THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP CAPACITY IN SUSTAINING THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE OF SCHOOLWIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to those in my life who have given me the strength and courage to achieve my dreams. They have encouraged me, tolerated me, and given me their support as I pursued this life long aspiration. I make this dedication to my father and my late mother, Nick and Nellie Heavrin, to my husband, Tim Combs, and to my sons, Jeffrey and Jeremy.
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“No man is an island, entire of itself.” --John Donne

This meditation authored in 1624 could have easily been in reference to the challenging journey of pursuing a doctoral degree for it was through the efforts and support of others that I have reached this final level of academic accomplishment.

I offer my most sincere gratitude to Dr. Barbara N. Martin who saw in me potential that I did not recognize and through her faith, I was able to achieve more than I would have thought possible. She was my advocate, my motivator, my mentor, and through all of this, is my friend.

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There are so many that played a part in my accomplishing this endeavor. I am indebted to them all and I thank you.
ABSTRACT

The purpose for this study was to examine what occurred within schools successfully implementing and sustaining school change through the examination of characteristics of leadership capacity. Leadership capacity was identified as broad-based, skillful participation that promoted the advancement of the capabilities of many organizational members to lead.

Quantitative analysis used to compare responses of teachers in schools identified as successfully sustaining school improvement with responses of teachers in schools identified as not yet successfully sustaining improvement resulted in the finding that there was a significant difference between the two school groups in all of the characteristics of leadership capacity. The effective size for each of the leadership capacity characteristics was positive and each characteristic was statistically significant for schools successfully sustaining school improvement. Principals of schools successful in sustaining school improvement demonstrated behaviors that promoted, supported, and encouraged the building of leadership capacity for lasting school improvement.

Successful school leadership builds trust, develops focus for the school, and convenes dialogue about teaching and learning. Implications for successful school leadership for sustaining school improvement involve taking additional care to enable broad teacher involvement. This is accomplished in creating meaning and committing to the values that meaning represents for the school, in sharing knowledge through questioning and inquiry, by participating fully in decision-making based on evidence, and reflecting on how practice impacts student learning.
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction to the Study

Background

The world is ensconced in a complex and fast-changing society, creating challenges for school leaders as they strive to prepare students for “an unknown and unknowable future” (Garmston & Wellman, 1999, p.1). Complicating this situation is the shift that has taken place in society’s views toward public education evidenced in the federal mandate increasing accountability for schools to improve student academic achievement through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (Chrisman, 2005; Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning [McREL], 2001). NCLB included substantial accountability standards for public schools and to ensure schools reach the ambitious goals of NCLB schools have to demonstrate significant annual achievement gains (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2004). NCLB was based on the assumption that all children can and will learn despite influences such as social class, gender, race, or cognitive ability. School personnel have had to adapt to meet these arduous challenges placed on the organization by changing conditions and environments, shifts in society, and increasing accountability demands.

While schools are expected to exhibit significant academic achievement gains regardless of the background or environmental factors impacting students, another mandate that predated NCLB was also creating accountability demands on schools. This mandate was issued to schools from the U.S. Secretary of Education in 1998, arriving in a document titled Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000). The compelling theme of the document was that
school personnel needed to make decisive efforts to respond to and to prevent violent behavior. Another theme found within the document was schools that are safe, effective, and orderly had environments where considerable effort was made to build and maintain secure school cultures. Yet, schools were experiencing an increase in students’ displaying antisocial behavior ranging from extreme forms of aggression and violence to less extreme forms of chronic problem behavior such as noncompliance and peer to peer conflict (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998). Schools were presented with the expectation of ensuring that all students, regardless of background, make annual academic achievement gains, while confronted with increases in disruptive behavior that interrupted and reduced the already limited amount of instructional time teachers had to prepare students for achieving academic gains.

When attempting to determine why there were increasing incidents of children engaging in challenging behavior in the school setting, researchers found compelling evidence that communities and parents, by failing to provide children engagement with the necessary social skills and models of appropriate social interaction, were contributing to an increase in children at-risk of displaying antisocial behavior (Lewis, et al. 1998). Educators responded with reactionary, punitive, exclusionary and aversive methods of enforcement of discipline in an attempt to reduce incidents of problem student behavior in the school setting (Sugai & Horner, 2002). However, studies of school discipline systems suggested that a reactionary and punitive approach in school discipline practices contributed to increasing rates of problem behavior including aggression, vandalism, truancy, tardiness, and students dropping out of school and found that negative consequences alone did not change problem behavior (Horner, Sugai, & Vincent, 2005;
Lewis, et al.). In response to these unpromising conclusions, researchers advocated for a shift in how schools addressed discipline with a school-wide systems approach to student behavior that emphasized prevention, intervention, and positive methods for addressing problem behavior (Lewis, et al.; Neresian, Todd, Lehmann, & Watson, 2000). Thus schools needed to proactively address student behavior to create an environment where student learning was the focus to meet the demands of NCLB and safe school legislation.

*School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports* (SW-PBS) is a systemic approach that emphasized school-wide efforts to develop effective behavior supports which are proactive and incorporated a comprehensive response to prevention and reduction of student problem behaviors. The practices and systems of SW-PBS are arranged along a continuum of support that addressed prevention from a three-tiered perspective (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Primary prevention is focused on decreasing new incidents of problem behavior by utilizing effective practices for all students in school-wide settings, non-classroom settings, and classroom settings. The secondary prevention process centered on reducing the number and severity of problem behavior incidents for a smaller percentage of students who were at risk and were in need of specialized supports. Tertiary prevention directed the focus on reducing incidents of problem behavior for students who were at a high level of risk for emotional, behavioral, and social failure by the use of specific and individualized supports. An academic approach to the development of social skills and appropriate behaviors was used for achieving social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviors for all students (Sugai & Horner). SW-PBS, as a prevention approach to discipline in school-wide settings, was a change from how schools had typically managed behavior.
As a systems approach to prevention of problem behaviors, implementation of SW-PBS for school organizations represented a shift from current practice to a proactive instructional approach that required a different way of thinking about discipline and behavior management. SW-PBS focused on desired outcomes, or what schools want to happen, as a way to identify appropriate behaviors for the school setting. This was done by emphasizing what behaviors students needed to do rather than concentrating on making a long listing of what students should not do at school, moving from a reactionary mentality toward creating a culture of competence for student behavior (Horner, et al., 2005). As such, SW-PBS required the members of the school organization to recognize the need for change and to employ an approach that changed how student behavior was perceived and managed by reforming policies, practices, and procedures.

Changing how a school approached student behavior meant changing embedded patterns with which the school organization operated and how members acted and defined the way the organization did business, or what Farmer regarded as “what is done, how it is done, and who is doing it” (1990, p.8). In regard to school change, Fullan (1993) stated that “it has long been known that skill and know-how are central to successful change” (p. 16). Schools implementing SW-PBS were involved in implementing a change initiative requiring the school to become and function as a learning organization to facilitate the process of change for this initiative.

As a learning organization, the school organization engaged in implementing SW-PBS undertook developing competencies and skills for inquiry, problem-solving, applying new practices, using data to make decisions, and other competencies needed for successful change (Conner, 1992; Fullan; McREL, 2000). Professional development,
training, and technical assistance for schools choosing to adopt and implement SW-PBS approaches to student behavior was provided by the Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), universities, and state level departments of education (Horner, Sugai & Vincent, 2005). Aligning with research on effective system change, school leadership teams participated in professional development and training that provided team members with skills, knowledge, and competencies to implement and sustain SW-PBS practices for meaningful change (Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Lewis, 2005).

When fully implementing SW-PBS, some schools experienced success in decreasing the amount of time spent on addressing problem behaviors while improvements in academic performance occurred over time (Horner, et al., 2005). Other indicators of effectiveness resulting from the program included increased time spent on instruction, improved school environments, and perceived improvement in school safety (Horner, et al.; Putman, Horner, & Algozzine, 2006). Although there was mounting evidence that SW-PBS was effective in decreasing incidents of problem behavior and increasing achievement, there were indications that maintaining implementation of the initiative was problematic for some schools (Horner, Todd, Lewis-Palmer, Irvin, Sugai, & Boland, 2004; Irwin & Algozzine, 2006; Illinois PBIS Network, n.d.).

Given the success of some schools at implementing and sustaining SW-PBS while other schools were not successful the question emerged: What occurred in schools successful in implementing and sustaining SW-PBS that was different from what occurred in schools that were not yet successful? In other words, schools implementing SW-PBS participated in equivalent professional development, training, and received
similar support, yet only some of these schools were able to achieve a level of implementation that led to sustainable and durable change. What factors resulted in some school organizations developing the capacity to implement and sustain change while other school organizations implementing the same change initiative did not develop the capacity? Was there a difference in how school leaders build leadership capacity so that a school sustained a change initiative such as SW-PBS, and if so, what strategies were utilized by the school leaders? Research on school change indicated that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership within the organization (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Thus, in this study how successful schools develop leadership capacity to sustain the desired outcomes of SW-PBS was investigated.

Conceptual Underpinnings of the Study

Three constructs interacted to inform and guide the study. The conceptual underpinning of schools as organizations presented the framework of studying schools as learning organizations, through school leadership and change, and building capacity for sustaining change. Each construct was viewed through the lens of school change, reform, and improvement as pertaining to schools involved in renewal efforts. Also considered was how each of these constructs contributed to the development of capacities for sustaining school change and improvement.

Schools as learning organizations

Schools as learning organizations provided a framework for understanding that the sustainability of change initiatives was related to the organization’s ability to learn, as well as the depth of learning that took place within the organization (Awbrey, 2005; Boyce, 2003). Organization learning “is indicated by changes in institutional actions and
performance outcomes as well as shifts in values, assumptions, and approaches to inquiry” (Boyce, p.124). Therefore, organizational learning took place not only when changes in how the organization conducted its business occurred, but also when there were changes in why the organization conducted its business as it did. Changing the understanding of why an organization conducted business as it did involved collective learning that took place within the culture of the organization, or inquiry into the meanings, assumptions, and values that are embedded within the organization (Awbrey; Boyce; Seashore-Lewis, in press).

Organizational culture “is an enduring, independent phenomenon that consist of some combination of values, beliefs, and assumptions that organizational members share about appropriate behavior” (Seashore-Lewis, in press). For schools, organizational culture represented how educators viewed the relationship between their practice and the learning of students (Seashore-Lewis). Educators within a school organization had to challenge their values, beliefs, and assumptions about this relationship before they could begin to learn as an organization (Awbrey, 2005; Boyce, 2003; Seashore-Lewis).

Through this questioning or inquiry around issues of practice, a school became a learning organization where educators “work together to gather more information about their teaching . . . and then discuss, share, and critique the new ideas so that all members understand and can use the new information” (Seashore-Lewis, in press, p. 3). But more than just examination had to occur since functioning as a learning organization called for collective action and changes in practice as a result of inquiry and discussion. Therefore, organizational learning took place when there were observable changes in the organization’s patterns of activity (Cook & Yanow, 1993). For a school, this would result
in collective changes in practice involving student learning, constituting organizational learning.

Changing the culture and practices of a school organization require structures and processes that encouraged and allowed for effective inquiry and learning (Awbrey, 2005; Cook & Yanow, 1993; Weasmer & Woods, 1999). Educators need opportunities to learn, question, debate, practice, evaluate, practice again, and evaluate again to successfully change practice, necessitating supportive leadership for change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Leadership for effective change “is defined as the framing of meaning and the mobilization of support for a meaningful course of action” (Retallick & Fink, 2002, p. 92).

Leadership in a culture of change

Educational leaders who were supportive during change identified the contextual factors, structures, supports and processes necessary for educators to successfully make changes and exercised the use of strategies that develop the capacity for dealing with change (Retallick & Fink, 2002). Such leaders focused on the development of teachers’ knowledge, skills and learning within a professional community of educators (Fullan, 2002). Change leaders worked on changing the context to help create new settings conducive to learning and to sharing that learning (Fullan, 2002b). Furthermore, leadership was considered key in organizations involved in change (Retallick & Fink).

In a culture of change, leadership was more than an effort by the leader to influence others, but rather leadership was conceptualized as a mutual process of influence involving all of those involved in the change process (Hallinger, 2003). Leadership and leader were not the same concept and leadership was viewed as more
complex than leading (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Leadership was found within the potential of many throughout the organization and leaders facilitated the development of that potential. In a school organization, the formal role of the leader was typically the principal, but those principals successful in the leadership of change understood that sustainability of improvement was found in collective learning and the development of leadership capacity within colleagues of the school (Lambert, 2005a).

The principal serving as a leader of change recognized the responsibilities of leading as cultivating and building the leadership capacity of others (Sergiovanni, 2005). The main focus of successful principals was building leadership capacity in a number of good leaders within the school organization who could sustain improvement after the principal was gone (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004). By creating the conditions for drawing out the abilities, skills, and knowledge of others during the change process, the leader enriched the school’s renewal efforts and advanced the agenda of continuous improvement (Mai, 2004). School principals effective in leading during change envisioned an expanded view of leadership in order to sustain meaningful, long lasting changes (McREL, 2001). This type of leadership was the impetus for building leadership capacity for lasting school improvement (Fullan, 2002a; Lambert, 2003).

**Leadership capacity**

In order to successfully sustain school change, leadership was not viewed as the role of an individual, but rather as an organizational concept described as “broad-based, skillful participation . . . that leads to lasting school improvement” (Lambert, 2005b, p. 38). In other words, leadership was not a person or traits of an individual but instead was found within the culture of a school organization that promoted the advancement of the
capabilities of many members to lead. Integral to this vision of leadership were the assumptions that educators had the desire to be purposeful professionals and were capable of leadership (Lambert, 2003). Leadership of this nature accepted collective responsibility for school improvement. Leadership capacity was realized “when a school staff has undertaken skillful work using inquiry, dialogue, and reflection to achieve student performance goals” (Lambert, p. 5). What was emphasized in this idea of leadership was that it was reciprocal, purposeful learning within a professional community (Lambert, 2005b). Leadership was not established as an individual, but rather it existed within the collective understanding, knowledge, and skills of educators within the school. Leadership was dispersed and collaboratively held by all of the participants within the learning community of the school, demonstrating the connectedness of schools as learning organizations (Lambert).

Leadership capacity, as conceptualized for this study, assist schools in moving beyond the implementation phase of change towards sustainable improvement. Without leadership capacity educators are often dependent upon the principal, deflect responsibility from themselves, and function with fragmented focuses of purpose contributing to an environment where children are unsuccessful (Lambert, 2005a). Effective leaders plan for sustainable leadership by not relying on a person but instead creating a culture of initiative and opportunity within the school so that leadership is distributed (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Effective leaders involved in change fostered sustainability in the way they “constantly spawn leadership and commitment in all quarters” (Fullan, 2003, p.38).
Leadership capacity and capacity building was about providing others with opportunities, resources, training, and support structures to facilitate professional growth and collective learning with accountability (Fullan, 2003). Leadership capacity was learning communities promoting leadership for all where participants share in the purpose of the school and understood the contributions made by each participant toward the purpose of the school (Lambert, 2005b). School systems involved in building leadership capacity concentrated on the skills and qualities that sustained deep learning and created conditions that distributed leadership into the culture of the school (Hargreaves & Fink, 20003).

Thus, the use of organizational theory as a lens to view schools provided a framework for conceptualizing schools as learning organizations, and examining leaders, and leadership capacity. Specifically, how these constructs function together to contribute to producing the capacity for sustaining school improvement in order to positively impact students was investigated. Since schools struggle with successfully sustaining school improvement or change (Fullan, 2000; Mai, 2004), the pathways, strategies, and processes that build capacity for sustainability are important and are investigated in this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

School personnel are experiencing increases in problem and severe student behaviors that are disruptive to the learning environment while facing demands to increase academic achievement of students (Chrisman, 2005; Lewis, et al., 1998). Faced with increasingly complex demands, educators are engaged in re-examination of practice. Research consistently supported a high correlation of increased instructional time to
improved student achievement (Putman, et al., 2006). Also found in the research literature was that the use of school-wide behavior support increased instructional time and was linked with improved student academic achievement, along with increased school safety and student satisfaction while indicating a connection between low academic achievement and frequent incidents of problem behavior (Horner, et al. 2005; Lewis, et al.; Putman, et al.). A school-wide behavior support initiative, known as School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS), provides effective, proactive, and comprehensive approach to prevention and intervention of student problem behaviors (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Schools implementing SW-PBS are provided with similar training in PBS basics, assistance in designing preventive systems throughout the contexts of the school, and professional development in expanding and sustaining efforts. Yet, some schools implementing SW-PBS find sustaining the initiative problematic even though discipline incidents were reduced and instructional time was increased while other implementing schools are successful in sustaining SW-PBS practices over long time periods (Horner, et al.).

Implementing SW-PBS immerses schools in the change process compelling the school organization to engage in inquiry, to operate as learning organization, and to build leadership capacity for sustainability. Given that SW-PBS training and support guided schools through the change process, what occurred in schools successful in sustaining SW-PBS that was different from schools not yet successful in sustaining SW-PBS in developing strategies and practices for sustainability? How do schools effectively build the capacity for sustaining change? The challenge is to determine what took place in schools successful in sustaining SW-PBS and in effectively developing leadership
capacity for sustainability. This study was intended to explore the strategies and pathways of school organizations not only effective in implementing but also in sustaining a change initiative such as SW-PBS.

**Purpose of the Study**

Research on school change indicated that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership within the organization (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Reliance on the leadership of one person can no longer continue if schools are to improve and sustain improvement. Leadership capacity is about creating conditions within the school for self-renewal, growth, and the development and distribution of leadership throughout the school organization. Research indicated that school leaders and teachers must commit, participate and have “great capacity” (Fullan, 2003, p. 30) for a school to sustain deep meaningful change.

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to examine what occurred in schools successful in implementing and sustaining SW-PBS that was different from what occurred in schools that were not yet successful. Schools implementing SW-PBS were involved in the same professional development, training, and support yet only some of the schools were able to achieve a level of implementation that led to sustainable and durable change. Also investigated were the factors within the school organization that resulted in some schools developing the leadership capacity to implement and sustain change while other school organizations implementing the same change initiative did not sustain the initiative effectively. Included in this study was the consideration of the question: Is there a difference in how school leaders build leadership capacity so that a school sustains a change initiative such as SW-PBS, and if so, what are the strategies
established in these schools by the school leaders? Through examination of the practices, strategies, and approaches used by schools to successfully sustain change, findings may identify valuable indicators of effectiveness in building leadership capacity for sustainability of change.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine the differences that occurred in schools successful at sustaining change from schools not yet successful in sustaining change. The synthesis of the literature review revealed the concept that schools successfully sustaining change or improvement efforts developed leadership capacity in the school organization. Leadership capacity was understood as a framework for sustaining school improvement. The theory that schools with leadership capacity were successful at sustaining change was used to frame and inform the investigation of schools successful in sustaining the initiative SW-PBS. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining school improvement?

2. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

3. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of inquiry – based use of information to inform decisions and practice in schools
successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

4. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of roles and actions reflecting broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

5. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic reflective practice that consistently leads to innovation in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

6. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

7. What are the change strategies and processes established by the school leaders that enhance a school’s capacity to sustain a change initiative such as SW-PBS?

**Limitations and Assumptions**

As there are limitations and assumptions to all studies (Heppner & Heppner, 2004), there are several limitations and assumptions in regard to this investigation. A limitation is “some aspect of the study that the researcher knows may negatively affect the results or generalizability of the results” (Gay, 1996, p. 96). An assumption is a fact that is presumed to be true and accurate but not in reality confirmed (Gay). The
limitations and assumptions related to this study are offered in the following paragraphs. A discussion of action taken to manage for these limitations and assumptions is included in the next section.

Population for the study was an area for limitations and assumptions. There was a geographical limitation for the study as the participating schools are located within three states in the Midwest. Schools were located in a limited geographical area because of the need to identify schools in states where SW-PBS was implemented and because of the limited length of the study. It was assumed that schools have implemented the SW-PBS initiative for two or more years since each participating school was identified as a school participating in an advanced assessment of implementation. There is the potential for the lack of generalization of the study since the study was not inclusive of all schools (Heppner & Heppner). Schools participating in the study are implementing or have implemented the initiative SW-PBS and therefore the information collected in this study may be generalized to only the limited number of schools implementing SW-PBS.

Methodology was also an area for limitations and assumptions for the study. Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) noted that there are threats to the validity of the instrumentation process when surveys are used and this can produce a limitation to a study. When using surveys, differences in how individuals respond and the biases of the researcher can interfere with the validity in the research. The findings of the survey instruments used are limited to the sample group responding and the researcher was aware that broad application of the findings may be biased. Meaning for any set of data is dependant on who is interpreting the data (Patton, 1997). Lack of participation and non-response to survey instruments was noted as “a major problem that seems to be
increasing in recent years” (Fraenkel & Wallen, p. 407) and can result in misleading findings. In this study only one change initiative was investigated during a specific time frame providing a limited view of the change process for schools participating. The researcher assumed that SW-PBS was the main change initiative of focus in the participating schools during the time of the study. These limitations and assumptions were acknowledged in an attempt to inform the reader and provide a framework for understanding the results of the investigation.

**Design Controls**

A descriptive methodology was used in the design of this study since characteristics and behaviors of educators and administrators in school organizations were summarized in this investigation. In addition, the differences between variables were explored to determine the extent of the relationship. In this causal-comparative research, an attempt was made to ascertain the cause of differences that already existed between schools successful and not yet successful in sustaining change (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

The target population for this investigation was the school organization and as such was identified as the unit of analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The data collected were used to describe the school organization as a representation of the membership of the organization. To adequately describe the unit of analysis, the researcher collected data from a majority of the school organization’s members so that the data summary description represented the school organization as a whole. In choosing the sample population for the study, various sampling techniques were used to produce a representative sample to increase the generalization of the results (Gay, 2000; Fraenkel &
This sample population mirrors the overall population of schools implementing SW-PBS in “the essential, or relevant, characteristics of the population” (Fraenkel & Wallen, p. 110) contributing to the results of the study.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed for this investigation. The method of administrating survey tools provided quantitative data while conducting focus group interviews produced qualitative data for analysis. Survey methods provided a format for gathering information and investigating the “status of some phenomenon within an identified class of people, organizations, or regions at a particular time” (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000, p. 112). Surveys used in this investigation were designed to provide a description of the characteristics of the population participating in the study. To ensure a high participation rate in the study, the researcher included all teaching staff during the administration of the surveys and conducted the focus group interviews on-site at the participating schools. The reliability of the survey was assessed by the researcher utilizing test-retest reliability which determined the degree that scores are consistent over time (Gay, 1996). The test-retest process also provided the researcher with reliability estimates on possible variation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Content validity for the survey was determined by examining characteristics validated through research. Characteristics of leadership capacity similar to those in the survey were described and presented in other research involving leadership capacity and sustaining school improvement (Fullan, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McREL, 2001; Peterson & Smith, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005; West, M.; Ainscow, & Stanford, 2005).
Interviewing was a common method to collect qualitative data to obtain information beyond what can be collected through surveys (Merriam, 1998). The validity of the interview protocol questions was established through pilot testing the questions with a group of educators to ensure the questions were understandable and clear (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The survey questions were grounded in the literature and in research involving leadership capacity and sustaining school improvement (Fullan, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McREL, 2001; Peterson & Smith, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005; West, M.; Ainscow, & Stanford, 2005). Specifically, focus group interviews were used to as a way to “better understand how people feel or think” about the issues investigated in the study (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 4). Conducting focus group interviews of representative schools was used by the researcher to collect additional data to allow for comparability of responses from the survey instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). To provide for comparability of responses, the researcher conducted structured interviews utilizing standardized wording of interview questions. Also, by conducting several focus group interviews, the influence of the researcher’s bias on the findings of the investigation was diminished.

**Definitions of Key Terms**

The definitions of key terms used in this investigation are provided to offer clarity and to help the reader comprehend core concepts of the study.

**Behaviors of principals.** Behaviors are described as practices and actions such as communication, consultation, facilitation and leadership used by principals to promote and support involvement and collaboration of educators that lead to collective responsibility for student learning within the school.
*Capacity building.* This “consist of developments that increase the collective power of the school in terms of new knowledge and competencies, increased motivation to engage in improvement actions, and additional resources” (Fullan, 2005b, p. 175).

*Change.* A process that involves the way an organization transforms actions and outcomes through organizational learning along with shifts in the values, assumptions, and approaches of the organization (Boyce, 2003). For the purposes of this study, the terms improvement and reform are used interchangeably with the term change.

*Leadership.* Strategies and behaviors that contribute to organizational learning and renewal (Mai, 2004) and are focused on developing teacher’s knowledge and skills, professional community, program coherence, and resources (Fullan, 2002).

*Leadership capacity.* A concept of leadership that is “broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership” (Lambert, 2003, p.4) and is an organizational concept referring to the organization’s ability to lead itself and to sustain that effort when key individuals leave the organization. Broad-based means the inclusion of the principal, a majority of teachers and staff, and a large number of parents and even students involved in the work of leadership. Skillful participation conveys skillful use of inquiry, dialogue, collaboration, and reflection.

*Leadership capacity characteristics.* Indicators of the knowledge, dispositions, understandings, and skills needed to build leadership capacity in schools and organizations (Lambert, 2003). For the purposes of this study the six leadership capacity characteristics are defined as follows:
1. Broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership is representative governance, collaborative work in leadership that engages others in opportunities to lead.

2. A shared vision results in program coherence is development of a joint vision that is used to guide and align instruction and assessment.

3. Inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice is the use of reflection, dialogue, and inquiry to focus on student learning and to inform decision making.

4. Roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility is about the expansion of roles and of working together and sharing responsibility.

5. Reflective practice consistently leads to innovation is individual and group journaling, peer coaching, and collaborative planning to support new practices and shared accountability.

6. High or steadily improving student achievement and development is establishing and implementing standards and expectations for student performance so that all children learn (Lambert, 2003).

*Learning organization.* An organization that is skilled at creating, acquiring, and sharing knowledge, and changing its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights. In this kind of organization, change and improvement constantly take place referred to as organizational learning (Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory [McREL], 2001).
School Improvement. The results of reform, practices, strategies and/or initiatives implemented by school organizations that supports students in obtaining high student achievement or steadily improving student achievement.

School wide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS). An approach to prevention and intervention of problem behaviors using a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviors in all students (Sugai, et al., 2000).

School wide Evaluation Tool (SET). A research instrument used for measuring implementation of school-wide positive supports procedures and effects of school-wide PBS programs (Horner, et al. 2004). The SET is useful in assessing the sustained use of SW-PBS procedures for primary prevention.

Successful SW-PBS schools. For the purpose of this study, a successful SW-PBS school is a school implementing SW-PBS and receiving a total score of 80% and a subscale score of 80% on expectations taught on the School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) in the most current year assessment submitted for the school.

Sustainability. This concept denotes a level of change that involves transforming an organization in such a way that the conditions and capacity for improvement is found within and across the organization in continuous renewal (Fullan, 2003).

Summary

In an educational environment where schools are expected to ensure that all students learn, school organizations need an approach that proactively addresses student academic achievement and brings about school improvement. Reasons why some school organizations were able to develop the capacity to implement and sustain change leading
to improvement was viewed through the conceptual underpinnings of schools as learning organizations, leadership in a culture of change, and leadership capacity. The theory that schools with leadership capacity were successful at sustaining change was used to frame and inform the investigation of successful schools sustaining the initiative SW-PBS. Putting this investigation into context, the purpose of the study was to examine what occurred in schools successful in implementing and sustaining SW-PBS that was different from what occurred in schools that were not yet successful. The researcher proposed to identify valuable indicators of effectiveness in building leadership capacity for sustainability of change through examination of the practices, strategies, and approaches used by schools successfully sustaining change.

In Chapter Two, a synthesis of related literature is presented and provides the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the study. In Chapter Three, a description of the research design and methodology utilized in this study is provided. Presented in Chapter Four are the research analysis and findings. In Chapter Five, the results of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research are presented.
As the world changes at incredible rates, organizations are challenged with the need to change and reform to remain viable (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory [McREL], 2000; Preskill & Torres, 1999). Preskill and Torres determined that “what has become crystal clear is that organizations will never again be stable and predictable entities” (p. 3). Furthermore, schools are part of this change cycle (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998) and “school improvement, educational reform, and similar themes of renewal have been an integral part of the public school conversation for the past 20 years. . . . In short, the idea of change is not new to education” (McREL, 2000, p. 3). In fact, schools as organizations are well known for reform, change, and improvement efforts stemming from a desire for renewal, gaps in performance results, advancements in knowledge, mandates, and other societal deficits where responsibility has been delegated to schools (Evans 1996). Further success in meeting the challenge for sustained improvement may rest in an educational organization’s capacity to operate as a learning organization (Mai, 2004).

Yet educational organizations have not been particularly successful in school improvement or change, especially in developing the capacity for sustainability or “strong institutionalization” (Fullan, 2000, p. 1). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) summed up the state of affairs by noting that “Educational change is rarely easy, always hard to justify, and almost impossible to sustain” (p. 693). Moreover, the problem for school organizations seeking to effectively improve or change centers on what behaviors,
strategies, or structures contribute positively to organizational learning and renewal in a way that produces the capacity for sustainability in order to make a positive difference for students (Fullan, 2000; Mai, 2004). Therefore, an investigation of the pathways with the potential to successfully sustainable school improvement and change was the focus of this study.

Presented in this chapter was a review of related literature germane to the process of effective change and sustaining change within school organizations viewed through the lens of schools as organizations. The conceptual underpinning of schools as learning organizations guided the review of the constructs of schools as learning organizations, school leadership and change, and building capacity for sustaining change. Each construct was reviewed, synthesized, and summarized through the study of relevant material. Additionally, to provide a basis for application, these constructs were coupled with the change initiative known as School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS) and information about the program was presented. The impact of the interconnectedness of the constructs on the capacity to sustain successful change or improvement in schools was revealed through this review.

Organizational theory provided an appropriate theoretical foundation for the conceptual framework of viewing educational settings, specifically public elementary and secondary schools, as organizational systems in as much as schools share the features, characteristics, structures, and attributes associated with organizations. Thus, research and literature on the dimensions of organizational culture, organizational change, and organizational learning were identified as primary constructs for understanding schools as
learning organizations, providing a point of view or what Cook and Yanow (1993) called a “cultural perspective on organizational learning” (p. 431).

Initially, schools as learning organizations involved in change or improvement led to the examination of leadership and the change process. Literature and research about effective and successful change efforts of organizations pointed to the importance of leaders and leadership responsibilities throughout various levels of the school for building the capacity to change and improve. Specifically, found in current literature on leadership and change was the idea that “our conception of what leadership means needs to be expanded” (McREL, 2001, p.19) in order for schools to sustain meaningful and long-lasting change. This called for an expanded view of leadership which led to the investigation of building capacity for sustaining and maintaining change or improvement in school settings by developing and building leadership capacity as an organizational concept of broad-based, skillful participation in leadership (Lambert, 2005).

Consequently, the next phase of the literature review is the examination of building leadership capacity for sustaining effective change after successful implementation of a change initiative. The abilities, skills, and participation or what Fullan (2003) described as “great capacities and commitment from the entire teaching force and its leadership” (p.30) was offered as a venue for sustaining and maintaining deep meaningful change or improvement in schools. Understanding the complex problem of sustainability and moving beyond the implementation phase of change to long-lasting change and what that encompassed guided the literature review of building leadership capacity. The question of how to apply these concepts, strategies, and models to change
effort subsequently led to a presentation of the change initiative SW-PBS, which functioned as an application model for this study.

Finally, a description of the change initiative known as SW-PBS is presented to ground the constructs in an identifiable reform strategy. The underpinnings, guiding principles, and method of implementation of SW-PBS are presented. Also, details of the program are offered so the reader can develop an understanding of the strategies and processes of SW-PBS thus providing a base for comprehending the study’s purpose, analysis, and findings.

*Schools as Learning Organizations*

Organizational systems theories provide perspectives, which guide and shape the practices and structures of organizations (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Preskill & Torres, 1999; Seashore Louis, in press). An array of organizational theories exists for managers, supervisors, and leaders to draw upon when conceptualizing their particular organization (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Organizational systems theory is about understanding, explaining, and predicting how to best structure an organization to fulfill its goals. Organizations are theorized to act as systems containing interconnected components that function as “dynamic and complex webs of interactive loops” (McREL, 2001). Using organizational theory as a framework for conceptualizing public schools facilitated the understanding that schools are complex organizational systems, sharing the features, characteristics, structures, and attributes associated with organizations (McREL, 1997). Taking the viewpoint of schools as learning organizations supplied the conceptual underpinning for examining effective change and sustaining change in schools.
The literature and research reviewed revealed that school organizations needed to be learning organizations in order to sustain change since “the success of initiatives such as general educational reform should be assessed . . . by the cultural change and the learning that takes place within the organization” (Awbrey, 2004). Furthermore, Fullan (1993) proposed the reason for educational systems to be learning organizations was “the discovery that change in complex systems is nonlinear – full of surprises” (p. 4). Support for school organizations to function as learning organization was confirmed by Boyce’s (2003) assertion that “the research suggests that continued organizational learning is essential to successful and sustained institutional change” (p. 119).

The components of organization learning, organizational change, and organizational culture were found to be interrelated and connected throughout the literature and research regarding learning organizations (Awbrey, 2005; Boyce, 2003; Fullan, 2002a; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Morgan, 1997; Ott, 1989; Seashore Louis’ in press; Schein, 1985). This intersection of these organizational components appeared in the connections between culture and learning, in the impact that organizational learning has on organizational actions, and in the significance of embedded change in organizational culture for sustaining change. Meaningful change does not take place without organizational learning while organizational learning makes major organizational change possible. Neither is attainable without a learning culture which is essential to achieving and sustaining organizational learning and change (Boyce). To analyze the complex systems of organizations, one needs to grasp and conceptually integrate the aspects of organizational culture, organizational learning, and organizational change.
Organizational Culture

Organizational culture was defined in the literature as an organization’s members enacting a shared meaning of reality as the way of sense making of the organization (Awbrey, 2005; Cook & Yanow, 1993; Peterson & Smith, 2000; Seashore-Louis, in press). Awbrey purported that organizations are more than operations and structures—organizations also carry meaning for the individuals functioning in the organization. This meaning or culture is critical to facilitating successful change within organizations. Furthermore, Peterson and Smith pointed out “that it is helpful to treat identifiable, structural entities such as . . . organizations as sources of meaning” (p. 103). In addition, Seashore-Louis noted that research in organizations agreed with a view of culture as an enduring, independent phenomenon. This phenomenon consisted of a combination of values, beliefs, and assumptions that organizational members shared to create meaning, or culture. Building on this perspective, Cook and Yanow offered that meaning-making and meaning sustaining for the organization was achieved through the organization’s culture.

Yet, beyond the concept of shared meaning as organizational culture, what essentially made up organizational culture was acknowledged in numerous ways in the literature reviewed (Awbrey, 2005; Bergquist, 1992; Farmer, 1990; Schein, 1985; Seashore-Louis, in press). Seashore-Louis proposed that organizational culture was composed of three cultural conditions identified as professional community, organizational learning, and trust. Similarly, Schein identified three levels of culture in organizations as artifacts, values and beliefs, and basic assumptions while Bergquist categorized organizational culture as having three levels of institutional domains known
as structure, process, and attitude. Similarities in these labels of levels or conditions were found. Indeed, the apparent elements or systems of operations that were tangible, observable, symbolic, and visible in structures and behavior patterns made up what the authors identified as the community, artifacts, or structures of organizational culture (Bergquist; Cook, 1993; Schein; Seashore-Louis). The remaining levels of organizational culture dealt with such elements as philosophies, ideologies, ethical codes, power and influence patterns, personal views, relationships, values, emotions, needs (Awbrey; Bergquist; Schein; Seashore-Louis). It was noted by Awbrey that for the members of the organization these basic assumptions that guide behavior and actions are the “deepest level of culture” (p. 12). However, no matter the name or label given, organizational culture consisted of the embedded patterns by which the institution operated, members acted, and defined the way the organization does business, or what Farmer regarded as “what is done, how it is done, and who is doing it” (p. 8).

Organizational learning and organizational change can not occur in an organization without impacting organizational culture and reaching into the values and beliefs that give meaning for the organization and its members (Awbrey, 2005). For organizational change to be lasting it must be reflected in the basic assumptions that guide the behavior and actions of the organization or reflected in the organizational culture. Awbrey further emphasized that “the sustainability of change initiatives for an organization is related to the depth of self-examination and learning that take place within its culture” (p. 13). Likewise, Seashore-Lewis (in press) concluded that organizational culture, organization learning, and organization change were connected and found that organizational learning served as a model for school change.
Organizational Learning

A repeated perspective offered in the organizational literature reviewed suggested that organizational learning had occurred when there were observable changes in the organization’s pattern of activities, or culture (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Copland, 2003; Seashore Louis, in press). Organizational learning was defined as “the acquiring, sustaining, or changing of inter-subjective meanings through the artifactual vehicles of their expression and transmission and the collective actions of the group” (Cook & Yanow, p. 449). Moreover, in the document Noteworthy Perspectives: Exploring Beliefs and Research to Promote Thoughtful Practice (McREL, 1997) organizational learning was noted as a term that “is often used synonymously with the term change, as a means of describing how organizations adjust and learn over time” (p. 51). Additionally, Boyce (2003) concluded “that continued organizational learning is essential to successful and sustained institutional change” (p. 119). Over time within organizations, as members engage and pursue “shared enterprises, learning results in practices” (Copland, p. 380). Fostered by these new practices was change in culture creating collective responsibility inside the learning organization (Lambert, 2005).

Organizational learning was further described as understanding, which presents itself as performance or action or “when you understand something, your knowledge is actionable – not just in a rote way, but in a generative or creative way” (McRel, 1997, p.23). Mai (2004) echoed the concept that learning organizations were about action when stating that “learning organizations are about constant self-evaluation and about developing new approaches and practices to deal with the challenges of an ever changing environment” (p. 212). Furthermore, Cook and Yanow (1993) adhered to the supposition
that learning brings about action in organizations by pointing out that “When a group acquires the know-how associated with its ability to carry out its collective activities that constitutes organizational learning” (p. 438). In support of this view of organizational learning as action, Fullan (2002a) recommended that:

We understand the role of knowledge and organizational performance and setup corresponding mechanisms and practices that make knowledge sharing a cultural value . . . information becomes knowledge only when it takes on a social life, information only becomes knowledge when it is socially processed. (p. 410)

Likewise, Seashore-Lewis (in press) also concluded that organizational learning is a social action which “requires that knowledge have a shared, social construction common to all members of the school organization” (p. 4) and that organizational learning compelled collective action embodied by the acquisition of and construction of “meaningful context and conditions” (p.5). Therefore, for learning to take place in organizations, knowledge becomes understanding as it is socially processed resulting in observable collective action within the context of the organization toward successful and sustainable change.

Socially processing knowledge and enactment as a benchmark of organizational learning involves learning in context, described by Fullan (2002a) as “the learning with the greatest payoff” since it is learning in the setting of the organization and is crucial to “developing shared and collective knowledge” (p. 11). Fullan (2003) defined context “as set of conditions under which we operate” (p. 27). Fullan suggested that learning organizations “don’t treat the context as a given. Change it, even in small ways to get new results . . . if you want more sharing of knowledge” (p. 28). Fullan added that “a core
feature of learning organizations is that they constantly ask and process troubling questions” (p. 49).

Organizational Change

An organization socially learning within its context leads to organizational self-examination, questioning, and scrutiny. Morgan (1997) asserted that to learn and change, organizational members “must be skilled in understanding the assumptions, frameworks, and norms guiding current activity and be able to challenge and change them when necessary” (p. 92). Lambert (2006) substantiated this viewpoint of challenging assumptions in a study of high capacity schools when finding that members of a learning organization “discussed assumptions and beliefs, inquired into practice, tried to make sense of what they found, and framed new or improved actions” (p. 5). In other words, organizational learning impacts organizational meaning, bringing about organizational activity that leads to organizational change. Boyce (2003) summarized that “successful institutional change is indicated by changes in institutional actions and performance outcomes as well as shifts in values, assumptions, and approaches to inquiry” (p. 124). The occurrence of active collective learning within organizations was found essential for effective change since “organizational learning makes major organizational change possible” (Boyce 2003, p. 130).

Similarly, Fullan (2003) endorsed that “sustainable system change is the agenda” (p. xiii) for schools functioning as learning organizations. Fullan (2002) additionally noted that “the more that sustainable educational reform becomes the agenda, the more that leadership becomes the key” (p. 1). In addition, Retallick and Fink (2002) asserted that “educational change is complex and difficult work, but without leadership at the
school level it is probably impossible work” (p. 104). Organizational culture “provides a template for organizational learning . . . and exerts a profound impact on the . . . way an organization responds to changes” (Evans, 1996, p. 44). Consequently, an organization’s ability to learn is embedded and connected to the organizations culture or “the basic assumptions that guide behavior and actions” (Awbrey, p. 12). There exists an essential relationship between organizational learning and organizational change making the culture of the school an important consideration when initiating organizational change (McREL, 1997). As a result, those managing or facilitating reform in a school organization must understand the culture of the organization and the connection to organizational learning to successfully implement organizational change. School organizations functioning as learning organizations are involved in change or reform and this in turn necessitates the need for school leadership. Thus, the successful leader in a school functioning as a learning organization comprehends leadership within the process of change.

School Leadership and Change

Researchers agreed that leadership is a key component in educational reform and improvement (Copland, 2003; Fullan, 1993, 2002, 2005; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Lambert, 1998, 2003, 2005a, 2006; Mai, 2004; Retallick & Fink, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2005). This agreement among researchers also encompassed the realization of the type of leadership that is not effective for learning organizations involved in school improvement. When studying effective leadership in school improvement, Copland (2003) found the following:
What history tells us is that the traditional hierarchical model of school leadership, in which the identified leaders in positions of formal authority make critical improvement decisions and then seek, through various strategies, to promote adherence to those decisions among those who occupy the rungs on the ladder below, has failed to adequately answer the repeated calls for sweeping educational improvements across American schools. (p. 375)

Furthermore, Hargreaves and Fink (2004) found that “most school leadership practices create temporary, localized flurries of change but little lasting or wide spread improvement” (p. 9). Fullan (2002a) pointed out that “the principal as instructional leader has taken us only so far in the quest for continuous improvement. We must now raise our sights and focus on principles as leaders in a culture of change” (p. 14) These statements support the finding that “in order to make and sustain meaningful, long lasting changes, our conception of what leadership means must be expanded” (McREL, 2001, p. 2).

**Leading Change**

Leaders who understand and support effective and successful school change utilized leadership practices that promoted learning within the school organization (Lambert, 2005a; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Retallick & Fink, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2005; Weasmer & Woods 1999; West, Ainscow & Stanford, 2005). Lambert (2003) described leadership that promoted lasting school change as actively focused on creating conditions for learning, in that “leadership is the cumulative process of learning through which we achieve the purposes of the school” (p. 3). Likewise, Sergiovanni (2005) supported this concept stating that “leadership inevitably involves change, and change inevitably involves learning” (p. 122). Retallick and Fink further buttressed this concept when
concluding that “leading is defined as the framing of meaning and the mobilization of support for a meaningful course of action” (p. 92). Specific to schools, this type of educational leader comprehends that “reforms need to be pursued under conditions which maximize intensive teacher learning, involving external ideas as well as internal ideas” (Fullan, 2003, p. 7).

Therefore, leading in a culture of change involved activity that resulted in direct impact and interaction with others participating in the change while attending to the creation of and sustaining of a culture of renewal (Fullan, 2003; Retallick & Fink, 2002). Sergiovanni (2005) described such leaders as having the ability to know and focus on what was critical and who “cared deeply about their work, learn from their successes and failures, take calculated risks, and are trustworthy people” (p. 112). This type of leader advances reciprocal learning that enables others to contribute to the construction and negotiation of meaning, maximizing the potential of the organization, and leading to a shared purpose (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Lambert, 1998; McREL, 2000). Sergiovanni further stipulated such leaders create conditions for change by emphasizing capacity building. Additionally, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) when analyzing the factors that supported successful change or led to failed change found that “the leadership supporting an innovation must be consistent with the order of magnitude of change represented by that innovation” (p. 66). Consequently, it is essential for change leaders to understand the nature of change and the change process (Fullan, 2002a).

Thus, the challenge for leaders and educators involved in change is developing an understanding that the process of change is not the same for all organizations and while most school organizations are fundamentally similar that there are “distinctly different
change processes” (McREL, 2001, p.3) Accordingly, Guskey (2000) noted that “the most worthwhile changes in education require time for adoption, adjustment, and refinement” (p. 9). He further explained that change begins with small, incremental steps and “the greatest success is consistently found when the change requires noticeable, sustained effort, but is not so massive that typical users must adopt coping strategies that seriously distort the change” (p. 37). To complicate grasping the nature of change, Fullan (2005) maintained that “significant change involves a certain amount of ambiguity, ambivalence, and uncertainty for the individual about the meaning of change” (¶ 3). Fullan also advised leaders to not assume that the image or version they carry of the change is the change that should be or will be implemented. Change carries meaning for those involved in the process and that meaning is different for each individual (Hargreaves, 2004). Leaders in schools successfully engaged in change established crucial systems to support the change process, including creating a shared meaning of change. While developing these appropriate strategies for implementing change in a learning organization, the leader seeks to pursue and achieve changes that are supported by the school staff (Retallick & Fink, 2002).

In contrast, when researching schools faced with challenging circumstances that were initiating reform, West, et al. (2005) found that for the school leaders, “it was knowing how to start that mattered” (p. 90) and that the beginning of the change process is a time when schools “need to rediscover the sense of purpose”. (p. 78) For those implementing change, Fullan (2003) suggested that “a good starting point is to develop a more relaxed attitude toward uncertainty: to not have expectations of the system that is incapable of meeting, and then work on those more subtle, more powerful change forces
that can bring greater results over time” (p. 25). For educational leaders to know how and where to start change efforts, Beach (2006) recommended working with others in the organization to assess the internal and external environments in order to specify the needed changes, a process of examining where the organization is compared to where the organization wants to be in the future. Retallick and Fink (2002) encapsulated what the change process is while acknowledging the complexity of change when explaining that leaders need to find strategies for school staff to “develop the capacity for dealing with change by looking at school issues through multiple conceptual lenses” (p. 93). Understanding the change process is fundamental to successful change, but it is a challenging quest for those leading, initiating, and managing change.

Stages of Change

By considering the phases or stages of the change, leaders can deepen their understanding of the change process (Guskey, 2000; Hargreaves, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Lambert, 2005a; Weasmer & Woods, 1999). Lambert noted that “school improvement begins with a period of organization as the school initiates new collaborative processes that relate to norms, teams, vision, use of data, shared expectations, and ways of working together” (p. 63). While different terms were used to identify the different stages or phases of change by researchers, they all shared common characteristics (Evans, 1996; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Guskey, 2000; Lambert, 2005a; Marzano, et al. 2005; McREL, 2001). For example, the early stages, referred to as the instructive phase (Lambert), fundamental stage (McREL), first-order change (Evans; Marzano, et al.), or the implementation stage (Hargreaves & Fink), were characterized as a time when new ideas and practices are explored, a time of experimentation within the
school. This early period of time when the school experienced change in structures, roles, processes and procedures usually occurred in incremental ways. Also found to be significant during the initial stages of change was the awareness that changing one aspect of the school system causes interaction with other elements that influence one another, resulting in the potential for unforeseen effects (McREL, 1997; 2000). During this period in the change process, the successful leader created an inclusive environment for the development and implementation of change and worked to gain the commitment of staff (Mai, 2004).

Additionally, Copland (2003) described the leader’s role in the early phases as “intentional formal leadership . . . [who] initially puts reform on the school’s agenda so it cannot be ignored. Persons in formal leadership roles are highly important in this sense, providing the catalyst for the work early on” (p. 388). However, Hargreaves (2004) warned that “the challenge of change here is to connect it to the meaning it holds for different types of people, not just different stages of development” (p. 305). It was found to be critical during this initial period of change for people to be kept on board through established systems, practices, and procedures which ensured that directions, strategies, and information were accurately communicated (McREL, 2000; West, et al. 2005).

Furthermore, in the research and literature reviewed, subsequent stages or phases of change carried the labels of transitional (Lambert, 2005a), institutional (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003), fundamental (Guskey, 2000), deep or discontinuous change, adaptive, and second order change (Evans, 1996; Marzano, et al. 2005; McREL, 2001). Lambert portrayed this period of the change process in schools as the most demanding since “teachers often feel tempted to abandon the effort at this point - it seems too hard” (p. 63)
Similarly, McREL found that this was a time in the change process that “is much more difficult and demands a great deal of those who are part of the system” (p. 5) and in these phases of change, there was a shift or altering in the way the organization conducted business. Organizations were thus challenged with operating differently than in the past, requiring those involved to learn new ways of interacting with problems and with the environment (Marzano, et al. 2005; McREL) During this time of difficulty the role of leaders in providing support and encouragement, accommodating innovation, and renewing commitment levels was critical to the change process (Lambert; McREL, 2000; Weasmer & Woods, 1999). Additionally, Guskey acknowledged that “because any change that holds great promise for increasing individual’s competence or enhancing an organization’s effectiveness is likely to be slow and require extra work, this process is recognized as a continuous endeavor that involves everyone in the organization” (p. 38).

When researching schools involved in the late stages of change, Lambert found that “principals in the study reported that they encountered some patterns of teacher resistance, disengagement, and dependence” (p. 64). Likewise, Conner (1992) supported this finding when reporting that human perception can often present resistance to implementing change, compelling the leader of change to acquire an awareness of resistance within the change process.

Therefore, conflict, disagreement, and resistance are inevitable to the change process and are fundamental to successful change and “any collective change attempt will necessarily involve conflict . . . smooth implementation is often a sign that not much is really happening” (Fullan, 2005a, ¶ 5). Those involved in the change process are experiencing loss and deep change is unsettling and less familiar (Fullan; Hargreaves,
Established earlier in the review of literature was the assumption that educational systems engaged in change needed to be learning organizations, and as such, an organization’s pursuit of questioning, scrutinizing, and challenging assumptions, practices, and norms should be viewed as valuable to the process of change (Morgan 1997). An effective leader of change understands this and uses the natural tendency to resist change as an opportunity for engagement and growth and to draw out valuable knowledge from the organization to identify “what contextual factors, structures, supports and processes were necessary for teachers and leaders to successfully make changes” (Retallick & Fink, 2002, p. 93). In addition, Weasmer and Woods (1999) discovered that “once learners participate energetically, share authority, and engage in meaningful work, they begin to shed the most negative emotions and demonstrate their knowledge” (p. 32). Similarly, Hargreaves (2004) found:

Inclusive change and reform processes that engage teachers’ knowledge and commitments are more likely to increase teachers’ professional involvement in school improvement and reduce the anger and anxiety that divert their emotional energies into attacking others and protecting the self. (p.306)

In summary, effective leaders of change respond to the changing context of the learning organization immersed in change, combining this with an understanding of the dynamics of change to build the capacity of participants for dealing with change (Fullan, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Retallick & Fink, 2002; Sergiovani, 2005).

For educational leaders how schools were effective at initiating change, the elements of successful change efforts, and the stages of the change process gave way to the realization that for effective change “capacity building must become the core feature
of all improvement strategies, and we need to focus explicitly on the difficult issues of sustainability” (Fullan, 2005b, p. 180). Leadership capacity as an organizational concept offered a framework to sustain school improvement through “broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership that leads to lasting school improvement.” (Lambert, 2005b, p. 38). Moreover, developing the capacity to sustain school improvement promptly became the challenge for schools as learning organizations.

Building Capacity for Sustaining Change

The need to create successful change by moving beyond implementation towards building capacity for sustainability of change was echoed by authors and researchers in the literature reviewed for this study (Chrisman, 2005; Coburn, 2003; Copland, 2003; Fullan, 2000; 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2005b; Hargreaves, 2004, Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; 2004; Horner & Sugai, 2006; Lambert, 2003; 2005a; 2005b; 2006; Mai, 2004; Weasmer & Wood, 1999). Sustainability was described as “more than a matter of persistence. . . it is change for keeps and change for good” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 693), and was improvement that endures over time going beyond temporary gains, creating meaningful improvements in learning, contributing to growth, and supporting the learning organization (Fullan, 2005b; Glickman, 2002; Mai). The concept of building leadership capacity was rooted in the understanding that leadership capacity or sustainable leadership was essential to the continued implementation and sustained success of improvement and change efforts for schools (Chrisman; Fullan, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink; Lambert, 2003; Mai). In other words, if schools were to achieve long-lasting sustainable improvement, an investment in promoting leadership capacity building as a function of the change process was necessary.
Leadership Capacity

Leadership capacity or sustainable leadership was defined by researchers as the concept of extending leadership through throughout the school as a form of constructivist leadership that involves broad-based skillful participation while viewing leadership as a collective learning process that was reciprocal and embedded within the various levels and structures of the school organization (Coburn, 2003; Fullan, 2005b; West et al. 2005). Retallick and Fink (2003) defined leadership as the “framing of meaning and the mobilization of support for a meaningful course of action” (p. 92), while Lambert’s (2003) definition suggested that learning and leadership were intertwined. Accordingly, Fullan (2002a) described leadership as being at the heart of school capacity that focuses on development of knowledge and skills and is about relationships and teambuilding. Hallinger (2003) purported that “leadership must be conceptualized as a mutual influence process” (p.346). Using these concepts of leadership one must abandon the view of leadership as being a formal role lodged in a hierarchical view of authority and power (Copland, 2003).

Lambert (1998) stated that definitions of leadership capacity “include the usefulness of building an infrastructure of support that is aligned with the work of the school” (p. 12). This infrastructure was composed of the vision and mission of the school, work structures, training and professional development, opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, and the policies of the school. Lambert further (2003) referred to leadership capacity as an organizational concept which denotes the “organization’s capacity to lead itself and to sustain that effort” (p. 4). Also noted by Lambert (1998) was that “many of the current reform strategies – inquiry, shared
leadership, collaboration, collective responsibility – are woven into definitions of capacity building” (p. 11).

When defining leadership capacity, West et al. (2005) described it as “enlarging the staff’s capacity to imagine what might be achieved, and increasing their sense of accountability for bringing this about” (p. 89). Fullan (2005b) defined capacity building as consisting “of developments that increase the collective power in the school in terms of new knowledge and competencies, increased motivation to engage in improvement actions, and additional resources” (p. 175). Likewise, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) pointed out that leadership was not an individual but a “network of relationships of people, structures, and cultures [and] leadership is . . . dependent on interrelationships and connections” (p. 696). Moreover, schools are more likely to sustain and deepen change through building leadership capacity when school elements and features are in place to provide for development of leadership capacity (Coburn).

When schools sustained meaningful and lasting change or improvement through building a capacity for leadership, certain enabling conditions or characteristics were found by researchers (Chrisman, 2005; Coburn, 2993; Fullan, 2005b; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Lambert, 1998; 2003; 2005a; 2006). Of the schools Hargreaves and Fink studied, the researchers observed that the schools “concentrate on the leadership skills and qualities that will sustain the kind of deep learning. . . we need in the future, rather than merely seeking to survive” (p. 700). Lambert (2005a) found for the schools participating in research “that each school had design features – structures, processes, and roles – that promoted leadership capacity” (p. 63). Also found in these schools was the shared conceptual framework for improvement and clear strategies with perceptible internal
cohesion. Additionally Fullan (2005b) found that schools were successful when combining a compelling conceptualization with a commitment to strategies for capacity building, had a moral purpose, used lateral capacity building, engaged in on-going learning and productive conflict, and enhanced internal capacity with external partners. Other characteristics in schools successful in sustaining and capacity building were noted by Chrisman as strong teacher leadership through internal leadership structures, opportunities for teachers to make decisions, and regular use of collaborative time to review and discuss improvement. Coburn further concluded that research suggested that the depth of “renewed and vigorous dialogue, not just about the challenges of sustainability, but about strategies for providing schools with the tools they will need to sustain reform” (p. 6) was a condition of leadership capacity. Lambert’s (2003) finding summarized the enabling conditions needed in the school organization by noting that “it is only when a school staff has undertaken skillful work using inquiry, dialogue, and reflection to achieve student performance goals that a school can be said to have achieved high leadership capacity” (p. 5). One research weakness noted in understanding the enabling conditions found in schools was that school improvement researchers had a tendency to work with organizations that were already successful and provided little information on how schools got that way in the first place (Fullan, 2000; West, et al. 2005).

However, in schools where leadership capacity or sustained leadership was demonstrated, teachers were encouraged to “play more prominent leadership roles” (Lambert, 2005a, p. 65). It was found that as teachers and principals participated in relationships based on reciprocity and their role definitions became more similar in the
leadership tasks related to sustaining improvement (Lambert). Chrisman (2005) supported this analysis of shared leadership by concluding that schools sustain success when there was apparent strong teacher leadership. Chrisman also observed that “teacher leadership was strengthened in the successful school when teachers made decisions” (p. 17). Likewise, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) concluded that “educational systems should see leadership as a vertical system that extends over time” (p. 699) Thus, for schools to generate enabling conditions for building capacity the school leaders, particularly the school principal, had to promote developing shared leadership within a professional culture (Lambert, 2003).

**Building Capacity**

Earlier in this literature review, leadership in school change was examined. Throughout that examination, references to reciprocal learning, building capacities of others, and increasing the professional involvement of participants engaged in change were found throughout the literature and research. In fact, the role of the leader became broader when researchers examined the issue of sustaining change and building capacity within schools for long-lasting improvement (Chrisman, 2005; Fullan, 2005b; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Lambert, 1998; 2003). Lambert (2003) found that school leaders effective in building leadership capacity for improvement “generate the conditions and create the climate” (p. 15) and their primary role was to serve as a catalyst in building capacity for sustaining improvement. Conversely, Fullan discovered that when there was a lack of leadership in developing and building capacity, “there was little increase in the internalized commitment of teachers to take responsibility for further improvement” (p. 176) in their schools. Furthermore, Hargreaves and Fink stated that “leaders develop
sustainability by the way in which they approach, commit to, and protect deep learning in their schools. . . and by the way they try to ensure that the improvements they bring about will last over time, especially after they themselves are gone” (p. 695). This sustainability was accomplished through aspects of leadership which included (a) leading the learning of everyone in the school in order to put student learning first, (b) distributing leadership to create a network of relationships for accessing the intelligence of everyone, and (c) building sustainable leadership vertically within the school so that the leaving of the principal does not pose a threat to sustainable improvement (Hargreaves & Fink). As found in this analysis of leadership capacity, the concepts and elements of leadership capacity paralleled the tenets of the leadership model known as distributed leadership.

Building leadership capacity and distributed leadership are both based on a theory of action that “views leadership as a set of functions or qualities shared across a much broader segment of the school community that encompasses administrators, teachers, and other professionals and community members both internal and external to the school” (Copland, 2003, p. 376). Copland employed a framework to study sustaining capacity for school improvement utilizing the concepts of distributive leadership based on principles of “mutual dependence, reciprocity of accountability and capacity, and the centrality of instructional practice” (p. 377). Lambert (2003) also drew a comparison between leadership capacity and distributed leadership when asserting the following:

Distributed or disbursed leadership is central to capacity creation. We are still in a position of needing to develop understandings about what leadership really involves when it is distributed, how schools might function and act differently and
what operational images of distributed leadership and action might look like. (p. xv)

In addition, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) noted that the view of leadership known as distributed leadership provided depth and scope to the practice of sustainable leadership and that “the promise of sustainable success and education lies in creating cultures of distributed leadership throughout the school community, not in training and developing a tiny leadership elite” (p. 700). Moreover, Fullan (2005b) found that both distributive leadership and leadership capacity models focused on developing other leaders within the school organization, equal to the focus on student learning and achievement. Notable parallels between distributed leadership and leadership capacity were found in the concepts of collective and dynamic activity (Fullan), mutual dependency and accountability (Copland), creation of a culture of initiative and opportunity (Hargreaves & Fink), and promoting shared ownership of sustaining school improvement across the school organization (Lambert).

Ownership of school improvement and school reform was found to be the fundamental basis which resulted in districts, schools, and teachers possessing the capacity to sustain, maintain, and deepen improvement (Coburn, 2003). Coburn pointed out that when most schools initiate a school reform or improvement effort, knowledge and expertise for the reform efforts were often located with resources external to the school organization. These external resource providers were initially responsible for the reform, but if the school leaders, teachers, and the broader school community do not take responsibility for enacting and sustaining the reform, then the school would not have the capacity to sustain lasting consequential change. Additionally, Coburn pointed out that
research on reform ownership was limited because often researchers of reform perceive ownership as buy-in or acceptance, instead of perceiving it as a shift in the “knowledge of and authority for the reform” (p. 8) To possess the knowledge, skills, and practices that enable schools to take ownership of school improvement, school leadership “must be embedded in the hearts and minds of the many and not rest on the shoulders of a heroic few” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 699). In other words, for a learning organization, broad base, skillful participation was the essence of leadership capacity and was the essential ingredient for lasting and deep change that truly impacted the learning of students.

*School-wide Positive Behavior Supports*

In the literature review presented up to this point, how schools performing as learning organizations enacted and sustained change, reform or improvement in ways that make a lasting difference for students was investigated. For the purpose of this study, the initiative of *School-wide Positive Behavior Supports* (SW-PBS) was used as an application model for grounding the concepts and tenets of building leadership capacity and sustaining successful improvement. SW-PBS was a change initiative designed to provide schools with an approach to prevention and early intervention for student problem behaviors (Lewis, 2005). The underpinnings, guiding principles, and implementation of SW-PBS are presented.

Research noted the increase in destabilizing disruptive behaviors, anti-social behaviors, and violent behaviors found throughout society existing within schools today and have negatively impacted the school environment (Nersesian, Todd, Lehmann, & Watson, 2000; Walker & Horner, 1996). Public school teachers are held accountable to
deal with all of the children that enter their classrooms, yet those children often bring with them a staggering array of serious issues that can interfere with social and academic development (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Nersesian et al.). Schools are expected to be safe and secure environments focusing on academics and student learning and to accomplish this, student behavior has to become a proactive priority for schools (Horner & Sugai, 2000). SW-PBS was an approach that offered schools not only a way to comprehensively address behavior concerns of students but also represents an organizational approach to prevention. SW-PBS was defined as “a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviors in all students” (Sugai, Horner, Dunlap, Hieneman, Lewis, Nelson, 2000, p. 131).

SW-PBS was established on the premise that “students learn appropriate behavior in the same way they learn to read – through instruction, practice, feedback, and encouragement.” (Lewis & Sugai, 1999, p. 2). The approach was based on concepts from behavior science and analytical behavior analysis, prevention logic, systems change theory, and evidence based instructional practices (Horner & Sugai, 2002). The systematic application of SW-PBS featured (a) a prevention-focused continuum of support for students, (b) an instructional approach to improving social behaviors, (c) a systems perspective to change and support of effective practices, and (d) the use of data-based decision making. The systems of SW-PBS were organized along a continuum that includes primary prevention focused on reducing the number of new incidents of problem behavior, secondary prevention focused on reducing the number and seriousness of existing problem behavior, and tertiary prevention focused on reducing the incidents and
seriousness of complex, dangerous, and long-standing problem behaviors (Horner & Sugai).

The guiding principles of SW-PBS requires school officials to make a long term commitment to the initiative, expect school staff and administration to consistently implement SW-PBS, have in place practices for acknowledging appropriate behavior and consequences for inappropriate behavior, and ensure that strategies implemented throughout the levels of systems within the school were appropriate for all students (Sugai et al. 2000). The method of implementation for SW-PBS started with securing administrative support and active participation while ensuring that a majority of the school staff supports participation in the initiative. A school leadership team was then established with broad-based representation to conduct an assessment of the current school-wide discipline system and from that assessment determined an outcome for SW-PBS for the school. The next step was to create an action plan based on data-based decision making and establish a system for regular evaluation of the effectiveness of SW-PBS. Built into these stages of implementation were professional development, support, and technical assistance concentrating on the development of team members’ skills and expertise to sustain the initiative internally, including establishing internal school coaches who developed additional proficiency in SW-PBS (Nersesian et al. 2000).

Within the initiative of SW-PBS, concepts of leadership capacity were represented. While the principal played an important role, broad-based, skillful participation (Lambert, 2005a) was found in the structure of the leadership team. The staff was expected to engage in “skillful work using inquiry, dialogue, and reflection to achieve . . . goals” (Lambert, 2003, p. 5) through the use of data-based decision making
and action planning. By utilizing the systems perspective in SW-PBS, the risk of experiencing a “lack of improvement results from the failure to view school as an educational system” (McREL, 1997, p. 53) was significantly diminished. Regularly evaluating effectiveness and action planning around data supported the school as a learning organization as described by Mai (2004) when stating that “learning organizations are about constant self evaluation and about developing new approaches and practices to deal with challenges” (p. 3). Finally, ownership of the initiative (Coburn, 2003) was shifted from external providers to leadership team members and internal coaches who were embedded with the school organization.

While the concepts of leadership capacity were represented in the change initiative of SW-PBS, no significant research on how the development of leadership capacity impacted a school organization’s ability to sustain SW-PBS was found in the literature review. Schools implementing SW-PBS were involved in implementing change that required the school to function as a learning organization in order to facilitate the change process fundamental to this initiative, yet how schools build the leadership capacity to sustain SW-PBS has not been examined. Although there was evidence that SW-PBS was effective, there were indications that maintaining implementation of the initiative was problematic for some schools (Horner, Todd, Lewis-Palmer, Irvin, Sugai, & Boland, 2004; Irwin & Algozzine, 2006; Illinois PBIS Network, n.d.). Research that examined how broad-based, skillful participation in leadership (Lambert, 2005) contributed to sustaining the change initiative of SW-PBS for school organizations was lacking in the literature and offered a significant opportunity for investigation.

Summary
Presented in this chapter was a review of related literature to provide the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings for the study. Organizational theory provided the lens of schools as organizations which guided the review of the constructs of schools as learning organizations, school leadership and change, and building capacity for sustaining change. These constructs were coupled with the change initiative known as School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS) which provided a basis for application and information about the program. The interrelated concepts of organizational culture, organizational change and organizational learning were examined utilizing the framework of schools as organizations. An investigation of the construct of school leadership and change highlighted effective leadership for change and the nature of change. The literature review of building capacity for sustaining change contained an investigation of the concept of leadership capacity, enabling conditions, and ownership of change. A description of the initiative SW-PBS provided background about the program that serves as a model for application for the purposes of the study.

In Chapter Three, a description of the research design and methodology utilized in this study is presented. The mixed research design, incorporating quantitative and qualitative measures, is described. Presented in Chapter Four are the research analysis and findings. In Chapter Five, the results of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research are presented.
CHAPTER 3
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

Educational organizations personnel are challenged to respond to a call for renewal and sustained improvement efforts as arduous demands are placed on schools by changing conditions within the context of increasing accountability (Chrisman, 2005; Evans, 1996, Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Mai, 2003; Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory [McREL], 2000). In educational environments where schools are expected to ensure student learning through school reform or change toward school improvement, school organization personnel require an approach to develop, implement, and sustain school improvement (Fullan, 2000). Thus, schools need to function as learning organizations in order to collectively change the practices and patterns of the school involving student learning (Awbrey, 2005; Cook & Yanow, 2003; Weasmer & Woods, 1999).

Leadership is essential to changing the school organization so an expanded view of leadership is required to sustain meaningful, long lasting changes (Fullan, 2002; Harris & Lambert, 2003; McREL, 2001; Retallick & Fink, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2005). This expanded role of leadership was viewed as the organizational concept of building leadership capacity (Lambert, 2003). Research on school change indicates that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership in the organization (Harris & Lambert). Leadership capacity involved creating conditions within the school for self-renewal, growth, and the development and distribution of leadership throughout the school organization (Harris & Lambert; Lambert, 1998;
Lambert; Lambert, 2005(a); Lambert, 2005(b); Lambert, 2006). Characteristics of leadership capacity included broad-based, skillful participation, shared vision, the use of inquiry, collaboration and collective responsibility, reflective practice, and high or improved student achievement. Through the use of change strategies and processes, this development of leadership capacity was supported and encouraged by school leaders (Lambert). Thus the purpose of the study was to examine what occurred within schools successful in implementing and sustaining school change through the examination of characteristics of leadership capacity.

In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology used for this study is presented. The rationale for the mix methods design used for this study is given and the population and sampling for the study depicted. A description of the instrumentation used along with data collection methods and data analyses is explained in detail to assist in replication of the study. Completing the information presented in the chapter is a discussion of the researcher’s biases and assumptions impacting the study.

Research Questions

The synthesis of the literature review revealed the concept that schools successfully sustaining change or improvement efforts developed leadership capacity within the school organization (Awbrey, 2005; Chrisman, 2005; Farmer, 1990; Fullan, 2000, 2002b, 2005b; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, 2004; Lambert, 2003, 2005a ). Leadership capacity was understood as a framework for sustaining school change or improvement. The theory that schools with leadership capacity are successful at sustaining change was used to frame and inform the investigation of schools successful in
sustaining the initiative SW-PBS. The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining school improvement?

2. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

3. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of inquiry—based use of information to inform decisions and practice in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

4. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of roles and actions reflecting broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

5. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic reflective practice that consistently leads to innovation in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?
6. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

7. What are the change strategies and processes established by the school leaders that enhance a school’s capacity to sustain a change initiative such as SW-PBS?

*Rationale for Use of Mixed Methods*

A way of planning and conducting the study using specific methods of data collection and analysis is provided through the selection of the research design (Creswell & Clark, 2007). For the purposes of this study, mixed methods research was chosen as the research design. Mix methods research involves the collection and analyzing of both quantitative and qualitative data in this study.

Creswell and Clark (2007) argued that by combining both approaches to a research problem, a better understanding of the problem would result than with the use of a single approach alone. Several reasons were given for this conclusion. By applying both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the weakness of one approach could be balanced by the strengths of the other approach. The use of mixed methods supplied more evidence for the research problem and offered augmented comprehensive data than either quantitative or qualitative research alone could offer while assisting the researcher in the development of multiple views of the research problem. The use of mix methods design allowed the use of inductive thinking and deductive thinking to be united in the study of the research problem.
In this study, the mixed methods research approach utilized by the researcher was the triangulation design (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The approach presented the researcher with a way of obtaining different but complimentary data about the research problem with the potential to merge or compare and contrast data and to validate or expand findings of the study. This researcher collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data separately on the phenomenon of leadership capacity to validate and corroborate quantitative and qualitative results and findings. There were two phases of data collection with quantitative data collected through the use of survey instruments from a larger sample size and qualitative data collected through the use of focus group interviews providing in-depth descriptions from a smaller sample size. The quantitative data was collected and analyzed first in the sequence to determine statistical significance and the qualitative data was collected and analyzed second in the sequence to help with explanation and comprehension of quantitative findings. Thus, the statistical findings could be better understood through the analysis of the descriptive data collected in the study and the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative data used to validate each other through the use of mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gay, 1996; Merriam, 1998).

Population and Sample

To select the sample for the study, the population of interest for the study has been defined. This was the population to which, ideally, the results of the study would be generalized (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gay, 1996). The target population for the study was public school attendance centers within three states in the Midwest. There are 8008 public school attendance centers, referred to as schools in the study, included in the target
population (Illinois Education Quickstats 2006, n.d.; Missouri Public School Accountability Report, 2005; State of Tennessee Statewide Report Card 2005). Figure 1 illustrates the progression of the population and sample identification used in this research project.

*Figure 1.* Progression and sequence of the population and sample identification for purposive sampling.

From the target population, a sample was selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involved choosing a representative sample which was especially qualified for the purpose of the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Purposive sampling for this study was based on the common characteristic of public school attendance centers implementing the initiative SW-PBS. This shared characteristic among public school attendance centers was chosen since the purpose of this study was to examine what
occurred in schools successful in implementing and sustaining SW-PBS that was
different from what occurred in schools that were not yet successful. The purposive
sample for the study was 215 school attendance centers identified as implementing SW-
PBS in three Midwest states (Columbia Public Schools Positive Behavior Support, n.d.;

For school attendance centers, or schools, identified as the purposive sample for
the study the administration permission for school participation letter (see Appendix A)
was sent to the chief school administrator, the director, or the superintendent of schools
requesting permission to contact the principal of identified schools. After the chief school
administrator, director, or superintendent agreed to allow contact about participation in
the study, contact was made with the principals of the attendance centers of the school
district. Principals were sent a request for school participation and information letter that
included asking for the two most current SET scores (see Appendix A). Copies of the
consent letter for the survey and the survey were also sent to the principal for review.

Schools where the principal granted permission to contact staff for participation
were divided into two groupings by the researcher. One grouping was composed of
schools with the most current SET score equal to or more than 80/80 and was categorized
as schools successful at sustaining school change. The other grouping contained schools
with the most current SET score less than 80/80 and were categorized as schools not yet
successful at sustaining school change. Teachers were sent a letter of consent (see
Appendix A) and a survey (see Appendix B) in schools meeting the criteria with consent
to participate received from the building principal.
The size of the sample was a concern in research since the goal of the researcher was to generalize the results of a study. Researchers suggested that larger sample sizes offset the concerns of differences between the sample and the population ((Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gay, 1996; Heppner & Heppner, 2004). The researcher sought to obtain as large a sample size allowed within the time limit and geographic location of the study. While no specific number was given for a sample size, it was recommended that for correlational research 30 subjects were needed to “establish the existence or non existence of a relationship” (Gay, p. 124). For the purposes of this study, a subject was considered to be the school as a whole. Within each school, the number of teachers participating in the survey and focus group interview would increase the likelihood that the sample was representative of the population.

The public school attendance center, or school, was the unit of analysis used for the study and the greatest number of schools willing to participate and meeting the criteria for schools successful and not yet successful at sustaining school change was used as the sample for the study. Furthermore, to adequately describe the unit of analysis, the researcher collected survey data from a majority of the school organization’s members so that the data summary represented the school organization as a whole. The survey instrument was sent to all of the teaching staff in a participating school.

Random sampling was used to select schools to participate in focus group interviews. The steps in random sampling involved defining the population, identifying the members of the population, and selection of members from the population with each member having an equal chance of being selected (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gay, 1996). The population for this random sample was the schools that had teachers respond to the
survey. The schools were previously grouped into categories and for the random sample these schools remained in the category assignment made earlier. From each category, two schools were selected randomly to participate in the focus group survey. All of the teachers in each of the schools chosen were sent an informed consent letter for the focus group interview (see Appendix A). All of the teachers in the school consenting to participate were included in the focus group interview.

Whereas no sample population has precisely the same composition as that of the target population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Gay, 1996), attention was given to obtaining a representative sample of the population. By using the demographic areas of average school size, social economic status, and ethnic background as shown in Table 1 (see Appendix C) for a measure of comparison between the target population and the sample population, the researcher sought to enhance understanding of how the sample group reflected the target group and served as a representation of the target population, thus increasing the probability that the study could be generalized to the target population (Heppner & Heppner, 2004; Thomas & Brubaker, 2000).

*Data Collection and Instrumentation*

The data collection process was composed of three phases utilizing three different data sources for this study. The use of different instruments to collect data, known as triangulation, presented the researcher with a technique that improved the quality of data and the accuracy of interpretations (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Detailed descriptions of the instrumentation used in this study were provided, supplying what the instrument measured, the factors and subscales found within the instrument, and the reliability and validity of the instrument.
Data Collection

The first phase of data collection consisted of obtaining the most current School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) scores from participating schools implementing SW-PBS. School administrators providing permission for school participation were asked to submit the SET scores to the researcher for the school. These data were used to sort participating schools into two categories, schools successful at sustaining change and school not yet successful at sustaining change. The SET scores gathered for this study were from previous evaluations conducted by outside evaluators trained in the administration of the SET. As delineated in Chapter 1 of this study, a successful school is a school implementing SW-PBS and receiving a total score of 80% or more and a subscale score of 80% or more on expectations taught on the SET for the most current year score submitted.

The next phase of data collection consisted of the administration of the Leadership Capacity School Survey. The building level administrator provided permission for contacting the teachers of schools participating in the study. Teachers in the participating schools were given an informed consent letter and a copy of the survey with a stamped return envelop (see Appendix B). Teachers choosing to participate were asked to complete the informed consent form while keeping a copy, complete the survey, and return the survey to the researcher. Follow-up letters and thank you letters also were sent to the teachers in participating schools (see Appendix A).

The final phase of data collection involved conducting a focus group interview using the School Assessment Interview (see Appendix B). The focus group interview was used as a data collection method that provided a qualitative approach to gathering
information on characteristics of leadership capacity. Focus group research is “a process of disciplined inquiry that is systematic and verifiable” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 198) and was used to provide the researcher with insights to enhance understanding and interpretation. For teachers completing the Leadership Capacity School Survey, an informed consent letter was sent with an invitation to participate in a focus group interview (see Appendix A). Teachers choosing to participate in the interview were asked to complete and return the informed consent form. A time was scheduled for the researcher to conduct the focus group interview. During the interview, procedures for data collection included the use of field notes and electronic recordings. A transcript of the comments and discussion was made and reviewed by participants so that any corrections could be made to the transcript to ensure accuracy in content and meaning.

These three phases of data collection, the use of the School Assessment Questions interview in combination with the SET scores and the Leadership Capacity School Survey, provided a resource for triangulation of the data gathered and enhanced the analyses and interpretation of data collected for this study. The triangulation design procedure used in this mixed method study was a one-phase design where the data collection of both quantitative and qualitative occurred within the same time frame, at separate times, and were equally important phases of data collection (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

Instrumentation

School-wide Evaluation Tool. The School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) is designed to assess and evaluate the level of implementation of critical features of school-wide effective behavior support, known as SW-PBS, across each academic school year.
The SET (Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd, & Horner, 2001) was developed to assess features that are in place, determine annual goals for school-wide effective behavior support, evaluate on-going efforts toward school-wide behavior support, design and revise procedures as needed, and compare efforts toward school-wide effective behavior support from year to year. The SET was also designed to provide trend data of improvement and sustainability over time. As acknowledged previously, SET scores gathered for this study were from evaluations conducted by outside evaluators trained in the administration of the SET.

The SET consisted of 28 items with data gathered from conducting interviews with administrators, teachers, staff members and students; reviewing permanent products such as school policies, training curricula, and meeting minutes; and examining data systems currently in use. Evaluation questions were scored by the assignment of a value of 0, 1, or 2 representing not implemented, partially implemented, and fully implemented. For each evaluation question, what constitutes the value for that question was specifically stated along with the data sources used (Horner et al, 2004). For example, when examining the level of implementation of the SW-PBS feature of school-wide behavior expectations are defined, the elements of documentation in place, affirmations by staff and students during interviews, and having the expectations publicly posted throughout the school received a score of 2. If one of the elements were not in place, the score received would be 1, and if none of the elements were in place a score of 0 would be received.

The items of the SET were organized into seven subscales that represent the seven key features of SW-PBS. The seven key features of SW-PBS were 1) school-wide
behavioral expectations are defined; 2) these expectations are taught to all children in the school; 3) rewards are provided for following the expectations; 4) a consistently implemented continuum of consequences for problem behavior is put in place; 5) problem behavior patterns are monitored and the information is used for ongoing decision-making; 6) an administrator actively supports and is involved in the effort; and 7) the school district provides support to the school in the form of functional policies, staff training opportunities, and data collection options. A school was considered as implementing the primary prevention practices of SW-PBS with high fidelity when both the total score on the SET and the score for the subscale of expectations are taught to all children is at 80% or higher. A SET score of 80/80, meaning 80% or more was scored on the SET total and 80% or more was scored on expectations are taught to all children, indicated the consistency and presence of local capacity to successfully sustain SW-PBS (Horner et al, 2004).

The reliability of the SET was assessed through a variety of correlational analyses involving test-retest and internal consistency of items, subscales, and the total SET score. The Pearson product-moment correlations (r) were used to analyze all item and subscale score correlations, all item total score correlations and all subscale total score correlations. Also calculated was Cronbach’s coefficient alpha internal consistency index for all SET subscales and the SET total score. The overall alpha of .96 was found indicating that the correlational structure of the SET met criteria for research purposes (Horner et al, 2004).

The validity of the SET was evaluated within Messick’s (1988) unified construct validity framework. Examined were the intercorrelations across SET subscales to obtain
indices of cohesiveness of internal structure of the content domain sampled by the SET. This multi-method construct validity analysis was used to understand the content structure of the SET more clearly. Since the subscales were designed to be used as components of the SET total score, the subscales should correlate with each other at least at the level of $r = .40$ to $.50$ and should not correlate so closely that they are redundant. The data were interpreted as demonstrating that the SET subscales demonstrate sufficient empirical association to be interpreted as components of the SET total score. To assess the extent to which the SET was sensitive to change in behavioral procedures used in schools, an analysis was conducted to determine if SET scores changed over time in schools implementing SW-PBS. A paired $t$ test comparing pre-SET and post-SET means generated at $t = 7.63$ ($df = 12$), $p \leq .001$, which documented that the SET was sensitive to implementation changes beyond those attributed to chance (Horner et al., 2004).

Leadership Capacity School Survey. The Leadership Capacity School Survey was an assessment of leadership dispositions, knowledge, and skills needed to build leadership capacity in schools and organizations and includes items and indicators related to the features of high leadership capacity schools. It was designed by Lambert (1998) to assess the leadership capacity of a school. The summary of the last page of the survey formed a profile of the respondent’s insight of the strengths and needs of the school’s leadership capacity.

There were 30 items clustered according to six characteristics of high leadership capacity for schools and enumerates the specific skills and understandings needed for developing leadership capacity. The items of the Leadership Capacity School Survey were scored by assessing a value from 1 to 5 indicating a range from the item not being
done at the school to the refinement of practice for the item. The items of the Leadership Capacity School Survey were clustered into six characteristics of high leadership capacity. The characteristics are a) broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership; b) shared vision results in program coherence; c) inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice; d) roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility; e) reflective practice consistently leads to innovation; and f) high or steadily improving student achievement and development. For use in this study the survey was modified when items were rearranged on the participant survey form (Lambert, 1998).

Scores can be translated in two ways. Individual item scores of 3-4 indicated a strength and an item score of 5 indicated exemplary work that reflects high leadership capacity. A total score for each of the six characteristic was compared to the possible scores for each characteristic. The closer the total score for each characteristic was to the possible score, the more the characteristic was considered as a strength for the school and provided an indication of the quality of growth (Lambert, 1998).

When conducting research using a survey instrument such as the Leadership Capacity School Survey, the reliability and validity of the contents of the survey need to be verified. The reliability of the Leadership Capacity School Survey was assessed by the researcher utilizing test-retest reliability which determined the degree that scores are consistent over time (Gay, 1996). The survey was administered to the same group of 20 educators with a three week interval. The scores from the survey were correlated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ($r$) to establish the stability for the reliability of the survey. A high coefficient of stability was the criteria for good test-retest
reliability. For the *Leadership Capacity School Survey*, the correlation between the test and retest was significant, $r(598) = 94$, $p<.001$. The correlation established was a high coefficient of stability, indicating the reliability of the survey. Content validity for the survey was determined by examining characteristics validated through research.

Characteristics of leadership capacity similar to those in the *Leadership Capacity School Survey* were described and presented in other research involving leadership capacity and sustaining school improvement (Fullan, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McREL, 2001; Peterson & Smith, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005; West, M.; Ainscow, & Stanford, 2005).

*School Assessment Interview.* The *School Assessment Interview* was composed of questions adopted from Lambert (2003). The questions provided additional information on the characteristics of leadership capacity promoted by the school’s leader. The interview questions were designed to assess the behaviors of principals as developers of leadership capacity within the school organization and were used in combination with the *Leadership Capacity School Survey*. Used as a structured focus group interview, it served as an oral form of a written survey or a verbal questionnaire (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The *School Assessment Interview* consisted of 10 open-ended questions focusing on essential principal behaviors for building leadership capacity within a school. Each question related to a subscale of the *Leadership Capacity School Survey*. The validity of the interview protocol questions was established through pilot testing the questions with a group of educators to ensure the questions were understandable and clear (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The survey questions were grounded in the literature and in research involving leadership capacity and sustaining school improvement (Fullan, 2003;
Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McREL, 2001; Peterson & Smith, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005; West, M.; Ainscow, & Stanford, 2005). The School Assessment Interview was used as a strategy to gather descriptive data in the interviewee’s own words so that insights on perceptions could be interpreted.

Data Analysis

Data analyses is the use of techniques to analyze the data collected (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Data analyses involved several steps or procedures used by the researcher for examining both quantitative and qualitative data. In general, raw data collected are prepared for analysis and explored for preliminary understandings in conjunction with choosing the type of analyses based on the research questions and preparing the presentation of the results of the analyses. Each research approach, quantitative and qualitative, was initially analyzed separately and then merged in the discussion of the research findings utilizing the six characteristics of leadership capacity.

For the first phase of data collection, the two most current years of SET scores were requested from schools agreeing to participate in the study. The analysis for this data set involved sorting the schools into two groups. The SET scores obtained for this study were from previous evaluations conducted by evaluators trained in the administration of the SET. As schools submitted previous years of SET scores, the scores were reviewed in order to sort the schools into groups. One grouping consisted of schools submitting the most current SET scores equal to or more than 80/80 comprising the category of schools successful in sustaining school change. The second grouping was made of schools with the most current SET scores less than 80/80 forming the category
of schools not yet successful in sustaining school change. Since the purpose of this study was to examine what occurred in schools successful in implementing and sustaining SW-PBS that was different from what occurred in schools that were not yet successful, the two categories provided a basis for study.

All of the schools where permission was received from the principal to contact staff were included in the administration of the Leadership Capacity Survey. Completed and returned surveys were gathered from each participating school and scored by the researcher to ensure accuracy and consistency in scoring (Gay, 2000). The survey distributed to participants was altered so that items from the subscales of the six leadership capacity characteristics were not grouped together as on the original survey (see Appendix B) published by Lambert (1998). To prepare each survey for data analyses, the items were rearranged into the original subscales and a total score was obtained for each subscale.

To determine if a statistical difference in each of the six leadership characteristics, or dependent variables, existed between the two categories, or the independent variable, in which the schools were sorted, a multivariate analysis of variance method (MANOVA) was used (Green & Salkind, 2003). The MANOVA is a parametric statistical test that allows for testing of more than one dependent variable in the same analysis and identifies if changes in independent variables have a significant effect on dependent variables, thus the use of the MANOVA test was appropriate for data analysis using the survey scores of successful schools and schools not yet successful in sustaining school change (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). With the schools sorted into the two predetermined groups, each score for each subscale or characteristic was evaluated for significant differences.
Teachers from the schools randomly selected from schools that had participated in the written survey were invited to participate in a focus group interview. Schools were chosen from each grouping, schools successful at sustaining change and schools not yet successful at sustaining change. One focus-group interview was conducted with teachers at each chosen school by the researcher. An interview protocol was used and the focus group interview was electronically recorded to ensure accuracy. The text was then transcribed and prepared to allow for validation of the data by participants. For analysis of qualitative data, the constant comparative method of data analysis was employed (Merriam, 1998). The data was coded utilizing grouping and labeling that aligned with the six leadership capacity characteristics forming the subscales within the written survey creating categories or themes (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

This mix methods study utilized a triangulation design which is an approach used to converge quantitative data and qualitative data to better understand a research problem (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In the triangulation design model (see Figure 2) quantitative data and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately and then merged during interpretation to compare or validate results. The method of comparison used for analysis in the present study when merging quantitative data and qualitative data was a matrix (Creswell & Clark). In the matrix, the six leadership capacity characteristics from the survey and the themes from the focus group interviews were used to identify rows and columns with text data or quotes reported in the cells of the matrix. Through examination across the rows of the matrix, comparisons were made of the two data sets to determine how the leadership capacity characteristics were talked about within the different themes.
from the focus group interviews, providing a framework for understanding the data sets (Creswell & Clark).

*Figure 2.* Triangulation design model for converging quantitative data and qualitative data in mixed methods design.

![Triangulation design model](image)

SOURCE: Creswell and Clark, (2007, pp. 63, Figure 4.1).

**Researcher’s Biases and Assumptions**

A researcher must be aware of sources of bias to avoid bias when possible.

Sampling bias was a source of bias when using non-probability sampling techniques such as the purposive sampling used in the present study. In purposive sampling, determining the probability of each member in the population being selected for the sample was not possible (Gay, 1996). Through a comparison of demographics, the researcher sought to have a representative sample as close to the target population as possible. However, the choosing of the sample was based on the public school attendance centers implementing the initiative SW-PBS, contributing to a significant difference in the target population and sample population. The researcher made the assumption that schools implementing the initiative SW-PBS are typical schools and these schools were basically similar to schools not implementing SW-PBS. Another related assumption on the part of the researcher was that the range of grade levels within each of the schools participating in
the study did not impact the implementation of SW-PBS and did not influence leadership capacity development. It was also assumed by the researcher that the teachers participating in the study did not differ from teachers choosing not to participate in the study.

A potential bias when collecting data concurrently was that one form of data collection will bias the other when collected from the same participants (Creswell & Clark, 2007). To minimize this potential bias, the researcher reorganized the items on the survey and removed section names that would denote the leadership capacity characteristic associated with the survey item. Also, the questions used in the focus group interview were not identified by labels related to the leadership capacity characteristics.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology for the present study were described. The purpose of the study was to examine what occurred within schools successful in implementing and sustaining school change through the examination of characteristics of leadership capacity. The rationale for the mix methods design used for this study was provided, the population and sampling for the study depicted, and instrumentation used in the study was explained. Data collection methods and data analyses were detailed to assist in replication of the study. Concluding the chapter was a discussion of the researcher’s biases and assumptions impacting the study. In Chapter 4 the data analysis accompanied by interpretation and research findings is presented. A discussion of the results, findings, and conclusions will be found in Chapter 5 along with implications and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 4
Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

The purpose for this study was to examine what occurred within schools successfully implementing and sustaining school change through the examination of characteristics of leadership capacity. Leadership capacity was identified as broad-based, skillful participation that promoted the advancement of the capabilities of many organizational members to lead (Lambert, 2005b). The intent of the examination was to provide insights into building leadership capacity for sustaining lasting school improvement, thus impacting student achievement.

Research indicated that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership within the organization (Harris & Lambert, 2003). The characteristics of leadership capacity were studied in school organizations implementing the school improvement initiative known as Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS) by investigating the factors within the school organization that resulted in some schools developing the leadership capacity to implement and sustain change while other school organizations implementing the same change initiative did not sustain the initiative effectively.

To facilitate this investigation, information to assess leadership capacity in schools identified as implementing SW-PBS was collected through the use of a survey instrument, followed up by focus group interviews to gather additional information and further insights into the development of leadership capacity within schools implementing this school improvement initiative. Analyzed were the six characteristics of leadership
capacity which were a) broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership, b) shared vision resulting in program coherence, c) inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice, d) roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility, e) reflective practice consistently leads to innovation, and f) high or steadily improving student achievement and development. Additionally, investigated were the change strategies and processes established by the school leaders that enhanced the development of leadership capacity to support the school in successfully sustaining an improvement initiative.

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining school improvement?

2. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

3. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

4. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of roles and actions reflecting broad involvement, collaboration, and collective
responsibility in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

5. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic reflective practice that consistently leads to innovation in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

6. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

7. What are the change strategies and processes established by the school leaders that enhance a school’s capacity to sustain a change initiative such as SW-PBS?

In Chapter 4 is the presentation of data and synthesis of the analysis of data collected. Specifically, this chapter is organized into four parts including demographic data, results of the quantitative data, results of the qualitative data, and triangulation of the data. The first part presents a review of demographic data which includes a brief discussion of the collection methods and research protocols along with a descriptive breakdown of the sample population participating in the study. In the second and third sections of the chapter, results of the data analyses offer a synthesis of the procedures and processes applied to the quantitative data and qualitative data. And finally, the analyzed data is triangulated using the convergence model (Creswell & Clark, 2007) with the
research questions serving as the framework for merging the quantitative and qualitative data.

Data Analysis

Demographics of Population

The participants of this study were employed as educators in school buildings implementing SW-PBS. Purposive sampling was used for this study and was based on the shared characteristic of public school attendance centers implementing the initiative SW-PBS. This common characteristic among public school attendance centers was chosen since the purpose of this study was to examine what occurred in schools successful in implementing and sustaining SW-PBS that was different from what occurred in schools that were not yet successful. Chief school administrators and building principals of schools determined to meet the criteria of the purposive sample for the study were sent letters of consent for permission to contact school staff about participation in the study through the completion of a survey instrument. School staff choosing to participate returned the survey to the researcher which contained demographic data for the individual and school.

The public school attendance center, or school, was the unit of analysis used for the study and the greatest number of schools willing to participate and meeting the criteria for schools successful and not yet successful at sustaining school change was used as the sample for the study. For the study, 62 chief administrators were initially contacted resulting in 80 building principals contacted for permission to contact staff. Of the chief administrators contacted, 46% responded by granting permission, 12% responded to decline granting permission, and 42% did not respond to either the initial
letter or follow-up letters. Responses from the 80 building principals contacted resulted in 19% providing permission to contact staff, 1% choosing not to grant permission, and 80% did not respond to either the initial contact letter or follow up letters. From the schools with staff contacted for participation in the study, 100% of the schools had staff that responded to the survey providing the demographic data of participants for the study.

The demographic data selected for inclusion on the survey were gender, school location as in urban, suburban, and rural, the level of grades in the school, and the enrollment size of the school. A summary of the demographic data of the participants are summarized in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Location</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of School</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior High</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Size</td>
<td>Less than 800 students</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 801-1500 students</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 1501 students</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.* Demographic data of survey participants.
In addition, schools were randomly chosen and the school staff was invited to participate in a focus group interview. Of the staff participating in the focus group interviews, 10% were male and 90% were female. The average years of teaching experience for the interview participants was 8.8 years with an average of 6.2 years at the school where they were currently employed when participating in the interview. Of the schools randomly chosen to participate in the focus group interview, both were suburban, with enrollments of fewer than 800 students.

Data Collection Instruments

Data analyses involved several steps or procedures used by the researcher for examining both quantitative and qualitative data. Each research approach, quantitative and qualitative, was initially analyzed separately followed by a triangulation of the data and then merged into a discussion utilizing the six characteristics of leadership capacity. For the first phase of data collection, previous years of SET scores were requested from schools agreeing to participate in the study. Schools meeting the criteria for the purposive sampling of the study were asked to submit previous years of SET scores. SET scores indicate the level of implementation of critical features of school-wide effective behavior support, known as SW-PBS, across an academic school year (Horner et al, 2004). A SET score of 80/80, meaning 80% or more was scored on the SET total and 80% or more was scored on expectations are taught to all children indicated the consistency and presence of local capacity to successfully sustain the initiative of SW-PBS.

These data were used to sort participating schools into two categories, schools successful at sustaining improvement or change and schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement or change. Schools submitting the most current year SET scores
with an overall average of 80% or higher and a score of 80% or higher on expectations taught were assigned to the category of schools successful at sustaining change, also referred to as Group 1. Schools with the most current year SET scores with the overall average score below 80% and a score below 80% on expectations taught were assigned to the category of schools not yet successful at sustaining change, or Group 2. This resulted in designating 50% of the schools for Group 1 and 50% of the schools for Group 2.

The second phase of data collection included the administration of the Leadership Capacity Survey. This survey instrument was used to collect data on the six characteristics of leadership capacity by having participants provide a rating that described the school setting in regard to the indicators of each leadership capacity characteristic. On the survey, seven items related to broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership, four items were tied to shared vision results in program coherence, five survey items were connected to inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice, four items addressed roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility, five items were linked to reflective practice consistently leads to innovation, and five items were about high or steadily improving student achievement and development. Each survey item was rated on a scale of one to five. The rating, or number, described the following: 1) we do not do this at our school, 2) we are starting to move in this direction, 3) we are making good progress here, 4) we have this condition well established, and 5) we are refining our practice in this area.

Data received from surveys were recorded as raw data from individual participants. The items on the survey completed by participants were not grouped
together by leadership capacity characteristic. This required the regrouping of responses from individual participants to obtain a score for each of the six characteristics. The responses from the survey that related to a characteristic were added together for a total score for the characteristic. These scores for each of the six leadership capacity characteristics were transferred into a statistical analysis program.

To determine if a statistical difference in each of the six leadership characteristics, or dependent variables, existed between the two categories, or the independent variables, in which the schools were sorted, a multivariate analysis of variance method (MANOVA) was used. The MANOVA is a parametric statistical test that allows for testing of more than one dependent variable in the same analysis and identifies if changes in independent variables have a significant effect on dependent variables. The data were analyzed to determine if there were differences in the survey scores for each of the leadership capacity characteristics between the two school groupings. The data analyses are presented for the first six research questions requiring the utilization of quantitative data collection.

A MANOVA evaluates and tests the hypothesis that the population means for the dependent variables are the same, or equal, across all groups (Green & Salkind, 2003). This test can also detect differences in correlations among the dependent variables between the different levels of the independent variable and also seeks to identify the interactions among the independent variables and the association between dependent variables, if any. In this test of between-subjects effects the partial eta squared is reported which supplies an effect size for the variable as well as the observed power for each variable. The six leadership capacity characteristics scores were analyzed to ascertain if
there were significant differences in the scores of schools categorized as schools successful at sustaining change and schools categorized as not yet successful at sustaining change. The alpha of \( p < .05 \) was used to determine if there was a significant difference for each characteristic between the two groupings of schools. Each leadership capacity characteristic was also analyzed for effect size and observed power.

Teachers from the randomly chosen schools from the total of schools participating in the written survey were invited to participate in a focus group interview for the third phase of data collection. The \textit{School Assessment Interview} was composed of questions adopted from Lambert (2003). The questions provided additional information on the characteristics of leadership capacity promoted by the school’s leader. The interview questions were designed to assess the behaviors of principals as developers of leadership capacity within the school organization and were used in combination with the \textit{Leadership Capacity School Survey}. The \textit{School Assessment Interview} consisted of 10 open-ended questions focusing on essential principal behaviors for building leadership capacity within a school. The \textit{School Assessment Interview} was used as a strategy to gather descriptive data in the interviewee’s own words so that insights on perceptions could be interpreted. One focus-group interview was conducted with teachers at each chosen school by the researcher. The data were coded utilizing grouping and labeling that aligned with the six leadership capacity characteristics forming the subscales within the written survey creating categories or themes (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

\textit{Quantitative Analysis}

\textit{Research Question 1: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in schools}
When examining the leadership characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership, participants were asked to consider the governance groups of their school, performing collaborative work, modeling of leadership skills, sharing of authority and resources, the learning of the entire school community, and engaging each other in opportunities to lead. This characteristic served as a subscale on the survey and was measured by combining questions number 1, 7, 13, 19, 25, 29, and 30. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the difference between broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in schools successful at sustaining school improvement as opposed to schools not yet successful in sustaining school improvement. For the characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership, the analysis revealed significant differences between the school groupings, $F(1,66) = 15.22, p < .0001$. The strength of the level of significance means that the probability of the dependent variable to occur by chance is very unlikely. Participants in schools successful at sustaining school improvement reported higher scores for the characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership ($M = 26.22, SD = 4.35$) than participants in schools not yet successful ($M = 22.02, SD = 4.48$). Contained in Table 2 are the means and the standard deviations for the dependent variable.
Table 2

Broad-based, Skillful Participation in the Work of Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.22</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.07</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Power was computed using alpha = .05 and scores above .80 are considered as very strong.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

A shared vision that results in program coherence is a development of a joint vision that is used to guide and align instruction and assessment (Lambert, 2003). This concept was examined by participants when considering if the vision was developed jointly, questioning each other to keep on track, thinking about the alignment of the vision to standards, instruction, assessment and programs, and regular review of the vision. This characteristic served as a subscale on the survey and was measured by combining questions number 2, 8, 14 and 20. The multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to analyze the difference between a shared vision that results in program coherence in schools successful at sustaining school improvement as opposed to schools not yet successful in sustaining school improvement. For this characteristic, the analysis revealed significant differences between the school groupings, $F(1,66) = 7.57, p < .008$. 
The strength of the level of significance means that the probability of the dependent variable to occur by chance is very unlikely. Participants completing the survey in schools successful at sustaining school improvement reported higher scores for the characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence ($M = 15.06, SD = 2.90$) than participants completing the survey in schools not yet successful ($M = 13.08, SD = 3.00$). Contained in Table 3 are the means and the standard deviations for the dependent variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.774</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.06</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3*

*Shared Vision Results in Program Coherence*

Note: Power was computed using alpha = .05 and scores above .80 are considered as very strong.

**Research Question 3: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of inquiry–based use of information to inform decisions and practice in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?**

Inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice was the use of reflection, dialogue, and inquiry to focus on student learning and to inform decision making (Lambert, 2003). When appraising this concept participants were asked about the use of a learning cycle that involved reflection, dialogue, inquiry, and action, making time for learning to occur, focusing on student learning, the use of data for decision
making, and the use of a comprehensive information system to keep everyone informed. This characteristic served as a subscale on the survey and was measured by combining questions number 3, 9, 15, 21, and 26. To analyze the difference between schools successful at sustaining school improvement as opposed to schools not yet successful in sustaining school improvement for inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice a multivariate analysis of variance statistical analysis was conducted. For the characteristic of inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice, the analysis found significant differences between the school groupings, $F(1,66) = 22.92, p < .0001$. The strength of the level of significance means that the probability of the dependent variable to occur by chance is very unlikely. Participants in schools successful at sustaining school improvement reported higher scores for the characteristic of inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice ($M = 26.22, SD = 4.35$) than participants in schools not yet successful ($M = 22.02, SD = 4.48$). Contained in Table 4 are the means and the standard deviations for the dependent variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26.22</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.02</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Power was computed using alpha = .05 and scores above .80 are considered as very strong.*

*Research Question 4: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of roles and actions reflecting broad involvement, collaboration, and*
collective responsibility in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

Roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility was about the expansion of roles and of working together and sharing responsibility (Lambert, 2003). Questions on the survey asked participants to reflect on how roles were designed, performing outside of traditional roles, development of new ways of working together, and the planning for sharing responsibility in implementation of decisions and agreements. This characteristic served as a subscale on the survey and was measured by combining questions number 4, 10, 16 and 22. The multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to analyze the difference of roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility between schools successful at sustaining school improvement as opposed to schools not yet successful in sustaining school improvement. For the characteristic of roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility, the analysis revealed significant differences between the school groupings, $F(1,66) = 14.53, p <.0001$. The strength of the level of significance means that the probability of the dependent variable to occur by chance is very unlikely. Participants completing the survey in schools successful at sustaining school improvement reported higher scores for the characteristic of roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility ($M = 14.28, SD = 2.73$) than participants completing the survey in schools not yet successful ($M = 11.86, SD = 2.50$). Included in Table 5 are the means and the standard deviations for the dependent variable.
Table 5

Roles and Actions Reflect Broad Involvement, Collaboration, and Collective Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Successful Schools</th>
<th>Not Yet Successful Schools</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N  M   SD</td>
<td>N  M  SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>32 14.28 2.73</td>
<td>36 11.86 2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Power was computed using alpha = .05 and scores above .80 are considered as very strong.

Research Question 5: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic reflective practice that consistently leads to innovation in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

Reflective practice consistently leads to innovation and is found in individual and group journaling, peer coaching, and collaborative planning to support new practices and shared accountability (Lambert, 2003). The items on the survey related to reflective practice asked participants to consider the making of time for reflection, encouragement through the providing of resources, personnel, and time, networking inside and outside of the school district, the practice and support of new ways of doing things, and the development of criteria for accountability. Questions on the survey related to this characteristic were questions number 5, 11, 17, 23 and 27. To analyze the difference between schools successful at sustaining school improvement as opposed to schools not yet successful in sustaining school improvement for the characteristic of reflective
practice consistently leads to innovation a multivariate analysis of variance statistical analysis was conducted. The analysis found significant differences between the school groupings, $F(1,66) = 17.85, p < .0001$ for reflective practice consistently leads to innovation. The strength of the level of significance means that the probability of the dependent variable to occur by chance is very unlikely. Participants in schools successful at sustaining school improvement reported higher scores for the characteristic ($M = 17.09$, $SD = 3.04$) than participants in schools not yet successful ($M = 13.72$, $SD = 3.48$). Presented in Table 6 are the means and the standard deviations for the dependent variable.

Table 6

Reflective Practice Consistently Leads to Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17.09</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13.72</td>
<td>3.48</td>
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</table>

Note: Power was computed using alpha = .05 and scores above .80 are considered as very strong.

Research Question 6: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

High or steadily improving student achievement and development was establishing and implementing standards and expectations for student performance so that all children learn (Lambert, 2003). To examine this characteristic, participants were asked
about the establishment and implementation of expectations and standards, teaching so that all children can learn, providing feedback about student progress, talking to families about student performance and school programs, and the redesign of roles and structures to develop resiliency in children. Questions on the survey relating to this characteristic were questions number 6, 12, 18, 24 and 28. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the difference between high or steadily improving student achievement and development in schools successful at sustaining school improvement as opposed to schools not yet successful in sustaining school improvement. For the characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development, the analysis revealed significant differences between the school groupings, $F(1,66) = 17.46, p <.0001$. The strength of the level of significance means that the probability of the dependent variable to occur by chance is very unlikely. Participants in schools successful at sustaining school improvement reported higher scores for the characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development ($M = 19.56, SD = 3.34$) than participants in schools not yet successful ($M = 16.33, SD = 3.03$). Illustrated in Table 7 are the means and the standard deviations for the dependent variable. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Successful Schools</th>
<th>Not Yet Successful Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>.984</td>
<td>32 19.56 3.34</td>
<td>36 16.33 3.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Power was computed using alpha = .05 and scores above .80 are considered as very strong.
Qualitative Analyses

Research Question 7: What are the change strategies and processes established by the school leaders that enhance a school’s capacity to sustain a change initiative such as SW-PBS?

The interview protocol contained 10 questions that were intended to provide additional information on the characteristics of leadership capacity promoted by the school’s leader. The interview questions were designed to assess the behaviors of principals as developers of leadership capacity within the school organization. Just as on the survey instrument, each question on the interview protocol related to a leadership capacity characteristic, linking the data gathered from the survey and the interview processes.

As described previously, schools were sorted into two groups categorized as schools successful at sustaining change, or Group 1, and schools not yet successful at sustaining change, or Group 2. Focus group interviews were conducted at schools which included a school from Group 1 and a school from Group 2. These schools were randomly selected from the schools participating in the survey data collection phase of the study. After obtaining permission from the principal of the school to again contact the staff, all of the teachers at each school selected were invited to participate in the focus group interview.

For each school focus group interview, a place and time was arranged for conducting the interview and those staff members choosing to participate were provided time for questions and clarifications before the interview started. The participants signed informed consent forms to participate in the interview and agreed to the interview being...
electronically recorded to aid in the accuracy of transcribing responses into text. The focus group interviews were electronically recorded and then the text was transcribed with copies sent to participants through email for validation of the data, known as member checking (Creswell, 2003). Participants had the opportunity to clarify, verify, correct, or expound on any recorded response in the transcript.

For qualitative data, the constant comparative method of data analysis was used (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Merriam, 1998). This strategy of analysis provided a method for constructing categories through the sorting of units of data into groupings with commonalities. The focus group interview data was coded utilizing grouping and labeling after working through the transcripts and identifying data categories, or themes, derived from the data. Through this process, connections between responses of multiple participants were found to have commonalities which were identified by the researcher as themes.

Themes that emerged from analyses of the data collected during the focus group interviews were found to be linked to leadership capacity and were labeled a) empowering communication, b) purposeful, skillful decision making, and c) culture of professional growth. These themes formed the basis for breaking down the interview data while establishing scaffolding for analyzing the strategies and pathways used by school leaders to facilitate and promote the building of leadership capacity within the school. The commonality of the interview data that supplied the themes also shared an association with the components or characteristics of leadership capacity. This led to linking these conceptual elements, the themes, in a visualization of how the themes related to each other as well as within the concept of leadership capacity, thus capturing
the interaction of the data and the dynamic relationships to each other. Illustrated in Figure 4 is the model used to organize the logic of the themes’ interconnectedness and how these were embedded within the characteristics of leadership capacity.

![Diagram of leadership capacity characteristics]

**Figure 4.** Themes embedded within leadership capacity.

*Empowering Communication.* Empowering communication emerged as a theme that was dispersed throughout the interview data. The threads interwoven within this theme were about how information flowed out into the school organization and back to the school leader, how communication and the distribution of data were used to support decision-making, and how communication was encouraged.
In the school representative of Group 1 schools, structures and processes were established and in place to allow for communicating regularly and consistently with the school staff as summarized by an interviewee when stating, “Now we have a very organized system for how he [the principal] disseminates information” (FGI-1-74). Supporting this viewpoint, other comments were that, “he shares information with us” (FGI-1-29) and “People know, one hand knows what the other is doing” (FGI-1-20). These processes and structures also aided in the receiving of information and communication an interviewee indicated that “he [the principal] makes sure he is aware of what’s in the works” (FGI-1-92). In the interview data for the school representative of Group 2 schools, interview data indicating communication supported by processes and structures was limited, as pointed out by one teacher that communication happened “at faculty meetings they do, and some emails. That’s about it I would say.” (FGI-2-7). Another staff member talking about communication from the administration said that “they are split...on what they agree to and their follow through with things” (FGI-2-8).

Encouraging communication and opening channels to foster communication was evident in the interview data for schools successful at sustaining change. Group 1 teachers noted often throughout the interview that they send and receive “A lot of email communication” (FGI-1-38) and that “he [the principal] sends emails out about different topics and you can give feedback” (FGI-1-289) Additionally another teacher shared that “Through emails he’ll ask ‘What do you think about this?’ (FGI-1-81). Examples offered by staff of the structures and processes included weekly staff meetings that focused on sharing data and outcomes, the use of technology to receive and distribute information, and the use of team leaders to carry information throughout the school organization.
Repeated throughout the interview data were terms and phrases referring to the regularity of communication including weekly, a lot of email, monthly, quarterly, and always. In the school representative of Group 2 schools encouragement of communication was not apparent in the interview data as evidenced by a teacher commenting that when trying to communicate with administrators “I feel like you’re pushed off” (FGI-2-26) while still another teacher stated “[they] act like they don’t care sometimes” (FGI-2-37). These comments spoke to the lack of encouraging or fostering communication avenues.

Communication and the supplying of information and data that supported decision making were found in the Group 1 school through methods of how it was shared and disseminated to the school staff, as noted by an interviewee, “I think by...showing the progress towards those goals, [by] showing the data” (FGI-1-8). Supporting this was the remark made by another teacher that “we discuss outcomes” (FGI-1-17). Found throughout the data were other references made to discussing outcomes, going over data, the collecting and dissemination of data, and “reporting back the statistics” (FGI-1-184). The data which indicated the regularity of communication were also indicated the regularity of the sharing of data with the school and staff and how this lead to empowering communication within the school. In the interview data from the Group 2 schools, communicating, sharing and dissemination of information or data was not evident from the interview data collected. As an interviewee acknowledged, “They respond quickly, [but] we’re not given a reason why, especially if no was the answer. Things aren’t looked into” (FGI-2-26). Adding to this was another interviewee’s voiced concern that when asked to provide input by the administrators, “we go into these surveys a little apprehensive because we don’t know if they are going to actually take our
responses” (FGI-2-126). Summarizing the how administrators communicated with staff in the school, a staff member confided, “I do feel like there is a lot of un-professionalism that happens here” (FGI-2-34). Displayed in Figure 5 is a comparison of accompanying data sources from each interview for the theme of empowering communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flow of Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGI-1-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGI-1-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGI-1-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGI-1-289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.** Theme empowering communication and data sources.

*Note: FGI = Focus Group Interview; 1 = Group 1 Schools and 2 = Group 2 Schools; # = transcript line*

*Purposeful, Skillful Decision-making.* Purposeful, skillful decision-making emerged as a theme during the focus group interviews and was found to be an element in the building of leadership capacity that impacted the way decisions came about within the school setting. Couched within this theme were the deliberateness of decision making and taking ownership of the decisions. During the interview, participants in schools
successful at sustaining change discussed the strategies and practices utilized by the principal of the school involved in decision-making. Repeated throughout the interview data were statements around the gathering of data, the sharing of data, and the use of data in decision making. As summed up by one teacher’s statement when talking about making decisions, “It’s not just a simple Yes or No” (FGI-1-58).

Decision making was represented as purposeful and deliberate by the teachers participating in the interview representing Group 1 schools. The willingness to ask for and then listen to ideas and input were evidenced by comments from teachers that included “He [the principal] is open to listen to everyone’s ideas” (FGI-1-45) and “If it needs to be a group decision, then we’ll have a meeting where everybody has input” (FGI-1-58) and “He [the principal] seeks out people for their opinion” (FGI-1-70). When talking about how the principal made decisions, one interviewee responded before a decision is made that “it’s checked out and it’s OK with everyone…he’s supportive” (FGI-1-107) and if “he sees it’s beneficial to the students, he’ll let you go with it” (FGI-1-296). The interview data for schools not yet successful at sustaining school improvement revealed that decisions were not made with purposefulness and deliberately. Supporting this was the comment made by a teacher about seeking a decision:

Sometimes they might pass me off to a different one [administrator]…sometimes it goes round and round and I’m told that I will have to ask someone else, and I don’t get an answer. That can become frustrating. There’s the principal and two assistants and maybe the two assistants will agree but then you have to have the big boss okay it and maybe he won’t. (FGI-2-13)
The gathering of data, the sharing of data and the use of data in decision making was found throughout the interview data. Gathering data was accomplished through various formats. In schools successful at sustaining improvement, the way decisions were reached were described as processes that involved getting input from others and collecting data or getting “input from a variety of sources” (FGI-1-85). Also noted, when engaged in making decisions, the principal “compar[es] different points of view” (FGI-1-71) and “He talks to us about it and asks for input so we can share it with him” (FGI-1-84) and “We really try to use data” (FGI-1-128). Another teacher confirmed that decisions were based on data when stating “It’s coming to an idea or solution together and how can we look at that with data and how can we base our decision on what we’ve seen.” (FGI-1-163). Another supporting comment about using data for decisions was that it was “using what we have to figure out where to go” (FGI-1-232). These strategies also led to decision making that was deliberate as illustrated in an interviewee’s assertion about a decision a committee wanted to make. She noted that:

We had a couple of things we wanted to look at and he would say ‘Alright, but you guys slow down. You’re excited about this and you want to try it but we need to see what the staff feels and we need to see if they see the same areas of concern as the committee does’…he encouraged a survey and once we were able to give the survey we were able to see and look, they really do have the same concerns as the committee. (FGI-1-119)

Purposeful, skillful decision making in the school not yet successful in sustaining change was not strongly evident in the interview data. One interviewee noted when talking about decisions that “some [administrators] really do follow through and investigate and some
of them don’t and they never get back to you and that’s a huge problem” (FGI-2-19). Another teacher commented that “things aren’t looked into as to why we’re asking...especially [for] something in our classroom” (FGI-2-27). When talking about gathering information and input for making decisions, another interviewee alleged that “In my opinion it is not done often enough...when they do, it’s somebody they confide in as a friend rather than being professional about it” (FGI-2-39).

Ownership of decisions was promoted by the leader of the school successful at sustaining change. Verifying this was the comment made by a teacher that “he [the principal] really puts it back on the staff for any kind of choices or any kind of decision making” (FGI-1-97). Another teacher’s remark supported the ownership of decisions by saying that “it’s about what we do well and what do we need to do to go in the right direction to do better” (FGI-1-180). Ownership of decisions was found in the way teachers approached instruction as illustrated by the comment made by a teacher “that data has really driven a lot of instruction this year” (FGI-1-267). Additionally, another teacher reported that “they [teachers] focused on their data so they could know what they had to do...to target the weak areas” (FGI-1-270). For the school not yet successful at sustaining change, the interview data indicated that ownership of decisions was not commonly accepted by administrators or teachers. A statement made by a teacher that characterized ownership of decisions by administrators was, “It’s like ‘Oh I really don’t want to answer them [teachers] but I know I’m going to have to eventually’ (FGI-2-46). Supporting this was another statement made by an interviewee that “There’s three different opinions and they [administrators] don’t share, they don’t work together...they are all unto themselves, but they’re supposed to work together.” (FGI-2-52). Following
suit, teachers have not developed the ability to take ownership of decisions as indicated by a teacher when declaring that “I’m a teacher and I’m not supposed to make this decision. They’re my boss, be my boss” (FGI-2-44).

The theme of decision-making with accompanying data sources from each of the school groups was depicted in Figure 6.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 6.** Theme purposeful, skillful decision making and data sources.

*Note: FGI = Focus Group Interview; 1 = Group 1 Schools and 2 = Group 2 Schools; # = transcript line*

*Culture of Professional growth.* Culture of professional growth as a theme had embedded within it the elements of leadership roles, collaboration, and responsibility. The theme of professional growth was comprised of the components of opportunities to
participate in leadership, collaboration as professionals, and responsibility resulting from professional growth.

As representative of schools successful in sustaining change, the data from the school selected for the focus group interview offered examples of opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership roles within the school setting. It was reported that the principal’s “philosophy has been to have teacher leadership” (FGI-1-10). Adding to this were the comments that “he really respects and acknowledges the people that step up and do those roles” (FGI-1-21) and that “He uses team leaders a lot” (FGI-1-67). It was also observed by an interviewee that “He is good at recognizing people’s strengths and tries to promote leadership through their strengths” (FGI-1-129). A statement that demonstrates the results of teacher leadership was:

And I myself, I know personally my own leadership skills and experience have developed since he [the principal] has been here because of that. I feel like I’ve come to a point where I can take that and feel very competent in that [leadership role]. (FGI-1-17)

The interview data from the school representative of schools not yet successful at sustaining had few opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership roles reported. The roles referred to in the interview data were assignments to committees for departments. A description by a teacher was “Sometimes I feel like teachers are put upon for the things they [administrators] should be doing. I feel like sometimes they want us to assume more leadership but...I feel like things are pond off on us, like hallway supervision” (FGI-2-79).
Collaboration was a common thread in the theme of professional growth in the school interview data for successful schools. It was noted that the principal “encourages collaboration” (FGI-1-112). By promoting the use of collaboration, one interviewee was able to describe professional growth as being about “administrators and teachers working together to make decisions about curriculum development and professional development” (FGI-1-132). Adding to this were the comments of other teachers about being involved in collaboration, including discussing the importance of collaboration by pointing out “what it meant to have teachers meeting with each other and communicating with staff” (FGI-1-136) and by working “collaboratively [we] try to be all together instead of at different points, creating an opportunity for collaboration” (FGI-1-176). In the interview data from the Group 2 school, collaboration was not indicated as regularly occurring within the school. Discussed by an interviewee was that “it seems like it’s one of the things they have to make sure they have done at the last minute and that becomes the last minute for us” (FGI-2-114). When talking about teachers collaborating together, it was noted by a teacher that “I have witnessed at faculty meetings the actual shutting down of people’s questions...questions [that] are pertinent to what we are doing” (FGI-2-119).

Responsibility as a factor of professional growth was also found in the interview data. In the school successful at sustaining change, a teacher indicated this element of responsibility in her response that it is about “Why you want to do it and how you’re going to do it, how you implement it” (FGI-1-51). Leadership roles were connected to responsibility as observed by another staff member when saying “I think that gives them [teachers] more leadership because they’re taking responsibility for that” (FGI-1-86). Commenting on the strategies used by the principal to promote responsibility a teacher
announced that “he’s really into letting staff take ownership of the building.” (FGI-1-100) while another pointed out that “he trusts us to do what we think is right” (FGI-1-104). Responsibility of the staff in finding ways to successfully sustain practices was found when a teacher stated:

> We’re keeping up with it where in years past we had concerns and would start something but then it would just disappear and we wondered ‘Where did it go?’.

> We [now] address that [when] there is still a concern...how are we going to make sure that we going to keep this up? (FGI-1-241).

Adding to responsibility and professional growth were the uses of reflective practice of teachers. It was pointed out by a teacher that “We have a professional portfolio we keep...reflecting your teaching status or skills. People reach for standards in their professional portfolio...and it lets you push yourself...to see how you’re doing, to check on yourself’’ (FGI-1-247). From the interview data for the school representing Group 2 school indicated that reflective practice was not a common practice in the school. A teacher reported that “we have to do the standard personal professional development plan. It’s not enforced...we don’t work on it that much” (FGI-2-112). It was remarked about professional development opportunities for growth that “We haven’t really had any...we had a writing one this year...and I think it was a recycled idea that was given new names” (FGI-2-104). When discussing professional growth another teacher remarked that “it kind of belittled us. It wasn’t the best for us” (FGI-2-102) indicating that not only did the professional develop not advance reflective practice; it did not meet the needs of the teachers. One teacher even confessed that “I went to the first one then
they told me that I could go on to work on things that are more relevant to me” (FGI-2-100).

In Figure 7, an illustration of a comparison from each interview of the theme of professional growth with accompanying data sources was presented.

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<tr>
<td>FGI-2-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGI-2-119</td>
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**Figure 7.** Theme culture of professional growth and data sources.

*Note: FGI = Focus Group Interview; 1 = Group 1 Schools and 2 = Group 2 Schools; # = transcript line*

**Triangulation of Data.**

The next analyses of data incorporated a triangulation design model that merged quantitative data and qualitative data, which was collected and analyzed separately, to compare or validate results. This approach allowed the researcher to converge
quantitative data and qualitative data to better understand the research problem. The method of comparison used for analysis in the present study when merging quantitative data and qualitative data was a matrix (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This method of concurrent data analysis assisted the researcher in determining to what extent do the data support and confirm each other as well as what similarities and differences existed. In the matrix, the six leadership capacity characteristics and the themes from the focus group interviews were used to identify rows and columns with text data reported within the cells of the matrix. Through examination across the rows of the matrix, comparisons were made of the two data sets to determine how the leadership capacity characteristics were talked about within the different themes from the focus group interviews and how each theme was tied to the leadership characteristic. For each interview, a separate matrix was used to analyze and merge the data and is presented in Figure 8 and Figure 9.

Specifically, the qualitative data themes of empowering communication, purposeful, skillful decision-making, and culture of professional growth were merged with the six characteristics of leadership capacity which were a) broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership, b) shared vision resulting in program coherence, c) inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice, d) roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility, e) reflective practice consistently leads to innovation, and f) high or steadily improving student achievement and development and a discussion of the merged data presented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad-based Participation</th>
<th>Purposeful, Skillful Decision-Making</th>
<th>Empowering Communication</th>
<th>Culture of Professional Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Opportunities to meet</td>
<td>▪ Regular emails on various topics</td>
<td>▪ Teacher leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Seeking input from team leaders</td>
<td>▪ Responsive</td>
<td>▪ Respected and acknowledged</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and leaders not informal roles</td>
<td>▪ Organized system of</td>
<td>▪ Choosing team or committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Seeks out and compares different</td>
<td>dissemination for</td>
<td>▪ Regular professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>views</td>
<td>information</td>
<td>development opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Seeks input from a variety of</td>
<td>▪ Open door, welcoming</td>
<td>▪ Flexibility and choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sources</td>
<td>input, ideas, feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Positive and encouraging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Vision</td>
<td>▪ Discussing outcomes</td>
<td>▪ Sharing of information</td>
<td>▪ Open to ideas that enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Mission statement jointly formed</td>
<td>▪ Mission statement posted, visuals reinforcing</td>
<td>▪ Trusts to do what’s right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Everyone seeing things the same way</td>
<td>▪ Modeling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry-based Use of Information</td>
<td>▪ Sharing data</td>
<td>▪ Provides statistics, charts, graphs</td>
<td>▪ Coming to idea or solution together &amp; how data is used for that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Promoting gathering and using</td>
<td>▪ Collects and disseminates data</td>
<td>▪ Focusing PD using data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>data for decisions</td>
<td>▪ Uninterrupted meeting time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Base decisions on data seen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Responsibility</td>
<td>▪ Showing progress towards goals</td>
<td>▪ Encourages ownership of building</td>
<td>▪ Team leader program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Group decisions</td>
<td>▪ Encourages collaboration</td>
<td>▪ Gives more leadership for taking responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Decision making put back on staff</td>
<td>▪ Acknowledges staff for efforts leading to successes</td>
<td>▪ Delegating leader roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Doesn’t like quick decisions</td>
<td>▪ Providing time for collaboration about instruction</td>
<td>▪ Recognized for accomplishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Working together to make decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Practice</td>
<td>▪ Data used to change practices</td>
<td>▪ Talking about the how and why of practice</td>
<td>▪ Recognizes strengths to promote leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Data used to compare and to figure out where to go</td>
<td>▪ Questioning to help with ideas</td>
<td>▪ Demonstrating practice to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Professional portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Achievement</td>
<td>▪ Makes connection to standards and GLEs</td>
<td>▪ What areas have improved</td>
<td>▪ Encouraged to do what meets needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Focusing on improvement</td>
<td>▪ What areas are needing focus</td>
<td>▪ Able to do what is best for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Data driving instruction</td>
<td>▪ Talk about what’s working for kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8. Matrix for Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Focus Group Interview 1*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Purposeful, Skillful Decision-Making</th>
<th>Empowering Communication</th>
<th>Culture of Professional Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Broad-based Participation</strong></td>
<td>Power over</td>
<td>Some at faculty meetings and emails</td>
<td>Limited or no opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not consistently responsive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Vision</strong></td>
<td>No focus, no unity</td>
<td>Split on the vision</td>
<td>Provides little or no guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different opinions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inquiry-based Use of Information</strong></td>
<td>Information not used</td>
<td>Information not collected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can go round and round</td>
<td>Reasoning not shared</td>
<td>Needs not meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collective Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>Decisions passed off</td>
<td>No follow through or modeling</td>
<td>Responsibility not accepted by administration or teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reluctance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflective Practice</strong></td>
<td>Not much feedback provided</td>
<td>Questions shut down</td>
<td>Paperwork as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Achievement</strong></td>
<td>Sometimes considered</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 9. Matrix for Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Focus Group Interview 2*
Broad-based participation in the work of leadership in survey data of schools successful at sustaining school improvement was reported as significantly different from schools not yet successful and through the interview data it was reported as being promoted through empowering communication, purposeful, skillful decision-making and a culture of professional growth. For successful schools, empowering communication was accomplished by utilizing an organized system of dissemination of information. The structures and supports found to provide for this were regular and responsive communication, communicating on a variety of topics, encouraging communication, welcoming input and feedback, and the responsiveness of the principal. Broad-based participation was reported in decision-making by providing opportunities to meet, seeking input from others, seeking input from informal leaders in the school, and seeking input from a variety of sources for comparison. Professional growth that sponsored broad-based participation in successful schools was described as occurring through the use of teacher leadership, through flexibility and choices for the teachers, through respect and acknowledgement, and by regular opportunities for professional growth for all of the staff. For schools not yet successful, a different approach was revealed. Broad-based participation encouraged by empowering communication was limited and administrators were reported to be inconsistent in responsiveness to staff. Decision-making was approached differently in that the administrators possessed the power to make decisions and often reasoning or discussion did not accompany the decision-making process. Teachers reported limited or no opportunities for professional growth through broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in the school.
There was a significant difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence between schools successful at sustaining school improvement and schools not yet successful. In the interview data, a shared vision was advanced through empowering communication and a culture of professional growth while supporting purposeful, skillful decision-making. In successful schools, the shared vision was communicated by the sharing of information, by visual representations, and through the modeling of the building principal. Decision-making using the vision occurred when the vision was jointly formed and everyone shared the same meaning of the vision while using the vision in the discussion of outcomes. Professional growth through a shared vision was promoted by openness to ideas that enhanced the vision and trusting the staff to do what needed to be done to reach the vision. In schools not yet successful, the vision was not viewed as a unifying focus for the school. Administrators were described as being split in how they viewed the vision of the school leading to the use of different opinions to guide decisions. The lack of a vision to focus the school also provided little guidance for professional growth of the school staff towards accomplishing the vision of the school.

Inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice in schools successfully sustaining school improvement was significantly different from schools not yet successful at sustaining school improvement and through the interview data it was reported as being promoted through empowering communication, purposeful skillful decision-making and a culture of professional growth. For successful schools, empowering communication promoted inquiry-based use of information for staff as information was collected and then disseminated as data through statistics, charts and
graphs and used during uninterrupted meeting time. Purposeful, skillful decision-making was enhanced through inquiry by gathering data for decisions, sharing the data, and basing decisions on the data seen. A culture of professional growth was found in the focusing of professional development through the use of data and through the use of data to come to an idea or solution for the school. In the data for schools not yet successful, inquiry-use of information was hampered by the lack of apparent efforts to gather information and when it did exist, was not commonly shared with the staff. Teachers did not depict the use of information in decision-making and often the decision-making process was convoluted and inconsistent. Without inquiry-use of information, professional growth opportunities were portrayed as not meeting the needs of the staff.

There was a significant difference in roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility between schools successful at sustaining school improvement and schools not yet successful and through the interview data was portrayed through empowering communication, purposeful, skillful decision-making and a culture of professional growth. The data from successful schools revealed that broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility were communicated through encouraging ownership of the school building and through encouraging, while providing time for, collaboration. Decision-making was impacted by broad involvement, collaboration and collective responsibility when decisions were made with the staff working together to make group decisions and then responsibility for decisions was given to the staff. Professional growth was achieved as the staff was given more leadership as a result of taking responsibility, through the delegation of leadership roles, and the recognition given to staff for accomplishments. Indicated in data for schools not yet
successful was a reluctance to take responsibility for decisions either by the administrators or the teachers. Broadening involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility were not encourage through modeling and often pointed out was that administrators were not taking responsibility and teachers did not want it. It was disclosed that decisions were passed off to others and teachers experienced frustration.

The survey data for schools successful in sustaining school improvement and not yet successful in sustaining school improvement indicated that there was a significant difference in reflective practice leading to innovation. Interview data for successful schools revealed that empowering communication, purposeful, skillful decision-making, and a culture of professional growth was found to support reflective practice in successful schools. Empowering communication included talking about the how and why of practice and questioning each other as professionals to help with reflection. Decision-making included looking at data used to change practice, for comparison, and to guide decisions about next steps for the school. Professional growth involved the use of professional portfolios, demonstrating practice to others, and recognizing strengths to promote leadership. Schools not yet successful, interview data indicated that reflective practice could not take place since questions were not addressed or used as a way to reflect on practice. Teachers reported that they received little feedback to guide their professional growth and professional growth planning was an exercise in paperwork without follow through or impacting practice.

Between the two school groupings, there was a significant difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of high or steadily increasing student achievement. Empowering communication for schools successful at sustaining school improvement
included communicating the areas of improvement achieved by the school as well as the areas in need of improvement or focus and talking about what was effective for student learning. Purposeful, skillful decision-making was found in the connections made between student achievement and standards, keeping decisions focused on improvement, and by data driving instruction. In a culture of professional growth for student achievement, teachers were encouraged to meet students’ learning needs and were able to do what was best for student learning. For schools not yet successful at sustaining change, interview data revealed that while sometimes what students needed was considered in decision-making, student achievement in general was not a topic of discussion. Professional growth as it related to student achievement was also a topic that was absent from the interview data.

By merging the survey data and interview data through the matrix format, comparisons of the quantitative and qualitative data was facilitated to foster insights of how the two data sets related to each other (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Through examining the similarities or differences in this comparison of the data results gave an approach for reporting and for discussion of the study to assist with development of insights of how the data was related. Specifically, this analysis guided the comprehension of how school leaders promoted the building of leadership capacity for lasting school improvement.

**Summary**

Presented in Chapter Four were the data analysis presented in four parts including, demographic data, results of the quantitative data, results of the qualitative data, and triangulation of the data. Offered was a review of demographic data which included a descriptive breakdown of the sample population participating in the study,
results of the data analyses with a synthesis of the quantitative data and qualitative data, and triangulation of quantitative data and qualitative data using the convergence model. A summary of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for practice, conclusions and summary are presented in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 5
Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Introduction

This mixed design study investigated what occurred within schools successful in implementing and sustaining school change through the examination of characteristics of leadership capacity. The characteristics of leadership capacity were studied in school organizations implementing the school improvement initiative known as Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS) by examining the factors within the school organization that resulted in some schools developing the leadership capacity to implement and sustain change while other school organizations implementing the same change initiative did not sustain the initiative effectively.

Leadership capacity, as conceptualized for this study, assists schools in moving beyond the implementation phase of change toward sustainable improvement. Leadership is not established as an individual, but rather it exists in the collective understanding, knowledge, and skills of educators within the school. Leadership is dispersed and collaboratively held by all of the participants in the learning community of the school, demonstrating the connectedness of schools as learning organizations (Lambert, 2005b). Leadership capacity is about creating conditions in the school for self-renewal, growth, and the development and distribution of leadership throughout the school organization (Lambert).

Purpose of the Study

The viewpoint of schools as learning organizations supplied the conceptual underpinning for examining effective change and sustaining change in schools. The
challenge for school organizations seeking to effectively improve or change centers on what behaviors, strategies, or structures contribute positively to organizational learning and renewal in a way that produces the capacity for sustainability in order to make a positive difference for students (Fullan, 2000; Mai, 2004). Research indicates that school leaders and teachers must commit, participate and have “great capacity” (Fullan, 2003, p. 30) for a school to sustain deep meaningful change and that schools successful in sustaining school improvement build capacity for leadership in the organization (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Leadership capacity is about creating conditions in the school for self-renewal, growth, and the development and distribution of leadership throughout the school organization.

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to examine what occurred in schools successful in implementing and sustaining an improvement initiative that was different from what occurred in schools that were not yet successful. Also investigated were the factors within the school organization that resulted in some schools developing the leadership capacity to implement and sustain change while other school organizations implementing the same change initiative did not sustain the initiative effectively. Included in this study was the consideration of the question: Is there a difference in how school leaders build leadership capacity so that a school sustains a change initiative such as Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS), and if so, what are the strategies established in these schools by the school leaders? Through examination of the practices, strategies, and approaches used by schools to successfully sustain change, findings identified valuable indicators of effectiveness in building leadership capacity for sustainability of change.
Research Questions

These questions guided the research and design of this study were as follows:

1. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining school improvement?

2. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

3. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of inquiry–based use of information to inform decisions and practice in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

4. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of roles and actions reflecting broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

5. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic reflective practice that consistently leads to innovation in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?
6. Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

7. What are the change strategies and processes established by the school leaders that enhance a school’s capacity to sustain a change initiative such as SW-PBS?

The data analyses were synthesized and blended with the review of research to provide a platform for addressing each research question.

*Design and Procedures*

A descriptive methodology was used in the design of this study since characteristics and behaviors of educators and administrators in school organizations were summarized in this investigation. In addition, the differences between variables were explored to determine the extent of the relationship. In this causal-comparative research, an attempt was made to ascertain the cause of differences that already existed between schools successful and not yet successful in sustaining change (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

The target population for this investigation was the school organization and as such was identified as the unit of analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). The data collected were used to describe the school organization as a representation of the membership of the organization. To adequately describe the unit of analysis, the researcher collected data from a majority of the school organization’s members so that the data summary description represented the school organization as a whole. In choosing the sample
population for the study, various sampling techniques were used to produce a representative sample to increase the generalization of the results (Gay, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen).

The use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed for this investigation. The method of administrating survey tools provided quantitative data while conducting focus group interviews produced qualitative data for analysis. Survey methods provided a format for gathering information and investigating the “status of some phenomenon within an identified class of people, organizations, or regions at a particular time” (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000, p. 112).

Surveys used in this investigation were designed to provide a description of the characteristics of the population participating in the study. This phase of data collection consisted of the administration of the *Leadership Capacity School Survey*. The building level administrator provided permission for contacting the teachers of schools participating in the study. Teachers choosing to participate were asked to complete the informed consent form while keeping a copy, complete the survey, and return the survey to the researcher. To ensure a high participation rate in the study, the researcher included all teaching staff during the administration of the surveys and conducted the focus group interviews on-site at the participating schools.

Interviewing was a common method to collect qualitative data to obtain information beyond what can be collected through surveys (Merriam, 1998). Specifically, focus group interviews were used to as a way to “better understand how people feel or think” about the issues investigated in the study (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 4). Conducting focus group interviews of representative schools was used by the researcher
to collect additional data to allow for comparability of responses from the survey instrument (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). To provide for comparability of responses, the researcher conducted structured interviews utilizing standardized wording of interview questions. Also, by conducting several focus group interviews, the influence of the researcher’s bias on the findings of the investigation was diminished. Teachers choosing to participate in the interview were asked to complete and return the informed consent form. A time was scheduled for the researcher to conduct the focus group interview. During the interview, procedures for data collection included the use of field notes and electronic recordings. A transcript of the comments and discussion was made and reviewed by participants so that any corrections could be made to the transcript to ensure accuracy in content and meaning. Data analyses involved several steps or procedures used by the researcher for examining both quantitative and qualitative data. Each research approach, quantitative and qualitative, was initially analyzed separately followed by a triangulation of the data and then merged into a discussion utilizing the six characteristics of leadership capacity.

*Discussion of the Findings*

The use of organizational theory as a lens to view schools provided a framework for conceptualizing schools as learning organizations, examining leaders, and leadership capacity. How these constructs functioned together to contribute to producing the capacity for sustaining school improvement in order to positively impact students was a focus of this investigation. The following findings were reflective of how the data gathered in this study were related to the constructs of schools as learning organizations, school leadership and change, and building capacity for sustaining change and in what
manner the connection was found to present for the construct. Presented in Figure 10 is a summary of selected authors and research and how the findings of the current study are connected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Researcher</th>
<th>Schools as Learning Organizations</th>
<th>School Leadership and Change</th>
<th>Building Capacity for Sustaining Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boyce 2003</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awbrey (2005)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambert (2003; 2005)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retallick &amp; Fink (2002)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seashore-Louis (in press)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hargreaves (2004)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combs (2007)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 10. Connections of Researcher to Research Constructs*

Researchers studying school changed recognized that school organizations need to function as learning organizations and organizational learning was essential to successful and sustained institutional change (Awbrey, 2005; Boyce, 2003; Fullan, 1993). Meaningful change did not take place without organizational learning while organizational learning made lasting organizational change possible. Neither was
attainable without a learning culture which is essential to achieving and sustaining organizational learning and change (Boyce). Also found in research on learning organizations were the interconnections between culture and learning, the impact organizational learning had on organizational actions, and in the significance of embedded change in organizational culture for sustaining change (Awbrey, 2005; Boyce, 2003; Fullan, 2002a; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Morgan, 1997; Ott, 1989; Seashore Louis, in press; Schein, 1985). Literature and research about effective and successful change efforts of organizations pointed to the importance of leaders and leadership responsibilities throughout various levels of the school for building the capacity to change and improve. Leaders who understand and support effective and successful school change utilized leadership practices that promoted learning within the school organization (Lambert, 2005a; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Retallick & Fink, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2005; Weasmer & Woods 1999; West, Ainscow & Stanford, 2005). Specifically, leadership and change was the idea that “our conception of what leadership means needs to be expanded” (McREL, 2001, p.19) in order for leaders to sustain meaningful and long-lasting change. This called for expanded view of leadership led to the investigation of building capacity for sustaining and maintaining change or improvement in school settings by developing and building leadership capacity as an organizational concept of broad-based, skillful participation in leadership (Lambert, 2005). The abilities, skills, and participation or what Fullan (2003) described as “great capacities and commitment from the entire teaching force and its leadership” (p.30) was offered as a venue for sustaining and maintaining deep meaningful change or improvement within schools. Understanding the complex problem of sustainability and
moving beyond the implementation phase of change to long-lasting change and what that encompassed guided this investigation.

Finding 1

Schools successful at sustaining school improvement build leadership capacity through the characteristics of a) broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership, b) shared vision resulting in program coherence, c) inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice, d) roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility, e) reflective practice consistently leads to innovation, and f) high or steadily improving student achievement and development.

Quantitative analysis used to compare responses of teachers in schools identified as successfully sustaining school improvement with responses of teachers in schools identified as not yet successfully sustaining improvement resulted in the finding that there was a significant difference between the two school groups in all of the characteristics of leadership capacity. The effective size for each of the leadership capacity characteristics was positive and each characteristic was statistically significant for schools successfully sustaining school improvement.

In the first research question, the relationship of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership to successfully sustaining school improvement was explored. Broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership was defined as representative governance, collaborative work in leadership that engages others in opportunities to lead (Lambert, 2003). As a feature critical to leadership capacity, areas of attention for a school include structures and processes for participation and opportunities to become
skillful participants in leadership, a “combination of breath of participation and depth of skillfulness” (Lambert, 2003, p.4). Retallick and Fink (2002) collaborated this finding when pointing out that schools successfully engaged in change establish crucial systems that involve the school staff in change. According to Fullan (2003) leadership capacity and capacity building was about providing others with opportunities, resources, training, and support structures to facilitate professional growth and collective learning with accountability for sustaining school improvement which again supports the finding that schools successful in sustaining school improvement or change employ broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership.

Schools successful in sustaining school improvement and building leadership capacity addressed leadership and change by having a shared vision resulting in program coherence was the finding for the second research question. By having a shared vision, members of schools successful in sustaining change communicated a common approach to how they advanced as a school in obtaining the purposes of the school, leading to consistency, or coherence, of the programs in place in the school. For schools involved in successfully sustaining change, participants identified as important to that success elements that resulted in having a shared vision leading to program coherence, thus supporting the organization in the sharing of meaning and in meaning making. In order for organizational change to be lasting it must be reflected in the basic assumptions that guide the behavior and actions of the organization or reflected in the organizational culture (Awbrey, 2005). This finding was supported through the defining of organizational culture as organization’s members enacting a shared meaning of reality as
the way of sense making of the organization (Awbrey; Cook & Yanow, 1993; Peterson & Smith, 2000; Seashore-Louis, in press).

The finding for research question three was that schools successfully sustaining change exercised the leadership capacity characteristic of inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice and was consistent with research on schools successful in sustaining change performing as learning organizations. Inquiry-based use of information “provides a generative approach to discovering information... questions are posed, evidence is collected and reflected upon, and decisions and actions are shaped around the collected findings” (Lambert, 2003, p. 6). This characteristic can serve to provide evidence as aspects of the learning culture within these schools. Researchers studying school changed recognized that school organizations need to function as learning organizations and organizational learning was essential to successful and sustained institutional change (Awbrey, 2005; Boyce, 2003; Fullan, 1993). When questions are posed and inquiry takes place for decision-making and for guiding practice, a school is functioning as a learning organization.

Schools successful at sustaining school improvement demonstrated that roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility in the school was examined in research question four. Lambert (1998) pointed out that this leadership capacity characteristic “brings about change...as roles change, new behaviors emerge...teachers, particularly, no longer see themselves as responsible only for their classroom, but for the school as well” (p.20). There is a shift or altering in the way the school conducts business and the roles of individuals within the school organization. Organizations were thus challenged with operating differently than in the past, requiring
those involved to learn new ways of interacting with problems and with the environment (Marzano, et al. 2005; McREL, 2001). Collective responsibility aligns with West et al. (2005) description of “enlarging the staff’s capacity to imagine what might be achieved, and increasing their sense of accountability for bringing this about” (p. 89). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) made a connection between leadership and collective responsibility by describing it as a “network of relationships of people, structures, and cultures [and] leadership is . . . dependent on interrelationships and connections” (p. 696).

The finding for research question five involved the leadership capacity characteristic of reflective practice that leads consistently to innovation. Lambert (2003) defined reflective practice as “thinking about your own practice and enabling others to think about theirs” (p. 7). Reflection is part of the cycle of inquiry and is an integral part of school improvement since understanding what was is central to understanding what is and what can be for a school. This self examination or scrutiny included strategies such as writing about practice, peer coaching, studying with peers, and reflections on results of practice (Lambert). Supporting reflection that leads to learning, Morgan (1997) asserted that to learn and change, organizational members “must be skilled in understanding the assumptions, frameworks, and norms guiding current activity and be able to challenge and change them when necessary” (p. 92). Boyce (2003) summarized that “successful institutional change is indicated by changes in institutional actions and performance outcomes as well as shifts in values, assumptions, and approaches to inquiry” (p. 124). Reflective practice leads to learning and learning leads to innovation that supports sustaining school improvement.
The central focus of a school should be teaching and learning and analyses for research question six found that a focus on high or steadily improving student achievement was present in schools successful at sustaining school change and improvement. The student learning factors of academic performance, resiliency and equitable outcomes are at the heart of leadership capacity (Lambert, 2003). Leading the learning of everyone in the school in order to put student learning first was accomplished through leadership capacity that created a network of relationships for accessing the intelligence of everyone (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003).

**Finding 2**

Principals of schools successful in sustaining school improvement demonstrated behaviors that promoted, supported, and encouraged the building of leadership capacity for lasting school improvement. Leadership was found to be an essential feature for successful school change or improvement in the research from this data set. Fullan (2002) noted that “the more that sustainable educational reform becomes the agenda, the more that leadership becomes the key” (p. 1). In addition, Retallick and Fink (2002) asserted that “educational change is complex and difficult work, but without leadership at the school level it is probably impossible work” (p. 104). Researchers agreed that leadership is a key component in educational reform and improvement (Copland, 2003; Fullan, 1993, 2002, 2005; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Lambert, 1998, 2003, 2005a, 2006; Mai, 2004; Retallick & Fink, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2005). This agreement among researchers also encompassed the realization of the type of leadership that is not effective for learning organizations involved in school improvement. Lambert (2003) found that school leaders effective in building leadership
capacity for improvement “generate the conditions and create the climate” (p. 15) and their primary role was to serve as a catalyst in building capacity for sustaining improvement.

Leaders of schools successful in sustaining change established, used and promoted strategies and processes that enhanced a school’s leadership capacity and resulted in lasting school improvement. Through broad-based participation in the work of leadership, leaders found ways to share their power to engage teachers in opportunities to develop their own skills as leaders in a productive and meaningful way as revealed by one teacher’s comment that “my own leadership skills and experience has developed” (FGI-1-18) and in another teacher supporting statement that the leader’s “philosophy has been to have teacher leadership” (FGI-1-10). Chrisman (2005) maintained this viewpoint by concluding that schools sustain success when there was apparent strong teacher leadership and observed that “teacher leadership was strengthened in the successful school when teachers made decisions” (p.17). Likewise, Hargreaves and Fink (2003) concluded that “educational systems should see leadership as a vertical system that extends over time” (p. 699).

For schools involved in successfully sustaining change, participants identified as important to that success elements that resulted in having a shared vision leading to program coherence, thus supporting the organization in the sharing of meaning and in meaning making. The concept of this unity was found to be present in successful schools as demonstrated in the comment of a teacher who shared “[The principal] likes to make sure everyone is seeing things the same way” (FGI-1-125). Teachers of schools successful in sustaining change consistently rated items from the survey related to a
shared vision as strengths for the school. Included in these comments was that the vision was developed jointly, there was questioning of what they did as teachers to determine if their actions were consistent with the vision, they were thinking about the alignment of the vision to standards, instruction, assessment and programs of the school, and they regularly reviewed or revisited the vision they shared. By having a shared vision, members of schools successful in sustaining change communicated a common approach to how they advanced as a school in obtaining the purposes of the school, leading to consistency, or coherence, of the programs in place in the school. Also, the principals of successful schools were reported to communicate the shared vision, striving to keep that vision foremost in the daily activities of the school. Comments made by a teacher that supported this was that “it’s posted everywhere …visual signs to reinforce” (FGI-1-31) and “He does a good job of modeling …our direction” (FGI-1-39) and when talking about the vision that data was shared, “showing the progress towards those goals” (FGI-1-8). These actions were supportive of an organizational culture and represented how educators viewed the relationship between their practice and the learning of students as found in research about schools as learning organizations (Seashore-Lewis, in press).

Integrated within the culture of a learning organization was the use of questioning or inquiry around issues of practice and changes in practice as a result of inquiry and discussion (Cook & Yarrow, 1993; Shore-Lewis, in press). Educators need opportunities to learn, question, debate, practice, evaluate, practice again, and evaluate again to successfully change practice, necessitating supportive leadership for change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). For schools successful in sustaining change, inquiry-based use of information was also noted as an approach the leader used and this coupled with having a
shared vision served to provide evidence as aspects of the learning culture within these schools. Practices used by the leader noted by teachers suggesting the use of inquiry included the use of data for decision making, making time for learning to occur, and focusing on student learning. Reinforcing the use of inquiry in schools successful at sustaining change, it was noted by a participant that “we can analyze data and design activities and lessons for whatever we need to focus on for the students...and it really helps” (FGI-1-256). Furthermore, the principals of successful schools at sustaining change bolstered the use of inquiry by creating conditions for inquiry to take place. An example of this was provided by a participant when sharing the observation that the teachers were able to undertake inquiry had “uninterrupted time to meet” (FGI-1-260) during the school day. These successful schools were indicative of what was found in research by signifying that there exists an essential relationship between organizational learning and organizational change making the culture of the school an important consideration when initiating organizational change (McREL, 1997).

The leaders of successful schools endorsed and encouraged broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility were communicated through encouraging ownership of the school building and through encouraging, while providing time for, collaboration. Decision-making was impacted by broad involvement, collaboration and collective responsibility when decisions were made with the staff working together with the leader to make group decisions and then responsibility for decisions was shared with the staff. This was reflected in a teacher’s description of involvement and collaboration that “it’s administrators and teachers working together to make decisions” (FGI-1-131).

Over time within organizations where broad involvement and collaboration is fostered, as
members engage and pursue “shared enterprises, learning results in practices” (Copland, p. 380), these new practices result in change and generate a culture that creates collective responsibility inside the learning organization (Lambert, 2005).

To advance reflective practice that leads consistently to innovation, leaders integrated talking about the how and why of practice and provided opportunities for teachers to questioning each other as professionals to help with reflection. Teachers were involved in looking at data used to change practice, for the purposes of comparison, and to guide discussion about where to next take the progress of the school. Professional growth was promoted by reflective practice through the use of professional portfolios, demonstrating practice to others, and recognizing strengths to promote leadership. Socially processing knowledge and enactment as a benchmark of organizational learning was described by Fullan (2002a) as “the learning with the greatest payoff” since it is learning in the setting of the organization and is crucial to “developing shared and collective knowledge” (p. 11). Uses of reflective practice of teachers added to responsibility and professional growth resulting in building leadership capacity in schools.

High or steadily improving student achievement and development was about establishing and implementing standards and expectations for student performance so that all children learn and leaders of schools facilitated and encouraged strategies that provided for the entire school to talk about student learning. This was done by communicating the areas of improvement achieved by the school as well as the areas in need of improvement or focus and talking about what was effective for student learning. Connections were made between student achievement and standards with decisions
focused on improvement practicing data driving instruction. As summed up by a teacher, “Data has really driven a lot of instruction this year” (FGI-1-267). Lambert (1998) confirmed that “student learning is the content of leadership. It is what we talk about, struggle with, decide about, plan for” (p. 23).

Conclusions

Research Question 1: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining school improvement?

The results of this investigation indicated that schools successful at sustaining school improvement addressed broad-based participation in the work of leadership differently than schools not successful at sustaining school improvement. Teachers in successful schools more often assisted in the governance of their school, performed collaborative work, modeled leadership skills, shared authority and resources, attended to the learning of the entire school community, and engaged each other in opportunities to lead. The difference between the school groupings was so significant that it is reasonable to conclude that there was in place process and strategies to allow teachers to develop a breadth of participation and a depth of skillfulness in leadership. The research on leadership collaborated this conclusion when it was noted that “to make and sustain meaningful, long lasting changes, our conception of what leadership means must be expanded” (McREL, 2001, p. 2).

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence in schools successful at
Through a statistical analysis it was determined that schools successful at sustaining school improvement approached the leadership capacity characteristic of shared vision resulting in program coherence significantly different than schools not successful in sustaining improvement. In successful schools teachers were involved with the school leadership in forming and reviewing the school vision while using the vision as a frame for viewing standards, instruction, assessments and school programs. Awbrey (2005) purported that organizations were more than operations structures. Organizations also carry meaning for the individuals functioning with the organization. Having a shared vision created and carried meaning for the teachers of schools successful at sustaining improvement. The strong results signify that the vision was the unifying influence for working together in the school and that was a commitment to the shared vision.

Research Question 3: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of inquiry–based use of information to inform decisions and practice in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

Schools successful at sustaining school improvement attend to inquiry-based use of information to inform decisions and practice differently than schools not successful at sustaining improvement. The significance of the difference between the school groups was strong enough to indicate that teachers in successful schools regularly participated in using a learning cycle that involved inquiry, made time for inquiry within the school day, focused that inquiry on student learning, had systems in place to keep everyone informed,
and used inquiry to guide decisions and practice. There was an engagement of staff in
dialogue where questions were asked, data collected and reflected upon, and actions
formed around the results of inquiry, or in other words, learning taking place. Meaningful
change does not take place without organizational learning while organizational learning
makes major organizational change possible. Neither is attainable without a learning
culture which is essential to achieving and sustaining organizational learning and change
(Boyce, 2003).

Research Question 4: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity
characteristic of roles and actions reflecting broad involvement, collaboration, and
collective responsibility in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than
schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

The results of this research indicated that there was a significant difference in
schools successful at sustaining school improvement and schools not yet successful at
sustaining school improvement when undertaking the leadership capacity characteristic
of broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility reflected in roles and
actions of the staff in the school. Teachers in schools successful in sustaining
improvement designed roles that reached beyond their individual classrooms, sought to
take on roles outside of tradition, found new ways of working together throughout the
school and plan for the sharing of responsibility of decisions, practice, and
implementation. The expansion of roles and collaborate work brought about a sense of
responsibility for the staff within the successful schools. Supporting this conclusion was
Hargreaves (2004) assertion that “inclusive change and reform processes that engage
teachers’ knowledge and commitments are more likely to increase teachers’ professional involvement in school improvement” (306).

Research Question 5: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic reflective practice that consistently leads to innovation in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

The data analyzed from the study disclosed that there was a significant difference in reflective practice that consistently leads to innovation between schools successful at sustaining school improvement and school not yet successful at sustaining school improvement. This was found in making time for reflection, encouraging initiatives by school staff, and practicing new ways of doing things. Reflecting on practice means looking at and learning about how teachers act upon teaching, learning, and leading as educators. Educational systems engaged in change needed to be learning organizations, and as such, an organization’s pursuit of questioning, scrutinizing, and challenging assumptions, practices, and norms should be viewed as valuable to the process of change (Morgan, 1997) allowing for the development of the groundwork to support innovation through reflective practice.

Research Question 6: Is there a difference in the leadership capacity characteristic of high or steadily improving student achievement and development in schools successful at sustaining school improvement than schools not yet successful at sustaining improvement?

When addressing high or steadily improving student achievement and development schools successful at sustaining school change significantly addressed this
characteristic differently that schools not yet successful. Teachers in successful schools worked together to establish and reach standards and expectations, taught and assessed so that all children could learn, provided feedback on student progress, and had discourse about student performance. Multiple measures of student achievement, development and performance were taken into account and used to inform instruction. West et al. (2005) connection of leadership and student learning described as “enlarging the staff’s capacity to imagine what might be achieved, and increasing their sense of accountability for bringing this about” (p. 89) collaborates the conclusion drawn that leadership capacity is related and part of student achievement.

*Research Question 7: What are the change strategies and processes established by the school leaders that enhance a school’s capacity to sustain a change initiative such as SW-PBS?*

School leaders use a variety of strategies and process to build and develop leadership capacity for lasting school improvement through empowering communication, purposeful, through skillful decision-making, and through a culture of professional growth. Capacity-building principals align their actions so that teachers have the opportunities to create meaning, to share knowledge, to use and understand data, and to participate in leading the school. Such a leader comprehends that:

The leadership skills needed for collaborative work involve the ability to develop a shared sense of purpose with colleagues, facilitate group processes, communicate well, understand transition and change and their effects on people, mediate conflict, and hold a keen understanding of adult learning. (Lambert, 1998, p.18).
As Sergiovanni (2005) stipulated, such leaders create conditions for change by emphasizing capacity building.

To enhance a school’s capacity to sustain change, such as SW-PBS, school leaders communicated regularly with staff and used systems to allow communication to flow within the school while encouraging and welcoming input. Within this communication was the sharing of information, data, the status of the school’s vision, and dialogue leading to collaboration and reflection. Through communication, the leader encouraged ownership and responsibility by the school’s staff while acknowledging accomplishments and shared leadership.

Closely tied to communication was purposeful and skillful decision-making. The school leader sought data and information for decision-making and promoted the same for the staff. Data was shared and discussed with time allotted for teachers to collaborate, work together with the data, and to base decisions on the data. Instruction and improvement decisions were based on data and data was used to make changes in practice.

A culture of professional growth was encouraged and promoted by the leader as teachers were provided with opportunities to practice leadership. Teachers taking leadership roles were respected and acknowledged by the leader and they were given flexibility and choices in their leadership. Supporting this conclusion, Lambert (2005a) found in schools where leadership capacity or sustained leadership was demonstrated, teachers were encouraged to “play more prominent leadership roles” (p. 65). Professional growth was advanced by focusing professional development on data and aligning it to the needs of the staff. The leader advanced reflective practice by providing time for teachers
to talk about the how and why of teaching, to demonstrate practice to others, and through
the use of a professional portfolio that was used to assist teachers in thinking about their
individual practice and growth. These educational leaders realized that for effective
change “capacity building must become the core feature of all improvement strategies”
(Fullan, 2005b, p.180).

**Limitations of the Findings**

There are limitations to all studies (Heppner & Heppner, 2004), and there are
several limitations and assumptions in regard to this investigation; however actions were
taken to manage for these limitations to diminish the impact of these limitations on the
findings of this study. These limitations were acknowledged in an attempt to inform the
reader and provide a framework for understanding the results of the investigation. The
limitations for this study include the following:

1. There was a geographical limitation for the study as the participating schools
   are located within three states in the Midwest.

2. Schools participating in the study are implementing or have implemented the
   initiative SW-PBS and therefore the information collected in this study may
   be generalized to only the limited number of schools implementing SW-PBS.

3. The findings of the survey instruments used are limited to the sample group
   responding and the researcher was aware that broad application of the findings
   may be biased.

4. The study was conducted within the timeframe of one academic year to collect
   and analyze results.
5. In this study only one change initiative was investigated during a specific time frame providing a limited view of the change process for schools participating.

6. When using surveys, differences in how individuals respond and the biases of the researcher can interfere with the validity in the research. Steps were taken to minimize the effects of these limitations through supervision and guidance from experienced researchers throughout this study. In choosing the sample population for the study, various sampling techniques were used to produce a representative sample to increase the generalization of the results (Gay, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen). To ensure a high participation rate in the study, the researcher included all teaching staff during the administration of the surveys and conducted the focus group interviews on-site at the participating schools.

**Implications for Practice**

Advancing school improvement efforts beyond the initial implementation phase into “strong institutionalization” (Fullan, 2000, p.1) centers on behaviors, strategies, or structures contribute positively to organizational learning and renewal in a way that produces the capacity for sustainability in order to make a positive difference for students (Fullan; Mai, 2004). School leadership emerges as critical to the endeavor of school improvement but leadership must move beyond the traditional hierarchical position to a concept of sustainable leadership that extends leadership throughout the school involving broad-based skillful participation and viewing leadership as a collective learning process that is reciprocal and embedded within the various levels and structures of the school organization (Coburn, 2003; Fullan, 2005b; Lambert, 2003; West et al. 2005). Insights
provided from the findings of this study on how leaders incorporate structures, opportunities, and professional practices that lead to building leadership capacity for sustaining school improvement and what leadership capacity characteristics need to be present in schools has implications for educators.

Successful school leadership builds trust, develops focus for the school, and convenes dialogue about teaching and learning. Successful school leadership for sustaining school improvement involves taking additional care to enable broad teacher involvement in creating meaning and committing to the values that meaning represents for the school, in sharing knowledge through questioning and inquiry, to participate fully in decision-making based on evidence, and reflecting on how practice impacts student learning. When leaders align actions to this approach, they enable others to become involved in and skillful at leadership. Comprehending that leadership is a shared concept in a school successful at sustaining improvement and change is the challenge for school leaders.

To meet this challenge, school leaders need to assess how they use communication to empower others in building leadership capacity in their organization. This assessment has to focus not only on the methods and strategies used but also on the overt and covert messages infused within. Stating that a principal is seeking input and dialogue has to be accompanied by actions that reflect the principal values and respects this input and dialogue. Information that is meaningful and useful for guiding decisions and prompting inquiry needs to be contained in empowering communication. Consistency and focus of what is communicated should be guided by meaning that is shared by all and is deemed as reliable for moving the school toward the vision of the
school. Empowering communication encourages ownership and responsibility of the school’s staff and supports the occurrence of collaboration. School leaders concerned with building leadership capacity within the school, view communication as a system of support, not just an activity.

To build leadership capacity, school leaders need to use and endorse purposeful, skillful decision-making within the school organization. School leaders are traditionally viewed as decision makers for the school and by using data and seeking input they can practice purposeful and skillful decision-making. Building leadership capacity and sustaining improvement, necessitates that the leader move beyond this level of individualized decision-making and champion purposeful, skillful decision making that also actively involves participation of the school staff. This degree of decision-making is not immediate, but it does lead to ownership of decisions by the school staff and promotes unity of the teachers in the decision process. Ownership and unity advances the development of collective responsibility for decisions by all of the school staff as the patterns of participation increases skillfulness beyond the traditional role of the school leader. School leaders concerned with building leadership capacity not only hone individual skills for making decisions but include opportunities for everyone in the school organization to practice and develop decision-making skills.

By striving to make empowering communication and purposeful, skillful decision-making a part of the culture of the school, leaders will significantly engage teachers in skillful leadership, resulting in building leadership capacity in schools for implementing and sustaining lasting and meaningful school improvement, thus creating a learning organization. As schools engage in change or improvement initiatives, school
leaders will need to engage in building leadership capacity in the school organization.

School leaders with a desire to sustain successful school improvement will need to adjust their practice to incorporate strategies, design or expand systems, and apply practices to promote leadership capacity in the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

School change has been described as “rarely easy, always hard to justify, and almost impossible to sustain” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p.693). With that in mind, additional research and investigation into what school organizations need to do to successful sustain school improvement is obligatory. While the findings of this study indicated schools successfully sustaining the change initiative of SW-PBS demonstrated within the school organization characteristics of leadership capacity, further research is needed. Replication of this study applied to different change initiatives or change models could provide insights on commonalities across improvement efforts of schools in the building of leadership capacity for sustaining change. Other questions to consider include: Is there a sequential order in the development of leadership capacity and if so, do schools that proceed through this hierarchy systematically achieve success at sustaining change sooner or at deeper levels than if not?

Research to explore questions related to how school organizations identify and carry out the practices which create a systematic approach that fosters sustaining school improvement for meaningful change could enhance the understanding of the development of leadership capacity for school organizations. Issues to explore would include how schools apply sustainable practices to produce desired outcomes and what factors influence the selection of these practices. Furthermore, how do these practices impact and
support the behavior of organizational members and what is the relationship of practices to successfully sustaining school change?

Additional investigation on how change occurs through a model of implementation that leads to capacity for sustaining change which becomes institutionalized to achieve continuous regeneration within the school organization could add to the understanding what leads to successful school change. Questions to consider would include inquiring into how schools successfully move along this continuum and what issues emerge as schools move from sustaining change to continuous regeneration. These questions and issues of successful school change or improvement reach beyond the focus of this study but should be considered since educational organizations have not been particularly successful in school improvement or change, especially in developing the capacity for sustainability (Fullan, 2000).

Summary

The purpose for this study was to examine what occurred within schools successfully implementing and sustaining school change through the examination of characteristics of leadership capacity. Leadership capacity was identified as broad-based, skillful participation that promoted the advancement of the capabilities of many organizational members to lead (Lambert, 2005b). The intent of the examination was to provide insights into building leadership capacity for sustaining lasting school improvement, thus impacting student achievement.

A significant difference in the presence of leadership capacity characteristics was found to exist through the use of surveys and focus group interviews of schools identified as successfully sustaining school improvement through the change initiative of
Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports (SW-PBS) and of schools identified as not yet successful at sustaining school improvement. The concept of building leadership capacity was rooted in the understanding that leadership capacity or sustainable leadership was essential to the continued implementation and sustained success of improvement and change efforts for schools (Chrisman, 2005; Fullan, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, 2004; Lambert, 2003; Mai, 2004). Additionally, this investigation revealed that school leaders of schools successful in sustaining school improvement implemented change strategies and processes that enhance a school’s capacity to sustain a change initiative through empowering communication, purposeful, skillful decision-making, and through a culture of professional growth towards the building of leadership capacity for the teachers of the school. Supported this finding of this investigation was agreement among researchers that leadership is a key component in educational reform and improvement (Copland, 2003; Fullan, 1993, 2002, 2005; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Lambert, 1998, 2003, 2005a, 2006; Mai, 2004; Retallick & Fink, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2005).

Leadership capacity is about the capacity of an organization to lead itself and sustain that leadership for lasting and meaningful school improvement. As noted by Harris and Lambert (1998) and supported by the findings of this study, “if schools are to improve and sustain improvement they can no longer be reliant on the leadership capabilities of one person” (p.6). For sustaining successful change, the concept of leadership must be expanded and extend the traditional role and encompass the skillful participation of all involved in school improvement.
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Appendix A

*Letters*

1. Administration Permission for Participation
2. School Participation and Information
3. Letter of Informed Consent – Survey
4. Follow up Letter – Survey
5. Thank You Letter
Administrative Permission for School Participation Letter

Dear School Administrator,

I am conducting a research study titled, *The Role of Leadership Capacity in Sustaining the School Improvement Initiative of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports*. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The research gathered should be helpful in providing insight into leadership capacity and school improvement. The findings could serve to assist schools in building leadership capacity for sustaining school improvement and impact student achievement.

For the study, elementary schools, middle schools/Jr. high schools, and high schools implementing Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports were selected from Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee. I am seeking your permission as the administrator of the *<Name Here>* School District to contact the principal and the teaching staff of the *<Name Here>* school building for the purpose of inviting the teaching staff to participate in this study.

All of the teachers from the *<Name Here>* school building will be invited to participate by completing 30 items on the *Leadership Capacity School Survey*. Teachers will also be invited to participate in a focus group interview session comprised of 10 open-ended questions. A copy of the survey, interview protocol and informed consent letters 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 survey and/or interview. Participants’ answers and the building’s identity will remain confidential, anonymous, and separate from any identifying information. I will not list any names of participants, or their corresponding institutions, in my dissertation or any future publications of this study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about participation either by phone at (573) 226-3798, or by fax at (573) 226 3801, or by email at combsc@umr.edu. In addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Barbara Martin, who can be reached at 660-543-8823 or by email at bmartin@cmsu.edu.

If you choose to allow me to contact *<Name Here>* school building regarding participation in this study, please complete the attached permission form. A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christine Combs
Doctoral Candidate
Administrative Permission for School Participation Form

I, ______________________________________________________________________ grant permission for the <Name Here> school building to be contacted regarding participation in the study of leadership capacity in schools being conducted by Christine Combs.

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

1. All responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future publications.
2. All participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point in the study prior to submission of the survey.
3. All identities will be protected in all reports of the research.
4. Any consent or refusal to participate in this study will not affect the employment of participants in any way.

Please keep the letter and a copy of the signed permission form for your records. If you choose to grant permission for the <Name Here> school building to participate in this study, please complete the Administrative Permission for School Participation Form, seal it in the enclosed envelope and return to Christine Combs 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 the <Name Here> school building to be contacted and invited to participate in this study.

_________________________________________________________________________  ________________
Chief Administrator’s Signature                          Date
School Participation and Information Letter

Dear School Administrator,

I am conducting a research study titled, The Role of Leadership Capacity in Sustaining the School Improvement Initiative of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The research gathered should be helpful in providing insight into leadership capacity and school improvement. The findings could serve to assist schools in building leadership capacity for sustaining school improvement and impact student achievement. Contacting you for participating in this study has been approved by your chief administrator, director, or superintendent <Name of administrator here>.

For the study, elementary schools, middle schools/Jr. high schools, and high schools implementing Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports were selected from Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee. I am seeking your permission as the principal of the <Name Here> School to contact the teaching staff for the purpose of inviting them to participate in this study.

All of the teachers from your school building will be invited to participate by completing 30 items on the Leadership Capacity School Survey. A copy of the survey, and informed consent letters 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 survey and/or interview. Participants’ answers and the building’s identity will remain confidential, anonymous, and separate from any identifying information. I will not list any names of participants, or their corresponding institutions, in my dissertation or any future publications of this study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about participation either by phone at (573) 226-3798, or by fax at (573) 226 3801, or by email at combsc@umr.edu. In addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Barbara Martin, who can be reached at 660-543-8823 or by email at bmartin@cmsu.edu.

If you choose to allow me to contact the teachers in your school building regarding participation in this study, please complete the attached permission form. A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christine Combs
Doctoral Candidate
Request for School Participation and Information Form

I, ____________________________________grant permission for the teachers of <Name Here> School to be contacted regarding participation in the study of leadership capacity in schools being conducted by Christine Combs.

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

1. All responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future publications.
2. All participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point in the study prior to submission of the survey.
3. All identities will be protected in all reports of the research.
4. Any consent or refusal to participate in this study will not affect the employment of participants in any way.

Please keep the letter and a copy of the signed permission form for your records. If you choose to grant permission for the <Name Here> school building to participate in this study, please complete this Request for School Participation Form, seal it in the enclosed envelope and return to Christine Combs 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 the <Name Here> school building to be contacted and invited to participate in this study.

_____________________________________________________  _________________
Participant’s Signature      Date

Information Requested

To assist in the data collection for schools choosing to participate in this study, the two most current Schoolwide Evaluation Tool or SET scores are requested. All of the safeguards given in this letter of consent are in place regarding this information. Copies of the SET Scoring Guide for your school can be sent or other formats used to report and record scores or you can complete the table below with information from the SET Scoring Guide.

2004-2005 School Year

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<th>C = /6</th>
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2005-2006 School Year

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<td>F = /16</td>
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</table>
Letter of Informed Consent Form
Survey

Dear Participant:

Thank you for considering participation in a research study titled, *The Role of Leadership Capacity in Sustaining the School Improvement Initiative of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports*. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The information gathered should be useful in the field of school leadership and school improvement. Your participation has been approved by your Superintendent and Principal.

**Researcher:** Christine Combs, University of Missouri-Columbia Doctoral Candidate, combsc@umr.edu, (573) 226 3798.

**Advisor:** Dr. Barbara Martin, 4105 Lovinger Hall, Central Missouri State University, (660) 543-8823, bmartin@cmsu.edu.

**Procedures:** For the study, elementary schools, middle schools/Jr. high schools, and high schools implementing Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports were selected from Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee. From the selected schools, all of the teachers in a building will be included. Teachers in this study must be currently employed at the school building and 18 years of age to participate. Your participation will take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete the 30 items on the *Leadership Capacity School Survey*. You will be asked to complete the survey and return it, along with the informed consent form, in the self-addressed stamped envelope. All teachers in your school building will be asked to participate in this study.

**Participation:** Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time you wish without penalty, including in the middle of completing the *Leadership Capacity School Survey* or after it is completed. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect your employment in any way. You may also decline to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about your participation. You can call me at 573-226-3798. In addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Barbara Martin, who can be reached at 660-543-8823.

**Confidentiality:** Participants’ answers will remain confidential, anonymous, and separate from any identifying information. A code number may be assigned so that responses may be grouped for statistical analysis. Only the researcher and the dissertation supervisor will have access to identifiable data. Collected data will be kept locked and destroyed three years after completion of this study. Data will be aggregated for statistical analysis and summarized for reporting, protecting participants’ confidentiality at all times.
Your identity and your building’s identity will be confidential and remain anonymous in
the reporting of results. I will not list any names of participants, or their corresponding
institutions, in my dissertation or any future publications of this study.

This research has been preauthorized by the Institutional Review Board-IRBs of the
University of Missouri-Columbia. If you have further questions regarding research
participants’ rights, please contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus
Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585, or visit
http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm or
http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/ 45cfr46.htm For inquiries about
the survey or your participation, please contact the researcher Christine Combs by phone
at (573) 226-3798, or by fax at (573) 226 3801, or by email at combsc@umr.edu. You
may also contact the dissertation supervisor Dr. Barbara Martin at (660) 543-8823.

**Injuries:** The University of Missouri does not compensate human subjects if discomfort
eventually results from the research. Nonetheless, the university holds medical,
professional, and general liability insurance coverage, and provides its own medical
attention and facilities if participants suffer as a direct result of negligence or fault from
faculty or staff associated with the research. In such unlikely event, the Risk
Management Officer should be contacted immediately at (573) 882-3735 to obtain a
review of the matter and receive specific information. Related ethical guidelines about
will be upheld. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.

**Risks and Benefits:** The risk of your participation in the study is minimal. The research
gathered should be helpful in providing insight into leadership capacity and school
improvement. The findings could serve to assist schools in building leadership capacity
for sustaining school improvement and impact student achievement.

If you have questions regarding your teachers’ rights as a participant in research, please
feel free to contact the University of Missouri-Columbia campus Institutional Review
Board at 573-882-9585.

If you choose to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form. A
copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future
reference. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christine Combs
Doctoral Candidate
Informed Consent Form

I, ____________________________________ agree to participate in the study of leadership capacity in schools being conducted by Christine Combs.

By signing this consent form and completing the Leadership Capacity School Survey I understand that the following safeguards are in place to protect me:

1. My responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future publications.
2. My participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point in the study prior to submission of the survey.
3. My identity will be protected in all reports of the research.
4. My consent or refusal to participate in this study will not affect my employment in any way.

Please keep the consent letter and a copy of the signed consent form for your records. If you choose to participate in this study, please complete the attached survey along with the signed consent form and seal it in the enclosed envelope and return to Christine Combs as soon as possible. Please do not place any name, number, or other identifying markings on your survey in order to protect your confidentiality.

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.

_____________________________________________________  _________________
Participant’s Signature      Date
Follow up Letter - Survey

Date

<Title><First Name><Last Name>
<Position>
<School District>
<Address>

Dear <Title><Last Name>,

About a week ago you received the survey I distributed titled Leadership Capacity School Survey. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The research gathered should be helpful in providing insight into leadership capacity and school improvement. The findings could serve to assist schools in building leadership capacity for sustaining school improvement and impact student achievement.

I hope you found the packet to be self-explanatory and the survey easy to complete and return.

Please feel free to contact me if there are any problems. I genuinely appreciate your help with this project.

Sincerely,

Christine Combs
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia
(573) 226-3798
combsc@umr.edu
Thank You Letter

Date

>Title><First Name><Last Name>
<Position>
<School District>
<Address>

Dear <Title><Last Name>,

I would like to express sincere gratitude that you took time from your busy schedule to help me with my research study. The information from your completed survey/interview will be very helpful in providing insight into leadership capacity and school improvement. The findings could serve to assist schools in building leadership capacity for sustaining school improvement and impact student achievement.

I want to reassure you that I will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of your participation and responses, both in my dissertation project and in all future published research on this topic.

I welcome you to call me should you wish to provide any additional insight or documentation that you feel will further enrich my study.

Sincerely,

Christine Combs
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia
(573) 226-3798
combsc@umr.edu
Letter of Informed Consent Form
Interview

Dear Participant:

Thank you for considering participation in a research study titled, The Role of Leadership Capacity in Sustaining the School Improvement Initiative of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports. This study is part of my dissertation research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The information gathered should be useful in the field of school leadership and school improvement. Your participation has been approved by your Superintendent and Principal.

Researcher: Christine Combs, University of Missouri-Columbia Doctoral Candidate, combsc@umr.edu, (573) 226 3798.

Advisor: Dr. Barbara Martin, 4105 Lovinger Hall, Central Missouri State University, (660) 543-8823, bmartin@cmsu.edu.

Procedures: For the study, elementary schools, middle schools/Jr. high schools, and high schools implementing Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports were randomly selected from Missouri, Illinois, and Tennessee. From the selected schools, teachers are invited to participate in a one hour focus group interview comprised of 10 open-ended questions. The focus group interview will be informal and you are free to answer the questions you choose, and pass on those that you do not wish to answer. The focus group interview will be recorded and then transcribed verbatim for use by the researcher. Teachers in this study must be currently employed at the school building and 18 years of age to participate.

Participation: Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time you wish without penalty, including in the middle of the focus group interview or after it is completed. Your consent to participate or refusal to participate will not affect your employment in any way. You may also decline to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about your participation. You can call me at 573-226-3798. In addition, you are also welcome to contact the dissertation advisor for this research study, Dr. Barbara Martin, who can be reached at 660-543-8823.

Confidentiality: Tapes and transcripts will remain confidential, anonymous, and separate from any identifying information. A pseudonym will be assigned to responses for use by the researcher. You will have the opportunity to verify the transcribed interview for accuracy of what was stated and what you intended. Edits, deletions, and clarifications will be made immediately to the transcript to comply with your right to voluntarily release data. Only the researcher and the dissertation supervisor will have access to identifiable data. Collected data will be kept locked and destroyed three years after completion of this study.
Your identity and your building’s identity will be confidential and remain anonymous in the reporting of results. I will not list any names of participants, or their corresponding institutions, in my dissertation or any future publications of this study.

This research has been preauthorized by the Institutional Review Board-IRBs of the University of Missouri-Columbia. If you have further questions regarding research participants’ rights, please contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585, or visit http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm or http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/humansubjects/guidance/ 45cfr46.htm For inquiries about the survey or your participation, please contact the researcher Christine Combs by phone at (573) 226-3798, or by fax at (573) 226 3801, or by email at combsc@umr.edu. You may also contact the dissertation supervisor Dr. Barbara Martin at (660) 543-8823.

**Injuries:** The University of Missouri does not compensate human subjects if discomfort eventually results from the research. Nonetheless, the university holds medical, professional, and general liability insurance coverage, and provides its own medical attention and facilities if participants suffer as a direct result of negligence or fault from faculty or staff associated with the research. In such unlikely event, the Risk Management Officer should be contacted immediately at (573) 882-3735 to obtain a review of the matter and receive specific information. Related ethical guidelines about Protection of Human Subjects set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations “45 CFR 46” will be upheld. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.

**Risks and Benefits:** The risk of your participation in the study is minimal. The research gathered should be helpful in providing insight into leadership capacity and school improvement. The findings could serve to assist schools in building leadership capacity for sustaining school improvement and impact student achievement.

If you have questions regarding your teachers’ rights as a participant in research, please feel free to contact the University of Missouri-Columbia campus Institutional Review Board at 573-882-9585.

If you choose to participate in this study, please complete the attached consent form. A copy of this letter and your written consent should be retained by you for future reference. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christine Combs
Doctoral Candidate
Informed Consent Form

I, ____________________________________ agree to participate in the study of leadership capacity in schools being conducted by Christine Combs.

By signing this consent form and participating in the focus group interview, I understand that the following safeguards are in place to protect me:

1. My responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future publications.
2. My participation is voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any point in the study prior to submission of the survey.
3. My identity will be protected in all reports of the research.
4. My consent or refusal to participate in this study will not affect my employment in any way.

Please keep the consent letter and a copy of the signed consent form for your records.

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.

_____________________________________________________  _________________
Participant’s Signature      Date

The date, location, and time for the focus group interview at your school will be arranged and notification will be sent to you.
Appendix B

*Instruments*

1. Leadership Capacity School Survey – Participant Version
2. School Assessment Interview Protocol – Participant Version
Leadership Capacity School Survey-Participant Version

Thank you for considering participation in this study on leadership capacity. This survey is conducted as part of research for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. The information gathered should be useful in the field of school leadership. Your participation has been approved by your Superintendent and Principal. Your identity and your building’s identity will remain confidential and anonymous and will not be reported or used in the dissertation or any future publications of this study. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participation at any time you wish without penalty, including in the middle of completing the survey or after completing the survey. You may also decline to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable answering.

Biographical Information
PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY
Please circle one choice for each item:

Gender: Male / Female                School Location: Urban / Suburban / Rural
Level of School: Elementary / Middle School / Junior High School / High School
School Size: Less than 800 students / Between 801-1500 students / More than 1501

Leadership Capacity School Survey

This school survey is designed to assess the leadership capacity of your school. Leadership capacity is defined as broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership. You are to circle the number that best describes your school setting. The numbers on the 1-5 scale represent the following:

1 = We do not do this at our school.
2 = We are starting to move in this direction.
3 = We are making good progress here.
4 = We have this condition well established.
5 = We are refining our practice in this area.

Circle the rating for each item.

In our school, we:

1. Have established representative governance groups
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Develop our school vision jointly
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Use a learning cycle that involves reflection, dialogue, inquiry and action
   1 2 3 4 5
4. Have designed our roles to include attention to our classrooms, school, community, and profession 1 2 3 4 5
5. Make time for ongoing reflection (e.g., journaling, peer coaching, collaborative planning) 1 2 3 4 5
6. Work with members of the school community to establish and implement expectations and standards 1 2 3 4 5
7. Perform collaborative work in large and small groups 1 2 3 4 5
8. Ask each other questions that keep us on track with our vision 1 2 3 4 5
9. Make time available for this learning to occur (e.g., faculty meetings, ad hoc groups, teams) 1 2 3 4 5
10. Seek to perform outside of traditional roles 1 2 3 4 5
11. Encourage individual and group initiative by providing access to resources, personnel, and time 1 2 3 4 5
12. Teach and assess so that all children learn 1 2 3 4 5
13. Model leadership skills 1 2 3 4 5
14. Think together about how to align our standards, instruction, assessment, and programs with our vision 1 2 3 4 5
15. Focus on student learning 1 2 3 4 5
16. Have developed new ways to work together 1 2 3 4 5
17. Have joined with networks of other schools and programs, both inside and outside the district, to secure feedback on our work 1 2 3 4 5
18. Provide feedback to children and families about student progress 1 2 3 4 5
19. Organize for maximum interaction among adults and children 1 2 3 4 5
20. Keep our vision alive by reviewing it regularly 1 2 3 4 5
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale: 1 = We do not do this at our school. 2 = We are starting to move in this direction. 3 = We are making good progress here. 4 = We have this condition well established. 5 = We are refining our practice in this area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Use data/evidence to inform our decisions and teaching practices</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Have developed a plan for sharing responsibilities in the implementation of our decisions and agreements</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Practice and support new ways of doing things</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Talk with families about student performance and school programs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Share authority and resources</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Have designed a comprehensive information system that keeps everyone informed and involved</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Develop our own criteria for accountability regarding individual and shared work</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Have redesigned roles and structures to develop resiliency in children (e.g., teacher as coach/advisor/mentor, schoolwide guidance programs, community service)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Express our leadership by attending to the learning of the entire school community</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Engage each other in opportunities to lead</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Thank you for completing the Leadership Capacity School Survey.*

*Your participation in this study is appreciated.*

*Remember, your identity and your building’s identity will remain confidential and anonymous in the reporting of the results of this survey.*

Lambert (2003)
School Assessment Interview Protocol – Participant Version

School A  B  C  D

1. How does your principal communicate the school’s shared vision that lets you know that the vision is alive and well?

2. When a member of your school asks the principal permission for an action, how does the principal respond?

3. Describe how the principal seeks advice or consultation from others in your school.

4. How does the principal encourage choice or establish options for others in your school?

5. Describe the how the principal responds to a request for a quick decision when one isn’t required?

6. What types of leadership opportunities does the principal provide for or offers for others in your school?

7. Does the principal promote collective responsibility by involving others in determining criteria for success and determining progress or lack of progress? If so, please offer an example.

8. Describe how professional development opportunities for instruction and assessment are designed in your school?

9. What actions of the principal have encouraged and supported reflective practice in your school?

10. Can you think of an occasion when the principal has provided the opportunity for the members of your school to pose your own questions and sought your own answers about teaching and learning?

Lambert (2003)
Appendix C

Table

1. Relationship of Selected Demographics Between Target and Sample Population
Table 1. **Relationship of Selected Demographics**

*Averages for Selected Demographic Elements Between Target Population and Sample Population*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Sample Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Enrollment</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Economic Status</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>71.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Approvals

1. Internal Review Board Approval – University of Missouri – Columbia

2. Permission to Reprint
Project Number: 1079497

Project Title: The Role of Leadership Capacity in Sustaining the School Improvement Initiative of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports

Approval Date: 12-27-2006

Expiration Date: 12-27-2007

Investigator(s): Combs, Christine
Martin, Barbara Nell

Level Granted: Expedited

CAMPUS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

This is to certify that your research proposal involving human subject participants has been reviewed by the Campus IRB. This approval is based upon the assurance that you will protect the rights and welfare of the research participants, employ approved methods of securing informed consent from these individuals, and not involve undue risk to the human subjects in light of potential benefits that can be derived from participation.

Approval of this research is contingent upon your agreement to:

(1) Adhere to all UMC Policies and Procedures Relating to Human Subjects, as written in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46).

(2) Maintain copies of all pertinent information related to the study, included but not limited to, video and audio tapes, instruments, copies of written informed consent agreements, and any other supportive documents for a period of three (3) years from the date of completion of your research.

(3) Report potentially serious events to the Campus IRB (573-882-9585) by the most expeditious means and complete the eIRB "Campus Adverse Event Report". This may be accessed through the following website: http://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/.

(4) IRB approval is contingent upon the investigator implementing the research activities as proposed. Campus IRB policies require an investigator to report any deviations from
an approved project directly to the Campus IRB by the most expeditious means. All
human subject research deviations must have prior IRB approval, except to protect the
welfare and safety of human subject participants. If an investigator must deviate from the
previously approved research activities, the principal investigator or team members must:
a. Immediately contact the Campus IRB at 882-9585.
b. Assure that the research project has provisions in place for the adequate protection of
the rights and welfare of human subjects, and are in compliance with federal laws,
University of Missouri-Columbia's FWA, and Campus IRB policies/procedures.
c. Complete the "Campus IRB Deviation Report". This may be accessed through the
following website: http://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/.

(5) Submit an Amendment form to the Campus IRB for any proposed changes from the
previously approved project. Changes may not be initiated without prior IRB review and
approval except where necessary to eliminate apparent and immediate dangers to the
subjects. The investigator must complete the Amendment form for any changes at
http://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/.

(6) Federal regulations and Campus IRB policies require continuing review of research
projects involving human subjects. Campus IRB approval will expire one (1) year from
the date of approval unless otherwise indicated. Before the one (1) year expiration date,
you must submit Campus IRB Continuing Review Report to the Campus IRB. Any
unexpected events are to be reported at that time. The Campus IRB reserves the right to
inspect your records to ensure compliance with federal regulations at any point during
your project period and three (3) years from the date of completion of your research.
Re: Request to use material in dissertation (Thread:261129)
Permissions [permissions@ascd.org]

You replied on 3/5/2007 10:44 AM.
To: Combs, Christine L.
Cc: 

Dear Ms. Combs,

In response to your request dated March 4, 2007, ASCD grants you the one-time non-exclusive right to reproduce pgs 110-113 from “Leadership Capacity for Lasting School Improvement” in the English language for use in your dissertation. This permission covers the text portion of the requested materials only and does not extend to material that is separately copyrighted. Please note that it is your responsibility to secure permission for any photographs, illustrations, cartoons, advertisements, etc. appear on a page with the text that are referenced to another source. The reproduction of covers, mastheads, and logos of ASCD publications is strictly prohibited.

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No fee is required for this use, however, permission is granted upon the condition that every copy of the ASCD material distributed contains a full acknowledgment including: title, author(s) and/or editor(s), journal or book title, including volume/issue/date (if applicable), the identical copyright notice as it appears in our publication, the legend “Reprinted by Permission.”, and The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is a worldwide community of educators advocating sound policies and sharing best practices to achieve the success of each learner. To learn more, visit ASCD at www.ascd.org.

We would appreciate your acknowledging the above by return email. Otherwise, thank you for your interest in ASCD publications.

Sincerely,
Kat Rodenhizer
Rights and Permissions Assistant
ASCD
krodenhizer@ascd.org
VITA

Christine Combs was born on August 6, 1956 in Virginia to Robert Nicholas Heavrin and Nellie Ann Heavrin. In 1976, she moved to Missouri to complete undergraduate studies at Missouri State University in Springfield where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education in 1978. In 1982, Christine completed her Master of Education with a Reading Specialist emphasis and her Specialist in Education in Educational Administration, both at Missouri State University. As part of the University of Missouri-Columbia statewide cohort program, she earned an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis in 2007.

Christine Combs began her teaching career at Licking R-VIII District in Licking, Missouri from 1978 to 1980, and continued at Summersville R-II in Summersville, Missouri from 1980-1981, and at Eminence R-1 School District from 1981 until her retirement in 2005. During that time she taught elementary and Jr. High students, remedial reading, served as elementary principal and as superintendent. She currently is employed as a Positive Behavior Supports Regional Consultant with South Central Regional Professional Development Center at the University of Missouri-Rolla.