A CASE STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES

IMPLEMENTED IN A HIGH POVERTY, HIGH ACHIEVING SCHOOL

A Dissertation

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the Faculty of the Graduate School

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Doctor of Education

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the

dissertation entitled

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a candidate for the degree of doctor of education,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

Boyd-Zaharias and Pate-Bain (2008) postulated that low achievement and high dropout rates among poor students continue to "plague" (p. 40) public schools in the United States; and elaborated further by stating, "our nation will profit by or pay for whatever they become" (p. 40). Chenoweth (2009a, 2009b) and Haycock (2001) shared that the country continues to move forward with reform efforts though the achievement gap between poor students and their non-poor peers does not tend to close, rather it widens. Therefore, the achievement gap between poor students and their peers, a problem of practice, is the focus of this study.

The researcher chose a narrative case study in a high performing, high poverty school in Missouri. The perceptions of stakeholders regarding the leadership processes and structures implemented by the principal were examined through the lens of transformational leadership. The following two overarching themes emerged: (1) Educating the Whole Child and (2) High Expectations of Stakeholders. The researcher found that by focusing on the themes the school was able to increase and sustain academic achievement of the students of poverty as well as their peers when assessment data from the Missouri Achievement Program (MAP) were analyzed. School personnel across the United States could replicate the leadership processes and structures identified through this case study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

The impact of poverty on families, schools, social welfare, labor market and the

government sector has been "crippling" (Taylor, 2005, p. 53). Further, the financial

ramifications have not been isolated to families. Companies, public schools, and others

have been impacted and the effect has trickled down to those in poverty in a way that has

not been seen in this country since the Great Depression in the 1930s (NCCP, 2011). All

of this ultimately influences many factors in the life of a child living in poverty. In fact,

the child poverty rate in the United States is higher than it is in most industrialized

nations (Taylor).

Consequently, low achievement and high dropout rates among poor students

continue to "plague" (Boyd-Zaharias & Pate-Bain, 2008, p. 40) the public schools in the

United States. Boyd-Zaharias and Pate-Bain use the word "plague" purposefully by

stating, "Our nation will profit by or pay for whatever they become" (p. 40). Further, they

postulated that the country continues to move forward with reform efforts though the

achievement gap between poor students and their non-poor peers does not tend to close,

rather it widens. Rothstein (2004) summed up the achievement gap issue by stating:

> For nearly half a century, the association of social and economic disadvantage
> with the student achievement gap has been well known to economists,
> sociologists, and educators. Most, however, have avoided the obvious implication
> of this understanding — raising the achievement of lower-class children requires
> amelioration of the social and economic conditions of their lives, not just school
> reform (p. 11).

Though reform movements have been the process for begetting change in schools, they have not brought about the change needed for poor students (Chenoweth, 2004, 2007, 2009b; Haycock, 2006; Rothstein).

The history of school reform is vast and has been occurring for decades; therefore, this researcher selected the most poignant movements to highlight. In 1979, Edmonds published an influential paper calling for better, more effective schools for the urban poor in America. Edmonds (1979) reported that strong leadership was a characteristic of effective schools and that such leadership focused on student outcomes. Four years after Edmonds' paper, the age of accountability began in 1983 with the release of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and added to the growing attention and concern about the quality of education in America's schools. According to the report, students in schools in the United States should be expected to achieve high, measureable standards to ensure student success in the information age (Horn, 2003). Initially, principals met these challenges by merely complying with externally mandated programs and were not required to document success through student outcomes (Cawelti, 2004; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). As concerns increased regarding student performance, there became an expectation for principals to lead school change and school reform (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1992).

Specifically, the second Bush administration, along with federal legislators, decided to increase the level of accountability for schools receiving federal Title I funds by passing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization of 2001* (ESEA) popularly known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (Fowler, 2004; U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2005; Wenglinsky, 2004). Title I funding was a part

of the initial ESEA in 1965, which provided money to support poorly performing

students in disadvantaged schools (Popham, 2003). This reform "requires states to test

more, set more ambitious improvement for their schools, and increase sanctions for

schools that fail to meet these goals" (Goertz & Duffy, 2003, p. 4). Schemo (2002)

estimated that 20% of the federal Title I money, which funds programs in schools with a

high incidence of poverty, would be used to provide tutors for students in and

transporting students away from failing schools.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) changed what schools and districts did

with the results of the student achievement on standardized tests due to the

implementation of accountability mandates (USDOE, 2007). In fact, when NCLB was

signed into law on January 8, 2002, its consequences impacted each state department of

education, trickling down to each school district, school building, and ultimately every

teacher in schools receiving federal funding (USDOE, 2007).

This landmark legislation was the first time the federal government gave specific

guidelines for which schools must achieve or face financial ramifications in addition to

further consequences. Prior to the mandates of NCLB students took similar state

standardized tests while educators acknowledged their student achievement levels and

then filed away the information (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Taylor, 2005). Once NCLB

was implemented, it altered this process so that educators were forced to examine and

adjust how they taught in order to increase student achievement the following year. This

became the benchmark for meeting accountability mandates increases annually (USDOE,

2007). Though schools and districts had been used to a long line of school reform

movements, this was the first time student academic achievement was tied directly to

funding (USDOE, 2005,). According to Payne (2003) many educators "grieved" (p. 371) at the onset of rigorous state assessments and accountability.

However, after years under the NCLB, educational leaders have not observed substantive evidence that the legislation has assisted school leaders with marginalized communities in turning their failing schools around (Brady, 2003). According to Haycock (2006), NCLB has put a spotlight on poor and minority students, which she referred to as "invisible children" (p. 38). An additional reauthorization of NCLB is underway and leaders of schools with a high incidence of poverty are seeking additional guidance and support in how to improve their academic standing, thus it is essential that successful schools with high incidences of poverty be examined and their best practices shared (USDOE, 2010). The challenge for educators is to find methods that bring about and document continued improvement (Laitsch, 2003). However, one challenge with NCLB's broad policy is in its general guidelines, leading school personnel to struggle with the specificity in the process which requires schools to practice learning by doing, which Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) labeled as "internalization" (p. 99). Internalization is referred to as the process of observation turned into practice (Nonaka & Takeuchi). Many school leaders lack the knowledge, skill, and training to implement such internalization strategies (Elmore, 2002; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Accordingly, the purpose of this research was to explore approaches for PK-12 educational leaders to bolster the achievement of students from poverty. By exploring possible connections between the leadership style of the principal and the sustained high academic achievement by all students, regardless of social economic status, educational

leaders should be able to enhance learning for all students. Therefore, research regarding successful schools with a high incidence of poverty was sought for this study.

Conceptual Framework

Leadership theory was selected as the theoretical framework for the purpose of studying schools of poverty sustaining high academic achievement. Both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks are necessary components in research. As Mertens (2005) affirmed as the literature review progresses, a "more sophisticated (often greatly) modified conceptual framework should emerge" (p. 106).

Smallwood, Ulrich, and Sweetman (2008) stated, "Beyond our personal awareness, research has shown that the quality of leadership helps meet the expectations of investors, customers, and employees" (p. 1). According to Bass and Stogdill (1990), leadership is a broad concept that "occurs universally among people regardless of culture, whether they are isolated Indian villagers, Eurasian steppe nomads, or Polynesian fisher folk" (p. 5). Throughout time, leadership theory has been closely related to the effective functioning of complex organizations (Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2005). Given the vast importance of the role of the leader of an organization, there has not been a large amount of research on school leadership as related to sustaining high student achievement (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). In the analysis of research by Marzano, McNulty, and Waters, they found over five thousand articles and studies that address school leadership, "but only 69 that actually examine the quantitative relationship between building leadership and academic achievement of students" (p. 6).

Simultaneously, the broad topic of increasing and sustaining high achievement narrows considerably when the focus is placed upon the type of leadership found in

successful schools (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Schools with such achievement have leaders with distinctive leadership characteristics that implement specific leadership processes and structures. Further research led to the call for school reform initiatives.

Throughout the research on effective schools, there was a constant call for "school restructuring" which was perceived as a better way to identify and meet instructional needs determined at the local level (Hallinger & Heck, 1999). Restructuring has been defined as the "reforming of the interrelationships of an organization; a strategy used to analyze and redesign the organization or structure of education in order to improve student outcomes" (MASSP, 1994, p. 27). The literature regarding effective school restructuring called for school leaders to be the initiators of change rather than merely responding to it, and instructional leadership alone, it was disputed, could not accomplish this (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). Leithwood et al. (1999) argued that instructional leadership was no longer a suitable paradigm for restructuring. Instead they promoted a different model of leadership called transformational leadership, which should be "potentially more powerful and more elegant as a description of effective leadership in the context of school restructuring" (p. 27).

As a result, the conceptual framework of transformational leadership explicitly informed and guided this study of leadership in schools with a high incidence of poverty sustaining high academic achievement. With the focus on the building level rather than at the district level in these times of accountability (Elmore, 2002), principals need to prepare themselves as transformational leaders to have a positive impact on student achievement (Fullan, 2001; Hedgpeth, 2000). Principals in high performing schools spend 81% more time practicing transformational leadership than those in average

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schools (Ellis, 1984; Lieberman, 1995). Cawelti (2004) advised "no significant increase in student achievement will be forthcoming unless students receive higher quality and more focused instruction in their classrooms on a day-to-day basis" (p. 10). For that reason, it is critical to understand how leaders in high performing schools with a high incidence of poverty are effecting the changes necessary to increase student achievement.

After studying great historical leaders, Burns (1978) discovered that they possessed a distinctive kind of leadership, which he identified as "transforming" (p. 7). This leadership style was characterized as being moral and uplifting because, "it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of leader and led, and thus has a transforming effect on both" (Burns, p. 20). According to Burns, leadership was found in the relationships between motives, resources, leaders, and followers. Bass (1985) defined transformational leaders as possessing a kind of charismatic or idealized influence over followers, while inspiring higher motivation, stimulating them intellectually, and providing individualized consideration for them. Therefore, the definition of transformational leadership used for this study is composed of the following four constructs: (1) individualized influence; (2) inspirational motivation; (3) intellectual stimulation; and (4) individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978).

Burns (1978) and Bass (1999) described another form of leadership, called transactional leadership, in which leaders and followers engage in an exchange process with followers being rewarded for behavior considered desirable by the leader. Although researchers have often focused on one model of principal leadership, there are others such as Leithwood and Montgomery (1992) who argued that it is doubtful that any one model

by itself describes what qualities leaders should possess. Lashway (1996) urged that principal leadership be multi-dimensional with a focus on the hierarchical, transformational, and facilitative elements of schools. Bass (1999) further contended that transformational leadership and transactional leadership complement each other. Though the constructs identified were linked directly to transformational leadership, they also can be found in the larger framework of leadership (Blase & Blase, 2004; Gronn, 2009).

Although leadership styles tend to complement each other, they also have characteristics that are most appropriate for various organizational environments. In times of change, transformational leadership appears to be very effective (Leithwood et al., 1999). Further, a transformational leader is found to be essential in organizations seeking increased student achievement in schools with a high incidence of poverty (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Patten, 2010; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Reeves, 2001). Since schools are currently in a state of change (Leithwood et al., 1999) and poverty is in the increase (NCCP, 2011), transformational leadership was chosen as the conceptual framework for this inquiry.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

Since the achievement gap between students of poverty and their peers continues to grow, some school leaders must find a way to not only close the gap but also to increase student achievement for all students. Subsequently it is critical that successful schools with effective leaders be identified, and their practices studied. Initially, school leaders perceived NCLB as a reform that would create equity in marginalized communities (Payne, 2009; Taylor, 2005). Instead, schools, more than ever before, are

held accountable for student achievement without the necessary resources (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Combining the lack of resources (DuFour & Marzano, 2011) with the rapid increase in students of poverty entering schools across the United States (NCCP, 2011; Payne, 2009; Taylor, 2005) and the challenges facing educators has become apparent. Furthermore, as Taylor (2005) posited, family incomes continue to be a reliable indicator when predicting levels of student achievement. "Students who live in poverty are not only more likely to underachieve than their peers from middle- and high-income households; they are also at risk of not completing school" (p. 53). Wood (2002) expounded on this issue of poverty when affirming that students living in poverty are also retained, suspended, and expelled from school more often than their middle income peers.

Schools in Missouri, like other states, must continue to work to meet accountability mandates at both the federal level and state level with the Missouri School Improvement Program. In addition to these accountability mandates, NCLB (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2007) specifically acknowledges the need for subgroups within the student population to grow incrementally with all students being on grade level by the year 2014. However, the achievement gap continues to widen between the students of poverty (Chenoweth, 2009a; Haycock, 2001, 2006) and other students. Thus, in an effort to avoid reinventing the wheel the practices and processes of leaders within successful schools of poverty need to be examined (Chenoweth, 2009a, 2009b). Furthermore, few such successful schools in Missouri have been identified, nor have they been studied in-depth. For that reason, schools in Missouri with a high incidence of

poverty that have achieved sustained success must be studied. Findings would permit the leadership processes and structures implemented in these schools to be shared with leaders of schools failing to meet the accountability mandates of NCLB and the Missouri School Improvement Plan [MSIP] (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2011; USDOE, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

For the present study, the researcher examined the perceptions of PK-12 educators and leaders regarding the leadership processes and structures that may have positively impacted the academic achievement of their students. Based on these findings, the researcher sought to determine approaches in which PK-12 educational leaders can understand the leadership processes and structures being practiced in a high performing school in Missouri with a high incidence of poverty. This study examined a "problem of practice" (Creswell, 2007, p. 135; Willis, Inman, & Valenti, 2010) prevalent in schools across the country. The results of this narrative case study should enhance the current body of knowledge about closing the economic achievement gap in education and focus on leadership practices found to be successful.

Research Questions

The review of literature revealed questions that narrowed the scope of the study. One overarching concept continued to be at the forefront of the mind of the researcher throughout the interpretation of the literature: How do leaders in schools of poverty impact student achievement successfully? The following questions surfaced through the review of literature which guided this inquiry:

1. What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement of students from poverty?

2. What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students from poverty?

3. How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed how they behave in their school?

4. How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of the principal?

Design of the Study

A narrative case study was selected for the design of this research and will take place in one Missouri school with a high incidence of poverty that consistently meets federal and state accountability mandates. The researcher selected a case study to focus on discovery rather than hypothesis testing (Merriam, 1998). Since this study investigated a problem of practice (Creswell, 2007; Willis et al., 2010) prevalent in schools across the country, a case study provided a holistic view of the natural school setting while also providing input from several stakeholders (Creswell; Yin, 2003). Furthermore, this case study will identify and examine leadership processes and structures that led to sustained high academic achievement in one Missouri school despite barriers of poverty, a common "problem of practice" nationwide (Creswell, p. 135).

The how and what questions that drive this study called for a qualitative approach, which Yin (2003) described as a research design of empirical inquiry. Using one school

as the focus of the study allows for an in-depth examination of the school in its natural setting while gathering data from a myriad of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In addition, collected will be ancillary data from school documents, artifacts, and observations (Merriam, 1998; Yin) to provide for triangulation of the data (Fowler, 2004).

<div align="center">Limitations and Assumptions</div>

According to Fowler (2004), one potential limitation of a narrative case study is the notion that such a study is less credible than quantitative studies since it evolves from subjective findings. Thus, the integrity and competence of the researcher must be considered as well (Merriam, 1998). Entering the study, the belief of the researcher that a leader makes a difference in the academic achievement at a school may also be considered as a potential limitation (Creswell, 2007; Merriam).

However, the researcher relied on the frankness of the participants in the study (Creswell, 2007) to overcome many of these limitations. The use of the informed consent form aided in the trustworthiness of the responses of participants (Creswell) by allowing them to understand completely the purpose of the inquiry before data collection. Throughout the interview and focus group process the recording, verbatim transcription, and confirmation of statements (member-checking) by participants should give participants an opportunity to expound upon their responses prior to completion of the study (Creswell; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995).

Another potential limitation could be the location of and socioeconomic level of the case when considering the transferability of the study (Yin, 2003). As finding the exact replica would be impossible, this must be taken into account as potentially limiting.

Additionally, due to each state creating the test and levels of proficiency, each test varies by state and may also impact transferability of the findings to a different school outside of Missouri (USDOE, 2005; Yin).

Finally, a single case limits the information to one site in Missouri with a high incidence of poverty (Creswell, 2007; Fowler, 2004; Yin, 2003). Conversely, while a single case may be limited compared to a multi-case study, the ability to proceed more in-depth into what has been done at the site to increase and sustain academic achievement of all students should create a richer deeper understanding of the potential outcomes (Creswell; Merriam, 1998).

<center>Design Controls</center>

Through the process of identifying the limitations, it has made the researcher cognizant of the potential impact. Further, the researcher attempted to ensure rigor and quality through the appropriate qualitative validity and reliability measures. Accuracy checks were made through the triangulation of data through member-checking (completed through the transcript verification by participants), a thorough and rich description, and clarification of researcher assumptions and biases (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) emphasized data credibility through the ethics of the researcher, triangulation, and process of tracking data to easily follow up if the need would arise.

Trustworthiness was increased through the possibility of the study being easily replicated in other sites (Merriam, 1998) by a comprehensive description of the participants and the school. Though qualitative research can be deemed subjective the researcher took steps prior to, during, and throughout the research process to enhance the

understanding of the case study site. Throughout the interview and focus group process, the researcher kept bias and assumptions out of direct questions (Emerson et al., 1995). Finally, the data coding and audit processes delineated the responses into clearly identified categories (Emerson et al.). Researchers seeking to draw their own conclusions would be able to examine this research and the compiled data and would find similar results as the original finding in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

<div align="center">Definition of Key Terms</div>

The following terms were identified as being important to the understanding of the investigation. Definitions were provided to give readers a clearer understanding of key concepts and to establish a critical common language (Bruffee, 1999).

Achievement: A measurement of how students are performing academically in relation to some type of measure, typically standardized assessment scores. For the purposes of this study, achievement refers to how students are performing on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests in the areas of communication arts, mathematics, and science. The MAP assessments are administered to students in grades three through eight.

Achievement gap: A consistent difference in academic test scores between groups of students. The gaps most frequently referred to are those between white students and minority groups such as African-American and Hispanic students as well as between students of poverty and their non-poor peers.

Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP]: A measurement defined by the United Stated federal No Child Left Behind Act that allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine how every public school and school district in the country is

performing according to student performance under Title I of NCLB. The goal is to have all students reaching proficient levels in reading and math by 2014 as measured by performance on state tests.

High achieving school: Identified as having students of poverty achieving at the top two levels, proficient and advanced (increases incrementally annually) necessary to meet AYP (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MODESE], 2011; MSIP, 2004).

High incidence of poverty: Schools with at least 50% of students qualifying for Free of Reduced Meals [FRM].

Looping: A teacher loops with students from one year in school to the next. This is believed to help with relationships as well as knowing where students are academically.

Missouri Assessment Program [MAP]: The annual test of academic achievement of students in grades three through eight in Missouri schools. The results are how the mandates of NCLB are determined as met, or not met.

Poverty: A student qualifying for Free or Reduced Meals [FRM] at school is deemed a child of poverty or low socioeconomic status (SES). Often socioeconomic status is used for the level of income of a family; therefore, poverty is often referred to as low socioeconomic status.

Reculturing: According to Newmann and Wehlage (1993), reculturing means "to move from a situation of limited attention to assessment and pedagogy, to a situation in which teachers and others routinely focus on these matters and make associated improvements" (p. 11).

Restructuring: According to Newmann and Wehlage (1993), restructuring means to

      move responsibilities from one department to another, or to shift workers.

Socioeconomic Status [SES]: Students qualifying for Free or Reduced Meals [FRM] are

      classified by SES for NCLB subgroup purposes.

Stakeholder: A person with a vested interest in an organization. Stakeholders in this study

      include staff, parents, students, and community members.

Subgroup: Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP] goals and test scores are divided into the

      following subgroups of students: ethnicity; students with disabilities;

      socioeconomic level; English Language Learners; and overall school performance

      (USDOE, 2005).

Successful School: The school must have met AYP and had at least 65% of students from

      poverty achieving in the highest two levels of achievement: proficient and

      advanced during the past three years.

Transformational leadership: Defined by four dimensions: (1) individualized influence;

      (2) inspirational motivation; (3) intellectual stimulation; and (4) individualized

      consideration (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978).

Summary

      Accountability created by NCLB and MSIP has forced educators to place a

greater emphasis on performance on state mandated tests of all students than ever before

in the history of the United States (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; MODESE, 2011; USDOE,

2007). While many factors contribute to the success or failure of a school, research has

revealed that leadership has a significant role in school improvement (DuFour &

Marzano; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Sheppard, 1996;

Smallwood et al., 2008). Consequently, it is important to identify and recognize leadership processes and structures prevalent in successful schools, especially those in schools with a low socioeconomic status. This study, developed through the conceptual lens of transformational leadership, intended to identify what the principal of one successful Missouri school with a high incidence of poverty did consistently to impact student achievement.

Once school leaders have the access to the successful leadership processes and structures being implemented in schools of poverty, they can use them as a guide to bring about success in their building. Because leadership theory was selected as the theoretical framework for the purpose of studying schools of poverty sustaining high academic achievement, the opportunity for several leadership styles were options for the researcher to narrow for the conceptual framework. Given the vast importance of the role of the leader of an organization, it is unfortunate that there has not been a large amount of research on school leadership as related to sustaining high student achievement (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Ultimately, the review of related literature narrowed the larger comprehensive theoretical framework to the more specific conceptual framework of transformational leadership. This leadership style, introduced by Burns (1978), affirmed that leadership was found in the relationships between motives, resources, leaders, and followers. Bass (1985) defined transformational leaders as possessing a kind of charismatic or idealized influence over followers, while inspiring higher motivation, stimulating them intellectually, and providing individualized consideration for them.

As Cawelti (2004) advised, in order to increase student achievement, students must be receiving the high quality and focused instruction that comes from teachers who are

motivated, inspired, and knowledgeable enough to do so. The transformational leader takes the part of a key role in achieving this through their leadership style. As Hersey and Blanchard (1988) advised successful leadership comes through influence, not authority (p. 4). Therefore, utilizing the lens of transformational leadership allowed the researcher to narrow the focus to the four constructs of (1) individualized influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978).

This study began with an introduction, which provided an overview of the research purpose and design in Chapter One. A review of related literature related to the study followed in Chapter Two. The subjects, research design and method, and data analysis were explained in Chapter Three. Provided in Chapter Four were the specific results of the study. The study concluded with Chapter Five, which included the discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The role of principals has changed dramatically over the past decade due in large

part to the federal legislation *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act of 2001*. Accountability

implemented through NCLB and the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP)

requires school leaders to examine current and best practices to meet the mandates of

continuous improvement (Missouri School Improvement Program [MSIP], 2004; U.S.

Department of Education [USDOE], 2005). Historically, education has gone through

numerous school reform efforts, with NCLB being the latest federal reform movement

resulting in more action than past efforts (Blase, Blase, & Phillips, 2010; Fullan, 2001;

Reeves, 2006, 2009).

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published the

report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* that focused on ways to

restore America's competitive edge on international business and national defense. The

National Commission on Excellence in Education findings indicated that the average

achievement test scores were lower than they were in 1957. According to the report,

students were expected to meet high, measureable standards and schools were to be held

accountable for the achievement level students attained as reported on standardized tests.

Ultimately, the goal was to prepare students in the United States to be successful in the

information age (Horn, 2003).

Following in 1994, the United States Congress determined that federal Title I

money must be spent to bring the poor children up to state standards, as opposed to the

initial Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) affirming that the funds

simply had to be spent on poor children. The revised focus was to engage in research and

development of programs for teaching economically disadvantaged children and to

evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. The largest of these federal programs was

Title I which provided federal funds to all districts with children of poverty (Odden &

Odden, 1995).

According to Richardson (2011) doing anything separate or special for children of

poverty did not occur before federal dollars were designated for educating the poor.

Congress titled the next major legislation *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*. Goals 2000

placed a national focus on improving teaching, schools, and student performance. The

goals included the following: all children will start school ready to learn; the national

high school graduation rate will increase to 90%; competency to be demonstrated on

challenging core subjects; science and mathematics achievement to be best in the world;

schools will be safe and drug free; the teaching force will improve professional skills;

partnerships and increased parental involvement (Paris, 1994). Unfortunately, these

provisions never took effect because most states failed to comply (Chenoweth, 2004).

The *Third International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) of 1995 was the

largest and most comprehensive study completed to compare international education. The

study tested the knowledge of half a million students at three different grade levels in 41

countries. The general results indicated that the United States students performed well in

fourth grade but dropped to low levels in math and science by high school (Kelly, 2002).

Kelly's analysis of the 1995 TIMSS findings indicated:

> The United States' education system failed to create a mechanism at the federal
> level for developing and enforcing uniform standards of education throughout the

country; teacher preparation occurred primarily in university classrooms; in poor communities, broken families were most frequently blamed for low achievement, whereas in more affluent areas family support for school was cited as a main factor; homework is done in school and simply represented work that teachers expected to be done before the next class session; and students demonstrated a limited repertoire of strategies for studying and were not prepared to do academic work other than short assignments (p. 43).

This information gave school leaders in the United States some indication of what the deficits were in relation to math and science achievement, but provided no solution of how to remedy the situation (Kelly).

Thus, federal legislators decided to increase the level of accountability for schools receiving federal Title I funds by passing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization of 2001 (ESEA) popularly known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (Fowler, 2004; Wenglinsky, 2004). This legislation impacted school funding focusing the attention of school leaders across the nation. The stated goal of the NCLB Act follows:

Designed to help close the achievement gaps between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers, the new law will change the culture of America's schools so that they define their success in terms of student achievement and invest in the achievement of every child (USDOE, 2005, p. 3).

For the first time in history, states were required to demonstrate that they were using federal money effectively (Chenoweth, 2004).

Specifically, the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provision of NCLB created a new method of defining success. AYP is a measurement defined by the United Stated federal *No Child Left Behind Act* that allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine how every public school and school district in the country is performing according to student performance under Title I of NCLB. Each state creates the academic assessments based on the state standards, as well as the levels of achievement for the assessments. AYP goals and test scores are divided into the following subgroups of

students: ethnicity; students with disabilities; socioeconomic level; English Language Learners; and overall school performance (USDOE, 2005). Therefore, schools, parents, and communities could view the academic achievement of each subgroup of students with the expectation to leave no child behind. The accountability and annual testing of all students, reporting annual statewide progress objectives and proficiency by factors of ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic level, and limited English proficiency have resulted in a major focus on testing and test results among all states dependent on federal financial support (USDOE, 2005).

As a result of such mandates, Missouri schools are facing loss of accreditation if scores on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) are not at the levels required by NCLB (Missouri School Improvement Plan [MSIP], 2004). In addition to such losses, schools are required to examine the achievement of all students including those from low socioeconomic levels. The poverty level in many Missouri schools meets or exceeds the national definition of 50% (Missouri Kids Count, 2010). Originally appropriated at the federal level to support teaching children from poverty (USDOE, 2005) this funding could possibly be eliminated if accountability mandates are not met by AYP standards.

Consequently, the outcome of the more recent educational reforms and high stakes accountability measures has resulted in the evolution of leadership roles and behaviors of principals of the 21st century from school management to transformational leadership (Brandt, 2000; Duke, 2004). Fullan (2001) declared leadership is required for problems that do not have easy solutions. Grint (2005) referred to these as "wicked problems" (p. 1473). According to Grint, wicked problems are those which are complex with no one clear, correct answer, and require leadership rather than management. Due to

the legislative reforms, principals are required to delve deeper into test results to examine which subgroups have met or not met the mandates set forth in NCLB. The subgroups of ethnicity, students with disabilities, socioeconomic level, English Language Learners, and overall school performance all contribute to the AYP report of the school which impacts funding as well as accreditation for districts (USDOE, 2005).

Chatterji (2006) highlighted children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, those whose first language is not English, and children receiving special education services are achieving at much lower rates than the general population. This divide is what researchers refer to as the achievement gap (Chenoweth, 2004; Haycock, 2006; Reeves, 2006; Rothstein, 2004). Therefore, as Fullan (2001) indicated, leadership is about solving complex problems such as how to meet AYP by raising achievement for all students and thus closing, and hopefully eliminating, the achievement gap. Chenoweth (2009a) argued, "All schools could learn something from the qualities shared by schools that have been successful in educating poor and minority students to high levels" (p. 38). In fact, effective leaders have as one of their highest priorities to learn from the best practices of high-performing schools (Carter, 2000). DuFour and Marzano (2011) warned that if the educational gaps remain, the workforce will display an abrupt decrease in the number of workers with high school diplomas and college degrees over the next 15 years.

Unfortunately researchers have confirmed the significant negative impact of poverty, hunger, and homelessness on the ability of a student to concentrate and succeed in school and life (Apple, 1996; Banks & Banks, 1995; DuFour & Marzano, 2011, Giroux, 1998; Haycock, 2006; Kozol, 2005; Payne, 2003, 2008, 2009; Rothstein, 2004).

Love (2005) contended that for the over one million homeless children in America, difficult living arrangements along with the daily struggle for food puts academics and attending school low on the priority list. Further, researchers recognized the strong correlation between students who are impoverished and their more advantaged peers due to the achievement gap that continues to widen (Carter, 2000; Chenoweth, 2004; Haycock, 2006). Hence, the impact of poverty on education should compel a sense of urgency in the education of students from poverty. However, statistics continue to illustrate that educators are failing to reach the impoverished areas of America, and therefore are failing the country (Shields, 2004). The challenge is so overwhelming to educators and administrators across the country that some scholars have acknowledged that unless the broader issues of homelessness, poverty, and unemployment are addressed through legislation, the necessary changes in schools will not make the difference required (Chenoweth, 2009a; Rothstein; Shields).

Collins (2001) stated that academic success for at-risk learners is a matter of conscious choice by principals. Prior to the work of Collins, Edmonds (1979) noted:

> 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; and whether or not we do, it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we have not so far (p. 23).

Therefore, the pressure to close the achievement gap while increasing achievement for all students continues to grow annually for school leaders as does the proficiency target for students.

According to Burney and Beilke (2008), poverty may be the most important of all student differences. Nearly all public schools include students from poverty; thus understanding the constraints poverty has on achievement is important for all such

schools (Burney & Beilke). Further, DuFour and Marzano (2011) argued that "no generation of educators in the history of the United States has ever been asked to do so much for so many" (p. 5). Consequently, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the leadership processes and structures exhibited in a high performing, high poverty school in Missouri through qualitative research methods using a lens of transformational leadership.

The researcher in this study examined a "problem of practice" (Creswell, 2007, p. 135; Willis et al., 2010) prevalent in schools across the country. Creswell identified a problem of practice as a problem occurring in more than one location, demographic, or field. Specifically, this inquiry attempted to identify the transformational leadership processes and structures implemented in successful schools with a high incidence of poverty to reveal valuable information for leaders of schools not meeting the mandates of accountability. As Chenoweth (2009a) postulated, "All schools could learn something from the qualities shared by schools that have been successful in educating poor and minority students to high levels" (p. 38). Accordingly, during this era of accountability, capturing the actual experiences of the transformational leadership processes and structures of principals from high performing, high poverty schools will assist other principals with effectively educating this ever growing population of students (Patton, 2002).

This review of literature focused on the constructs necessary for school leaders to understand this phenomenon: leadership and poverty. Specifically, the constructs of leadership that lead to student achievement and school improvement are leaders as a change agent, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership. An in-depth

discussion of poverty and the skill sets required by both teachers and principals to offset the influence of poverty on student achievement were also presented.

Leadership

Researchers (Cotton, 2003; Lieberman, 1995; McEwan, 2003; Reeves, 2001, 2006, 2007, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2000; Yukl, 2009) have found a positive correlation between the leadership of the building principal and increased student achievement. Studies have emphasized the characteristics of building leadership as key to enhanced student achievement (McEwan; Sergiovanni, 2000; Yukl). Furthermore, studies indicated the leadership of a building principal as critical for student achievement (Cotton; Lieberman). Schmoker (2004) contended that the role of the leader is decisive in the change process. Therefore, since school reform utilizes data to determine academic standing and funding, a building leader must be knowledgeable about all aspects of data, as well as how to use data to drive decision making (Haun, 2003; Kotter, 1990). Arguably, characteristics of effective schools generally identified leadership as a foremost factor for educational reform (Fullan, 2001, 2010; Rust & Freidus, 2001).

Additionally, it is crucial to understand the variables that directly impact high-performing schools so that leaders may be properly prepared to focus on the primary factors needed to produce desired student achievement results. While researchers have identified a positive correlation between the leadership of the building principal and increased student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Lieberman, 1995; McEwan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2000; Yukl, 2009), it is important in this time of high accountability to understand the specific leadership skills that effect student achievement within a high poverty setting.

Decades of research exist regarding classroom-level practices associated with increased student performance (Blase et al., 2010; Carter, 2000, Chenoweth, 2004, 2009b; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2001; Jackson, Davis, Abeel, & Bordonaro, 2000; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Reeves, 2009). For that reason, researchers have studied the overall impact of leadership on student achievement, yet few studies have examined the school-level leadership processes and structures that have helped to close achievement gaps. Hence, narrowing the focus to the specific leadership processes and structures successful leaders implement in order to effect change and increase student achievement is needed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Chenoweth, 2009a, 2009b; DuFour & Marzano; Haycock, 2006; Jackson et al.; Lashway, 1996; Louis et al.; Reeves, 2009; Yukl, 2009). As a result, the first leadership construct to be examined was that of the leader as a change agent.

Leader as a Change Agent

Haycock (2006) identified high stakes accountability as the "elephant in the room" (p. 230) and Lashway (1996) referred to it as the "800 pound gorilla of school reform… highly visible, hard to control, and impossible to ignore" (p. 14). Some schools have demonstrated success according to academic achievement outcomes and through focused school reform efforts, although the majority have struggled to meet minimal educational standards and goals (Reeves, 2007). Therefore, schools are faced with an urgent need to understand the implications of external accountability for educational reform and to execute leadership processes and structures that mobilize, manage, and sustain continuous improvement of performance outcomes (Schmoker, 1999).

In times of significant change, for example the mandates of NCLB and MSIP, the leader must be flexible and adapt to the ever-changing climate in order to provide what is needed by whom and when (Fullan, 2010). To effect change, school leaders must assume diversified roles (Bernhardt, 2004; Fullan, 2010; Haun, 2003; Kotter, 1990; Lashway, 1996; Schmoker, 1999). Diverse roles include, but are not limited to: thinker; believer; resource acquirer; leader; employer, manager; supporter; delegator; and information provider (Gorton & Snowden, 1998, p. 11). According to Yukl (2009) principals leading change, referred to as change agents, create a viable vision and work with the stakeholders to establish and work toward a shared vision by building leadership capacity within the stakeholders (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Lambert, 2003). DuFour and Marzano stated "Every person who enters the field of education has both an opportunity and an obligation to be a leader" (p. 1).

The role of the school-based administrator, like the role of schools, is perpetually changing and increasingly challenging; therefore, improved leadership is pivotal to improved student achievement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). In a time of high stakes accountability, it is necessary for leaders to undertake the role of change agent (DuFour & Marzano; Fullan, 2001) to meet these accountability challenges. An essential role of a change agent is the collection and analysis of data. However, what is done with the data is what is most important. An effective leader will guide teachers through the analysis of data utilizing the information culled from the data to lead instruction as well as vision creation (Bernhardt, 2004).

Change is difficult in any organization, but education appears to struggle more with the change process than business organizations due in part to the traditions

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established many years ago (Lambert, 2003). Our schools have traditionally been trusted by parents to deliver effective education and to keep current with appropriate delivery methods and styles that adapt to the students' learning preferences. With the current pressure on school leaders and classroom educators to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps, change is not an option. However, effective leaders realize the internal struggle of their colleagues and work to ensure all input is valued, and everyone has a voice in collaborative conversations (Lambert). Fullan (2001) confirmed the leader must influence teachers to realize the need for change rather than trying to force it on them. One way to guide teachers to the realization that change is necessary is through data analysis of student achievement on standardized tests. The change process is embraced and implemented more effectively, according to Fullan (2001), once teachers see that a deficit exists, and change is necessary.

Further, Reeves (2009) stated that the effective change leader puts the change in perspective by identifying what will *not* be changing, as opposed to focusing on what must be changed. The process of cultivating dialogue that teachers can understand and internalize, will help facilitate the change process. In fact, the process can go from an overwhelming and imposing threat to a "modification of practice within the broader practice" (Reeves, 2009, p.10). When reframed in this manner, change turns into a meaningful and exciting opportunity (Reeves, 2009).

Furthermore, leaders of high poverty, high performing schools have established certain practices that have led to the successful change in these organizations (Fullan, 2010; Schein, 2002; Yukl, 2009). Reeves (2009) argued an effective leader must be willing to demonstrate the practices necessary for change before people will commit to

the change. While many leaders believe a dialogue about the change will be enough; nothing speaks louder than the actions of the effective leader (Fullan, 2001; Reeves, 2006).

Subsequently, leadership capacity enhances reform efforts in successful buildings by guiding the stakeholders through the process of adopting the change (Fullan, 2010; Lambert, 2003). Schein (2002) confirmed that the partnership and motivation that comes from the process of shared leadership provides the psychological safety to accept the need for the changes as well as beginning the learning process for meaningful change. Fullan (2010) described the process of "capacity-building" in which teachers and students can "clearly articulate their learning targets, success criteria, and instructional actions" (p. 14).

Creating a shared vision with stakeholders and then implementing it throughout the organization is a practice of successful change agents (Schein, 2002). However, effective leaders must also know that once the shared vision has been identified, communicated, and implemented, ongoing team collaboration for clarification and feedback is critical (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Allowing for discussion and questions during the creation of a vision will prevent frustration that typically occurs when leaders fail to follow through with this crucial step (Lencioni, 2002).

As Cervero and Wilson, (2006) espoused, involving all stakeholders within an organization in decision-making is critical for the success of the programmatic change at hand. All members of an organization bring with them their unique perspective and background and the change agent must value and acknowledge their contributions (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Conflict is healthy when approached properly, and ongoing

dialogue with the entire organization will aid the leader in identifying themes in professional growth needs as well as the level of commitment to change (Lencioni, 2002).

Further, Newmann and Wehlage (1993) found these organizations went through "reculturing" (p. 11) as opposed to restructuring. According to Newmann and Wehlage, reculturing means "to move from a situation of limited attention to assessment and pedagogy, to a situation in which teachers and others routinely focus on these matters and make associated improvements" (p. 11). When an organization goes through reculturing, deeper dialogue, better instructional practice, and higher student achievement are the result (Newmann & Wehlage).

Newmann and Wehlage (1993) identified and researched schools with effective professional learning communities (PLCs) and found three commonalities: (1) professional conversations existed; (2) there was a clear focus on student work and assessments; and (3) instructional practice changed based on best practices. Additionally, schools identified as PLCs continually reflected, collaborated, and changed what was not working resulting in effective outcomes (Lambert, 2003). Consequently, the building leader must identify teachers with effective leadership skills, utilize their abilities to facilitate PLCs, and include them on the school leadership team (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Lambert). DuFour and Marzano espoused that leaders seem to solve problems because "they are the answer" (p. 1). Additionally, DuFour and Marzano asserted that no one individual can bring about this change alone, recognizing that it takes a collaborative effort and "widely dispersed leadership to meet the challenges confronting our schools"

(p. 2). Although a change agent makes a great impact on an organization during times of change, the right kind of instructional leader in schools is equally important.

Instructional Leadership

"The goal in a learning community is to build connections between people, socially and intellectually. Commitment strengthens interpersonal connections...building a learning community is tantamount to developing a commitment to shared learning" (Prawat, 1993, p. 9). In essence, school principals go through the process of building connections between people in a continuous cycle. In order to be successful leaders during the change process, the building must function as a true learning community with the ownership of learning belonging to all stakeholders (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Although definitions of instructional leadership vary by researcher, for the purpose of this paper the researcher synthesized the work to three key concepts of instructional leadership: (1) instructional leaders develop skilled practitioners (Blase & Blase, 2004; Leithwood et al., 1999; Zepeda, 2004); (2) instructional leaders support the vision of the organization while supporting staff members (Blase & Blase; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1995; Smith & Andrews, 1989); and (3) instructional leaders promote a culture of learning for students and adults (Blase & Blase; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Bush, 2003; Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Lambert, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Mintzberg, 1979).

Skilled practitioners. First, instructional leaders work to develop skilled practitioners which should lead to better results on high stakes tests (Youngs & Darling-Hammond, 2002). Shared skill sets impact every aspect of the classroom from instruction to classroom management. Additionally, research demonstrates that classroom

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management impacts learning as much as good instruction (Knight, 2009).

Conversations, observations, professional growth opportunities, and reflection allow

leaders to focus on the individualized professional growth of teachers. Zepeda (2004)

indicated three attributes of successful professional development: "(1) It is relevant to the

individual teacher; (2) Feedback is part of the process; and (3) It facilitates the transfer of

new skills into practice" (p. 42).

Conversely, transactional leadership is viewed more as positional, rather than a

partnership as in instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 2004; Burns, 1978; Yukl,

2009). When a teacher views the principal as a partner in the improvement of teaching

rather than using classroom visits as a "got you" situation, a partnership forms. Teachers

seek affirmation of their efforts from the principal and through this process growth occurs

naturally (Zepeda, 2004). Also, rather than appealing to individual material and social

needs as transactional leadership does, instructional leadership asks that leaders and

followers alike work toward the same collectively determined goal (Blase & Blase;

Burns; Yukl).

Support the vision. Second, the importance of the instructional leader supporting

the vision of the organization while supporting staff members cannot be overlooked

(Blase & Blase, 2004; Glickman et al., 1995; Lambert, 2003; Smith & Andrews, 1989).

Instructional leadership is not only about support; in addition, it illustrates how to

determine a vision that does not simply maintain the status quo but also takes the school

where it needs to advance. It is widely known that teachers will not embrace a vision they

had nothing to do with creating (Blase & Blase; Bush, 2003; Lambert; Yukl, 2009). An

effective leader will motivate members of the school to seek a worthy vision because it

promotes learning and growth for all (Yukl). Thus gaining buy-in from the staff as all are committed to the collectively created vision. When all members of an organization share a vision of student and adult learning, it becomes the culture of the organization (Lambert; Yukl).

Support may be accomplished through many avenues: observation; feedback; reflection; resources; professional growth opportunities; and through developing skill sets (Bush, 2003) based upon the situation. Regardless of how the support is provided, if teachers are not receptive, the effort is pointless. Thus, a learning culture is critical (Lambert, 2003). McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) shared that transforming the culture of a school will not occur without the principal. Further, the principal is the creator of culture, either intentionally or not (McLaughlin & Talbert).

Leaders as teachers and learners. Third, instructional leadership requires leaders to be teachers and learners. An acute awareness of the organization's needs is essential to the instructional leader (Bush, 2003). Being a lifelong learner as an instructional leader confirms to staff and students the leader is not above them, to which positional power in transactional leadership alludes (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 2009). Sheppard (1996) identified promoting the professional development of teachers as the most influential instructional leadership behavior in kindergarten through twelfth grade educational settings. Thus, it is not an option to avoid professional development. Effective instructional leaders must embrace, participate, and reflect on the impact professional development has on student achievement through proficient dialogue with teachers (Zepeda, 2004). Nurturing professional dialogue is essential to empowering teachers and instructional improvement (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Consequently, an effective instructional leader participates in growth opportunities alongside peers, in order for the teachers to see the leader place an emphasis on the importance of professional growth personally and professionally (Blase & Blase, 2004; Blase et al., 2010). DuFour and Marzano (2011) argued "the more skilled the building principal, the more learning can be expected among students" and that "powerful school leadership by the principal has a positive effect on student achievement" (p. 48). An important aspect of being a building leader in a school setting is prioritizing learning and intellectual stimulation, which is natural for an instructional leader (Dufour & Marzano). When staff and students are aware and a part of creating the culture for learning, the school focuses on what is important, which relates to Burns' (1978) model of transformational learning. Burns referred to transformational learning to describe changes in beliefs and assumptions that affect professional practice. Mezirow (1991) considered transformational growth as the developmental learning that takes place in adults.

Reeves (2007) noted instructional leaders do not need to be experts in every academic field. However, Reeves (2007) insisted instructional leaders must be experts in clarity, consistency, and fairness. This theme is not limited to the work of Reeves (2007); other researchers agree that with the time constraints placed on principals, their focus must be grounded in clarity and consistency (Chenoweth, 2007; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2001; Haycock, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). Further, principals must decide how to spend each moment of the day. If the objective is improved student achievement, then principals must analyze what leaders of successful schools are doing to duplicate their efforts (Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Marzano et al.; Reeves, 2001,

2007, 2009). Fullan (2010) called this the "skinny of change – focusing on a small number of key things done with relentless consistency" (p. 12).

Researchers (Fullan, 2010; Marzano et al., 2005; Sergiovani, 2000) argued, in this climate of high stakes accountability, a facilitator of change is essential and a strong educational leader. Unfortunately, a caveat exists that many leaders do not have the skills to assess and develop internal stakeholders (Lambert, 2003). Therefore, leaders as lifelong learners beget the buy-in from staff members, which has been shown as critical to the success of high performing schools. While these same leaders have the external accountability to motivate them, without the appropriate background knowledge the odds are against them for creating success internally (Elmore, 2002).

Transformational Leadership

Hersey and Blanchard (1988) stated "The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority" (p. 4) which is a foundational construct of transformational leadership. According to Bass (1999), transformational leadership refers to the leader motivating the follower to achieve performance beyond expectations through one of four dimensions of transformational leadership: (1) charisma (which was later renamed individualized influence); (2) inspirational motivation; (3) intellectual stimulation; and (4) individualized consideration. Avolio and Bass (1991) affirmed that leaders who were more satisfying to their followers and effective as leaders were more transformational than transactional overall. Further, members of transformational teams care about and are inspired by one another, intellectually stimulate each other, and identify with the teams' goals (Bass, 1999).

Charisma or Individualized Influence. Avolio and Bass (1991) substituted the term individualized influence for charisma with the rationale that this dimension is about being influential concerning ideals. Bass (1999) referred to idealized influence and inspirational leadership as being demonstrated when the leader envisions a desirable future, articulates how it can be reached, serves as a role model for colleagues, sets high expectations, and displays confidence. Additionally, DuFour and Marzano (2011) shared "leadership is ultimately about the ability to influence others" (p. 3).

Lashway (1996) acknowledged that previously principals were asked to become instructional managers, exercising control by setting goals, maintaining discipline, and evaluating results. In the NCLB era, principals are viewed more as a facilitative coach by creating teams, PLCs, building leadership capacity, and fostering relevant collaboration (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Lambert, 2003). Principals must be leaders who believe in and model the importance of change and reform (Lashway). They not only serve as change agent, but also in a role of transforming teaching and learning by moving people beyond their own self-interests to those of the organization through idealized influence (Bass, 1999).

According to research, the dimensions of transformational leadership also have a positive impact on student achievement outcomes (Blase, Derick, & Strathe, 1986; Griffith, 2004). The effective transformational leader has created a shared vision, and has inspired teachers and students to commit to this vision (Bass, 1999). Further, the transformational leader understands the level of growth needed by teachers and students through individual consideration and data analysis, and is committed to providing the

intellectual stimulation needed to achieve increased teacher capacity and student

achievement (Bass, 1999).

Transformational principals guide others to lead, by sharing the responsibilities of

leadership (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; Lambert, 2003; Pavan & Reid, 1990).

Research has also discovered that transformational leadership is associated with "less

achievement disparity" between groups of students (Griffith, 2004, p. 137). The increase

in student achievement comes through the actions of the leader regarding the school

conditions, data analysis and interventions, which motivates teachers and students to

achieve more (Bass, 1999; Griffith).

Griffith (2004) discovered that achievement gaps tended to be the smallest when

the level of teacher job satisfaction is high and when staff viewed their principal as a

transformational leader. Further research documented that a positive school environment

had a constructive impact on schools with high percentages of socioeconomically-

disadvantaged students (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps 1995; Brookover,

Schweitzer, Schneider, Beady, Flood, & Weisenbaker, 1978; Shouse, 1996).

Inspirational Motivation. Leithwood, Seashore, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom

(2004) proclaimed school level leadership not only matters; it is second only to teaching

among school-related factors in its impact on student learning. As principals shape the

instructional program to produce improved learning outcomes for students (Gawerecki,

2003; Grove, 2004; Klein, 2002), they are placing the needs of the students in the center

of all their decision-making (Williams, 2006). Bredeson (1989) concerted, "The behavior

of the school principal is the single most important factor supporting high quality

educational programs, and while schools make a difference in what students learn,

principals make a difference in schools" (p. 29). Fullan (2010) expounded by stating the effective instructional leader can create a change in instruction through inspirational motivation, which will provide the best transformed learning environment for all students.

Furthermore, Bamburg (1994) noted schools, like any organization, function best when their staff has a clear idea about what is important. Schools that have found the most success in increasing student achievement have benefited from the clarity of purpose grounded in a set of shared beliefs and core values. In studies of school improvement, vision is consistently a central theme (Llamas-Sanchez & Lopez-Martin, 2006; Whitaker, 2003; Williams, 2006). Rosenholtz (1991) espoused the success of any transformed organization is dependent upon clear, commonly defined goals.

Bass (1999) declared that for an organization to become transformational in nature, the leader must first articulate the changes that are required. Once articulated, the leader may make the necessary changes in structure, processes, and practices along with widely communicating these changes throughout the organization. Further, Avolio and Bass (1991) stated that the leader, who is individually considerate of others, participates more in reculturation activities than those who are not; thus motivating others through modeling best practices rather than simply talking about them.

Intellectual Stimulation. Intellectual stimulation is demonstrated when the leader helps followers to become more creative and innovative through guided conversations gathering the input of all (Avolio & Bass, 1991). This is best done through the creation of a shared vision. While vision is necessary for all organizations, it is especially important for schools. Schools are institutionalized, therefore it is often assumed their purpose is

known and understood. However, without a stated vision, a school does not achieve its highest potential (Casey, 2005; Lambert, 2003; Rion-Gaboury, 2005). Concurrently, effective leaders communicate an awareness of purpose and model an active commitment to achieving the school's educational vision.

Nanus (1992) explained a leader must develop a mental picture of the possible future of the school, this vision, often becomes the mission statement for the school. A critical argument about the vision is that it must articulate a realistic future for the school, a condition that is often better than what currently exists (Nanus). Sergiovanni (2005) stressed the importance for principals to develop a vision of the school by collaborating with all of the major stakeholders in the school community, whose goals and aspirations contribute to the future of the school. Researchers found that when people believed their input was valued, they became more collaborative (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1999). A collective vision helps focus attention on what is important and increases the sense of shared responsibility for student learning (Nanus; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Transformational leaders have teachers who are motivated to work each day and the impact on student achievement is clear (Griffith, 2004). This does not happen by happenstance, but through the relationship and confidence of the leader (Bass, 1999). Thus, the behaviors of the principal directly affects school staff, specifically their job satisfaction and level of commitment to the organization (Kane & Tremble, 2000) resulting in a transformed school setting. Specifically, the effective leader knows to include a variety of staff when creating the shared vision and enabling them to share this information with colleagues (Sanzo, Sherman, & Clayton, 2011) resulting in a transformed environment.

According to Crockett (1996) transformational school leaders are good problem solvers. They are not only experts in addressing low student performance, but rather seek to develop leadership teams to discover answers together (Koschoreck, 2001; Murphy & Louis, 1995). One example is to develop a commitment to the shared vision of the organization; the transformational leader must appeal to his or her moral and psychological needs (Bass, 1999). The moral needs of an individual encompass a sense of goodness, righteousness, and duty, whereas the psychological needs of individuals include autonomy, esteem, and self-actualization (Blase et al., 1986; Griffith, 2004). Bass (1999) expounded on the ability of transformational leaders to change the attitude and behavior of employees through the process of providing a clear sense of mission.

Individualized Consideration. The fourth dimension, individualized consideration, is demonstrated when the leader is aware of the individual developmental needs and support the professional growth of the followers (Bass, 1999). On the other hand, if a leader does not take the time to see where the teachers (followers) are professionally; which is best accomplished through observation, communication, and reflection, there may be professional growth opportunities that are overlooked (Zepeda, 2004). An integral part of a school's vision being created and adopted is to know were each learner (staff and student) in the school is on the learning spectrum.

Conger and Kanungo (1998) described a vision as an articulated statement of goals, principles, and expectations for the entire learning community. However, having a vision statement is not enough to create the transformation needed in schools (Fullan, 2001). Achieving a shared vision occurs when the administration, teachers, support staff, students, families, and community are able to understand, contribute to, implement, and

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communicate the vision through daily school operations (Sergiovanni, 2005). A common vision is a roadmap for decision-making, instruction, and provides a guide for learning. A dynamic vision represents the entire learning community and outlines the direction for the school. Individualized consideration is expressed through actions, dialogue, and the manner in which the vision is communicated. Leaders must demonstrate the vision in their actions and share the vision of the future (Fullan, 2001; Nanus, 1992; Sergiovanni, 2005). Barker (1991) described vision:

> Vision without action is merely a dream; action without vision just passes the time; vision with action can change the world (p. 46).

An international study of successful principals, in schools (Yilmaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007) with a high incidence of poverty, found that principals displayed similar transformational leadership characteristics including that of setting and maintaining a specific direction for their schools by allowing educators to participate in the creation of that direction. Earlier Manasse (1986) stated that for the effective leader to set the correct direction for the school, he or she must understand the current state of the school as well as have the vision to know where the school needs to go. This is achieved through listening to the teachers who are with students daily and who best understand the current culture of the building.

Fullan (2001) and Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) argued that when developing a vision, leaders should keep several things in mind. First, the leader must understand the culture of the school (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Second, the leader should value teachers by soliciting their input for the vision and promoting their professional growth. Third, the vision should be an extension of what the stakeholders value. Fourth, the vision should

promote collaboration. Fifth, the vision should offer menus, not mandates. Lastly, the vision should connect with the wider environment.

In addition, researchers (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1999; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Yukl, 2009) have identified that job satisfaction plays a role in school personnel's performance. Job satisfaction is referred to as a person's global feeling about the job resulting in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Spector, 1997; Ulrich & Ulrich). Studies (Bass, 1999; Blase et al., 1986; Kane & Tremble, 2000) have also denoted that transformational leadership is associated with such effective leaders. The commitment of group members, motivation, and extra effort in their jobs, and commitment to the organization have been positively correlated with the dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass, 1999; Blase et al.; Kane & Tremble).

In order to increase job satisfaction, according to Blase et al. (1986), the leader must begin by initiating structure and displaying consideration, which have been associated with higher job satisfaction, more satisfying work conditions, and less job stress. Burns (1978) noted that effective leadership involved the ability of the leader to make group members become less interested in themselves and more focused on the organization.

Although classroom instruction has the greatest school level impact on student achievement, transformational leadership has the second greatest affect according to Leithwood et al. (2010). This research was supported by Marzano, McNulty, and Waters (2005) who found that principals who improve their leadership skills and responsibilities can contribute as much as a 10 percentile point improvement to student test scores. Research has shown that successful leaders positively impact student outcomes through

their role as a transformational leader, even though the impact comes to students in indirect ways (Boyan, 1988; Dinham, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marzano et al.).

Transformational leaders have the ability to place an instructionally sound instructor in each classroom, as well as the responsibility to provide effective professional development opportunities which will continue to allow them to reach higher levels of teaching proficiency and therefore impact student achievement (Sanzo et al., 2011). Further, successful principals use data to determine which instructional interventions to put in place to increase student achievement (Sanzo et al.). As the review of literature revealed, transformational leadership goes beyond the two constructs of change agent and instructional leadership to actually enhance student achievement. Therefore, the leadership theory selected to guide this research on high poverty, high achieving schools was transformational leadership.

<center>Poverty</center>

Since nearly all public schools include students from poverty, it is important for all schools to understand the impact of poverty on achievement (Burney & Beilke, 2008). In fact, poverty levels across the nation have steadily increased following the decade of decline in the 1990s (Burney & Beilke). The National Center for Children in Poverty found that the number of children living in poverty increased by 33 percent between 2000 and 2009 (NCCP, 2011). Further, a report from the U. S. Census Bureau, published in September, 2011, announced that the number of people living in poverty has risen to approximately 46 million people, more than one-third of them being children (Shields, 2004).

Concurrently, the educational level of parents impacts the perpetuation of poverty in a family. In 1995, Banks and Banks stated "There is an enduring relation between social class and educational outcomes and those students from high-status families tend to have "high levels of educational attainment [while] low social class correlates with low levels of educational attainment and achievement" (p. 551). Parents who have less than a high school degree have 87% of the children living in poverty (NCCP, 2011). Burney and Beilke (2008) expounded on the increasing number of children in poverty by noting that affected by poverty were one third of all babies born in 2000. Furthermore, Burney and Beilke postulated that no ethnic group is immune to poverty, nor is poverty an urban problem. In 2005, 41% of fourth graders in the United States, who qualified for free or reduced meals, resided in rural areas (Burney & Beilke).

Burney and Beilke (2008), along with Rothstein (2004), shared that children entering school from a home of poverty enter with fewer foundational skills and resources to increase those skills. Consequently, educators have felt powerlessness; as the continual flow of data revealed the achievement level of students from poverty is consistently lower (Chenoweth, 2009a; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Additionally, Middleton and Petitt (2007) stated:

> The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation will eventually impact almost every public school in a negative fashion… Some [researchers] predict that anywhere from 80% to 99% of American public schools will eventually be forced to inform parents that their school did not reach all NCLB goals and is therefore designated as a "failing" school. Even if a school meets every goal except one, it still must wear the label "failing school" (p. 33).

In fact, nearly all the low performing schools across the nation are high poverty schools (Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Fortunately, through the examination of leadership behaviors on student achievement, researchers (Kannapel & Clements;

Pollard-Durodola, 2003) have found that there are principals who are making a difference with student achievement in high poverty schools. The principals who are making the difference in high performing, high poverty schools have implemented various successful strategies, organizational structures, and programs within their schools (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Mosenthal, Lipson, Tornello, Russ, & Mekkelson, 2004). In addition, Kannapel and Clements found that many high poverty schools were able to defy the trend and prove that the background of the student body does not have to determine the outcome of academic achievement. Most importantly, researchers must examine the leadership in schools that do not meet the pattern of an achievement gap, where students of poverty achieve at the same level as their peers (Chenoweth, 2009a).

Impact of Poverty on Children

Researchers (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997; Burney & Beilke, 2008; Chatterji, 2006) have shown that children of parents with higher educational levels have been read to more often, have more books in the home, have been exposed to computers, and have different conversational patterns when compared to their peers from families with less education and resources. Further, children from lower income homes may have less access to enrichment programs outside of school that would add to confidence in ability to learn new things, social skills, and background knowledge that could transfer to the academic environment (Burney & Beilke; Everson & Millsap, 2004).

Payne (2009) coined the term "situated learning" (p. 371) to refer to the initial learning that takes place for all people. It involves the language, relationships, and tasks where reasoning is done through stories and people act on the situation at hand. When children transition to formalized schooling from situated learning, there is quite a bit of

change for them to process. Reasoning is done through "laws" (Payne, 2003, p. 371) and

action comes from symbols such as numbers, letters, shapes, signs, and pictures (Payne,

2003). The background information children bring with them to school varies greatly

based on the situated learning environment from which they come (Chenoweth, 2007;

Haycock, 2001; Payne 2003, 2008, 2009; Reeves, 2001). Therefore, formal schooling

may present challenges to students living in poverty and teachers may or may not be

prepared to help these children overcome these challenges (Payne, 2008).

Additionally, children of poverty tend to have parents who have come from

poverty and their education may have never been completed (Burney & Beilke, 2008). In

2008, the National Institute for Literacy—Statistics and Resources stated that about 22%

of American adults have minimal literacy skills and are unable to read at a fifth grade

level. These findings more than double in some of the more destitute urban areas, like

Detroit where the adult literacy rate is 47% (Shields, 2004).

Further, children of poverty are more likely to have learning disabilities, lower

test scores, and be more likely to drop out during middle and high school (Missouri Kids

Count, 2010). Taylor (2005) added to the devastation by adding the grim picture by

stating that children of poverty are more likely to be retained, suspended, and expelled.

Due to the lack of background knowledge and necessary vocabulary, children living in

poverty are not prepared, which (Payne, 2003) results in significant challenges.

Therefore, the achievement gap between children of poverty and their peers

continues to widen as the number of children in poverty also increases. According to the

U.S. Census Bureau report in 2011 the official poverty rate in the United States had risen

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to 15.1 percent of the population, representing approximately 46 million people, one-third of which are children.

The Economic Achievement Gap Challenge

Children whose family has an income of 130% or less of the Federal poverty guideline qualify for free meals, while those whose families have incomes from 131% to 185% of the poverty guideline are eligible for reduced price meals (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Unfortunately, level of income does not adequately represent all of the differences between those who have resources and those who do not. The length of time in poverty, family assets, college savings, as well as the level of poverty when the child was younger than five years of age all influence achievement preparation and performance (Rothstein, 2004). When defining poverty within a school setting, it is essential to separate ethnicity and race as indicators. Burney and Beilke (2008) determined race is not a causal factor of poverty. Therefore, poverty will be viewed across all racial and ethnic groups because while not all schools are impacted by race, nearly all are impacted by poverty (Burney & Beilke; Payne, 2003).

Researchers have declared that poverty and its related social conditions (i.e., lack of access to healthcare, early childhood education, stable housing, educational resources, etc.) affect child development and student achievement prior to the child ever entering a classroom (Chenoweth, 2004; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Elmore, 2002; Haycock, 2006; Rothstein, 2004). Despite the evidence that states and the country should look to create ways to counteract the negative impact of poverty on academic success and child development, most state and federal policies have failed to do so (Elmore, 2002).

The Potential

Research has shown that leadership plays a large role in organizational change and student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Lieberman, 1995; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2000; Yukl, 2009). Chenoweth (2009a) found several low socioeconomic schools defying the odds because they "ruthlessly organize themselves around one thing: helping students learn a great deal" (p. 39). These educators examined students in the learning environment and then created structures that supported learning. This may mean these schools do not resemble traditional schools; however, what they are doing works (Chenoweth, 2009a; Haycock, 2006; Reeves, 2007).

Consequently, effective teachers find out what their students know, need to know, and find a way to get them there (Reeves, 2007). Since foundational skills are lacking in children from poverty (Payne, 2003), effective schools have had to frontload this content into their teaching in order to increase comprehension (Chenoweth, 2009a). Leaders in successful high poverty schools have found such investment in the students makes a significant difference in achievement (Chenoweth, 2009a). Furthermore, these highly effective teachers have found ways to make content relevant to all students (Reeves, 2007), while the principal builds leadership capacity (Lambert, 2003). DuFour and Marzano (2011) shared that "virtually everyone who has elected to enter the field of education has the potential to lead… keep this observation in mind; someone is looking to you right now for leadership" (p. 3).

Carter (2000) stated that most public discussion of race and academic achievement tends to portray children of poverty as victims. However, the literature (Cotton, 2003; Lieberman, 1995; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003; Sergiovanni,

2000; Yukl, 2009) revealed that this is not the case in successful high poverty schools. Principals from successful schools recognized that while children learn at different paces, it is their responsibility to ensure that all children master key subjects, especially reading, math, and fluency in the English language (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Reeves (2003) noted teachers in these schools assess students constantly, to determine whether each and every child is learning, while the principal monitors these assessments. According to Carter (2000) and Marzano et al. (2005) principals and teachers must use assessments as instruments of diagnosis, to allow educators to increase academic achievement regardless of social economic status.

After reviewing the literature, the researcher discovered three common leadership processes prevalent in successful high poverty schools. Leadership processes including ongoing formative and diagnostic assessments allow educators to meet the student where they are based on solid evidence (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Edmonds, 1979; Marzano, et. al, 2005). Another leadership process impacting student achievement according to Carter (2000), Chenoweth (2007, 2009a, 2009b), Lambert, (2003), Marzano et al., and Reeves (2001) is through differentiated professional development allowing teachers and principals to be engaged in relevant and purposeful professional growth opportunities. According to DuFour and Marzano (2011), Lambert, and Marzano et al., the leadership process of collaboration among teachers and staff has led to an increase in rigor, expectations, and academic achievement.

Further the researcher discovered four common leadership structures prevalent in successful high poverty schools. According to Chenoweth (2007, 2009a, 209b) and Reeves (2001) the first and essential leadership structure is to have a culture of high

expectations and meaningful relationships. Research (Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Reeves, 2001) shows the teacher's high (or low) expectations are what sets the cognitive tone for the students within the classroom. Additionally, Carter (2000), Chenoweth (2009a), DuFour and Marzano (2011), and Reeves (2001) agreed that all students must have hard working, committed and knowledgeable teachers in every classroom. These researchers, and others, have found the knowledge base of the teacher is irrevocably linked to the success of the students in the classroom (Haycock, 2006; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Sanzo et al., 2011). Another critical structure found in successful schools is a rigorous curriculum for all students (Carter; Chenoweth, 2007; Reeves, 2001). Often, schools separate students based upon ability which does not allow a rigorous and enriching curriculum for all (Shields, 2004). The fourth leadership structure found in successful schools is a principal who is a strong leader. The leaders found in high performing, high poverty schools believed in academic success for all students, knew how to lead in a time of change, had a clear and purposeful vision, had commitment from the teachers, and knew how to hire and retain knowledgeable teachers (Burns, 1978; Carter, 2000; Chenoweth, 2009a; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2001; Lambert, 2003; Reeves, 2001; Sanzo et al.; Yukl, 2009).

An additional common theme of successful schools was that the schools did not implement one or two things and obtain the results. They focused on a number of things simultaneously. This is what Cawelti (2000) referred to as "a sustained focus on multiple factors" (p. 2) and what Fullan (2010) called the "skinny of change – focusing on a small number of key things done with relentless consistency" (p. 12). In order to achieve the critical mass necessary to affect change, schools of poverty that created large enough

gains in student performance to be deemed successful must engage in "systemic change" (Cawelti, p. 2) that resulted in a transformed school environment.

Summary

Aristotle (1998) once said we could demonstrate the possible by studying the actual. Therefore, investigating successful schools with high incidence of poverty, and examining the leadership processes and structures implemented that have led to their success will be essential for educators. DuFour and Marzano (2011) stated that educators are doing more than has ever been asked in history of educators with less funding than has been given in the past. Consequently, public pressure to perform at unprecedented rates has building and district leadership scrambling to find out what can be done to increase student achievement in order to meet federal and state mandates (Chenoweth, 2009b; DuFour & Marzano).

After an extensive review of the literature, the researcher found transformational leadership to be the most effective during a time of change such as is necessary under the federal and state mandates of NCLB and MSIP (Casey, 2005; Cotton, 2003; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; MODESE, 2011; USDOE, 2007). Transformational leaders serve as change agents while working diligently to inspire followers to find solutions to the wicked problem (Grint, 2005) posed by the high stakes accountability created through the NCLB Act (Burns, 1978; Fullan, 2001; Yukl, 2009). Pressure to raise student achievement has caused educators to forgo entrance to the field of administration in high poverty schools (Lyons & Algozzine, 2006). Thus it is important to examine the practices of successful principals who have elected to remain in the field during this turbulent time and examine what works to raise achievement for all students (Sanzo et al., 2011).

Although poverty has been on the rise in Missouri, successful schools with a high incidence of poverty can be found (Missouri Kids Count, 2010; MODESE, 2011). Carter (2000) referred to the failure of public schools to teach poor students a "national tragedy and a national disgrace" (p. 1). However, the review of literature revealed effective leadership processes and structures that have been implemented in high poverty schools and are replicable in schools failing to meet success under NCLB (Carter; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Reeves, 2006). The success in such buildings has taken diligent and intentional efforts, along with hiring skilled and committed teachers, and implementing strong transformational leadership practices all of which can be replicated in schools failing to find success (Carter; Chenoweth, 2009b; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Haycock, 2006; Kannapel & Clements; Reeves, 2001).

Study after study proved that success can be found in even the most impoverished community (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Carter, 2000; Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Edmonds, 1979; Haycock, 2006; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Reeves, 2001, 2006). It is not the brick and mortar that make the difference. It is the people who are committed to doing what is best for the children that have the power to influence the educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the review of literature made it clear that no single program has been identified as being what made the difference in the high performing, high poverty schools. However, the review did identify commonalities in leadership processes and structures among the schools that will serve as the foundation for the case study. By focusing on what these successful schools have done in some of the worst conditions, valuable insight for improving performance of all schools across the United States can be

gained (Carter, 2000; Chenoweth, 2009b; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Haycock, 2006; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Reeves, 2001). What appears to be missing as leaders seek answers is a coherent, evidence-based, and equity-oriented solution to the persistent lack of success for children of poverty (Shields, 2004).

Contained in Chapter Three are descriptions of the research design and methodology. The discussion includes the questions guiding the study, the participants, and a summary. Included in the discussion is the rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach and support for the design. The data collected and analyzed from the study are presented in Chapter Four. Contained in Chapter Five are the findings and conclusions, along with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Gordon (2004) posited that one of the most "critical" (p. 21) problems facing the

nation and its schools is the "persistent association of academic achievement with

students' socioeconomic divisions" (p. 21). As critical as this problem has become, a

clear and concise solution has eluded educators who are required to ensure each child

attain the level of proficient as set forth in the NCLB legislation (Reeves, 2001).

Therefore, this "problem of practice" (Creswell, 2007, p. 135) is in the forefront of the

minds of principals across the country (Gawerecki, 2003; Grove, 2004; Reeves, 2006,

2007, 2009). After an extensive review of the literature, the researcher found

transformational leadership to be the most effective during a time of change such as is

necessary under the federal and state mandates of NCLB and MSIP (Casey, 2005;

Cotton, 2003; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Therefore, this

study was conducted using the conceptual lens of transformational leadership.

Accountability for how each child in a school performs academically has become

the focus of education across the United States (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). In 2001, the

level of accountability for schools receiving Title I funds was significantly increased by

the legislation of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization of 2001*

popularly known as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (Fowler, 2004; Wenglinsky, 2004).

NCLB calls for schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), meaning that the

scores of students on standardized tests are expected to improve incrementally each year

until 2014, when all students must achieve at the proficient or advanced levels (USDOE,

2007). Not only is the average score of the student body expected to improve; so too are the scores of various subgroups in the student body, including economically disadvantaged students (USDOE, 2007).

A review of current literature revealed that principals are being held accountable for low performing schools (Kahlenberg & Wasow, 2003). Consequently, school leaders are unsure of how to continue to raise scores for all students. NCLB has identified subgroups of students in the areas of ethnicity, students receiving special education services, English Language Learners, and socioeconomic status (USDOE, 2007). With the identification of subgroups, data on state standardized tests have shown that students in various subgroups are not achieving at the same rate as their peers (Haycock, 2001; Reeves, 2001). Hence, an achievement gap has been identified between subgroups and has raised the level of concern among educators. Without the knowledge of how to close the gap, educational leaders will be unable to achieve the goal set forth by NCLB of having all students achieve at the highest two levels (proficient and advanced) on state standardized tests (Chenoweth, 2009b).

Students of poverty, identified as eligible for free or reduced meals, are not meeting the academic achievement levels of their peers, therefore the achievement gap continues to widen (Haycock, 2001, 2006; McCombs & Whisler, 1997). Principals are seeking leadership processes and structures being implemented in schools with a high incidence of poverty, identified as serving over 50% of students receiving free or reduced meals, finding success in closing the achievement gap (Brady, 2003; Chenoweth, 2009b).

Unfortunately, after several years under the NCLB, educational leaders have not observed conclusive evidence that the legislation has assisted schools with marginalized

communities in turning their failing schools around (Brady, 2003). The reauthorization of NCLB is underway and leaders of schools with a high incidence of poverty are looking for guidance and support in how to improve their academic standing, thus it is essential that successful schools be examined and their best practices shared. The challenge for educators is to find methods that bring about and document continued improvement (Laitsch, 2003).

A comprehensive review of the literature provided evidence that principals are not aware of the leadership processes and structures that are needed in schools serving a high incidence of poverty. Thus the researcher sought to delve into the leadership processes and structures implemented in a successful school with a high incidence of poverty meeting federal and state accountability mandates as identified by NCLB and the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) guidelines (MODESE, 2011; MSIP, 2004). Further, this study generated valuable information for principals of schools struggling to meet accountability mandates. Accordingly, included in Chapter Three are the research questions, the rationale for the use of a narrative case study approach, and the limitations therein. Also included are a description of design controls, the participants, a discussion of the data collection and instrumentation, procedures of data analysis, and a brief summary.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

According to Hancock and Algozzine (2006) researchers should allow the review of literature to direct the identification of relevant research questions. This process allowed the researcher to determine whether the proposed research added to the existing body of knowledge. One overarching concept continued to be at the forefront of the mind

of the researcher throughout the interpretation of the literature: How do leaders in successful schools of poverty impact student achievement? The following questions surfaced through the review of literature which further guided this inquiry:

1. What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement of students from poverty?

2. What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students from poverty?

3. How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed how they behave in their school?

4. How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of the principal?

Rationale for the Use of a Narrative Case Study

Prior to settling on a qualitative approach, the researcher investigated the benefits and drawbacks as opposed to a quantitative or mixed methods approach. A strictly quantitative approach would have removed subjectivity as well as potentially critical input and insight from participants (Creswell, 2007). However, the researcher sought to unveil the story to be told in a school with a high incidence of poverty that consistently meets federal and state accountability mandates for student achievement. Therefore, the researcher observed and interacted within the same walls as the successful students and staff of the school. The ability to focus on one site selected by specific criteria identified through a review of literature enabled the researcher to thoroughly examine the case in

order to most effectively answer the research questions. As this study investigated a problem of practice prevalent in schools across the country, a narrative case study provided a holistic view of the natural school setting while also providing input from several stakeholders (Creswell; Willis et al., 2010).

Conversely, a mixed methods approach was considered that would have included both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Merriam, 1998). Such an approach would allow for the use of qualitative data therefore examining participant responses in an unbiased way (Creswell, 2007; Merriam; Yin, 2003). Further, quantitative researchers seek statistical significance in order to support or refute the hypothesis generated (Creswell; Merriam). The research topic did not allow for a specific hypothesis as the researcher sought input from participants in a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty. Without the interviews, focus groups, document and artifact analysis, and onsite observations, the holistic picture would not be created for the reader. Additionally, an existing survey instrument was not identified that had been previously used in order to establish content validity (Creswell).

Therefore, the research design selected for this study was that of a narrative case study. Creswell (2007) cited a narrative case study as one where the researcher examines a single case in-depth and shares the information with the reader in the format of a story. Using a narrative case study allowed the researcher to explore how the participants interacted within the social situation and the meaning gleaned from such interactions (Merriam, 1998).

Answering the how and what questions of this study was best addressed using a qualitative design approach (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Identifying a specific Missouri

school (the case) allowed for a deeper examination of the principal in the natural setting, while gathering data from a myriad of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell; Yin). Since qualitative research is an inquiry process used to increase the understanding of a social or human problem based upon a holistic picture that is created by the researcher through their words a narrative case study was deemed appropriate (Creswell). Further, the case study provided an avenue through which the researcher was able to internalize the leadership processes and structures implemented by the principal in the natural setting of the school (Creswell; Elmore, 2002; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Another benefit of a case study is the exploration of a single entity or phenomenon within a timeframe during which detailed information is collected from a number of sources with a variety of data collection procedures (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). As with traditional case studies, a variety of data collection methods were selected as useful for this study. Through observation, document and artifact review, interviews, and focus groups the researcher gleaned insight into the daily lives of teachers, parents, and other stakeholders who work with children of poverty (Creswell; Merriam; Yin). Being onsite was essential for capturing anecdotal data, such as strategies educators and leaders implement, which are often things they are unaware of doing, that have made an impact and can be observed and recorded in field notes (Creswell; Emerson et al., 1995). However, limitations of a case study exist and must be acknowledged (Merriam).

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

One limitation was the amount of time needed in order to delve deep into the case and acquire the rich data required of an effective case study (Merriam, 1998). As well as

the amount of time required, another time limitation was that of the constraint of time of both the participants and researcher. Another limitation occurred due to the research taking place in the natural setting of the participants, whereby the researcher may be seen as invasive.

To address the limitations, the researcher implemented multiple methods of data collection such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis in order to assure reliability and validity of the data as well as to aid in triangulation of the data (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, member-checking helped with the accuracy of the qualitative findings (Creswell). Furthermore, the researcher utilized the literature review to determine how to purposefully select the participants for the study, rather than selecting them through a random sampling (Creswell). Criteria, further detailed in the next section, allowed for the researcher to identify a site based on best practices according to the literature.

Participants

The selection of the specific school that became the subject of this study was purposeful. Purposeful selection, according to Creswell (2007) and Yin (2003), occurs when criteria are identified prior to the selection process and therefore limits cases to those meeting the constraints while also being considered as one in which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998). A purposeful sample provided the researcher with a specific elementary school meeting the criteria of a high achieving school with a high incidence of poverty that had consistently met federal and state accountability mandates as identified in the Missouri School Directory 2011-2012 (MODESE, 2011).

In addition, purposeful sampling of the 12 participants took place to ensure an accurate representation of stakeholders in the organization (Creswell, 2007). Without a purposeful selection, valuable input from the staff might not be represented, as is the possibility with a random selection. Therefore, the selection of the five teaching staff was designed to represent those who actually test students in grades three through five as well as others who do not but were selected by the principal who believed the faculty would contribute to the overall picture of what has been implemented and has led to the success of all students. The principal was instrumental in selecting a small group of five parents from a variety of socioeconomic levels, adding insight that was invaluable to the study.

Further, when a researcher implements purposeful sampling, the sample is selected, or limited, by constraints. Yin (2003) stated that when a researcher selects the case it should represent a critical test to existing theory, which purposeful sampling was accomplished through a process of filtering to find such a case. In this case, the researcher utilized filters to narrow the subject selection to those within the parameters defined by the researcher as most appropriate for this study (Yin). The set of filters, determined through the review of literature, included student achievement, level of poverty, and consistent leadership (Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a; Haycock, 2001, 2006; Reeves, 2001, 2007).

The first filter was applied in order to identify schools in Missouri with a high incidence of poverty. A high incidence of poverty is identified as having at least 50% of the students qualify to receive free or reduced meals. The socioeconomic level of students was identified through NCLB and MSIP data reported by the district and thus was the tool utilized to measure poverty (MODESE, 2011; USDOE, 2007).

The second filter was applied to the schools identified through the first filter in order to identify schools that met federal and state accountability mandates in the area of student achievement. Each year the level of achievement required to be considered as meeting AYP increases incrementally; though schools can meet AYP through a variety of calculation factors (USDOE, 2007). For this filter, school data from the three most recent years was analyzed. The school must have met AYP and had at least 65% of students from poverty achieving in the highest two levels of achievement: proficient and advanced during the past three years.

The process of finding a school identified through the first two filters and with a leader who had been in place for a minimum of five years was the third and final filter narrowed the options considerably. However, since research suggested that continued improvement rests largely on the shoulders of the principal (Cotton, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005), the third filter was vital to the research as it speaks to the value of having a transformational leader in place over time. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) stated that leaders should remain for more than five years when their improvement efforts are doing well.

<center>Data Collection and Instrumentation</center>

Anytime research is conducted, ethical considerations must be a part of the process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This research was performed under the authority of the University of Missouri's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). One key to performing an ethical study is through the informed consent form (see Appendix B), which must first be approved by the IRB. Before contacting any participants in the study, the permission of the gatekeeper was sought and obtained (see Appendix A). Prior to

participating in the study, each participant was asked to read and sign the informed

consent form with the understanding that his or her participation was voluntary and could

be terminated at any time during the study (Creswell, 2007). Participants were allowed to

ask any questions regarding the study and the researcher answered questions

satisfactorily before signatures were obtained.

Instrumentation consisted of two semi-structured interview protocols conducted

with the building principal and researcher at one session and a central office

administrator at a second session. Follow up phone interviews were scheduled when

further clarification was needed as the researcher transcribed the interviews. Additional

instrumentation involved two semi-structured focus group protocols conducted in two

sessions at the school building. One session included six teachers from the building

interacting with the researcher and one another. The second session involved parents of

diverse socioeconomic backgrounds interacting with the researcher and one another. The

questions of both the interview protocols and the focus group protocols were designed to

gain the perspectives of the stakeholders of the building and district regarding the

leadership style of the principal, the transformational leadership processes and structures

that have been implemented that have led to the increase in the academic achievement of

students from poverty, and what the principal considers about his or her own leadership

style and the impact it has had on increasing achievement for students from poverty.

Interview and Focus Group Protocols

Interviews and focus groups were two of the qualitative methods the researcher

utilized to collect data in order to better understand the lived experiences of others

(Merriam, 1998). Yin (2003) argued that although more time consuming, interviews and

focus groups provided rich and descriptive data that would have been harder to extract from questionnaires. Additionally, interviews and focus groups allowed the researcher to ask clarifying questions that were revealed through the process of document analysis (Emerson et al., 1995; Gay & Airasian, 2000; Heppner & Heppner, 2004; Merriam). According to Krueger and Casey (2008), finding participants with a great wealth of knowledge about the site for interviews and focus groups is where researchers learn the most about key issues for the purpose of the research.

For one of the interviews, the principal was purposefully selected, through the filter of a principal being in place for over five years, from a school meeting AYP accountability mandates for their students in the subgroup of poverty over a period of time. The AYP data were obtained from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE, 2011). The second interviewee was a central office who works closely with the selected principal and school and therefore had knowledge of the leadership style of the principal and the impact it had on the academic achievement of the students. The researcher contacted both the principal and central office administrator directly to arrange the interview date and time. The interviews consisted of fifteen open-ended questions, identified through the review of literature, and lasted approximately one hour. After the initial interviews, the researcher was able to follow up with the principal and central office administrator by phone and email to further explore emerging themes.

For the focus groups, the teachers and parents were purposefully selected by the principal and researcher to provide a comprehensive group consisting of a variety of members. The focus group interviews took place with the researcher working with the principal to coordinate the most appropriate time for both groups. Each focus group

consisted of four to five members. A benefit to a focus group is the opportunity for participants to continue discussing an answer after hearing a colleague's response as it may have reminded them of additional information they might not have recalled without the colleague present (Creswell, 2007; Emerson et al., 1995). The focus group interview consisted of six (teachers) and six (parents). The semi-structured questions were asked by the researcher and lasted approximately one hour.

Prior to each interview and focus group, a letter of confirmation, the interview questions (see Appendix C), and letters of informed consent (see Appendix B) were sent to each participant. This allowed for confirmation of the date and time as well as providing time for reflection on the questions they would be asked during the session. This too allowed the opportunity to remind participants of their voluntary participation and to ensure them of confidentiality.

During the interview, the researcher used audio recording to capture the dialogue while taking notes of body language, gestures, and interactions between colleagues. This process proved valuable as the transcription of the audio recording would have been more difficult had notes not been available to what cannot be captured on audio tapes. As Emerson et al. (1995) explained the purpose of the field notes during interviews and focus groups is to allow for the reactions of the participant to be recorded by the researcher to serve as visual cues and aid the transcription process.

Following the interviews and focus groups, the researcher transcribed the audio tapes. Member-checking was conducted to verify the accuracy of the transcripts and confirmed by each participant and increase the content validity (Creswell, 2007). The participants were given instructions to contact the researcher to make necessary

corrections within the prearranged time frame. The use of coding prior to publication aided in confidentiality and increased the confidence of the participants in the researcher (Creswell; Merriam, 1998). Protecting the participants also enhanced the frankness of the participants' statements.

On-Site Observations

Two full day visits to the site provided ample time for the researcher to obtain a better picture of how the school operates on a daily basis. Specifically, the research observed principal, teacher interactions, classrooms, and departmental meetings. Field notes from observations were utilized as a design control in this study to balance the effects of researcher bias (see Appendix D). Additionally, field notes provided specific documentation of the actual observations, thoughts, and impressions made during each step in the research process (Emerson et al., 1995). The researcher took notes regarding various aspects of the interviews and focus groups as well the individual thoughts and perspectives throughout the process. Though observations were not the primary data collection technique, they were used to enhance the overall picture the researcher intended to create.

Document Analysis

Qualitative researchers rely on a variety of documents to supplement and connect data from their work. In this case, the researcher utilized both internal and external documents to supplement the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Examples of external documents which can be found on the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website are the Missouri School Improvement Program Review of the case study school, Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) results,

as well as the socioeconomic level as defined by the school's free and reduced meals

percentage (MODESE, 2011; Yin). Internal documents included the school's schedule,

school improvement plan, professional development plan, and faculty meeting agendas,

professional learning community collaboration logs, and staff and student handbooks.

Such documents were collected and analyzed in order to build the case background and

aided processes of interviews, focus groups, and recording field notes and observations

(Yin).

In addition to documents, qualitative researchers also rely on artifacts to assist

with creating the holistic picture of the case being studied (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003).

Artifacts utilized in this study included school records, photographs, yearbooks,

newspaper articles, website archives, and parent communication. The review of artifacts

prior to visiting the site helped create a clearer picture of the case being studied before the

researcher stepped through the doors.

Additionally, documents and artifacts were coded (see Appendix E) and added to

the appropriate category to verify the data from interviews, focus groups, and

observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). The identity of the

participants was concealed through the use of the coding system thereby guaranteeing

participant confidentiality. Furthermore, an attempt was be made to collect ancillary data

from a variety of school documents, artifacts, and observations (Merriam, 1998; Yin) to

provide for triangulation of the data (Fowler, 2004).

<div align="center">Data Analysis Procedures</div>

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Creswell (2007) advise qualitative researchers to

develop an appropriate system to sort data. The researcher used multiple devices to

record interviews and focus groups as well as documentation including field notes to aid with coding the data (Merriam, 1998). The process of coding includes the identification of each item in the research and then sorting them into mutually exclusive themes (Creswell; Emerson et al., 1995; Merriam). The process of codification must be done in a thorough and logical manner (Merriam). Therefore the researcher served as the sole interviewer to increase consistency throughout the interview and focus group process. Yin (2003) affirmed that a researcher can increase content validity through the use of multiple resources which was accomplished through the analysis of the interviews, focus groups, documents, and observations.

Further, the ethnographic field note process outlined by Emerson et al. (1995) provided a process for each document, transcript, participant, artifact, and item to be numbered in a concise manner for more accurate coding (see Appendix E). Through the process of the transcription of the interviews and focus groups the researcher identified each participant by a code (see Appendix E), along with a code for each question (see Appendix C) in order to assist with accuracy in the data analysis (Creswell, 2007). Following the transcription process, participants were given the opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy as was stated in the informed consent form, this led to increased validity of the responses. Once all transcripts were verified, the researcher reviewed all transcripts in their entirety for a holistic overview (Creswell).

The data evolved into patterns which the researcher then sorted into categories (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). As the researcher sought to answer the research questions through the analysis of the data, the questions helped with the analysis process and codification. As all data must be sorted into categories, the process of creating the

categories should be exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Merriam). The data collected

from observations, documents, artifacts, interviews, and focus groups allowed the

researcher to identify categories which assisted with triangulation of the data for

verification purposes (Creswell; Fowler, 2004).

The process of data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the study.

Though the interviews and focus groups took place after observations and document

analysis, they were used to help accurately capture the essence of what actually took

place to increase student achievement through directive questions. As the categories

formed, the relationship between each emerged helping to further refine the data

collection (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998).

Researcher's Biases and Assumptions

The ability to rely on the results of the study is dependent upon the consistency

with which the collection and analysis of the data was completed (Krueger & Casey,

2008; Yin, 2003). To ensure consistency, the researcher led all interviews and focus

groups as well as performing the analysis of documents and artifacts. Validity will be

confirmed through the ability to replicate the process in schools with similar demographic

and socioeconomic standing through the use of multiple sources of evidence (Creswell,

2007; Emerson et al., 1995; Yin).

Another aspect that must be remembered is the fact that the researcher sets the

tone for interviews and must be fully present in the process (Yin, 2003). While

interviewing the participants, the researcher utilized an audio recording device to ensure

nothing was missed, leaving the attention of the researcher fully on the participant(s) to

document field notes. Further, this allowed the researcher to ask clarifying questions as

the interview proceeded to delve deeper into the knowledgebase of the participant(s) (Creswell, 2007). Though serving as both the interviewer and researcher has potential limitations to the study, being aware of this aspect throughout the process corrected for researcher bias. Data from the interviews and focus groups were used to triangulate information obtained from the documents and observations to answer the research questions.

Certain assumptions have been made regarding this study. One such assumption is that the data collected from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents reflected honest and accurate depictions of the practices of the participants. Ultimately, all research is concerned with "producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 1998, p. 198). Another assumption was that the participants were forthright in their responses. Through the transcript analysis, the researcher had the participants confirm their statements through the verification process of member-checking in an effort to eliminate inaccuracies (Merriam). Merriam defined member-checking as the process of participants verifying responses as transcribed by the researcher.

The researcher implemented a variety of strategies in an effort to ensure trustworthiness of the data. Creswell (2007) defined trustworthiness as the process by which quality was assured in the study. One strategy implemented through the interview and focus group process was that the researcher was the sole interviewer, thus ensuring consistency (Creswell). Moreover, the construct validity relates to the integrity and competence of the researcher and the evidence (Merriam, 1998). Being aware of body language, eye contact, and other information during the interviews and focus groups

added to the depiction of the case. Thus, the use of audio recording to keep the attention of the interviewer on the participant(s) was deemed beneficial. The researcher also ensured trustworthiness by increasing reliability, the ability to replicate findings in other schools (Creswell).

Summary

Contained in Chapter Three was information related to the design and methodology used to guide the examination of the perceptions of teachers, parents, a central office administrator, and the building principal as to which of his/her transformational leadership processes and structures have led to the increased academic achievement of the students of poverty in their school. The rationale for selecting a single case student was presented as the best for the information the researcher sought to examine. The process for selecting the population was described, as well as the data collection and instrumentation. The procedures for data analysis followed. Finally, the researcher's biases and assumptions were presented.

Included in Chapter Four is a presentation of the data analysis and the research findings discovered through the case study method identified in Chapter Three. Included in Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings, conclusions drawn from the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

High academic achievement by students in marginalized communities is generally not what occurs in the majority of public schools across the United States. However, some schools have found success with helping their students achieve, regardless of socioeconomic status. Researchers espouse the achievement gap between children of poverty and their peers continues to widen (Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Haycock, 2001; Reeves, 2006, 2007), regardless of the additional accountability of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. The accountability mandates have brought the subgroup of socioeconomic status to the attention of educators, without providing clear direction on how to change the gap between subgroups and that of their peers (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Elmore, 2002).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to add information to the existing body of knowledge that educators across the United States can use to increase the academic achievement of all students as is required by federal legislation (USDOE, 2007). Through an examination of a high poverty, high performing school, the researcher identified leadership processes and structures implemented that led to the academic achievement of all students, particularly those from poverty. Viewed through the lens of transformational leadership, the researcher analyzed the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the leadership processes and structures of the principal to provide useful information for schools failing to meet such high levels of academic success for their students from poverty.

Presented in this chapter is a review of the study design, data collection methods, conceptual underpinnings, research questions, and process of data analysis. Additionally, a description of the setting and an introduction of the educator participants will be presented.

Study Design

The narrative case study (Creswell, 2007) allowed the researcher to explore in-depth how individuals interact within the social environment and the meaning and perceptions they have (Merriam, 1998) while examining those perceptions in regard to the leadership processes and structures. The case was identified through a series of filters in order to collect open-ended data (Creswell) by "captur[ing] multiple realities that are not easily quantifiable... [through a] holistic approach to information collection in [a] natural setting" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 72). Each participant was purposefully selected in order to ensure a variety of grade levels (teachers) and socioeconomic levels (parents) were represented with the purpose of collecting data representative of all stakeholders.

Data Collection Methods

Prior to conducting the on-site interviews and focus groups, the researcher obtained permission from the district gatekeeper to conduct research and to have access to the stakeholders of the school. The researcher then completed the University Institutional Review Board application, which included providing information about the selection process and purpose of the study. Following approval from the University of Missouri-Columbia (see Appendix A), the researcher traveled to the site to begin collecting data. Informed consent forms were signed by all educators and parent

participants (see Appendix B) prior to observations, interviews, and focus groups.

Through the process of interviewing the principal, key documents and artifacts were

identified and offered to the researcher as being relevant to the study at hand. Following

the interviews and focus groups, participants received a verbatim transcript of their

participation in the interview or focus group and were given the opportunity to provide

feedback through the procedure of member-checking (Creswell, 2007). The data were

triangulated through member-checked audio taped interviews and focus groups,

document and artifact analysis, and field notes (Emerson et al., 1995) of recorded

interactions among educators and students or colleagues.

Research Questions

Based on the conceptual underpinnings, the following research questions were

identified to guide this study:

1. What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive

    the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement

    of students from poverty?

2. What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has

    implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students

    from poverty?

3. How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed

    how they behave in their school?

4. How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of

    the principal?

After the field observations and participant interviews and focus groups, the data were analyzed to determine themes and categories.

Process of Data Analysis

Observations and field notes, gathered during each visit to the site, provided direct perceptual data. Individual interviews were conducted with two administrators, one at the building level and the other at the central office level. Two separate focus groups were convened and conducted onsite with two groups: teachers (n= 5) and parents (n=5). Each participant received information about the research study, and an informed consent with a description of his or her rights. Audiotapes, made during each interview and focus group, were transcribed verbatim. The researcher shared copies of the transcription with the participants, asking them to verify the accuracy of their words and intent. Analysis of each interview and focus group began following verification from the participants.

All data were examined and assigned the following codes (see Appendix E): Further codes included the following: administrator participant 1 (A1); administrator participant 2 (A2); educator participant 1 (E1); educator participant 2 (E2); educator participant 3 (E3); educator participant 4 (E4); educator participant 5 (E5); parent participant 1 (P1); parent participant 2 (P2); parent participant 3 (P3); parent participant 4 (P4); parent participant 5 (P5); interview 1 (I1); interview 2 (I2); focus group 1 (FG1); focus group 2 (FG2); field observation 1(FO1); field observation 2 (FO2). Additional codes included the following: poverty (POV); charisma (CH); inspirational motivation (IM); intellectual stimulation (IS); and individual consideration (IC).

Setting

The site for this narrative case study was a rural elementary school in Missouri, which will be heretofore referred to as Silver Lake Elementary School (pseudonym), which was the only elementary school in the Silver Lake School District (pseudonym). Silver Lake Elementary School is a PK-5 school of approximately 250 students. The student population was over 50% of students qualifying for free or reduced meals. Within that subgroup, over 65% achieved at the top two levels of achievement on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP).

The school district is in the center of a 300 square mile area serving five counties in the heart of Missouri. The district had been consolidated from four smaller districts into one larger district serving fewer than seven hundred students. Families moved to this district with the hope of providing a solid educational foundation for their children. In recent years, the enrollment had been on the decline due to the length of the commute many parents had to make in order to find employment in nearby cities. Due to the school being a significant distance from most residences, transportation is provided to and from school. Employment opportunities, other than farming, lie outside the county of the school. The school, located on a rural highway, is connected via a covered exterior walkway, to the middle and high schools. Gates surround the playground area due to the proximity to the busy highway. An effort to implement security had been started as was evident by a set of security doors and keypad, though the keypad had never been activated due to the security company filing for bankruptcy.

Upon entering the elementary school, the office was easily accessible and displayed various accomplishments of the children. Each staff member the researcher

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encountered was friendly and accommodating. The building had been built a few decades earlier, and the researcher saw the school pride in the cleanliness and faces of each staff member. The principal gave the researcher a tour of the premises providing an explanation of when each addition was built and how the space was repurposed to maximize learning for all.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

A total of five teachers, one building principal, one central office administrator, and five parents agreed to participate in the study. Of the teachers, one taught kindergarten, two taught third grade, one taught fourth grade, and one taught Title I mathematics. As the following profiles will illustrate, each participant had students (a child or children) enrolled at Silver Lake Elementary School at some point in time, if not at the time of their participation.

Administrator 1: The first participant, Greg Parsons (pseudonym), was the principal at Silver Lake Elementary School. In addition to serving as the building principal, he also served as the middle school principal as well as the director of transportation. Greg was in his fourteenth year of education, and all but three years were served as building principal at Silver Lake Elementary School. Prior to becoming the building principal, Greg served as a fourth grade teacher in a district in close proximity to Silver Lake Elementary School. Though Greg only served three years in the classroom, he was well rounded through his education, mentoring, experience in the community, and membership in professional associations.

Administrator 2: The second participant, Dr. Ken Woodson (pseudonym), was the superintendent at the Silver Lake School District. Ken was in his twenty-second year of

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education, and only the last seven years were served in the Silver Lake School District. Prior to serving in his administrative role for the Silver Lake School District, Ken taught middle school science for five years in a nearby school district. He then served as the principal of the middle school in the same district. Before leaving for the Silver Lake School District, Ken served for three years as the superintendent in the same district in which he taught and served as a principal. Ken grew up in the Silver Lake community and as a result, he was glad to return to his home town to serve as superintendent.

Educator 1: The first teacher participant, Heidi Mohler (pseudonym), taught kindergarten at Silver Lake Elementary School. Heidi was in her tenth year as an educator. She taught second grade for a half year and the remaining 9.5 years as a kindergarten teacher, all at Silver Lake Elementary School. Heidi grew up in the town and graduated from the Silver Lake School District. She said she wanted to remain in the town she grew up in because it made such a difference in her life. Heidi shared, "There is just something about being able to give back to the community I grew up in and that I have chosen to have my kids grow up in makes me feel like I am paying it forward."

Educator 2: The second teacher participant, Bonnie Hoefer (pseudonym), taught third grade at Silver Lake Elementary School. Bonnie was in her sixth year as an educator. Prior to teaching third grade, she taught second grade for four years. She taught her first year in a larger school district. Her second year in education she moved to Silver Lake Elementary School to be closer to her family. When the researcher asked how she felt about the difference between the two schools and if she would prefer to move back to the larger district, Bonnie responded with, "Working in a larger district without such a

personal touch makes me realize how blessed I am to be here. I know I make a difference every day for our kids."

Educator 3: The third teacher participant, Jenny Wink (pseudonym), taught fourth grade at Silver Lake Elementary School. Jenny was in her seventeenth year as an educator. Prior to teaching fourth grade at Silver Lake Elementary School, Jenny spent two years in a neighboring district as a first and then a second grade teacher. She looped with her students and said that she learned more about her students and families than she thought possible. Jenny stated, "All I had to say to a child was that I could call home and they straightened right up. Another benefit was the relationships with parents. I loved that!" When Jenny moved to Silver Lake Elementary School she taught first grade for ten years before moving to fourth grade. "I have found my niche, this is where I was meant to teach."

Educator 4: The fourth teacher participant, Angie Harris (pseudonym), taught third grade at Silver Lake Elementary School. Angie was in her thirteenth year as an educator. Prior to moving to Silver Lake Elementary School, Angie taught fifth grade for two years in a nearby school district. When Angie moved to the Silver Lake School District, she taught sixth-grade science for four years at the middle school. When the opening for third grade at Silver Lake Elementary School became available, she applied. While telling about her background, Angie shared, "I knew the principal was new and doing great things, I wanted to be a part of that. I have never considered going back to the middle school… I made the right choice for me and my students."

Educator 5: The fifth educator, Edward Teeter (pseudonym), taught Title I at Silver Lake Elementary School. Edward was the veteran being in his twenty-seventh year

as an educator. Prior to teaching Title I math, Edward had experience teaching second through fifth grades as well as middle school math. Edward had the most diverse teaching experience of the educators and understood the appreciation of what Silver Lake Elementary School offers students and their families. Edward stated, "The teachers in this school have the compassion and motivation to do what is best for our kids every day. I have never taught in a place like this, it is refreshing. I will proudly retire here."

Parent 1: The first parent participant, Suzanne Smith (pseudonym), had one child attending Silver Lake Elementary School and one child at Silver Lake Middle School. Suzanne was born and raised in the community and was more than willing to join the focus group process. She was able to bring to the group the educational experience she had as a child at Silver Lake Elementary School compared to that of her children. Though Suzanne manages her family farm, she made a commitment to the school to volunteer one day a week. Suzanne shared, "If I can't find time to help the folks who educate my children, I am doing something wrong."

Parent 2: The second parent participant, Maureen Henry (pseudonym), had two children attending Silver Lake Elementary School. Maureen moved to the Silver Lake area when she married her husband, whom she met during her first (and only) semester of college. Her husband grew up attending the Silver Lake Schools and returned when college did not work out. He was able to find employment in a city with a one hour commute each way. Maureen stayed at home to raise the children. As jobs are sparse in the rural area, she and her husband chose to live with less so she could stay home. Though they only have one vehicle, Maureen tried to be at the functions of her children. One day a month her husband drops her off and she works at the school doing various

tasks for the teachers such as listening to children read, making photocopies, and working with children who need one-on-one attention. She rides the bus home with her children since her husband does not return to town until evening. Maureen elaborated, "When I ride the bus with my children, I feel like a kid again. I know the day will come when they do not want Mom riding the bus, but the teachers need me so I do it."

Parent 3: The third parent, Patrick Adams (pseudonym), had three children attending Silver Lake Elementary School. Patrick taught math at Silver Lake High School which was located on the campus with the elementary and middle schools, so he was able to join the focus group on his plan period. A product of the Silver Lake Schools himself, Patrick was excited to share his experiences not only as a parent, but also as a teacher. "I am fortunate because I see the end product. The teachers here [at the elementary school] get kids who can't read or write; I get to see what their hard work creates."

Parent 4: The fourth parent, Marc Orr (pseudonym), had two children attending Silver Lake Elementary School, along with one attending the middle school and one at the high school. Marc owned the local gas station and was fortunate to be able to be close to his children rather than having an hour commute. Marc's wife had abandoned her children and husband for life in a bigger city. Marc took it in stride saying, "It is her loss… our kids have done so well here that it would have been criminal for me to follow her. There are tradeoffs for every decision… I think I made the best choice by my kids."

Parent 5: The fifth parent, Tom Elsey (pseudonym), had one child attending Silver Lake Elementary School and one attending Silver Lake High School. Tom moved to the community with his wife, who grew up there. Though Tom was fortunate enough to work from home three days a week, he had a one hour commute on the other two days

of the week. His wife was a teacher at the middle school but was unable to join the focus group due to her schedule. Tom said, "If my wife will work here, this is where I want my kids to go to school. She knows education and I don't."

<p style="text-align:center">Themes</p>

Using the data set and the predetermined codes, the following two themes emerged: (1) Educating the Whole Child; with the subthemes of: (a) providing basic needs; (b) academic interventions based on achievement data; (c) an emphasis on reading; (d) extended academic time; and (e) relationships; and (2) High Expectations of Stakeholders; with the subthemes of: (a) consistent student expectations; (b) increased staff accountability; and (c) community involvement.

<p style="text-align:center">*Educating the Whole Child*</p>

Providing Basic Needs. Within the theme of Educating the Whole Child, many stories emerged of educators and community members whose ability to identify the basic and higher order needs of the children had a profound impact on student attitude and effort at school. When Greg Parsons accepted the job of the Silver Lake Elementary School principal he knew that the basic needs of children had to be provided. He decided early on to initiate a program called *No Child Left Behind at Christmas*:

> Basically we asked businesses and folks around town to donate money for the cause. We sent a letter to our neediest families asking for clothing sizes. I assumed we might get $1,000… that first year we got $5,400, and it has pretty much stayed there each year for the past seven years. We buy for about 100 kids spending $50 to $60 per kid. Five to seven teachers and I take our shopping list to the outlet mall. We buy mostly clothes and one toy per child. We bring everything back and teachers come by on their plan or any free time they have and wrap and bag the gifts. Parents come by discreetly and get them and take them home. The kids think it's either Santa or the parents. This just goes to show the support of the community.

The teachers were equally enthusiastic about the activity. Angie Harris imparted, "You should see the counselor's office at Christmas; you can't get to her desk without crawling over it." Jenny Wink added, "Our No Child Left Behind at Christmas is all donated by the community; they take care of our kids." Parents were very appreciative of the initiative, though not all knew the program as in-depth as the others, as it was a topic that was not elaborated upon as it became apparent to the researcher that the parents who were familiar did not want to discuss the specifics because it identified them as being poor. Maureen Henry stated, "Some families couldn't provide what was wanted by kids at the holiday and the school helped with that. Though it makes for a nice holiday, it goes much farther than that with the folks of Silver Lake."

It goes beyond the Christmas holiday, as explained by Bonnie Hoefer who said that it is more about the basic needs of the children. She stated, "If a teacher sees a kiddo in need, you go get the *Child in Need Debit Card* and buy food, coats, clothes, school supplies, even swimsuits." The teachers and principal know that without the basic needs being met, learning will not occur. Patrick Adams shared, "Our kids have so many things lacking in their home life, but they know when they walk through the doors they walk into a caring environment that has some of the most considerate adults they will ever know."

Many of the participants were also the product of the Silver Lake School District and want to "pay it forward" according to Heidi Mohler. Edward Teeter added, "Mr. Parsons has done more for the whole wellbeing of the kids than ever happened before. He pays attention to their needs; he takes care of them…" Angie Harris continued:

He really cares about those kids. When I think of the teeth he has pulled, haircuts he has given… [laughs] he couldn't fix a parent's dog clipper cut, but he cuts a lot of hair. If he knows something is wrong, he is going to fix it.

As adults, the teachers looked back at their upbringing and said that they knew what the basic needs were that needed tending to because, as Heidi Mohler stated, "We are the poor kids, we have just grown up."

Academic Interventions Based on Achievement Data. Within the theme of Educating the Whole Child, the participants mentioned the individualized academic interventions that have been put in place as one key to the success of the students of their school. The staff of Silver Lake Elementary School utilized data to determine which interventions each student needs. Working collaboratively with their grade level team and the Title I staff, interventions are methodically implemented based on each child's academic achievement. Greg Parsons, building principal, stated that this process cannot take place until the basic needs have been met:

Once kids' bellies are full, they have shoes on their feet, and clothes on their back, they can begin to learn. Our teachers know that comes first… but the academics are important too. Our teachers do a good job with this so I get to stand back and watch.

The teachers felt the support of Mr. Parsons while working to implement the best interventions for students. "He trusts that we know the kids and we know what they need," stated Edward Teeter.

The parents also trust the educators working with their children. This was evident by the focus group dialogue through the observations of the researcher. As parents discussed the interventions that had worked with their child, stories were shared about the success of their children to various interventions. Maureen Henry commented regarding one particular math intervention that worked well for her child, "They tried that with my

child, but had to change it because he was too clever to allow them to 'trick' him into doing extra math." Maureen laughed and continued, "I can't get him to be tricked into anything at home, if they can do it here, more power to them!"

The teachers said they are applying interventions that are, according to Angie Harris, "Meeting the children where they are and showing them they can be successful." The researcher asked about particular programs that had been used by the school and found that all participants agreed that there are none. According to Greg Parsons, "We do not jump on bandwagons that come through. I tell the teachers to take only what fits you from any professional development." This approach is appreciated by the teachers, "I like that we don't hop on every bandwagon. Mr. Parsons doesn't force things on us," stated Bonnie Hoefer.

The data that teachers examine, along with Mr. Parsons and the district curriculum director, included MAP results, along with formative and summative assessments. The teachers work with their grade level to look at the data, and also utilize their colleagues from the Title I program and other grades to find what will work for each student. The teachers determine what skills are needed to be successful across the board, such as attention, focus, sequencing, processing, problem-solving, perseverance, social skills (Jensen, 2009), and work from there to create the plan that works best for each student. Jenny Wink explained the process of working together for the students:

> We all help each other. Some kids may need to work with a teacher from another grade to be successful but then I take kids from other grades. It all works because we know it is best for the kids. The kids are always in the hall coming or going, but always with a destination, not roaming without a purpose… we don't have time for that.

This was observed by the researcher as well. The halls had a constant movement, but it was purposeful movement. Children would look up at Mr. Parsons and the researcher and comment about where they were headed.

The interventions implemented came from a variety of resources. As the researcher spent time observing prior to the focus group session with the teachers, intervention implementation was addressed in the questions asked during the focus group. The researcher asked how the interventions "menu" came to be. The teachers enjoyed the question as laughter came from everyone in the room. Though professional development is offered, it is not required by Mr. Parsons to be implemented in its entirety. The teachers said they "know each child well" and according to Heidi Mohler:

> We are a small enough school that we know each child well, and we know what they like and don't like. We also know what we like and don't like and if I don't like working with kids who struggle in math, I know which teacher does. I work primarily with kids who struggle with language arts. It works because we work together.

The teachers all agreed with this opinion. Parents believed their children were learning skills that go beyond the classroom. "I know… when we are working on something in the yard and I am ready to throw in the towel and my child says to slow down the answer will come… and every time we do, it works." said Tom Elsey of perseverance and problem solving skills in his children. Marc Orr laughed, adding "I know what you mean. I have tried to quit out of exhaustion when I hear that same thing, slow down…" the other parents laughed and nodded in agreement. Patrick Adams added, "As a high school teacher, I can tell you that it is a 'learned skill' and it sticks with them. I appreciate it and know it will serve them well."

When asked how they measured success, the teachers had a variety of ways ranging from formative data to summative data. Since the MAP data has been analyzed, the teachers look year to year to see growth of students, and they used that data to determine initial interventions. Once the interventions have been applied, the teachers assess students based on their deficits through formative assessments. Additionally, Jenny Wink stated, "We look at data every day. We know where our kids are academically and if what we are doing is working." Further, Bonnie Hoefer expressed:

> It is very evident from the data that there is growth. Sometimes people look only at numbers, so it is nice that we also look at things like self-confidence. Mr. Parsons knows the kids receiving interventions and checks in on the kids and with us. It is nice to know our work is appreciated and noticed. I know what it is like to work in a school where it is only about numbers, that isn't the case here and I know it helps academically, though I cannot say exactly how that works… I just know it does.

This brought nods of assent from the teacher participants. The parent participants had observed the same boost in self-confidence when discussing their children. "I know when Anna [pseudonym] came home from school each day she seemed to almost blossom, I know that is weird for me to say, [laughs] but it is the only way to describe what I saw" said Tom Elsey. Marc Orr agreed stating, "I am glad you mentioned the 'blossom' because it really does describe what happens when your kids go to school here."

Emphasis on Reading. Within the theme of Educating the Whole Child, the emphasis on reading was noted by all participants. The students of Silver Lake Elementary School were walking proof of the focus on reading as the researcher observed reading happening all over the school as well as noticing the library as the busiest place in the school building. Mr. Parsons said, "Kids read more here than any other place I have ever heard of." He shared that there is one program that has been implemented with

fidelity and in its entirety at Silver Lake Elementary School, Reading Counts. Though not one to implement a full program, he emphasized the importance of reading to all things students do at Silver Lake Elementary School, "Kids have to be able to read. That is it. It isn't an option. You can't do well in science or social studies if you can't read." The Reading Counts program has been used in conjunction with a reading assessment to determine the level of books a child should be reading along with setting goals (points) for each grading period.

The teachers, parents and superintendent were all in agreement on the heavy emphasis on reading. Dr. Woodson, the superintendent, said:

> When I walk in, kids want to tell me how many points they have. At first it was like learning a foreign language, but once I caught on… I knew what they were doing was special. Kids want to read, are always reading, and are proud of how much they have read. It is crazy to think about really. I wish I read like that when I was a kid, I see these same kids in the middle and high school and they still read like they did in elementary school. It is a great thing and I know it has an impact on our test results.

The researcher observed students telling Mr. Parsons how many points they had and if they were on their way to take a test or if they were at their goal, even how many points beyond their goal.

The parent participants expressed they each had children who, in the words of Maureen Henry, "will not put that book down for anything." According to Patrick Adams, a parent as well as a teacher at Silver Lake High School, "As a teacher, I get to see what happens when these kids grow up and are still reading at every chance." Edward Teeter quietly added:

> It can be frustrating when you need them to come to dinner or take a bath, but it is something natural to them and at our house, we are used to the 'book negotiations' as we refer to them. My wife and I feel guilty saying things like 'put

that book down and look me in the eye so we can have a conversation' or 'it is time for bed, give me the book' because we never had that as kids.

The other parents nod in agreement and laugh as they, too, share stories of trying to get their children to do something other than reading, along with expressing the guilt of making such statements.

Once Mr. Parsons, the building principal, began speaking about reading, his body language and expression changed into that of someone who wanted to get across his point emphatically:

> The one program we do use here is Reading Counts. The books are all marked for the kids, they take tests, they have challenges… kids read more books here than any other place I have ever heard of. Every book is marked and kids know their reading level from the SRI [Scholastic Reading Inventory]. We start them half way through first grade. First through fourth grade last year read more than 32,000 books. You cannot even imagine how much they read! Every kid knows how many points they have every day. Once they get to their grade level points, if my door was open, I would have had fifteen kids come through here. They get a snack and a drink from my fridge; we can't keep the fridge stocked because they are in here so much. They get prizes, based on a reading goal; we go on a trip to a water park. These kids read going back to classrooms in the hallways. It is a huge deal. They just read and read and read. For example, my child is in third grade, he is average… takes after me. This year he has read 190 to 200 books, he doesn't even push it. He doesn't focus on it, he wants to play outside. At the end of the year I read off the numbers at the year-end assembly, it is unbelievable. Like I said, I do not like programs, but other schools in our conference do not have the numbers we have. Our Library Media Specialist goes through so many books; her check out rate is unbelievable. She teaches classes, but you can check out books any time of the day. Another principal asked me how we got our Library Media Specialist to check out books. It is simple. Everyone in the building puts an emphasis on it.

While the researcher was touring the building with Mr. Parsons, volunteers were sitting on benches with students while they read, other students were walking down the hall reading. It was clear that reading was an expectation at Silver Lake Elementary School. When the researcher and Mr. Parsons went to the library, there was action everywhere, students reading, discussing books, checking out books, talking to teachers, and

volunteers were helping students with electronic copies of books. Mr. Parsons asked the Library Media Specialist what her circulation numbers were currently. She responded, "Over 46,000 last check!"

Extended Academic Time. Adding to the theme of Educating the Whole Child, was the extended time for learning. The bell may ring to dismiss students at 3:05, but that is when some of the most intense work with interventions takes place. Several students leave, but many stay behind. The researcher noticed the smiles and laughter of those staying behind. Some students left to retrieve crates of milk and snacks from the cafeteria while others ran to the library to trade in books while waiting on the snacks. Teachers rushed around getting the items from the day cleared away to prepare for the afternoon session with students.

Students staying after were receiving targeted interventions that could not be implemented in the normal school day. A Title I teacher, Edward Teeter, explained in better detail:

> There are some kids who need more than we can offer while they are here during the day. There are computer activities that correspond to the achievement level of the child and then there are activities that include students from different grades, but at the same level in reading, for example. The group I work with first has some fifth graders along with kids as young as second grade. We are working on increasing reading fluency. I thought the grade disparity would be a problem. It has had the opposite effect. The older kids think they are helping the younger kids… the opposite is often true based on research.

Further dialogue revealed the research Edward Teeter was referring to was that of the pyramid of retention utilized by the National Training Laboratories Institute (1996) which espoused the ability to teach others led to a 90% retention rate.

The teachers' joy at sharing stories of students they have helped over the year and in the past was palpable. It was not a matter of why they stay after to help students

individually or in small groups that moved the researcher so much as why they would not do whatever it took to help these children be successful. Jenny Wink stated, "We do a lot of interventions for kids. Even though we push, the kids still want to be here." Bonnie Hoefer elaborated, "We have a lot of kids who cannot stay for tutoring so we take them home."

Angie Harris shared her experience with a student who stayed for tutoring only because she could offer him a ride home:

> When kids don't have a ride, we give them one. Parents sign a form. I know we are putting ourselves out there, but it is worth it. For example, I have a boy, Randy [pseudonym], from two blind parents who can be a discipline problem, but he is so excited about being here after school. Tutoring is probably a break for him.

Bonnie Hoefer chimed in, "I remember taking him home. I said, 'Okay, Randy, when we get to Cross Woods [pseudonym] tell me which one you live in. His parents came out and hugged him so tight! It made my night." Jenny Wink continued, "You want to help him because he helps so many. You can't say we won't let you stay for tutoring because you have two blind parents. That is why we take them home, for kids like Randy."

The time commitment to implement individualized interventions based on data and to ensure growth is tremendous. The teachers said they would do whatever it took to help their students to achieve, including spending countless hours poring over the data to ensure interventions met the needs of each student. Heidi Mohler said, "Sometimes you feel like you have been hit by a Mack truck, the next day you are ready to come back and teach!" This brought nods from all of the teachers.

Relationships. Within the theme of Educating the Whole Child was the emphasis on relationships. Strong relationships help stabilize children's behavior and provide the

core guidance needed to build lifelong social skills. Unfortunately, children raised in poverty often fail to form relationships therefore inhibiting their ability to respond appropriately to everyday situations (Jensen, 2009). Teachers often interpret the students' emotional and social deficits as a lack of respect. Unfortunately, teachers find it easier to condemn students' behavior and demand that they change it; than it is to work with the child to recognize the antecedent and how to handle similar situations differently in the future (Jensen).

Fortunately, the students of Silver Lake Elementary School have teachers who are there to support and shape behavior. Mr. Parsons had the teachers do a book study regarding relationships and shaping behavior. The teachers and Mr. Parsons referenced the book often throughout the interview and focus group. Jenny Wink said "Todd Whitaker [the author of the book the school studied] says that great teachers want the behavior to stop, bad teachers want them punished. That is the difference. I am glad we read that book. It is easy to become cynical." Every person, from the superintendent to the parents, stated the importance of relationships. Dr. Woodson, the superintendent, stated:

> Probably the number one thing we do for our kids is show them that we care about them. Once they know we care about them and it is a safe place, they can learn. The academics will come; we are going to support you.

Mr. Parsons mentioned relationships throughout his interview.

> One of my pet peeves is my relationship with the kids. You don't have to act like the boss when they know you are the boss. If someone came in to observe, they would think he is really lax with them. I try to make people laugh every time I visit with them. I try to do that so when it is business time, it is obvious. The kids I have the most contact with and hugs from are the kids who get in trouble. When I do discipline with a kid, I am done, when it is over it is over. It is like Groundhog Day, a fresh start. I still like you, it is in the past.

The message from the staff of Silver Lake Elementary School was clear. Relationships matter and are not an option. "If you do not feel the same way about the relevance of relationships, maybe this isn't the right place for you," added Mr. Parsons. Dr. Woodson said to be a successful teacher at Silver Lake, "First of all, you have to prove that you are going to be someone who cares about our kids."

Parents believed relationships were integral to the success of the students as well. Suzanne Smith said that her experience at Silver Lake Elementary School as a child was different than that of her children and the main reason was the relationship component:

> As a child, I remember the teachers being nice, but stern. I see my kids playing school with their friends and each is a different teacher. It is so cute. They really admire the teachers and know they care about kids. I will hear them say things about being sure someone is ok, taking time to have a conversation with a forlorn child. It makes me smile thinking about those folks working with my kids each day.

Maureen Henry laughed and stated, "You know your kids are in a good place when you listen to them play school and it is all about being kind, caring, and then teaching gets thrown in somewhere."

High Expectations of Stakeholders

Consistent Student Expectations. Within the theme of High Expectations of Stakeholders was the subtheme of consistent student expectations for all students. Silver Lake Elementary School has children of all academic levels, just as most other schools in the United States; however, these students all have high expectations for behavior and academics. Character is strongly emphasized and bullying was not tolerated, according to Mr. Parsons. New students who move in become acclimated quickly and realize the school is a safe place with students of good character. The teachers said the students make the difference, Mr. Parsons said the teachers do.

Now I'm going to sound like I am bragging here. There have been multiple occasions when we get a new student and we receive a call from the former school, a grandparent, whoever saying they are a discipline problem. It amazes me how our teachers can transform that child. It usually takes two to three weeks and they are fitting in fine. Don't get me wrong, our kids are very accepting; they love new kids and try to make friends with them. Since our students are so well behaved and respectful… if you are a discipline problem, you are the only one. They conform before you know it… I know there are problems, we are not perfect, but it is hard not to be successful here.

The teachers shared Mr. Parsons' enthusiasm for students being successful at Silver Lake Elementary School because it is the right thing to do.

A culture of high expectations was clearly evident from the dialogue with the teachers, administrators, and parents. When the teachers were asked how they were addressing the achievement gap between children of poverty and their peers, the answers were clearly tied to high expectations for all. Heidi Mohler said, "We do not see them as kids of poverty. We only see the gap as high and low, but not the gap of poverty… we are the poor kids but no one seems poor." Bonnie Hoefer agreed stating, "The kids do not even see each other as kids of poverty." Jenny Wink stated, "Our kids from poverty often score higher than those who are not." Angie Harris added, "We have the same expectation for all kids. We push them and want them all to do their best." Mr. Parsons added:

One thing we do have is the same expectations for every child, no matter what they have or don't have. Regardless of where they are from, the teachers have high expectations. They do understand the difference, the advantages of those who have education support at home, but here it is the same. We always know kids will rise to meet expectations. If they don't have what they need at home, they stay after school to get support.

The parents shared this concept of high expectations. Children are asked to do work that stretches them, according to Maureen Henry, "If I were to ask my child to do the same thing, I would get the blank stare, but if a teacher asks, consider it done."

Suzanne Smith agreed stating, "No one wants to let a teacher or Mr. Parsons down, believe me!" The other parents laughed and nodded in agreement.

Increased Staff Accountability. Within the theme of High Expectations of Stakeholders was the subtheme of increased accountability for staff members. A clear emphasis on respect between all staff members, from the cook in the kitchen to the superintendent, was evident. The superintendent, Dr. Ken Woodson, shared:

> Our kids are only as good as the teachers we hire. We stress the qualities the teachers should have, and we want someone who wants to be here. It has to be a good fit, we tend to hire local folks or people with rural experience and you have to commit and want to be here in this community.

Hiring the right people for the job is a focus of all administrators in Silver Lake. Dr. Woodson said, "'People not programs' is our philosophy. We [administrators] are all on the same page with that."

The expectations of teachers came out clearly through a new practice the administration had put in place in the past year. Greg Parsons shared:

> I allow the teachers to teach the way they want because they get good outcomes from students. I know the results. For example, we changed our observation forms to focus on what the students are doing. I don't care what the teacher is doing, even if they are hanging from the ceiling, I am more concerned with what the kids are doing. Every teacher is different and excels in a different way. I don't put them in a mold. I pretty much leave them alone since I know what they are teaching through the GLEs [Grade Level Expectations] or standards but as far as how they do it, I pretty much let them be individuals. We are pretty successful this way. Oh, one of my pet peeves, when your butt is in the seat, no teaching is going on. I like them to be up and teaching. Teaching behind the desk does not work for me.

The expectations were made clear to teachers and have been discussed in all observations and all formative and summative datum were gathered through the new evaluation form. Teachers are accountable for MAP scores as a part of the evaluation tool.

The teachers appreciated the level of trust their administrators had in them. The new evaluation tool came up, but was supported by teachers. Edward Teeter stated, "We know why we are here. If kids are not learning, that is on us. It is something we keep close tabs on and discuss with Mr. Parsons often." Angie Harris said, "Mr. Parsons trusts us, but don't let him catch you sitting down if he comes in… he has a saying about your butt in the chair, not a good thing…" Bonnie Hoefer shared, "Mr. Parsons is a very transformational, yet laid back leader. If he sees results, he lets us do what we are doing. We are a team. It isn't us against him." Jenny Wink added, "He just trusts us. He doesn't treat us like little kids. We get results and he knows that."

The ability to move teachers forward in such a manner has added to the leadership of the building, what Lambert (2003) referred to as building leadership capacity. It was clear that teachers did not want to let Mr. Parsons down. The expectations are high, yet the teachers consider themselves as part of a bigger family. As Angie Harris stated, "He will always support us. He will do what is necessary for kids to achieve, and that is done best through what he does to support us."

Community Involvement. Within the theme of High Expectations of Stakeholders was the subtheme of community involvement. The Silver Lake School District was formed through a consolidation of four surrounding schools. Due to the location of the district and it being the central site in a 300 square mile area for congregation, the community relies on using the facilities, participating in activities, and supporting the success of the district. Dr. Woodson stated, "We are very fortunate, our patrons have passed the last three bond issues by a 78 to 80% passage. We communicate with our community so there are no surprises." Mr. Parsons stated, "Since we do not have a 'town'

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the school is the center place. All community functions go through the school since it is several towns that all come together here."

The community of Silver Lake is involved in supporting the school district not only through voting to pass bond issues, which they do, but also through volunteering services, resources, and time. Each person interviewed shared that the community was "an amazing support, and without their support, we couldn't do what we do for kids here," according to Heidi Mohler. The community presence was evident as the researcher walked the halls: elderly ladies and gentlemen were listening to children read, volunteers in the library were helping students select books, and a parent was in the copy room making copies for teachers so they could focus on teaching.

Research showed that communities that were involved and vested in the schools had more input into the workers they hoped to recruit upon graduation (Jensen, 2009). Further studies identified community support as a non-negotiable component to success in schools of poverty (Haycock, 2001, 2006; Reeves, 2009). Mr. Parsons formed partnerships with local agencies to provide services such as medical and dental care, and haircuts which seemed to be the norm for Silver Lake. Mr. Parsons acknowledged that when he came to Silver Lake Elementary School, he wanted to provide Christmas assistance for the families in his school. He shared the story of the overwhelming response by the community:

> I decided to create a project called No Child Left Behind at Christmas. Basically we asked businesses and folks around town to donate money for the cause. We sent a letter to our neediest families asking for clothing sizes. I assumed we might get $1,000… that first year we got $5,400, and it has pretty much stayed there each year for the past seven years. Parents come by discreetly and get them and take them home. The kids think it's either Santa or the parents. This just goes to show the support of the community. Churches, individuals, it adds up.

The teachers shared the joy of this activity and the value of the community in its success.

Parents are welcome at Silver Lake Elementary and said they have neighbors that are not able to help in financial ways, but they help by listening to students read, come up to be a second person in a room with students working on art projects, or make photocopies for teachers. The outpouring has been overwhelming. "We have parents and community members in our building all the time. It is nice to know we are so supported in what we are doing for the kids of this community," shared Bonnie Hoefer. Maureen Henry said she loves being in the school because, "It feels like a family here. I am glad to be a part of it, and that my kids are a part of it."

Summary

The study design, data collection methods, research questions, process of data analysis, setting, participants, and themes were discussed in Chapter Four. In addition, a description of the school setting and a brief profile of the twelve participants were presented. In Chapter Four, the use of telling a story through a narrative case study (Creswell, 2007) was employed so as to bring a voice to the participants as well as to identify the themes that emerged through the data analysis. Discussed in Chapter Five are the findings and conclusions based on the data analysis. Furthermore, the implications for practice and recommendations for future study are presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The narrative case study examined the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the leadership of the principal in a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty. Through an in-depth analysis of the data, the researcher sought to identify transformational leadership processes and structures that led to the high academic achievement. The data were triangulated through member-checking, rich description, being cognizant of researcher bias, and the presentation of differing or opposing information (Creswell, 2007). The case study examined a problem of practice (Creswell) impacting educators across the nation: how to increase academic achievement of all students.

From the data, two overarching themes emerged: Educating the Whole Child and High Expectations of Stakeholders. The theme of Educating the Whole Child had five subthemes: (1) providing basic needs; (2) academic interventions based on achievement data; (3) emphasis on reading; (4) extended academic time; and (5) relationships. The theme of High Expectations of Stakeholders had three subthemes: (1) consistent student expectations; (2) increased staff accountability; and (3) community involvement.

In Chapter Five, a summary of the findings and conclusions based on the data analysis are discussed. The implications for practice and recommendations for future study are shared. The focus of narrative case study research is to tell a story through the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Through dialogue between the researcher and participants, along with onsite observations, the voice

(Creswell) of stakeholders was captured thus revealing the perceptions regarding the leadership processes and structures they believe have led to the academic success of the students, including students of poverty.

Summary of Findings

The overarching question guiding this qualitative study was, "How do leaders in schools of poverty successfully impact student achievement?" To this end, the study was viewed through the lens of transformational leadership. According to Bass (1999), transformational leadership refers to the leader motivating the follower to achieve performance beyond expectations through one of the four dimensions of transformational leadership: (1) charisma (later renamed individualized influence); (2) inspirational motivation; (3) intellectual stimulation; and (4) individualized consideration. Avolio and Bass (1991) shared that leaders who were more satisfying to their followers and were identified as effective were described as transformational leaders overall.

Two themes related to the perceptions of stakeholders regarding transformational leadership emerged as the data were analyzed: Educating the Whole Child and High Expectations of Stakeholders. Within the context of this study, as derived from the conceptual underpinnings, the researcher sought to answer the following questions:

What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement of students from poverty?

Through the data analysis process, consensus among the perceptions of teachers and district administration emerged that the principal believed in educating the whole child along with consistent, high expectations for all. The many stories shared by teachers and district administration were testament to their perceptions regarding the principal.

Leadership was credited with finding strategic and individualized ways to shape behavior and increase academic success for all students.

As was discovered through the review of relevant literature, the perceptions of stakeholders are important to uncovering the deeper picture of a case (Merriam, 1998). The lens of transformational leadership, which was used to guide the study, was defined by Bass (1999) to have four dimensions. Of the four dimensions, all were easily identified through the analysis of the data. Additionally, the four dimensions matched the themes that emerged through the triangulation of the data.

The dimension of charisma, or idealized influence, emerged through the subthemes of relationships of the overarching themes: Educating the Whole Child and High Expectations of All Stakeholders. It was evident through observations, interviews, and focus groups that teachers and students wanted to do well for Mr. Parsons. Angie Harris stated, "The kids don't want to let him down." Dr. Woodson shared that, "Mr. Parsons is a hands-on principal. He knows the kids, their names, and their needs. He also knows his teachers, and they know him."

Inspirational motivation, the second dimension of transformational leadership, emerged through the theme of High Expectations of All Stakeholders, as well as the subtheme reading, under the larger theme: Educating the Whole Child. The teachers said the principal's support of the reading program and addition of prizes in his office motivated some of the struggling students, but all students benefited, "If a child reaches a goal, the first question they ask is 'When do I get to go to Mr. Parsons' office?' If it gets them reading, I support it!" Teachers, as well, were motivated by Mr. Parsons to increase the achievement of their students due to the data conversations held with him.

The third dimension of a transformational leader is intellectual stimulation which emerged through the subtheme of extended academic time under the larger theme of Educating the Whole Child and also within the theme of High Expectations of All Stakeholders. By providing extended academic time to the school day, the students of Silver Lake Elementary were able to continue working on areas of weakness in a safe place with a snack and a caring adult. Bonnie Hoefer described the support of Mr. Parsons when the extended day begins, "Mr. Parsons walks the halls, thanks the kids and teachers for our hard work, and even sits with kids he knows do not prefer to spend their afternoons with us but need to be there." Dr. Woodson agreed that Mr. Parsons provides the intellectual stimulation for students, but also for teachers, "We have standards and he is very efficient in ensuring that is covered. He is in and out of classrooms all the time. He knows what is going on and if something is 'off' he questions it and will stick with it if it isn't what is best for kids." The teachers experienced intellectual stimulation through the book study process and collaborative dialogue. When the extended day begins, Mr. Parsons walks around thanking the teachers and students for staying, offering encouraging words to both.

The fourth dimension of transformational leadership is individualized consideration which emerged within the subtheme of providing basic needs under the larger theme of Educating the Whole Child. The teachers and Dr. Woodson stated in a variety of ways that Mr. Parsons knows the students, their needs, their families. "He does what it takes to ensure learning can take place," said Dr. Woodson. Angie Harris concurred with Dr. Woodson, sharing, "If he knows something is wrong, he is going to fix it." Mr. Parsons visits the homes of students often and will take a teacher along with

him to give them the perspective of the homes the students come from. Bonnie Hoefer reflected, "He cares about the kids and their families. I don't know how he does it all, but he does."

What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students from poverty?

In the review of literature, the role of the transformational leader was identified as best for schools in a time of change which is currently the case under the federal and state mandates of NCLB and MSIP (Casey, 2005; Cotton, 2003; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Over the past eight years of Mr. Parsons' tenure at Silver Lake Elementary School, he has been a part of significant change, considering the previous two principals served over sixty years combined prior to his arrival. Mr. Parsons was responsible for bringing about an increase in academic achievement and accountability through the transformational leadership processes and structures he has implemented.

Through the review of literature various leadership styles were studied including that of change agent, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership. Though components of each leadership style were present in the observations, interviews, and focus groups, the strongest tie to a leadership style was that of a transformational leader. The perceptions of Mr. Parsons regarding his own leadership style, which he described as "laissez-faire," came through to the researcher as indicative of a leader with charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

The first dimension of transformational leadership that Mr. Parsons described to the researcher was that of charisma. A clear perception of the principal was of a knowledgeable leader who trusts those with whom he works. Regarding how teachers

teach, Mr. Parsons shared, "I allow the teachers to teach the way they want to teach. I know the results." He is in each classroom daily and data are discussed with teachers frequently. Teachers want to do their best for the students. As Mr. Parsons shared, "The kids are their motivation." Teachers have responded to the trust and are of the opinion they are valued and do not want to let him down. His expectations are high for all stakeholders, especially the teachers. Mr. Parsons' philosophy, which he referred to as a pet peeve, is "…when your butt is in the seat, no teaching is going on." This was evidenced through the observation of and during the focus group with the teachers.

In the second dimension of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation, the perceptions based on the interview were clear that Mr. Parsons would like to have a motivated teacher in the classroom each day for the students. The theme of High Expectations for All Stakeholders, with the subthemes of consistent expectations for students and increased expectations for teachers fit well with Mr. Parsons' perceptions of his leadership style. Additionally, the subthemes of reading, basic needs, and relationships under the theme of Educating the Whole Child were a natural fit as well. Mr. Parsons' passion is for motivating people, especially, according to him, "the underdog." His support of the reading program has made it exciting for students to share their accomplishments due to his enthusiastic response to each child. Mr. Parsons knows the students and mentions specific goals, asks pertinent questions, and gives each child a treat to celebrate. The expectations of teachers are high. Mr. Parsons is cognizant of the stress that could bring, but he manages dialogue in a professional and appreciative manner:

> I want the teachers to work hard from the moment they arrive until the students
> leave, but then I want them to leave so they can come back and do it again the

next day. The teachers have a lot of flexibility here and they know what I expect. I trust them to do their job. I think they appreciate it.

The basic needs are met for Mr. Parsons' students due to his commitment to the cause. He understands that if a child does not have what Maslow (1943) referred to as the hierarchy of needs. Abraham Maslow (1943) created the hierarchy of needs, which asserted that students could not be expected to function at high academic levels when their basic needs went unmet. Basic needs include food, shelter, medical care, safety, and relationships. Jensen (2009) called the concept of educating the whole child a "360-degree wraparound student support system" (p. 70). Jensen shared that administrators should work to gain backing from the school board, district, and community to enable them to move quickly and decisively, which is how Mr. Parsons operates. Additionally, Jensen espoused that without the support from a wide variety of agencies, the job of education is much more difficult, Mr. Parson's partnerships with agencies emulate his understanding of this concept. Each child has a limited set of internal resources for dealing with everyday worries, and once that capacity is met the first casualty is school. Therefore, to get students to focus on academic achievement, schools must remove the real-world concerns that are constantly in the minds of those from poverty (Jensen).

The third dimension of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation, was observed in many of the conversations Mr. Parsons had with students and teachers. The larger themes of Educating the Whole Child and High Expectations of All Stakeholders applied to the leadership of the principal when viewed through his perspective. Each conversation challenged the student or adult to think deeper about the issue at hand. Mr. Parsons, when asked about his leadership style and its impact on how teachers teach, responded:

My teachers are so very good at ending a problem before it starts. I always tell them at the beginning of the year. If they do something one time, it is the kid's fault… twice, it's iffy, third time, it's your [teacher] fault. Kids are going to be kids; if they are left alone unsupervised, they are going to play in sinks, urinals… it's the responsibility of teachers. I tell them they lose power by turning things over to me. This was a difference from the prior administration. We have worked to shape behavior, not be punitive. It isn't always easy for the teacher but in the end they appreciate the process.

The students' and teachers' respect for Mr. Parsons was evident through observations of body language and the laughter emanating from those conversations.

Jensen (2009) shared that students from poverty are lacking social and problem solving skills and it should be kept in mind and fostered as they are in school. "When schools teach students the social skills to resist peer pressure, for example, students stay in school longer, do better academically, and get in less trouble" (Wright, Nichols, Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Botvin, 2004, p. 39). Further, studies have shown that educational intervention has the possibility to narrow or eliminate the socioeconomic performance gap (Barnett, 1998; Wright et al). Research into individual or school-based interventions has demonstrated that quality programs can: "Improve language fluency, IQ, and other cognitive processes; reduce school problems and academic failure in both elementary and high school; improve social, academic, and emotional intelligence when implemented in early childhood" (Campbell, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal, & Ramey, 2001, p. 58).

The final dimension of transformational leadership, individualized consideration, was also a strength for Mr. Parsons according to the data analysis. The subtheme of relationships within the larger theme of Educating the Whole Child was one of Mr. Parsons' strongest attributes. He consistently goes out of his way to discuss "non-business" items with students, parents, and staff. His knowledge of the basic needs,

families, and academic achievement of the students and staff was impressive to the

researcher. The support he offers through this knowledge has been invaluable to many.

He works hard to treat everyone with the individual attention they need. Mr. Parsons

stated,

> I have had parents in my office cussing at me. I greet them the next day just like I always have. It bothers them, but then they respect you later on. Once it is over, it is over. I am not going to dread seeing you every time just because you got upset with me. I understand they want what is best for their child. Once they realize that is what I want, too, it works.

The No Child Left Behind at Christmas concept was the dream of Mr. Parsons and it is a

testament to his dedication to meeting the individual needs of the students of Silver Lake

Elementary School.

The importance of relationships may seem obvious, but for children raised in

poverty, "it's a make or break factor" (Jensen, 2009, p. 93). Jensen elaborated on the

significance of relationships:

> Many schools rely on power and authority rather than positive relationships to get students to behave or perform well. The problem with the coercion approach is simple: the weaker the relationships, the more resources and authority you need to get the same job done… People will do more, and do it more willingly, for people they respect and enjoy being around (p. 93).

Strong, secure, safe relationships help stabilize children's behavior and provide the core

guidance that children need to build successful social skills (Jensen). Perhaps the most

important reason to foster relationships was presented by Pianta and Stuhlman (2004),

"Disadvantaged elementary students who felt connected with their teachers showed

improvements in their reading and vocabulary abilities" (p. 88). The students of Silver

Lake Elementary School have strong connections with their teachers because of the

emphasis of knowing each child well set forth by Mr. Parsons and embraced by the staff members.

How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed how they behave in their school?

Through the review of literature, it was revealed that the behavior of the school principal is the single most important factor in supporting a high quality educational program (Bredeson, 1989). Further research pointed to transformational leadership being associated with less disparity between subgroups (Griffith, 2004). The leadership of Mr. Parsons has enabled the teachers to drive the academic program at Silver Lake Elementary School. Additional research suggested a relentless focus on the academic core, on clear and high expectations, and on accountability systems that demand results for all kinds of students will produce results (Fullan, 2010; Jensen, 2009). Research also revealed that in schools of low performance, expectations diminished with the lower performance, instead of increasing (Haycock, 2001, 2006; Jensen; Reeves, 2009). Further, the high expectations of the children of Silver Lake Elementary School are buttressed with wraparound support for the whole child, lends itself to a much better chance for success.

Crow et al. (2003) and Lambert (2003) shared that transformational principals guide others to lead, by sharing the responsibilities of leadership, which has been the case according to the data analysis of the teacher perceptions of Mr. Parsons' leadership. Through the analysis of data, the researcher found the principal's leadership style has had a positive impact on instruction at Silver Lake Elementary School. The teachers felt they were empowered to use data to make decisions in their classroom.

The four dimensions of transformational leadership, charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, were revealed in the perceptions of the teachers regarding how they have changed under Mr. Parsons' leadership. The change in behavior did not come reluctantly as one might assume; the teachers were ready for a change in instructional leadership when Mr. Parsons came to Silver Lake Elementary School. Angie Harris stated, "We were hungry for new leadership. He came in and did not disappoint. Yes, we work harder, but the results are worth it."

Charisma, the first dimension of transformational leadership, along with the subtheme of increased staff accountability under the larger theme of Increased Expectations of All Stakeholders, was integral to the perceptions of the teachers. The ability to lead a group of educators to change instruction to what is best for children cannot happen without a charismatic leader. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, the resounding theme of "not wanting to disappoint Mr. Parsons" was clear. Heidi Mohler said, "He wants us to be successful. He cares. It makes a difference to me." Jenny Wink added, "When we sit in meetings discussing data, no one wants to let Mr. Parsons down. If we do have a low score in an area, he focuses on how to reteach it so it is better next time around."

The second dimension of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation, emerged through teacher perceptions. When the researcher asked the teacher focus group how the principal's leadership changed how they teach, Jenny Wink responded, "That's easy, it makes us love our job. We have total ownership of our job. I can spend my time teaching, finding interventions. It makes it more fun as a teacher; you get to come and

have fun." This was apparent through the nods of agreement from Jenny's colleagues.

Angie Harris added, "It is unconventional…he has a saying about your butt in the chair,

not a good thing…Don't let him catch you sitting in your chair." The consensus was that

though he has high expectations, he does not ask of the teachers anything he would not

do if he were in the classroom. "He wants the kids to be successful, he believes in us

being up and teaching, not behind a desk."

Intellectual stimulation, the third dimension of transformational leadership,

emerged through the use of targeted interventions and individualized instruction for

students based upon data. This resulted in the teachers of Silver Lake Elementary School

being able to reach students at the appropriate level to cause an increase in academic

achievement. Edward Teeter described how Mr. Parsons imparts intellectual stimulation

to assist teachers:

> If I see kids who are not performing as they are capable of I send them to him. He
> will talk with them, encourage them, find out if something is going on with them
> that is causing this to happen. He will always support us. He fights for the
> underdog. He will do what is necessary to help our students achieve.

This practice of the principal was observed by the researcher as students would visit Mr.

Parsons to discuss a test they had retaken and done better on or for a confidence boost

prior to taking a Reading Counts test.

The final dimension of transformational leadership, individualized consideration,

was perceived by teachers as an important part of how they have changed their teaching

practices. The subthemes of basic needs and relationships of the overarching theme of

Educating the Whole Child blended well with this dimension. The teachers shared that

Mr. Parsons' commitment to providing for the students' basic needs allowed them to

better understand where their students' needs were in order to ensure they had continued

support. Angie Harris shared how this was accomplished, "If a teacher sees a kiddo in need we go get the 'A Child in Need' debit card and buy food, coats, clothes, school supplies, swim suits." Bonnie Hoefer expanded:

> If Mr. Parsons did not make this a priority, we would probably not be as aware of the needs. It has changed how I do things in my classroom. It also brings kids closer to you when they know they can tell you they need more paper.

Several teachers commented on their use of the debit card to benefit students over the years.

Research showed that language acquisition skills lag in students of poverty (Hart & Risley, 1995; Payne, 2003, 2009). Hart and Risley performed a six-year study that followed the outcomes of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds:

> …found that by age 3, the children of professional parents were adding words to their vocabularies at about twice the rate of children in welfare families. Both the quantity and quality of phrases directed at the children by caregivers correlated directly with income levels (p. 135).

Further, Jensen (2009) reported that reading and language are related and a child's language acquisition influences their reading ability. Jensen stated that "Reading skills are not hardwired into the human brain; every subskill of reading including (but not limited to) phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, and comprehension, must be explicitly taught" (p. 37). Noble, Wolmetz, Ochs, Farah, and McCandliss (2006) espoused that "evidence suggests that poverty adversely alters the trajectory of the developing reading brain" (p. 27). The teachers shared that Mr. Parsons was a firm believer in the teacher making the difference in the lives of children from poverty and reading was considered foundational.

How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of the principal?

Parents living in poverty have many obstacles that get in the way of providing the best environment for their child(ren), according to the research (Chenoweth, 2009a, 2009b; Haycock, 2001, 2006; Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Payne, 2003, 2009; Reeves, 2006, 2009). Furthermore, Banks and Banks (1995) stated "There is an enduring relation between social class and educational outcomes" (p. 551) and those students from high-status families tend to have "high levels of educational attainment [while] low social class correlates with low levels of educational attainment and achievement" (p. 551). The staff, parents and students of Silver Lake Elementary School have disproved this statement. According to Dr. Woodson, "Well, about 60% of our students are on Free and Reduced Meals, I would say the number is more like 80%. We have those who simply won't apply for the pride factor." Meanwhile their students of poverty score as high as their peers on state mandated tests, if not higher.

However, the research also concluded that the role a parent takes in a child's education can make a difference to their academic achievement and that schools should capitalize on getting parents into the school setting and involved with their child's education, if possible (Kannapel & Clements; Payne, 2003). The staff of Silver Lake Elementary School is cognizant of this fact, as was observed by the researcher and documented through interviews and focus groups. The parents are as involved as their lifestyle will permit, and according to Greg Parsons, "They [parents] are always welcome here. Parents eat lunch here every day."

Further research uncovered an important reason for encouraging students to stay after school as "Low-income caregivers are typically half as likely as higher-income parents are to be able to track down where their children are in the neighborhood" (Evans, 2004). Further research indicated that "Low-SES children are often left home to fend for themselves and their younger siblings while their caregivers work long hours" (Jensen, 2009). Mr. Parsons knows that the students are safe when they are at school and he encourages children to stay after school daily.

Of the four dimensions of transformational leadership, charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, all applied to the perceptions of parents regarding the principal according to the data analysis. The school has been the center of most events for the town, so parents experience a level of comfort in the school. Many parents grew up in the Silver Lake School District and, though it has grown considerably, the main structures continue to be in operation, thus, making for a familiar environment.

The first dimension of transformational leadership that parents perceived was a part of the principal's leadership style was charisma. All parents mentioned being welcomed into the school, greeted at parent drop off and pick up daily, and having access to the principal. "He greets me like an old friend," said Heidi Mohler. Another parent, Marc Orr, humbly referred to an uncomfortable situation with his child:

> I was upset at a situation. Couldn't tell you what it was right off the top of my head, but at the moment, I was angry. I marched into Mr. Parsons' office and told him what I thought of it. He listened, offered advice, said it would be taken care of and sent me on my way. I thought he would remember me as the 'jerk' who spouted off at him… nope, that very afternoon and ever since, he has treated me like he always had. Gotta admire a guy with that attitude.

The parents agreed that Mr. Parsons had a great attitude and was always available for their questions.

Inspirational motivation is the second dimension of transformational leadership. The parents agreed that this is present in Mr. Parsons' leadership style. This dimension, however, was shared through stories of how Mr. Parsons had motivated their children, as opposed to motivating them personally. Suzanne Smith shared, "My child wants to do well in order to tell Mr. Parsons. He gets to go to the office to share his success." Tom Elsey elaborated, "The kids go to his office, chat about the accomplishment, and get a snack; but that is not as important as how they feel when they leave the office." The parents were all in consensus that Mr. Parsons motivates children to want to do better and to make him proud.

Though the third dimension, intellectual stimulation, was not as readily evident through dialogue with parents, it emerged through the analysis of data. The parents are always welcome at Silver Lake Elementary School. Offering more than a welcoming environment, which was evident through observations, parents are encouraged to attend family functions. One important night is the Back to School Bash, which parents and teachers referred to as more like a "Homecoming" atmosphere. Parents are invited to visit classrooms, teachers, the administration, and their friends while enjoying a full barbecue prepared and provided by the staff of the school. Another important opportunity for intellectual stimulation is the curriculum nights. All have been well attended and received by parents, according to the parent and teacher focus group data. Maureen Henry told of her experience with the math curriculum night, "Math is different now. I hate telling my

child that I can't help. These nights allow us to learn with our child and that makes me a lot more comfortable when the homework comes home."

The final dimension of transformational leadership was that of individualized consideration. This emerged as a strength of Mr. Parsons according to the data from parents through the focus group process. Marc Orr shared his admiration for the work Mr. Parsons does for families at Christmas time, "He knows what is needed by the students of the school and he makes sure no one goes without". Suzanne Smith added:

> He has a big heart when it comes to 'our' kids. He would take them home with him. I know he gives haircuts to kids who need them. I really do not think there is anything he wouldn't do for a child if he could.

This was the consensus of the group. Stories of Mr. Parsons at their children's personal events were shared, along with stories of seeing him at the grocery store. "He always acts glad to see us. I can see how tired he is, but he stops and chats every time," shared Patrick Adams.

<div align="center">Conclusions Based on the Findings</div>

This research was conducted through a qualitative research approach to examine the phenomena of a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty to seek the leadership procedures and structures in place within the natural setting (Creswell, 2007). The researcher sought to create a holistic picture through the identification of emergent themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Merriam (2005) espoused that qualitative research allows the researcher to understand phenomenon, or the perspectives of the people involved in the study, through the use of multiple forms of inquiry. As qualitative research is rooted in the belief that meaning is socially constructed by individuals through interactions in their world, on-site

research of a single case study was selected for this research. Thus, multiple pieces of data were available for the researcher to utilize to conduct a rich analysis of the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Consequently, the following conclusions are based on the findings of the study of the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the leadership processes and structures the principal has implemented that have led to the high academic achievement of the students of their school as viewed through the lens of transformational leadership.

Educating the Whole Child

Educating the Whole Child emerged as the first overarching theme identified through the data analysis. Five subthemes were also identified as essential components of the theme Educating the Whole Child: (1) providing basic needs; (2) academic interventions based on achievement data; (3) an emphasis on reading; (4) extended academic time; and (5) relationships. Therefore, the first conclusion, as it relates to identifying ways transformational educational leaders can positively impact student achievement, is that the leader must know the students and what their academic needs are and then they must act to make sure all needs (basic and academic) are met by the staff of the school.

Through the process of observations, interviews and focus groups, and artifact and document analysis it became clear that the principal of a high performing school must be actively involved with the students of the school. This was also confirmed by the work of many researchers and identified in the review of literature (Burney & Bielke, 2008; Chenoweth, 2009a, 2009b; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2001; Gawerecki, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; Reeves, 2001). The transformational leadership of the

principal permeated the perceptions of all stakeholders and according to the participants had a direct correlation to the academic success of students. This would not be possible if the principal was not actively engaged with the learning going on at the school. One teacher shared, "He will always support us. He fights for the underdog. He will do what is necessary to help our students achieve." Dr. Woodson, Mr. Parsons' direct supervisor, elaborated on how Mr. Parsons impacts achievement:

> I just think we both believe people are the key. 'People not programs' is our philosophy… We all agree on this; everyone is the key to our success and work to keep a lot of people in place; we demand a lot of them.

The teachers know the expectations are high, but they want to help the students be successful.

The active involvement of the principal in all aspects of a student's life in a high performing, high poverty school is essential to the academic success of the students, as evidenced through the review of literature and analysis of the data. Students from poverty require different support than their peers. The principal of a high performing, high poverty school is aware of the unique needs of those students and puts supports in place to ensure they are met (Chenoweth, 2009a, 2009b; Haycock, 2001, 2006). Mr. Parsons had a variety of supports in place such as the A Child in Need debit card, No Child Left Behind at Christmas, food for those who missed breakfast, and home visits to ensure that everything at home is acceptable for the children. Mr. Parsons assists families with utility bills, rent, and temporary housing. When asked about this he responded, "Once kids' bellies are full, they have shoes on their feet, and clothes on their back, they can begin to learn." He wants the parents to be able to keep their dignity; that was a clear point he wanted the researcher to be aware of while discussing the basic needs needing to be met

prior to academic needs. Once the basic needs are met, he and the teachers focus on the academics, offering interventions based on data analysis and extending the school day. Jenny Wink shared, "We look at data every day. We know where our kids are academically and if what we are doing is working. If not, we adjust in a timely manner." Therefore the students and teachers are intellectually stimulated constantly.

The final facet of Mr. Parsons' leadership comes from his desire to encourage and motivate students. He has great relationships with students, staff, and the community. A common thread emerged from the interviews of his relationships being a key component to the success of the students and staff: Mr. Parsons cares about all of them. Children from poverty must have trusting relationships with the adults around them in order to begin to make any kind of academic or behavioral change (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Payne, 2003). The relationships formed at Silver Lake Elementary School are representative of and based upon trust. The students know the adults around them care about their well being, as well as that of their family and, therefore, are willing to invest the time and energy into their academic work.

The overarching theme of Educating the Whole Child is supported by the five subthemes of: (1) providing basic needs; (2) academic interventions based on achievement data; (3) an emphasis on reading; (4) extended academic time; and (5) relationships. All five were found essential to the success of the students at Silver Lake Elementary School, based on the analysis of data. The five subthemes come together to wrap around the child, giving the unique support each child needs. The manifestation of Educating the Whole Child via the synergy of basic needs, academic interventions, reading, extended academic time, and relationships is illustrated in Figure 1:
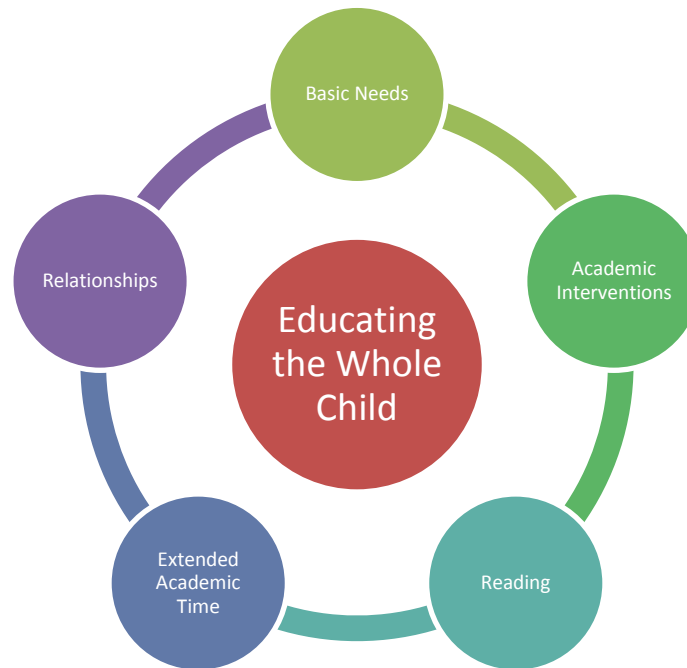
Figure 1: Educating the Whole Child via the synergy of basic needs, academic interventions, reading, extended academic time, and relationships.

The synergy presented in Figure 1 shows how the five subthemes wrap around the whole child making academic success a reality. Principals in this age of high accountability must seek the knowledge of the effective leaders around them. DuFour and Marzano (2011) shared that this is the most pressure educators have ever been under and with the least funding; essentially we are asking educators to do more with less. The mandates brought forth through NCLB have left the principal of today's schools no choice but to increase student achievement or have their building be labeled a failing school (NCLB, 2007). The work being done by the principal at Silver Lake Elementary School has given leaders seeking successful concepts a place to start.

High Expectations of Stakeholders

High Expectations of Stakeholders emerged as the second overarching theme identified through the data analysis. Three subthemes were also identified as essential

components of the theme High Expectations of Stakeholders: (1) consistent expectations of students; (2) increased staff accountability; and (3) community involvement. The three subthemes were intentional, according to Mr. Parsons. The students must be willing to live up to the consistent expectations placed upon them by the teachers, the staff must be willing to implement the high expectations expected of them, and the community must be willing to come in and do what is needed by the school at any given time.

The teachers and Mr. Parsons do not treat students of poverty different in regard to academics. When the researcher asked how the teachers were addressing the achievement gap between children of poverty and their peers, Edward Teeter responded, "We do not see them as kids of poverty. We only see the gap as high/low, but not the gap of poverty." Bonnie Hoefer added, "We do a lot of intervention and differentiation. The kids do not even see each other as kids of poverty; they do not bully or call names. Even though we push, the kids still want to be here." That was evident through the researcher's observations of the students in both the regular academic day and the extended academic day. The teachers know the students will work for food, so often rewards for reaching a certain reading goal or academic accomplishment are food based. According to Jenny Wink, "Some kids are intrinsically motivated, and others will work to earn rewards. If our kids are at a certain reading level, we will offer a special treat. I feed kids. Look, I give them food!" This seemed to be a commonality among the teachers, feeding students for academic successes. As the researcher observed lunch, the students who had a drink or snack from Mr. Parson's office were proudly showing off their prizes.

The expectations of teachers have been much higher under Mr. Parsons than the previous administrator, according to the perceptions of the teachers, but they appeared to

appreciate the added expectations. Mr. Parsons acknowledged his expectations are high, but he also cares about the work his teachers do each day:

> I want them to show up each morning and be ready to teach. I want them to work as hard as they can for the kids I want them to go home tired, but I want them to go home.

He does not ask teachers to write and submit lesson plans; he would rather walk around to classrooms and discuss the observations with teachers in order to share best practices with other teachers. Mr. Parsons also makes a concerted effort to visit socially with his teachers daily to discuss their family, ask about the ball game from the previous evening, basically let his teachers know that while he has high expectations, he also knows they are human and have a family to go home to each night. They do go home tired, as Heidi Mohler stated, "Sometimes you feel like you have been hit by a Mack truck; the next day you are ready to come back and teach!"

The final group of stakeholders with high expectations placed upon them is the community. Mr. Parsons has volunteers in daily to listen to students read. He knows it makes a difference when children have an audience when reading. The No Child Left Behind at Christmas project asks a lot of the community, but they give generously each and every year. The community holds many of its activities in the school, and Mr. Parsons is usually around to help set up or discuss the upcoming election. Mr. Parsons' hard work pays off, according to Dr. Woodson, "We are very fortunate. Our patrons have passed the last three bond issues by a 78 to 80% passage. We communicate with our community so there are no surprises." If a child needs dental work, medical attention, or other needs the school cannot provide, Mr. Parsons reaches out to a community member

for assistance. He said he has yet to be turned down, "Our community cares about these kids, and they are 'our' kids."

It is one thing to indicate high expectations are in place, it is another to actually observe a school where that is the norm. The overarching theme of High Expectations of Stakeholders was evident according to the researcher's field notes of the observations. The fact that the administration of the Silver Lake School District changed the evaluation tool to include MAP scores speaks volumes of the high expectations present. Through high expectations for all stakeholders, identified through the subthemes of (1) consistent expectations for students, (2) increased accountability for teachers, and (3) community involvement, students have the odds for success weighted in their favor. The synergy, like the cogs on wheels, of the overarching theme, along with the subthemes, is depicted in Figure 2:
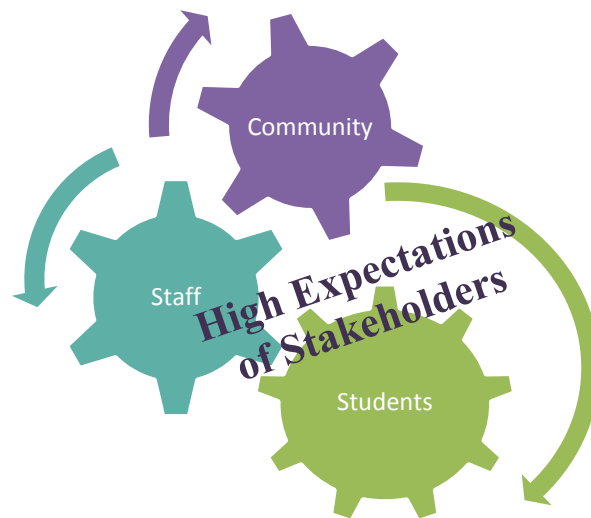
Figure 2: High Expectations via the synergy of consistent student expectations, increased staff accountability, and community involvement.

The synergy presented in Figure 2 shows how the three subthemes must all work together in order for success to occur. If one is stopped, or missing, the others cannot work. All three must come together for academic success to occur. Through the hard work of Mr. Parsons to hold each group accountable, this is a reality at Silver Lake Elementary School.

The conclusions based on the findings of this study identify the leadership processes and structures being implemented in a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty. The combination of the overarching themes and subthemes come together to wrap around the whole child in what Jensen (2009) called "360-degree wraparound student support system" (p. 70). The processes and structures Mr. Parsons perceived as integral to the success of the students of Silver Lake Elementary school are depicted in Figure 3:

Figure 3: The wrap around components of Educating the Whole Child with High Expectations.

Principals of today are faced with numerous obstacles, not the least of which are the accountability mandates of NCLB. Educating children coming from varied backgrounds and ethnicities requires skill; educating them to the level of proficiency for all is a massive undertaking for educators. Learning from high performing schools like Silver Lake Elementary School gives hope to those who are struggling to meet AYP. The pressure educators feel is the reality of NCLB: all students must learn and be proficient or advanced on state tests by the year 2014 (NCLB, 2007).

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Merriam (1998) pointed out that the integrity and competence of the researcher must be considered when limitations are addressed. The researcher was cognizant of this reality as the study progressed and therefore kept this in mind as data were analyzed. The researcher entered the study with the belief that the principal of a school has an impact on student achievement and remained neutral through the process of data collection and analysis. To increase the likelihood that the participants were honest in their responses, the researcher received permission from the Institutional Review Board from the University of Missouri-Columbia (see Appendix A) prior to interviews and focus groups. The process included the participants' completion of and agreement with the Informed Consent (see Appendix B). Following the transcription of the interviews and focus groups, member-checking by the participants was utilized to ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of their statements (Creswell, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Another limitation of the study was the location of the school and socioeconomic level of the patrons, both of which must be thought of when considering the transferability (Yin, 2003) of the study. Finding an exact replica of the school location

and demographics would be impossible, so it must be considered as possibly limiting to the study. Further, each state gives a different test of proficiency. This study was conducted in Missouri, so applying the findings to a school in a different state must also be considered when limitations are examined.

Lastly, this qualitative research study was conducted in a rural, high poverty school in Missouri. A single case study limits the information to one site which may be an anomaly or outlier (Creswell, 2007; Fowler, 2004; Yin, 2003) due to the high academic achievement of the students. However, though a single case study may appear to be limited when compared to a multi-case study, the researcher has the ability to examine the case in-depth and create a more rich, thick description (Merriam, 1998) of what has been done to increase and sustain the high academic achievement of the students at the site. This study can, therefore, be replicated in different locations with more information than a multi-case study with less depth (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003).

Implications for Practice

As evidenced by the findings, the role of the transformational leader (principal) has a direct impact on increasing student achievement (Fullan, 2001; Hedgpeth, 2000). Since principals in high performing schools spend 81% more time practicing transformational leadership than those in average schools (Ellis, 1984; Lieberman, 1995) the dimensions of transformational leadership are worth putting into practice. Further, the themes that emerged from the research should be considered by leaders of all schools, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Transformational leadership is defined by Bass (1985) as a leader who is charismatic, inspires higher motivation, creates intellectual stimulation, and provides

individualized consideration for followers. Therefore, the following four dimensions

must be in place by the principal to create the synergy to cause an increase in student

achievement: (1) individualized influence; (2) inspirational motivation; (3) intellectual

stimulation; and (4) individualized consideration (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Bass, 1999;

Burns, 1978). These dimensions were present in the leadership at Silver Lake Elementary

School, according to the perceptions of the participants of the study. Therefore, four of

the following five implications for practice were derived from Bass' (1985) definition of

transformational leadership.

The first implication for practice would be for a leader to utilize individualized

influence, also known as charisma, to impact student achievement. In the case study, Mr.

Parsons' charisma was evident through his day-to-day interactions with students, parents,

and colleagues and documented through observations of the researcher. He treated

everyone with respect and in turn was treated respectfully. Though parents may have had

hard feelings about an incident, it was never taken personally by Mr. Parsons.

Additionally, his ability to network within the community to ensure no child went

without basic supplies or gifts at Christmas impacted students of Silver Lake Elementary

daily.

A second implication for practice would be another dimension of transformational

leadership identified as inspirational motivation. A transformational leader creates an

environment in which people want to do more for the organization. Silver Lake

Elementary School is a perfect example of a setting entrenched in inspirational

motivation. Mr. Parsons was visible in halls, in the cafeteria, in classrooms, and in his

office. He has an acute awareness of what learning is taking place, as well as knowing the

staff and students on a personal level. Students worked hard to be able to go to Mr.

Parsons' office in order to share their academic success with him. He reciprocated by

celebrating each success with each individual. Likewise, teachers wanted to have their

dialogue with Mr. Parsons be positive about what was occurring in classrooms. Teachers

shared with the researcher that they wanted to have their data in advance of their data

conversations so they could point out specific areas of strength as well as where the class

needed remediation. Mr. Parsons shared in his interview with the researcher that he tries

to have personal conversations with teachers each day. He said that people will do

anything for someone they know cares about them, which was the case with the staff and

students of Silver Lake Elementary School, which was true by all observations,

interviews, and focus groups completed by the researcher.

A third implication for practice is the next dimension of transformational

leadership identified as intellectual stimulation. Mr. Parsons, as well as the district

administrators of Silver Lake, agreed that hopping on bandwagons was not the way to

operate. Therefore, decisions regarding implementation of a program, book study, or any

other outside addition to the building came only after thoughtful consideration. Mr.

Parsons knows his staff is well-educated and the staff has high expectations when it

comes to professional growth activities. Mr. Parsons shared that though teachers are able

to attend external professional growth experiences, they are not expected to implement

the learning if they do not feel it is best for the students. Further, when a book of interest

is given to him for a potential book study, he will read it and discuss with colleagues the

option of sharing it with the staff prior to implementation. Through rich conversations

over data, various student situations, discipline, areas of need, and other timely topics Mr.

Parsons can make informed decisions about how to stimulate the intellect of his colleagues. Effective transformational leaders can learn a lot by following his example. Too often leaders find they must implement the newest study, curriculum, or book without thinking of the staff and students they serve.

A fourth implication for practice is individualized consideration, the fourth dimension of transformational leadership. One of the greatest strengths of effective leaders is also one of the most time consuming: knowing the individual level of each person working within the organization. Taking the time to learn about each individual, their learning style, their level of expertise on various topics, and what their professional goals are is very worthwhile for those leaders who go through the process. Mr. Parsons told the researcher that knowing where the teacher was in their growth and where they wanted to go professionally allowed him to make the best use of time for each individual. The teachers also shared this was one of the things they appreciated the most about Mr. Parsons' leadership. The teachers felt that he knew them, cared about them, and would do whatever it would take to help them make the students of Silver Lake Elementary successful.

A final implication for practice would be the implementation of the themes identified through this study: (1) Educating the Whole Child, with the subthemes of (a) providing basic needs (b) academic interventions based on achievement data, (c) an emphasis on reading, (d) extended academic time, and (e) relationships, and (2) High Expectations of Stakeholders, with the subthemes of (a) consistent student expectations, (b) increased staff accountability, and (c) community involvement. As most of these themes could be implemented with minimal costs, the ability for schools, regardless of

socioeconomic status, to implement would be probable. The outcome of such increased and sustained high achievement as Silver Lake Elementary School has been able to attain is desirable and mandated through the legislation of NCLB.

Recommendations for Future Study

The results of this study add to the body of knowledge that already exists on high performing schools with a high incidence of poverty. As stated in the literature review, few schools in Missouri have been identified as high performing schools of poverty. Due to the accountability mandates of NCLB, that all students will reach the level of proficient or advanced by 2014 (USDOE, 2007), identification and examination of such schools is needed in order to advance to these levels. Not only is the average score of the student body expected to meet this level of proficiency so, too, are the scores of various subgroups in the student body, including economically disadvantaged students (USDOE, 2007). From this research study, three recommendations for future research are suggested and provided within this section.

The first recommendation for future research would be conducting a multi-case study analysis of several high performing schools with a high incidence of poverty. Creswell (2007) espoused that a multi-case study allows for the researcher to explore multiple sites and processes that are "bounded by time and activity" (p. 15) to collect open-ended, emergent data (Creswell) one could use to develop relevant themes for analysis. This approach also provides the reader a "…thick description" including: "…time, place, context, and culture" which is critical for transferability, or the ability to "…determine the degree of similarity between the study sites and the receiving context"

(Mertens, 2005, p. 256). Due to the limited availability of high performing schools in Missouri, the researcher opted for a single, in-depth study of one site.

A second recommendation for future research would be to study a different subgroup that consistently struggles to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on state testing and has a documented achievement gap when compared to other groups of students. Due to the legislation of NCLB mandating that all subgroups must meet AYP in order for a school as a whole to meet AYP (NCLB, 2005), this would be an appropriate recommendation for future research. Under NCLB, AYP goals and test scores are divided into the following subgroups of students: ethnicity, students with disabilities, socioeconomic level, English Language Learners, and overall school performance (USDOE, 2005). Further, with the expectation that all students achieve at the levels of proficient or advanced by 2014 (USDOE, 2007), this research could help guide educators struggling to meet AYP with different subgroups. Findings from such research would permit the leadership processes and structures implemented in such schools to be shared with leaders of schools failing to meet the accountability mandates of NCLB and MSIP for different subgroups (MODESE, 2011; USDOE, 2007). Due to the subgroup of socioeconomic level being a group that consistently struggles with meeting state and federal accountability mandates, the researcher chose to focus on the subgroup with one of the largest achievement gaps documented through research (Chenoweth, 2009a; Haycock, 2001, 2006; Reeves, 2009).

The final recommendation for future research would be to study a cohort group in a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty, referred to as a longitudinal study (Creswell, 2007). This would allow a researcher to study one set of students as they

move through their school years to record the data over time. The leadership processes and structures would be captured as principals would change at minimum at each different level of school (elementary, middle and high school) the students would progress through. Additionally, studying a case over time would allow for more data of all types: anecdotal; observation; artifacts; documents; interviews; and focus groups to be analyzed to contribute to a rich data set (Creswell; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). The current subgroup studied, high poverty, would not be ideal to examine over time due to the transient nature of high poverty families (Payne, 2003, 2009). Therefore, this type of study would not lend itself well to the current research.

Additionally, when considering future research, the inclusion of parents to the study introduced a dynamic not typically included in studies such as this. Therefore, it is recommended to include the parent perspective when conducting future research.

The researcher hopes the outcomes of the research findings will be implemented in schools across the country. The themes of Educating the Whole Child and High Expectations for All Stakeholders can easily be applied to any learning environment with minimal to no cost and with high return of an increase in academic achievement for all students, not just the subgroup struggling. Further, the leadership processes and structures implemented at Silver Lake Elementary School by Greg Parsons were essential to the success of the school, so the right leader must be in place for the leadership processes and structures to have the positive impact on student achievement, teacher buy-in, and community support. Therefore, looking through the lens of transformational leadership, the themes presented in this study can make a difference in any school, regardless of socioeconomic level or location.

Concluding Overview

This qualitative single case study examined the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the leadership processes and structures the principal had implemented in a high performing, high poverty school. The findings of this inquiry identified the need for two overarching themes to be present in a school: that of Educating the Whole Child and that of High Expectations of Stakeholders. Through the process of interviews, focus groups, analysis of artifacts, documents, and observations, two themes emerged that were perceived by stakeholders to ultimately impact the academic achievement of each child. Children of poverty were the focus of this study and have unique needs that must be met prior to the occurrence of academic success. Maslow (1943) referred to those needs as the hierarchy of needs. Historically, there has been an achievement gap between students of poverty and their peers, which has continued to widen after a brief narrowing in the 1990s (Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Haycock, 2001; 2006). Researchers have identified schools that have met academic success with the subgroups schools are held accountable for on state testing for NCLB requirements (Chenoweth, 2007, 2009a, 2009b; NCLB, 2005; Reeves, 2001). The success of schools, such as Silver Lake Elementary School, offers hope to schools struggling to increase the academic achievement of their students.

In conclusion, based on the findings, the overarching question guiding this study "How do leaders in schools of poverty impact student achievement successfully?" was answered. Through the analysis of the perceptions of stakeholders, it became clear that educators must work with the whole child in order to find success in academic achievement. Students of poverty come to school lacking many of the foundational skills

of their peers (Payne, 2003), which can set them back if not addressed early. Additionally, students of poverty need to have their basic needs met, as do all humans, prior to moving to the higher levels of need (Maslow, 1943). The staff members of Silver Lake Elementary School are aware of basic, as well as academic, needs of each child and work to ensure all needs are met. The support to ensure those needs are met comes directly from the principal of the school. Time and time again stakeholders mentioned the compassion of Mr. Parsons for all students of the school. If educational leaders took the time to invest in each student's unique needs, perhaps the level of success would be much higher.

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University of Missouri-Columbia Institutional Review Board Approval

Campus Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia

485 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211-1150
PHONE: (573) 882-9585
FAX: (573) 884-0663

March 28, 2012

Principal Investigator: Woods, Elizabeth H
Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (ELPA)

Your Application to project entitled *A Case Study of the perceptions of stakeholders regarding transformational leadership processes and structures implemented in a high poverty, high achieving school* was reviewed and approved by the MU Campus Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	1201880
Initial Application Approval Date	March 28, 2012
IRB Expiration Date	March 28, 2013
Level of Review	Expedited
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Expedited Categories	45 CFR 46.110.a(f)(6) 45 CFR 46.110.a(f)(7)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Type of Consent	Written Consent

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated problems, serious adverse events, and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
3. All modifications must be IRB approved prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk.
4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
5. The Continuing Review Status Report must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date.
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize the IRB stamped consent documents and other approved research documents located within the document storage section of eIRB.

If you have any questions, please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585 or umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu.

Thank you,

Charles Borduin, PhD
Campus IRB Chair

APPENDIX B

Gatekeeper and Informed Consent Forms

1. *District Gatekeeper Permission for Principal, Teachers, Central Office Administrator, and Parent Participation Letter*

2. *Letter of Informed Consent - Principal Participant*

3. *Informed Consent from Principal Participant*

4. *Letter of Informed Consent – Central Office Administrator Participant*

5. *Informed Consent from Central Office Administrator Participant*

6. *Letter of Informed Consent – Teacher Participant*

7. *Informed Consent from Teacher Participant*

8. *Letter of Informed Consent – Parent Participant*

9. *Informed Consent from Parent Participant*

**District Gatekeeper Permission for Principal, Teachers,
Central Office Administrator, and Parent Participation Letter**
< Name of District>

Dear <Title> <First Name> <Last Name>,

I would like to request your permission to invite staff members and parents of <Name of School>, the principal, and someone from the district level in your school district to participate in a research study entitled: *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School.* I am examining the leadership processes and structures being implemented in the school that have been relevant to bringing about the high student achievement. The information gathered should be beneficial to educational leaders responsible for bolstering the achievement levels of students in their schools as identified by the tenets of NCLB. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

For the study, Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) data was pulled from all schools in Missouri along with their socioeconomic status. The data was then filtered to include a building principal who has been in place for at least five years. I am seeking your permission as the Gatekeeper of the <Name of School District> to work the principal of <Name of School> for the purpose of inviting a variety of parents and staff members, including the building principal, to participate in this study. The selected staff members, parents, and central office member from your district will then be asked to participate in either a brief, up to 45 minutes depending on responses, individual interview session on-site or a small focus group interview lasting up to 45 minutes. In addition, I would like permission to review any documents that you give me permission to examine. I would also like to request up to two days of observation on site to record anecdotal notes. A copy of the principal, central office administrator, teacher, and parent informed consent forms are attached for your review.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary. The participants may withdraw from participation at any time they wish without penalty, including in the middle of or after completion of the interview. Participants' answers and the building's identity will remain confidential, and separate from any identifying information. The names of participants, and their corresponding institutions, will not be included in the dissertation nor in future publications of this study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about participation either by phone at (816) 719-6472 or by electronic mail at woods.hayet@gmail.com. In addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Barbara N. Martin, who can be reached at 660-543-8823 or by email at bmartin@ucmo.edu.

If you choose to allow me to contact you regarding the participation and selection of teachers and parents for the focus group interviews in this study, please complete the attached permission form. You should retain a copy of this letter and your written consent for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

E. Hayet Woods
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

**Administrative Permission for Principal, Teacher,
Central Office Administrator, and Parent Participation**

I, <Name of Gatekeeper>, grant permission for staff members and parents in my district to be contacted regarding participation in the study *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School* conducted by E. Hayet Woods, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

By signing this permission form, I understand that the following safeguards are in place to protect principals choosing to participate:

- All participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point before culmination of the study without penalty.
- All responses will be used for dissertation research and for potential future journal publications.
- All identities and affiliations will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- The interviews will take approximately forty-five minutes to complete.
- The researcher will be reviewing district and school documents given by the principal of the school.
- The researcher will be observing informally throughout the building for up to two days.

Please keep the consent letter and a copy of the signed consent form for your records. If you choose to grant permission for teachers in your school district to participate in this study, please complete this *Administrative Permission for Principal, Teacher, Central Office Administrator, and Parent Participation Form***,** either scan and e-mail it or seal it in the enclosed stamped envelope, and return to Hayet Woods as soon as possible.

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I grant permission for staff members in my district to be contacted and invited to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Title/Position: _____

School/District: _____

**Please return to: E. Hayet Woods, 1041 Maple Woods Drive. Liberty, MO 64068
Cell Phone: 816-719-6472
Email:** woods.hayet@gmail.com

Letter of Informed Consent - Principal Participant

February 14, 2012

Dear <Name of Principal>, Principal,

Thank you for considering participation in a research study titled *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School.* This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have been a principal in a high performing, high poverty school and are currently working as a principal in a PK-12 educational institution. The information gathered should be beneficial to PK-12 educational leaders responsible for bolstering the achievement of a diverse student population.

Researcher: Ms. E. Hayet Woods. University of Missouri, Doctoral Candidate, please contact the researcher by email at woods.hayet@gmail.com or by phone at 816-719-6472.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Barbara Martin, University of Central Missouri, please contact Dr. Martin by e-mail at bmartin@ucmo.edu or by phone at 660-543-8823.

Institutional Review Board: University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board, 483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211. If you have questions regarding your right as a research participant please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to add to the body of knowledge about increasing the academic achievement of students of poverty as perceived by principals in the field. The researcher will examine the perceptions of teachers and parents in your building, along with a Central Office staff member. The researcher will also examine documents the principal believes are pertinent to the study as well as observing informally throughout the building for up to two days.

  The following questions guide this qualitative study:

1. What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement of students from poverty?

2. What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students from poverty?

3. How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed how they behave in their school?

4. How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of the principal?

Procedures: If you give your consent to participate in this study, the researcher will conduct a 30 to 45 minute interview at your school, in a designated room or office. The interview will be audio-taped. The questions will be semi-structured with the opportunity to provide open-ended answers. In the event significant new findings develop during the course of the study, the researcher may ask you to participate in additional audio-recorded interviews via telephone. In addition to being recorded, all interviews will be transcribed verbatim for use by the researcher. The researcher may also ask additional questions of you via electronic mail. All participants will be allowed to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Consent: To participate in this study, please sign the consent form indicating you understand and agree to participate in the study. A copy of this form will be provided to you for your records.

Sincerely,

E. Hayet Woods
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

INFORMED CONSENT FROM PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT

I, _____, agree to participate in the *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School* by E. Hayet Woods, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

By signing this consent form and participating within the interview process, you understand that the following safeguards are in place to ensure protection:

    1. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions prior to the research study and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

    2. Your responses during the research study will be used for the dissertation and future potential publications regarding this subject.

    3. You understand this is a minimal risk study. The only foreseeable risks would be if information was compromised and given to the wrong participants. The researcher will avoid such risks by keeping the information confidential and kept in a locked location.

        The documents will be stored electronically and password protected. The only persons with access will be the researcher and advisor.

    4. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, including in the middle of interviews or after it is completed.

        If you should chose to withdraw, you may do so at any time with no penalty or loss of benefits.

    5. Your identity and the off-campus center will be confidential in the reporting of results. Your name or your corresponding institution will not be listed in the dissertation or any future publications of this study.

    6. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect employment in any way.

Please keep a copy of the consent letter and a signed copy of the consent form for your records. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher.

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date:_____

Title/Position: _____

School/District: _____

Contact Information:

Phone _____ (circle one)   WORK   HOME   CELL

Best time for contact: _____

E-mail:_____

Please return to: E. Hayet Woods, 1041 Maple Woods Drive. Liberty, MO 64068
Cell Phone: 816-719-6472
Email: woods.hayet@gmail.com (*scan to email is fine*)

Letter of Informed Consent – Central Office Participant

February 14, 2012

Dear (Participant):

Thank you for considering participation in a research study titled *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School.* This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have worked with a principal in a high performing, high poverty school and are currently working in a PK-12 educational institution. The information gathered should be beneficial to PK-12 educational leaders responsible for bolstering the achievement of a diverse student population.

Researcher: Ms. E. Hayet Woods. University of Missouri, Doctoral Candidate, please contact the researcher by email at woods.hayet@gmail.com or by phone at 816-719-6472.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Barbara Martin, University of Central Missouri, please contact Dr. Martin by e-mail at bmartin@ucmo.edu or by phone at 660-543-8823.

Institutional Review Board: University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board, 483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211. If you have questions regarding your right as a research participant please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to add to the body of knowledge about increasing the academic achievement of students of poverty as perceived by principals in the field. The researcher will examine the perceptions of teachers and parents in one of your elementary school buildings, along with the former principal. The researcher will also examine documents the principal believes are pertinent to the study as well as observing informally throughout the building for up to two days.

The following questions guide this qualitative study:

1. What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement of students from poverty?

2. What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students from poverty?

3. How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed how they behave in their school?

4. How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of the principal?

Procedures: If you give your consent to participate in this study, the researcher will conduct a 30 to 45 minute interview at your school, in a designated room or office. The interview will be audio-taped. The questions will be semi-structured with the opportunity to provide open-ended answers. In the event significant new findings develop during the course of the study, the researcher may ask you to participate in additional audio-recorded interviews via telephone. In addition to being recorded, all interviews will be transcribed verbatim for use by the researcher. The researcher may also ask additional questions of you via electronic mail. All participants will be allowed to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Consent: To participate in this study, please sign the consent form indicating you understand and agree to participate in the study. A copy of this form will be provided to you for your records.

Sincerely,

E. Hayet Woods
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

INFORMED CONSENT FROM CENTRAL OFFICE PARTICIPANT

I, _____, agree to participate in the *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School* by E. Hayet Woods, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

By signing this consent form and participating within the interview process, you understand that the following safeguards are in place to ensure protection:

  1. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions prior to the research study and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
  2. Your responses during the research study will be used for the dissertation and future potential publications regarding this subject.
  3. You understand this is a minimal risk study. The only foreseeable risks would be if information was compromised and given to the wrong participants. The researcher will avoid such risks by keeping the information confidential and kept in a locked location.
      The documents will be stored electronically and password protected. The only persons with access will be the researcher and advisor.
  4. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, including in the middle of interviews or after it is completed.
      If you should chose to withdraw, you may do so at any time with no penalty or loss of benefits.
  5. Your identity and the off-campus center will be confidential in the reporting of results. Your name or your corresponding institution will not be listed in the dissertation or any future publications of this study.
  6. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect employment in any way.

Please keep a copy of the consent letter and a signed copy of the consent form for your records. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher.

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date:_____

Title/Position: _____

School/District: _____

Contact Information:

Phone _____ (circle one)   WORK   HOME   CELL

Best time for contact: _____

E-mail:_____

Please return to: E. Hayet Woods, 1041 Maple Woods Drive. Liberty, MO 64068
Cell Phone: 816-719-6472
Email: woods.hayet@gmail.com (*scan to email is fine*)

Letter of Informed Consent – Teacher Participant

February 14, 2012

Dear (Participant):

Thank you for considering participation in a research study titled *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School.* This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have been a principal in a high performing, high poverty school and are currently working as a teacher in a PK-12 educational institution. The information gathered should be beneficial to PK-12 educational leaders responsible for bolstering the achievement of a diverse student population.

Researcher: Ms. E. Hayet Woods. University of Missouri, Doctoral Candidate, please contact the researcher by email at woods.hayet@gmail.com or by phone at 816-719-6472.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Barbara Martin, University of Central Missouri, please contact Dr. Martin by e-mail at bmartin@ucmo.edu or by phone at 660-543-8823.

Institutional Review Board: University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board, 483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211. If you have questions regarding your right as a research participant please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to add to the body of knowledge about increasing the academic achievement of students of poverty as perceived by principals in the field. The researcher will examine the perceptions of teachers and parents in your building, along with a Central Office staff member, and the principal. The researcher will also examine documents the principal believes are pertinent to the study as well as observing informally throughout the building for up to two days.

The following questions guide this qualitative study:

1. What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement of students from poverty?

2. What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students from poverty?

3. How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed how they behave in their school?

4. How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of the principal?

Procedures: If you give your consent to participate in this study, the researcher will conduct a Focus Group (group of people together answering questions) for approximately 45 minutes at your school, in a designated room or office. The focus group will be audio-taped. The questions will be semi-structured with the opportunity to provide open-ended answers. In addition to being recorded, all interviews will be transcribed verbatim for use by the researcher. All participants will be allowed to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Consent: To participate in this study, please sign the consent form indicating you understand and agree to participate in the study. A copy of this form will be provided to you for your records.

Sincerely,

E. Hayet Woods
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

INFORMED CONSENT FROM TEACHER PARTICIPANT

I, _____, agree to participate in the *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School* by E. Hayet Woods, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

By signing this consent form and participating within the interview process, you understand that the following safeguards are in place to ensure protection:

1. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions prior to the research study and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. Your responses during the research study will be used for the dissertation and future potential publications regarding this subject.

3. You understand this is a minimal risk study. The only foreseeable risks would be if information was compromised and given to the wrong participants. The researcher will avoid such risks by keeping the information confidential and kept in a locked location.

   The documents will be stored electronically and password protected. The only persons with access will be the researcher and advisor.

4. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, including in the middle of interviews or after it is completed.

   If you should chose to withdraw, you may do so at any time with no penalty or loss of benefits.

5. Your identity and the off-campus center will be confidential in the reporting of results. Your name or your corresponding institution will not be listed in the dissertation or any future publications of this study.

6. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect employment in any way.

Please keep a copy of the consent letter and a signed copy of the consent form for your records. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher.

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date:_____

Title/Position: _____

School/District: _____

Contact Information:
Phone _____ (circle one)   WORK   HOME   CELL

Best time for contact: _____

E-mail:_____

Please return to: E. Hayet Woods, 1041 Maple Woods Drive. Liberty, MO 64068
Cell Phone: 816-719-6472
Email: woods.hayet@gmail.com (*scan to email is fine*)

Letter of Informed Consent – Parent Participant

February 14, 2012

Dear (Participant):

Thank you for considering participation in a research study titled *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School.* This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a parent in a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty.

Researcher: Ms. E. Hayet Woods. University of Missouri, Doctoral Candidate, please contact the researcher by email at woods.hayet@gmail.com or by phone at 816-719-6472.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Barbara Martin, University of Central Missouri, please contact Dr. Martin by e-mail at bmartin@ucmo.edu or by phone at 660-543-8823.

Institutional Review Board: University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board, 483 McReynolds, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211. If you have questions regarding your right as a research participant please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to add to the body of knowledge about increasing the academic achievement of students of poverty as perceived by principals in the field. The researcher will examine the perceptions of teachers and parents in your building, along with a Central Office staff member, and the former principal. The researcher will also examine documents the principal believes are pertinent to the study as well as observing informally throughout the building for up to two days.

The following questions guide this qualitative study:

1. What leadership processes and structures do teachers and district leaders perceive the principal has implemented that has led to an increase in academic achievement of students from poverty?

2. What leadership processes and structures does the principal perceive he has implemented that has led to an increase in the academic achievement of students from poverty?

3. How do the teachers perceive that the leadership style of the principal has changed how they behave in their school?

4. How do parents of students in a high poverty school view the leadership style of the principal?

Procedures: If you give your consent to participate in this study, the researcher will conduct a Focus Group (group of people together answering questions) for approximately 45 minutes at your school, in a designated room or office. The focus group will be audio-taped. The questions will be semi-structured with the opportunity to provide open-ended answers. In addition to being recorded, all interviews will be transcribed verbatim for use by the researcher. All participants will be allowed to review the transcripts to ensure accuracy.

Consent: To participate in this study, please sign the consent form indicating you understand and agree to participate in the study. A copy of this form will be provided to you for your records.

Sincerely,

E. Hayet Woods
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

INFORMED CONSENT FROM PARENT PARTICIPANT

I, _____, agree to participate in the *A Case Study of the Perceptions of Stakeholders Regarding Transformational Leadership Processes and Structures Implemented in a High Poverty, High Achieving School* by E. Hayet Woods, doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

By signing this consent form and participating within the interview process, you understand that the following safeguards are in place to ensure protection:

1. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions prior to the research study and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. Your responses during the research study will be used for the dissertation and future potential publications regarding this subject.
3. You understand this is a minimal risk study. The only foreseeable risks would be if information was compromised and given to the wrong participants. The researcher will avoid such risks by keeping the information confidential and kept in a locked location.
   The documents will be stored electronically and password protected. The only persons with access will be the researcher and advisor.
4. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, including in the middle of interviews or after it is completed.
   If you should chose to withdraw, you may do so at any time with no penalty or loss of benefits.
5. Your identity and the off-campus center will be confidential in the reporting of results. Your name or your corresponding institution will not be listed in the dissertation or any future publications of this study.
6. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect employment in any way.

Please keep a copy of the consent letter and a signed copy of the consent form for your records. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher.

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signed: _____ Date:_____

Title/Position: _____

School/District: _____

Contact Information:

Phone _____ (circle one)　　WORK　　HOME　　CELL

Best time for contact: _____

E-mail:_____

Please return to: E. Hayet Woods, 1041 Maple Woods Drive. Liberty, MO 64068
Cell Phone: 816-719-6472
Email: woods.hayet@gmail.com (*scan to email is fine*)

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocols

1. *Principal Interview Protocol*

2. *Central Office Administrator Protocol*

Focus Group Protocols

1. *Teacher Focus Group Protocol*

2. *Parent Focus Group Protocol*

Principal Participant Interview Protocol

Date: _____   Start Time: _____

Introduction:
Hello. First off, I would like to thank you for taking the time to answer my questions focusing on your experiences as a principal in a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty. My name is Hayet Woods, and I will be conducting the interview. In order to ensure accuracy and my full attention on you, I will be audio taping the interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript.

Remember, you should feel free to answer honestly. Additionally, if I ask something you are unclear about, please ask clarifying questions. If you want to follow-up on a question or give an example, feel free to do so. I want this to be more of a conversation between professionals.

Our session will last about forty-five minutes and we will not be taking a formal break. Please let me know if you need to leave the table for any reason. I look forward to learning from you.

Questions	**Research Question(s)**

Opening Questions: 5 min.

1. How long have you been a principal at this school? 2. Have you had any previous principalship experiences? If so, at what levels and for how long?	Participant background

Introductory Questions: 5-10 min.

3. Tell me a little about your school and the community. *Probes: What are the demographics of the school in regard to enrollment, diversity, and socio-economic status? What are some of the rituals and traditions your school participates in?*	Q2 D, P
4. Suppose I am a new student to your school and I ask you what I need to do to succeed here. What would you tell me?	Q2 Ch, M, I

Transition Questions: 5-10 min.

5. How are you addressing the achievement gap between children of poverty and their peers?	Q2 P, M, I
6. How has the No Child Left Behind Act influenced the way your school operates?	Q2 Ch, M, I

Key Questions: 30-40 min.

7. What professional development activities have you provided or been provided regarding teaching children of poverty? *Probes: This may be sessions at professional conferences, book studies, video studies, etc.*	Q2 I
8. If you were to describe your leadership style, what would that be? *Probes: Leadership styles are often a combination of two or more, please be specific when describing why you feel you lean toward one over another.* 9. Describe specific leadership processes and structures that you have implemented that have led to the success of the students at your school using your leadership style as the foundation? *Probes: Data analysis, leadership behaviors, lesson plan format & procedures, observation and evaluation tools, etc.* 10. How did you create the vision for your school? How do you keep the vision alive and a part of day-to-day conversation? 11. How have the expectations for teachers changed under your leadership? *Probes: In regard to curriculum and instruction that is rigorous, multicultural and inclusive; structures and norms; discipline; policies and procedures; and schedules.*	Q2 Ch, M, I, C Q2 Ch, M, I, C Q2 Ch, M, I, C Q2 M, I, C

12. How has the behavior of the teachers changed since you implemented the expectations? *Probes: Use of data? Were they resistant initially? Have they embraced teaching the different demographics present in your building?* 13. How have the parents responded to your leadership?	Q2 M, I, C Q2 D, Ch, C

Ending Question: 5-10 min

14. Is there anything else you would wish to tell me that I have not asked?	Q1, OAQ

Closing:

Thank you so much for your time. I will transcribe our interview and ensure you an opportunity to review the transcript. Remember, your identity not be used in the final format. Please feel free to contact me at any time with additional questions or information.

Central Office Participant Interview Protocol

Date: _____   Start Time: _____

<u>Introduction:</u>
Hello. First off, I would like to thank you for taking the time to answer my questions focusing on your experiences as an administrator at the district level with high performing schools with a high incidence of poverty. My name is Hayet Woods, and I will be conducting the interview. In order to ensure accuracy and my full attention on you, I will be audio taping the interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript.

Remember, you should feel free to answer honestly. Additionally, if I ask something you are unclear about, please ask clarifying questions. If you want to follow-up on a question or give an example, feel free to do so. I want this to be more of a conversation between professionals.

Our session will last about thirty to forty-five minutes and we will not be taking a formal break. Please let me know if you need to leave the table for any reason. Let's begin by finding out more about each other. I look forward to learning from you!

Questions	**Research Question(s)**

Opening Questions: 5 min.

1. How long have you been an administrator at the district level? 2. Have you had any previous educational experiences? If so, at what levels and for how long?	Participant background

Introductory Questions: 5-10 min.

3. Tell me a little about the case study school and the community. *Probes: What are the demographics of the school in regard to enrollment, diversity, and socio-economic status? What are some of the rituals and traditions your school participates in?* 4. Suppose I am a new *teacher* to this school and I ask you what I need to know to be successful here. What would you tell me?	Q1 D, P Q1 D, P, M, I, C,

Transition Questions: 5-10 min.

5. How are teachers in this school addressing the achievement gap between children of poverty and their peers in your district?	Q1P, M, I, C
6. How has the No Child Left Behind Act influenced the way your district operates?	Q1 M, I

Key Questions: 30-40 min.

7. What professional development activities has the district provided regarding teaching children of poverty? *Probes: This may be sessions at professional conferences, book studies, video studies, etc.*	Q1 I
8. If you were to describe the leadership behaviors of the building principal, what would they be? What would you say the leadership style of the principal is? *Probes: Charisma, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individual Consideration*	Q1 Ch, M, I, C
9. Describe specific leadership processes and structures the principal has implemented that have led to the success of the students at this school using the leadership style of the building principal as the foundation? *Probes: Data analysis, lesson plan format & procedures, observation and evaluation tools, etc.*	Q1 Ch, M, I, C
10. How have parents received the changes implemented under the current principal?	Q1 D, P, Ch, C
11. How have the teachers changed under the leadership of the current principal?	Q1 I, C
12. What role do teachers have in decision making?	Q1 I, C
13. How was the building's vision statement created? Is it something that has changed under the principal?	Q1 Ch, M, I, C

Ending Question: 5-10 min

13. Is there anything else you would wish to tell me that I have not asked?	Q1 P, D, Ch, M, I, C

Closing:

Thank you so much for your time. I will transcribe our interview and ensure you an opportunity to review the transcript. Remember, your identity not be used in the final format. Please feel free to contact me at any time with additional questions or information.

Date: _____ Start Time: _____

Introduction:
Hello. First off, I would like to thank you for taking the time to answer my questions focusing on your experiences as educators in a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty. My name is Hayet Woods, and I will be conducting the interview. In order to ensure accuracy and my full attention on you, I will be audio taping the interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript.

Remember, you should feel free to answer honestly. Additionally, if I ask something you are unclear about, please ask clarifying questions. If you want to follow-up on a question or give an example, feel free to do so. I want this to be more of a conversation between professionals, therefore anyone is free to answer and add to answers of colleagues.

Our session will last about thirty to forty-five minutes and we will not be taking a formal break. Please let me know if you need to leave the table for any reason. Let's begin by finding out more about each other. I look forward to learning from you!

Questions	**Research Question(s)**
Opening Questions: 5 min.	

| 1. How long have you been a staff member at this school?

 2. Have you had any previous educational experiences? If so, at what levels and for how long? | Participant background |

Introductory Questions: 5-10 min.

| 3. Tell me a little about your school and the community.

 Probes: What are the demographics of the school in regard to enrollment, diversity, and socio-economic status? What are some of the rituals and traditions your school participates in?

 4. Suppose I am a new student to your school and I ask you what I need to do to succeed here. What would you tell me? | Q1 D, P

 Q1 Ch, M, I, C |

Transition Questions: 5-10 min.

5. How are you addressing the achievement gap between children of poverty and their peers?	Q1 P, M, I
6. How has this changed under this principal?	Q3 M, I, C

Key Questions: 30-40 min.

7. What professional development activities have you been provided? *Probes: Do teachers give input into the PD offered? Is it individualized or is it one size fits all? This may be sessions at professional conferences, book studies, video studies, etc.*	Q1, Q3 I, C
8. If you were to describe the leadership behaviors of your principal, what would they be? *Probes: Does the principal know student personal information? Teacher personal information? Care about individuals? Work to motivate people to do their best? Work to include staff? Collaborative? Spark your intelligence by asking deeper questions? What leadership style would you say best describes the principal?*	Q1 Ch, M, I, C
9. Describe specific leadership processes and structures your principal has implemented that have led to the success of the students at your school using your principal's leadership style as the foundation? *Probes: Data analysis, lesson plan format & procedures, observation and evaluation tools, etc.*	Q1 Ch, M, I, C
10. How was the school vision created? *Probes: Were teachers, students and/or parents involved?*	Q1, Q3 M, I, C
11. How has your principal's leadership processes and structures effected your instruction?	Q3 Ch, M, I, C

Ending Question: 5-10 min

12. Is there anything else you would wish to tell me that I have not asked?	Q1 P, Ch, M, I, C

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Closing:

Thank you so much for your time. I will transcribe our interview and ensure you an opportunity to review the transcript. Remember, your identity not be used in the final format. Please feel free to contact me at any time with additional questions or information.

Parent Focus Group Protocol

Date: _____   Start Time: _____

<u>Introduction:</u>
Hello. First off, I would like to thank you for taking the time to answer my questions focusing on your experiences as parents of children from a high performing school with a high incidence of poverty. My name is Hayet Woods, and I will be conducting the interview. In order to ensure accuracy and my full attention on you, I will be audio taping the interview. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript.

Remember, you should feel free to answer honestly. Additionally, if I ask something you are unclear about, please ask clarifying questions. If you want to follow-up on a question or give an example, feel free to do so. I want this to be more of a conversation between professionals, therefore anyone is free to answer and add to answers of colleagues.

Our session will last about thirty minutes and we will not be taking a formal break. Please let me know if you need to leave the table for any reason. Let's begin by finding out more about each other. I look forward to learning from you!

Questions	Research Question(s)

Opening Questions: 5 min.

1. How long have you had children attend this school?	Participant background

Introductory Questions: 5-10 min.

2. Tell me a little about your school and the community. *Probes: What are the demographics of the school in regard to enrollment, diversity, and socio-economic status? What are some of the rituals and traditions your school participates in?*	Q4 D, P
3. Suppose I am a new parent to your school and I ask you what my child needs to do to succeed here. What would you tell me?	Q4 D, P, Ch, M, I

Key Questions: 15-20 min.

4. If you were to describe the leadership behaviors of your child's principal, what would they be? *Probes: Does the principal know your child's academic and personal information? Care about individuals? Work to motivate people to do their*	Q4 Ch, M, I, C

best? Work to include parents? Collaborative? Spark your intelligence by asking deeper questions? What leadership style would you say best describes the principal?	
5. What would you say has led to the success of the students at this school using your principal's leadership as the foundation?	Q4 D, P, Ch, M, I, C
6. Do you know the vision of this school?	Q4 I
7. Do you know how the vision was created? *Probes: Were parents involved? How was it communicated?*	Q4 I
8. How have you been communicated with regarding your child's progress?	Q4 Ch, M

Ending Question: 5-10 min

9. Is there anything else you would wish to tell me that I have not asked?	Q4, OAQ

Closing:

Thank you so much for your time. I will transcribe our interview and ensure you an opportunity to review the transcript. Remember, your identity not be used in the final format. Please feel free to contact me at any time with additional questions or information.

APPENDIX D

On-Site Observation Form

Date _____

Beginning Time _____ Ending Time _____

Setting _____

Participant _____

Observations:

APPENDIX E

DATA CODES

A1	Administrator Participant 1
A2	Administrator Participant 2
E1	Educator Participant 1
E2	Educator Participant 2
E3	Educator Participant 3
E4	Educator Participant 4
E5	Educator Participant 5
P1	Parent Participant 1
P2	Parent Participant 2
P3	Parent Participant 3
P4	Parent Participant 4
P5	Parent Participant 5
I1	Interview with Principal
I2	Interview with Central Office Administrator
FG1	Focus Group with Teachers
FG2	Focus Group with Parents
FO1	Field Observation 1
FO2	Field Observation 2
POV	Poverty
CH	Charisma (Individualized Influence)
IM	Inspirational Motivation

IS   Intellectual Stimulation

IC   Individual Consideration

APPENDIX F

Document Review Form

Name of Document _____

Document # _____

Date Procured _____

Document Received From _____

Notes:

VITA

E. Hayet Jardak-Woods was born in St. Louis, Missouri, to Hedi and Bonnie Jardak. She graduated from Truman High School in Independence, Missouri. In 1990, she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Middle School Mathematics from the Central Missouri State University (renamed University of Central Missouri) – Warrensburg, Missouri. In 1996, she went on to earn her Master of Science degree in Educational Technology from Lesley College (renamed Lesley University) – Cambridge, Massachusetts. Following the path of a lifelong learner, she earned her Educational Specialist degree in Elementary and Secondary Administration from the University of Central Missouri – Warrensburg, Missouri, in 2006, followed by a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri – Columbia in 2012. Hayet is the first child of Hedi and Bonnie to receive a Doctorate degree, their influence and support had everything to do with this accomplishment.

Hayet's professional career consists of many diverse positions over the years. Starting out as a sixth-grade teacher in the Kearney R-I School District at Holt Elementary School, she held this position for six years. Upon the completion of her Master's degree in Educational Technology, she became the Instructional Technology teacher at Kearney Jr. High School in the same district. She held that position for four years before moving to the Independence School District as an Instructional Technology Integration Specialist for three years working with the teachers in the district on effectively implementing technology in the classroom. Following those three years, the position evolved into that of an Instructional Coach for all curricular areas which Hayet fulfilled for the next three years. During the coursework for her Educational Specialist

degree, the superintendent approached Hayet requesting she consider becoming and administrator, she agreed and became an Assistant Principal at Bridger Middle School in Independence, Missouri. After five years at Bridger Middle School, Hayet became the Assistant Principal at Smithville Middle School, in the Smithville R-II School District in Smithville, Missouri, where she currently works.

Hayet lives in Liberty, Missouri, with her husband, Ken, children, Patrick and Henry, mother-in-law, Maureen, and dog, Butterscotch. She has eagerly anticipated the time she would be able to spend with them upon the completion of her doctorate degree. As mentioned in the acknowledgements, family is of the utmost importance and Hayet is fortunate to have all of her immediate family, except her older sister, Amel, living in the Kansas City area.