative and to really dream about what could be.” “Jameson has always been distinguished as an innovative district.” “All of those folks [former superintendents] were very entrepreneurial, very innovative in their thinking.” |

The reference to innovation by Simmons and Walton (principals) suggests that the district superintendents supported and fostered innovation. According to Yates, a former superintendent, superintendents serving before her tenure were deliberate about their emphasis on innovative thinking. She also boasted that Jameson County Schools has long been perceived as an innovative district within Kentucky.

Table 4.4 displays comments by superintendents and principals about challenging and never being satisfied with the status quo.

Table 4.4

Superintendent and Principal References to Challenging Status Quo

| Respondent | Status Quo Quotes |
|------------|--|
| Franklin | “We talked about what it takes to move from good to great, what it takes to move individuals from status quo to a position of greatness when there are no easy answers.” “So, if we just work in the status quo we will always be status quo, but for a system to grow and thrive, we have to push them out of a status quo.” |
| Gabbert | “Yates knew that we were not content with a status quo.” |
| Samuels | “the greatest expectation [Franklin] had for me was to try to do something more than status quo.” “She expected me to build some inner circle people to help to defuse the status quo.” |
| Yates | “I think it's just critical for a 21st century superintendents to challenge the status quo and to encourage people to personalize learning, engage students in the use of blended learning and technology, and to really harness the opportunities that we have in the 21st century to do school in different ways. That was again part of the DNA of Jameson County. It was not just okay to think like that, it was expected to think that way.” |

Principals Gabbert and Samuels explain that the superintendents they worked under expected them to challenge the status quo. When superintendents referred to challenging the status quo, they indicated that it is superintendents and principals

collective responsibility. Specifically, superintendents Franklin and Yates explained that educators in the district are expected to challenge the status quo.

Although former superintendent Anderson did not use the words *innovation* and *status quo*, he discussed “out- of-the-box thinking” they attempted when he was superintendent. He talked about attempting to provide early childhood services in the schools and moving to all-day Kindergarten. Anderson was not able to see either of these initiatives to fruition but Franklin picked up where her predecessor left off and worked to create an early childhood center. During his interview, Samuels, a former high school principal, referred to Anderson and Franklin:

Franklin had come in after Lucas Anderson, Lucas who's just a big guy, he's just a big presence and he was pushing the envelope [but] he never really got us as far as Leslie [Franklin] did in terms of instruction and innovation.

This comment backs Yates’ claim that superintendents, across more than two decades supported innovation and challenged the status quo.

Superintendents’ expectation of principals being innovative and challenging the status quo is also supported by Franklin’s explanation of her expectations as district leader. She explained that she “was not at all satisfied with a status quo school.” Thus, when a principal was not working to improve, “I was very upset for all the problems in this school to be blamed on the kids or the parents or the poverty. There was always an excuse. So after a two-year action plan, that principal was replaced.” Yates added that some people did not embrace innovation and challenging the status quo.

We found that people who are more traditional in their approach and had a really hard time with that [challenging the status quo] were somewhat ill-suited for the leadership team there. It really needed to be people who were willing to think on their feet, think differently about the work, and be open to change.

Positive Superintendent and Principal Relationships

Following introductions at the start of my interviews with principals and superintendents, the first question asked was, *How would you describe your relationship with your superintendent or with your principals?* All eight interviewees reported they had good relationships, often describing them as personal and genuine. All eight talked about the individuals they worked with and used their first names in their comments. Suggesting that the relationship was open regardless their hierarchal position. Their comments however revealed differences between the ways in which superintendents and principals enacted their roles, which are presented in the next two sections.

Superintendent Perspectives

When the three former superintendents of Jameson County Schools were asked to describe their relationships with principals, Anderson shared that he made time to interact personally with them. He explained that he would try to get into every school each week to meet with principals at their work sites.

I was there [at the school] to see what was going on . . . if people had questions, if there was something they needed me to do while I was there . . . I tried to make it as collegial and informal as possible with each of them and that varies of course from person to person.

Franklin, who succeeded Anderson, described her relationships with principals a fundamentally working together as a team. She explained further that working as a team requires mutual trust and respect that “has to be earned” through “teachable moments,” during times of crisis or times of celebration. Further a trusting “relationship has to be continually built, supported” and “has to be one of the driving forces [to have a] smooth running district.”

Yates shared that she felt she knew all 11 principals well, describing her relationship with them as collegial. She added that she had recently reflected about the kind of relationships she had with principals while she was superintendent of Jameson County Schools and compared what she remembered to the relationships she has with principals and the superintendent in the district where she now works. Yates did not describe what she thinks about the relationships in her current district, but said that while serving as superintendent of Jameson County she felt they had “very positive relationships one to another” and revealed “the previous superintendents [had positive relationships] as well.”

Principal Perspectives

When Abell, the principal of the alternative school, was asked about her relationship with the superintendents with whom she worked, she replied “we had a personal relationship.” Abell was born and raised in Jameson County and attended school as a student with Yates, also a long term resident of the county. She described the foundation of her relationship with superintendent Franklin started when she worked as a school counselor and Franklin was her mentor. Abell appreciated the open relationship she had with her superintendents:

For the most part, I really felt like I could openly ask why questions, why was that decision made, and for the most part felt like I was given the freedom to do that and not seen as a rebel just because I wondered.

Abell also talked a lot about her role as an alternative school principal, explaining that she felt the roles and responsibilities were very different from what other principals had to do to in their schools. Twice during the interview, she stated that she would have liked to meet one-on-one with her superintendent more regularly. Although she understood why there was not always time to meet privately, she felt there were times she

needed it. When she opened the new alternative school, she explained that the first three years were very challenging. Reflecting on the three-year span of her principalship, she said, “Emotionally, I needed somebody that met with me twice a month for lunch and advised me on what to do.” Although these regular lunches did not occur, “I got through [it].”

Gabbert, currently a high school principal in Jameson County Schools, initially described her relationship with superintendents by describing how she addressed them: “I called Dr. Anderson, Dr Anderson,” because at the time she was an assistant principal. As a principal during Franklin and Yates’ superintendency, she called them “Leslie and Laura” which she thought was really nice.” She explained that she appreciated the kind of relationship and access she had to the superintendents. In the former district where she worked there were multiple layers one had to go through to get to the superintendent. However, in Jameson County Schools “I could call Dr. Anderson or Leslie or Laura on their cell phone. I could call them at night if I needed to. I could always get in touch with them.”

Simmons, principal of the early childhood center, described her relationship with the superintendents as one based on a common purpose “to build decisions around children.” She appreciated that kids were always brought into focus but acknowledged that each of the superintendents had “very different communication styles, very different priorities, and very different backgrounds.”

During the majority of time that Samuels served as a high school principal, Franklin was the superintendent, and he stated, “We had a good working relationship.” He added, “We had trust going; she really trusted me to do my thing as a principal, which

I appreciated, but I always knew what her expectations were.” Samuels described Franklin’s expectations for him as: “grow professionally,” “do something more than status quo,” “make the experience for kids better.” His summation of his relationship with Franklin can quickly be compared to the organization of these findings.

Former high school principal Walton described his relationships with the Jameson County superintendents as “outstanding.” He enjoyed collegial interactions and thus had autonomy to make most decisions about the new high school. He appreciated that he “shared a lot philosophically” with Anderson and Franklin, who both supported his ideas for the new high school. He explained that his focus in building the new high school was about “relationships,” a focus that he believed Anderson and Franklin shared. Walton enthusiastically stated, “I was extremely extremely fortunate to be an administrator with such outstanding superintendents.”

Summary

The descriptions of relationships between superintendents and principals evidenced two different approaches based on hierarchal position, but common themes. The superintendents in Jameson County Schools described ways that they were intentional about building relationships and being accessible to principals. In turn, principals described how they felt about the relationships they had with their superintendents and described their experience working with them. The data from principal interviews seemed to support the relationships the superintendents intended to build. In addition, when the principals described their relationships they would emphasize what they felt superintendents valued and stood for, including their focus on kids, professional learning, and always looking to engage in change when it supported

improvement for students. In the final chapter the findings from the narrative data are discussed and conclusions provided to understand how the relationship between superintendents and principals in Jameson County fosters organizational learning.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This case study explored the perceptions among superintendents and principals who served Jameson County Schools between 1991 and 2014. The distinguished scholar from the 2000 case study described the district as a community of learners and Jameson County Schools continues to embed characteristics that foster organizational learning. A case study design was used, and qualitative data were collected through eight semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected superintendents and principals. In total, three former superintendents, two former principals, and three current principals were interviewed. Many documents reviewed were provided by those individuals and were analyzed to substantiate the characteristics of the superintendent-principal relationships.

Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to identify relationship characteristics that exist between superintendents and principals when organizational learning is fostered. Engaging in organizational learning requires an intentional approach to solving problems and an organizational culture that supports and trusts its members (Collinson & Cook, 2007). It is important to learn about foundational relationships between school and district leaders because without their mutual support, the practices necessary to foster organizational learning could likely not be sustained (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Buffum, 2008).

Organizational Learning

Understanding the relationships of school leaders in an organizational learning context allows for reflection on the practices necessary to foster this kind of school district culture. Collinson and Cook (2007) contend that when a school or school system

fosters organizational learning it does so (a) deliberately, (b) when learning may change norms and behaviors, (c) by embedding learning as the way the institution does work, and (d) by renewal when the organization transforms in response to challenges. The deliberate use of learning is embedded in the work and relationships of superintendents and principals in Jameson County evidenced by leaders that span 23 years (1991 – 2014) of school and district leadership. Fostering organizational learning provides balance for continuity and change both of which are necessary for renewal (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Overtime, when the collective work of many fosters an organizational learning culture it leads to increased competence of the organization ever strengthening learning and renewal (Sergiovanni, 2005).

The data reported in Chapter 4 are organized into several separate yet related themes that emerged from this study. The following sections of this Chapter is organized using the same themes, present a brief summary of findings and discuss each them using literature presented in Chapter 2 to understand and explain the relationship characteristics of superintendents and principals and how they relate to their respective roles and responsibilities.

Shared Vision and Mission

It should be possible for members of an organization to articulate its vision for what they hope to accomplish. But for the vision to have value, Sergiovanni (2005) persuasively argues that the work should support the organization's mission and thus help to realize members' collective hopes and dreams. A recurring theme that emerged from interviews with superintendents and principals that served Jameson County Schools over the bounded period of this study (1991-2014) was their articulation of a vision and

mission and the persisting question that grounded their decision making processes: *What's best for kids?* This phrase seems to be on the lips of these school and district-level leaders whose leadership spans the past two and a half decades. The three superintendents and five principals used the notion, *do what is best for kids*, as a guide as well as a gauge to measure the quality of their work. This seemingly simple phrase provided a powerful template and compass to ensure their work was focused on what was best for kids and was having an impact on their learning. It was evident that the close link between vision, mission and child-learning focused work was important to principals and superintendents who participated in the study. They were all grounded in doing what was best for students, committed and focused on accomplishing this goal. The phrase, *best for kids* is defined by a commitment to engage in work and make decisions that supports improving learning opportunities for students. The findings from these leaders does not suggest they have all the answers, rather a humble commitment to continually seek and be open to changing practices that supports improving student achievement. Superintendents and principals suggested that improving student performance requires an understanding that focusing on what was happening in the classroom was most important. Therefore, work that focused on: (a) evaluating teachers, (b) being in classrooms, (c) working with teacher teams, (d) reviewing and discussing student data, (e) engaging in professional learning, and (f) continually defining their purpose. Their use of common language, phrases and child focused purpose of their work indicated that they shared a deep understanding of the vision and mission and significantly, both influenced the nature and direction of their work.

According to Deal and Peterson (1999) and Schein (1985), real organizational visions and mission are not superficial but rather runs deep. Hoyle et al. (2005) concur and note that substantive vision and mission statements crafted by school and district staffs go well beyond what is posted on the wall. Schein (1985) observes that organizational cultures may vary from place to place depending on context and the nature of leadership. Findings suggest that alignment of school and district vision and mission influenced how principals and superintendents did their work in Jameson County Schools for more than two decades. It is significant not only in its being widely shared but also in its duration. Sergiovanni (2005) observes sustaining a shared vision and mission that supports student learning is a characteristic effective leadership and community support. Jones (1999) postulates that when the superintendent and principal engage in meaningful conversation about organizational norms and the beliefs that govern action, it often results in altering behaviors that improve teaching and learning. It is evident that the vision and the work that supported the mission were very important to the leaders of Jameson County Schools individually and over time. Both may have had an indirect influence on improving student learning in the district. Interaction among principals and superintendents may be characterized as doing what was best for students.

Communication. Effective communication of the organization's vision is critical to be able to sustain improvements, especially when problems arise (Sergiovanni, 2005). The leaders who participated in the study shared stories about times when they had to work through complex innovations to solve the problems they discovered. A recurring theme that emerged from interviews with these leaders was evidenced in their articulation about *doing what was best for kids*. This focus appeared to guide the continual search for

ways to improve and served as a template for improvement initiatives. Broadly communicating the district's vision and mission that focused *on doing what is best for kids*, also focused that nature and direction of superintendents' and principals' work. For example, the level of communication that existed between superintendents and principals often took the form of direct conversations. Data indicate that they were comfortable in their relationship, met regularly, shared information and often sought out each other's opinions about work whenever it was needed. Superintendents' suggested that they were intentional about having regular one-on-one interaction with principals in meetings and in visits to schools. There was also evidence that superintendents enjoyed and valued their professional contact with principals. Interviews with principals provided considerable insight into the value they placed on their contact with superintendents. For example, in a discussion about the development of the alternative program, Abell, principal of the alternative program, expressed that she often wanted even more one-on-one interactions with superintendents. Principals, much like the superintendents valued opportunities to work collaboratively to accomplish what was *best for kids*.

Effective communication of the vision and mission between the superintendent (Hoyle et al., 2005; Kowalski, 2006) and principal (Björk, 2010; Matthews & Crow, 2003) is essential facing today's complex challenges and fostering organizational learning (Collinson & Cook, 2007; D'Alessandro, 1999). D'Alessandro (1999) asserts the two most important individuals in the school district that positively communicate an effective vision and mission are the superintendent and principal. She further argues two-way communication between a superintendent and principal not only builds mutual trust and respect, but also provides a means for coordinated effort to deliver the best services

for students. Data collected about the communication between superintendents and principals supports their sustained commitment to a child-centered shared vision.

Teacher-scholar. Marzano & Waters (2009) note that highly effective school and district leaders provide *instructional leadership* as a way to indirectly improve student learning. Data indicate that many principals and superintendents in Jameson County Schools discussed actions they took to improve and ensuring it met prevailing cultural norms, values and beliefs expressed in the district's vision and mission statements: *was it best for children?*, and, whether they were providing students better opportunities to learn. Superintendents shared examples of how they practiced the teacher-scholar role and that they expected instructional leadership from his or her principals. Principals affirmed this expectation and focused their work on improving learning opportunities for children. Data indicate that superintendents and principals discussed working together on initiatives including the creation of a new early childhood program, implementing standards-based grading, opening a new high school, and a reoccurring focus on improving teaching. All of these examples emphasize interactions that focused on improving learning opportunities that were better for children. The leaders in Jameson County provided insight into how their interactions exemplified characteristics of their teacher-scholar roles.

The role teacher-scholar and providing instructional leadership from the superintendent (Hoyle et al., 2005) and principal (Glanz, 2006) impacts student learning and although indirect, it is none-the-less a critical role for both. Instructional leadership by the superintendent includes working closely with principals to monitor change processes intended to improve student learning (Hoyle et al., 2005). The Jameson

County School superintendents interviewed all expressed an expectation that principals spend the majority of their time working as an instructional leader. Thus, consequently the principals interviewed all acknowledged what was expected of them and believed it was the right area to devote their time and energy.

Embrace Learning

The commitment to organizational learning by the superintendent and their relationship with principals in Jameson County focused on learning, problem-finding and problem-solving through cultivation of broad-based leadership. Jones (1999) observes that when superintendents and principals foster organizational learning, it becomes a basic characteristic of how they do work. Learning for learning sake is not haphazardly practiced. Rather, organizational members are intentional about what they need to understand and why they need to learn more. According to Collinson and Cook (2007) and Senge (2000) organizations learn for a reason. They use learning to uncover problems and rely on learning to develop solutions. Reeves (2006) suggest that organizational learning may have a substantive and widespread impact on improving the local organization. It was evident that over more than a two decades, the relationship between principals and superintendents in Jameson County supported the notion of organizational learning, influenced the nature of principal-superintendent communication, shaped their respective roles, and helped them stay focused on what was best for kids.

Democratic leadership. Deal and Peterson (1999) note that leading democratically is essential if learning is going to be embraced as a way to improve organizations. In other words, leaders have to rely on others to understand the multiple

layers that may define the problem in an organization and to consider what needs to be understood to implement a solution (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Reeves, 2006; Senge, 2000). The superintendents and principals interviewed provided evidence that they relied on each other to identify problems, understand factors that impact the problem, and formulate solutions. The respondents expressed a feeling of being trusted and were encouraged to challenge the status quo. The superintendents all expressed that they welcomed open dialogue and embraced opportunities to learn so that practices in the district could improve. Principals seemed empowered to learn and share, attributing this open environment to the leadership of the superintendent and the sustained culture of the district. Democratic leadership from the superintendent has become a cultural norm for Jameson County Schools. Principals imply that being led this way is empowering for them. They suggest that being a participant in this type of leadership allows them to be more innovative and open to change (Fullan, 2008).

Encouraging Innovation

The former and current administrative leaders who were interviewed expressed significant satisfaction in their work, often restating that Jameson County Schools was a unique district. Feeling empowered to challenge the status quo and create better opportunities for students to learn seemed to be very motivational for them. Maintaining the drive to do the difficult work of an educational leader and thriving as a leader in spite of the work's complexity is determined by the culture (Fullan, 2008). The superintendents and principals interviewed not only accepted change, but embraced it. They implied that the uniqueness of Jameson County Schools was their expectation to be innovative-to challenge the status quo.

Leadership without authority is a phrase that describes when individuals in positions of authority allow members of the organization to disrupt norms in order to encourage creativity and innovation (Heifetz, 1994). However, this doesn't suggest that parameters for the organization are not set, rather creatively solving problems that contributes to improving the organization must be cultivated (Fullan, 2008). Inquiry and then reinvention of behaviors may contribute to new operational norms that may make schools and school systems rewarding and stimulating places to work (Collinson & Cook, 2007).

Former superintendent Franklin and former principal Samuels explained the expectation of leaders to challenge the status quo as a foundational element of Jameson County School's innovation culture. When talking about pushing principals to think outside the box, Franklin replied,

If we just work in the status quo, we will always be status quo. But for a system to grow and thrive, we have to push them out of a status quo. We can't leave them out there . . . because change is stressful. Pushing peoples thinking, it's not something you can do every day because our own natural functioning [is to] seek equilibrium, but we know cells die if they stay in an equilibrium state. My thinking is if you're not improving, you are moving in the opposite direction.

Franklin implied that encouraging innovation was definitely an expectation of principals, but she also recognized that this has to be done carefully. It appears that superintendents not only understood the stress associated with change but also created an environment that empowered principals to seek opportunities to change on their own. Samuels supported this notion: "I was always encouraged to be evolutionary. Not revolutionary, but evolutionary." He was expected to always find opportunities to change.

Heifetz (1994) observes that a work environment in which leaders are expected to learn, grow, and change is not created accidentally. This type of environment requires

members of the organization to trust each other implicitly when serving to provide transformational leadership. It is evident that superintendents and principals in Jameson County Schools embraced the notion of shared-democratic leadership and continually provided mutual support and encouragement as they worked to improve schools and make them better for children. Broad-based recognition of the district's purpose coupled with an understanding that learning is continuous and collaborative created and maintained environment that supported innovation and change.

Mutual Respect

Scholars concur that organizations that promote learning cultures also cultivate trusting relationships and mutual respect (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Fullan, 2008; Hoerr, 2005; Senge, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005). Superintendents and principals in Jameson County Schools described respect for one another and their working relationships with both pride and enthusiasm. They characterized their work in Jameson County Schools as being very rewarding, particularly with regard to the way superintendents and principals accomplished their work. It is evident that mutual trust and respect for one another is a unique aspect of the relationship between superintendents and principals in Jameson County and enabled them to continually grow professionally, embrace change, and thus improve opportunities for children to be successful.

The preponderance of evidence on mutual respect between superintendents and principals was significant. In candidly describing their relationships superintendents and principals were complimentary of one another, gave each other credit for successful endeavors, and conveyed a feeling of having personal relationships. They frequently complimented each other on being smart and recognized how much they learned from

each other. Both superintendents and principals described a feeling that they liked working together and they were proud of what they accomplished. Importantly, they gave credit to the succession of Jameson County School District superintendents that nurtured a culture of trust and respect for more than two decades. The existence of heartfelt respect for each other is foundational to a school district that fosters organizational learning (Collinson & Cook, 2007; Fullan, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2005). Fullan (2008) describes loving your employees and Sergiovanni (2005) contends that leaders must be intentional about attending to the heart when learning is relied upon when engaging in change. The respect among leaders in Jameson County Schools was a powerful reference throughout the study and appears to have been an essential aspect of creating and maintaining its learning.

Conclusions

This exploratory case study was designed to discover relationship characteristics between superintendents and principals. The guiding research question for this study was: *What is the relationship between superintendents and principals in a district that fosters organizational learning?* Analysis of data have generated several themes and contributed to gaining insight into principal-superintendent relationships in a district characterized as a learning organization.

Major themes that emerged about the relationship between superintendents and principals in Jameson County include: (a) shared mission and vision, (b) learning is the mechanism for change, (c) commitment to innovation and challenging the status quo, and (d) positive relationships. It is evident that these recurring themes were intertwined with a wide array of superintendents and principals work as well as how they described their

relationships. Superintendents and principals were grounded in attempting to do what was best for kids because they focused their leadership practices on how they could impact the instructional program to improve learning opportunities for students. They were committed to continuous professional learning in order to understand better the actions necessary to improve. Ultimately, these leaders sought out and became excited about innovations that not only influenced changes in their practice but also contributed to emerging norms in their work. These school and district leaders expressed considerable respect for one another, valued each other's contributions, and appreciated working in an environment in which organizational learning is fostered.

The relationships between superintendents and principals in Jameson County Schools have been cultivated for many years, and thus, it is significant that the themes discovered spanned nearly two and a half decades. Successive superintendents have all valued leading in a way that fosters organizational learning and principals who served with them were highly motivated in their work. Evidence suggests that these school and district leaders valued their relationships and attribute it to the pride they felt about Jameson County Schools.

Leadership by these superintendents was critical to creating the district's success. Scholars have noted the importance of superintendent leadership in creating an environment where organizational learning thrives (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). In addition, principals in the study not only were all highly successful school leaders but also acknowledged that they thrived in the Jameson County School's learning culture. Principals participating in this exploratory case study overwhelmingly reported having positive views of the district's learning culture, enjoyed long careers, and expressed a

significant amount of loyalty and pride in the district. The succession of superintendents and the principals with whom they served over more than two decades embraced organizational learning, contributed to its longevity, and created a unique district-wide organizational culture.

Recommendations for Practice

Although, findings of this exploratory case study may not be generalizable to other districts, they are consistent with scholarly work on organizational learning. Recommendations for districts that may want to foster organizational learning reflect on what was learned about one district, presented below.

Define vision and practice mission. The business of leading schools is very personal. Consequently, doing what is the morally correct is an important guide to what leaders do and how they do it. Therefore, the organization's vision is not a just a statement, but rather a moral compass that can be used whenever decisions are made about students' education (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Redefining the vision is continuous because its meaning should become clearer as organizational members work against what is ultimately the dream of accomplishing. Leaders must remind and practice the ever-deepening and more meaningful definition of what the district envisions (Fullan, 2008; Reeves, 2006). In addition, leaders should recognize that work practices, initiatives, innovations, and subsequent changes define the mission. And, it must be scrutinized to ensure that it helps to make progress toward the district vision (Sergiovanni, 2005). If the work or mission does not support the hopes and dreams being sought for students then it should be challenged, and either changed or abandoned (Fullan, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Use learning to change. Learning includes things you might read, but it also includes personal and colleagues' experiences, and information that can be collected from the internal and external environment (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Engaging in learning to understand what direction should and should not be taken must become a common and intentional practice whenever identifying and resolving problems (Sergiovanni, 2005). Embracing learning does not come easily. It is difficult because it is a constant process, cycling over and over as we learn about new practices and scrutinize existing ones (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Leaders can foster the use of learning by ensuring that time is always allowed to enable stakeholders to think deeply about ways to improve the organization (Westover, 2008). Providing time should become common so that learning more is relied upon when complex problems are encountered.

Leaders must also understand that the learning cycle is difficult, requiring patience and trust (Buffum, 2008). Superintendents and principals are often expected to have the right answer, but if the process of learning is valued and relied upon, current thinking and practices may be challenged. Thus, being open to challenge and using learning to change is an essential characteristic of superintendent leadership. "Learning is being humble in the face of complexity," (Fullan, 2008, p. 14) because we do not have all the answers.

Seek innovation. Discovering new and exciting ways to meet the needs of students can be very rewarding (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Leaders should always be open to finding new ways to educate kids. They should also encourage others to challenge the status quo. It is important to be mindful of the work and stress involved when current practices are challenged. Leadership must understand that innovation takes

time and is taxing mentally, physically, and emotionally on employees (Fullan, 2008; Heifetz, 1994). However, innovation can be highly rewarding and provide deep satisfaction (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Consider the evidence provided by superintendents and principals in Jameson County when they talked about the long and difficult road engaging in change, and yet how proud they were of what they accomplished.

Provide respect to earn respect. Respect is defined as caring for others and what they contribute (Fullan, 2008). Leaders must always be mindful what it means to provide respect (Hoerr, 2005). It means not always rushing to judgment when a suggestion is offered or an action is taken. Providing respect does not mean that concerning situations or negative actions are not confronted. However, taking time to understand what influences and drives opinions and actions, then acknowledging the opinions and actions helps earn respect overtime (Patterson et al., 2012).

Professional practice of what is valued by the organization is essential. Respect is earned when the district vision is used to gauge decisions, when the mission supports the vision, when learning is used to change, and when innovation is sought to challenge the status quo. Remaining mindful of what leadership relationships should include earns respect and perpetuates the organizational learning practices indefinitely (Patterson et al. 2012).

Lessons Learned

Sitting among my cohort on my first day of orientation of doctoral studies at the University of Kentucky I was asked, what do you plan to study? Having been a principal for 5 years, I knew I wanted to learn more about how a superintendent and principal

interact as colleagues toward a common vision. I felt that if a principal and superintendent shared a common goal coupled with practices that promoted collaboration substantive good could be done for all students. Consequently, my study topic of interest remained about the relationship between superintendents and principals.

When I began my course work, I learned about the fundamental impact deliberate collaboration could have on leadership. Further, when collaboration is practiced in an organization that relies on learning to adapt to the changing internal and external environment, I felt my understanding of being an effective leadership was being fundamentally changed. Fostering organizational learning is essential to continually meet high stakes demands in schools and meet the 21st century demands of today's students. I learned that for a school to foster organizational learning, it would require support and commitment from the district superintendent. Conducting this study has had a profound impact on me as a principal and renewed my aspirations to become a superintendent. I am driven to assimilate the relationship characteristics I discovered in this study. I recognize that I may only begin the journey for future leaders in my district, because sustaining organizational learning requires a long line of leaders that promote this collaborative learning culture. Creating and sustaining and adaptive organizational learning environment is essential to prepare students now and into the future.

I learned that the creation and sustainability of organizational learning takes time. The context of this study spans more than twenty years. It is also evident that the careful selection of leaders over the last two decades is essential to maintaining a consistent vision and mission. Stability for Jameson County Schools is provided by a focus on student learning and a reliance on learning. The superintendents and principals that

participated in this study were empowered to engage in difficult work together because the organization was motivated to provide the best for their students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Conducting an exploratory case study in Jameson County Schools with a focus on superintendent and principal relationships continue and compliments the 2000 case study conducted in the same central Kentucky school district. The 2000 study focused on the transformational role of superintendents in this same district. There are multiple and diverse dimensions to understanding long-term change in school districts. Another chapter of the story for Jameson County Schools may focus on examining the role of board of education and how their selection of superintendents contributed to and sustained the district's focus on children and a learning culture. A research question for consideration may be: *What did the board of education look for in a superintendent and how did their selections nurture organizational learning overtime?* Many of the superintendent and principals interviewed acknowledged that the board members were thoughtful and intentional about the person that would be the next leader of the district. Understanding the members of the board and what they value in leadership would enhance scholarly understanding of how school district organizational learning environments may be nurtured over time.

Another significant area worthy of investigation in Jameson County Schools is the impact on teacher leadership. *How does the district's orientation toward organizational learning impact teacher leadership? And, does the relationship between superintendents and principals influence a broader sense of collaboration among teachers?* A much more holistic contribution to how districts can foster organizational learning could be

developed by understanding the actions, decisions, and work of the board of education, superintendents, principals, and teachers. Continuing to seek a more holistic view of Jameson County may prove to be a guide for other districts that have a long-term vision to foster their district's organizational competence toward embedding and the continual renewal of organizational learning characteristics.

APPENDICES

Appendix A-Communications and Community Relations

A superintendent should know and be able to:

- Articulate the district's vision, mission, and priorities to the community and mass media.
- Demonstrate an understanding of political theory and skills needed to build community support for district priorities.
- Understand and be able to communicate with all cultural groups in the community.
- Demonstrate that good judgment and actions communicate as well as words.
- Develop formal and informal techniques to gain external perceptions of a district by means of surveys, advisory groups, and personal contacts.
- Communicate and project and articulate position for education.
- Write and speak clearly and forcefully.
- Demonstrate formal and informal listening skills.
- Demonstrate group membership and leadership skills.
- Identify the political forces in a community.
- Identify the political context of the community environment.
- Formulate strategies for passing referenda.
- Persuade the community to adopt initiatives for the welfare of students.
- Demonstrate conflict mediation.
- Demonstrate consensus building.
- Promote school-community relations, school-business partnerships, and related public service activities.
- Identify, track, and deal with issues.
- Develop and carry out internal and external communication plans.

Appendix B-Superintendent Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introductions

Attending to Human Relationships:

How would you describe your relationship with your principals?

How would you describe your principals' roles and responsibilities while you were superintendent?

Think back to a complex reform initiative you had to respond to while you were superintendent. Describe your interactions with principals as you designed a solution or implemented a district directive.

Tell me how conflict was handled with principals when solutions to complex problems were being developed?

Prioritizing Learning for All Members:

Describe the role professional learning played when you worked with your principals to identify the root of problems and to development potential solutions.

Were professional learning opportunities provided for principals to promote different ways of thinking about solutions to problems?

- If response is Yes: Please describe what they were and how effective they were.
- If response is NO: Please share why professional learning opportunities were not offered.

Fostering Inquiry:

Direct Inquiry: Tell me about a time you posed a question to your principal(s), in which you sought their feedback. Describe your interaction with them.

Indirect Inquiry: Did you ever encourage your principals to “think outside the box” to find a solution to a challenging issue or problem?

- If response is Yes: Tell me why you encouraged by your principals to ”think outside the box” to find possible strategies.
- If response is No: Please share why you did not promote “thinking outside the box” to find solutions.

Facilitating the Dissemination of Learning:

If an improved approach to solving a problem was discovered, tell me how this information was disseminated to principals.

Providing for Members' Self-Fulfillment:

Please share with me how you approached professional learning with your principals.

How do you think principals would describe professional learning in this district while you were superintendent?

Closing and appreciation.

Appendix C-Principal Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introductions

Attending to Human Relationships:

How would you describe your relationship with your superintendent(s)?

How would you describe the roles and responsibilities your superintendent(s) expected of you?

Think back to a complex reform initiative to which the district had to respond while you were principal. Describe your interactions with your superintendent(s) as you designed a solution or implemented a district directive.

Tell me how conflict was handled while working with your superintendent(s) when solutions to complex problems were being developed?

Prioritizing Learning for All Members:

Describe the role professional learning played when you worked with your superintendent to identify the root of problems and to develop potential solutions.

Were professional learning opportunities provided by your superintendent to promote different ways of thinking about solutions to problems?

- If response is Yes: Please describe what they were and how effective they were.
- If response is NO: Please share why you think professional learning opportunities were not offered.

Fostering Inquiry:

Direct Inquiry: Tell me about a time you posed a question to your superintendent(s) in which you sought their feedback. Describe your interaction with her or him.

Indirect Inquiry: Were you encouraged by your superintendent to “think outside the box” to find a solution to a challenging issue or problem?

- If response is Yes: Tell me how you were encouraged by your superintendent to “think outside the box” to find possible strategies.
- If response is No: Please share why you think your superintendent did not support your “thinking outside the box” to find solutions.

Facilitating the Dissemination of Learning:

If an improved approach to solving a problem was discovered, please tell me how this information was disseminated by your superintendent(s).

Providing for Members' Self-Fulfillment:

Please share with me how professional learning was approached by your superintendent(s).

How would you describe professional learning while you worked for your superintendent(s)?

Closing and appreciation.

Appendix D-Document Analysis Form

Document Title _____

____ Primary Source ____ Secondary Source

____ Edited ____ Unedited

For what audience was the document written?

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

A. Who is the author and what is their position?

B. Why was this document written?

C. List things the author said about the relationship between the superintendent and principal.

D. List things the author said about the way work is done.

E. List things the author said that are characteristics of fostering organizational learning.

REFERENCES

- Alsbury, T. L. (2008). Hitting a moving target: How politics determines the changing roles of superintendents and school boards. In B. S. Cooper, J. G. Cibulka, L. D. Fusarelli (Eds.), *Handbook of educational politics and policy* (pp. 126-147). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Anders, L. W., Cetofante, E. F., & Orr, J. T. (1987). Building the instructional team for effective leadership. *NASSP Bulletin*, 71(502), 61-63.
- Andrews, R. L., Basom, M. R., & Basom, M. (1991). Instructional leadership: Supervision that makes a difference. *Theory Into Practice*, 30(2), 97-101.
- Argyris, C. (2001). Good communication that blocks learning. In *Harvard business Review on organizational learning* (pp. 87-109). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Austin, M. S., & Harkins, D.A. (2008). Assessing change: Can organizational learning "work" for schools? *The Learning Organization*, 15(2), 105-125.
- Barth, R. (2001). Teacher leader. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(6), 443-449.
- Bennis, W. G., & Nanus, B. (2007). *Leaders: Strategies for taking charge*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Björk, L. G. (1993). Effective schools-effective superintendents: The emerging instructional leadership role. *Journal of School Leadership*, 3(3), 246-259.
- Björk, L. G. (2001). Institutional barriers to educational reform: A superintendent's role in district decentralization. In C. C. Brunner & L. G. Björk (Eds.), *The new superintendency* (pp. 205-228). New York, NY: JAI Press.

- Björk, L. G. (2010). *Educational reform in the USA: Characteristics of superintendents in instructionally effective school districts*. Paper presented at the 6th International Symposium on Educational Reform, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Björk, L. G., & Gurley, D. K. (2005). Superintendent as educational statesman and political strategist. In L. G. Björk & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 163-185). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Björk, L. G., & Kowalski, T. J. (Eds.). (2005). *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Björk, L. G., Kowalski, T. J., & Young, M. D. (2005). National reports and implications for professional preparation and development. In L. G. Björk & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 45-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Blankstein, A. (2004). *Failure is not an option: Six principles that guide student achievement in high-performing schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Blase, J., & Björk, L. (2010). The micropolitics of educational change and reform: Cracking open the black box. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, D. , & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational change* (Part 1, pp. 237-258). New York, NY: Springer.
- Bogdan, L., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Boston. MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Boris-Schacter, S. (Ed.). (1999). *The changing relationship between principal and superintendent: Shifting roles in an era of educational reform*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Browne-Ferrigno, T., & Glass, T. E. (2005). Superintendent as organizational manager. In L. G. Björk & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 139-163). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Buffum, A., Erkens, C., Hinman, C., Huff, S., Jessie, L. G., Martin, T. L., Mattos, M., Muhammad, A., Noonan, P., Parscale, G., Twadell, E., Westover, J., & Williams, K. C. (Eds) (2008). *The collaborative administrator: Working together as a professional learning community*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Buffum, A. (2008). Trust: The secret ingredient to successful shared leadership. In A. Buffum, C. Erkens, C. Hinman, S. Huff, L. G. Jessie, T. L., Martin, M. Mattos, A. Muhammad, P. Noonan, G. Parscale, E. Twadell, J. Westover, & K. C. Williams, K. (Eds.), (2008). *The collaborative administrator: Working together as a professional learning community* (pp. 55-71). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Burke, W. (2008). *Organization change: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Collinson, V., & Cook, T. F. (2007). *Organizational learning: Improving learning, teaching, and leading in school systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Conrad, C. (1994). *Strategic organizational communication: Toward the twenty-first century* (3rd ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College.

- Cunningham, W. G., & Cordeiro, P. A. (2003). *Educational leadership: A problem-based approach* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- D'Alessandro, B. (1999). Taking turns a teaching and learning: The superintendent-principal partnership. In S. Boris-Schacter (Ed.), *The changing relationship between principal and superintendent: Shifting roles in an era of educational reform* (pp. 73-80). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Daresh, J. (2002). *What it means to be a principal: Your guide to leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Deal, T. E. & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- DeMoss, K. (2002). Leadership styles and high-stakes testing. *Education and Urban Society*, 35(1). 111-132.
- Doyle, D. (2002). Knowledge-based decision making. *School Administrator*, 59(11), 30-34.
- DuFour, R., DuFour, R., & Eaker, R., (Eds.). (2005). *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Dwyer, D. (1984). The search for instructional leadership: Routines and subtlties in the principal role. *Educational Leadership*, 41(5), 32-37.
- Edmonds, R. (1982). Programs of school improvement: An overview. *Educational Leadership*, 40(3), 4-12.
- Firestone, J. A., Mangin, M. M., Martinez, M. C., & Polovsky, T. (2005). Leading coherent professional development: A comparison of three districts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(3), 413-448.

- Fullan, M. (1998). Leadership for the 21st century: Breaking the bonds of dependency. *Educational Leadership*, 55(7), 6-10.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations survive and thrive*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2011). *The moral imperative realized*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fusarelli, B. C., & Fusarelli, L. D. (2005). Reconceptualizing the superintendency: Superintendents as social scientists and social activists. In L. G. Björk & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 187-206). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Glanz, J. (2006). *What every principal should know about instructional leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Glass, T. E., Björk, L. G., & Brunner, C. C. (2000). *The study of the American school superintendency 2000: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. E., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Unleashing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Gruenert, S. (2007). Correlations of collaborative school cultures with student achievement. *NASSP Bulletin*, 89(645), 43-55.
- Heifetz, R. A. (1994). *Leadership without easy answers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Hoerr, T. (2005). *The art of school leadership*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Hord, S. M., & Sommers, W. A. (2008). *Leading professional learning communities: Voices from research and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Hoyle, J. R., Björk, L. G., Collier, V., & Glass, T. (2005). *The superintendent as CEO: Standards-based performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jacobs, H. H. (Ed.). (2010). *Curriculum 21: Essential education for a changing world*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Jones, M. H. (1999). Building bedrock: The superintendent and the principal as mutual learners. In S. Boris-Schacter (Ed.), *The changing relationship between principal and superintendent: Shifting roles in an era of educational reform* (pp. 7-17). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kirst, M. M., & Wirt, F. M. (2009). *The political dynamics of American education* (4th ed.). Richmond, CA: McCutchan.
- Kowalski, T. J. (2005). Evolution of the school superintendent as communicator. *Communication Education, 54*(2), 101-117.
- Kowalski, T. J. (2006). *The school superintendent: Theory, practices, and cases* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kowalski, T. J., & Keedy, J. L. (2005). Preparing superintendents to be effective communicators. In L. G. Björk & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *School district superintendents: Role expectations, professional preparation, development, and licensing* (pp. 207-226). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Kowalski, T. J., McCord, R. S., Petersen, G. J., Young, I. P., & Ellerson, N. M. (2010). *The American school superintendent: 2010 decennial study*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Lasswell, H. (1936). *Politics: Who gets what, when, and how*. New York, NY: Whittlesey House.
- Lee, J. (2008). Is test-driven external accountability effective? Synthesizing the evidence from cross-state causal-comparative and correlational studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 608-644.
- Lee, J., & Reeves, T. (2012). Revisiting the impact of NCLB high-stakes school accountability, capacity, and resources: State NAEP 1990 –2009 reading and math achievement gaps and trends. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(2), 209-231.
- Leithwood, K., & Mascall, B. (2008). Collective leadership effects on student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(4), 529-561.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mangin, M. M. (2007). Facilitating elementary principals' support for instructional teacher leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(3), 319-357.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Aurora, CA: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.
- Marzano, R. J. & Waters, T. (2009). *District leadership that works: Striking the right balance*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

- Matthews, J., & Crow, G. M. (2003). *Being and becoming a principal: Role conceptions for contemporary principals and assistant principals*. Boston, MA. Allyn & Bacon
- Matthews, L., & Crow, G. M. (2010). *The principalship: New roles in a professional learning community*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interpretive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCain, T. (2005). *Teaching for tomorrow: Teaching content and problem-solving skills*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- McCleary, L. E, Crow, G. M., & Matthews, J. (1996). *Leadership: A relevant and realistic role for principals*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.
- McMillan, J., & Schumacher, S. (2009). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Muijs, D., & Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership: Improvement through empowerment. *Educational Management & Administration*, 31(4), 437-448.
- Mulford, B., & Silins, H. (2003). Leadership for organizational learning and improved student outcomes: What do we know? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(2), 175 - 195.

- Murphy, J. F. (2005). *Connecting teacher leadership and school improvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Murphy, J., Smylie, M., Mayrowetz, D., & Louis, K. S. (2009). The role of the principal in fostering the development of distributed leadership. *School Leadership and Management, 29*(2), 181-214.
- O'Donnell, R., & White, G. (2005). Within the accountability era: Principals' instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement. *NASSP Bulletin, 89*(645), 56-71.
- Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2012). *Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill
- Pellicer, L., & Anderson, L. (1995). *A handbook for teacher leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Petersen, G. J., & Barnett, B. G. (2005). The superintendent as instructional leader: Current practice, future conceptualizations, and implications for preparation. In L. G. Björk & T. J. Kowalski (Eds.), *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development* (pp. 107-136). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Plomp, T. (2011). *Preparing education for the information society: Curricular and implementation challenges*. Paper presented at the International Symposium on Educational Reform, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China.
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Reeves, D. (2006). *The learning leader: How to focus school improvement for better*

- results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Riehl, C. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 55-81.
- Riley, M. (1963). *Sociological research: A case approach* (Vol. 1). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Rost, J. C., (1991). *Leadership for the twenty-first century*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Schlechty, P. (2005). *Creating great schools: Six critical systems at the heart of educational innovation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schleicher, A. (2011). Lessons from the world on effective teaching and learning environments. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(2), 202-221.
- Schmoker, M. (2005). No turning back: The ironclad case for professional learning communities. In R. Dufour, R. Dufour, & R. Eaker (Eds.), *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities* (pp. 135-153). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Schön, D. A. (1983). Organizational learning. In G. Morgan (Ed.), *Beyond method: Strategies for social research* (pp. 114-128). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Scribner, J. P., Cockrell, K. S., Cockrell, D. H., & Valentine, J. W. (1999). Creating professional learning communities in schools through organizational learning: An evaluation of the school improvement process. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 1(35), 130-160.
- Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (Revised and updated ed.). New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Senge, P., Cambron-McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B., Dutton, J., & Kleiner, A. (2000). *Schools that learn: A fifth discipline fieldbook for educators, parents, and everyone who cares about education*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., Roth, G., & Smith, B. (1999). *The dance of change: The challenges to sustaining momentum in learning organizations*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2005). *Strengthening the heartbeat: Leading and learning together in schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Smylie, M. A. (1992). Teacher participation in school decision making: Assessing willingness to participate. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 14(1), 53-67.
- Stoll, L., & Louis, K. S. (Eds.) (2007). *Professional learning communities: Divergence, depth, and dilemmas*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- The National Commission of Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Thompson, M. (2013). *Principals' perceptions of experiences that helped improve their practice as instructional leaders* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI Dissertation Publishing. (Accession No. 35797680)
- The Wallace Foundation. (2013, January). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*. New York, NY: Author Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.com>
- Turk, R. L., Wolff, K., Waterbury, C., & Zumalt, J. (2002). What principals should know about building and maintaining teams. *NASSP Bulletin*, 72(509), 15-23.
- Wagner, T. (2008). *The global achievement gap*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Watanabe, M. (2007). Displaced teacher and state priorities in a high-stakes accountability context. *Educational Policy*, 21(2), 311-368.
- Wenger, E., & Snyder, W. (2001). Communities of practice. In *Harvard Business Review on organizational learning* (pp. 1-20). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Westover, J. (2008). A framework for excellence: The role of the central office. In A. Buffum, C. Erkens, C. Hinman, S. Huff, L. G. Jessie, T. L., Martin, M. Mattos, A. Muhammad, P. Noonan, G. Parscale, E. Twadell, J. Westover, & K. C. Williams (Eds.), *The collaborative administrator: Working together as a professional learning community* (pp. 235-252). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

- Williams-Boyd, P. (2002). *Educational leadership: A reference handbook*. Santa Barbara, CA: American Bibliographic Company-Clio Press.
- Wong, K. (2008). Federalism, equality, and accountability in education. In B. S. Cooper, J. G. Cibulka & L. D. Fusarelli (Eds.), *The handbook of education politics* (pp. 19-29). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

VITA
Ryan P. Clark

EDUCATION

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY
Level II Principal Certification, July 2004

Spalding University, Louisville, KY
MA, Education, 2000

Morehead State University, Morehead, KY
BS, Environmental Science/Marketing 1995

WORK EXPERIENCE

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| July 2013 – Present | Principal Bardstown Middle School, Bardstown, KY |
| July 2011 – June 2013 | Assistant Principal Bardstown High School, Bardstown, KY |
| July 2004– June 2011 | Principal Old Kentucky Home Middle School, Bardstown, KY |
| Apr. 2004–June 2004 | Acting Assistant Principal Old Kentucky Home Middle School, Bardstown, KY |
| Oct. 2003–Apr. 2004 | District Resource Teacher New Haven School, New Haven, KY |
| 2000–Oct. 2003 | 7th Grade Science Teacher Bloomfield Middle School, Bloomfield, KY |

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 2005–2013 | Kentucky Leadership Academy Alumni (KLAA) National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) |
| 2004–2005 | Kentucky Leadership Academy (KLA) Cadre |
| 2003–Present | School Based Decision Making Council Member |
| 2000–2003 | Nelson County School District Strategic Planning Committee |
| 2013–Present | Certified Evaluator – Kentucky Teachers Professional Growth and Effectiveness System |

2005–Present Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (K-TIP) School
Administrator Evaluator
2004 Member of Central Kentucky Behavior Cadre
2000– 2003 Appointed Nelson County School District Strategic Planning
Committee
1995 Recipient of Theta Chi Fraternity’s “Citation of Honor”

PUBLICATION

Royal, K. D., Parrent, J.V. & Clark, R. P. (2011). Measuring education majors’
perceptions of academic misconduct: An item response theory perspective.
International Journal of Educational Integrity, 7, (1), 30-42.