COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT ASSURE HIGH LEVELS OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR ALL: HIGH SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

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COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT ASSURE HIGH LEVELS OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR ALL: HIGH SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

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

By
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Lexington, Kentucky

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Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES THAT ASSURE HIGH LEVELS OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR ALL: HIGH SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Twenty-first century schools are complex organizations that serve individual students’ needs while meeting accountability and assessment demands. Effective leadership balances these diverse responsibilities through collective work of the shareholders in order to assure high levels of learning for all.

This qualitative study examined Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation in two high performing high schools in Kentucky. Both schools were classified as distinguished on the 2014-15 Kentucky School Report Card. One school has a long-standing tradition of high performance. The other school’s journey to high performance involved moving from a Needs Improvement School to a School of Distinction.

The 4-D Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Theory was used to explore the collective leadership practices of the two high schools. Data collection instruments and protocols followed the four AI phases (discover, dream, design, and deliver). Data were collected through observations, site visits, artifact reviews, individual interviews and focus groups. The effective schools characteristics, RTI core traits, and collective leadership practices provided the context for the study design.

In studying the RTI implementation process, evidence of effective schools characteristics, RTI core traits, and collective leadership practices were observed. Both schools focused intentionally on core instruction as an integral part of the RTI implementation process. The data concluded that the schools continue to make progress in meeting more students’ needs. Both schools have strategic plans to discover, dream, design, and deliver new ways to maximize the collective strengths of the school.
community. Evidence of each phase of AI emerged in the stories, conversations, and artifacts at both schools.

KEYWORDS: Appreciative Inquiry, Positive Organizational Scholarship, Effective Schools, Response to Intervention, Collective Leadership Practices, Team Leadership
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RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

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07/18/2016
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my very wise father, Larry Lee Jeffries, who passed away in May 2012. He had a deep passion and appreciation for learning and growing in wisdom. Sadly, he died prior to the writing of this dissertation. Many times during the process, I thought of my father and longed to share the research journey with him. My hope is that this completed work honors his memory, inspires others to seek wisdom, and promotes a love for learning.

_Instruct the wise and they will be wiser; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning._ Proverbs 9: 9
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Twenty-first century schools are complex organizations, and the expectations to meet all students’ needs are great. Facing accountability and assessment demands, leaders must balance many responsibilities. Effective leadership requires collective work in order to bring shareholders together to assure high levels of student learning. Research on effective schools indicates leadership is a key factor in the accomplishments of schools (Hawley & Rollie, 2007; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Lezotte, 1989, 1995; Lezotte & McKee-Snyder, 2010). Traditionally, school principals served as the primary source of formal leadership. However, a paradigm shift has occurred over the past few decades (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2011). Today, principals tend to establish collaborative teams in order to expand leadership (Fullan, 2001a, 2001b; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

These collective leadership practices are sometimes referred to as shared or distributed leadership. Much of the research literature uses the terms shared, distributed, and collective leadership interchangeably, yet each term suggests unique qualities. Distributed and shared leadership focus on the distribution of responsibilities among group members (Fullan, 2001a, 2001b; Leithwood, 2013; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), whereas collective leadership encompasses a broader perspective that emphasizes the strengths of the collective body (Eckert, West, Altman, Steward, & Pasmore, 2014; Leithwood, 2013, Leithwood, & Mascall, 2008; Kuenkel, 2016).

Although collective leadership differs from team leadership, the term team is sometimes used to describe the collective group. Leithwood and Louis (2012) define
collective leadership as “the extent of influence that organizational members and stakeholders exert on decisions in their schools” (p. 11). In *The Art of Leading*, Kuenkel (2016) states that collective leadership builds the capacities of the group and system through accomplishing goals for the common good. Collective leadership—the result of multiple, dynamic, and ever-changing processes—gives life to the organization. Distribution and exchange of expertise, collaboration of tasks, and shared ownership of results are at the core of collective leadership.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the collective leadership practices of highly effective high schools implementing Response to Intervention (RTI). Although some schools may refer to implementation teams as school leadership teams, throughout this work the term *RTI implementation team* refers to the group of individuals who facilitate the schoolwide implementation process. This analysis focused on RTI implementation (Jimerson, Burns, & VanDerHeyden, 2007; Mellard & Johnson, 2008), specifically exploring the leadership practices in two Kentucky high schools to determine how RTI teams implemented school, district, and national educational initiatives (Education Commission of the States, 1998; Finnan, 2000). The research included a variety of data regarding the leadership practices and perceptions of the RTI implementation team. The findings provided examples that may assist readers in making connections between leadership practices and the potential application in their own setting (Marquardt, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005).
Historical Background

The federal and state educational policies and programs that have been implemented in recent years focused on school accountability and performance of all students. These efforts emphasized access to effective schools for all of America’s students (Hawley & Rollie, 2007; Hilton, 2007), but these mandates alone did not change institutions. The schools that achieved the goals of these mandates assumed the collective responsibility of educating every student (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

RTI emerged from the 2004 reauthorization of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). This act required that the nation’s school districts review the process of identifying students as learning disabled and at risk of not learning (Ardoin, Witt, Connell, & Koeing, 2005; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006a, 2006b; Shinn, 2008). For the first time, public schools were not held to the discrepancy model that determined eligibility for special services based on the difference between achievement (Woodcock-Johnson Achievement Test) and intelligence data (WISC-IV). The discrepancy criterion is a two-standard deviation difference in the IQ score and achievement test data based on a normal curve. IDEA 2004 allowed districts and schools to consider RTI as an eligibility procedure for the documentation of learning disabilities. The act did not mandate RTI, but rather, simply provided a framework for addressing individual educational, social, and behavioral needs.

Prior to IDEA (2004), the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 held schools accountable for student learning. Both IDEA and NCLB stressed providing high quality, scientifically based instruction and intervention. Additionally, the laws held
schools accountable for all students meeting their appropriate grade-level standards (Klotz & Canter, 2006). Thus, NCLB and IDEA provided guidelines for meeting individual student needs. These federal laws required schools to provide effective instruction and monitor student progress prior to making referrals for special education services (Batsche et al., 2006), but they did not recommend a specific RTI model or procedure.

In 2009, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1 that mandated several initiatives regarding assessment and accountability for school systems. These included (a) new academic standards for students; (b) new aligned assessments and a balanced accountability system; (c) a professional growth and effectiveness system of performance evaluation for teachers, principals, and superintendents; (d) and a comprehensive system of school and district improvement, planning, and support. In addition to Senate Bill 1, the Kentucky General Assembly passed legislation that addressed the need for intervention strategies, models, and programs for students. Two groups of students were identified as at risk for poor learning outcomes: (a) those not meeting state benchmarks and (b) those needing accelerated learning opportunities (e.g., gifted and talented students). Thus, learners scoring below the established criteria received remediation instruction, and students scoring above the established criteria received advanced instruction.

In 2009, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) reported that only one-third of Kentucky’s high school students were ready for college or career upon graduation. According to Kentucky legislative documents, college readiness is defined as “the level of preparation a student needs to succeed in credit-bearing courses in college.
‘Succeed’ is defined as completing entry-level courses at a level of understanding and proficiency that prepares the student for succeeding courses” (CPE, 2009, para 2). Kentucky defines career readiness as “the level of preparation a high school graduate needs to proceed to the next step in a chosen career, whether that is postsecondary coursework, industry certification, or entry into the workforce” (CPE, 2009, para. 3). According to the Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE), career readiness includes mastery of core academic skills and the ability to apply those skills to concrete situations in the workplace and in routine daily activities. Employability skills and technical skills related to a specific career pathway are essential in any career area (CPE, 2009).

In order to address the issue of preparing high school students for college and career readiness, Kentucky Senate Bill 1 explicitly focused on areas that have a direct impact on high schools and postsecondary institutions. The bill called for these institutions to work collaboratively to prepare high school students for college and career readiness, to develop a plan to reduce college remediation rates, and to increase graduation rates of postsecondary students who begin college with readiness needs. Another portion of Kentucky Senate Bill 1 called for an increase in the minimum high school graduation requirements to 22 credits.

In May 2010, the implementation plan was developed and included measures to assess progress toward the goals of Senate Bill 1. The plan detailed four key strategies to promote college and career readiness goals:

- Accelerated Learning Opportunities (expansion of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual credit opportunities)
• Secondary Intervention Programs (development and implementation of transition coursework)

• College and Career Readiness Advising (full implementation of the Individual Learning Plan and comprehensive advising programs)

• Postsecondary College Persistence and Degree Completion (bridge programming, accelerated learning opportunities, and student support and intervention systems)

Additional legislation impacting high school college and career readiness goals included:

• House Bill 197, which established a pilot program of end-of-course testing for Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry.

• Senate Bill 130, which required, beginning in 2008-2009, a series of diagnostic assessments regarding high school readiness (in Grade 8), college readiness (in Grade 10), and college admissions (using ACT test scores in Grade 11).

Several related pieces of legislation supporting Kentucky Senate Bill 1 and the targets of this delivery plan are outlined below:

• House Bill 176 (2010) focused on turnaround efforts for struggling schools. This legislation required the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to identify persistently low-performing schools and to provide them with intensive support to promote student learning.

• Senate Bill 2 (2008) promoted a statewide focus on the advancement of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, thus allowing KDE to
create greater access for middle and high school students to Advanced Placement and STEM-related initiatives.

- Senate Bill 168 (2002) supported intervention strategies for remedial and accelerated learning. The bill required districts and schools to focus on individualizing learning opportunities for secondary students exceeding standards and to provide robust intervention systems for students who struggle with meeting standards as measured by the Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS).

- KRS 158.6453 (Subsection 20, c) specified the reporting of high school college readiness exams.

- KRS 158.6459 provided the intervention requirements for students not meeting PLAN or ACT benchmarks.

- 704 KAR 3:305 indicated the minimum graduation requirements.

One of the provisions of the legislation is for high school students to have a series of accountability assessments to measure their college and career readiness. These assessments are to be taken upon completion of coursework or at a designated time for a particular grade level. For example, the ACT is used as one of the benchmarks for college readiness and is given to all juniors in Kentucky. In addition to the ACT, other methods exist for measuring college readiness. The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (2013) states that college and career readiness is demonstrated in multiple ways:

- ACT Work Keys tests reading for information, locating information, applying mathematical concepts, and demonstrating workplace skills.
• ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) is used to determine military eligibility and includes arithmetic skill, word knowledge, paragraph comprehension, and mathematics knowledge.

• KYOTE (Kentucky Online Testing) is an online test of mathematics, reading, and English used by most Kentucky colleges and universities to determine course placement for students who have not met ACT benchmarks.

• COMPASS is used to measure strengths and weaknesses to determine placement in college courses. This computerized test is offered in reading, writing, math, and English as a Second Language (ESL).

• KOSSA (Kentucky Occupational Skill Standards Assessments) is an online test of workplace skills administered to Career and Technical Education (CTE) students.

• Industry Certificates that are approved in a particular vocation (such as a CNA program for nursing) can be used to determine career readiness.

In 2010, President Obama presented to Congress and the nation A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). This document outlined his administration’s proposal to restructure the educational system and provide a framework for the federal government’s role in education. Throughout the blueprint, the president presented these efforts as collaborative work of the federal and state governments, districts and schools, and administrators, teachers, parents, and students. The president said reform efforts needed to ensure a world-class education for all of the nation’s students:

Reforming our schools to deliver a world-class education is a shared responsibility – our nation’s teachers and principals cannot shoulder the task
alone. We must foster school environments where teachers have the time to collaborate, the opportunities to lead, and the respect that all professionals deserve. We must recognize the importance of communities and families in supporting their children’s education, because a parent is a child’s first teacher. We must support families, communities, and schools working in partnership to deliver services and supports that address the full range of student needs. (p. 1)

In December 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced NCLB, essentially revised the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in order to allow states, districts, and schools to determine what supports and interventions are implemented. ESSA requires the states to report data on student achievement and graduation rates but gives states and districts the flexibility to customize strategies, interventions, and accountability systems. This legislation, which goes into effect at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, thus shifted the responsibility for accountability from the federal government back to the states. During the ESSA signing ceremony, the president stated, “With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal—that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will” (https://www.whitehouse.gov).

This federal legislation reflects the requests of politicians, school leaders, researchers, educators, parents, and community members that all students in the United States receive a quality education. Many schools embrace the notion that all students can learn and that schools can positively influence student learning. The collective work of many results in increasing high school graduation rates, reducing dropout rates, and promoting more students going to college. The achievements create a synergy for the schools and hope for America’s students.
Statement of the Problem

The complex framework of RTI is particularly difficult to employ in high schools. Both federal and Kentucky legislation mandate student performance and accountability guidelines but allow much room for interpreting how schools are to meet the needs of all students. Additionally, little research has been done on high school leadership pertaining to RTI. The lack of specificity within RTI guidelines and the limited literature on integrating RTI into the secondary school specifically leave high school educators uncertain about how to reform their practices to achieve the goals of this legislation.

While the Commonwealth of Kentucky, districts, and schools have strengthened their commitment to students’ college and career readiness, research indicates that tremendous work remains to be done to prepare high school graduates. *The Condition of College and Career Readiness National Report* (2013) revealed some alarming outcomes regarding student learning in the nation’s high schools. Highlights of the report include the following findings:

- Of the high school graduates who took the ACT, 26% met all four academic benchmarks and were ready for college-level work (ACT, 2013, p. 1).

- Of the high school graduates meeting all four benchmarks, 43% were Asian, 32% were White graduates, 5% were African-American, and 13% were Hispanic (ACT, 2013, p. 5).

- About 69% of all students who took the ACT in 2013 met at least one of the four benchmarks (ACT, 2013, p. 4).

- Thirty-one percent of the students did not meet any of the benchmarks (ACT, 2013, p. 4).
• In 2012, Black students had a 68% graduation rate, Hispanic students had a 76% rate, Asian students had a 93% graduation rate, Caucasian students had an 85% rate, and Native American students had a 68% graduation rate (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, p. 5).

• Research predicts that within the next 10 years, 63% of all jobs in the United States will require some postsecondary education, and 90% of new jobs with high wages in growing industries will require some postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010, p. 3).

• Only 25% percent of American students perform proficiently or better in math, while 40% are proficient in reading, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress exam (NAEP, 2013).

Although studies are gradually emerging, research on RTI implementation within secondary schools still remains limited. Most of the literature specific to secondary schools pertains to teaching practices, literacy intervention, and positive behavioral intervention. Much of the research on RTI focuses on elementary schools, and studies on the use of RTI in elementary schools provide strategies for implementation as well as evidence supporting the efficacy of RTI for this population (Bender & Shores, 2007; Burns & Gibbons, 2012; Zirkel, 2007). Specifically, RTI in the primary grades addresses student learning needs as early as possible. The preventative nature of RTI allows learning gaps to be addressed prior to advancing to intermediate grades or secondary school. RTI in elementary schools has been found to be one of the most effective instructional options (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Johnson, Smith, & Harris, 2009).
More research, however, is needed in order to determine the effectiveness of RTI at the secondary school level. Before RTI can become a meaningful, widespread high school reform effort, educators must have a deeper understanding of the application of RTI within this setting, including the adaptive and technical leadership aspects of implementing RTI (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). As more research becomes available on secondary schools, educators can better understand the complexities of incorporating RTI into high schools.

Currently, few studies consider the integration of RTI, leadership teams and organizational learning in high schools. This study explores the collective leadership practices in two high schools in an effort to increase the limited research in this area (Bender, 2012; Ehren, 2009; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

**Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this study was to explore what, how, and why collective leadership practices are used in high performing high schools in order to meet student needs. I considered the context of effective schools’ characteristics and RTI basic tenets in order to determine how collective leadership enabled the school community to work together to design, plan, implement, and make necessary changes in order to educate all students. Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2010) articulate the serious responsibility of educators to prepare all students for school and careers:

We educators are directly responsible for crucial, life-saving work. . . . A student who graduates from school with a mastery of essential skills and knowledge has a good chance of successfully competing in the global market place, with numerous opportunities to lead a rewarding adult life. . . . Students who fail in school are at greater risk of poverty, welfare dependency, incarceration, and early death. . . . Compelling evidence shows that Response to Intervention (RTI) is our best hope for giving every student the additional time and support needed to learn at high levels. (p. 10)
In the research on leadership and effective schools, few studies concentrate on collective leadership practices of the RTI teams in high schools. This study specifically explored the positive work of leadership teams in high schools; that is, the focus of this study was thus to explore the positive core of the schools, specifically examining how RTI teams perform collective leadership practices (Hoover & Love, 2011).

**Overview of Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) design with an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) theoretical approach. AI focuses on the strengths and assets of organizations and individuals (Cooperrider, 1990; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008).

**Research Questions**

The overarching question of this study was, *What leadership practices do schools with effective RTI use?* The following two questions guided the investigation:

- How do leadership teams collectively support the implementation of RTI?
- What positive organizational learning occurs in schools with effective RTI models?

**Potential Limitations and Delimitations**

A limitation associated with qualitative study is related to validity and reliability. “Because qualitative research occurs in the natural setting, it is extremely difficult to replicate studies” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2000, p. 211). Case studies suggest what may be found in similar organizations, but additional research would be needed to substantiate whether findings from one study would be applicable elsewhere. This study involved two Kentucky high schools during a limited time span. Due to the small number of
schools and the short time frame, this work would likewise not be generalizable to other settings.

Much of the literature regarding RTI references elementary schools rather than high schools. This limitation required me to synthesize the literature regarding RTI, collective leadership, and effective schools at the elementary level and then extrapolate those findings to secondary schools. This study examined the collective leadership practices of RTI teams in high schools to discover what the teams did well to meet the needs of individual students. RTI served as the source for the investigation of collective leadership practices and not instructional practices involved in RTI implementation.

**Key Terms**

Four concepts frame this study: (a) effective schools, (b) response to intervention, (c) collective leadership, (d) positive organizational scholarship, and (e) team leadership. Below is an overview of these key terms, which are placed here for easy retrieval, if desired.

**Effective Schools**

According to Sudlow (1985), a universal definition of effective schools does not exist. Citing Ronald Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte, two of the pioneers of the effective schools movement, Sudlow defined an effective school as one which demonstrates the following criteria:

1. 95 (or greater) percent of all students at each grade level demonstrate minimum academic mastery and are prepared to succeed in the next grade anywhere in the United States;
2. there shall be no significant difference in the proportion of students demonstrating minimum academic mastery as a function of socioeconomic class;
3. the above two conditions have been obtained for a minimum of three consecutive years. Minimum academic mastery is measured by performance on a standardized test; preferably criterion-referenced as opposed to norm-referenced. (p. 11)
Chapter 2 of this dissertation provides historical background, an operational definition, and characteristics of the effective schools movement in more detail.

**Response to Intervention**

RTI is the practice of providing quality core instruction to all students and intervening with additional services when needed. Student learning data informs instructional decisions (Batsche et al., 2006). According to the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI), RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavioral problems. By implementing RTI, educators can identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities (NCRTI, 2010a).

**Collective Leadership**

Collective leadership is a form of leadership that distributes elements of various leadership roles throughout the organization commits to action. Leithwood and Louis (2012) define collective leadership as “the extent of influence that organizational members and stakeholders exert on decisions in their schools” (p. 11). Collective leadership extends the capacity of the leadership team by allowing members to utilize its members’ strengths and experiences to increase the success of the organization. This leadership goes beyond simply sharing responsibilities. In collective leadership, the strengths of leaders are maximized and utilized to support the vision and goals of the school. By using a collective body of leaders, the organization is better equipped to meet its established goals and promote success for all. For this study, collective leadership
refers to the collective capacity of a group to act and influence RTI to inspire change in the members of the school community (Kuenkel, 2016; Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

Team Leadership

A team is a manageable number of individuals with complementary skills who work collectively as a group. Through the individual contributions, the members collaborate, plan, and execute to achieve a common goal. The group of individuals, the team, commit to and work toward the collective success of the organization. The members mutually hold each other accountable to the established goals (Katzenbach & Smith, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the team is the specific group of leaders (e.g., cabinet, leadership team, implementation team) who contribute their specific expertise to meet the collective goals of the organization.

Positive Organizational Scholarship

Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is concerned primarily with the study of positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members. “POS does not focus on a single theory but examines dynamics typically described by words such as excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, or virtuousness” (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003, p. 46).

Summary

Compelling evidence shows that RTI can successfully engage a school’s staff in a collective process to provide every child with the additional time and support needed to learn at high levels (Burns & Gibbons, 2012). This study utilized RTI as the means to explore collective leadership in two high performing Kentucky high schools.
Chapter 2 provides an overview of educational accountability and legislation, collective leadership, effective schools, and RTI and a description of the context where the study was conducted. Chapter 3 provides a detailed presentation of the study design including the methodology, study purpose, study limitations, participants, research sites, data collection process, data sources, and data analysis. Chapter 4 reveals results of data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 presents my reflections about the study, lessons learned, and possible areas for further research.

The appendices include (a) formal approval to conduct the study from the University of Kentucky’s Institutional Review Board (IRB); (b) all interview protocols, guidelines, and questions; (c) all focus group protocols, guidelines, and questions; (d) all observation documentation logs; and (e) copies of all formal school communications and other documents related to the study. Following the appendices are citations for all works cited and my vita.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research considered the collective leadership practices of two top-ranked Kentucky high schools. The Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation team was observed and studied to gain insight into each school’s collective leadership practices. Literature searches using the key terms such as implementation teams, high schools, RTI, leadership teams, secondary schools, collective leadership, and effective schools to gather literature relevant to this study. Interestingly, reports of research on RTI in secondary schools and particularly pertaining to leadership were limited. This chapter provides an overview of three key concepts (i.e., effective schools, RTI, collective leadership practices) and defines the key terms for the study.

Effective Schools Research and Findings

In 1966, James Coleman discussed the effectiveness of education in American schools in *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, a paper funded by the United States Office of Education. The paper is often referenced in the literature as the *Coleman Report*. Coleman asserted that schools did not have a significant impact on the academic success of students, particularly those from low-income or underprivileged backgrounds. Instead, he credited the students’ home and family background as the main reasons for student achievement. Coleman concluded that the responsibility for learning rested with the students, and he relinquished the schools from this obligation.

Researcher Ronald Edmonds (1979) refused to accept the view that schools could not influence academic success. Edmonds, along with Brookover and Lezotte (1977), studied schools, primarily at the elementary level, throughout the United States and found
that the schools educating all students exhibited specific characteristics. In 1982, Edmonds formally identified the characteristics of effective schools, which he called correlates: (a) clear school mission, (b) high expectations for success, (c) strong instructional leadership, (d) frequent monitoring of student progress, (e) constant opportunities to learn and a focus on time on task, (f) safe and orderly environment, and (g) positive home and school relations. These correlates were frequently found in schools where students within all subgroups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic level) were learning. This research revealed that public schools’ efforts significantly affected learning when certain conditions were present, despite the students’ family background (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds 1982).

Schools characterized by high overall student performance with no significant gaps in achievement in the student subgroups are the hallmark of the effective school movement (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979, 1982). Effective schools have a foundation of high expectations for all students, exhibit strong leadership, maintain a focused commitment to learning for all, champion collaboration, utilize differentiated instruction, and conduct on-going monitoring of student progress (Lezotte & McKee-Snyder, 2010).

While Brookover and Lezotte (1979), Edmonds (1979, 1982), and Lezotte (1989) focused primarily on elementary schools, researchers in the United Kingdom studied effective schools at the secondary level. Research on secondary schools and the effective school movement was published in the book, *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children* (Rutter, 1982). Findings from this research on secondary schools in the United Kingdom, as well as studies on elementary schools in the
United States, evidenced that schools did have a clear impact on student learning. Researchers on effective schools asserted that (a) all children can learn and come to school motivated to do so; (b) schools should be accountable for measuring student achievement; (c) schools should analyze and use student achievement data to monitor student progress and ensure that all students learn; and (d) school reform efforts should be collaborative, research based, and data informed (Brookover & Lezzotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1982; Lezzotte, 1989; Rutter, 1982).

Since the 1990s, research findings from studies on effective schools have served as a foundation for change as schools and districts responded to federal and state accountability reforms. These reforms reflect legislator and educator goals of attaining high levels of achievement for all students and closing achievement gaps among subgroups within school populations. The effective-schools work maintains that the fundamental characteristics are still applicable today (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Lezotte & McKee-Snyder, 2010; Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005). As the understanding of the effective schools movement has evolved and developed over the years, the characteristics continue to be utilized and respected.

The original characteristics of effective schools consistently and continuously appear in school-effectiveness research. This work indicates that schools can and do have enough control to make major difference in students’ academic achievements. Table 2.1 lists the original correlates for school effectiveness that Edmonds first identified in 1982. These 11 characteristics remain central to the core of effective schools work today.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective School Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional leadership</td>
<td>Firm and purposeful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A participative approach</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The leading professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared vision and goals</td>
<td>Unity of purpose</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consistency of practice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collegiality and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A learning environment</td>
<td>An orderly atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An attractive working environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration on teaching and learning</td>
<td>Maximization of learning time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic emphasis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus on achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purposeful teaching</td>
<td>Efficient organization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarity of purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptive practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>High expectations all around</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing intellectual challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive reinforcement</td>
<td>Clear and fair discipline</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress monitoring</td>
<td>Monitoring pupil performance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating school performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pupil rights and responsibilities</td>
<td>Raising pupil self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positions of responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Control of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-school partnership</td>
<td>Parental involvement in their children’s learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A learning organization</td>
<td>School-based staff development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These characteristics were adapted from Lezotte and McKee-Snyder (2010).
The effective school criteria served as a part of the site-selection process that is described in detail in Chapter 3. This study examined the collective leadership practices in two high schools with high overall student achievement and with no significant gaps in student achievement across the major subgroups.

**Response to Intervention**

Effective schools characteristics embody the RTI framework. Central to the framework is a focus on learning and teaching, progress monitoring, and responding to data to meet the needs of individual student learners. The RTI Action Network defines the RTI framework as a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavioral needs. RTI is a regular education framework for all students, not simply a special education initiative. The universal core components of the RTI framework include a universal screener, multi-tiered interventions, data-based decision making, and evidence-based interventions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). It has a comprehensive, focused design that is intended to meet individual student academic and behavioral needs. This system combines multiple research-based practices to form a single system with the primary focus of helping students achieve academic and behavioral goals.

Research has revealed two different models of RTI (i.e., a protocol model and problem-solving model) which some schools use together. While the models differ in their approach regarding special education eligibility, they share some similar features: (a) high quality research-based instruction, (b) universal screening, (c) on-going progress monitoring, (d) researched-based interventions, (e) process monitoring during
interventions, and (f) reliable measures. The models may vary in the number of tiers or levels used (Fuchs, 2006a).

In The Handbook of Response to Intervention: The Science and Practice of Assessment and Intervention, Jimerson and colleagues (2007) present the work of Deno and Mirken during 1970, who utilized database decisions regarding instructional planning, assessment, and student outcomes and coined the term RTI. Another early example of RTI in education is found in the National Research Council Report, Placing Children in Special Education (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982). The conclusion emphasized the significance of all students having access to a scientifically based core curriculum (Heller et al.). Based on the principles of a scientifically based core curriculum, RTI has been presented as a viable option for over 30 years. Although research on providing students with this core curriculum has appeared in the literature for over three decades, the reauthorization of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) reignited the discussion regarding highly effective, evidenced-based core curriculum. As in previous research, the NCRT supports and recommends evidenced-based intervention and instruction.

The concepts of RTI are seen in such diverse fields as medicine, agriculture, and economics. In fact, RTI follows a medical model of using data to inform practices and providing evidenced-based interventions to meet individual needs. The basic tenets of this framework are to identify and support students before they fail; improve school achievement and social behavior; and provide models with different implementation techniques (Howell, Patton, & Deiotte, 2008).
Purpose of RTI

The central purpose of RTI is to provide every student with the time and support needed to learn at high levels (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009, 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011; Hutchins, 1972). High levels indicate the student is prepared upon graduation from high school for either the next phase of learning or the work force; thus, a prepared student does not require remediation prior to beginning postsecondary school or entering the workplace. Another purpose of RTI is to establish a framework for providing systematic, comprehensive services to address academic and behavioral needs for all students, preschool through Grade 12 (NCRT, n.d.; KDE, n.d.).

RTI is a general process—not an event, a program, or specific series of activities. It is intended to provide basic principles for schools and districts to follow so that all students have access to research-based classroom instruction and ongoing progress monitoring. Data collection and analysis guide the decision-making process. Figure 2.1 illustrates the four core features of the RTI framework and the interactions between and among these features.

Multi-Tiered System of Support

According to the NCRTI (2010b), a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is a prevention framework that organizes building-level resources to address individual student’s academic and/or behavioral needs within intervention tiers that vary in intensity. In the multi-tiered system, students are provided a continuum of learning, and in successful multi-tiered systems, they make significant progress. All instruction and interventions are focused on increasing student success.
The multi-tiered system of support may also be called a multi-level prevention system because the three tiers, sometimes referred to as levels of prevention (i.e., primary, secondary, intensive or tertiary), that include a range of interventions, enrichments, and supports for academics and behaviors. The system levels are typically referred to as primary (Tier 1 core), secondary (Tier II targeted), and tertiary (Tier III intensive). The NCRTI (2010b) specifies the activities and population involved within each tier as follows.

**Tier 1.** In Tier 1 (the core), all students have access to an evidenced-based core academic and behavioral curriculum. This tier focuses on all students within the regular classroom. Typically, the goal is for 80% or more of the students to master the core content within the structure of Tier 1.
**Tier 2.** In Tier 2, intervention is added to the core. In this tier, a smaller number of students receive intervention or enrichment support. Students who are not meeting or who are exceeding benchmarks receive intervention in a targeted area. Typically, this tier involves 10-15% of the population.

**Tier 3.** In Tier 3, the most intensive tier within the framework, students continue to receive Tier 1 and 2 services while engaging in more intense and frequent interventions in Tier 3. This tier involves an even smaller number of students, usually no more than 5% of the student population within a school.

**RTI in High Schools**

A primary purpose of RTI in high schools is to develop the staff’s ability to address all students’ educational needs through a cultural shift in which the improvement of academic performance and behavior is the driving force behind all actions (Johnson et al., 2009). RTI can be implemented in many ways in secondary schools, but the process must fit the needs, goals, mission, and vision of each school. It has the potential to help high schools address the needs of all students, improve graduation rates, increase college and career readiness, and improve teaching and learning through one integrated system (Callender, 2014; Kopkowski, 2008).

Most literature regarding RTI focuses on elementary schools. While many of the challenges to educate all elementary and secondary students are similar, the structures of these schools significantly differ. High schools are complex organizations with specific needs to consider when implementing an RTI plan (Bender, 2012; Bender, & Shore, 2007). These include (a) schedule restrictions and structures, (b) graduation requirements and credit needs, (c) content specific teacher certification, (d) departmentalized
instruction that is content specific, (e) students with a history of not meeting benchmarks, (f) accelerated learning needs, and (g) a wide span of student learning gaps (Duffy 2007). Without special considerations and modifications, the organizational structure of traditional high schools limits the use of universal screening tools, continuous progress monitoring, and interventions that work across subject areas.

Traditional secondary students’ schedules typically involve multiple classes that range from 50 to 90 minutes. Because independent departments do not usually interact with other departments, implementing interventions across content areas poses difficulties. According to the literature, in order for teams of teachers to collaborate between and among subject areas, schools must provide additional time and flexibility in the schedule (Bender, 2012; Buffam & Mattos, 2011; Buffam et al., 2009, 2010; Callender 2014; Canter, Klotz, & Cowan, 2008). Schools with successful RTI have established collaboration practices that include (a) utilizing implementation teams to share data and make collaborative data-informed decisions, (b) implementing and using professional learning communities, (c) committing to student learning for all, and (d) establishing a we can attitude (Bender, 2012; Buffam & Mattos, 2011; Buffam et al., 2009, 2010; Callender 2014). These schools have changed the way they do business, but the challenge for them is to maintain the focus on students’ achievement and not on adults’ needs (Canter et al., 2008; Duffy, 2007). While the complexity of the secondary school environment makes RTI more difficult to plan and implement, some high schools have successfully adopted this model.
Kentucky System of Intervention

The Kentucky System of Intervention utilizes a multi-tiered system of interventions that addresses the learning needs of students exceeding and not meeting benchmarks. Students on both ends of the spectrum of at-risk learners are served (see Fig. 2.2).

According to the KDE (2012),

what is effective for every learner is a systematic and ongoing assessment of their academic and behavioral needs and using the data in collaborative conversations with parents/guardians and educators in the interest of preparing students to be college and career ready to live and work in a global society. (p. 4)

*Figure 2.2. Kentucky System of Intervention Model (KDE, 2012).*
Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership focuses on student learning (Johnson et al., 2009; Mendels, 2012; Smith, 2001). An initiative such as RTI requires strong leadership to create a shared vision, build the capacity of school personnel, and lead as a leader of leaders. Numerous authors write about the importance of effective leadership in determining the success of an education initiative, including successful implementation of RTI (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016; Burns, Appleton, & Stehouwer, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005; Mellard & Johnson, 2008, Mendels, 2012; Ninni, 2010, Puccio, Mance, & Murdock, 2011). Effective leaders of initiatives embrace several common factors of highly effective schools:

- Strong instructional leadership,
- Highly skilled instructors,
- High expectations of achievement for all students,
- Broad instructional focus,
- Measures of student achievement as a basis for program and systems evaluation,
- Problem solving to improve systems as well as student performance,
- Instructional materials appropriate for diverse secondary learners (including highly structured instructional reading, writing, and math programs), and
- Differentiated instruction. (Callender, 2014, p. 22)

Leithwood and Louis (2012) identify two core functions of collective leadership required for successful implementation of RTI: (a) providing direction and (b) exercising influence. They assert, “Leadership is all about organizational improvement. More
specifically, it is about establishing agreed-upon and worthwhile directions for the organization in question and doing whatever it takes to prod and support people to move in those directions” (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, Chapter 1, Section 3, para. 3). Effective leaders provide direction and guide others toward the system’s goals.

Although a principal serves as the instructional leader for the entire school, other members of the school community also serve as instructional leaders within specific units or content areas. A primary function of instructional leadership is to ensure that every student receives the highest quality education every day. “The principal fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to student academic growth and school improvement” (KDE, n.d.). Instructional leadership thus involves a clearly communicated vision establishing learning as the primary mission of the school (Fullan, 2001b; Hawley & Rollie, 2007; Marzano et al., 2005).

**Leadership Practices**

Numerous instructional leadership practices are presented in the literature, and all these practices exhibit the instructional leaders’ commitment to the following (a) upholding on the school’s vision and achieving the goals; (b) focusing on learning and teaching; (c) creating a positive climate of collaboration; (d) developing leadership in others; (e) building leadership capacity throughout the system; (f) improving instruction for all; (g) managing people, data, and systems; (h) setting high expectations for success; and (i) monitoring progress (Fullan, 2001a; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Marzano et al. 2005;). Effective instructional leaders ensure their work demonstrates evidence of these practices.
Collective Leadership

Information regarding leadership’s impact on the success and failure of school organizations saturates the literature. The demand for effective leadership is great and extends beyond the abilities of a single individual. As Harvard researcher John Kotter (2010) states,

No one person, no matter how competent, is capable of single handedly developing the right vision, communicating it to vast numbers of people, eliminating all of the key obstacles, generating short term wins, leading and managing dozens of change projects and anchoring new approaches deep in an organization’s culture. Putting together, the right coalition of people to lead a change initiative is critical to its success. (p. 52)

In collective leadership, several leaders work together to achieve a common goal. The expertise, responsibilities, duties, and commitment to the organization’s mission are shared by the collective body of leaders. In the RTI process, a primary common goal is meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students. Collective leadership is not simply delegation of tasks or exertion of authority over members of the school. Rather, it is leadership that creates a framework for the school community to work collaboratively toward a shared goal (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

While the traditional model of instructional leadership pinpoints one individual in a formal leadership role, collective leadership embraces numerous leaders sharing responsibilities in a variety of capacities. In the collective leadership model, formal and informal leaders collaborate, and the principal becomes the leader of leaders (Leithwood, 2013; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood and Louis, 2012). Collective school leadership teams have developed an evolving instructional leadership model in which teams provide direction and exercise influence throughout the building. “No matter what
form it takes, instructional leadership is a nonnegotiable for schools to be effective” (Lezotte & McKee-Snyder, 2010, p. 42).

Collective leadership provides a means for school administrators to address significant changes in responsibilities (Portin, Shneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). Collective leadership requires principals to collaborate with staff in order to share leadership responsibilities and utilize personnel’s expertise throughout the school community. The use of collective leadership models supports and serves RTI implementation (Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Johnson et al., 2009; Portin et al., 2003).

**Implementation Team**

RTI implementation team members participate in all aspects of designing, establishing, and supporting the school’s RTI model, thus becomes a learning community as the team collaboratively works on continuous and increased levels of student learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). The model in Figure 2.3 displays the influences on and by school leadership. Note that within the figure that school leadership is located in the center, indicating that it receives and sends input from a variety of sources both internal and external to the school. Note also the direction of the arrows in the right half of the figure, indicating the school leadership influences and is influenced by what happens within the school. The figure thus displays how a RTI leadership team’s work is transmitted throughout the organization.

A school implementation team serves as the **guiding coalition** for RTI in the building and represents members from all areas of the school. The team coordinates the schoolwide efforts across grade levels, departments, and content areas. According to
Buffum and colleagues (2011), the following principles will achieve the team’s goals: (a) building a consensus for the school’s mission of collective responsibility; (b) creating a master schedule that provides sufficient time for team collaboration, core instruction, supplemental interventions, and intensive interventions; (c) coordinating school wide human resources to best support core instruction and interventions; and (d) allocating the school’s fiscal resources to best support core instruction and interventions. Finally, the team considers the organizational learning needs of the school (Buffum et al., 2009, 2010).

![Figure 2.3](image)

**Figure 2.3.** Leadership influences on student learning. Source: Leithwood and Louis (2012, p. 1)

**Implementation Science**

Implementation of initiatives such as RTI follows sequential phases (Forman, Olin, Hoagwood, Crowe, & Saka, 2009; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006a; Fullan, 2001a, 2001b; Shinn, 2008). According to Fixsen and colleagues (2005), implementation of an idea,
innovation, or initiative evolves through a series of steps. The National Implementation Research Network presents four implementation phases that include: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. The NCRTI modified the implementation model from Fixsen and colleagues (2005) to suggest schools focus on these four steps in sequential order: (1) exploring and adopting, (2) planning, (3) initial and full implementing, and (4) sustaining. As schools work carefully through each step, the central goal remains to focus on student academic and behavioral learning regardless of the implementation phase (Blase, Fixen, Naoom, & Wallace, 2005). While moving through the stages, schools may vary in the time and tasks required during each phase. When school communities restructure during implementation of RTI, the school organizational practices as well staff roles and responsibilities change. These changes can create a variety of challenges that school leaders must address.

**Fidelity of Implementation**

Fidelity of implementation refers to the accurate and consistent delivery of instruction or assessment according to the design, research findings, and developer’s specifications. It also requires includes adherence, exposure, program differentiation, student responsiveness, and quality of delivery. According to the American Institutes for Research, attention should be on fidelity of implementation at all levels (Center on Response to Intervention, n.d.; KDE, 2012; Yemm, 2007).

**Organizational Learning**

Organizational learning involves generating, incorporating, and sharing knowledge throughout the organization by using diverse processes and practices (Collinson & Cook, 2007). Learning occurs at individual, group, and system levels. As
the members learn together, they gain new expertise and develop the expectation of collective ownership of the system’s focus and goals. Each member shares the responsibility for meeting the desired outcomes. In the case of RTI, the team becomes collectively responsible for ensuring high levels of learning for every student (Buffum et al., 2011).

In his book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Peter Senge (1990) pinpoints five principle disciplines of organizational learning: (a) personal mastery, (b) mental models, (c) shared vision, (d) team learning, and (e) system thinking. Table 2.2 provides a brief explanation of each factor.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal mastery</td>
<td>At the school, teachers expand personal growth and capacity by having a strong desire to improve professionally, engaging in continual learning, and focusing on the future vision in order to make choices about their development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental models</td>
<td>At the school, teachers continually reflect on assumptions about schooling; openly dialogue, share views and develop knowledge about each other’s assumptions; and engage in their own work with flexibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared vision</td>
<td>Vision and goals of school are planned and created through a process of shared commitment, participatory activities, and consensus of all school members including students and parents; and a teacher’s personal vision is aligned with the school vision and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team learning</td>
<td>At the school, various group or team activities are encouraged to address schooling issues or teacher’s professional work; teachers become committed to, skilled at, and involved in collaborative work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems thinking</td>
<td>Teachers understand and manage their own work in an interrelationship within the school environment that includes processes of change; they consider the impact of their own work on the entire school organization and the stakeholders’ interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Positive Organizational Scholarship**

Learning-focused schools embrace RTI as a process of learning together while working toward the common goal of meeting individual student needs (Buffum et al., 2010). In order to implement an initiative, the organization needs value student learning
over adult comfort. These schools embrace the idea that the entire organization is collectively learning and growing in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) builds on the strengths of the organization in order to allow the positive states of individuals and groups within the organization to emerge. POS primarily considers the positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members (Cameron & Caza, 2008; Luthans & Avolio, 2009). Although POS does not represent a single theory, it has a primary focus on the dynamics typically described by words such as “excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, or virtuousness” (Cameron et al., 2003, p. 46).

Summary

Effective schools, collective leadership, and RTI research are at the center of this analysis of the collective leadership practices of high-performing secondary schools. For the purpose of this study, RTI served as the subject to explore collective leadership practices in schools with effective implementation. In order for the schools to be considered effective with RTI initiatives and implementation, students must demonstrate learning and make progress in academic performance and behavior. Applying the characteristics of effective schools, coupled with the core principles of RTI and collective leadership practices, may provide useful information for schools to use in developing plans for meeting student needs.

This chapter presented the primary RTI models, tiers, implementation processes, and framework. The literature review provided information regarding RTI in elementary schools and revealed gaps in the research for secondary school. Further studies in this
area are needed to contribute to the knowledge base and assist high schools with implementation practices of RTI.

Despite the paucity of research on RTI in high schools, educators are held accountable for individual student learning. The legislation mandating educational reform leaves a lot of room for interpretation regarding the specifics of RTI implementation. Throughout the research on effective schools, several common traits appear: (a) high expectations, (b) strong leadership, (c) commitment to learning for all, (d) collaboration, (e) differentiated instruction, and (f) frequent monitoring of student progress.

Strong leadership at all levels remains central to RTI initiatives. Collective leadership during the RTI implementation process, the primary focus of this study, fosters the school’s focus on the desired results of learning for all. As the school becomes a learning organization, the capacity to meet individual student needs increases. The conceptual framework for this study, illustrated in Figure 2.5, shows the factors and impact of the effective efforts of leaders in schools that assure high levels of learning. The findings on the effective schools movement guided the overall perspective on what constitutes an effective school and provided the operational definition of the term effective as it is used with effective schools, effective leadership, and effective teams. Specifically, the term effective is defined as producing a decided, decisive, or desired action; ready for service or action; producing desired or intended results; being successful or achieving the results you want; and fulfilling a specified function (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2014).
RTI and collective leadership practices in effective schools have instructional leaders and implementation teams that assure high levels of student learning (Mellard & Johnson, 2008; Leithwood & Mascall 2008).

The research on effective schools dates back to the 1960s. Educators may access this literature, but many do not use the findings to guide reforms, as is evident in national school report card data. This study focused on schools that have accepted the challenge to do what is needed to enable all students to have academic and behavioral success.

*Figure 2.4. Collective Leadership and Response to Intervention Implementation*

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

These schools adhere to the principles of effective schools, RTI, and collective leadership. Moreover, they embrace the idea of being a learning organization. Table 2.3 presents the findings of the effective schools movement, RTI, and collective leadership research.

Table 2.3.

*Common Factors for Inquiry: Effective Schools, RTI, and Collective Leadership*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Schools Characteristics</th>
<th>Response to Intervention Core Traits</th>
<th>Collective Leadership Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear School Mission, Vision, Goals</td>
<td>Clear goals and vision</td>
<td>Well-defined Mission, Vision, Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectation for Success</td>
<td>High Expectations for success all learners</td>
<td>High Expectation for Success for all learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Professional Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>Implementation Team – Guiding Coalition; Student Support Team</td>
<td>Strong leaders throughout the learning community; Principal in the leader of leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Student Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>Frequent Progress Monitoring; Universal Screener; Curriculum-based measurements; Data used to drive decisions</td>
<td>Frequent Progress Monitoring; Data used to drive decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Focus on Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Focus on Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and Orderly Environment</td>
<td>Positive Behavior Intervention and Support</td>
<td>Foster a Positive School Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and home and school relations</td>
<td>Positive and home and school relations</td>
<td>Promote Positive home and school relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Learning Environment</td>
<td>Student-Centered Learning environment</td>
<td>Student-Centered Positive, Learning Environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The literature review provided information focused on the study’s purpose to explore collective leadership practices of effective RTI implementation teams. Additionally, the review informed the design of the study and provided an overview of
the methods used to answer the research question, *What leadership practices do schools with effective RTI use?* Chapter 3 presents the research design, the methodology for the analysis of the school implementation teams and the applied collective leadership practices of the schools.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design and methodological approaches of this study, including methods used for interviews, focus groups, observations, data collection, and data analysis. The Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation process served as the source for gaining information regarding collective leadership practices in two high performing secondary schools in Kentucky. Effective schools research served as a guide to determine the characteristics of schools that focus on meeting individual student needs.

This qualitative case study used an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) theoretical research perspective to examine the positive leadership practices involved in RTI implementation. AI is a theoretical research perspective and methodology (Cooperrider, 1990; Hammond, 2013; Maxwell, 2005; Priest, Kaufman, Brunton & Seibel, 2012) commonly used in the fields of business, science, and social science (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007). AI informed the development of data collection protocols and data analysis in this study.

Appreciative Inquiry

AI was employed in order to explore the collective strengths and positive core of the high schools (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Lewis & Moore, 2011). This study sought to explore the effective leadership practices of schools and implementation teams who choose to teach all students. Effective schools research indicates that schools can positively impact student learning. A pioneer in effective schools research, Edmonds (1979) once said, “We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do
that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far” (p. 20).

The literature presents AI as a positive approach to change management (Cooperrider, Sorensen, Whitney, & Yaeger, 2000; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007; Serrat, 2008). Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) developed AI in the 1980s (Dematteo & Reeves, 2011) as a human systems theory to explain how organizations operate as a living body and move in the direction of the identified focus (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007). In this type of research, the positive core is linked to the successes of the systems and guides their future development.

While AI focuses on the positive core, the purpose extends beyond revealing positive traits. AI has two primary outcomes: generating knowledge and identifying new action that can promote transformation. In the transformational process, the method works to generate an improved organization through focusing on the positive core as the central focus of all the collective work (Cooperrider, 1990; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007). Through AI, organizations reveal innovations and creativity. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) state that examining the positive core is critical to the change process and refer to the process as the root cause of success analysis.

Because AI focuses on organizational strengths rather than problems, it provides a means to discover possibilities within the organization. A positive synergy develops among members of the organization as they focus on and study what the organization does well. The process does not ignore problems but rather addresses them from a positive viewpoint. Thus, the focus shifts from the traditional problem-solving model to a solution-generating model (Cooperrider et. al, 2000). The emphasis moves from
concentrating on what did not work in the past (e.g., problem-solving model) to considering what works well (e.g., solution-generating model.). AI generates strengths, builds on what is functioning properly, and assists with achieving the desired results.

Peter Drucker, a long-time researcher, speaker, and author of *Leadership and Management*, stated, “The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make our system’s weaknesses irrelevant” (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 2). Drucker asserts that focusing on the organization’s strengths yields more positive results than the traditional problem-solving methods that keep the problem as the center of the process (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Traditional problem-solving involves identifying the problem, searching for root causes of the problem, generating possible solutions, and developing an action plan. Problem-solving methods keep the problem as the center of the process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007).

The strength of AI, in contrast, is engagement and transformation of the organization, and when effectively implemented, it generates new ideas and positive actions (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007). Table 3.1 illustrates the shift from a problem-solving approach to an AI solution-generating model. The basic assumptions of the two approaches differ in process and belief. In the problem-solving model, the assumption is that the organization is a problem to be solved and needs to do less of something that is not done well. In AI, the assumption is that the organization is an asset to be developed and needs to search for ways to do more of what works (Hammond, 2013). Organizations that utilize AI view change as a cycle of learning. They use data to review structures and processes in order to continue to build on past success. While the
organization celebrates successes, the focus is on continuous improvement and a belief that organizations have life (Fullan, 2005; Hammond, 2013).

Table 3.1

**Problem Solving Approach and Appreciative Inquiry Approach***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Appreciative Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification of problem or simply a felt need</td>
<td>Appreciating and valuing the best of <em>What is?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of causes</td>
<td>Envisioning <em>What might be?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of possible solutions</td>
<td>Dialoguing <em>What should be?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action planning to treat the problem</td>
<td>Innovating <em>What will be?</em> to expand the capacity and effectiveness of the organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from *Two Approaches to Organizational Change*, (Hammond, 2013, p. 13)

Throughout a majority of the literature, AI follows a 4-D Cycle that includes these processes: discover, dream, design, and deliver (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007; Serratt, 2008, 2009). Hammond (2013) presents AI as a 5-D cycle with define as an additional phase. This study used the 4-D AI Cycle to design data collection instruments, assist with data analysis, and explore the leadership practices in the schools. I chose the 4-D model because the define dimension was established at the onset of the study design. I independently defined the inquiry phase when I determined what the study would explore. In this case, the define dimension process was used to explore the leadership practices in high performing high schools involved in RTI implementation.

The AI model is typically represented by a circular image suggesting a continuous process flowing from one dimension to the next. During each part of the cycle, the participants experience and explore various positive aspects of the organization. Each
phase incorporates the findings of the previous part of the cycle (Cooperrider & Sirvasta 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007; Hammond, 2013; Serratt, 2008, 2009). The circular, iterative process of AI is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

![Diagram](image.png)

*Figure 3.1. Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model, Adapted from The Thin Book of AI, (Hammond, 2013, p. 22).*

Although this process focuses on the positive core, all positive inquiry is not AI (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Hammond, 2013) because simply concentrating on the positive and negating all problems is not AI. AI research extends beyond simply pinpointing the positive by collecting information about how the group would be at its best. Throughout the process of AI, the participants tell the success stories of the organization and create a social construction of reality (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). A challenge of using this method involves eliciting participants’ visions about something they have not ever seen or witnessed. Although the organization’s history serves as a foundation for imagining endless possibilities for the future, participants in AI follow
specific steps to generate innovative ideas. AI supports the premise that in organizations something works. The AI cycle also operates on the assumption that what a group focuses on becomes the reality. Specific questions elicit responses that help the group dream and develop a plan to reach the desired outcome that already exists. Finally, AI provides a framework for organizational transformation from a traditional, static change process to a more fluid, living existence, yielding positive change for the common good. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the stages of AI, including the purpose, task, and outcomes of each stage (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Donnan, 2005; Stratton-Berkessel, 2010).

Table 3.2

*Summary of AI Stage Descriptions, Purpose, Task, and Outcomes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>What is the focus of inquiry?</td>
<td>Clarify the topic and create the inquiry process.</td>
<td>Clarify and affirm the topic of choice.</td>
<td>Topic of choice is determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover</td>
<td>What gives life?</td>
<td>Discover and appreciate personal and organizational high point stories and experiences.</td>
<td>Gathering stories and key ideas that identify the organization’s positive core.</td>
<td>Stories as evidence of values and best practices; greater sense of openness and listening skills, builds trust, generates positive energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Key Question</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream</td>
<td>What might be?</td>
<td>Co-create a desired future from collective, imaginative and innovative capacity of the group.</td>
<td>Co-create visions of all the elements participants want to introduce into communities or workplaces.</td>
<td>Members’ expressions of clear statements and images that idealize the organization, increased creativity, and amplified voices of hope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>How can it be?</td>
<td>Choose the design elements that will support and develop the organization structures to bring the dream to life.</td>
<td>Participants identify which projects they want to be a part of to make the dream happen.</td>
<td>Begin to submit basic project plans for consideration and refinement, begin to see shifts in behavior and mindsets, and increased empowerment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver</td>
<td>What will be?</td>
<td>Sustain momentum in organization, build capacity of participants to continue the process themselves.</td>
<td>Continue learning and adapting, consider new iterations of the cycle, engage in possibility thinking and look for opportunities versus problems.</td>
<td>Participants become appreciative leaders who champion self-sustaining change; cultural shift moves towards strength-based appreciative practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Study Design

This analysis used a qualitative, descriptive multiple case study research design. Specifically, the study examined the collective leadership practices of two high-performing Kentucky high schools with RTI implementation teams through an AI theoretical research perspective. A multiple-case study design has advantages over a single-case study design by utilizing more cases for evidence and data sources (Yin, 2003, 2016).

Theoretical Research Perspective and Research Questions

The AI theoretical research perspective focuses on the positive core of organizations (Cooperrider, 1990; Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Throughout the study, this theoretical research perspective influenced how questions were asked in the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. Whole system inquiry is one of the most successful and frequently used applications of AI and, therefore, was selected as the best approach for investigating the leadership practices used in high performing secondary schools in Kentucky.

This study used AI to explore the collective leadership practices of two high school RTI implementation teams. AI allowed the positive core of the individuals, teams, and the organization to become apparent. Research questions guided the systematic exploration. The overarching research question of this study was, What leadership practices do schools with effective RTI use? To determine those leadership practices, the following questions were asked:

1. How do leadership teams collectively perform to support the implementation of RTI?
2. What positive organizational learning occurs in schools with effective RTI models?

In order to answer the questions, I utilized a multi-phase case analysis using the AI research design (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Creswell, 2003, 2005; Yin, 2003). Two high-performing Kentucky secondary schools served as the setting for the research. The majority of the data collection occurred in the natural setting, the high school campus, allowing me to observe the participants conducting school business.

I began the study with an assumption that RTI, when effectively implemented through strong collective leadership, positively affects student learning and the learning environment. The presumption was that collective leadership by teachers, administrators, and other school staff, supported by RTI models, improved student learning and the school environment. The study sought to explore what, how, and why leadership practices were used in the high-performing schools.

While awaiting the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Kentucky, I reviewed publicly available documents (e.g., KDE and school websites) to generate a list of potential schools for the study. This process started in September 2015 and took place until the IRB approval on December 2, 2015. Having this information about the potential schools allowed the sites to be ready for on-site participation upon IRB approval.

Data Collection Overview

Before beginning any on-site data collection, I sought approval of the University of Kentucky IRB. All interview and focus group questions, protocols, and cover letters were submitted to the University of Kentucky’s Institutional Review Board for
acceptance and approval (Appendix A). Individual and focus group interview protocols were tested as a method of establishing content credibility. Participants in the instrument testing provided feedback regarding any clarifications needed with the questions or process. I used the feedback to modify the interview and focus group protocols. Specifically, questions were revised to ensure the AI process was well reflected throughout the interview. The length of time for administration and approximate times for each essential question was established based on the instrument testing. The I-phone 6 voice memo and MacBook Pro audio-recording applications were used to record all interviews. The devices were tested during the trial interviews for clarity and function. I ensured the phone and computers were charged and cords were available during all on-site data collection.

Data collection sources included interviews with formal and informal school leaders. Implementation team focus group interviews were conducted at both schools. Additionally, a minimum of four implementation team meetings per school were observed. Schoolwide walkthroughs at each high school allowed me to observe the overall school community and gain insight into the school setting. Reflections about each school’s implementation history were recorded in a field log using the Evernote application. Documents and artifacts were collected and reviewed throughout the research. These documents included school mission statements, RTI handbooks or guidelines, school newspapers, newsletters, websites, and implementation team meeting agendas and minutes. The following sections provide a brief synopsis of each of the schools and include a table for each school with an overview of the data collection.
process. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 present a sequence of the data collection process for each school in the study. Further information regarding the schools is provided in Chapter 4.

**Focal Point High School**

Focal Point High School (FPHS) is the only public high school in a rural community approximately 25 miles from an urban city in Kentucky. The school relocated to its current building in the fall of 2013. The principal, employed at the school for six years, and his leadership team have led the school from a needs improvement school in 2010 to a school of distinction in 2015.

**Table 3.3**

**Focal Point High School Data Collection Record**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Date(s) Administered</th>
<th>Content or Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with implementation team members (e.g., assistant principals, department chairs, counselors, lead teachers)</td>
<td>12/2/15 through 3/18/16</td>
<td>To conduct semi-structured interviews using interview protocol (Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interview with principal</td>
<td>12/2/15 and 2/25/16</td>
<td>To conduct semi-structured interviews using interview protocol (Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interview with RTI school lead contact</td>
<td>3/14/16</td>
<td>To gather data regarding RTI plan, implementation process, and data collection System (Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview with implementation team members</td>
<td>3/21/16</td>
<td>To conduct focus group protocol (Appendix D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site observations</td>
<td>12/16/15, 1/6/16, 2/3/16, 3/8/16, and 3/21/16</td>
<td>To observe the data collection site and record pertinent information (Appendix G, H, &amp; I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meetings (weekly)</td>
<td>12/16/15, 1/6/16, 2/3/16, 3/8/16, and 3/21/16</td>
<td>To observe and collect data (Appendix G, H, &amp; I)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Central Community High School

Central Community High School (CCHS) is the only public high school in a small town approximately 25 miles from an urban city in Kentucky. A central part of the overall community, the school has a long history of excellence. The public expects the school to maintain its distinguished school status and compels the school to strive for the best for the students. The school, as a community of learners, celebrates the tradition of distinction.

Table 3.4

Central Community High School Data Collection Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Date(s) Administered</th>
<th>Content or Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual interviews with implementation team members (e.g., assistant principals, department chairs, counselors, and lead teachers)</td>
<td>1/12/16 through 3/18/16</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews using interview protocol (Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interview with principal</td>
<td>1/12/16 and 3/9/16</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews using interview protocol (Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual interview with RTI school lead contact</td>
<td>3/14/16</td>
<td>To gather data regarding RTI plan, implementation process, and data collection system (Appendix B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview with implementation team members</td>
<td>3/3/16</td>
<td>Focus group protocol (Appendix D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site observations</td>
<td>12/14/15, 1/12/16, 3/3/16, 3/9/16, and 3/14/16</td>
<td>To observe the data collection site and record pertinent information (Appendix G, H, &amp; I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team meetings (bi-monthly)</td>
<td>12/14/16, 1/12/16, 3/3/16, and 3/14/16</td>
<td>To observe and collect data (Appendix G, H, &amp; I)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Methods

The data collection process involved multiple data sources: (a) document and data review, (b) individual and focus group interviews, (c) implementation team meeting observations, (d) site observations, and (e) field notes. Caution was taken to ensure all data were collected and maintained according to the established protocols. In order to organize a manageable system to store and retrieve all the data, I carefully developed a system to store and retrieve the data (Meriam 1998, Stake, 1995; Yin, 2016). The database allowed me a means to document a chain of evidence (Yin, 2016).

Document and Data Review

Phase I of data collection involved a review of extensive academic and non-academic school data (e.g., college and career readiness, attendance rate, school population, school improvement plans, Title I documents) to generate a list of potential schools. Stake (1995) stresses the importance of examining documents as a part of the case study process. This review included identifying schools that demonstrated characteristics of effective schools based on the findings from the publicly available information (e.g. school websites, newspapers, school newsletters, and Kentucky Department of Education website). Based on research regarding effective schools and RTI, the sampling criteria for site selection included the following: (a) Kentucky high school; (b) accountability data on the Kentucky School Report Card (KDE) indicating the school was distinguished, proficient, or needs improvement with a progressing classification during the 2014-15 school year; (c) school leadership implementation team active and in existence for at least two years; and (d) current principal in place for at least two years. This study explored high performing high schools in Kentucky, which
classifies schools as distinguished, proficient, or needs improvement based on diverse
data sources. Distinguished schools exceed the benchmarks, proficient schools meet the
benchmarks, and needs improvement schools do not meet the benchmarks. The results
from the Phase I data review served to generate the pool of potential participants for
Phase II. The participant and site selection is explained in more detail throughout this
chapter.

**Participant and Site Selection Criteria**

The selection process involved a review of trend data, the University of Louisville
ABRI Project data base, and the Kentucky Department of Education RtI model site data
base. The selection criteria for schools for the study included the following: (a)
Kentucky high school, (b) distinguished, proficient, or needs improvement progressing
based on the 2014-15 Kentucky School Report Card Data, (c) involvement in the RTI
process for at least two years (multi-tiered system of intervention), (d) current principal in
the building for at least 2 years and currently active, (e) school RtI implementation team
in existence for at least 2 years and currently active, and (f) use of data to inform
schoolwide academic and behavior instruction. These criteria were selected based on my
professional experience as a State Academic and Behavior RTI Liaison and current RTI
research (Bender, 2012; Buffum et al., 2011; Jimerson et al., 2007; Mellard & Johnson,
2008) and the convenience of settings.

**Research Setting**

Interventions in high school include some of the same sets of essential
components as those commonly implemented in elementary schools, but the actual
strategies for implementation differ due to a high school’s unique culture, structure, and
organization (Duffy, 2007; Hatch, 2002). More research is available regarding RTI implementation practices in elementary and middle school than in high school. The literature provides little information regarding the leadership practices involved in RTI at the secondary school level; therefore, I focused solely on the collective leadership practices of RTI implementation teams in high schools.

**Site Selection Process and Site Overview**

In 2008, the Academic and Behavior Response to Intervention (ABRI) Project began as a joint endeavor with the University of Louisville and the KDE. ABRI works with schools to create and sustain positive change in RTI implementation in schools. I used professional contacts with the ABRI Project and KDE to begin the quest to find study sites. I initially used a pool of 70 potential schools from the University of Louisville ARBI Schools’ Database (ABRI, 2015). Of the 70 schools, only three were high schools. Additionally, the KDE’s Department of Learning Services provided information regarding the database of exemplary RTI schools (KDE). The KDE database showed three high schools with a school implementation team. I also consulted with ABRI and KDE staff to pinpoint any other high schools implementing an RTI Model. Three more high schools were presented as possible candidates for the study. Thus, a total of nine high schools were found as a result of these inquiries with ABRI and KDE.

With the potential pool of nine schools, I reviewed publicly available data for each school including the following:

- Mission statements and other general school information on school websites.
- School report cards from the KDE website, specifically the overall accountability index, graduation rates, attendance rates, College and Career
Readiness index, and participation in federal lunch program, and other non-academic data.

To ensure that the data for this study was collected in an ethical manner, I followed the rules and regulations presented by the University of Kentucky IRB. Participants were asked to sign a consent form that provided a description of the nature of the study, a statement about its intended purpose, and an explanation about the option of voluntary withdrawal from the study at any time. All participants signed a consent form prior to beginning any interview or focus group.

Throughout the study, I gave participants the opportunity to address any concerns during the interview, focus group, observation, or data collection processes. The individuals participating in the interviews or focus groups and their responses were not revealed to anyone other than me (with the exception of the focus group assistant and second reader). The specific names of individuals and the actual school names were not provided in this document. Any name of an individual or school presented in this document is a pseudonym. No identifiable student school-based data was used or necessary for the research. The data collected pertained to the collective leadership practices of the team during RTI implementation.

Participants

Creswell (2007) stresses the importance of selecting participants who fit the study well and will honestly share their insights. The participants in this study represented a variety of staff at each of the high schools and included the principal, assistant principals, guidance counselors, teacher leaders, content leaders, SBDM members, and data specialists. In addition to considering the individual leaders, this study explored the
collective leadership practices of the implementation teams in two high schools.

Interviews with the formal and informal leaders took place at each site. I made multiple site visits to the natural school settings to observe the participants in their respective roles and took field notes to document the observations (Creswell, 2003, 2005, 2007). During these visits, I identified individuals who had leadership roles and scheduled time to interview them to learn more about their responsibilities. Speaking with all who provided leadership generated further information regarding the collective leadership practices of the school.

The privacy of the participants was protected throughout the research. While participant selection occurred through criterion sampling, I safeguarded the names of the schools and the school community members. All participants were informed of the efforts taken to maintain confidentiality of personal identification data, including the assignment of pseudonyms for participants and school names.

**Initial Site Visits**

From the list of nine schools generated from the selection process, I began to contact the principals of the school. I sent the first two principals an email with the study overview and requested their participation in the research of high performing high schools. Fortunately, both principals of the schools in this study graciously agreed to participate; hence, I did not contact the other seven potential sites to participate. I then sent a formal letter of request to the principals in which I provided a more detailed explanation of the study components and research purpose. Both principals followed the formal request with a letter of support that included their school’s commitment to the research process.
Once the two high schools were selected and their support enlisted, I contacted school personnel to schedule a site visit. I sent an email to each school principal to request an interview. In both cases, the administrators agreed to meet with me. During the initial meeting, I gained information regarding each school’s primary RTI contact leader, an overview of the school’s RTI structure, and the leadership team’s structure and function. The fundamental purpose of this interview was to gain information regarding the RTI and leadership framework in order to plan for observations, individual interviews, and focus group interviews.

After the first meeting with the principal, I scheduled, via email, a meeting with the primary RTI contact leader. In the meeting with the RTI contact leader, we reviewed the KDE template and discussed the RTI implementation process of the school. I organized the responses of the principal and the key contact leader of RTI for use during data analysis.

The principal or the principal’s designee and I also reviewed the Criteria for Sites with Exemplary Kentucky System of Intervention (KSI)/RTI Practices (Table 3.5), (KDE, 2012). This instrument contains the criteria KDE uses to identify schools that demonstrate exemplary KSI/RTI practices. I recorded the data on the template from the Criteria for Sites with Exemplary KSI/RTI Practices Form. Appendix I provides a list of key terms and definitions used on the document in Table 3.5. In addition to providing an initial overview of the status of the RTI process, the responses provided information on the school’s overall leadership structure, presented in the Chapter 4 findings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Fully Implemented</th>
<th>Partially Implemented</th>
<th>Plan In Development</th>
<th>Needs Development</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>Core Instruction with Differentiation</td>
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<td>Use of Learning Targets and KCAS</td>
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<td>School Implementation Team</td>
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<td>Student Intervention Team (collaboration)</td>
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<td>Student Intervention Plans</td>
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<td>Flexibility of Tiers (criteria for tier movement)</td>
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<td>Multiple Forms of Data</td>
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<td>Family Involvement</td>
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<td>Fidelity to the Intervention Process</td>
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<td>Use of Resources</td>
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<td>Writing Interventions</td>
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<td>Math Interventions</td>
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<td>Behavior Interventions</td>
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<td>Data Management Tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professional Learning</td>
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</table>

*Figure 3.2. KDE Criteria for Sites with Exemplary KSI/RTI Practices, KDE, KSI/RTI Document, 2012.*

During other site visits, meetings with the principal and school leadership team members occurred. Data collection during these site visits consisted of the following: (a) interviews with building principals, implementation team members, and other school
leaders; (b) walkthroughs to observe the participants and setting; and (c) document review of implementation team agendas and minutes, schoolwide summative data, RTI documents, school newspapers, student and staff handbooks, documentation guidelines, and forms.

**Data Collection**

Individual face-to-face interviews with formal and informal leaders, focus group interviews with leadership team members, observations of implementation and leadership team meetings, school site observations, and artifact and document collection and review served as sources of data for the study. I formulated the questions based on the AI 4-D model for individual and focus-group interviews using a theoretical research perspective that emphasizes the positive core of collective leadership practices (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007). Moreover, semi-structured protocols were used to guide the interviews based on the AI 4-D model. All interview and focus group questions, protocols, and cover letters were submitted to the University of Kentucky’s IRB for acceptance and approval (Appendix A).

**Three Phase Process**

The study involved three phases that are described in the following sections. Although the phases are listed as individual segments, the process did not follow a totally linear model. With the exception of the site selection, the processes of each phase were repeated throughout the study.

**Phase 1.** Site selection determined based on purposive sampling criteria. Artifacts and academic and non-academic data were reviewed and used for organizing the
study for Phase 2 (Creswell, 2005, 2007). Data analysis began as soon as data was collected and continued throughout the phases.

**Phase 2.** Artifact and document reviews, face-to-face interviews, focus groups, site observations, and observations of implementation team meetings occurred at each of the schools. As an additional source of data, the minutes from each school’s implementation team meetings were used to explore patterns within and among the schools. Data analysis continued throughout this phase.

**Phase 3.** On-going data analysis occurred using the collected data from Phases 1 and 2 (Neuman, 2006; Dematteo & Reeves, 2011).

**Data Sources**

Phase II involved numerous data collection sources including one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, site-observation visits, and implementation team meeting observations. The protocols clearly connected the research questions and AI stages. Phase II generated rich data from the interview and focus group transcripts and field notes from observations in the environment. This phase involved extensive time in the field to observe the participants in a variety of capacities.

**Interviews**

A semi-structured interview protocol process was used for the 14 (seven at each school) participant interviews. The interview questions, based on the AI process, elicited information regarding collective leadership practices of schools with effective RTI models. The questions focused on the 4-D AI components of discover, dream, design, and deliver (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007; Serratt, 2008). I asked questions that followed the four components of the AI process (see Table 3.1). Through asking
questions and being receptive to new perspectives, I gained insight regarding the collective leadership practices of the team and school. The interview questions served to generate open-ended targeted answers. The interviews were recorded and transcribed during data analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interviews followed a protocol using the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Each school had a team of leaders who participated in a focus group. The number of participants varied due to schedule conflicts at one of the sites; one focus group had eight people, and the other group had five people. Both focus groups consisted of administrators, guidance counselors, and lead teachers.

The participants were asked open-ended questions about the successes of the organization. Through a series of questions and prompts, the focus group members created possibilities for change and uncovered strengths within the system (Choo, 2006; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007; Serratt, 2008, 2009). The focus groups adhered to the determined protocols in order to have consistency of the process. At the end of each focus group interview, the participants were asked to provide any additional information not covered in the questions.

During the focus groups, I had an assistant help with the logistics of providing refreshments, audio recording the sessions, and taking notes during the interviews. We met immediately following the focus group to review notes. During this meeting, we reviewed our notes, recorded observations regarding body language and team interactions, highlighted comments from the notes that reflected stages of the AI process, and discussed any area for follow-up during upcoming interviews or observations.
Observations

Phase II also included observations to support the other data collection instruments. To gain additional insight into the relationships within and behaviors of the organization, the investigator attended five implementation leadership team meetings at one school and four at the other. The number of team meeting observations differed between the two schools because one team met weekly and the other met bi-monthly. The purpose of each school visit was to observe the participants’ actions, habits, and interactions during a meeting in the natural social environment.

I did not directly or actively engage in the meetings, but rather observed and recorded reflections regarding the leadership practices exhibited during the meetings. I chronicled the events and behaviors in a field notes log used to maintain all recordings of happenings and reflections. In addition, I used the Evernote application to document all meetings. The field logs assisted with documentation organization and data analysis. I also recorded observations, took detailed notes, collected documents, and transcribed the meetings for use in data analysis. The site visits were recorded in a researcher log (Appendix H) and the notes were recorded in a field notes template (Appendix I). The logs and template provided a detailed reference for use during data collection and analysis. Throughout all data collection, I focused on observing the collective leadership practices of the RTI implementation team.

Documents

Publicly available data was reviewed prior to the beginning of on-site data collection. The data included information from the KDE School Report Card(s), Tell Survey Data, School RTI Plans, School CSIP, and other information extracted from the
school and state websites. In addition to the artifacts collected from publicly available sources, other documents were gathered throughout the data collection process during school visits. Artifacts from the professional learning opportunities and RTI implementation practices were gathered from school personnel, websites, and school publications (e.g., school newspapers, agendas, handouts, and minutes).

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis occurred throughout the study. At the conclusion of the data collection in both high schools, a comprehensive analysis of all the data took place to find patterns, thematic content, and any unique data points. To ensure accuracy, I listened to the individual and focus group audio recordings while following the transcripts during an additional reading. An initial compiled list of all codes resulted in 64 codes with 505 references regarding leadership practices. I highlighted transcripts to focus on quotes and themes that emerged from the review. I reread the transcripts to reduce, combine, and narrow the number of codes. The 64 codes were condensed and refined into 20 codes. I then read the transcripts again to synthesize the codes even further. The findings present eight codes that resulted from the process of reducing and combining codes. The codes and reference counts are presented in the next chapter with the findings.

Initial data analysis consisted of the review of publicly available data regarding both schools. Upon IRB approval, data analysis occurred on a continual basis after interviews, observations, and site visits. I reviewed collected data to begin analyzing the findings. While Phase III served as the culminating data analysis period of the collective body of data, the data analysis occurred in all phases of the research. Phase III involved
analyzing individual and focus group interview data, observation field notes, documents, artifacts, and research journal notes.

An inductive thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted (Dematteo & Reeves, 2011). Data analysis included a review of the interview narratives and team observation notes to detect the emergence of trends and unique situations (Neuman, 2006). Themes generated from the individual school academic and non-academic data and the collective body of cases were recorded for additional analysis. Data were compiled and organized into themes that arose regarding the collective leadership practices of the schools. Any single, unique situation was recorded for further research (e.g., follow-up interview, further document reviews, and member checking). Themes were generated from the individual school data and the collective body of cases. The inductive thematic analysis technique was appropriate for this study because the themes emerged from the data.

After an initial reading of all transcripts, a preliminary set of codes was developed prior to Phase III coding. These codes aligned with key principles from the literature on effective schools, RTI, collective leadership, and RTI implementation science. This list of codes was modified regularly during the early phase of coding to accommodate common themes or patterns in the data that were not in the original list of codes. While receptive to the possibilities of new codes emerging, I reviewed the characteristics from the initial coding list and focused on the elements of effective schools, RTI, and collective leadership.

With qualitative research, the investigator seeks to understand the natural setting, in this case two high-performing secondary schools in Kentucky (Creswell, 2005).
Interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed by me. The transcripts of all interviews, focus groups, and observation field notes were read immediately after each data collection event. Initial codes were documented for further analysis. I used manual and computer-based coding systems. I preferred the manual method to organize thoughts, quotes, and documents; however, the volume of data necessitated the use of the computer for cross-case analysis and code reductions. NVivo for Mac Software, designed for qualitative research with rich texts and documents, was used for coding. This coding tool facilitated the formulation of data codes and organization of the results. Although NVivo Mac Software uses the term node to identify a code, I used the commonly-accepted term code throughout this document.

Following the coding process, a review and analysis of the coded data findings occurred again. Themes emerged during this process, and bodies of evidence began to surface across the schools that later helped to generate the overall findings. These findings revealed themes that (a) appeared in both high schools, (b) cropped up repeatedly in several interviews at each school, and (c) were described as school leadership practices used to implement RTI. Additionally, the findings revealed some unique themes for one of the schools.

**Quality and Verification Check**

Qualitative strategies used to ensure consistency and trustworthiness involved high-quality methods to gather data (Creswell, 2005, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2016). I used a combination of strategies to increase the credibility and consistency of the work (Maxwell, 1992; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Neuman, 2006). The precautionary measures included a variety of practices (Creswell 2005, 2007;
I engaged in prolonged and persistent time in the field at both schools. The fieldwork and data collection in both locations were extensive and occurred from December 2015 through April 2016. Data analysis continued throughout the process. In order to keep accurate documentation of the process and findings, I maintained a detailed research reflection journal to record my thoughts and observations. The journal allowed me to note observations of the physical setting, participant’s comments, calendar of events, researcher reflections, and other specific issues pertaining to the study. The reflection journal was maintained using the Evernote app. Each case had an individual notebook to store, organize, and manage data for quick retrieval.

In order to increase the credibility of the study, I utilized triangulation of data methods and sources (Mathison, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin 2016). The multiple methods of data collection supporting triangulation of data analysis included (a) artifact and document review, (b) walkthroughs and observations, and (c) individual and focus group interviews. The triangulation of data resulted from information generated from interviews, focus groups, observation field notes, and artifact reviews (Creswell, 2003, 2005, 2007; Stenbacka, 2001).

Another way I increased the credibility of the study was by recording participants’ language verbatim. I transcribed the participants’ assertions from all data forms and used their own words to report the findings (Creswell, 2003, 2007). The use of a recording device to audiotape all interviews and focus groups assisted with maintaining accurate information. Precise language was used in recording details about the people, practices, and setting. I maximized opportunities for iterative questioning and tactics to ensure
consistency of the participants’ interviews (e.g., asking open-ended questions in multiple ways).

I also incorporated member checking to confer with participants to ensure accuracy of data and to clarify any transcript language or artifact information. A copy of the findings was presented to each school for the principal and other personnel in the study to read and provide feedback. This allowed the participants to review the information for truthfulness and appropriateness.

In addition, I conferred with a second reader during debriefing sessions regarding coding data. The second reader, a colleague who works as a State Liaison in Academic and Behavior Response to Intervention, has a wealth of experience in leadership and RTI implementation.

In this study, I collected different types of data from numerous individuals and used multiple data collection methods (Creswell, 2005, 2007; Patton, 2001). The multiple data sources served to increase the credibility of this qualitative study (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Golafshani, 2003). This triangulation of data and sources allowed me to examine each single phenomenon from more than one perspective, thus increasing confidence in the conclusions of the study.

**Role of the Researcher**

All aspects of planning, preparing, and conducting the study were completed by me with two exceptions: a second reader was used during data analysis, and a logistics assistant helped with the focus groups. I transcribed all interview and focus group recordings using the Escribe application. The second reader completed an independent
reading of coding of data. The second reader and I conferred to determine inner-rater reliability, and the second reader’s responsibilities ended after that discussion.

**Researcher Background**

My education career began as a high school foreign language and English as a Second Language teacher and later included teaching and administrative roles at the elementary, middle, high school, and district levels. While serving as a high school principal (Grades 7-12), I collaborated with the ABRI Project and KDE for three years to implement RTI. The school formed a team to facilitate the implementation of academic and behavioral RTI in the high school. The implementation team collaborated on the development and execution of a plan to ensure that all students’ needs were met. The team considered the core curriculum, interventions, and enrichment access for the students. Implementation team participants served as the guiding source of instructional leadership and developed procedural and cultural plans for the schoolwide implementation of RTI. My experience as a high school principal working with an RTI implementation team provided first-hand knowledge of the RTI implementation process.

During the time of this dissertation research and writing, I served as a Kentucky RTI Liaison, providing leadership assistance and professional development to school-based RTI implementation teams in Central and Northern Kentucky. As a state liaison, I guided school-based leadership teams at the elementary, middle, and high school levels during the RTI implementation process.

**Potential Researcher Bias and Limitations**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary research instrument (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Throughout this study, I was
the primary researcher and utilized a second reader during the data analysis to prevent researcher bias in the data analysis.

During this study, my professional role as a state liaison included extensive work in training school personnel and facilitating implementation of RTI. In order to avoid potential bias, I did not study any of the schools in the ABRI Project. All schools in the study were selected using the effective schools and RTI core principles criteria as well as criterion sampling to choose cases with predetermined criteria. The criteria for selecting the schools included the following: (a) high school in Kentucky, (b) involvement in the RTI process for at least two years, (c) accountability data from the 2014-15 school report card indicating the school was distinguished, proficient, or needs improvement with a progressing classification, (d) school implementation team in existence for at least 2 years and currently active, and (e) current principal serving in the building for at least 2 years.

To further safeguard against bias, I intentionally asked open-ended, scripted questions. Any non-scripted questions asked during individual or focus group interviews were phrased objectively, and all protocols were followed throughout the study.

**Summary**

The AI research design was used for this study. This three-phase exploratory study used data gathered from individual and focus group interview transcripts, observation field notes, and artifacts from the RTI teams of two high-performing Kentucky secondary schools. The research considered the collective leadership practices occurring in the schools. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the data collection sources.
(e.g., interviews, focus groups, observations, field notes, artifacts, documents) and examines the themes that emerged from the interviews, observations, artifacts and document reviews.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the collective leadership practices used in two high performing secondary schools in Kentucky. The study examined changes in the schools through efforts of a collective leadership team to promote academic success for all. This research also analyzed how group decisions affected individual performance and overall effectiveness of the RTI implementation. The findings in this chapter emerged from an analysis of data collected at two high performing secondary schools. The participants for the study included positional leaders who were involved directly in the RTI implementation process in the two high performing high schools in Kentucky. As in Chapter 3, the identified schools use the same assigned pseudonyms: Focal Point High School (FPHS) and Central Community High School (CCHS).

Data collection occurred in three phases that yielded rich data from both schools and included (a) 14 individual interviews of school leaders and 2 focus-group interviews with other members of the RTI teams, (b) reviews of artifacts and documents, and (c) site visits to conduct observations of various leadership team meetings. The focus group at FPHS had five participants, while the focus group at CCHS included eight participants. The difference in number of participants was due to the availability of the school personnel. Collected data were organized using the Effective Schools Characteristics, RTI Core Traits, and Collective Leadership Practices. Table 4.1 presents a comparison of these three major concepts in the study. I considered the primary ideas of each concept and created this chart to use as a reference guide during data collection and analysis.
Since the data were collected and analyzed throughout each phase, the findings are reported and combined within the framework of the characteristics, traits, and practices. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the data analysis process, an overview of the participants, and a description of the two high school settings. This chapter also presents the findings from all data collection sources and concludes with five major themes that emerged during the data analysis.

Table 4.1

*Comparison of Effective Schools, RTI, and Collective Leadership Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Schools Characteristics</th>
<th>Response to Intervention Core Traits</th>
<th>Collective Leadership Practices</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear school mission, vision, and goals</td>
<td>Clear goals and vision</td>
<td>Well-defined mission, vision, and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High expectation for success</td>
<td>High expectations for addressing the needs of all learners and achieving success for all learners</td>
<td>High expectation for success for all learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong professional instructional leadership</td>
<td>Implementation team as guiding coalition; student support team</td>
<td>Strong leaders throughout the learning community; principal is the leader of leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent student progress monitoring</td>
<td>Frequent progress monitoring; universal screener; curriculum-based measurements; data used to drive decisions</td>
<td>Frequent progress monitoring; data used to inform decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on effective teaching and learner outcomes</td>
<td>Focus on learner outcomes</td>
<td>Focus on teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and orderly environment</td>
<td>Positive behavior intervention and support</td>
<td>Positive school culture fostered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive home and school relations</td>
<td>Positive home and school relations</td>
<td>Positive home and school relationships promoted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive learning environment</td>
<td>Student-centered learning environment</td>
<td>Student-centered positive, learning environment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Collective Leadership Practices

Through conducting interviews and observations and reviewing documents and field notes, I gained insight into the leadership practices in both settings. According to Stake, (1995), the behavior patterns of the system are key elements in understanding the case. Spending time in the setting provided opportunities to witness leadership behaviors and patterns related to RTI implementation. Data gathered at the two high schools revealed eight primary collective leadership practices. Table 4.2 provides the leadership practices and reference counts. Following the table, the next section presents the data by themes with collective leadership practices embedded and site examples provided.

Table 4.2

Collective Leadership Practices and Reference Counts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective Leadership Practices</th>
<th>Combined Reference Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to a collective vision and mission to provide direction and high expectations for the school community.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice data-informed, outcome- focused, and action-oriented decision-making.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embrace leadership capacity building and work as a collective body of leaders.</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set goals and develop implementation plans.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Align resources to meet the priorities of the school</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote a positive, collaborative learning culture for all.</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and implement systems to develop structures for how to do business. Enact reflexivity of practices, people, and programs.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make strategic, intentional decisions.</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study Sites

Both FPHS and CCHS achieved Distinguished Schools recognition based on the 2014-15 Kentucky School Report Card Data. The schools indicated that they had been involved with RTI on some level for five years but had been very diligent for over three years. When asked, *what schoolwide practices do you incorporate with regard to RTI*, the participants provided many examples. In addition, I asked the leaders, *What role does leadership play in successful RTI implementation?* Several members shared a variety of leadership and instructional practices. One CCHS assistant principal said,

CCHS is a good, comprehensive school. We are really good at taking the top level very seriously and looking at struggling learners very comprehensively. We have students who go to Ivy League schools every year. We spend a lot of time on what is needed for success in Tier 1. We have a great social worker who meets student needs. We send home big amounts of groceries over breaks. We do a little bit for everybody because we have kids who need help in many different ways. In order to address the many student needs, the staff [members] understand they work as a team.

During an individual interview, a CCHS teacher leader spoke about the RTI practices and stated,

We don’t work as if it is just one of us. We work together and are really focused on the whole school approach . . . not just Advanced Placement (AP), special education, or general education. Working together the school addresses the various needs of the students.

The FPHS principal expressed his thoughts regarding the RTI school practices.

We were doing it [RTI] before, but previously it looked different. . . . We were haphazardly doing it. Now we are intentional. We use our data more and don’t just take people at their word. We reinforce the expectations and try to make things manageable for people.

One of the FPHS guidance counselors, who is referred to as the *keeper of the data*, shared the following assessment during a focus-group interview.
What works in our RTI implementation is that we collaborate and work well together to do what needs to be done for our students. Our RTI involves flexible grouping. We are willing to restructure as needed. We have structures in place to help us with the process, but we have to be flexible. We intervene immediately and don’t wait until the end of the 9 weeks. We do our best to do it [what is needed] to meet the needs immediately.

In the school newspaper, The Forum (2015), the principal shared his thoughts regarding RTI practices and leadership efforts:

This past year, FPHS jumped from 78th percentile to 95th percentile, landing FPHS the Distinction Title. . . . He attributes this large jump to the heavy focus placed on college and career readiness. Through interventions, classes based around improving students’ test scores in certain areas, and pushing eligible students to take the Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment (KOSSA) test, we were able to improve the number of college and career ready students in the school. Such concentrated efforts have resulted in the highest number of passing scores in FPHS history. The School of Distinction title marks the success of a series of efforts over the years to improve FPHS for students. . . . To better the learning environment of the school, the administration began many different initiatives, such as intervention programs. The results of these initiatives are evident from the steady rise in scores over the past years… a testimony to what we’ve accomplished.

The CCHS data specialist reflected on RTI practices:

We combed through tons of data and looked at students who were not being successful. We put them in the appropriate classes or support structures for behavior and/or academics. We get them help early so that they can be successful here and beyond. We have a dynamic team. Our principals had different histories with kids and they knew our students. They brought teachers in and asked, ‘what had worked.’ . . . We started putting it out there on the table to be more proactive with RTI placements. We use our homework club, LIFT tutoring. We have our small community… It is our community approach to helping students and that is unique to this county.

Both schools have RTI systems that include a strong core curriculum, intervention programs, and enrichment opportunities for all students. Although the two schools are both high performing academically, they have many similar characteristics and few that are quite unique. For example, FPHS has made significant gains in academic achievement over the past four years and plans to sustain the reached level of distinction,
whereas CCHS has a long history of high academic performance and intends to continue the rich heritage it has established. Both schools commit to meeting the needs of all students and state that they will not be satisfied until all student needs are met.

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 provide trend data from the Kentucky School Report Card for both schools from the 2011-12 to 2014-15 school years. The tables present longitudinal school data to give an overview of each school in the study. This trend data provides a synopsis of both schools’ demographics and academic performance.

Focal Point High School

FPHS, a rural Kentucky school approximately 25 miles from an urban setting, had been in its previous location for 50 years and has been in its new location for 4 years when this study began. According to the United States Census Bureau, the community of approximately 35,500 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) is proud of the new school’s state-of-the-art facilities that provide the students a wealth of learning opportunities. Table 4.3 presents data on FPHS from the Kentucky School Report Card.

Over the past four years, the school catapulted from the 32nd percentile to the 95th percentile in state assessment scores. The 95th percentile afforded the school the title of School of Distinction for the 2015 reporting cycle. In the FPHS school newspaper, the writer, proudly reported,

The School of Distinction title marks the success of a series of efforts over the years to improve FPHS for students. FPHS is one of only 26 schools that achieved the title of School of Distinction for the 2014-15 school year, putting it in the top 5 percent of schools across the state. (The Forum, 2015, p. 1)

The article also pointed out why this was such a notable achievement for FPHS: “For such a large school, a title like this is no easy feat. Seventeen of the 26 schools of
Table 4.3

**Focal Point High School, KDE, School Report Card Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focal Point High School</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9-12</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>1,616</td>
<td>1,617</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title 1 Status</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolwide Eligible</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>No Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>91.9%</td>
<td>94.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout Rate</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention Rate</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Rate</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>92.6%</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and Career</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Readiness</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Lunch Rate</td>
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<td>44.1%</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced Lunch Rate</td>
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<td>5.9%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability Overall</td>
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<td>60.6</td>
<td>72.6</td>
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<td>78%ile</td>
<td>77%ile</td>
<td>95%ile</td>
</tr>
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<td>Classification</td>
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<td>Proficient Progressing</td>
<td>Proficient Progressing</td>
<td>Distinguished/Progressing</td>
</tr>
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<td>Focus School</td>
<td>Focus School</td>
<td>High Progress School</td>
<td>School of Distinction/High Progress School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

distinction have an enrollment of fewer than 1,000 students compared to FPHS’s enrollment of around 1,700” (*The Forum*, 2015). The school’s story is about dramatic change in location, vision, and performance. Three years ago, the students and staff moved into a new building where they are currently located. During an individual
interview, one of the FPHS guidance counselors stated, “We knew we did not want to bring what we were doing at the old school to the new school.” Other FPHS leaders agreed that the physical move to the new building was a perfect opportunity to make adjustments in operational and academic areas too. The leaders realized that they should seize this opportunity to dream big and plan efficiently for the creation of a new school.

Central Community High School

CCHS is located in a small town approximately 25 miles from an urban center in Kentucky. The United States Census reports the population in 2015 to be approximately 26,000 people. The school has a long history of excellence, and the community expects it to maintain the distinguished status. The school building was constructed over 50 years ago. Table 4.4 provides an overview of the Kentucky School Report Card trend data.

CCHS has a rich heritage with a passionate devotion to the school community. Even with the strong legacy of excellence, the population consists of many students with various needs and backgrounds. When asked what makes your school unique, the leaders shared that the sense of community was what made CCHS special. One teacher leader and SBDM member said,

We serve a great community. We are blessed with teachers that have taught here for 30 years and will come back next year. The longevity of the staff and the intense institutional knowledge of people who have been here and care deeply about the school’s success is what makes [our school] unique.

Members spoke of the school community as a family, a support system, a part of the greater community, and an invaluable resource. The community atmosphere is at the heart of all actions and conversations throughout the campus. The school is the heart of the community at large.
One teacher leader shared a memory of a student who bought food for the Thanksgiving basket donations with her own money. He recalled that the student brought in an incredible number of cans: “Most of the time, we think students are just taking the food from their own pantry to donate, but this young lady bought it special with her own
money. That is who we are in attitude and actions.” Many of the current teachers are graduates of CCHS and take pride in returning home to teach in the school.

The school’s tradition of excellence is evident throughout the school. The hallways display banners, using school colors, recognize numerous academic, athletic, artistic, and extra-curricular accomplishments. School communications include highlights of CCHS accomplishments.

Next Sections

The following sections provide the collective findings under the themes that emerged during data analysis. Each theme is presented with my discoveries and participant contributions collected from the individual interviews, focus groups, documents, and observations from both schools.

Effective Vision: Proper Focus

One of the collective leadership practices presented in the data included a commitment to the school vision and mission to provide focus and direction for the school community. In this collective leadership practice, the emphasis is on a particular outcome that becomes the central attention of all the school community’s work. The vision and mission provide focus for all to follow.

The participants were asked, *In what ways does your school communicate high expectations?* They were also asked, *Do you have a specific memory of the school’s commitment to learning for all?* Members of the RTI leadership team at both schools expressed deep commitment to high expectations for the students including preparing all students to be college and career ready upon graduation. One FPHS guidance counselor stated, “We have high expectations that students are going to be college and career ready.
We are all on the same vision.” A teacher leader at CCHS stated, “We have high expectations for all…students, staff, teachers, and administrators.” One CCHS guidance counselor said, “We maintain our focus on what is best for students. It is easy to say, ‘we need to be student centered’ but actually being student centered requires determination to do it.”

Both schools emphasized that they have a special willingness on the teachers’ part to show the students how they can be successful. One CCHS assistant principal shared, “Our students and staff know the high expectations are for everyone. We hold each other accountable here. We take new teachers [and students] under our wings here to help them learn the ways and be successful. The vision is known by all, and the school community is dedicated to staying and preparing all students academically and behaviorally for success.” The FPHS principal said, “The biggest challenge is getting everybody to see the vision, to buy into the vision, to understand the vision, and to be on board.” Maintaining the vision as the focus for the schools was expressed by all leaders.

**All Students College and Career Ready**

Personnel at both schools embrace the vision that all students are prepared for college and career upon graduation. The schools’ report cards—as well as the vision, mission, and belief statements—reflect a broadly supported commitment to the goal of getting students ready for postsecondary learning and career opportunities. Further, members of each school’s community take ownership of this goal for all students.

FPHS created a vision statement emphasizing the goal to make sure all students are prepared for college and careers: “ALL students, college and career ready.” The
FPHS principal shared that at the beginning of each school year, the faculty and staff
review school data and stakeholder feedback to plan for the upcoming year.

One FPHS guidance counselor leader stated, “We focus on goal of college and
career readiness for all.” The artifacts, interviews, and observations provided
documentation of the school efforts to achieve the vision for every student to be college
and career ready. Through interviews and information gleaned from documents,
extensive evidence of the positive performance of FPHS emerged. In a school newspaper
article, the principal summed up the school’s improved performance by saying one of the
biggest factors of their “large success is the heavy focus on college and career readiness”
(\textit{The Forum}, 2015).

During the interviews, the participants were asked to \textit{describe a time when they
felt most excited about their involvement with the leadership team}. Several members of
the team referenced key transformational moments in the school’s RTI implementation
process. One CCHS administrator shared a memory that occurred approximately three
years ago as the “moment when the teachers really tried everything we asked them to do
regarding common assessments and data usage.” She continued,

\begin{quote}
The moment when the teachers really tried everything we [the administration]
asked them to do regarding common assessments and data usage. The staff
followed what we asked…the test scores shot way up. Teachers began to think
‘oh, it really works.’ After that, most teachers in the building want, need, and use
the benchmark scanners. The change went from us \textit{forcing or requiring} these
things, to the teachers seeing the success and owning the results. Now I think our
teachers would still use common assessments data without it being required.
\end{quote}

One event was recalled by all the FPHS leaders. The principal, in his sixth year of
service at FPHS when the study was conducted, said that a pivotal moment occurred after
a scholastic audit conducted by the KDE took place about five months into his first year
at the school. The audit report revealed several weaknesses that the school needed to address. He emphasized that the report “was not pretty” and forced him to realize that the school community needed to move in a different direction. He also said that the superintendent at the time collaborated with him to implement drastic changes and supported his decision to make the needed modifications. The principal knew the school community could do business differently for students. Following the audit, the principal planned a series of events that he said were intended to “ignite the fire” needed for the necessary change to begin.

One transformational memory mentioned by six of the interviewed leadership-team members involved a series of meetings held at a local hotel conference center. Before convening in the hotel conference room, the principal held an optional meeting for any faculty or staff member interested in change and moving forward. Using the information from the recent audit, other school data, and professional experience, he explained, “the way we currently do business for students can be better.” He presented an opportunity for the school to do more for the FPHS students and community. During this gathering, he began to share the school’s chance to come together to meet the needs of all the students. He explained that “the way we currently do business for students can be better.” He then invited the group to join him in this effort. During interviews, other members of the school community indicated that this was an emotional meeting where the principal “shared from his heart that the students of FPHS deserved more.”

Following the staff meeting, the principal invited a team of seven school personnel whom he thought would have leadership influence and abilities to join this effort to cast a new vision for the school. These seven served as administrators, guidance
counselors, or in a particular leadership role. Each of these invitees was encouraged to choose one person to invite to the meeting as a guest. The meeting was designed to be solution focused. One guidance counselor stated, “We did acknowledge problems, but stayed solution focused.” Several members described this initial meeting, called a *Think Tank Day*, as a time of discovering what the FPHS is and what it could be in the future. The principal facilitated the discussion using a *design thinking construct* (Rowe, 1987), which is a creative problem-solving approach that involves individuals working collaboratively to solve real-world problems. In this case, the team focused on generating solutions to the needs of the FPHS community. The team received a challenge to imagine what could be possible for the students at the new school. The members were encouraged to dream big and think beyond the walls of the current building.

During this day, the group began to develop a new design for the school’s leadership and vision for the future. The collective group brainstormed a list of four focal points for the needed change framework. At the time they generated these ideas, the implementation plan was unknown. The participants presented these components as *non-negotiable, must have* areas.

- **Interventions:** Students in need of academic or behavioral support should receive appropriate interventions. In an interview, one counselor stated, “The team felt strongly that we needed to have immediate intervention for students.” At this point, the team did not know how the implementation process for the interventions would work—they just reported knowing that they needed timely interventions.
• Connections: The team determined that schedules should allow time for students to receive advising and support. This part of the change plan stemmed from a presentation to the school by Dr. Manuel Scott, a motivational speaker. One of the counselors said, “His message still resonated with all of us . . . we knew that every student needed at least someone to connect with, at least one adult.” Again, the team did not know how these connections would be implemented, but they realized connections and relationships needed to be an integral part of the school’s future opportunities for students and staff.

• I-time: This part of the list was an effort to add enrichment class. I-time would allow the students to generate ideas for classes and provide some student choice in the development of classes. A guidance counselor recalled, “We asked the students, ‘If you could have any class, what would it be?’ The students gave us a lot of answers, and sometimes they even limited themselves.” The team committed to making the concept of I-time and to making it a reality.

• Schedule structure: According to the leaders, the new schedule needed to be revised to meet the needs of all of the students. “We went from a standard schedule to something pretty radical,” said one of the guidance counselors. The group prepared for a drastically different schedule and were willing to explore various scheduling options.

The CCHS principal expressed, “We have high expectations that students are going to be college and career ready, and that all will be on the same vision. We all have
ownership in it. We meet to review CCR data and look to see who has met the goal and who has not. We make plans to address those who have not yet met the benchmark.”

The leaders expressed that while they have high expectations and are focused on the vision, they are always trying to figure out new and better ways to support the students. One CCHS administrator shared, “Our whole team is committed to the vision.”

Commitment to Learning for ALL

Schools that practice a commitment to learning for all embrace the notion that all members of the community are learners. Review of various data sources from both schools reflected a commitment to learning for the adults and students alike. One CCHS administrator said, “Our job is learning…. Our job is to ensure that learning is happening all throughout this building.” During interviews, study participants were asked, What are some examples of your school’s commitment to learning for all?

Members of the FPHS cabinet shared a memory from a period prior to moving to the new building. After two Think Tank Days, a core of FPHS leaders began meeting regularly to prepare for the upcoming move to the new school. The members began to visit other schools to explore scheduling, interventions, and advisory options. The team expressed the importance of spending time in high performing schools. For example, one member said, “It made us aware of so many options out there for students.” Another one said, “The chance to visit other school communities gave us the chance to dream beyond what we were doing. It gave me a desire to be better and do better.” Team members emphasized the value of time spent visiting other schools and attending professional learning opportunities.
A guidance counselor and principal from FPHS attended the University of Kentucky’s Next Generation Leadership Academy along with other professionals from the school district and area schools. The academy presented tools to address school innovation and change. The guidance counselor described this learning opportunity by stating,

It was single-handedly the best professional learning opportunity I have ever experienced. I experienced more professional growth during the two years I was involved in the program than at any other time in my profession. It was phenomenal and stretched us to work as a group. We learned that if what we are doing right now is not working, we needed to explore what will work. We had the broad goal for all to be successful. We needed to answer the question “what do we need to do differently?” That was our challenge as a group.

A FPHS guidance counselor described some of the initial hesitation to the changes and expressed:

The first year, the people were not on board from the high school. It [University of Kentucky’s Next Generation Leadership Academy] was more of a central office driven initiative. The second year, we knew we were moving over to the new building and that we had a grand opportunity to try innovative things to help students to be successful.

Both participants considered their selection to attend the leadership academy to be an honor provided by the district office. They stated that they used information from this professional experience in planning for the transition to the new school.

Both schools described the commitment they had to meet the needs of all students. RTI is a process to address individual student academic and behavior needs. When speaking about RTI, a CCHS teacher leader and SBDM member reflected,

RTI is not a thing we do. It is not all about the data and the test. It is about the kids that need help and not because of a statistic or test [score]. We don't want to massage the numbers to make us look good. It is more than a numbers game—we want to get kids college and career ready. We want them to be able to get jobs when they leave here. We can’t rest until we reach every student.
Other leaders expressed the strong desire to have all students learning at high levels. A principal at CCHS stated, “We made a shift from teaching lessons to ensuring our students were learning.” A colleague asserted, “Our work is not done until all students are learning at their highest level. We use CCR data at all implementation team meetings.” To assure the goals are achieved, data are shared regularly at faculty meetings as well as during professional learning communities [PLC] sessions, department meetings, and content meetings. According to another team member, “Data is the driving force in PLC business. We incorporate data-informed decision making into the schoolwide structures for students, teachers, and leaders.” Another CCHS administrator reported, “Sometimes we go back to Maslow’s Theory, and we name and claim each student for what they need. This serves as a visual for all.”

During PLCs at CCHS, the members reviewed the foundations of the practice. They were reminded of the commitment to the shared mission, vision, values, and goals of the school. They were challenged to work as a collaborative team to inquire, plan, and achieve results. The leaders expressed that through the PLC process, all staff were encouraged to learn together and accomplish the fundamental purpose of learning for all.

**Gold Standard**

Members of the CCHS leadership team were asked, *What is it about this team – the structure, systems, processes, policies, staff, leaders, and strategies – that create conditions for success?* Their diverse responses included comments about the broader community, the school’s heritage, the dedication of the administrators and teachers, and the commitment of the students. One reason that was mentioned often in the interviews and documents reviewed was the school’s strong commitment to excellence. Personnel
at CCHS refers to the commitment to excellence with the phrase, *Gold Standard*. An administrator said, “The gold standard is our constant mantra.” Mission statements, hallway banners, school communications, faculty meeting agendas, and pep rally messages all reference the *Gold Standard of Distinction*. The Gold Standard is a part of the school culture in academics, arts, athletics, and attitude. Participants report that the Gold Standard is part of the school’s long heritage of excellence. The data specialist stated, “We embrace the Gold Standard in all we do.” The principal affirmed the focus on the Gold Standard by stating,

> The Gold Standard is a heritage that comes with the school. Our mission is for all students to be college and career ready. We have a *can* do attitude with a bar set high. Our students perform best when the bar is high. We are very aware of students, their placements, and overall needs.

Throughout the interviews, focus groups, observations, and site visits, the school’s commitment to the vision was evident. Both schools indicated that everybody uses their strengths to address the many facets required for students to be successful. One administrator said, “Our structures support the things we do and our commitment to the focus on the vision.”

Not only is the bar set high for students, it is equally as high for the faculty. The teachers help hold each other to the Gold Standard. One teacher leader of the focus group asserted, “We hold each other to the same standard. If someone is not cutting it, you are out.” A teacher leader at CCHS said, “We try to live up to what other colleagues are doing. The students also hold us accountable and have high expectations for us.” An administrator stated, “Student achievement and well-being is the central, clear-cut focus of this school.”
In order to maintain the Gold Standard, the accountability for all is high. Staff members maintain high expectations for each staff member and student. One teacher leader at CCHS stated, “We hold each other accountable. When a new teacher comes to the building, we help them, and show them the expectations.” A data specialist and member of the CCHS leadership team shared about the Gold Standard,

It [The Gold Standard] is all over the building in communications, announcements, in SBDM minutes, and in emails to parents. . . . The expectation of excellence is seen everywhere. . . . For example, our AP enrollment numbers are up which shows that larger numbers of students can achieve in all areas. We provide opportunities for students to be involved in the school community. We have groups for students to belong to as well. There is a heritage that comes with this school, and that is unique to the school. Our parents have high expectations too. We have a good school, and we are going to keep it that way. The teachers have high expectations for behavior and for work. They accept only the student’s best in all areas. They spend time in and out of class – everybody is working their tails off! That is the Gold Standard.

**Effective Resources: Proper Places**

This capacity focuses on ensuring financial, capital, human resources, curriculum and teaching resources, professional learning resources, and program allocations are aligned to the established mission and vision. The mission and vision of the school become the priorities for resource allocations. The participants were asked *What makes your school the most effective in personal, professional, leadership, and learning terms?* They were also asked *What has your team put into place to support your school’s implementation of RTI?* The leaders provided responses to what they collectively do as a team to support RTI implementation. Several leaders mentioned that they considered decisions from all aspects, including financial, academic, social, personnel, students, and community.
People

Putting people in the right places is an integral leadership practice at both schools. The expertise of staff is used for teacher class assignments and student placement. Student’s data is used to place them in the proper classes. Even with the student body population at both schools, guidance counselors indicated that at times they hand schedule students in order to ensure proper course assignment. One FPHS administrator said, “We make data-informed changes and decisions regarding programs, procedures, and people. Our goal is to have people in the best places to meet the most needs.”

Members were asked to share a great memory of the school. One member of the FPHS team described a memory of a transformational meeting prior to moving to the new building. The leader said that at the completion of the first FPHS vision-casting meeting at the hotel conference room, each member was asked to bring two staff members with them to the next meeting. They were advised to be “strategic and intentional” in their choices. The FPHS principal stated that they should consider bringing one person who would support and one person who might challenge the change efforts. The group continued to plan for the four focal points of change, defined in the previous meeting. They developed committees that would come into the new building with established team processes established. One guidance counselor stated, “Everybody was excited about that change, at least it seemed that way.” Several members stated, “We told people we would try things and make adjustments as needed. We were excited to ask others to join the work.”

Both leadership teams expressed how people were keenly aware of the need to have the right people in the right place. One CCHS administrator stated, “We put the
right people in the right positions. We are very thoughtful about pairing people together.” A FPHS cabinet member stated, “We put some of our best people in interventions. We do a good job of taking the right people to the right places.” One CCHS data specialist said, “Our principal has figured out where the staff needs help and makes needed changes. For example, my position, data specialist, was created because the teachers would benefit, which would, in turn, help students in the end.”

Additionally, both schools stated that they are extremely intentional in the hiring of new staff. CCHS administration described how they changed the interviewing process and questioning format. The administrators indicated that during the past year, most of the interview questions centered on candidates’ leadership capabilities. The leaders stated that the shift in interview protocol resulted in a highly effective group of new staff members. One administrator said, “The new staff members have utilized their leadership skills to increase the leadership capacity of the school. It has worked out well for us. We will most likely continue asking leadership questions as a part of our interview process.”

The schools expressed the commitment to working together as a team. One FPHS guidance counselor stated, “We no longer work in silos. We have systems established to ensure we communicate and work collectively to meet student needs.” One CCHS administrator said, “Sharing our expertise is what we do best. We have many people who play different roles. In PLCs we must take on the business aspect of PLCs and take out the emotions and feelings so much. Now we let the data speak.” The CCHS principal said,

Our role will be to come back with the department chairs to take this [PLCs] to the next level. The level of work our teachers are doing is fantastic. We could probably work smarter, but I don’t think you could work much harder. We just need to capitalize on our human resources. Our job is to ensure learning. In fact,
our job is learning. We have built a collaborative culture at CCHS. Our school is better when teachers are talking and learning. Things go better for students when adults are collaborating and working together. Students are our products. We are blessed with teachers that have taught in this building for 30 years and will come back next year. We have an intense institutional knowledge. We have people who have been here and care deeply about the school’s success.

Another example of effective use of resources was expressed regarding an upcoming professional learning trip planned for a group of strategically chosen leaders. The CCHS principal said, “We know that highly effective schools look at other schools to try to find better ways to do things.” The data specialist at CCHS stated,

We will take the right people there. We hope to provide our leaders with more focus and a great look at PLCs in action in a highly effective school in Chicago. I think we [leadership team] do good job of putting the right people in the right places. I know we are very intentional about this and work diligently to align all of our resources appropriately.

Both schools monitor people and are aware when operations are working. The administration responds quickly when an area needs attention.

**Programs and Professional Learning**

Both school teams stressed the importance of providing staff with the proper materials for success, including supplies, programs, curriculum, and trainings. One leader stated, “If we are going to do it [training or resources], we acquire the resources to make it work according to best practices.” The FPHS principal stated,

When we think about programs and professional learning, we are always coming back to the table with numbers. We ask, ‘What is working? What is not working?’ We do an analysis with different data instruments. We ask questions about how much does it cost? How will we evaluate the effectiveness? Who will use the resource? Will it be for all, some, many, few? We want to fund appropriately if we are going to do it [training and resources.] We acquire the resources to make it work according to best practices. For example, we used our co-op (cooperative education extension) to come in and train our staff for disengaged learners. We realized we had a lot of disengaged learners and our adults needed extra tools to address the students. We pick resources and training based on what will result in the most student success for all students.
One CCHS administrator shared a memory of encouraging staff to be innovative. The leader stated,

We want to be very flexible with the teachers. For example, if a team of teachers wants to loop with a group of students and asks, can we try this? Can we try this new idea with our students? Our answer is always yes. Yes, as long as they have common assessments and end at the same point. The yes is qualified with staying within the boundaries of the curriculum map and ending with the common assessments. We need this in order to compare data. If they can do these things, then we say yes.

Both school leadership teams expressed the importance of removing any barriers that would hinder the focus of the mission (e.g., provide needed supplies for success, listen to what people need). The teams expressed a willingness to listen to the teachers and students in order to provide the needed resources for success.

**Effective Leaders: Profound Impact**

This practice embraces leadership capacity building. Members of the organization participate in leadership opportunities throughout the school community. Having multiple levels of leadership strengthens leadership. Leaders are cultivated and encouraged to utilize individual strengths and expertise to strengthen the work of the learning community. Leaders make thoughtful, well-calculated, data informed decisions to support the school’s mission. Through strategic and intentional decision-making, the leaders maintain the focus on the established goals. The members were asked *What are some examples of strong leadership in your school?* They were also encouraged to *tell a particular time when they remember such an example of strong leadership.*

The CCHS data specialist stated that the principal has “figured out where the staff needs help. He looks for needs and addresses them [concerns] to remove any barriers. He is quick to respond when we have a need.” One of the CCHS guidance counselors
stated, “Our principal supports our students and cares about the teachers. He provides consistent leadership. If someone is struggling, he will help them. He has such a high level of tolerance for people.”

Both leadership teams engage in courageous conversations. For example, the FPHS principal stated, “Sometimes you have to take the unpopular stand and understand the consequences of a decision.” One CCHS administrator said, “Sometimes our positive culture keeps us from saying certain things; think about our students as all of our students.” In one cabinet meeting, the FPHS principal asserted,

Communication is not where it needs to be. I don’t like getting blindsided. We have to all be on the same page. It helps me when I am dealing with parents and those outside the school. In turn, when communication is as it needs to be, I can appropriately support everyone.

Another example of courageous conversations was shared by the CCHS principal:

We have to put the structures in place and to get the beliefs to follow. We also have to explain the why and show them the data for the why we need to do something. One of the things that is tough to get over in a school like ours that has always been pretty good is that everybody thinks we are already doing this stuff. For example, when we did the PLC professional learning training and I think we are here and others think we are doing all of that. I know they are not all doing all of that and so there is a lot of confrontation. Not in an ugly way but a let’s confront the data. In one of our last meetings, we looked at the novice reduction data. Many were surprised at the numbers. I charged the department chairs to look at every student in this group and see what they need. I don’t think it is ever too late to try. We have not done enough of what does this kid need to get better when we still have novice learners.

Administrators at CCHS shared the desire for the school leaders to work smarter and be looking for strategies to help take that next step. The CCHS principal expressed the need for courageous conversations as a part of the school’s leadership practices. He stated,

One of our strengths [our strong community] is also one of our weaknesses. We have a tight staff, and we like each other. We teach each other’s kids. This can be a weakness and we don’t want to have awkward conversations. We don’t want to hurt each other’s feelings. Hopefully, this pattern [embracing leadership and
PLC concept] takes away the personal and emotional component. We need to not be afraid to have these conversations. When we teach what we love and know it better than anything, we need to tell others some of things that you did. Share with other teachers what I know you love this and I want to do some of what you did. We need to have conversations based on the facts. These conversations do not need to be a hurtful thing.

One of the CCHS assistant principals added, “Sometimes our positive culture keeps us from saying certain things. We must think about our students as all of our students. We should be about reaching more students. We have to have conversation that help share what we know.”

The stories of courageous conversations were observed during a cabinet meeting when the leaders had reviewed a variety of AP and ACT benchmark data. The FPHS principal asked, “If our students are not meeting these benchmarks, what do we need to do differently? It may be time to consider other options for I-time. We have to do what is needed for our students. What are your thoughts?” The cabinet members shared ideas and expressed the need to have focused time to discuss this in more detail.

In addition to valuing courageous conversations, both schools’ personnel utilize a variety of leadership capacities (e.g., implementation team, content and department leaders, professional learning communities, SBDM committees, student advisory councils, and parent teacher organizations). The schools established a multi-level leadership system to utilize leadership teams in various capacities throughout the school communities. The use of multi-level leadership teams provides an avenue for two-way communication. Implementation team members have specific responsibilities and areas of expertise. They have embraced a partnership of working together. One of the FPHS
administrators expressed the power of maximizing the leadership capacity of the school by stating,

We all feel the need to intervene in any area when needed. We want to make an immediate difference in the school. We are a group of individuals, unified as a team. We all have ownership in this. We each have different levels of expertise and use it. With our collective power, we achieve amazing things together. The key is to work together and own the responsibility together.

Leadership capacity is built by maximizing leadership talents throughout the school community. Likewise, one of the FPHS administrator offered a vivid description:

I truly believe leadership is the captain at charting the course. Our leaders are good at what they do. In fact, we are good at what we do. We have plan for with qualitative and quantitative data use. Our principal helps us believe it [data use] is essential. Our principal is very clear and concise. When our building leader communicates that way, it becomes a part of what we do.

Multiple members of the FPHS leadership team referenced the FPHS principal in the individual interviews as a key to the success of the implementation process. One FPHS administrator stated,

He is really good at bringing leadership out in people. He pushes and pushes, but he does really nice things too. He is pretty special and nurturing. He recognizes talent quickly and gives it an opportunity to thrive. If you are not going to use your talent, he does not have a lot to do with you. He wants you to use your talent for the school community.

While reflecting on the move from the old building to the new building, one FPHS leader stated, “We were being lead and did not know it when the planning started so long before the move. Our principal helps us believe.” A FPHS guidance counselor said, “He [our principal] gets stuff done and together we all get things done.” The participants stated that everyone felt encouraged to use their strengths to address the many facets needed for students to be successful. One FPHS cabinet member shared about the principal and said, “When he sees you have a strength and a passion, he will turn you loose to work.” Each team member at both schools expressed the commitment their principal had to the vision
of college and career readiness for all. One CCHS cabinet member stated, “Our principal helped us believe change is essential. He was very transparent and explained the ‘why’ of what we were doing.”

Adding to the leadership capacity, both schools stated that they have a working SBDM or schoolwide committee system. The CCHS members shared that the leadership is not a top down process. One CCHS guidance counselor stated,

The school is run by a lot of different people in a lot of ways. We work for our good students that will do good things in the world. The top down decisions made here are things that would benefit the teachers and students. Sometimes those decisions are necessary for the good of all.

The members explained that the principals build leaders and expand the leadership capacity in order to strengthen focus on the school vision and mission. One of the CCHS administrators shared how the leadership teams work to support the teachers. The principal said, “If a teacher wants to try something innovative and has the data to support the idea, we will let them try it. We want our teachers to be thinking of new and better ways to help students learn.”

During individual and focus group interviews, CCHS participants referenced the principal as an integral part of the school community. They mentioned his ability to identify and address areas of need. For example, one person stated, “My position, data specialist, was created to assist teachers. He knew it would benefit the teachers which would help students in the end.” School staff spoke of him as a leader who helps the staff believe it is essential to help students learn. One member said,

He is a building leader who can communicate in such a way that it becomes a part of what you do. He is very transparent and explains the ‘why’ behind what he does. Our principal is always reading, learning, and sharing, but we know it is NOT just him, it is the whole team.
Members of the leadership team at CCHS shared that their principal cares deeply about the staff and students. One teacher leader stated, “We are more than teachers and students to him. We are a part of the school family.”

The participants were asked, *What does your leadership team do to support the process of RTI implementation?* During an interview, the CCHS principal referenced four leadership practices that contributed to the school’s success in this order: (1) focusing the school on goals and expectations for high levels of student achievement, (2) putting the right people in the right places, (3) creating structures and opportunities for teacher collaboration and leadership, and (4) providing a safe environment for innovation. He added, “CCHS has good teachers with good content knowledge with good relationships with students. We all have to want to own the results. We have everything we need in terms of raw material.” He explained that part of his role was to put the people and structures in place to let them do what they know how to do.

The FPHS principal expressed the heart of the leadership team at his school when he stated,

*Leadership comes down to student data. We know that in order to meet the needs of individual students, we have to be willing to make some pretty big changes. We want to be high performing on all the accountability measures. We know we need to measure and monitor all of our work. We provide extracurricular activities to enhance all our programs. We want high student engagement, strong leadership throughout the building, and empowered teachers.*

One of the cabinet members at FPHS shared how the leadership team supports innovation.

*If they [the teachers] have an idea, our principal encourages them to pursue it. He uses problem solving approach with the staff. We [the staff] used to be more negative. The principal is rooting that out. People won’t survive with a negative attitude. The change in people’s attitudes has turned around under his leadership. This [negative attitude] was a universal problem, but with leadership, social*
pressure from colleagues, and the strategic hiring new staff, the cycle of negativity was broken.

The FPHS cabinet members shared that leadership was always searching for more innovation or *the next thing*. One cabinet member said,

I think we are a highly effective school because we are always striving for more. You know, the next good to great thing. Our principal always says, “Where we are now…is never enough. We can always do more for our students.”

The schools indicated that the current results stem from the leadership’s focus on college and career readiness which would not have happened without strong leadership. One FPHS guidance counselor said,

Focus sometimes forces the issue for things to happen in the classroom. Without focus, we would have invested our time somewhere else. Sometimes being given a directive by administration provides accountability. Wherever I have been, whatever administration is focused on gets done.

During the time in both schools, I had the opportunity to witness district leaders interact with building level leaders. At CCHS, the district leaders complimented and encouraged the school level leaders for their efforts in meeting student needs. One of the CCHS district leaders, while working with a team of leaders, stated, “You all are the experts in the field. The quality of teachers in this school is 99.9% greatness. My role is to be a collaborative partner with you.”

**Effective Process: Proper Plan**

The collective leadership teams in both schools established the practice of setting goals and developing implementation plans. The plans provide the needed structures to support the desired outcomes. This capacity refers to working with others to help ensure that goals are strategic, specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) and lead to improved teaching and learning. They establish meeting agendas
that include current goals and status updates regarding college and career readiness. The leaders were asked *What is it about the team that creates conditions for success*, and the members shared examples.

**Data-Informed, Outcome-Focused, and Action-Oriented Decision-Making**

This capacity is about leading and engaging school teams in collecting, analyzing, and incorporating data into the ongoing school business. Data was used to identify trends, areas for celebration, and areas of growth. Data informed specific actions and plans for improvement that focused on teaching and learning. Both schools’ personnel stressed that while data was essential to the RTI implementation process, the students in the school were “more than just a number.” The FPHS principal said,

> Numbers are important, but they don’t always tell the whole story. Sometimes we struggle with that and have to remind ourselves of the notion that we work for what is best for our students. Yes, data is a numbers game. We just want to stay focused on being willing to do what is best.

FPHS and CCHS leaders emphatically stated that they are interested in more than just numbers, and leaders in both schools expressed that data does not replace personal connections and professional knowledge. The CCHS principal said,

> Some of the teachers said that they don’t want to attribute all of our success based on data, and I would agree with that. I think our data is a reflection of many good things our teachers have been doing. I have told them before that the data never reflects all that they do for kids, but it is a reflection of the school in general. I don’t think any of them are ever disappointed when we are a school of distinction. When it comes to that, we all enjoy having a little party and being patted on the back when we see we are in the 97 percentile or higher. We love being the highest ranked high school in central Kentucky. I have always told the staff that if they are doing the right things, the data will take care of itself. If they are caring for kids, teaching the standards really well, trying to meet the needs of kids, the data will fall into place.

Each school has a staff member whose primary responsibility is to manage the data. All staff members use data to inform their practices, a process modeled by leaders
in both school communities. One FPHS guidance counselor stated, “We use our data more efficiently today than we did three years ago.” Both principals shared that having a professional data specialist allowed them to use the data rather than spend time organizing the data. One CCHS assistant principal shared,

Our data system is a structural piece. Several years ago, our former chief academic officer told me, ‘you need a management system for your data . . . it is too hard to go running around.’ I learned the need to have structures in place so that it [data] all comes to the leadership team. Now that was good important advice!

The data specialists assist with helping all members of the school use data. Students in the school communities use data too. The CCHS data specialist said,

We have tried various ways for students to use their data. We have had times when they [the students] tracked their data, and that was not the best for us. It did not work for them creating any more student ownership. Now we have individual student conferencing to review data and show students where they are in terms of assessments.

Both schools use a goal setting process in academic core areas. The staff communicate that they know what the students can do and challenge them to do it. The CCHS data specialist said, “We are as transparent as possible with data. It is not easy and not an overnight process. Some students are still struggling with the process.” A leader at FPHS stated, “Data usage is a whole system responsibility. It is still difficult for many to understand why they have to take all these tests and use data to inform our decisions and practices.”

The data are used to monitor what the schools do throughout the year. The CCHS principal said,

If we don’t monitor, we don’t know if we are doing the right things. The data informs us. If we are not intentional in using it, the data will drive us all over the place. We have to be informed and look at the trends. Sometimes the data tells
us to make a change and other times to stay in the lane and not zig and zag all over the place.

The schools expressed that they have become data-informed schools and that is why they believe they are maintaining high scores. The leaders shared that everyone does not love data but that the staff looks at results and plans strategically. The participants also stated that data are important but do not need to be “over analyzed.” The CCHS principal said,

We can sit and look at data all day long and get paralysis by analysis. We need to look at it, reflect on it, and act on it. I think we do a pretty good job of that here. We have tried many different ways to use data, but I feel we have a pretty good system in place. I would put our data collection system up to anyone’s system. The system is only as good as the person running it. Our data specialist helps us so much with organizing and processing our data.

When talking about data, the leaders stressed that the desire was to have all staff own the data. The expectation is for all staff to bring requested data to all meetings prepared to discuss the findings. The FPHS principal said, “We have come too far to allow people to come to the table unprepared. That would simply be unacceptable here. It just would not happen.”

The structure of both teams’ leadership includes agendas with data reports and targets. The targets and data are reviewed at each meeting. The schools share data in a variety of ways, including whole group faculty meetings, SBDM Council meetings, and SBDM data committee meetings with a representative from each department. All areas look at schoolwide data and those members communicate back to their staff representative in monthly PLC meetings. Sometimes data are reviewed with individual teachers because the data relates primarily to one area.
Implementation Systems for Structure Development

The leaders create standard protocols to provide structures for how to do business. These structures may include organizational flowcharts, handbooks, standardized forms, and other tools to create order and efficiency. The student and faculty handbooks at both schools provide well-defined structures and procedures for all to follow. Both schools utilize a professional learning community process to facilitate professional learning and data usage. One CCHS administrator stated, “We let the data speak for itself. We use it to help create and implement systems and structures.

The schools also utilize communication structures to maintain the “message” throughout the school community (e.g., emails, newsletters, minutes, agendas, and school newspapers). One member expressed how leadership is communicated annually. One of the data specialists explained,

From the beginning of school, we get our team play book [our faculty and staff handbook] with classroom expectations and best practices. We go over that at the beginning of the year in faculty meetings. We discuss how learning will be embedded during leadership meetings with department chairs, guidance counselors, PLCs. It is a trickle down of expectations. The department chairs share with the content areas. Everyone has a role in the communication process. Everybody is on a committee and given a mission of expectations.

Both schools shared the communication of processes and expectations with parents. The schools send home assessment scores and grades on a regular schedule. CCHS has implemented standards-based grading for approximately three years and reports that it has been gradually built into the operational structure. They state that it is still a work-in-progress. In order to provide additional communication, the schools host open houses, parent nights, send emails and other written communications home to parents. During parent nights, the schools indicated that they share the school vision and strategies the
school are implementing to assist the students. One CCHS guidance counselor said, “Our parents come to us or we call parents. We want to inform them of the plans and allow their voice to be heard as well.” Both schools acknowledged this is an area of needed growth. They would like to do more to promote a stronger home school connection. FPHS and CCHS stated that parents receive general information regarding the school but would like to do more to collaborate with parents and the greater school community.

One FPHS administrator stated, “We have a goal-oriented agenda. We use data to set all schoolwide goals. Then, we implement a plan with the what, who, how, and why to ensure the goal is reached.” A FPHS guidance counselor said, “We stay focused on our goals and stick to the plan. The goals the team develops always go back to our vision and mission.”

**Positive Organizational and Collaborative Learning Culture**

This capacity enables school communities to work together and to learn from each other with a central focus on effective teaching and learning. The school functions as a community of learners. All the activities of the school embed learning in the process.

The participants were asked, *What makes this school effective?* A FPHS cabinet member responded, “The school is a collaborative learning culture. We help each other and do not let anyone hide.” A CCHS teacher leader stated, 

We are a rigorous school, and we demonstrate that with super high standards. We have lots of rigor and lots of pressure. Part of our success is our community of learning because our students know we will be there to help them step the game up. We offer tutoring sessions, activities after school, and in the community. We offer all different ways for students to step up to our demands. You can be rigorous and the students will accept the rigor because they know we will be there to help. Learning is evident. Our teachers learn from other co-workers. We teach each other that you must lead in this *tough* school.
The reference to *tough* in the above quote above referred to the school’s rigorous demands for excellence for all.

The team members shared examples of working together as a community of learners. Leaders expressed that teachers support each other inside and outside of the school. One teacher leader at CCHS stated, “We are friends outside of this place. Our groups are really tight. We cook for each other, help move each other. We are just very close with each other.” Another teacher leader of the CCHS team said,

> When new people come to our school, they find their spot in the community. New teachers are paired with a veteran teacher somewhat based on personality and interests. One of our administrators pairs the teachers and then meets with the team throughout the year. The members expressed that the community aspect is within and among the departments.

The community aspect was central to the positive learning culture in both schools. FPHS and CCHS participants expressed the positive learning culture as an integral part of their school business. However, community was mentioned in every conversation and during all interactions at CCHS, as is reflected in the 210 reference counts during data collection.

Additionally, members at both schools expressed the value for professionalism throughout the school community. One administrator of the FPHS leadership cabinet stated, “My voice, opinion, and professionalism are valued here.” A CCHS teacher leader expressed an appreciation for the administration valuing the staff as professionals: “The leadership here is willing to let go and trust people to be professionals.” In my researcher reflection log, I commented on the “professionalism of speech, actions, and dress in FPHS and CCHS. Staff members treat each other as professionals and expect them to do what is asked.” A different researcher reflection log entry reported the
principal thanking the staff for their time. CCHS principal stated, “Thank you for your time and participation. I appreciate you all very much.” Prior to a break, FPHS principal said, “Thank you all for your work, hope you get some rest, and come back ready to hit it hard when you get back. We have a lot yet to do before the end of the school year. Now, go get some much needed rest.”

The CCHS principal shared how he viewed the effectiveness of the school:

At its core teachers and students are empowered to teach and learn. When our school is at its most effective place, our teachers are taking the ball and running with it and bringing the kids along with them. When a teacher has the data to show me, I don’t have to ask. There is nothing that is an add-on. Then it is not my job to tell them what to do because they have such a clear vision of how to help students. For example, we have an exemplary model in our building. Our math teachers have created a national model of what a PLC should be. They co-teach with peers, give up planning time to meet the needs of the classes in order to differentiate and track daily progress. They do daily diagnostics and assign work linked to the standard. We are trying to give more PLC training and not just force people to meet together. This year we took PLCs out of the schedule. We thought it would happen organically. We have realized it doesn’t happen unless we schedule time for the whole team to meet. We took a step back this year with taking it [PLCs] out of the schedule. We will bring it back into the structure next year.

Learning opportunities at both schools are embedded in faculty and department meetings. Both schools utilize PLCs to share information and gain new knowledge. For example, in my reflection journal, I noted that once during a PLC with a group of teacher leaders, a very upset student came into the meeting space yelling. The two administrators got up and calmly worked with him. The flow of learning continued during the teacher discussion while the administrators worked with the student. The administrators later rejoined the PLC to continue participating.

A teacher leader at CCHS shared, “The administration keeps a pulse on what is going on and pushes us all to learn together.” The members expressed how they provide
feedback to each other. One CCHS teacher leader stated, “We give and receive feedback. We have teachers who want to become better. They find new ways to reach students. The teachers here want the students to succeed. We have a positive culture here, with teachers who truly care.” Another teacher leader at FPHS shared, “We have strong instructional leaders here who give each other feedback for what we can do better.”

**Reflexivity Enacted**

Reflexivity relates to challenging current practices and fostering innovation through conversations. Leadership promotes a culture that listens and acts on feedback. One CCHS administrator stated, “PLCs relentlessly question the status quo, seek new methods of teaching and learning, test the methods, and then reflect on the results.” The school communities in the study provided feedback that promoted teaching and learning for all. The school leaders said that they frequently reflect on the practices, programs, and data and the staff continuously learns together in faculty meetings and PLCs.

When asked to reflect on how the school effectively implements RTI, the CCHS principal said, “Still I don’t feel like we are ever done with RTI. We are always trying to figure out better ways of supporting kids. We can’t rest until we meet the needs of every student in our building.” The principal at FPHS asserted, “We are not willing to stay the same. We must ‘fuel the beast,’ keep improving, and not become stagnant.”

Each leadership team meeting and PLC had data presented for reflection, feedback, and planning. The teams asked questions such as, “What changes do we need to implement to provide more effective instruction for our students? Is this a good use of resources if the data shows it is not working? How do we know the program is being implemented with fidelity?” When discussing AP data during a leadership team meeting,
one member asked, “Why are only a little over half the students taking the AP exam? We need to find if it is a financial, motivational, or academic issue?”

In a leadership meeting discussing college and career readiness, the FPHS principal expressed his concern to the team. After the team reviewed CCR data, the principal stated, “We have got to get something done regarding all staff working on career readiness too.” The team was asked to reflect on ways they would provide leadership to the faculty. The principal added, “This will take all of us owning the data and working on a solution together.”

During a cabinet meeting, the FPHS principal highlighted the data that reflected 70% college ready. He said, “At this time in the year, that level is impressive.” He went on to ask the leaders a series of questions to guide a discussion regarding CCR. He asked, “What is the percentage who just don’t get career ready? You would think career would be higher based on our students. How will we address this as a team?” Another agenda item during a cabinet meeting involved math data. A core content lead asked about an instructional portion of the math curriculum and posed this question, “Do we know that beyond a shadow of a doubt that [math process] is happening right now?” The team engaged in a discussion and the principal said,

We know that what gets measured gets done. I don’t think we have monitored like we should. We need to do a better job of making sure what we say is happening is truly happening. We may have to bite the bullet and make some changes.

During a FPHS cabinet meeting at the start of 2016, the principal asked the group to reflect on current practices and past innovations. He played two songs, We Did Start the Fire (lyrics in Appendix L) by Billy Joel (1989) and We Built this City (lyrics in Appendix M) recorded by Starship and written by Taupin, Page, Lambert, and Wolf
(1985). He asked the members to bear with him as there was a purpose for sharing these songs. He challenged the participants, “What is significant about these two songs?” Members shared some thoughts. The principal responded,

This is the point. We must keep the others motivated, some will say, ‘we did not start the fire at this school.’ They are wrong. We did start the fire. . . . we made the transitions when we moved to this building. I did a lot of reflecting over the break and realized, a lot of people would not recognize that we started something new. We did start the plan. We must continue to fuel the fire. Some of you have come into the position you are in within the last 4-5 years . . . since we started this new plan. We [The Cabinet] must fuel the fire. Don’t fight it. We can’t fear the change, fuel it. We don’t want to go backwards. We must constantly be reading and trying new things. We have to fuel the beast. Our focus has to be the laser light focus on the kids we can move.

FPHS and CCHS practiced reflexivity in order to question current practice and promote innovation. Both schools promoted healthy conversations regarding results and desired outcomes. Members were encouraged to share ideas and ask questions to challenge the team.

**Effective Celebrations: Profound Outcomes**

FPHS and CCHS embrace the leadership practice of recognizing and celebrating successes of students and staff. The team members spoke of countless celebrations of success. ACT banners line the halls of CCHS to tout the pride of the students and staff. One CCHS assistant principal said, “We make a big deal of the ACT banners. We want our students to see that academic success is as important as athletic success.” Awarding graduation medals symbolizing college and career readiness was cited four times as an example of celebrating success. One guidance counselor said, “Students are proud of the medal that they get to wear on graduation day. I was actually a little surprised at how excited they were about the medals.” The medals provide an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the students for the achievement of college and career readiness.
Additionally, students receive graduation cords that represent different levels of accomplishments. The cords serve to denote the student’s commitment to excellence. Staff members expressed that the students wear the medals and cords with pride.

FPHS and CCHS also honor students who earn CCR status at graduation by awarding them with a medal to wear as a symbol of their accomplishment. One guidance counselor reported, “The students take great pride in receiving and wearing these symbols [the medals] of their hard work.” Additionally, one of the schools has a wall of “fame” with the pictures of all college and career ready students for the year proudly displayed for all to view and celebrate.

Another celebration of success occurred after the FPHS moved from being a two-time proficient school to a school of distinction. The principal said, “Being named a distinguished, high progress school was a high point of the school and my career.” The school community celebrated its achievement as a school of distinction in several ways. The local community collaborated with the school to provide the students and staff a celebration day on the school lawn that included games and refreshments. During this celebration day, the administrators cooked for the students and staff. The leaders played games and engaged with the students. The school community celebrated together the work of the collective body.

Participants shared multiple moments of collective celebrations of the school community (e.g., pep rallies, class traditions, sporting events, fine arts performances, assemblies). One teacher leader at CCHS shared a memory of a school pep rally where teachers and students came together to celebrate the spirit of the school and to support one another. The participant described the moment stating, “It was as if the whole school
gave the students a collective hug.” A CCHS teacher leader stated, “Our school community embraces the idea of school pride.” During the focus group interview, all participants emphasized the school’s commitment to celebrating the school community.

**Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the study’s findings from the artifacts, interviews, and observations gathered at two high achieving secondary schools. The participants from both schools willingly provided information regarding the collective leadership practices used by their school’s RTI implementation teams. The five primary themes that emerged from this study were presented, including effectively focusing on the vision, maximizing the resources, building leadership capacity, establishing and implementing processes and structures, and promoting celebrations of success.

Both schools diligently devoted all efforts to the vision of learning for all. The schools also focused on college and career readiness for all students. The leadership practices reported in the findings reflect a strong commitment to that vision.

The leaders from FPHS and CCHS expressed the dedication they have to maximizing all resources (e.g., human resources, financial, curriculum and teaching, and program allocations) and aligning them with the school’s commitment to learning for all. The participants shared examples of strategically utilizing the resources.

The importance of building leadership capacity was expressed in interviews and was evident during my observations at both schools. Leaders embraced the notion of building strong teams in order to share responsibilities and results. The participants’ responses provided evidence of the collective leadership practices used at both schools
and of the strengths of the leadership teams to build leadership abilities. Each school principal facilitated a leadership team and served as a leader of leaders.

The leadership teams at the two schools established and implemented processes to ensure the collective work was focused on the school’s vision. In creating operational structures, the leadership team had guidelines for implementing the plans. Both schools utilized processes to provide structure and to monitor the implementation of the plans. Further, the leadership teams promoted recognitions all people in the school community. Personnel from both schools reported memories of school celebrations. FPHS and CCHS celebrated their achievements and look forward to future celebrations of success.

The next chapter discusses several specific themes of collective leadership practices that emerged in this study and provides an in-depth reflection of the data. Additionally, the chapter presents areas for further research and lessons learned. While the findings described in Chapter 5 are not generalizable, they can provide insights for other high school educators to consider as they plan to meet individual student needs and organize an RTI implementation team and plan.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explored the collective leadership practices used during Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation in two high-performing high schools in Kentucky. Through investigating the RTI implementation teams, I gained information regarding the how, what, and why of each school’s leadership practices. Five major themes emerged from this study: (a) focus on the vision of learning for all, (b) maximizing all resources, (c) building leadership capacity, (d) establishing and implementing processes and structures, (e) and promoting celebrations of success. Chapter 5 presents a brief review of the study design and discussion of the findings. Implications for future practice and research are also explored in this chapter. Additionally, it contains my reflections on this study, limitations of this research, lessons learned, and my concluding remarks.

Review of Study Design

This multi-phase case analysis used the 4-D (discover, dream, design, deliver) Appreciative Inquiry (AI) research design (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Creswell, 2003, 2005; Hammond, 2013; Yin, 2003). In order to gain insight into the schools’ fundamental positive core, the investigation utilized AI theory for the development of the data collection protocols and data analysis. The overarching research question for this study was, What leadership practices do effective RTI teams use? As the participants shared stories of the implementation process, the collective leadership practices surfaced. According to the study participants’ responses, the collective leadership practices included (a) a strong commitment to a collective vision and mission that focuses on high expectations for the school community; (b) regular practice of data-informed, outcome-
focused, and action-oriented decision-making; (c) willingness to build leadership capacity and work as a collective body of leaders; (d) commitment to setting goals and developing implementation plans; (e) alignment of resources (e.g., financial, human resources, people, programs) to meet the priorities of the school; (f) promotion of a positive, collaborative learning culture for all; (g) commitment to creating and implementing systems for developing operational structures; (h) enactment of reflexivity of practices, people, and programs; and (i) commitment to making strategic and intentional decisions.

**Discussion of Key Findings**

The findings of this study revealed several themes from data gathered at the two high schools. Leaders at both schools engaged in specific strategies that facilitated success and addressed challenges with RTI implementation. Although the results are not generalizable, they offer lessons that other schools can learn from when planning, implementing, and sustaining RTI implementation or other initiatives. A discussion of the nature of collective leadership precedes the discussion of each theme that emerged from data collected during this study. The discussion below evidences how collective leadership practices are interrelated and dependent upon each other.

**Collective Leadership**

Collective leadership involves a transformation of the leadership culture from a traditional leader-dependent system to an interdependent network of leaders (Cullen, Willburn, Chrobot-Mason & Palus, 2014). Collective leadership requires people to collaborate across traditional hierarchies and positions in order to increase the collective capacity of the organization. The contributions of individual and group expertise allow members to learn together and share knowledge throughout the organization. Eckert,
West, Altman, Steward, and Pasmore (2014) assert that formal leadership requires a specific approach:

Leaders in formal roles must create the conditions in which responsibility, power, authority, and decision-making is distributed within and throughout an organization rather than at the top of a hierarchy. They must redefine their leadership role to focus on empowering collective leadership amongst all stakeholders, and embrace their responsibility for ensuring that these stakeholders are valued, supported, and engaged in fulfilling the organization’s mission, vision, and strategy. (Forward)

During my time in the two schools, I observed the leadership teams engaging in collaborative efforts to meet students’ needs. Through the school leaders sharing memories and stories, I learned how they collectively work to create the conditions for shared responsibility and decision-making. “Collective leadership means the distribution and allocation of leadership power to wherever capability, expertise, and motivation sit. The responsibility of leadership is shared by each and every member of the organization” (Eckert et al., 2014, p. 1). Focal Point High School (FPHS) and Central Community High School (CCHS) utilized collective leadership practices to share responsibilities, expertise, and experiences in RTI implementation, thus creating a culture of continuous improvement that supports meeting the academic and behavioral needs of all students (Dematteo & Reeves, 2011). While traditional leadership is comprised of individuals, collective leadership maximizes the strengths of the collective body and the collective relationships among the individual leaders (Kuenkel, 2016; Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

Establishing a collective leadership culture requires more than members acquiring new skills—it necessitates a paradigm shift. Rather than focusing on problems, organizations with a collective-leadership culture focus on what characteristics it hopes to increase (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2007; Kuenkel, 2016). I observed this culture of
collective leadership while exploring the leadership practices within the two schools in the study. The leaders of these schools realized the collective benefits of utilizing all aspects of the community’s knowledge base, professional experiences, and abilities to maximize the potential outcomes (Cooperrider et al., 2000; Hammond, 2013), a skill that Bolman and Deal (2008) refer to as reframing an organization to allow the leader to view a situation from a variety of perspectives. The leaders of FPHS and CCHS address matters with the belief that multiple solutions are plausible through the efforts of the collective body. The following sections present a discussion of the major themes that emerged while studying the collective leadership practices.

**Impact of Effective Vision on Proper Focus**

Both high schools exhibited significant emphasis on the school’s vision of learning for all. All members of the schools shared the responsibility and commitment to the vision (Collinson & Cook, 2007). The leadership conversations, decisions, and activities centered around the schools’ vision, thus providing a true focus on the mission. The leadership teams’ commitment to the vision created a clear focus for the entire schools community.

**Impact of Effective Resource Allocation in Proper Places**

Leaders at both FCPHS and CCHS practiced effective resource allocations. Resources were strategically purchased and positioned based on evidenced-based practices. The schools invested resources that focused on the goal of all students becoming college and career ready. The allocation of resources extended beyond financial resources to include human resources that were maximized and strategically placed throughout each organization. The collective group of leaders appreciated the
expertise of individuals and experienced the positive impact of utilizing each member’s strengths for the common good (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Mendels, 2012).

As I listened to leaders, I learned that these two schools valued people as vital resources to the school. The school leadership teams wanted to have the right people in the right places. People mattered and were thus considered a tremendously valuable resource. In fact, the conversations regarding resources centered more around people (e.g., students, teachers, community) than programs, money, or purchases.

Impact of Effective Leaders

According to Leithwood and Mascall (2008), multiple responsibilities and abilities are required when leading a school. The authors assert that when principals who use collective leadership disperse various responsibilities throughout the organization, all the school-community members share ownership of the results. Key to the success of the two high performing high schools was the collective body of leaders facilitated by the principals who served as the leader of leaders. Interestingly, the two principals exhibited different collective leadership styles, yet they both effectively motivated teams of leaders, one to sustain a historically high performing school and one to advance an underachieving school to the status of a school of distinction. One principal held a more structural style, and the other principal had a human relations style. Both shared a willingness to collaborate and utilize the diverse talents of the team members.

Although the principals’ leadership styles differed, both schools clearly demonstrated the elements of effective schools. Both leaders embraced a culture of collective leadership by utilizing the strengths of all members of the school community. According to Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Rader (2010), “AI is the relational capacity
to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power-to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance-to make a positive difference in the world” (Chapter 1, Section 3, para 2). Lewis and Moore (2011) identify the following traits as characteristics of the principles of positive and appreciative leadership: (a) being relational, (b) balancing control and direction, (c) valuing everyone’s voice and experience, (d) recognizing the importance of shared importance, (e) maintaining integrity, (f) promoting inclusion, (g) searching for what work, (h) celebrating everyday issues, (i) getting out of the way, (j) being bold and taking risks, (j) creating connections and synchronism and (k) fostering an emergent, iterative, learning process.

Both principals embraced these characteristics and utilized them for the common good. The leadership teams at both schools had members who embraced this positive, relational approach. The use of expertise and experience contributed to each school’s effective implementation process. Additionally, the multiple levels of leadership throughout the two organizations allowed the members to more effectively and efficiently perform the collective responsibilities.

Despite all the demands and initiatives facing FPHS and CCHS, their leadership teams transformed into organizational innovators. The members led the schools to distinction by embracing the collective leadership capacities and working toward the common good of school communities (Fullan, 2001a; Katzenbach & Smith, 2003; Kuenkel, 2016).

**Impact of Effective Process on Implementation Plans**

Historically, school improvement and effective schools research has evidenced a strong need for schools to understand the implementation process of change.
Interestingly, the effective-schools research of the 1980s established a vision for school improvement but did not explain the process for achieving the vision. The struggles for schools to process and implement new initiatives continue today. At a time when many schools do not understand the implementation process needed for RTI to be successful, FPHS and CCHS accepted the challenge, developed implementation plans, and began to implement the plans. Personnel at both schools took risks in committing to learning for all, and through the RTI implementation-planning process, they have both achieved high levels of distinction. These schools realized that RTI implementation was a process, not an event to organize, or a program to purchase. The schools used the collective resources to meet the collective vision, and accept the collective responsibility.

**Impact of Effective Celebrations Resulting from Profound Outcomes**

The importance of collective recognition of achievement was evident in the two high performing schools. The schools celebrated a variety of results. The leaders recognized teachers and staff who specifically contributed to the vision of success for all. While the schools celebrated the level of performance achieved in the past years, the focus remains on sustaining the high-level of achievement while continuously striving to do more for the collective body of learners. Again, the value of people (e.g. students, teachers, staff members) was evident in the recognitions and celebrations.

**Distinctive Case Themes**

Both principals exhibited numerous similar collective leadership practices, yet each school evidenced its own uniqueness. Specific distinctions between the two schools emerged during the study. The following sections highlight the exceptional traits at each
school. This finding was so profound that I thought it warranted a deeper interpretation and explanation.

**Community Heritage**

A strong, positive community atmosphere pervades both schools. However, when exploring the collective leadership practices at CCHS, I found the sense of community particularly evident at this school. School members there stressed the value of the community inside and out of the school walls. Long-standing traditions of the school reflected the great pride throughout the community. One member mentioned the tradition of class colors days, spirit days, and a spirit stick.

During the focus group, one of the teachers expressed great passion for the school community by stating, “We don't want to lose what makes this little county school unique. It might be old, but it is one of the most valuable things that this school has that can't be lost.” Throughout the time I spent at CCHS, all participants stressed the importance of the community atmosphere. All individual and focus group interviewees expressed this community pride. The sense of community was evident during site visits as well. The importance of the CCHS community was central to the positive core of this high performing high school in Kentucky. The sense of community was in the fiber of the school and demonstrated by all. Walking through the hallways and seeing banners, trophies and pictures, made the community atmosphere come to life.

As CCHS leaders talked about RTI in the school, they referred to attending to the various needs of the students, including physical needs. The spirit of caring is seen throughout the CCHS campus. Wherever their students have needs, they meet them. At the core of CCHS is a spirit of compassion and support.
The Cabinet

While both schools in the study have an active leadership implementation team, personnel at FPHS refers to their team as “The Cabinet.” The principal created The Cabinet as a leadership structure for the implementation process of schoolwide initiatives. Leadership filters up and down through The Cabinet whose members express the belief that “we will not fail with the right people at the table.” While the principal facilitates the leadership meetings, everyone at the table play an integral part of the leadership process for the school. He passes leadership responsibilities to the other members of the team, then to the teachers throughout the building, and then to the students. The school communicates a sense of achieving something great. One member stated that The Cabinet represents the voices of both the faculty and the student body. I observed this structural process and saw the collective leadership practices of The Cabinet. In talking with the principal, he shared,

I am really strategic with who is on The Cabinet. Some are invited back, and some will not be invited back to the table next year. You earn your seat at this table. This helps build the leadership capacity in the school.

Because The Cabinet considers all student issues and works to provide leadership that helps all of the students, the structural element of The Cabinet was central to the RTI process at FPHS. Careful thought and consideration as to who would be in The Cabinet was based on the people, their expertise, and ability to lead others throughout the school community. Through the structure of The Cabinet, the team built leadership capacity that facilitated the vision of learning for all.
Lessons Learned

The purpose of this research was to investigate leadership practices that emerged from an exploratory study of two high performing high schools that are effectively implementing RTI. I visited the schools to gather more information about how they used collective leadership practices in RTI implementation. The study, bound in time from December 2015 through April 2016, utilized the school implementation team as the means for examining the research. Some strong and consistent themes developed from the collected data. Both implementation teams exhibited a collective vision and goals, focused on data-informed decisions, and served as a community of learners and leaders. The analysis showed the schools focused on leadership capacity building and communicated effectively in order to provide collective leadership throughout the school.

RTI aims to provide interventions (e.g., differentiation, two levels of academic and behavioral interventions) within a broader system (e.g., core curriculum or Tier 1) that addresses the needs of all students. Embedded in both schools was a strong system for ensuring an effective core curriculum for all students. Personnel from both schools indicated their schools supported students with intensive needs but acknowledged they can always do more. Each school focused intently on the core academic program to maximize the effectiveness of student learning. The core instruction served as the primary focus of the RTI discussions and action plans in both settings. In fact, the leadership teams’ discussions rarely used the term RTI—the team members focused on assuring all the students were successful. While the leaders were focusing on the students’ needs, they too were learning and growing professionally.
Both schools maintained a focus on improving the effectiveness of core instruction in order to increase student learning. When data showed that a particular area was working successfully, the school continued with the plan. When data indicated otherwise, changes were made that were strategic and prompt. The schools had a sense of urgency, and personnel acknowledged the importance of using all resources wisely. The level of commitment in both high-performing high schools truly impressed me. The faculty and staff held high expectations for themselves, other staff members, students, and the school community. The only promoted option was success for all.

I was surprised that both high performing high schools indicated that they were “not yet satisfied” with their performance and were always striving to improve. Study participants emphasized “yet” in the interviews and stated that they knew they had the collective ability, commitment, and responsibility to see the additional resources and plans for students become a reality. The previous achieved successes provided the school communities with hope and a belief that they can achieve what they commit to do.

At the onset, I presumed that these Schools of Distinction would desire to sustain the status and continue what they did well. I did not expect the level of reflexivity and constant desire to become better. While they expressed satisfaction in their state rankings and assessment data accomplishments, personnel at both schools stated that they had areas of needed growth and improvement. A staff member of The Forum, the FPHS newspaper, interviewed the principal regarding the school’s success. When asked about FPHS being recognized, the principal replied,

Our School of Distinction is obviously a tremendous accomplishment and my culminating moment as a principal. There is no time to rest on our laurels though. We have to keep working hard to maintain the great strides that we have made.
Faculty from both schools expressed the need to be innovative in meeting all learner needs. Study participants were asked, *What dreams do you have for your school,* and *what would you like to report about your school in 2018?* Their responses included shared hopes of providing students with more scheduling options. They said that they would like to rethink the traditional secondary school and provide more opportunities for students. Additionally, personnel stated that they needed to strengthen communication between home and school. They felt they could do more to include families and other community members in the communication and work of the school. Faculty at both high schools recognize the importance of positive relationships with families and the broader community and strive to do more to include them in the process of learning for all.

As a practicing leader of RTI implementation in Kentucky, I gained insights from these two high performing schools that I shall use in my work with other schools. I witnessed the power of implementing the elements of effective school characteristics and collective leadership practices. Personnel at both schools held a commitment to a collective vision and purpose and embraced the collective responsibility of the outcomes. Both schools modeled a community of positive organizational scholarship (POS) (Cameron et al., 2003) as evidenced by a strong PLC structure and a commitment to ongoing learning during faculty meetings and other team-structured times. The communities focused on positive outcomes and processes of the school. Cameron and Caza (2008) assert several benefits from embracing POS and AI. The schools demonstrated an increase in leadership capacity, positive relationships and performances, positivity, psychological capital (i.e., hope in the future and a belief that the collective body can accomplish goals), and commitment to the collective vision.
When I developed the research design for this study using AI concepts for data collection and data analysis, I intended the theory to be reflected in the methodology of the study. As I began data collection, I did not anticipate finding so many elements of AI in the processes and practices used at both high schools. Throughout the investigation, I realized the schools practiced AI as a part of their collective leadership practices. The collective leadership practices that emerged provided insight into the implementation of the four components of the AI theory. I studied AI literature in depth in preparation for the investigation process, but what I witnessed from the time in the schools provided a powerful illumination of AI theory in action. Throughout the data collection, both schools eagerly shared their success journeys and exposed the positive cores of the organizations. Analysis of that day supported their using AI while implementing RTI.

FPHS’s story was a journey from needs improvement to school of distinction designations by KDE. The school community is proud of the achievements and now strives to maintain the level of distinction it celebrates today. Each of the four AI components was evident from the data collected there. The team dreamed the seemingly impossible, and through the collective efforts of the organization, achieved the desired outcome. With the established collective leadership practices, the leadership team is committed to the delivery of sustaining the level of high performing high school. They already have plans in place to assist with sustaining the work from the previous years.

CCHS has a long history of excellence, and the school community focuses on sustaining this level of distinction. The community proudly celebrates the long-standing tradition of the school. Because this school has worked through the four AI phases multiple times, the school spends a great deal of time sustaining the high levels of
academic success and seeking to provide innovations that improve the best of their positive core.

Table 5.1 details the AI components FPHS and CCHS demonstrated throughout the study. Below are key examples of each phase of AI.

**Table 5.1**

*Researcher AI Case Study Reflections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AI Inquiry Step</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Participant Response Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Discover**    | What is the best of what is at the school? | • Value and utilize the wealth of expertise throughout the building  
• Celebrate the strong sense of community  
• Recognize the many accomplishments of the school community  
• Recognize the expansive collective leadership capacity  
• Focus on vision and outcomes |
| **Dream**       | What is envisioned for the school? | • Meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students  
• Provide shareholders with a voice in the educational process  
• Focus on preparing students for postsecondary education and careers (e.g., CCR)  
• Offer innovative opportunities (e.g., Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Academies; Project-based Learning; Professional Skills for Certifications (e.g., Cosmetology, Emergency Medical Technician [EMT], Fire Science)  
• Desire more effective home, school, and community relationships |
Table 5.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AI Inquiry Step</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Participant Response Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>How does the school co-construct what should be?</td>
<td>• Collaborate to maximize resources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Explore other schools of innovation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Practice Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS); use current research in practice for development and planning; reflect on current practices and data</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Make adjustments as needed and exhibit a willingness to take risks in developing future plans</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Continue the work of collaborative teams</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Practice reflection and providing feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver</td>
<td>How does the school learn, empower, improvise, and sustain?</td>
<td>• Monitor progress frequently and respond to data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Celebrate successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Embrace innovation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Listen to the voices of all shareholders</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Empower all members to join the collective mission and accept the collective responsibility</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Provide flexibility to make adjustments as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Continue to be a community of learners always willing to try new ideas and innovations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations of the Study

I served as the sole data-collection instrument for this study. Due to my extensive background with RTI implementation and past leadership experiences, I could have inadvertently included elements of researcher bias. I consciously made every effort to adhere strictly to the established protocols presented in the study design to avoid introducing researcher bias into data collection and data analysis.

A potential limitation of this study may be that I maintained an intentional focus on collective leadership practices used in RTI implementation and thus did not analyze specific data regarding instructional or behavioral practices aspects of RTI. Nonetheless,
this study has begun to fill a gap in the literature about leadership practices used to successfully implement RTI in high schools.

**Implications for Practice and Research**

Although RTI has been in place for years, the level of understanding the process among educators still varies. School personnel’s knowledge of RTI influences their ability to develop implementation plans and implement interventions and enrichments with fidelity. Practitioners need continued professional learning in the area of RTI implementation.

Since this study was conducted in only two high performing high schools, further research is needed to understand more fully the collective leadership practices of schools within effective RTI models. More research is needed to provide schools, particularly high schools, information regarding RTI implementation. Further research would add to the knowledge base of how leadership teams collectively support RTI implementation and provide more information regarding what POS occurs in schools with effective RTI models.

**Closing Thoughts**

The literature on organizational change and effective schools clearly establishes that some strategies of intended change are more effective than others (Blase et al., 2005; Burke, 2008; Fullan 2001a, 2001b; Hawley & Rollie, 2007; Leithwood & Louis, 2012, Lezotte, 1989, 1995, 2012; Lezotte & McKee, 2007; Lezotte & McKee-Snyder, 2010). The limited supply of models for effective RTI in high schools leaves many secondary school educators wondering how to meet the learning needs of all students effectively. Despite the lack of literature to guide or models to follow, the two schools in this study
demonstrated evidence of encapsulating the effective schools characteristics and utilizing the key principles of collective leadership. They embraced the concept that schools can and do have a profound impact on student learning (Edmonds, 1979, 1982). The educators of both schools realized the process of school improvement, based on the effective schools research, takes time, involvement, and commitment. Personnel at both schools engaged in a wide range of collective leadership practices, such as setting goals, utilizing people’s strengths and expertise, redesigning the school community structure, sharing information among and between leaders, being flexible and innovative, and improving the instructional program (Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

Both high schools that served as the study sites for this investigation embedded all four phases of AI into their school structure and practices. At times, they incorporated all of them into a planning session, and at other times their focus was on one phase in order to address a particular issue.

These two high performing high schools provide examples of the valuable impact that collective leadership practices can have when used during RTI implementation in secondary schools. The school communities’ consistent and intentional commitment to learning for all and their diverse and effectively utilized collective-leadership practices are central to the success of both communities. The accomplishments of both high schools serve as a source of inspiration for school leaders. My hope is that other schools reflect on the collective leadership practices, RTI implementation process, and effective schools characteristics that these two cases employed in order to assure high levels of learning for all in their school communities.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Initial Review

Approval File
November 30, 2016

IRB Number
15-0655-P1S

TO: Melissa Wainwright
Education Admin & Supervision
111 Dickey Hall
0017

PI phone #: (502) 384-2545

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Non-medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol Number 15-0655-P1S

DATE: December 3, 2015

On December 2, 2015, the Non-medical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:

Collective Leadership Practices of Effective Response to Intervention Teams

Approval is effective from December 2, 2015 until November 30, 2016 and extends to any consent/assent forms, cover letter, and/or phone script. If applicable, attached is the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects. [Note: subjects cannot only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have been a valid "IRB approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.] Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review Report Form which must be completed and returned to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedure should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards in the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance on Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook web page: [http://www.research.uky.edu/cti/IRBsurvivalhandbook.html#PÏsponsibilities]. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [http://www.research.uky.edu/ori]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428.

[Signature]
Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Purpose Statement: The purpose of the individual interview is to gain a greater understanding of the collective leadership practices of “X” High School’s Response to Intervention Implementation Team. During the interview, questions will follow the 4-D model of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987). Through asking questions regarding the positive core, the individual explores successful highlights and stories of the implementation of RTI in the school.

Although you will not get personal benefit from taking part in this research study, your responses may help us understand more about the collective leadership practices of implementing Response to Implementation in high school.

Date: The date will be scheduled as soon as the researcher receives approval from the University of Kentucky Internal Review Board and the dissertation committee chair.

Time: The time will be determined in order to accommodate the schedules of the participant’s work and other obligations. Each interview will last for 45 to 60 minutes.

Participants: Participants will include RTI Implementation Team Members, Department Chairs, Teacher Leaders, Administrators, Instructional Coaches, Interventionists, and School Guidance Counselors. Participants may choose not to answer any questions, or to end the interview if they feel uncomfortable or desire to stop the interview for a different reason.

Location: The interview will take place in a comfortable, private setting that is at the high school or in a location in close proximity.
Artifacts and Information Collected before the Interview:

I. Review the school’s School Report Card Data before the interview.
II. Review the school’s website before the interview to gain information regarding the mission, vision, and goals.

Confidentiality:

In order to protect confidentiality, each participant will be given a fictitious name for data analysis purposes and will remain anonymous in all research reporting documents. All data collection and analysis will follow the guidelines of the University of Kentucky’s Internal Review Board. Data will be stored and destroyed according to the IRB protocol.

Documentation Process: All interviews will be recorded and the researcher will take notes during the interview. A professional transcription service will transcribe all interviews for the Project Investigator’s data analysis and interview process documentation.

Interview Format: The researcher will begin the interview by thanking the participant for the time and willingness to participate in this study. The participant will complete a confidentiality waiver before the conducting of any research. The interview will begin with general information about the candidate and Response to Intervention. The elements of Appreciative Inquiry are embedded in the research questions. Questions seek to generate stories regarding the collective leadership practices of the school, the positive core of the school, the Response to Intervention team, and the RTI implementation process.
APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

• For how long have you been a member of the ____ High School community? What is your position?

• Who is involved in RTI at your school?

• Who is involved on the RTI Implementation (Leadership) Team at the school?

• How would you describe an effective school? What would a highly effective school look like?

• How is Response to Intervention implemented effectively?

• If you had no limitations on resources, allocations, reforms, or any other type of constraints, what would an ideal high school look like to you? What would the students, staff, administrators, and parents do in this “possibilities are endless high school.”?

• What role does leadership play in successful RTI implementation?

• Are minutes and agendas maintained for the implementation team meetings? – Ask for access to previous minutes and agendas. Review the documents before the focus group.

• For how long has your school been involved in response to intervention implementation?

• What is your role with the school implementation team?

• For how long have you served in this capacity?
• What are the roles of the following people in the school community: students, parents, community members, staff members, faculty members, administrators, counselors, other school-community members)?

• How does your school’s implementation team communicate information, data, and findings from the meetings to the faculty? Staff? Parents? Students?

• What does your team do effectively to support the implementation process?

• What has your team put into place to support your school’s implementation of response to intervention?

• What schoolwide practices do you incorporate with regard to response to intervention?

• In what ways does your school communicate high expectations?

• What are some examples of strong leadership in your school? Tell me a particular time when you remember such an example of strong leadership.

• What are some examples of your school’s commitment to learning for all? Do you have a specific memory of the school’s commitment to learning for all?

• What are some examples of collaboration your school employs?

• How does your school monitor student progress?

• How does your school meet learner needs?

• How does your school use data?

• How does your school monitor student progress?

• Do you have anything you would like to share about your school, Response to Intervention, or the Implementation Team?

Thank you for your time. It was a pleasure speaking with you and hearing your stories.
After the interview

The researcher will review all interview notes and make comments and notes in the Field Notes Journal. Initial codes or themes will be recorded at this time. The recording will be sent to the transcriptionist. The researcher will follow up with the participant regarding any questions regarding the interview. A written thank you will be sent to the participant thanking for the time and contribution to the study.
APPENDIX D

LETTER OF INVITATION: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Melissa E. Wainwright
University of Kentucky
Department of Educational Leadership and Administration
111 Dickey Hall
Lexington, Kentucky

Date, 2015

Potential Study Participant

[Title]
[Company Name]
[Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP Code]

Dear Name of Participant:

My name is Melissa E. Wainwright, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education Leadership at the University of Kentucky. I am writing to request your participation in a study regarding the collective leadership practices in high schools with successful implementation teams. I would like to speak with you about your school’s leadership practices as they pertain to Response to Intervention implementation. Your responses may help us understand more about the collective leadership practices of implementing Response to Implementation in high schools.

Your participation would consist of an in-person, audio-recorded interview, which would last no longer than one hour. Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview. Confidentiality of your identity and responses are assured. There are no known risks to participating in this study.

If you would be willing to participate, or have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me via email at Melissa.wainwright@uky.edu or princimel2@gmail.com, or by phone at (502) 319-3545. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428.

Thank you for consideration in this matter, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Melissa E. Wainwright
Doctoral Candidate
University of Kentucky
APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

**Purpose Statement:** The purpose of the focus group interview is to gain a greater understanding of the collective leadership practices of “X” High School’s Response to Intervention Implementation Team. During the focus group, questions and probes will follow the 4-D model of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, & Srivasta, 2007; Johnson & Leavitt, 2001). Through asking questions regarding the positive core, the group will be asked to explore successful highlights and stories of the implementation of RTI in the school.

**Date:** The date will be scheduled for the beginning of the 2014-15 school year.

**Time:** The time will be determined in order to accommodate the schedules of the participants’ work and other obligations.

**Participants:** Participants will include RTI Implementation Team Members, Department Chairs, Teacher Leaders, Administrators, and School Counselors.

**Location:** The focus group will take place in a comfortable, private setting that is at the high school or in a location in close proximity.

**Artifacts and Information Collected Prior to the Focus Group:**

- Who is involved in RTI at your school?
- Who is involved on the RTI Implementation Team at the school?
- For how many years has the high school had an implementation team?
- Are minutes and agendas maintained for the implementation team meetings? – Review the previous minutes and agendas prior to the focus group.
- Review the school’s School Report Card Data.
Confidentiality:

In order to protect confidentiality, each participant will be given a fictitious name for data analysis purposes and will remain anonymous in all research reporting documents. All data collection and analysis will follow the guidelines of the University of Kentucky’s Internal Review Board. Data will be stored and destroyed according to the IRB protocol.

In order to maintain the anonymity of the group, participants will be asked to refrain from discussing the comments of other focus group members.

Focus Group Process

Procedure

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Rationale for the Participant Selection: All participants are involved in the Response to Intervention process at the school in a formal or informal capacity. The participants have been at the school for at least two years.

3. Desire all participants’ perspectives and ask that only one person speak at a time.

4. All responses are confidential.

Appreciative Inquiry Questions and Probing Statements

Opening Question

• What is great memory you have about this school? What makes your school unique?

Discovery (Look for the best of what is)

• What makes your school the most effective in personal, professional, and leadership learning terms?
• Consider your experiences with the Response to Intervention Implementation Team. Describe a time when you felt most excited about your involvement with this team. What made it an exciting experience? What helped to make it possible? Describe the event in detail.

• What is it about this team – its structure, systems, processes, policies, staff, leaders, and/or strategy – that create conditions for success?

**Dream** (Imagine the best we can become)

• Without being modest, what do you value about yourself and your greatest strengths? How do your strengths help you to be an important member of this school’s implementation team?

**Design** (Determine the ideal; create an action plan to achieve the vision)

• What do you see as the core values of this implementation team? This school? The department? The team?

**Deliver** (Express what will be and how to empower, learn and adjust. sustainability; co-create the future)

• It is 2018, and you are preparing for the next school report card or news report about your school. What are you highlighting about the team’s accomplishments? The school’s accomplishments?
  
  – What do you see in the school that is new, different, changed, better?

• If you had three wishes for Response to Intervention and the implementation team, what would they be?

**Closing Comments and Thank You**

• Do you have anything additional you would like to share about the school?
• Thank you for your time and participation.

**After the focus group**

The researcher will review all focus group notes and make comments and notes in the Field Notes Journal. Initial codes or themes will be recorded at this time. The recording will be sent to the transcriptionist. The researcher will follow up with the participant regarding any questions regarding the focus group. A written thank you will be sent to the participants thanking them for the time and contribution to the study.
APPENDIX F

LETTER OF INVITATION: FOCUS GROUP

Melissa E. Wainwright
University of Kentucky
Department of Educational Leadership and Administration
111 Dickey Hall
Lexington, Kentucky

Date --, 2015

Potential Study Participant
[Title]
[Company Name]
[Street Address]
[City, ST ZIP Code]

Dear Name of Participant:

My name is Melissa Wainwright, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education Leadership at the University of Kentucky. I am writing to request your participation in a study regarding the collective leadership practices in high schools with successful implementation teams. I would for you to participate in a focus group interview regarding your school’s leadership practices as they pertain to Response to Intervention implementation. Your responses may help us understand more about the collective leadership practices of implementing Response to Implementation in high schools.

Your participation would consist of a focus group interview (audio-recorded) of 6 to 10 people. The interview would last approximately one hour and would not be longer than 75 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the focus group at any time. Confidentiality of your identity and responses are assured. There are no known risks to participating in this study.

If you would be willing to participate, or have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me via email at Melissa.wainwright@uky.edu or princimel2@gmail.com, or by phone at (502) 319-3545. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428. Thank you for consideration in this matter, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Melissa E. Wainwright
Doctoral Candidate
University of Kentucky
APPENDIX G

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Participant observation is used for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their typical environments. The researcher will observe implementation team meetings and spend time in the natural setting of each high school in order to gain insight into the collective leadership practices. The Effective Schools, RTI, and Collective Leadership Practices Comparison Chart, Appendix G (Wainwright, 2015), and the Criteria for Sites with Exemplary KSI/RTI Practices, Appendices J & K (KDE, 2012) served as reference to literature and best practices for the observation field notes.

Observation Date:

Start Time: End Time:

Location(s):

Participants Observed:

Event/Activity/Action Observed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Words/Phrases</th>
<th>*Observations</th>
<th>Notes for Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*general environment, body language, participant interactions, moods, general feelings, atmosphere, general environment, systems, procedures, practices, images, reflections
### APPENDIX H

**FIELD LOG TEMPLATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time (Start and End)</th>
<th>Research Location</th>
<th>Researcher Activity</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Document Collected</th>
<th>Notes/Further Study</th>
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APPENDIX I

FIELD NOTES TEMPLATE

Appendix —
Dissertation Field Notes
Melissa E. Wainwright, Researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Start Time:</th>
<th>End Time:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date Reviewed:</td>
<td>Start Time:</td>
<td>End Time:</td>
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</table>

**Research Question(s):** The overarching question of this study is, *In what ways is collective leadership enacted in schools that effectively implement Response to Intervention?* To help answer the overarching question, the following questions guided the study:

1. How do implementation teams collectively perform to support the implementation of Response to Intervention?
2. What positive organizational learning occurs in schools with effective Response to Intervention?

**Setting:**

**Participants:** Principal, Assistant Principal, Other Administrator, Teacher, Teacher Leader, Department Chair, Other

**Participants’ Behavior (s)/Action (s):**

**Researcher Activities/Actions:**

**Researcher Personal Impressions:**

**Notes for follow-up or needing further information:**

**Appreciative Inquiry Notes:**

**Evidence of Positive Organizational Scholarship:**

**Quotations or specific language/message/slogan (include source):**
## APPENDIX J

### KDE CRITERIA FOR SITES WITH EXEMPLARY KSI/RTI PRACTICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Core Instruction with Differentiation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use of Learning Targets and KCAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School Implementation Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Student Intervention Team (collaboration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Comprehensive Schedule (all students)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Student Intervention Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Flexibility of Tiers (criteria for tier movement)</td>
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<td>• Diagnostic Assessments</td>
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<td>• Progress Monitoring</td>
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<td>• Multiple Forms of Data</td>
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<td>• Family Involvement</td>
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<td>• Fidelity to the Intervention Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use of resources</td>
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<td>• Ownership of Goals and Plans</td>
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<td>• Reading Interventions</td>
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<td>• Writing Interventions</td>
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<td>• Math Interventions</td>
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<td>• Behavior Interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Data Management Tools</td>
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<td>• Professional Learning</td>
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</table>

KSI/RTI Document (KDE, 2012)
APPENDIX K

KEY TERMS: CRITERIA FOR SITES WITH EXEMPLARY KSI/RTI PRACTICES

- **Core Instruction with Differentiation** - a variety of teaching strategies to address diverse learners prior to placement in Tier II services (e.g., questioning techniques, role playing, manipulatives, literature circles, movement activities, project-based learning, flexible groups, etc.)

- **Use of Learning Targets and KCAS** – learning targets are student friendly, visible and addressed during instruction

- **School Implementation Team** – team members understand roles and meet regularly to discuss school wide implementation (e.g., schedule, data, criteria for tier movement, resources, accessible written plan for stakeholders, etc.)

- **Student Intervention Team (collaboration)** – team members understand roles and meet regularly to discuss specific student data, effective instructional strategies, and next steps for students

- **Comprehensive Schedule (all students)** schedule is intentional for all students (struggling and advanced) to receive targeted interventions consistently

- **Student Intervention Plans** – individualized plans include diagnostic assessment data, progress monitoring, instructional plans, student goals, timelines

- **Flexibility of Tiers (criteria for tier movement)** – tier movement is flexible and ever changing, based on student progress and need

- **Diagnostic Assessments** – along with the universal screener, a diagnostic assessment is utilized to accurately identify areas of strength and weakness for targeted intervention

- **Progress Monitoring** – consistent progress monitoring matches the targeted skill and is used to drive instruction

- **Multiple Forms of Data** – utilizes universal screener, diagnostic assessment, progress monitoring, classroom formative assessments, etc.

- **Family Involvement** - informs families of RTI process, individual child’s progress and targeted plans

- **Fidelity to the Intervention Process** – consistency of intentional instruction using evidence based strategies (How is it monitored?)

- **Use of resources** – personnel, programs, professional learning

- **Ownership of Goals and Plans** – all stakeholders, including students and parents, have clear expectations of individual goals

- **Reading Interventions** – targeted evidence based interventions at all three tiers are in place and consistently implemented, analyzed and revised

- **Writing Interventions** – targeted evidence based interventions at all three tiers are in place and consistently implemented, analyzed and revised

- **Math Interventions** – targeted evidence based interventions at all three tiers are in place and consistently implemented, analyzed and revised

- **Behavior Interventions** – targeted evidence based interventions at all three tiers are in place and consistently implemented, analyzed and revised

- **Data Management Tools** – organized method of tracking student placement and progress, which is accessible to all stakeholders

- **Professional Learning** – professional learning occurs for all personnel delivering interventions, progress monitoring, and decision making

KSI/RTI Document (KDE, 2012)
APPENDIX L

WE DIDN'T START THE FIRE BY BILLY JOEL

Harry Truman, Doris Day, Red China, Johnnie Ray
South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe DiMaggio
Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon, Studebaker, Television
North Korea, South Korea, Marilyn Monroe
Rosenbergs, H-Bomb, Sugar Ray, Panmunjom
Brando, The King and I, and The Catcher In The Rye
Eisenhower, Vaccine, England's got a new queen
Marciano, Liberace, Santayana goodbye

Chorus:
We didn't start the fire
It was always burning
Since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No we didn't light it
But we tried to fight it

Joseph Stalin, Malenkov, Nasser and Prokofiev
Rockefeller, Campanella, Communist Bloc
Roy Cohn, Juan Peron, Toscanini, Dacron
Dien Bien Phu Falls, Rock Around the Clock
Einstein, James Dean, Brooklyn's got a winning team
Davy Crockett, Peter Pan, Elvis Presley, Disneyland
Bardot, Budapest, Alabama, Khrushchev
Princess Grace, Peyton Place, Trouble in the Suez

Repeat Chorus
Little Rock, Pasternak, Mickey Mantle, Kerouac
Sputnik, Chou En-Lai, Bridge On The River Kwai
Lebanon, Charles de Gaulle, California baseball
Starkweather, Homicide, Children of Thalidomide...
Buddy Holly, Ben-Hur, Space Monkey, Mafia
Hula Hoops, Castro, Edsel is a no-go
U-2, Syngman Rhee, payola and Kennedy
Chubby Checker, Psycho, Belgians in the Congo
Repeat Chorus

Hemingway, Eichmann, Stranger in a Strange Land
Dylan, Berlin, Bay of Pigs invasion
Lawrence of Arabia, British Beatlemania
Ole Miss, John Glenn, Liston beats Patterson
Pope Paul, Malcolm X, British Politician Sex
J.F.K. blown away, what else do I have to say

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APPENDIX L (CONTINUED)

Repeat Chorus

Birth control, Ho Chi Minh, Richard Nixon back again
Moonshot, Woodstock, Watergate, punk rock
Begin, Reagan, Palestine, Terror on the airline
Ayatollah's in Iran, Russians in Afghanistan
Wheel of Fortune, Sally Ride, heavy metal, suicide
Foreign debts, homeless Vets, AIDS, Crack, Bernie Goetz
Hypodermics on the shores, China's under martial law
Rock and Roller Cola wars, I can't take it anymore

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning
Since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
But when we are gone
It will still burn on and on and on and on
And on and on and on and on...

We didn't start the fire
It was always burning
Since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No we didn't light it
But we tried to fight it
We didn't start the fire
It was always burning
Since the world's been turning

We didn't start the fire
No, we didn't light it
But we tried to fight it
We didn't start the fire
It was always burning
Since the world's been turning
We didn't start the fire
No, we didn't light it
But we tried to fight it
APPENDIX M

WE BUILT THIS CITY SONG LYRICS BY STARSHIP ENTERPRISE

We built this city
We built this city on rock and roll
Built this city
We built this city on rock and roll

Say you don't know me or recognize my face
Say you don't care who goes to that kind of place
Knee deep in the hoopla, sinking in your fight
Too many runaways eating up the night

Marconi plays the mambo, listen to the radio
Don't you remember?
We built this city
We built this city on rock and roll

We built this city
We built this city on rock and roll
Built this city
We built this city on rock and roll

Someone's always playing corporation games
Who cares, they're always changing corporation names
We just want to dance here, someone stole the stage
They call us irresponsible, write us off the page

Marconi plays the mambo, listen to the radio
Don't you remember?
We built this city
We built this city on rock and roll

We built this city
We built this city on rock and roll
Built this city
We built this city on rock and roll

It's just another Sunday
In a tired old street
Police have got the choke hold, oh
Then we just lost the beat

Who counts the money underneath the bar?
Who rides the wrecking ball into our guitars?
Don't tell us you need us 'cause we're the ship of fools
Looking for America, coming through your schools

(I'm looking out over that Golden Gate bridge on another gorgeous sunny Saturday and
I'm seein' that bumper to bumper traffic.)

Don't you remember? (remember)

(Here's your favorite radio station, in your favorite radio city, the city by the bay, the city
that rocks, the city that never sleeps.)

Marconi plays the mambo, listen to the radio
Don't you remember?
    We built this city
We built this city on rock and roll

We built this city
We built this city on rock and roll
    Built this city
We built this city on rock and roll
    Built this city (oh)
We built this city on rock and roll
    Built this city
We built this city on rock and roll

(We built, we built this city) built this city (we built, we built this city)
(We built, we built this city) built this city (we built, we built this city)
(We built, we built this city) built this city (we built, we built this city)
(We built, we built this city) built this city (we built, we built this city)
REFERENCES


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*Management Decision, 39*(7), 551-555.


VITA

Melissa Elaine Wainwright

Education and Special Trainings

1986
University of Madrid
International Studies, Spanish

1988
Anderson University
Anderson, Indiana
Bachelor of Arts, Secondary Education and Spanish

1992
Seminole County Public Schools, University of Florida
Orlando, Florida
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Endorsement

1996
Northern Illinois University
Dekalb, Illinois
Master of Arts, Educational Leadership and Administration

2014
Rank I Superintendent Certification K-12
University of Kentucky, College of Education
Lexington, Kentucky

Professional Experience

1988 to 1991
Orange County Public Schools, Industrial Spanish Instructor
Martin Marietta Defense Company
Orlando, Florida

1989 to 1990
Deltona Middle School, Spanish/ESOL Teacher,
Deltona, Florida

1990 to 1993
Seminole County Public Schools, ESOL Teacher
Orlando, Florida

1990 to 1990
Seminole Community College, Industrial Spanish Instructor
Orlando, Florida

1993 to 1996
Churchville Junior High School, ESOL Teacher
Elmhurst, Illinois

1996 to 1997
Chippewa School, Principal
Bensenville, Illinois
1997 to 2000  Walker County Public Schools, Principal and Assistant Principal
            Rossville Elementary
            LaFayette Middle School
            LaFayette, Georgia

2004 to 2006  Franklin County Public Schools, Assistant Principal
            Western Hills High School
            Frankfort, Kentucky

2008 to 2011  Frankfort Independent Schools, Principal
            Frankfort High School
            Frankfort, Kentucky

2012 to 2013  Franklin County Public Schools, Interim Middle School Director
            Curriculum and Instruction
            Frankfort, Kentucky

2011 to Present  University of Louisville, State Support Liaison
                 Academic and Behavior
                 Response to Intervention(ABRI) Project
                 Louisville, Kentucky

Professional Honors

2009  Kentucky World Language Association
       Outstanding Administrator Award

Conference Presentations

Wainwright, M. & Robertson, S. (2011 July). *RTI in secondary schools*. Conference co-
            presenter Kentucky Association of Secondary School Principals, Lexington,
            Kentucky.

            Northern Kentucky University and Northern Kentucky Education Cooperative
            Collaborative for Teaching and Learning.

            Conference session presenter Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky.

            presenter University of Louisville, ABRI Conference, Shelbyville, Kentucky.

            session co-presenter for Kentucky Center for Mathematics Fluency Forward
            Conference, Lexington, Kentucky.