HOW FEMALE PRINCIPALS NURTURE ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOLS WITH CHALLENGING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

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Doctor of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

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by

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

dissertation entitled

HOW FEMALE PRINCIPALS NURTURE ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNTIES

IN SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOLS

WITH CHALLENGING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

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a candidate for the degree of doctor of educational leadership and policy analysis,

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

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Dedication Page

I dedicate this dissertation to all the women in my life. To those amazing women who came before me, my mom and my paternal grandma, who showed me how to be strong and never give up on my dreams. To those women alongside me, Janine, my sister, Sarah, my future daughter-in-law, Mary Pierce, Laura Siegert, Laura Burton, Lamae Koogler, and Laura Backer, who know the struggle, yet continue to fight and support one another. And, most importantly to the woman who will pursue her dreams after me, Miss Emma Grace Woodward. May God continue to guide her path with a light that shines so bright everyone will know that she is blessed by His glory forever and ever.

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A wise man, my dissertation chair, Dr. Ongaga, once told me to "Keep the Faith" and to remember "who is in the boat with you." He referenced the Biblical story from Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, and Luke 8:22–25 when Jesus' disciples were in the fishing boat and it began to storm. They feared the dark howling winds, the constant flashing lightning, and the large deathly waves around them. They cried out in fear, wondering what they should do. They woke Jesus from his sleep and asked if he cared that they should all die in this terrible storm. Jesus spoke and the winds and waves calmed immediately. The disciples were amazed at these actions.

The past three years have been nothing short of a storm in my life, though I learned more than I ever imagined and created some lifelong relationships. While I would not let anything stop my pursuit of this degree, I did face many challenges: the premature birth of my granddaughter, who was in the NICU for three months, my dad's stroke, my mom's heart attack, and me being diagnosed with stomach cancer, in addition to a world-wide pandemic. Dr. Ongaga always reminded me to look to the One who was in the boat with me. Call upon Him first, not last out of fear. He is my guide and my direction. I will be forever grateful to Dr. Ongaga for this reminder of faith beyond measurement.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, Dr. Kim Finch, Dr. Jon S. Turner, and Dr. T. C. Wall. I truly appreciate all the time they spent reading this dissertation and advising me on ways to improve my research and writing. Their advice and guidance are greatly appreciated.

Additionally, my family and friends have been the most amazing support system I could ever ask for. My mom and dad have kept encouraging me to reach the dream I have always wished for. Their love and support keeps me stable and focused. My husband, the love of my life, is the best chef ever, who keeps me supplied with peanut butter and chocolate rice krispy treats. My little dachshunds, Rebel and Dixie, have sat next to me hours upon hours of writing. Their loyalty is a blessing from above. My son for reminding me that education is not always the most important thing in life, even though I have dedicated my life to education. My father-in-law for providing articles and humorous cartoons to keep me motivated. My special friend from God, Mrs. Mary Pierce, who encouraged me to apply to doctorate school and then became my cheering section. She has always offered me encouragement in this pursuit. Finally, my dissertation group, Lamae Koogler and Laura Backer. I could never have finished this task set before me without both of you at my side. You are a true blessing from God.

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ABSTRACT

Based on Cueva's (2010) learning strategies, this study investigated adult learning strategies successful high school female principals use to nurture adult learning opportunities at their schools in the state of Missouri. Public high schools were selected based on their 2019 Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 5) performance standards and indicators. Their principals were asked to complete a survey online and self-select to be interviewed. The findings indicated that principals take their role as instructional leaders seriously and seek to use learning strategies for understanding, conversation, and action. The most frequently used adult learning strategy is Nurturing Place while the least used is Creative Expressions. The principals desire more time and resources to help their teachers learn.

Keywords: learning strategies, adult learning opportunities, challenging student demographics, strategies for learning, female principals, professional development

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan once said, "There's no such thing as a high-performing school without a great principal" (Connelly, 2010, p. 35). Being a principal is more than just earning a certificate and dispersing discipline to unruly students. Many school districts have successfully transformed schools and raised student achievement because of the dedicated leadership of an excellent principal. Yet, economically disadvantaged school districts struggle to find and retain high-performing principals. Their job descriptions include finding avenues of success for a school with challenging demographics, in addition to practicing strategies for adult learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Completing these tasks do not come naturally with the job title; it requires principals who can create learning environments that nurture meaningful learning opportunities of diverse learners and "awaken possibilities as a catalyst for understanding, conversation, and action" (Cueva, 2010, p. 79).

Background

Research shows that school leadership matters. Strong, capable, committed leadership increases a school's ability to ensure high levels of student learning and achievement for all of its students (Platt, Tripp, Fraser, Warnock, & Curtis, 2008; Pepper, 2010; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). Principals require a repertoire of skills and competencies, most of which are captured in national and state standards such as Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) and Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). These standards embody a research and practice-based understanding of the relationship between educational leadership and student learning. These standards tend to answer the question, what is it that principals really do? The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) argued that:

> Improving student learning takes a holistic view of leadership. In all realms of their work, educational leaders must focus on how they are promoting the learning, achievement, development, and well-being of each student. The standards reflect interdependent domains, qualities, and values of leadership work that research and practice suggest are integral to student success. (p. 3)

Great, effective leaders energize all people to make productive decisions. These decisions lead to improvements in school and student success. According to Mintzberg (2004), "Effective leadership inspires more than it empowers; it connects more than it controls; it demonstrates more than it decides" (p. 143).

Research on female educators (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003; Fridell et al., 2009; Levi, 2017; Marshall, 2004; Post, 2015; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sebastian & Moon, 2018; Van Engen & Willemsen, 2004) indicated that females formed the majority of classroom teachers in the country, but leadership positions were dominated by male principals. A recent study of nearly 14,000 nationwide school districts showed that women make up 76% of all teachers in the United States (US) (Superville, 2017). This study showed that 25% of all principals in the State of Missouri are female. While there has been an increase in women as educational leaders over the past decade, with 52% as Pre-K – 12 principals and 25% as superintendents, continued momentum is essential to keep these numbers rising. Levi (2017) described women leaders as inspiring, connecting, and demonstrating, especially when working in teams. He posited, "Increasing the proportion of females on the team improves performance" (p. 32).

Building communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2010) is one way female principals create success. Communities of practice are groups "of learners who have different levels of knowledge and mastery of the knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and norms of the group" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 121).

In creating communities of practice, successful female principals structure adult learning activities, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and faculty engagement opportunities with specific strategies. Cueva (2010) outlined six specific strategies she used to "add depth and dimension to community-based health education with diverse adult learners" (p. 79). These include: Nurturing Place, Sharing Power, Heart Listening, Talking Story, Engendering Humor, and Creative Expressions. While these strategies are not a definitive list of required activities, they are grounded in research and create the framework for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Research (e.g., Chenoweth, 2009; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Pappano, 2010) shows there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst. "Existing research also shows that demonstrated effects of successful leadership are considerably greater in schools that are in more difficult circumstances" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 5). While teachers have a greater impact on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004), it is important to note that the most recognized leader in the Pre-K-12 educational system is the principal. This means that this leadership position is worthy of recognition and research. While there is a great deal of research on elementary (grades Pre-K-5)

principals, who make up a majority of the female principals in the United States (US), there are few studies about female principals in successful high schools (grades 9-12) and how they create an environment of learning for the adults in the building. It is the principal's role to provide learning opportunities for teachers; this role can ultimately lead to student success, especially in schools with challenging student demographics. Additionally, research (e.g., Chenoweth, 2009; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Pappano, 2010) on male principals exist on what they do in troubled schools, yet there is a dearth of research on how successful high school female principals promote trusting relationships among diverse groups of teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, and community members that lead to the development of true learning communities.

Female principals in diverse schools with a large non-white student population are usually faced with challenging student demographics, including items such as low student achievement, low student attendance, high suspensions, high free and reduced lunch (FRL) ratios, and low graduation rates (Theoharis, 2008). Many of these women anchor their goals in social justice (Theoharis, 2008) tenets, not just improving their overall state scorecard. A widely accepted view is that social justice practices in schools are dependent on the capacity of school leadership (Brown, 2006) whose effects, some argue, account for about 3 - 5 % of the difference in student achievement within and across schools (Bush, 2008). Within school-related factors that affect student learning, leadership is next to teacher quality (Leithwood et al. 2006). It is these social justice tenets, treating all peoples with fairness, dignity, respect, and opportunities (Theoharis, 2008) that lends to strategies practiced by Cueva (2010) in her communities of learning. While her practices may focus on the education of healthcare topics for non-white

peoples, these strategies can also be applied in the successful education of adult learning communities.

The Chicago Consortium on School Research (CCSR) found that there are unique problems and barriers to education that must be addressed by the principal in high-poverty schools, one of these is developing teacher knowledge (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). Additionally, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) created a guide for what principals should know and do, outlining six standards, two of which focuses on adult learning: (1) "Lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center" and (2) "Create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals" (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011, p. 48). Based on these ideas, additional research is needed to investigate the presence of Cueva's (2010) strategies in the educational practices of successful high school female principals. "Effective leaders are best characterized through a specific set of practices" (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011, p. 46). Knowing these practices can possibly provide specific strategies that current and future principals, regardless of gender, can use in their own practices.

Problem of Practice

Many studies (e.g., Loder, 2005; Shoho & Barnett, 2010) on the complexity of the principalship indicate it is a much more demanding job than it used to be. The role of a principal is complex, more difficult, and poses pressures to solve not only educational issues, but also social and personal problems (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). In previous decades, argued Fleck (2008), good management skills and a complete understanding of the school and community would make a principal successful. Today, principals are

expected to be experts in leadership, education, and administration. Some of these duties include completing paperwork, supervising afterschool activities, marketing the school, raising monies, and serving as the official liaison between the school and the public (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). This can be an overwhelming responsibility for one person. Even as principals rise to the many challenges, they continue to work in an environment of intense pressure to meet state and federal standards.

Research studies indicate that emotional exhaustion creates a high level of burnout, especially in women (Battle, 2010; Donaldson, 2008, Friedman, 2002; Fullan, 2009; Normore, 2007; Webber, Sarris, & Bissell, 2010; Whitaker, 1996). However, there are women who are confronting the challenges of being a successful principal. They are addressing issues of teacher education and student success in ways that other principals can follow. In a study by Chin (2013), women leaders strongly embraced their gender identities compared with white male leaders. He stated, "They [women] are more likely to feel their gender influenced in their exercise of leadership, and their gender was a strength in their exercise of leadership" (p. 5). Historically, leaders have mirrored the dominant majorities of their society. In the United States, leaders have typically been white, heterosexual, males (Ridgeway, 2002). Although women have gained access to leadership roles, women remain under-represented in leadership roles (Chin, 2010; Sandberg, 2013). Bosak and Sczesny (2011) indicated that gender stereotypes and negative prejudices of female leaders contribute to the under-representation of women in leadership positions. Northouse (2019) explained this under-representation or leadership gap was because men take charge while women take care. He also claimed, "Men are stereotyped with agentic characteristics of confidence, assertiveness, independence,

rationality, and decisiveness while women are stereotyped with communal characteristics that identify them as sensitive, warm, helpful and nurturing" (p. 358). Females focus on relationship-oriented ideas, which may be thought as characteristics insufficient for the role of a leader. This may be why female leaders are expected to approach leadership in the same manner as males (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Yet, this is not always how females succeed.

A support system is one of the most common indicators for successful female leaders (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Loder, 2005). Principals desire support, such as informal and formal networking, to help manage conflict and pressures. Whitaker (1996) explained that women are more likely to seek the support of others. Additionally, geographical and socio-economic circumstances provide different contexts for principal success. Studies (e.g., Alvy & Robbins, 1998; Brock & Grady, 2012; Marshall, 2004; Platt, Tripp, Fraser, Warnock & Curtis, 2008; Pepper, 2010; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009; Reis & Diaz, 1999; Sebring & Bryk, 2000; Theoharis, 2007) show that regardless of the context, principals who make schools successful care about students and are passionate about improving student learning. According to Brock and Grady (2012), these principals:

> Sought solutions that met student needs, were undaunted by obstacles, and were unwilling to succumb to the status quo. They saw opportunities instead of barriers. They were responsible thinkers. They were confident and optimistic about their abilities and willing to take risks. They inspired teachers and developed teams of dedicated, hardworking followers and supporters. (p. xvii)

Studies also indicate that female principals have made huge differences in their schools (Acquaro & Stokes, 2016; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Funk & Polnick, 2005; Gupton, 2009; Helterbran & Rieg, 2004; Normore & Gaetane, 2008), despite many of the challenges facing the school, including high percentage of FRL ratios, high teacher turnover rates, and low socio-economic status.

These female principals have done the unexpected by achieving success in their schools when society told them that success was not possible (e.g., Chira, 2017; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eckman, 2004; Hansen, 2014; Helterbran & Rieg, 2004; Sebastian & Moon, 2018). In order to reach this success, female principals should first know themselves, their strengths and weakness, and the impact they have on stakeholders. Being self-aware makes them adapt to the changing circumstances and needs of teachers and students. In fact, if current female principals take a look inside themselves, they might also find what makes them successful and what they can do to make their schools successful. According to Northouse (2019), "Self-awareness includes reflecting on your core values, identity, emotions, motives, and goals, and coming to grips with who you really are at the deepest level" (p. 203).

If female leaders are to be effective in a diverse society, they need to "understand their own preferred style and behaviors and how these may differ from those preferred by others" (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 157). Further, Green (2010) explained that without a clear understanding of one's self-beliefs, values, and strengths, it is difficult to successfully lead any group or organization. For fear of being misunderstood or misinterpreted, self-knowledge is essential for such leaders; however, there is a paucity of data about successful high school female principals' ways of using Cueva's (2010)

strategies of adult learning to engender ways to "honor diverse perspectives and share power through story, laughter, and the expressive arts" (p. 79) among stakeholders.

Research (e.g., Helterbran & Rieg, 2004) shows, "Although the number of women entering school administration has grown in the last ten years, so has the turnover of females in the principalship" (p. 15). With evidence of such turnover, and low numbers of high school female principals (Arnold, 2005; Battle, 2010; Drago-Severson, 2009; Murphy, 2006; Normore, 2007), it is important to investigate how female principals of successful high schools incorporate adult learning practices in their professional development activities. By determining what specific strategies these successful high school female principals use, and if those strategies are the same ones outlined by Cueva (2010), other administrators can model this behavior and improve their own practices, thus creating a positive environment for student success. While most principals encourage learning among their staff, they may not have a specific plan in place or research-based strategies to follow.

Existing Gap in the Literature

This study fills an existing gap in research on successful high school female principals and the practices they use for adult learning. It was particularly pertinent in those schools with challenging student demographics, especially in schools where successful high school female principals have high student achievement. Additionally, there has been no direct research focusing on Cueva's (2010) six strategies for creating adult learning communities in education. This study adds to the scholarly conversations about the work of principals and the support they provide to their staff.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate adult learning practices of successful female principals in successful high schools in the State of Missouri. Also, the study determined if those practices align with the adult learning strategies posited by Cueva (2010). These strategies include: Nurturing Place, Sharing Power, Heart Listening, Talking Story, Engendering Humor, and Creative Expressions. Ultimately, it was also the purpose of this study to make recommendations to other principals about practices that are used by current successful female principals in successful high schools, so they may model these practices and potentially improve their own practices. As Helterbran and Rieg (2004) asserted, "Differences and difficulties may exist in the perceptions of women in the principalship. The charges for women are to winnow through the issues and tasks, to identify what is hindering performance, and to face hindrances and work to diminish them" (p. 20). When research is available regarding specific gender practices in adult education, then barriers for future and current high school female principals can be reduced. This research study was essential to the success of women in educational leadership.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do Cueva's (2010) six learning strategies manifest themselves in the current practices of high school female principals during adult learning opportunities?
2. How do female principals in successful high schools nurture adult learning opportunities for their teachers?

3. What challenges do these female principals experience in nurturing adult learning opportunities?

Theoretical Framework

Bolman and Deal (2017) addressed adult learning through the human resource lens, showing that learning is central to productivity, and that a leader's role is to facilitate the alignment between individuals and the organization. In this case, the leader is the principal of the school and the organization is the school in which the principal leads. Merriam and Brockett (2007) defined adult learning as "activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception, define them as adults" (p. 8).

One of the duties of a principal is to be an instructional leader of the school. In this charge, principals should understand adult learning. Merriam and Bierema (2014) explained adult learning in five theories:

1. Behaviorism – Learning is a change in behavior.
2. Humanism – Learning is about the development of the person.
3. Cognitivism – Learning is a mental process.
4. Social Cognitive Theory – Learning is social and context bound.
5. Constructivism – Learning is creating meaning from experience.

Constructivism theory set the tone for the framework for this study. This theory was based on the "common assumption that learning is how people make sense of their experience" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 36). Driscoll (2005) also claimed that learners want to make sense of their experiences. "Learners, are not empty vessels

waiting to be filled, but rather active organisms seeking meaning" (p. 387). This constructivist thinking is important to understand as an instructional leader of adults.

Candy (1991) observed "teaching and learning, especially for adults, is a process of negotiation, involving the construction and exchange of personally relevant and viable meanings" (p. 275). It is the task of the principal to make learning relevant and full of meaning, meeting the needs of the adult learners in the building. By doing this, principals not only create an atmosphere of learning for teachers, but also an atmosphere of learning for students. Principals can utilize the tenets of constructivism by including self-directed learning, transformational learning, experiential learning, reflective practice, situated cognition, and communities of practice (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). These tenets allow for maximizing adult learning in an instructional setting. Adult thinking processes are modeled and supported for new learners and communities of practice are encouraged where "members share and learn from each other" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 37).

Cueva's (2010) learning strategies of practice are anchored in the constructivism theory. She stated, "learning involves taking risks, which means moving beyond our zone of comfort to stretch our capacity to engage in the world in new ways" (p. 81). She invited readers to journey with her to "explore ways to honor diverse perspectives and share power through story, laughter, and the expressive arts." (p. 79). In this journey of learning, she postulated six strategies to foster adult learning. These strategies include: Nurturing Place, Sharing Power, Heart Listening, Talking Story, Engendering Humor, and Creative Expressions. It is the use of these six strategies that create positive learning environments for adults.

According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), "Communities of practice are made up of learners who have different levels of knowledge and mastery of the knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and norms of the group" (p. 121). High school learning communities, comprised of teachers in the same building, should be purposefully designed within the educational setting of adult learners. These communities may or may not exist as "learning happens, design or no design" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 121); however, purposeful adult learning strategies can be effective learning tools, as outlined by Cueva (2010). She originally designed this model of adult learning in a community-based health education setting to "nurture meaningful learning opportunities that awaken possibilities as a catalyst for understanding, conversation, and action" (p. 79). For the past forty years, she has worked with Alaska Native peoples and American Indian peoples and as an adult education researcher. It is through her observations, interactions, and conclusions that the framework for adult learning has surfaced.

In the context of this study the term "peoples" as opposed to the word "people" was used. Cueva (2010) preferred "the use of peoples over people to express the range of diversity among indigenous peoples. Each tribal group is dynamically unique, rooted within a rich cultural heritage of language, song, dance, and way of being" (p. 79). Cueva (2010) discussed how leaders balance the process of learning with the outcome and the individual's needs with the needs of the group as a whole. "The process of learning is concerned with what goes on in the learner's head, heart, body, and soul that leads to change in behavior or perspective" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 252). Each of the six learning strategies she presented "serve as a reflective guide in preparation for

creating meaningful, learning experiences" (p. 88). These strategies are defined (see Table 1).

Table 1

Learning Strategies (Cueva, 2010)

Strategy	Definition
Nurturing Place	Leader created a place of acceptance of all diverse backgrounds, encouraging participants to share their experiences, live their dreams, and feel a sense of belonging to a community. Participants were invited to experience understanding and connection, while creating a sense of hope and renewal. All peoples experienced respect, even in moments of discourse or critical reflection and participated in an inclusive learning environment.
Sharing Power	Leader invited participants to share their experiences and/or challenges with all participants. She encouraged voices from various backgrounds to lead and guide learning. Peoples' names and positive body language support a diverse learning environment for everyone.
Heart Listening	Leader was committed to actively listening to others, especially those peoples with a diverse story. She listened with an open mind; stereotypes are suppressed. Her heart was open to the input and experiences of peoples from a diverse background. Her own story was challenged and explored by participants. Communication skills were taught and practiced among all learners.
Talking Story	Leader encouraged peoples in her school to share their personal experiences, both in and out of the classroom. She chooses stories of the organizational narrative that represents all peoples. She shared her own story in such a way that she was able to connect to learners and help them move forward in their own learning process.
Engendering Humor	Leader considered the laughter that bubbles up from the humanness of peoples as they engage in the work of teaching and learning. She understood the nurturing power of humor and how it can energize memory, providing a playful

	community of learners, encouraging laughter daily as an integral part of learning.
Creative Expressions	Leader weaved non-traditional ways of learning, including song, dance, movement, drawing, painting, and sculpting to bring heart and soul to the learning experience of all peoples.

This framework showed educators what adult learning looks like in a high school setting and how specific strategies were used to promote adult learning practices. In such, this theoretical framework does not stop after analyzing the data, it offers "recommendations for changes to improve the lives [of females] and society" (Creswell, 2014, p. 64), particularly for the female principal and her teaching staff. These recommendations are useful tools for future educational leaders in practice. "Learning from the sacrifices as well as the successes of female administrators provides real-life stories of women school principals" (Funk & Polnick, 2005, p. 34).

Design of the Study

This study used a mixed method approach (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano, 2011) to investigate adult learning practices of female principals in successful schools in the State of Missouri. Quantitative data provided demographical information as well as the strategies female principals used. Qualitative data provided insight into why and how principals use specific strategies. Therefore, I found a mixed method was the most productive way to capture successful high school female principal's use of strategies as they nurture adult learning opportunities. The collection of this data was approved by the University of Missouri's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Setting

This study was conducted in public high schools in the State of Missouri. Each participating school was led by a female principal. The schools were located either in rural, urban, or suburban. Additional school demographic data, such as FRL, Missouri School Improvement Program scores (MSIP 5), and enrollment, as defined by the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE), were also used to locate the appropriate schools. The setting for the survey components of this research was conducted online using a secure University of Missouri survey platform, Qualtrics. A video conferencing program, Zoom, was used for interviewing. This video program was selected for its ability to record the interview and connect to principals who were not within driving distance to the researcher.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided archival data, MSIP 5 scores. The state used the Annual Performance Report (APR) to determine how well each school district is doing at meeting certain academic standards. According to the APR system, DESE measured Academic Achievement (56 points), Subgroup Achievement (14 points), College and Career or High School Readiness (30 points), Attendance (10 points), and Graduation Rates (30 points) of each school and school district (Missouri, n.d.; Stahly, 2018). For this study, the MSIP 5 scores for Academic Achievement and Subgroup Achievement were used to determine potential participants. The scores of participating high schools were in the 90th percentile or higher.

Participants

The target population for this study was successful high school female principals in the State of Missouri. I attained a list of all high school principals in the State of Missouri from DESE (2019) that included public information. An initial analysis of the list showed that of the 534 high school principals in Missouri, a total of 131 (25%) were female and qualified to be potential participants. The study utilized purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013), which helped to locate participants who fit the gender requirements. A further analysis of the list from DESE indicated that all 131 schools led by successful high school female principals had attained a score of 90% or higher on 2019 Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 5) indicators. These successful principals had a high number of challenging student demographics DESE defined as challenging based on ethnicity, attendance rate, eligibility for free and reduced lunch, graduation rate, homeless or foster care status, and family income (Missouri, n.d., School Report Card). This focused on schools with such a high percentage of non-white students and a high percentage of students on FRL.

An email containing instructions on competing a short survey was sent to the schools whose principals qualified to be included in the study. Participants were given three weeks to respond to the email with three reminders sent in one-week intervals. Of the emails that were sent, eight bounced back as not valid email address, one was referred to the superintendent, 43 principals started the surveys, but only 35 completed the survey. Data cleaning revealed that 35 surveys (27% response rate) were valid to be included in data analysis. Of the valid 35 responses, five principals self-selected to be included in the interviews. Finally, three principals were interviewed, representing rural, suburban, and

urban school districts. Their purposive sampling selection was based on their ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Spradley, 1979). All principals consented to participate in the study (see Appendix A), which was approved by the University of Missouri's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Collection Tools

This study used mixed method (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano, 2011) to investigate adult learning practices of female principals in successful high schools. According to Martens (2020), different designs reflect different data collection strategies, "such as collecting quantitative data first to use as a basis for collecting more in-depth qualitative data" (p. 414). Data collection strategy decisions in mixed methods research "should be guided by the purpose of the research and the paradigmatic belief system of the research team" (Martens, 2020, p. 415). Three data collection strategies were utilized in this study; archival data, survey, and personal interviews.

Archival data. Martens (2020) stated that "published archival records include such things as official proceedings of an organization, vital statistics, and official institutional histories" (p. 300). Archival data for this study were sourced from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The data included Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 5) Performance Standards and Indicators. DESE uses MSIP 5 to measure the performance of K-12 districts and schools. The indicators include academic achievement, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness, attendance rate, and graduation rate. This data were used to determine successful high schools led by female principals. Access and use of DESE data on high

school principals in the state of Missouri were used to determine the 131 successful high school female principals who were included in the study.

Survey. Collecting survey data were a convenient way to gather relevant information for the researcher. Surveys are also convenient in that they may be taken at the participant's convenience. According to Fink (2017), conducting surveys is the prime way to make information meaningful, focus on what the researcher is investigating, maintain validity to ensure that answers correspond to the intended measure, and confirm reliability or provide a consistent measure of comparable situations in that if the survey was taken again, the results would be similar.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through an online survey (Fink, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Newcomer, Hatry, & Wholey, 2015). The survey was comprised of 12 demographic items (length at current position, size and location of high school, and socio-economic status of high school) and a Likert-scale type of questions that asked principals to rank the six learning strategies posited by Cueva (2010) from least (1) to most frequently used (6). The survey also described the six learning strategies and asked participants to describe what that strategy looks like, if at all, in their practice. Additionally, specific scenarios were described and participants were asked to respond to each scenario (see Appendix B). Besides quantitative data, the survey contained open-ended qualitative questions that addressed participants' personal insights and experiences regarding usage of learning strategies (see Appendix B).

Personal interviews. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Glesne, 2011; Gray, 2017; Patton, 2002). It involves selecting information-rich participants according to the needs of the study

(Creswell, 2014; Morse, 1991). Principals were asked to self-select for the interview process. Five principals self-selected to be interviewed, but due to constraints of time and schedule, only three were interviewed each from schools categorized as rural, suburban, and urban. Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014) were conducted with a series of questions. An interview protocol (see Appendix C) and consent form (see Appendix A) were created prior to the personal interviews and the interviews were recorded for documentation and analysis purposes.

Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis of the data (Field, 2017) was conducted to investigate the practices of high school female principals in successful high schools. The first step was to categorize the data based on survey responses. Analysis of this quantitative data used descriptive statistics to determine central tendencies (e.g., mean, standard deviation). A crosstab analysis was also conducted on the responses to determine which adult learning strategies principals used in general and by specific categories including rural, urban, and suburban.

Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and assigned a pseudonym to protect the privacy and ensure participant confidentiality. Qualitative data analysis consisted of reviewing all transcribed interviews and searching for patterns or themes within the responses. It was essential to interpret their responses to make sense of what they said using "thick description" (Patton, 2002), which goes beyond mere fact and interprets what is seen, heard, and read during the interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Glesne, 2011; Gray, 2017; Patton, 2002). The responses were "organized categorically and reviewed repeatedly and continually coded" (Seidman, 2013, p. 119).

The reliability of the interpretation and categorization of themes were conducted by asking participants to categorize, if possible, their activities into one or more of the six strategies suggested by Cueva (2010). I used member checking (Creswell (2014), whereby participants were asked to verify their responses for clarification and validity.

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

Limitations

While I made every effort to develop and conduct a trustworthy study, consistent with all research tenets, this study had limitations. Time constraints limited the number of participants, since they were given only three weeks to respond. Also, this study focused only on successful high school female principals in the state of Missouri. The researcher and research schedule only allowed for three personal interviews, which were not face-to-face, and so some cues might have been lost. Only one measure, 2019 MSIP5, was used as an indicator of the school's success. Different contexts might have different measures, especially in rural schools.

Assumptions

The participants of this study answered the interview questions in an honest and candid manner. The inclusion criteria of the sample were appropriate and therefore, assured that the participants had all experienced the same or similar situations in the context of helping adults learn in their building. Additionally, I assumed that the participants of this study had a sincere interest in participating and did not have any motives.

Design Controls

It is the design of this study to focus only on female principals of successful public high schools. Purposeful samples of successful high school female principals were selected based on information provided in the initial survey sent to all high school female principals in the state of Missouri.

Definition of Key Terms

Education

Adult Learning. "Activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception, define them as adults" (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 8).

Adult Learning Community. A group of adults "who share common academic goals and attitudes, who meet semi-regularly to collaborate" on work (Mulvey & Cooper, 2016, p. 86).

High School. This is an academic institution which awards an academic diploma and provides an education that is more advanced than elementary school or middle school but less advanced than college.

Learning. "The process of learning is concerned with what goes on in the learner's head, heart, body, and soul that leads to change in behavior or perspective" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 252).

Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) 5. A school accountability system for reviewing and accrediting public school districts in Missouri. MSIP began in 1990 and entered its fifth version in 2013 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d., MSIP 5).

Principal. In an educational institution, this is the "most important or influential person; a person who has controlling authority or is in a leading position" (Principal, 2019, p. 1).

Professional Development. Adult learning activities that can encompass formal professional training, specialized training, verbal and/or written feedback, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help teachers and/or other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC). This is a group of educators who meet regularly, share expertise, and work collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students. The term is also applied to schools or teaching faculties that use small-group collaboration as a form of professional development.

Public School. This is a school supported by public funds.

Successful Schools. This type of school is defined as one that meets in the 90 percent or higher in MSIP 5 scores, according to the State of Missouri.

Teacher. This is a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, competence, or virtue.

Demographics

Challenging Student Demographics. Students are categorized as challenging based on ethnicity, attendance rate, eligibility for free and reduced lunch, graduation rate, homeless or foster care status, and family income (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d., School Report Card).

Culture. The culture of a school building is "an acquired and transmitted pattern of shared meaning, feeling, and behavior that constitutes a distinctive human group" (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 157).

Female. Humans who belong to the sex which typically produces eggs or to the gender which is typically associated with it. A female is also referred to as a woman or lady.

Peoples. In the context of this study the term "peoples" as opposed to the word "people" was used. Cueva (2010) preferred "the use of peoples over people to express the range of diversity among indigenous peoples" (p. 79).

Strategies

Learning Strategies. These are reflective practices that prepare learners for creative, meaningful, learning experiences (Cueva, 2010).

Creative Expressions. The leader weaves non-traditional ways of learning, including song, dance, movement, drawing, painting, and sculpting to bring heart and soul to the learning experience of all peoples (Cueva, 2010).

Engendering Humor. The leader considers the laughter that bubbles up from the humanness of peoples as they engage in the work of teaching and learning (Cueva, 2010).

Heart Listening. The leader is committed to actively listening to others with an open mind; stereotypes are suppressed. Communication skills are taught and practiced among all learners (Cueva, 2010).

Nurture. To embrace and encourage the growth and development of others (Cueva, 2010).

Nurturing Place. The leader creates a place of acceptance of all diverse backgrounds, encouraging participants to share their experiences, live their dreams, and feel a sense of belonging to a community (Cueva, 2010).

Sharing Power. The leader invites participants to share their experiences and/or challenges with all participants. She encourages voices from various backgrounds to lead and guide learning (Cueva, 2010).

Talking Story. The leader creates an environment where participants are comfortable sharing their story. Their stories help create an atmosphere of learning and become part of the organization's story (Cueva, 2010).

Significance of the Study

High school principals may find their positions challenging in numerous ways; however, being able to provide effective, research-documented, adult learning strategies that have proven to be successful will be beneficial for their practice. Principals are placed in a critical role of school improvement, mandating principal preparation and development in order to gain knowledge about student learning, effective teaching, professional development, curriculum, and organizational change. Regardless of their operating context, principals play a key role in promoting instructional improvement and championing a shared vision for academic success for all students in their schools. This study used Cueva's (2010) strategies of adult learning to investigate how female principals in successful high schools embraced professional development in their schools. The focus was on creating professional learning communities that define good teaching, creating new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners. In addition, practitioners statewide may benefit from the study by having a deeper understanding of

how to engage faculty in specific strategies that are successful in other similar high school settings.

Practice

This study has the potential to impact the practices of high school principals, especially females. Knowing how other female principals have successfully practiced adult learning strategies can be a tool for future faculty professional development and establishing and managing professional learning communities. This study has an impact on not only potential female principals, but all educators. Addressing the challenges and successes facing individuals at the principal level, especially those with challenging student demographics, helps to open communication between administration and instructional staff. Sometimes simply shining a light on gender issues allowed others to see a different perspective. "Women are overrepresented in the education system; yet, they are consigned to lower positions. The current body of knowledge must continue to disseminate effective practices that can encourage female leadership, promote leadership among women" (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010, p. 1). It was my hope (Helland & Winstron, 2005) that the results of this research would improve the learning environment of not only the principals being researched, but each educator who came in contact with the results of this study. "Hope is not just an emotion, it is a dynamic, powerful, and pervasive cognitive process that is observable across numerous contexts including that of formal organizations [schools]" (Helland & Winstron, 2005, p. 42).

Scholarship

Individuals have learned to participate within the educational system because they grew up in that same system; they do not know anything different. The symbols are

created from ritualistic behavior that everyone has learned at a young age (Bolman & Deal, 2017). By providing research on how successful high school female principals created communities of practice and utilized strategies for building these adult learning communities, this study formed a new perspective on adult learning and recommended how other learning institutions can model this success. Additionally, this study was significant because it helped to determine if a principal's practice is purposefully research based. According to Helterbran and Rieg (2004):

> Principals with the knowledge, attitudes, dedication, and stamina to assume the school's top job are the only individuals who stand a chance to survive, and indeed flourish, in a position that rivals any other in the importance and service of educating and serving children. (p. 20)

Having data to support this practice reinforce a principal's plan for adult learning, professional development, and forming professional learning communities within her high school. This study also contributes to the body of research and knowledge on effective female principals and how they create empowering environments that support innovation, involvement in decision making, and continuous professional development.

Summary

Women in leadership has been a significant topic for research both in the business world (Sandberg, 2013) as well as the field of education (Acquaro & Stokes, 2016; Normore & Gaetane, 2008; Reis & Diaz, 1999; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). There are many successful women in leadership positions throughout the State of Missouri, like the successful high school female principals who participated in this study. It is through the intentional practices of these women that other educators may model and ideally find

similar success in their own practices. The results of this study have an impact on educators, in all levels of education, not just at the principal level. Teachers, support staff, and administrators will know how communities in practice function and what strategies are used successfully in adult learning activities. The ways in which a principal helps her faculty learn can greatly impact all educators, ultimately improving the learning environment and educational success for all.

SECTION TWO: PRACTIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

Nelson Mandela is known for his views on education, stating, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Strauss, 2013). It is the leaders of education who help shape the world of education today. Through a look at the history of education, specifically high schools in the State of Missouri, a greater understanding of the role of a high school principal is explored through organizational analysis and more extensively in leadership analysis. As an educational leader, the principal, who wants to follow patterns of success, should focus on styles and strategies that empower educators to be successful. Finally, some implications for research in the practitioner setting with be explored.

History of Organization

Education began as a means of survival. It was Indigenous Tribes who first found value in formally educating their young. They knew that if their tribe was to survive, they would have to instill essential skills in their children. While hunting and tent making may not be essential survival skills needed in today's society, the idea of educating children or preparing young peoples for their future is a goal of the educational system (Urban & Wagoner, 2009). It was this same goal, set by Thomas Jefferson in the early 19th century, which began a nationwide emphasis on education. Jefferson originally designed an educational program that would increase the knowledge of all American citizens. He was adamant about teaching the masses information they needed to know in order to be law abiding, voting, functional American citizens. Jefferson's plans for universal education and for publicly funded schools would create the system for education in America today (Historical Timeline, 2015).

Education in Missouri

In the late 18th century, states began to include education as part of their plan in growing and attracting citizens. Each state would designate a Secretary of Education who in turn would oversee the entire education system within the state. In 1820, when Missouri became a part of the union, the constitution of Missouri declared that schools should be encouraged in the new state, forever. The Act declaring Missouri a state went on to read "one or more schools shall be established in each Congressional Township as soon as necessary and the children of the poor shall be taught free" (Phillips, 1911, p. 6).

As this Act became reality, schools began to pop up across the state. Educating young men to become the next generation of leaders was the sole focus of this movement and it was a success. Many schools were established in Missouri towns, and by 1821, schools existed in the towns of St. Louis, St. Charles, Florissant, Cape Girardeau, Franklin, Potosi, Jackson, and Herculaneum, and in rural areas of both Cooper and Howard counties. These schools catered to boys of families who could pay small stipends. By the 1830's there were 11 schools for girls in the State of Missouri; however, these schools focused solely on basic literacy and homemaking practices (Meyer, 1982). The 1865 Missouri Constitution, along with numerous other state laws, called for a large network of public schools. The original plan was to require four months of education per year for every child in the state. In 1870, enrollment grew from 169,000 to 280,000, including 9100 black students. The public-school system across the State of Missouri focused on providing reading, writing, and arithmetic to elementary children. High schools were rare outside the major cities (Parrish, Jones, & Christensen, 1980).

High Schools

In a mere 30-year time span, the enrollment of students attending secondary education had risen from 10% to 73%, and by 1940, states such as Iowa and Nebraska had the largest number of enrolled students in what was now considered high school education (Goldin, 2008). Missouri would soon follow. High schools, by 1955, were emphasizing general skills and social mobility, rather than specific training or apprenticeships. Although open to all American students, by 1955, 80% of the youth who had graduated from a high school were mostly white students. This number was outstanding in comparison to European countries at this time, who were graduating 10-20% of their youth (Goldin, 2008). As schools began to populate across America, leaders for these institutions became increasingly desirable. Businessmen, laborers, bankers, attorneys, and other prominent figures would teach courses and or guide others through the educational process. Soon individual leaders became known as headmaster, head teacher, head, chancellor, school director, or principal.

Principals of High Schools

Individuals who lead high schools are charged with many challenges from federal and state requirements to local and personal beliefs. "It is widely believed that a good principal is the key to a successful school" (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013, p. 63). It is without a doubt that this position is one of the most challenging jobs of any public institution. The impact a principal can have on the school environment, teachers, local communities, and student success is extreme. A study in the state of Texas found that high school principals have a very large impact on student achievement. In successful situations, they have been shown to significantly improve the performance of students, at

least in part through their impacts on selection and retention of good teachers. Adversely, they have also been known to have a negative effect on school performance (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013).

Although many researchers would argue that the principal job is one of the most difficult, complex, and challenging jobs in education (Battle, 2010; City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009; Hoffman & Johnston, 2005; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Wagner et al., 2006), they have the ability to change the lives of those teachers and students in their building. Blaydes (2002) emphasized, "Principals have the power, the ability, and the compassion to make the world a better place" (p. 52). To make the educational world a better place, principals are charged with providing instructional learning to teachers in the building. This instructional piece (Donaldson, 2008; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; LaPointe & Davis, 2006) can be a powerful tool that helps create an atmosphere of learning, acceptance, and hope.

Organizational Analysis

Public high school systems are traditionally designed in a system of hierarchy (Mintzberg, 1973). The school board of education has governance over the entire system but is guided mostly by the superintendent. Principals report to the superintendent and manage or lead a group of teachers. While this top-down managerial style has been a common practice in high schools, many educational systems are focusing more on a team management style (Levi, 2017). In a team setting, several groups of teams are constructed to run various parts of an educational system. For instance, in a high school, there may be a team of educators who focus on each grade level or a team who focus on discipline, academics, or extra-curricular activities. The principal oversees the activities

of the groups, but does not directly mandate requirements, as seen in a top-down management style.

Learning for All Students

Through a school's organizational patterns, whether the school is divided into teams or departments, whether it follows a traditional, modified, or block schedule (Rettig & Canady, 2001), the administration and teachers can convey to students, parents, and the community that learning is the important business that happens in the school building. The school's organization is structured to support learning. "The master schedule, for example, is not established merely for the convenience of the transportation department, although bus schedules are important and must be accommodated" (Danielson, 2002). The same is true for teams; they are not designed only for members of the faculty who are friends to work together. All educational arrangements reflect an unwavering focus on student learning.

Culture of Success

A focus on success is essential in reaching success (Johnson, 1990). "A good school organization will offer students the optimal degree of challenge, stretching them while at the same time ensuring that they can succeed if they exert the necessary effort" (Danielson, 2002). Students should know, but may need a reminder that they are in charge of the effort part of their learning. For example, in high school, students can enroll in advanced placement courses if they are willing to commit to a heavy workload. Opportunities to excel should not be exclusive for a few students, but open to any student who is willing to commit to rigorous learning. When a school adopts a culture of success, it also commits itself to a flexible deployment of resources: nothing is carved in

stone, and no one adopts a take it or leave it attitude. The school assumes students are capable learners, and the school accepts its obligation to ensure successful learning by all students. All students should be able to get additional help when they need it.

School Organization

The research on school organization (Anderson, 1982; Johnson, 1990; Rowan, Raudenbush, & Kang, 1991) is clear: in general, "Small schools yield better results than large ones" (Danielson, 2002). This suggests educators at large schools can help more students learn by creating teams, units, or Schools-Within-A-School (SWAS). Many high schools establish SWAS to create smaller and more personal learning communities. The smaller groups may be focused on grade level, or organized around an instructional focus, such as technology or the arts. Additionally, studies on teacher collaboration and working in teams (Grant, 1988; Johnson, 1990) have shown students benefit when teachers work together to promote student learning. While this may be difficult in some small rural schools, it is recommended that smaller units of learning yield successful students.

Some high schools institute SWAS for their 9th grade students. This structure is designed to provide a transition from middle school to high school. SWAS provide students with smaller instructional units and permit them to learn the ropes of the high school by interacting with more students and teachers, in addition to abiding by more structured rules of conduct. Students are also able to learn how to find a classroom or juggle the multiple demands of many different courses.

High schools may find difficulty in scheduling SWAS, but they work perfectly for a block schedule format, which many high schools have adopted over the past decade. In

block scheduling (Rettig & Canady, 2001), students attend three to four classes on any given day rather than seven to nine. There are two basic patterns for block scheduling: four-by-four and A/B. In four-by-four schedules, students complete four year-long courses each semester in periods of about 90 minutes each day. In the A/B schedule, classes are held on alternate days over the entire year; students may still be carrying six to eight courses, but they attend only half of them on any given day. Block scheduling creates positive learning environments, as it provides longer instructional time and more opportunities for engaged learning. Teachers are likely to utilize different learning approaches when given 90 minutes to teach, rather than limiting their approaches to a 40-minute time frame. In general, block scheduling improves the school climate, with fewer discipline referrals, fewer class changes each day, greater student commitment to the work, and the potential for more engaging instruction (Danielson, 2002).

Leadership Analysis

Chenoweth (2009) stated, "There is no single program, policy, or practice that will ensure that all schools and all students will be successful. Educating children is a complex task, and when children live in poverty or isolation, the task is even more complex" (p. 7). Additional research (e.g., Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Leithwood & Lewis, 2012; Pappano, 2010) has shown that successful principals follow several patterns of success in their practice. Successful principals are able to structure their practice in such a way that they know if completed properly should, based on others past practice, result in successful students and teachers. In a study of Chicago schools, Sebring and Bryk (2000) found, "A central theme emerging from our research is that principals of improving . . . schools skillfully use a combination of both support and pressure to enable

and vitalize the efforts of adults who work directly with children" (p. 2). In productive schools, principals share common leadership styles and leadership strategies that empower educators to successfully work with students.

Leadership Styles

Sebring and Bryk (2000) outlined four leadership styles they found in their research of Chicago schools. Additional research (e.g., Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Leithwood & Lewis, 2012; Pappano, 2010) has followed similar patterns of leadership styles. These four leadership styles can be coupled with two other profound leadership styles: Servant Leadership and Social Justice Leadership. Incorporating components from these six types of leadership can lead to a successful school in regards to teacher professional development and student success.

Inclusive vision. These are principals who can articulate a true vision for the school. Vision refers to a broad picture of the direction a school seeks to move; whereas, goals refer to the specific targets that need to be achieved to reach the vision (Hallinger, 2011). They explore ideas "and invite teachers and parents to further elaborate and shape this vision" (Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 2). As they complete the duties of their job, they find ways to bring other peoples, including teachers, into leadership positions. "There is a serious need to better evaluate, support, and develop teachers, especially in high-poverty schools where we know that teacher quality is a critical factor in the quest to close the achievement gap" (Pappano, 2010, p. 106). In looking at the education and development of teachers, principals can ensure success in their students and school. Successful principals "know that change requires the commitment, talent, and energy of many" (Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 2). This includes teachers, staff, parents, and the

community. Incorporating all of the people on a successful vision team can create progress within the school system.

Focus on student learning. "Principals in productive schools set high standards for teaching, understand how children learn, and encourage teachers to take risks and try new methods of teaching" (Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 2). Visiting classrooms and having conversations with teachers help keep them up-to-date on classroom instruction and focus on strategies, materials, and/or other support teachers need to educate students properly. Glatthorn, Jailall, and Jailall (2017) outlined six standards to make sure schools are focusing on student learning:

1. Students are working hard and the teacher is facilitating as a coach by providing structure, giving clues, and modeling.
2. Students are solving problems using generative knowledge.
3. Students are asking questions and the teacher is prodding them to ask questions by rewarding those who do so.
4. Students are using the language of learning by talking in small groups or writing while the teacher monitors this use.
5. Students are engaged in assessing their learning and the work of their classmates.
6. Students are learning something significant. This may be the most important tenant of student learning. "When they leave the classroom, they know more than when they entered" (p. 138).

Efficient management. Things get done in these schools. Teachers have the necessary items they need at the beginning of the year. "Principals secure academic and

social support services for students in need, so that classroom disruptions are minimized" (Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 2). Successful principals are able to complete the management part of their job without hesitation. Being able to get these things done in a timely, repetitive fashion usually yields success. Fullan (2014) claimed that "the principal must ensure that good management prevails in the school . . . they make sure the basics – budget, timetable, health, and safety – are addressed effectively" (p. 56). Good managerial skills as a foundation of a daily routine can keep a school running smoothly, so the principal has time to address other issues.

Support initiatives and enable others. Helping other teachers find support is imperative to being a successful principal. They have to help teachers adopt new ideas and ways of teaching. In doing so, "they make time available for teachers to learn new content and strategies, receive coaching, and obtain necessary material" (Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 2). By providing this support, principals will see teachers pursue success in the classroom, thus resulting in an academic improvement from students. Providing support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, and modeling values and practices are aimed to communicate the principal's respect for her colleagues, as well as concerns about their personal feelings and needs (Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990).

Servant leadership. This style of leadership focuses on the leader's ability to serve all the peoples within the organization. Specifically, for this research, the successful female principal would serve not only the students in a high school, but also the teachers and members of the community. "[Servant] leadership is not about controlling people, it's about caring for people and being a useful resource for people"

(Autry, 2001, p. 20). This style is different than many traditional forms of leadership in that the leader focuses on the achievements of others more so than herself. She thrives on the success of the overall community, school, students, and teachers. A servant leader shares power, putting the needs of the employees first and helps all the peoples succeed at their highest possible levels (Sendjaya, & Sarros, 2002). Servant leadership is defined as a leadership approach in which leaders "place the good of followers over their own self-interests and emphasize follower development" (Northouse, 2019, p. 220). Research (e.g., Drucker, 2011; Northouse, 2019; Spears, 2002) has identified ten characteristics that generally typify a servant-leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of the peoples, and building community. Fridell, Newcom Belcher, and Messner (2009) found that female principals reported higher use of servant-leadership styles, especially in four domains—daily reflection, consensus building, healing relationships, and developing sense of self-worth. The servant-leader "puts followers first, empowers them, and helps them develop their full personal capacities" (Northouse, 2019, p. 219).

Social justice leadership. In the words of a social justice principal, "I can't separate what is leadership and what is justice and equity work. It all has to be about social justice. There can be no separation" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 3). Administrators who make equity and justice a meaningful part of their work need to find real-life examples of other leaders who practice this same type of leadership style. Finding these examples are critical to success in this leadership style (Marshall & Ward, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). "These real-life models help create a sense that social justice in schools is not just

educational theory or rhetoric but actually practiced by leaders and indeed possible" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 4).

Principals who practice social justice may vary in the way they approach their duties. Some are outspoken; others are more introverted. Some principals are organized, while others are more spontaneous. However, three traits all social justice principals embody are "a complicated mix of arrogance and humility, lead with intense visionary passion, and maintain a tenacious commitment to her or his vision of social justice while nurturing and empowering their staff" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 12). The principals of social justice also led in democratic, collaborative, and empowering ways. They trusted teachers and staff to create curriculum and make decisions. Their ability to empower others and create a dynamic school environment is "clearly distinct from schools where the principal is autocratic and imposes decisions in a top-down manner" (Theoharis, 2008, p. 19).

Theoharis (2008) described the social justice principal in terms of a t-shirt metaphor. The difference between a principal who says she practices social justice and one who actually has social justice woven into her daily life is like wearing a purple tie-dye shirt. The color purple can be printed on any shirt and read clearly at any time; however, the purple in a tie-dye shirt is not just printed on the outside, it is part of the fabric and present in every area of that shirt. "Social justice ingrained into the very being of the social justice leader means that each decision, every aspect of that principalship, and all details of the school are examined and seen from a social justice perspective" (p. 20).

Leadership Strategies

Literature suggests principals can create leadership for teachers in three ways. The first way focuses on professional development or supporting teacher learning (Donaldson, 2008; Evans, 1996; Levine, 1989; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Sarason, 1995). The second way is to build relationships with teachers (Arnold, 2005; Barth, 2006; Bolman & Deal, 1995; Moller & Pankake, 2006). Finally, principals can focus on teacher learning within their own building (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2007; City et al., 2009; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2008; Elmore, 2004; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Johnson, 1996). "Rather than just following rules and regulations, teachers are motivated by a growing sense of shared beliefs and practices focused on student learning" (Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 4). This can be done in various ways. In their discussion of professional development, Nunnelley, Whaley, Mull, and Hott (2003) include professional growth plans. They explained that ". . . the principal is obligated to making sure strong professional growth plans are enacted" (p. 56). Marzano and Waters (2009) found twenty-one strategies that work for principals. Sebring and Bryk (2000) found four strategies for success in their research. Additionally, there are two other strategies that successful principals have incorporated in their practice: Coaching (Cory & Bradley, 1998; Gill, 2010; Sebring & Bryk, 2000) and Storytelling (e.g., Chen, 2014; Gardner, 1995; Knaflic, 2015; Krueger, 2015; Lawrence & Paige, 2016; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Sergiovani & Green, 2015; Zak, 2014). By using some of these strategies, current principals can find success.

Accountability. At its core, this strategy involved a balanced and honest account of a school's successes and failures (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Cottrell (2016)

explained that one of the biggest challenges is directly addressing teacher performance, both positive and negative. Although it may be easy to assess and acknowledge the positive, it can be difficult to address the negative. A typical school has approximately 30 percent great teachers, 50 percent good teachers, and 20 percent who need interaction. Cottrell (2002) further stated, "You simply cannot ignore performance issues and expect your superstars to stick around very long" (p. 40). Lashway (2001) framed accountability: "For many, 'accountability' just means delivering results" (p. 2). He added that based on results, accountability should encompass consequences, both positive and negative.

Long-term focus on instruction. Successful principals know that in order to focus on academic improvement, essential change is necessary in the ways teachers instruct their classes, learn new strategies, or utilize the time provided to them. In order to do this, principals can focus on hiring new talented teachers, improving adult learning activities, professional development of current teachers, and/or eliminating excessive non-academic activities, such as assemblies and meetings. "Promoting best practices . . . in order to maximize instructional time and resources for learning" (Sebring & Bryk, 2000, p. 2) is essential to not only the success of the school, but teachers and students.

Purpose and Direction. Sebring and Bryk (2000) claimed that "principals use the School Improvement Plan mandated under the 1988 reform to bring together parents, community members, and teachers around a comprehensive, coherent plan for school development" (p. 2). This plan (Leithwood et al., 2004) outlines the annual goals and strategies for improvements in five areas: school leadership, parent involvement, professional development and collaboration, student-centered learning climate, and

classroom instruction. The plan tells how each benchmark is monitored and recommends that principals follow this plan in order to ensure success. As described by Leithwood and Riehl (2003), "Leadership involves purposes and direction. Leaders know the ends toward which they are striving. They pursue goals with clarity and tenacity, and are accountable for their accomplishments" (p. 7). Marzano and Waters (2009) warned that "schools are quite willing to try new things—perhaps too much so" (p. 50). Principals should filter new things and stay focused on goals. Fullan (1993) echoed these comments, noting, "It is probably closer to the truth to say that the main problem in public education is not resistance to change but the presence of too many innovations" (p. 23).

Build Relationships. Marzano and Waters (2009) explained that "a case can be made that effective professional relationships are central to the effective execution of many of the other responsibilities [of a principal]" (p. 58). Fullan (2003) described the importance of the principal creating bonds with teachers to help stay aligned and focused. Marzano and Waters (2009) described specific behaviors associated with this strategy including being informed about teacher's personal lives, being aware of their needs, acknowledging significant events for teachers, and maintaining personal relationships with teachers.

Coaching. Gill (2010) recommended leaders practice a leadership style that involves coaching. "Coaching is the process of facilitating self-awareness, learning, and performance improvement of staff or volunteers, often on the job" (p. 65). This type of leadership requires the leader to become one with her community. She should listen without judgment, ask questions, and speak in such a way that she can draw out the

positive, successful characteristics, of her staff and not focus on herself (Cory & Bradley, 1998; Gallwey, 2000). Gill (2010) offered 11 suggestions for listening effectively, which is the key component to making this type of leadership style successful. A principal should practice not talking, put herself in her staff's shoes, be interested, observe non-verbal behavior, avoid interruptions, listen for implicit meanings, speak only affirmatively, rephrase what was said, and finally stop talking. It is important to note that Gill (2010) has "stop talking" as the "first and last suggestion because all other techniques of listening depend on this" (p. 66).

Storytelling. Every person on this planet has a story. Female principals of successful high schools in the State of Missouri are no exception. It is through these stories that educators can learn how to be better teachers, mentors, and inspirational leaders. Stories teach about the past, influence the present, and give hope for the future. Simply stated, stories are the creation of education. Learning is based on the stories of others. According to Sergiovani and Green (2015), stories communicate what is important and provide a way for teachers and others to gauge their fit with the school and its beliefs. Howard Gardner (1995), explained:

> A leader is likely to achieve success only if she can construct and convincingly communicate a clear and persuasive story; appreciate the nature of the audience(s), including its changeable features; invest her own (or channel others') energy in the building and maintenance of an organization; embody in her own life the principal contours of the story; either provide direct leadership or find a way to achieve influence through indirect means; and finally, find a way to

understand and make use of, without being overwhelmed by, increasing technical expertise. (p. 302)

While a storytelling type of leadership strategy may not be recognized in past practice, it is extremely impactful and receiving a great deal of attention from current educators, including principals. George Couros (2015) advised educational leaders to stop trying to think outside the box and look within; think inside the box. He encouraged leaders to tell stories and create an atmosphere for learning among educators. Find out the classroom stories, the story of the organization, or of the school, then, create a new narrative, not just a story about the past, but the future story you will write together. Educators are more likely to connect with a story if they know they are part of that story (Couros, 2015). Sanfelippo and Sinanis (2017) encouraged leaders to listen to the stories of everyone in the building. This requires action, not just thinking about those stories. It is not the thought that counts; it is the action that counts and makes a difference. While this takes time, good leaders know that the story wins every single time.

Research has also shown that stories are useful inside organizations like high schools. People of all backgrounds are more motivated by their organization's transcendent purpose (how it improves lives) rather than by its transactional purpose (how it sells goods and services). This transcendent purpose is a reason teachers teach. One way principals, as educational leaders, can tap into this purpose is by effectively communicating through stories about themselves, student success, and teacher empathy (Zak, 2014). Schools have their own story. These stories are an effective way to communicate transcendent purpose. What passion has led teachers to succeed with struggling students? What students have overcome barriers to success? "These are the

stories that, repeated over and over, stay core to the [school] organization's DNA" (Zak, 2014, p. 1). Stories provide guidance for daily decision-making as well as motivation.

Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

There has been a great deal of research on non-white, socio-economically challenged schools (e.g., Chenoweth, 2009; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Pappano, 2010), offering several suggestions for success based on leadership styles (e.g., Drucker, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Glatthorn, Jailall, & Jailall, 2017; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Northouse, 2019; Marshall & Ward, 2004; Podsakoff, et al., 1990; Sebring & Bryk, 2000; Sendjaya, & Sarros, 2002; Spears, 2002; Theoharis, 2007) and leadership strategies (e.g., Cory & Bradley, 1998; Couros, 2015; Gallwey, 2000; Gill, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Sebring & Bryk, 2000; Zak, 2014). Given that teaching and learning make up the core of schooling, it is incumbent upon the principal to enhance the academic aspirations and achievement of students by cultivating learning strategies that accomplish such a mission.

There is a refined focus on adult learning strategies based solely on female principals in successful high schools with challenging student demographics. Knowing how these principals specifically nurture learning opportunities among teachers can be beneficial to the future practices of all principals. Cueva (2010) focused on six specific learning strategies that can be incorporated into the professional development and learning environment of any principal, especially those who serve communities with challenge student demographics. Studying these challenges and implementing successful practices can benefit principals, schools, teachers, parents, and ultimately student success.

Adult learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007) is a topic that should be addressed by all principals in practice. Cueva (2010) reminded us that "learning involves taking risks, which means moving beyond our zone of comfort to stretch our capacity to engage in the world in new ways" (p. 81). Principals can utilize the tenants of adult learning including self-directed learning, transformational learning, experiential learning, reflective practice, situated cognition, and communities of practice (Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2010). Because "learning happens, design or no design" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 121), it is essential that high school learning communities are purposefully designed to meet the needs of adult learners through these proven successful leadership styles and leadership strategies.

Summary

John Dewey, philosopher and educator, saw learning "as a lifelong process, involving applying and adapting previous experience to new situations" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 105). It is essential for current principals to understand the past and the history of education, high schools, and their positions as a leader in the school. Reflecting on the past, connecting it with their current situation, and providing direction for the future can help educational organizations succeed. Additionally, knowing the various leadership strategies and styles can help principals base their practice on a solid foundation. The work of principals from turnaround schools and socio-economically challenged regions is never ending. In a given day, a principal may have over 40 different items to complete, in addition to whatever unplanned items may occur (Chenowth, 2009; Pappano, 2010). In order to sustain academic success in the students, it becomes essential to create an atmosphere of adult learning with the teaching staff.

SECTION THREE: SCHOLARY CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

A review of literature regarding leadership as a high school principal, specifically successful female principals, has been examined. This will be followed by a discussion of literature in regards to adult learning opportunities and adult learning communities as discussed by Merriam and Bierema (2014). The six Cueva (2010) learning strategies have also been explored. Additionally, studies about leadership at the high school level have been synthesized.

Leadership as a High School Principal

The most recognized leader in the K-12 educational system is the principal. "Over the last 30 years, the school principal has been identified as a key player in school improvement and change" (Smulyan, 2000, p. 10). The title principal is defined as the most important or influential person; a person who has controlling authority or is in a leading position. If school districts want successful students and schools, then they should focus on the leaders, specifically the principals who lead the educators. "A principal's ability to successfully lead and manage a school is very important to the success of the students within that school" (Pepper, 2010, p. 45). It could be assumed that the principalship is a people profession, and no degree is going to make a principal successful. She needs to cultivate her abilities to communicate honestly with students, faculty, staff, parents, and the broader community (Alvy & Robbins, 1998). In public schools, the percentage of leaders who are female is higher in elementary schools (64%) and lower in middle (42%) and high schools (30%) (Bitterman, Goldring, & Gray, 2013); in the State of Missouri, at the high school level, it is 25%. Great, effective leaders energize peoples to make productive decisions. These decisions lead to improvements in

school and student success. "Effective leadership inspires more than it empowers; it connects more than it controls; it demonstrates more than it decides" (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 143).

Female Principals

Inspiring, connecting, and demonstrating are skills associated with female leadership, especially when working in teams. "Increasing the proportion of females on the teams improve performance" (Levi, 2017, p. 32). The principal leads a team of educators. When that principal is also female, leadership may look differently. "Women tend to put themselves at the center of their organizations rather than at the top . . . they labor constantly to include people in their decision making" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 83). Results from meta-analyses study suggest that women lead in a more democratic and participatory manner in comparison to men (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). Female leadership has also been described as a leadership style which focuses on the ability to be a good role model, inspire, stimulate, and support their followers (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003; Van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

Female leadership can lead to successful schools, teachers, and students. Instead of a traditional pyramid structure, like many traditional school structures, many female leaders create more of a flat structure, like spokes on a wheel (Levi, 2017). This can be seen in schools where the principal is a woman. Staff may feel more empowered to make decisions and talk openly with their female leaders. With a woman as an educational leader, the structure might change. Instead of a traditional forced top-down leadership (Mintzberg, 1973), a female might be more likely to include everyone before making

major decisions. She would get input from various sources, building relationships and rapport in ways men do not function. By including everyone, a woman is able to build teamwork and comradery that is needed to run a successful organization. Female leaders have a more participatory style compared to their male peers (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Fridell et al., 2009; Post, 2015; Pounder & Coleman, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1989). Sebastian and Moon (2018) found females excel in the critical domain of planning and setting goals. These two domains are "the most important area where principals can involve others in their work" (p. 12).

Bolman and Deal (2017) claimed, "Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures" (p. 45). It is rational to employ more women as principals and set aside personal agendas, whether consciously or unconsciously pursued. Since educators know that "building a cohesive team is critical," (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 97) it makes sense to put a woman in a leadership role, like the high school principal, where she can use her natural skills to benefit the organization. Unfortunately, this does not happen often because peoples are prone to follow the path of least resistance, especially when leaders hire other leaders. They "feel drawn to employees who resemble them, who are most often . . . male" (Johnson, 2018, p. 70).

It is true that leadership tends to hire peoples like themselves. Since the majority of leadership roles are held by men, they are more likely to hire men for those same leadership roles. From a structural perspective, it is important for educational leaders to see what Levi (2017) constituted as good teamwork with other members who do not resemble themselves: "Becoming aware of cultural differences and one's own cultural biases is important for effective teamwork" (p. 290). Acknowledging this bias in

administration can change the way principals are selected for employment, especially ones at the high school level. One solution to changing the roles of women in education requires men to see this as their problem, too. "If well-intentioned men don't include themselves in the problem, they're unlikely to go out of their way to make themselves part of the solution" (Johnson, 2018, p. 67). Men can be the dynamic factor and become the facilitators of change, ultimately changing the appearance of leadership of education. "The only way to change the outcome is to change how we see and play the game and, eventually, change the game itself and its paths of least resistance" (Johnson, 2018, p. 73). They can pave the way, open doors, and encourage women to become high school principals.

While several researchers in the field of gender inequality tend to self-reflect when researching this topic (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Gupton, 2009; Murphey et al., 2005), it should be noted that the lack of female educational leaders is a "matter of some concern" (Cubillo & Brown, 2003) and if women are going to move into leadership positions, such as high school principal, they "must be willing to shift into multidimensional gender and traverse conventional borders" (Christman & McClellan, 2008). Cubillo and Brown (2003) claimed the gender issues facing females in educational leadership are both vertical and horizontal in terms of breaking through the glass ceiling and glass walls.

Through Christman and McClellan's (2008) research, seven women discussed the challenges women face and emphasized that women have to do more than overcome the glass barriers; they needed to change the perception of women leaders and continue to be

educated on diverse gender roles. Sanchez and Thorton (2010) summarized this issue very well:

> Women are overrepresented in the education system; yet, they are consigned to lower positions. The current body of knowledge must continue to disseminate effective practices that can encourage female leadership, promote leadership among women with families, and reflect a feminine way of knowing." (p. 3)

According to recent studies, women make up 76% of teachers in the US, with an increase in women as educational leaders over the past decade, showing 52% as principals and 25% as superintendents, up 12% since 2000 (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Superville, 2017). Continued momentum is essential to success, especially in female leadership, which is why it is important to keep these numbers rising. Marshall (2004) said that by the year 2010, school leadership would need to be repopulated. Now, in 2020, there are still low proportions of female leaders in education. "Successful women should always be watching for new female administrators to bring through the ranks to provide the leaders of tomorrow" (Funk & Polnick, 2005, p. 26). A study of 150 female leaders tried to reflect on the ways in which females have achieved success in leadership (Gupton, 2009). This study was conducted in 1993, and over a quarter of a century later, there are still not equal proportions of females as high school principals within the educational system. Unfortunately, "no woman is likely to become a corporate manager, get tenure at a university, or be elected to public office by emphasizing their capacity for cooperation, sharing, emotional sensitivity, and nurturing" (Johnson, 2018, p. 83). Yet, these are some of the most essential skills needed to be a successful educational leader.

Adult Learning Opportunities

Education has always been about student success. Finding ways to help students succeed is the challenge faced by administrators and teachers globally; however, it is not something that just happens because students, teachers, and administrators are in a building together. Success is finely cultivated in teachers so students may also succeed. Providing adult learning opportunities is one of the job duties of most high school principals; they are charged with the responsibility of conducting relevant and purposeful adult learning activities for the school's educators. This can be done through various avenues, including guest speakers, curriculum development, and team building. "Adult education includes pathways for bringing people together to create a place for genuine communication of diverse ideas and perspectives, enriched through respectful active listening and reflective talking" (Cueva, 2010a, p. 6). One of the most successful ways to provide adult learning is by creating adult learning communities. It is through this collaboration that teachers build rapport and relationships, which will ultimately improve student success. There are four key principles of adult learning. These include:

1. Adults have different educational experiences and life experiences, personalities, needs, and preferences that shape the way they learn (Cranton, 1996; Kolb, 1984; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezirow, 2000).
2. Formally or informally, adults need to understand why they need to learn something in particular; learning must equal value (Brookfield, 1995; Knowles, 1984, Marsick, 1998, Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000).
3. Social context and culture must be considered when creating adult learning opportunities (Brookfield, 1995; Lawler, 2003; E. W. Taylor, 1994).

4. Adults learn through experience and problem-solving methods (Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 2000; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004).

Adult Learning Communities

Building adult learning communities is one way successful high school female principals are able to create success. An adult learning community is simply a group "of learners who have different levels of knowledge and mastery of the knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and norms of the group" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 121). With a wide range of educators who have different levels of experience and education, high schools are a natural environment for the creation of adult learning communities.

Today, adult learning communities, also known as communities of practice, are used throughout businesses and education. The field of education usually refers to these adult learning communities as Professional Learning Communities (PLC). According to Richard DuFour (2004), a leading expert in education, a PLC is "an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (p. 6). In a PLC, the idea that the principal is the instructional leader changes to the principal becoming a member of a community of learners and leaders (DuFour et al., 2008; Hord & Sommers, 2008).

Learning Strategies

In creating learning communities, successful high school female principals can structure adult learning activities, professional development, and faculty engagement opportunities with the strategies presented by Cueva (2010). She identified the following six strategies: Nurturing Place, Sharing Power, Heart Listening, Talking Story, Engendering Humor, and Creative Expressions. While these strategies are not a

definitive list of required activities, they are grounded in additional research and literature.

Nurturing place. This strategy focuses on the learning environment and how participants interact with one another. The leader creates a place of acceptance of all diverse backgrounds, encouraging participants to share their experiences, live their dreams, and feel a sense of belonging to a community. Participants are invited to experience understanding and connection, while creating a sense of hope and renewal. All peoples experience respect, even in moments of discourse or critical reflection, and participate in an inclusive learning environment. It describes the physical setting, as well as the learning approach, in that it should help participants feel "comfortable and confident" (Cueva, 2010, p. 89). The leader creates a place of tolerance, understanding, discourse, renewal, hope, peace, dreams, and a sense of belonging. Diversity is invited, encouraged, and respected.

In nurturing the idea of learning, Cueva (2010) encouraged learners to experience life in diverse ways by listening, seeing, feeling, and becoming a part of someone else's world. For principals, it may be becoming a member of a professional learning community, rather than a leader who dictates instruction. In creating a nurturing place, principals are encouraged to focus on respect for differences. Freire (1992) called for a new ethic of educational practice "founded on the respect for differences" (p. 157). This respect should be found not only between principal and teachers, but also within the teacher classrooms to promote student success.

Encouraging teachers to embrace their process of discovery and what is revealed to them through interactions with others is how a place of nurturing can begin. Inviting

learners to be open to other ideas, peoples, cultures, and backgrounds can begin to open doors for increased collaboration and authentic learning. This type of adult learning goes beyond leader and learner, and finds itself embedded in the atmosphere. It is not easy; "learning requires taking risks . . . moving beyond our zone of comfort . . . stretch our capacity to engage in the world in new ways" (Cueva, 2010, p. 81). While this type of learning may sound idealistic, it can be "disorienting and painful. It is a risky venture to delve beyond the comfort of safety into the mystery of exploration and discovery" (Cueva, 2010, p. 81). Principals willing to take this risk can create successful learning for not only their teachers, but students, as well. This successful learning incorporates the background of all diverse learners and the cultures each one represents.

Sharing power. This strategy is used when the leader invites participants to share their experiences and/or challenges with all participants. She encourages voices from various backgrounds to lead and guide learning. Peoples' names and positive body language support a diverse learning environment for everyone. Sharing Power focuses on the principal's position of power. It is the responsibility and obligation of the leader to recognize that power (Johnson, 2018) and open the lines of communication, giving others the power to tell their story. The leader invites participants to share, and ensures diverse voices are encouraged, heard, and supported. "The notion of shared or distributive leadership is not novel, though it has been somewhat ignored in comparison to solo leadership" (Solansky, 2008, p. 333). Most principals are seen as a solo act or the individual in charge of a high school.

The position of a principal is one of power; it is recommended by Cueva (2010) "to acknowledge that power and continually reflect upon responsible ways to use power

wisely" (p. 83). The principal should think about everyone in the school to make sure all voices are being heard. Her power should be used to equalize all members of a team. "Organizations have clearly found teams to be effective" (Solansky, 2008, p. 332). Sharing power can be achieved through adult learning communities. "Eighty percent of companies with 100 or more employees rely on teams and groups for their everyday work" (Solansky, 2008, p. 332). If sharing power works in companies, then it can work in education, too. One of the major tenets of a PLC is that peoples learn more by working together than they would working alone. Principals do not have to do all the work on their own. "It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organization" (Senge, 1990, p. 4). By sharing power, creating PLCs as an adult learning community, principals are able to promote the same team learning teachers encourage in their classrooms.

Funk and Polnick (2005) claimed, "The latest picture of a female principal is as an effective school leader who is strong and influential in her position as leader and who involves others in the important decisions within the school" (p. 36). Sharing power benefits the principal and the teachers, while improving student learning. "Only the most enlightened administrator can share leadership" (Jamieson, 2014, p. 102). As social beings, educators depend on others for survival and happiness. Research has shown that a neurochemical called oxytocin signals the brain that it is safe to approach others. "Oxytocin is produced when we are trusted or shown a kindness, and it motivates cooperation with others. It does this by enhancing the sense of empathy, our ability to experience others' emotions" (Zak, 2014, p. 1).

Sharing power with a diverse group of learners allows all peoples of various cultures to be representative in the decision-making processes and the continual growth of the organization. Although there is increasing pressure for principals to improve student performance, "it is equally important to expect that principals take actions to support instructional and shared leadership that leads to improved student learning" (Leithwood & Louis, 2012, p. 40). In other words, in sharing power with other educators, principals can find success in student achievement. Hallinger (2011) suggested that sharing power is "comprised of a range of different behaviors or strategies for involving others in decision-making" (p. 136). These strategies can be effective when representative of past practice in principal success. Shared power, when used well, can be "a powerful tool for expanding the school's capacity to achieve its vision and create its own desired future" (Hallinger, 2011, p. 138).

Heart listening. This strategy requires the leader to be committed to actively listening to others, especially those peoples with a diverse story. She listens with an open mind; stereotypes are suppressed. Her heart is open to the input and experiences of peoples from diverse backgrounds. Her own story is challenged and explored by participants. Communication skills are taught and practiced among all learners. Genuine listening by the principal focuses on Cueva's (2010) reminder that "the creator gave us two ears and one mouth so we could listen twice as much as we talk" (Cueva, 2010, p. 89). Peter Drucker (2011) suggested good leaders "listen first, speak last" (p. 36). Adult learners want to know that their thoughts are being heard (Gill, 2010; Merriam & Bierema, 2014) and it is true that good "leaders who are open have learned to stop talking and start listening to what others have to say" (Preskill, & Brookfield, 2009). Most

principals find that this skill requires far more time than they have for progress; however, it is a skill, which with practice, can prove to be transformational. Shane Safir's (2017) research of co-principals in a California high school found that listening took time, but it was worth the time:

> Listening is at the heart of school transformation. It's the one skill that allows leaders to connect across racial, cultural, gender, and socioeconomic differences; to gather rich data on the front lines of change; to build staff capacity through reflective questions; and to drive reform through the power of relationships. This simple shift in approach—from telling to asking, from expert to learning leader, from hero to host of meaningful dialogue—can help leaders close the gap between their vision and their day-to-day actions. (p. 18)

The two co-principals take time each week to practice talking and listening to each other. They show their teachers how to listen to each other, as well as how to listen to their students. They listen to the words parents say and do not say. It is with this finely tuned skill, listening, that they have proven success. If transformation learning is the heart of leaders, then students will find success from those who learn how to listen. Actively listening to others creates empathy for diverse cultures and peoples. "Empathy is important for social creatures because it allows us to understand how others are likely to react to a situation, including those with whom we work" (Zak, 2014, p. 1).

Talking story. This strategy is based on the idea that telling stories has "historically served two primary functions: to entertain and to teach people how to become better human beings" (Lawrence & Paige, 2016, p. 65). In this strategy, the leader encourages peoples in her school to share their personal experiences, both in and

out of the classroom. She chooses stories of the organizational narrative that represents all peoples. She shares her own story in such a way that she is able to connect to learners and help them move forward in their own learning process. The leader has her own story to share and encourages all participants to share their story so that all stories become a part of group learning processes.

It is through the storytelling process that peoples are able to share their learned experiences. Storytelling allows the author to reflect on past experiences while educating others about current or future experiences (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). It is through these stories that learning is created (Knaflic, 2015; Krueger, 2015; Lawrence & Paige, 2016). "Each of us has a story that must be told and someone needs to hear" (Cueva, 2010, p. 85). As principals facilitate learning among their faculty, they need to remember that "by giving voice to our stories, we bring what is on the inside out. Each person's story is aligned with the potential to broaden our lived experience" (Cueva, 2010, p. 86). Chen (2014) proposed that adult learners learn best when their life experiences are included in the learning process. Using life experiences helps adults make a connection to their learning. In order to provide an optimum environment for all adult learners, principals, as adult educators, should seek to hear the stories of their teachers. The principal should relate what is being taught to the story each individual is creating. Freire's theory of pedagogy (1992) highlighted dialogue and collaborative activity as essential to the learning process. Cajete (1994) shared, "Through story we explain and come to understand ourselves. Story in creative combination with encounters, experiences, image making, ritual, play, imagination, dreams, and modeling, forms the basic foundation of all human learning and teaching" (p. 68).

Zak (2014) claimed, “When you want to motivate, persuade, or be remembered, start with a story of human struggle and eventual triumph. It will capture people’s hearts” (p. 1). This quote implies that events and processes are more important than the product produced. Bolman and Deal (2017) explained this further, and through a story, by stating, “A good story, for instance, trumps data and abstractions in wooing consumers” (p. 255). The online auction icon, eBay, played on the importance of storytelling. At the beginning of the company’s success, a story began circulating social media. This romantic story of a man who loved his fiancé so much, he created eBay so she could find all the pieces of her collections and the desirables of her heart. It was such a touching story that millions of peoples felt inclined to sell items and buy items, so they, too, could have the desires of their heart (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Surprisingly, eBay’s story is false, but the idea of storytelling is very much true. Consumers connect with stories. Educators should also learn to hone-in on this skill.

In cancer education training, Cueva (2010a) discussed the storytelling that ensues through Reader’s Theatre in her communities:

> Through story, participants engaged in a multisensory learning journey, which invited interconnected ways of knowing and understanding. Listeners and readers alike became time travelers, reliving past memories as well as considering future options, the vicarious trying on of another’s garments of experiences and perceptions.” (p. 5)

This storytelling strategy can be an extremely powerful tool for creating connections within adult learning communities, especially those of a diverse nature, ultimately leading to teacher and student success.

> In order to motivate a desire to help others, a story must first sustain attention by developing tension during the narrative. If the story is able to create that tension then it is likely that attentive viewers/listeners will come to share the emotions of the characters in it, and after it ends, likely to continue mimicking the feelings and behaviors of those characters." (Zak, 2014, p. 1)

Engendering humor. This strategy encourages the leader to think about the laughter that bubbles up from the humanness of peoples as they engage in the work of teaching and learning. She understands the nurturing power of humor and how it can energize memory, providing a playful community of learners, encouraging laughter daily as an integral part of learning. This strategy invokes humor in participants with an understanding laughter builds a community of learners. "We need to laugh together to make peace, to create and sustain community" (Hooks, 2003, p. 196). While many educators feel that learning is no laughing matter, it is important to remember the playfulness of learning and how learning can be fun (Cueva, 2010). A participant in Cueva's (2010a) cancer education training expressed "If you don't have fun while you are learning then everything you are learning is just not going to stick" (p. 5).

Traditionally, humor has been something found outside the walls of education. It was not thought to be professional if one was engaged in laughter. Thankfully, this trend has changed and research is beginning to focus on the benefits of humor in education. "It unleashes creative thinking and reduces social distances" (Korobkin, 1988, p. 154). Humor helps to relax learners and once learners are relaxed, then the true learning, possibly transformative learning, can begin. Humor can be expressed through appropriate jokes, pictures, cartoons, or any tool that evokes laughter. "Laughter was

experienced as a natural response to conversation and was described as a source of nourishment, strength, and healing that supported learning and enhanced memory retention" (Cueva, 2010a, p. 5). Laughing can create a common bond for diverse learners as they explore the experiences of others and find their own connections to new learning environments, ultimately benefitting all participants, including teachers and students.

Creative expressions. This strategy is a way for the leader to weave non-traditional ways of learning, including song, dance, movement, drawing, painting, and sculpting to bring heart and soul to the learning experience of all peoples (Cueva, 2010). This strategy pushes the boundaries of traditional learning by exploring new ways of learning and expressing experiences. "Arts in adult education moves us beyond the entertainment value to honor diverse ways of knowing with the potential to connect with people . . . in their learning process" (Cueva, 2010, p. 86). Many peoples have creative impulses and creative arts are a means of organizing and making meaning of life's experiences (Lomas, 1998; McDaniel & Thorn, 1997).

Creative expressions through the arts are "languages for the communication of new ideas" (Elias et al., 1995, p. 75). By engaging in activities other than traditional reading or listening, adult learners can tap into a different way of learning. In Jones et al (1996), the function of art is "to help us find a new way of seeing, of hearing, of thinking, of feeling . . . and to find from those experiences new ways of experiencing our communities, our neighbors, our society" (p. 48). Cueva (2010) concluded that "through expressive arts we honor the relationship of spirit, body, and mind as holistic pathways for learning" (p. 86). Research in this type of learning concludes that "participants can benefit from greater freedom and control to move beyond a sharing of experience, to a

fuller expression and shaping of their story in a way that makes sense and matters to them" (Eaves, 2014, p. 156).

High School Leadership Studies

There has been a great deal of research surrounding high school principals (e.g. Barth, 2006; Battle, 2010; Blayes, 2012; Chenoweth, 2011; Fleck, 2008; Hallinger, 2011; Hoffman & Johnson, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Sterrett & Hill-Black, 2020) and some that focus on how the principal leads teachers in the school (e.g. Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Chen, 2014; Couros, 2015; Drago-Steverson, 2012; Fullan, 2014; Levine, 1989; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). These studies have made an advancement in scholarly literature as well as influenced the practice of principals in high schools nationwide. Three advanced leadership studies focusing on principal renewal, women leaders, and women principals will be explored.

Principal Renewal

Eleanor Drago-Severson (2012) conducted a study that focused on the practice of helping principals cope with the stresses of their position. She interviewed 25 principals, who had served as school leaders for at least five years, and she selected these principals purposefully as "they were leaders responsible for supporting teacher learning within their schools" (p. 12). She found principals "employed a variety of strategies for self-renewal . . . and expressed a desire for engaging in ongoing reflective practice with colleagues" (p. 2). Principals engaged in strategies not only to help teachers learn, but to help themselves cope with the daily stresses of their position. By doing this, principals were able to "effectively exercise leadership, avoid burnout, and renew themselves

(Drago-Severson, 2012, p. 2). She found that no matter what type of school (public, private, or charter) or financial stability of the district, principals were still challenged to find enough time to engage in self-renewal.

Scholars and practitioners argue principals need to restore and renew themselves to manage the stress that comes with their job (Battle, 2010; Fullan, 2009). Blaydes (2002) defined renewal as the ability to "replenish the personal resources necessary to continue to be able to give to others" (p. 54). If there is going to be any emphasis on professional development and using strategies to support other educators, then principals ought to find a way to help themselves. In the same sense, if teachers are going to be given additional learning opportunities through professional development from principals, they, too, need to focus on growth through internal capacities (City et al., 2009; Donaldson, 2008; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Principals can provide time for reflection and learning while incorporating some adult learning strategies.

Women Leaders

Andrews (2016) completed a study on women in the workforce stating that there are barriers to which women must conquer in order to survive. This survival extended beyond the business world and into every sector, including education. She stated:

> In the business world, women leaders are still a minority. This statement comes as no surprise to most of us; what is surprising is that men outpace women in leadership roles across every sector in the world: corporate, nonprofit, government, education, medicine, military and religion. (p. 36)

Many statistics on gender roles were positive. Women comprise 57 percent of the U.S. job market; 52 percent of all management roles and professional occupations, such as physicians and attorneys. Additionally, women represent 60 percent of bachelor's degrees, and they also outpace men in the total number of master's and doctorate degrees. On the concerning side; however, "women hold only 19 percent of board seats and 15 percent of executive officer positions, and the number of female CEOs at Fortune 500 companies is a paltry four percent" (Andrews, 2016, p. 36). Andrew's findings revealed the gap between men and women, which has existed for generations, was multifactorial and deep-seated. Her research showed four barriers that women face in leadership. These barriers are faced not only by women in business, but those in education, too. The four types of barriers to leadership for women were structural barriers, institutional mindsets, individual mindsets, and lifestyle choices.

Structural barriers include lack of access to informal networks. Andrew explained how women were not usually invited to golf games, sporting events, or other activities outside of work because there was an overwhelming assumption that women would not be interested in participating or because they had other commitments, like family. Many relationships were built and decisions were made during these informal events. The second barrier was institutional mindsets, which was why many high school principals are male. Traditionally, this role has been viewed by both males and females as a male role, which was why many school board members would not view the role of a superintendent as a female role (Superville, 2017). The last two barriers were individual mindsets, which has to do with the way a woman thinks about her ability to lead, and lifestyle choices, which includes family balance with a career.

Andrews (2016) not only found barriers for women, but provided solutions to these barriers which include finding a mentor or male advocate, proactively communicating a desire to become a leader, ask for assignments rather than volunteer skills, educate men and women about unconscious bias, and encourage employers to promote work-life balance and offer flexible options.

Women Principals

Funk and Polnick (2005) conducted a study focusing solely on female principals. In their research, they found that even though the number of female principals were increasing, they still faced issues that were gender specific. The purpose of their literature review study was to "assist aspiring and in-service female principals to become more successful in their roles by providing a research base and a guiding framework for women regarding success in the principalship" (p. 24). The results of their research was a cumulative list of things female principals should do and things they should avoid.

Slick and Gupton (1993) suggested 11 items for administrators to be successful including: be prepared with necessary degrees and credentials; be psychologically ready and politically aware; work hard to be highly qualified; be persistent, strong, firm, and fair; learn from failure; have good people skills; be professional at all times; develop a strong support system; believe in self; uphold integrity; and maintain personal ethics and values. While this list was not specific to females, they did add in a later publication the need for a better support system for females in leadership positions (Gupton & Slick, 1996).

They continued their research by exploring barriers for female principals, (Grogan, 2000; Helterbran & Rieg, 2004), political savvy for female principals (Funk,

1998; Hill & Ragland, 1995), and challenges for female principals (Eckman, 2003). Their research also indicated many positive aspects of being a female principal. The first positive aspect focused on advice to other female principals. This advice included balancing life; using time wisely; not sacrificing being professional, moral, or ethical; being optimistic; keep a sense of humor and maintain perspective; be a lifelong learner; spend time deciding what's important; and make decisions in the best interest of students (Krajewski, Matkin, Chance, & Galletti, 1998).

A second positive aspect focused on the advantages of being female. These advantages included "being nurturing, giving, adaptive, collaborative, intuitive, flexible, peace-making, empathic, able to compromise, sensitive, humanistic, responsive to others' needs, strong communicators, active listeners, and collaborative" (Funk & Polnick, 2005, p. 30). A final positive aspect focused on the voices of female principals. They listed word-for-word quotes to represent their voices.

Overall 19 conclusions were made regarding this study. Three important conclusions were (1) Although female school principals continue to face barriers that limit their success as school leaders, many women in principalships are providing strong leadership in their schools; (2) Female principals are successful, empowering leaders who serve as change agents, treat everyone with respect, care about children, provide a positive school culture, and make a difference in the lives of the children in their care; and (3) The latest picture of a female principal is an effective school leader who is strong and influential in her position as leader and who involves others in the important decisions within the school (Funk & Polnick, 2005).

Summary

Women in leadership has been a significant topic for research both in the business world (Sandberg, 2013) as well as the field of education (Acquaro & Stokes, 2016; Normore & Gaetane, 2008; Reis & Diaz, 1999; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). These female leaders have a responsibility to learners at every age and stage of their learning. Educating is not exclusive to teachers; it is also one of the important responsibilities given to high school principals. To meet this responsibility, successful principals should purposefully design professional development that aligns with the successes of adult learning communities, which may also align with the six strategies presented by Cueva (2010). Whether purposeful or not, learning happens (Merriam & Bierema, 2014); therefore, principals should be encouraged to structure the learning environment of their teachers so ultimately students will succeed.

SECTION FOUR: CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

To be presented at the National Principal Convention, hosted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), scheduled for July 14 – 17, 2021 at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center in Denver, Colorado. The presentation includes an Executive Summary and a PowerPoint Presentation.

EXECUTIVE SMMARY

A Mixed Method Study of How Female Principals Nurture Adult Learning Opportunities in Successful High Schools with Challenging Student Demographics.

Statement of the Problem: There are few studies about female principals in successful high schools (grades 9 – 12) and how they create an environment of learning for the teachers in the building, especially in schools with challenging student demographics. An effective instructional leader takes the responsibility in developing the teacher learning, which ultimately reflects in student learning.

Purpose of the Study: This study investigated adult learning practices of female principals in successful schools in the State of Missouri and the strategies they use to nurture adult learning opportunities within their schools.

Research Questions:

1. How do Cueva's (2010) six learning strategies (Nurturing Place, Sharing Power, Heart Listening, Talking Story, Engendering Humor, and Creative Expressions) manifest themselves in the current practices of high school female principals during adult learning opportunities?
2. How do female principals in successful high schools nurture adult learning opportunities for their teachers?
3. What challenges do these female principals experience in nurturing adult learning opportunities?

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework: One of Merriam and Bierema's (2014) adult learning theories is constructivism, learning is creating meaning from experience. This theory set the tone for specific research of Cueva's (2010) strategies of practice in a learning community. She stated, "Learning involves taking risks, which means moving beyond our zone of comfort to stretch our capacity to engage in the world in new ways" (p. 81). To foster adult learning, she postulated six strategies, including: Nurturing Place, Sharing Power, Heart Listening, Talking Story, Engendering Humor, and Creative Expressions. It is the use of these six strategies that create positive learning environments for adults.

Design of the Study:

- Mixed Methodology (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano, 2011)
- Participants: 35 successful high school female principals in the State of Missouri
- Data Collection Tools: Archived Data, Survey, Personal Interviews
- Data Analysis: Constant coding, Cross tabulation, Descriptive Statistics, Emerging themes in transcription (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

Findings:

- How Cueva's (2010) learning strategies are use in principal practice?
  - Nurturing Place is the most used strategy by successful high school female principals.
  - Creative Expressions is the least used strategy by successful high school female principals.
- How principals nurture adult learning opportunities for teachers?
  - District initiated learning
  - School-wide professional development
  - Teacher self-selected learning
  - Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
  - Teacher Self-Reflection
- What challenges do successful high school female principals experience?
  - Not Enough Time for Adult Learning
  - Limited Context Specific Related Resources
  - Managing Adult Learning and Growth Processes

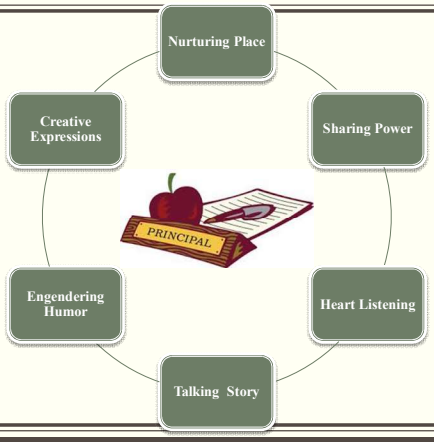
Recommendations for Practice:

- Strategically and thoughtfully cultivate school cultures that support adult learning using Nurturing Place.
- Establish schools as communities of professional learning or PLCs by creating venues and continuous opportunities for teacher learning, designed within a framework that considers adult development and learning.
- Build a learning oriented school culture of success and achievement.
- Create relationships that are based on trust and mutual respect.
- Encourage teachers to know their authentic self through self-reflection, self-knowledge, and self-consistency.
- Be deliberate in managing time to create effective systems, prioritizing tasks, and delegating responsibility.

PowerPoint Presentation

How Female Principals Nurture Adult Learning Opportunities in Successful High Schools with Challenging Student Demographics

by Dana Moad Woodward



"There's no such thing as a high-performing school without a great principal" (Connelly, 2010, p. 35). *former Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan*

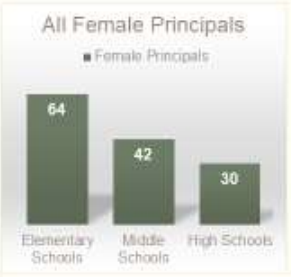
Background

Leadership Matters

- Principals, as successful leaders, can create adult learning opportunities that improve teacher learning; therefore, increasing student learning.
- Educators and learners are key stakeholders in the learning process.
- "The process of learning is concerned with what goes on in the learner's head, heart, body, and soul that leads to change in behavior or perspective" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 252).
- "Learning happens, design or no design" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 121).
- Purposeful learning can occur in structured adult learning opportunities.

Problem in Practice

- Research (e.g., Chenoweth, 2009; Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Pappano, 2010) shows that there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader.
- Successful female leadership at the high school level is worthy of research, with a focus on adult learning opportunities, especially in schools with challenging student demographics.
- Many of these women anchor their goals in social justice (Theoharis, 2008) tenets, not just improving their overall state scorecard.
- Women leadership should be recognized in practice and study, as they have done the unexpected by achieving success in their schools (e.g., Chira, 2017; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eckman, 2014; Hansen, 2014; Helterbran & Rieg, 2004; Sebastian & Moon, 2018).



Gap in Research

- Little research on high school female principals and their practices in adult learning strategies.
- No direct research focusing on Cueva's (2010) six strategies for creating an adult learning community in education. This is a new idea and focus that could benefit current and future principals.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this mixed method study was to investigate adult learning strategies (Cueva, 2010) successful high school female principals in the state of Missouri use during adult learning opportunities in their school.

Research Questions

1. How do Cueva's (2010) six learning strategies manifest themselves in the current practices of high school female principals during adult learning opportunities?

2. How do female principals in successful high schools nurture adult learning opportunities for their teachers?

3. What challenges do these female principals experience in nurturing adult learning opportunities?

Definition of Terms

Successful High Schools

- The MSIP 5 uses APR to determine school success based on: Academic Achievement (56 points), Subgroup Achievement (14 points), College and Career or High School Readiness (30 points), Attendance (10 points), and Graduation Rates (30 points) (DESE, n.d.; Stahly, 2018).
- For purposes of this study, the high school MSIP 5 (2019) score for the participants of successful high schools was calculated at 90 percent or higher.

Challenging Student Demographics

- DESE defines challenging students based on ethnicity, attendance rate, eligibility for free and reduced lunch, graduation rate, homeless or foster care status, and family income (DESE, n.d., School Report Card).

Adult Learning Opportunities

- Adult learning activities encompasses formal professional training, specialized training, verbal and/or written feedback, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help teachers and/or other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

Merriam and Bierema (2014) explain traditional adult learning in five theories:

1) Behaviorism – Learning is a change in behavior

2) Humanism – Learning is about the development of the person

3) Cognitivism – Learning is a mental process

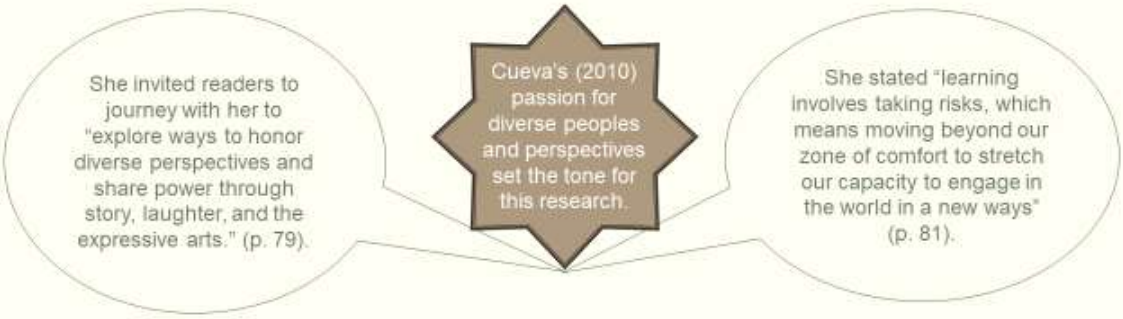
4) Social Cognitive Theory – Learning is social and context bound

5) Constructivism – Learning is creating meaning from experience

- Driscoll (2005) claimed that "learners, are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, but rather active organisms seeking meaning" (p. 387).
- Candy (1991) observed "teaching and learning, especially for adults, is a process of negotiation, involving the construction and exchange of personally relevant and viable meanings" (p. 275).

Theoretical Framework (cont.)

How is meaningful learning created through experience?



In this journey of learning, she postulated six strategies to create positive learning environments for adult learning.

Unique Terms Used in Cueva (2010) Framework

Learning Strategies	• A reflective practice that prepares learners for creative, meaningful, learning experiences (Cueva, 2010).
Peoples	• Preferred "the use of peoples over people to express the range of diversity among indigenous peoples. Each tribal group is dynamically unique, rooted within a rich cultural heritage of language, song, dance, and way of being" (p. 79).
Adult Education	• "Activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception, define them as adults" (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 8).

Nurturing Place

The leader creates a place of tolerance, understanding, discourse, renewal, hope, peace, dreams, and a sense of belonging. Diversity is invited, encouraged, and respected.

Sharing Power

The leader invites participants to share their diverse experiences and/or challenges with all participants. She encourages voices from various backgrounds to lead and guide learning.

Heart Listening

The leader is committed to actively listening to others, especially to peoples with a diverse story. She listens with an open mind; stereotypes are suppressed. Her heart is open to the input and experiences of peoples from a diverse background.

Talking Story

The leader encourages peoples in her school to share their personal experiences, both in and out of the classroom. She creates an environment where participants are comfortable sharing their story. Their stories help create an atmosphere of learning and become part of the organization's story.

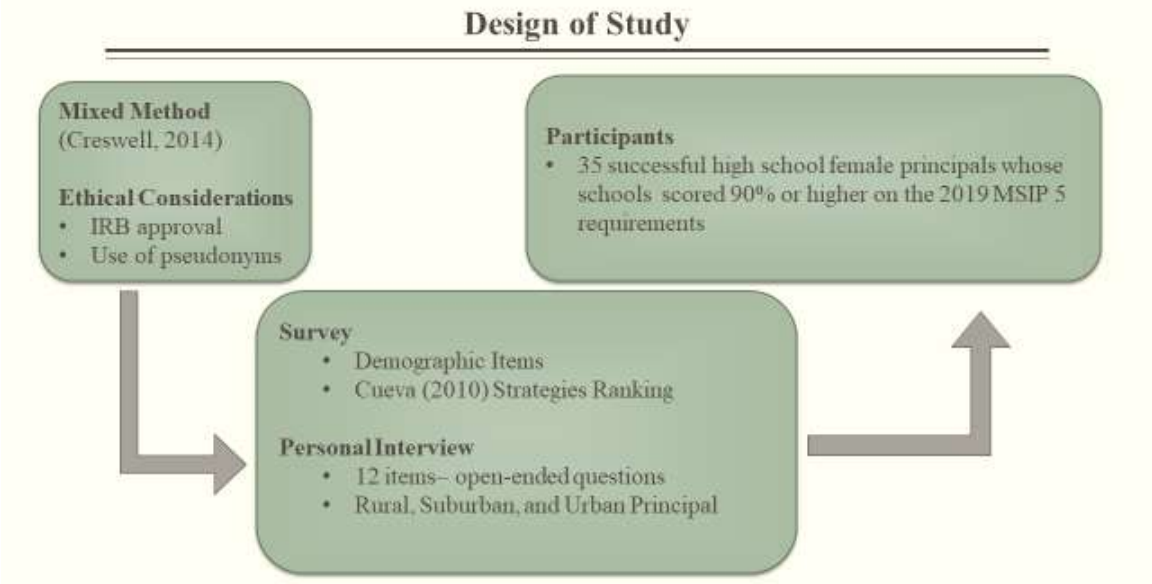
Engendering Humor

The leader considers the laughter that bubbles up from the humanness of peoples as they engage in the work of teaching and learning. She understands the nurturing power of humor and how it can energize memory, providing a playful community of learners, encouraging laughter daily as an integral part of learning.

Creative Expressions

The leader weaves non-traditional ways of learning, including song, dance, movement, drawing, painting, and sculpting to bring heart and soul to the learning experience of all peoples.

DESIGN OF STUDY



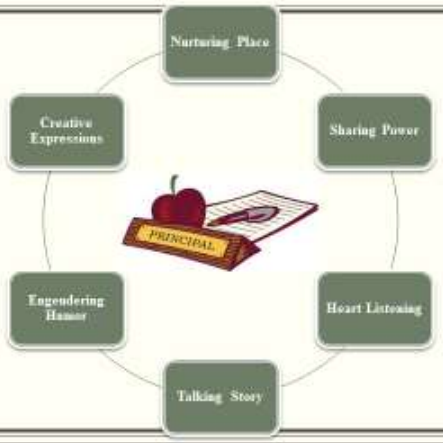
Data Analysis

- **Quantitative**
  - Descriptive analysis of the data (Field, 2017).
    - Categorized the data based on survey responses.
    - Analyzed using descriptive statistics.
- **Qualitative**
  - Reviewed all transcribed interviews, searched for patterns and themes.
  - Used "thick description" (Patton, 2002, p. 503) to interpret what is seen, heard, and read during the interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Glesne, 2011; Gray, 2017; Patton, 2002).
  - Coded patterns and themes and reported as findings.

FINDINGS

"You have to put strategies in place; it's not going to naturally happen."

(J. M. Daniel, interview)



PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY

Participants (n=35) Characteristics

Age in years	
<=45	48
>45	52

Ethnicity	
White	91
Non-White	9

Years served as principal	
<=2	14
3-5	34
6-10	23
>=11	29

Highest degree	
Masters	14
Specialist	54
Doctorate	32

Years served as principal in current school	
<=2	20
3-5	40
6-10	23
>11	17

Face-to-Face Interviews

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Experience	School Classification	Ethnicity
J. M. Daniel	46-55	Doctorate	> 11 years	Rural	White
P. C. Larsen	46-55	Doctorate	3-5 years	Suburban	White
E. I. Tindall	36-45	Specialist	6-10 years	Urban	Non-White

School Characteristics

Location	
Urban	9
Suburban	20
Rural	71

Percent of non-white students	
<=10	71
11-25	9
26-50	9
>51	11

Total number of teaching staff	
<=25	28
26-50	43
>51	29

Total number of enrolled students	
<=500	69
>500	31

Students on free or reduced-price lunch (%)	
<=25	14
26-50	31
51-75	40
>75	14

Percent of non-white teaching staff	
<=10	54
11-25	37
26-50	3
>51	6

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE:
SUCCESSFUL FEMALE PRINCIPALS' USE OF LEARNING STRATEGIES

Rankings of Usage of Cueva's (2010) Six Learning Strategies

	N	Mean	SD	Rankings
Nurturing Place	35	4.40	1.168	6
Sharing Power	35	3.57	1.243	5
Heart Listening	35	3.51	1.337	4
Engendering Humor	35	3.37	1.308	3
Talking Story	35	3.14	1.309	2
Creative Expressions	35	2.09	1.422	1

*Rankings indicate the commonly used strategy on a scale of 1-6, 1 being least used and 6 most used.

Cueva's (2010) Learning Strategies and Commonalities in Qualitative Data

Strategy	Commonalities
Nurturing Place	• Revisit purpose and vision of school and career • Listen to teacher input and adjust as needed • Create a purposeful yearly theme • Find teacher's reason for why they pursue this career
Sharing Power	• Rely on teachers to say what they need • Ask small groups of teachers to pilot new programs, collect data that informs instruction, and share experiences with other teachers • Allow teachers to guide professional development • Establish Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
Heart Listening	• Model specific listening strategies • Use restorative practices

Cueva's (2010) Learning Strategies and Commonalities in Qualitative Data (cont.)

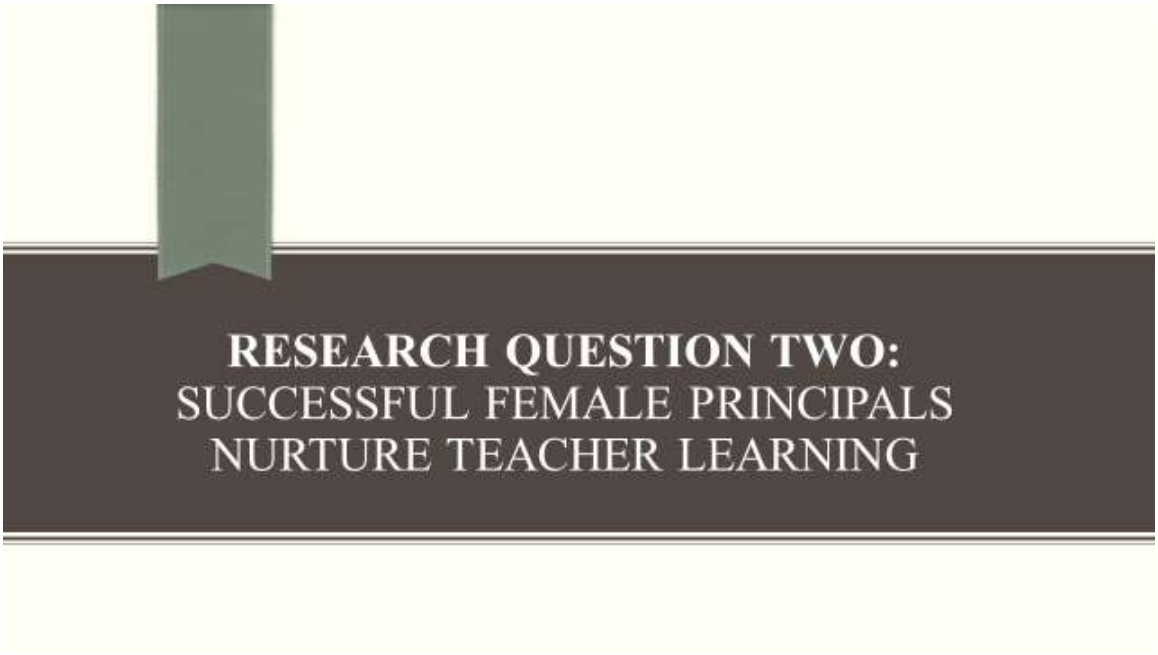
Strategy	Commonalities
Talking Story	• Share personal experiences • Relate to teachers by examples of other teachers • Create open conversations • Share personal successes and failures with teachers
Engendering Humor	• Laugh at self to show human qualities • Use to deescalate situations • Create memorable moments • Encourage laughter daily as an integral part of learning.
Creative Expressions	• Invite departments to showcase their skills to the staff (i.e. art department teach staff how to paint, PE department host a yoga event) • Create learning that includes involvement and movement • Use music to connect learning

Cueva's (2010) Learning Strategies and Quotes

Strategy	Quotes
Nurturing Place	"Make sure everybody has the same understanding of what core values are and how those core values can drive the work." (E. I. Tindall, interview)
Sharing Power	Setting up professional learning communities is a great way to "share and distribute leadership among teachers. This develops a culture of collaboration and respect." (Z. T. Berger, survey text entry data)
Heart Listening	Teach listening by "having [teachers] turn and face the wall and share an idea when no one can see the expression on their face." (J. M. Daniel, interview)

Cueva's (2010) Learning Strategies and Quotes (cont.)

Strategy	Quotes
Talking Story	"I'm a great storyteller. I think I have a lot of personal experience to draw from. I think stories add that human element that people can relate to." (P. C. Larsen, interview)
Engendering Humor	"Laughter is a survival mechanism." (J. M. Daniel, interview)
Creative Expressions	"I use a lot of music in my meetings." (J. M. Daniel, interview)



OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

1. District initiated learning
2. School-wide professional development
3. Teacher self-selected learning
4. Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
5. Teacher self-reflection

HOW PRINCIPALS SEE THEIR ROLE FOR TEACHERS

- Provide a support system for teachers
- Promote and encourage teachers
- Be a sounding board for teachers
- Model expectations for teachers
- Start conversations with teachers
- Establish clear purpose for teachers

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE: CHALLENGES FACED BY SUCCESSFUL FEMALE PRINCIPALS

CHALLENGES

Theme	Subtheme
Not Enough Time For Adult Learning	• New Teachers • District Driven Initiatives • For Conversations with Teachers • Teachers Learn from Teachers
Limited Context Specific Related Resources	• Money for Teacher Learning • New Teacher Training • Vertical Collaboration • Improve Learning Targets
Managing Adult Learning and Growth Processes	• Accountability for Teacher Learning • Meeting Everyone's Needs • Providing Productive Feedback • Willingness to Learn

LIMITATIONS

LIMITATIONS

1. Time constraints limited the number of participants, since they were given only three weeks to respond.
2. Study focused only on successful high school female principals in the state of Missouri.
3. The researcher and research schedule only allowed for three personal interviews.
4. Only one measure, 2019 MSIP5, was used as an indicator of the school's success. Different contexts might have different measures, especially in rural schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Strategically and thoughtfully cultivate school cultures that support adult learning using Nurturing Place.
- Establish schools as communities of professional learning or PLCs by creating venues and continuous opportunities for teacher learning, designed within a framework that considers adult development and learning.
- Build a learning oriented school culture of success and achievement.
- Create relationships that are based on trust and mutual respect.
- Encourage teachers to know their authentic self through self-reflection, self-knowledge, and self-consistency.
- Be deliberate in managing time to create effective systems, prioritizing tasks, and delegating responsibility.

SECTION FIVE: CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Article Title: How Female Principals Nurture Adult Learning Opportunities in Successful High Schools with Challenging Student Demographics

to be submitted to

the National Association of Secondary School Principals

for publication in

the *Bulletin*, a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal

published in cooperation with Sage Publications

Abstract

Based on Cueva's (2010) learning strategies, this study investigated adult learning strategies successful high school female principals use to nurture adult learning opportunities at their schools in the state of Missouri. Public high schools were selected based on their 2019 Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP 5) performance standards and indicators. Their principals were asked to complete a survey online and self-select to be interviewed. The findings indicated that principals take their role as instructional leaders seriously and seek to use learning strategies for understanding, conversation, and action. The most frequently used adult learning strategy is Nurturing Place while the least used is Creative Expressions. The principals desire more time and resources to help their teachers learn.

Keywords: learning strategies, adult learning opportunities, challenging student demographics, strategies for learning, female principals, professional development

How Female Principals Nurture Adult Learning Opportunities in Successful High Schools with Challenging Student Demographics

Former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan once said, "There's no such thing as a high-performing school without a great principal" (Connelly, 2010, p. 35). Being a principal is more than just earning a certificate and dispersing discipline to unruly students. Many school districts have successfully transformed schools and raised student achievement because of the dedicated leadership of an excellent principal. Yet, economically disadvantaged school districts struggle to find and retain high-performing principals. Their job descriptions include finding avenues of success for a school with challenging demographics, in addition to practicing strategies for adult learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). This does not come naturally with the job title; it requires principals to create learning environments that nurture meaningful adult learning opportunities, which "awaken possibilities as a catalyst for understanding, conversation, and action" (Cueva, 2010, p. 79). Cueva (2010) outlined six specific strategies, which created a framework for this study, adding "depth and dimension to community-based health education with diverse adult learners" (p. 79). These included: Nurturing Place, Sharing Power, Heart Listening, Talking Story, Engendering Humor, and Creative Expressions.

Many studies (e.g., Loder, 2005; Shoho & Barnett, 2010) have been conducted on the complexity of the principalship, indicating that it is a much more demanding job than it used to be. The role of a principal is complex and poses pressures to solve not only educational issues, but also social and personal problems. In previous decades, principals needed good management skills and an understanding of the school; whereas, today they are expected to be experts in leadership, education, and administration (Fleck, 2008).

Even as principals rise to the many challenges, they continue to work in an environment of intense pressure to meet state and federal standards. Research studies (Battle, 2010; Donaldson, 2008, Friedman, 2002; Fullan, 2009; Normore, 2007; Webber, Sarris, & Bissell, 2010; Whitaker, 1996) indicated that emotional exhaustion created a high level of burnout, especially in women. However, there are women who have defied the odds and transformed their schools into beacons of success.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do Cueva's (2010) six learning strategies manifest themselves in the current practices of high school female principals during adult learning opportunities?
2. How do female principals in successful high schools nurture adult learning opportunities for their teachers?
3. What challenges do these female principals experience in nurturing adult learning opportunities?

Literature Review

The most recognized leader in the K-12 educational system is the principal. "Over the last 30 years, the school principal has been identified as a key player in school improvement and change" (Smulyan, 2000, p. 10). If school districts want successful students and schools, then they should focus on the leaders, specifically the principals who lead the educators. "A principal's ability to successfully lead and manage a school is very important to the success of the students within that school" (Pepper, 2010, p. 45). The principal leads a team of educators. When that principal is also female,

leadership may look differently. "Women tend to put themselves at the center of their organizations rather than at the top . . . they labor constantly to include people in their decision making" (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 83). Results from meta-analyses study suggest that women lead in a more democratic and participatory manner in comparison to men (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). Female leadership has also been described as a leadership style which focuses on the ability to be a good role model, inspire, stimulate, and support their followers (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003; Van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

By including everyone, a woman is able to build teamwork and comradery that is needed to run a successful organization. Female leaders have a more participatory style compared to their male peers (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Fridell et al., 2009; Post, 2015; Shakeshaft, 1989). Sebastian and Moon (2018) found females excel in the critical domain of planning and setting goals. These two domains are "the most important area where principals can involve others in their work" (p. 12).

While several researchers in the field of gender inequality in education tend to self-reflect when researching this topic (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Gupton, 2009; Murphey, Moss, Hannah, & Weiner, 2005), it should be noted that lack of female educational leaders is a "matter of some concern" (Cubillo & Brown, 2003) and if women are going to move into leadership positions, they "must be willing to shift into multidimensional gender and traverse conventional borders" (Christman & McClellan, 2008). Cubillo and Brown further claimed that the gender issues facing females in

educational leadership are both vertical and horizontal in terms of breaking through the glass ceiling and glass walls.

Women in leadership has been a significant topic for research both in the business world (Sandberg, 2013) and in the field of education (Acquaro & Stokes, 2016; Normore & Gaetane, 2008; Reis & Diaz, 1999; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Building adult learning communities is key to the success of principals. According to Cueva (2010a) "to collaboratively expand the world of possibility is at the heart of adult education" (p. 6). An adult learning community is defined as a group "of learners who have different levels of knowledge and mastery of the knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and norms of the group" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 121). With a wide range of educators who have different levels of experience and education, high schools are a natural environment for adult learning communities and female principals can structure adult learning opportunities along Cueva's strategies.

Nurturing Place

This strategy focuses on how the principal created a place of acceptance for all diverse backgrounds, encouraging participants to share their experiences, live their dreams, and feel a sense of belonging to a community, while creating a sense of hope, peace, and renewal.

Sharing Power

This strategy is used when the principal invited participants to share their experiences and/or challenges with all participants. She encouraged voices from various backgrounds to lead and guide learning, inviting participants to share, and ensuring diverse voices were encouraged, heard, and supported.

Heart Listening

This strategy requires the principal to be committed to actively listening to others, especially those people with a diverse story. She listened with an open mind; stereotypes were suppressed. Her heart was open to the input and experiences of people from a diverse background. Communication skills were taught and practiced among all learners.

Talking Story

In this strategy, the principal encourages people in her school to share their personal experiences, both in and out of the classroom. She shared her own story in such a way that she was able to connect to learners and help them move forward in their own learning process.

Engendering Humor

This strategy encourages the principal to think about the laughter that bubbles up from the humanness of people as they engaged in the work of teaching and learning. She understood the nurturing power of humor and how it could energize memory, providing a playful community of learners, encouraging laughter daily as an integral part of learning.

Creative Expressions

This strategy is a way for the principal to engage participants' whole being to bring heart and soul to the learning experience and weave non-traditional ways of learning, including song, dance, movement, drawing, painting, and sculpting.

Method

Since most studies about educational administration have been either quantitative or qualitative, this study used a mixed method approach (Creswell, 2014; Creswell &

Plano, 2011). Quantitative data provided demographical information as well as the rank of strategies successful high school female principals used. Qualitative data provided insight into why and how principals use specific strategies.

Participants and Sampling

I attained a list of all high school principals in the State of Missouri from DESE (2019) that included public information. Of the 534 principals, 131 (25%) were deemed female based on their title and/or name. An email was sent to each of the 131 successful high school female principals, alerting them of the impending survey.

An analysis of the list from DESE indicated that all 131 high schools led by successful female principals had exhibited scores of 90% or higher on MSIP 5. The standards included academic achievement, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness, attendance rate, and graduation rate (see Table 2).

Table 2

MSIP 5 Standards and Total Possible Points

Standard	Points
Academic Achievement	56
Subgroup Achievement	14
College and Career Ready	30
Attendance	10
Graduation Rate	30
Total Points Possible	140

Participants were given three weeks to respond to the email with three reminders sent in one-week intervals. Of the emails that were sent, eight bounced back as not valid, one referred me to the superintendent, 43 surveys were started, and 35 surveys were completed. Data cleaning revealed that 35 surveys (27% response rate) were valid to be included in data analysis. Of the valid responses, five principals sent self-selection emails to be interviewed. Three principals (pseudonyms) were interviewed, representing rural, suburban, and urban school districts (see Table 3).

Table 3

Interviewed Principals Demographic Data

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Experience	School Classification	Ethnicity
J. M. Daniel	46-55	Doctorate	> 11 years	Rural	White
P. C. Larsen	46-55	Doctorate	3-5 years	Suburban	White
E. I. Tindall	36-45	Specialist	6-10 years	Urban	Non-White

Data Collection

Three data collection strategies were utilized in this study, including archival data, survey, and personal interviews. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided archival data of schools MSIP 5 (2019) school performance standards and principals' public information.

The survey was sent to all successful female principals whose high schools met the criteria of MSIP 5 (2019). Principals were asked 12 demographic questions and to rank learning strategies as posited by Cueva (2010) on a Likert scale of one, being the

least used strategy, to six, being the most used strategy. The collection of this data was approved by the University of Missouri's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013) were conducted with three principals, one from rural, suburban, and urban communities, via Zoom, an online video conferencing tool. The interview comprised of questions that sought insight on what it is like to be a successful high school female principal, the challenges faced by successful high school female principals, and the six strategies posited by Cueva (2010). Interviews were approximately 30 minutes long. Data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed for emerging themes that could corroborate quantitative data.

Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis of the data (Field, 2017) were conducted. Survey data was downloaded from Qualtrics into Excel and cleaned up for analysis using SPSS (V. 24). Unique identifiers were used for confidentiality purposes. Descriptive statistics were used to determine central tendencies.

Qualitative data analysis consisted of searching for patterns and emerging themes. I used thick description (Patton, 2002) that went beyond mere fact and interpreted what was seen, heard, and read during the interviews. Repeated phrases and ideas from at least two successful female principals constituted as a pattern or theme (Creswell, 2014).

Method of Verification

To verify data, I used triangulation (Creswell, 2014), collecting data using multiple ways: surveys, interviews and document analysis (DESE information and MSIP5 scores). To further increase verification, I completed member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by sending transcribed interviews to the interviewed principals for

verification and to verify that I had captured the interview accurately. As a female educator, I have a heightened sensitivity to rely on the words that successful high school female principals said during their interviews.

Findings

The findings are presented by participant's demographics and research questions. The demographics and school characteristics of successful female high school principals in the state of Missouri included in the final sample of 35 respondents are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Personal and school characteristics of the survey respondents

Variable	Percent (%)
Personal Characteristics	
Age in years	
<=45	48
>45	52
Ethnicity	
White	91
Non-White	9
Highest degree	
Masters	14
Specialist	54
Doctorate	32
Years served as principal	
<=2	14
3-5	34
6-10	23

>=11	29
Years served as principal in current school	
<=2	20
3-5	40
6-10	23
>11	17
School Characteristics	
Location	
Urban	9
Suburban	20
Rural	71
Total number of enrolled students	
<=500	69
>500	31
Percent of non-white students	
<=10	71
11-25	9
26-50	9
>51	11
Students on free or reduced-price lunch (%)	
<=25	14
26-50	31
51-75	40
>75	14
Total number of teaching staff	
<=25	28
26-50	43
>51	29
Percent of non-white teaching staff	
<=10	54

11-25	37
26-50	3
>51	6

Note. $n = 35$

Research Question One: Successful Female Principals' Use of Learning Strategies

The first research question asked how Cueva's (2010) six learning strategies manifest themselves in the current practices of successful high school female principals during adult learning opportunities. Survey data revealed that Nurturing Place is the most commonly used learning strategy, while Creative Expressions is the least used learning strategy for successful high school female principals. The survey data asked principals to describe how they used learning strategies to help teachers learn. A similar question was used during the interviews. Out of this data, some commonalities emerged that indicate how principals utilized the learning strategies for teachers in their schools (see Table 5). A principal from a rural school captured the views of other principals regarding adult learning by stating, "You have to put strategies in place; it's not going to naturally happen" (interview).

Table 5

Commonalities in Learning Strategies

Strategy	Commonalities
Nurturing Place	• Revisit purpose and vision of school and career • Listen to teacher input and adjust as needed • Create a purposeful yearly theme • Find teacher's reason for why they pursue this career
Sharing Power	• Rely on teachers to say what they need

	• Ask small groups of teachers to pilot new programs, collect data that informs instruction, and share experiences with other teachers • Allow teachers to guide professional development • Establish Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
Heart Listening	• Model specific listening strategies • Use restorative practices
Talking Story	• Share personal experiences • Relate to teachers by examples of other teachers • Create open conversations • Share personal successes and failures with teachers
Engendering Humor	• Laugh at self to show human qualities • Use to deescalate situations • Create memorable moments • Encourage laughter daily as an integral part of learning.
Creative Expressions	• Invite departments to showcase their skills to the staff (i.e. art department teach staff how to paint, PE department host a yoga event) • Create learning that includes involvement and movement • Use music to connect learning

In the survey, principals were asked to rank the strategies in order of usage, from most to least used on a Likert scale of 6-1, 6 being mostly used and 1 being least used. Table 6 shows these rankings, mean, and standard deviation.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations and Rankings of Learning Strategies

	N	Mean	SD	Rankings
Nurturing Place	35	4.40	1.168	6
Sharing Power	35	3.57	1.243	5
Heart Listening	35	3.51	1.337	4
Engendering Humor	35	3.37	1.308	3
Talking Story	35	3.14	1.309	2

Creative Expressions	35	2.09	1.422	1

Note. 6 was most used strategy and 1 was least used strategy.

Findings indicated that successful high school female principals use Nurturing Place strategy more often than any other strategy and they use Creative Expressions strategy the least.

Nurturing Place. This strategy helped principals create an atmosphere of trust and learning for all teachers to feel comfortable and confident. Tindall, an urban successful female principal indicated this strategy helped give teachers a sense of renewal, hope, and peace. For instance, when she wanted her staff to focus on core values, she made sure everybody had the same understanding of what core values are and how those core values could drive the work. She shared how she uses a list of 120 words, asking teachers to individually select five of those words to describe their core values. During professional learning meetings, she asks teachers to share their list with their table partners. By so doing, "teachers are able to see what others value the most."

She took this process one step further and asked the whole group to determine what five core values were most important in the school. In her words, "when we saw behavior that was not in alignment with our core values, that provided a shared purpose around which our conversations took place. That was pretty, pretty powerful."

Another principal from a suburban school shared how she created a sense of belonging, hope, and renewal for teachers and students by used the Nurturing Place strategy during a back-to-school event. She described how students shared personal stories as to why they needed their teachers. She believed this activity "strengthened student-teacher relationships that allowed them to share experiences, their dreams, and a

sense of belonging" (interview). Some of the statements from survey data that exemplify the use of Nurturing Place strategy include: "It is important to build a safe, caring learning environment first," "Relationships are primary," and "when Nurturing Place is the culture, there is tremendous trust, respect, and a shared responsibility. This is key in our school."

Sharing Power. The principals ranked Sharing Power as the second most used strategy. Sharing Power demands a conscious awareness of the many facets of power, including positionality in the learning environment and whose interests are served or neglected. The principals espoused shared leadership that was anchored in trust, critical for the mission and vision of their schools. One urban principal said she liked to empower her teachers to lead their learning. "I want to pilot things first and get teacher feedback." In her strategy, she found teachers who were willing to try new things, collect data to inform instruction, and then share their experience with the other teachers. She continued, "They can share out and help make the transition and adapting of new behaviors a little more easy." A rural principal had a similar response, stating "I encourage teachers to try new ideas and strategies and then have them share successes with others" (Z. T. Berger, survey).

These principals empowered and encouraged their teachers to engage in dialogue, listen and attend to feelings, learn what worked and what didn't, and why. By so doing, the principals established a process of sharing power with participants that nurtures an environment of invitation, allowing participants to express their viewpoints and challenge their understandings.

Principals used PLCs to share and distribute leadership among teachers thereby developing a culture of leadership and respect. By sharing power in PLCs, an adult learning community was engendered, team members stepped forward when situations warranted, providing the leadership necessary, and then stepped back to allow others to lead. Principals stated they had faster responses to complex situations and promoted the same team spirit in the classrooms.

Heart Listening. Ranked the third most used strategy by survey participants, Heart Listening was discussed by all three interview participants. Principals practiced listening not just to answer, but to learn what others are saying, feeling, and expressing. Genuine listening by the principal focused on Cueva's (2010) reminder, "The creator gave us two ears and one mouth so we could listen twice as much as we talk" (Cueva, 2010, p. 89). Urban principal, E. I. Tindall (interview) said, "We have a lot of open conversation here." She also said with great pride that she practiced the same strategies during teacher professional development that high school teachers are encouraged to use in their classroom, like Turn and Talk and Talking Heads.

Peter Drucker (2011) suggested good leaders "listen first, speak last" (p. 36). J. M. Daniel (interview) laughed when reflecting on listening skills. She said, "Teachers are the worst students." She kept this in mind when asking them to talk and listen to one another. "In our most successful meetings, I've had to use strategies on how to listen." She explained how people do not really listen; they listen to respond. She constructed a strategy to help them listen. At a professional development meeting, she asked each person to speak, but told them that no one could make a comment. They had to listen to each other rather than listen to respond. In another strategy, she "had them turn and face

the wall and share an idea when no one could see the expression on their face." For this strategy, participants listened to the words, rather than reacted to cues that were heard or seen first. In reflection of this activity, she said, "I try different strategies so we can allow voices to be heard without opinions . . . it has helped people be more active listeners."

Talking Story. "As stories emerge and grow they intersect, spiral, and weave together to create a new and vibrant tapestry of meaning" (Cueva, 2010, p. 84). Principals want to create meaning through stories. Suburban principal, P. C. Larsen addressed this strategy with enthusiasm: "I'm a great storyteller. I think I have a lot of personal experience to draw from," she continued, "I think stories add that human element that people can relate to" (interview). Although this strategy ranked fifth in the survey data, individual interviewees expressed their successful use of Talking Story in adult learning opportunities. Urban principal, E. I. Tindall (interview), said telling stories is something she liked to model for her teachers. "I try to share about those opportunities that I've had, ones that worked and didn't work. I've been a principal for 19 years and I have a wealth of experience." Overall, principals were able to use Talking Story as a way to share their story, weave meaningful experiences, and connect with teachers, giving voices to lived experience.

Engendering Humor. While many educators may feel that learning is no laughing matter, it is important to remember the playfulness of learning and how learning can be fun, especially in adult learning opportunities. "We need to laugh together to make peace, to create and sustain community" (Hooks, 2003, p. 196). While Engendering Humor ranked fourth among all participants, J. M. Daniel, a rural principal

said Engendering Humor was her number one strategy as "laughter is a survival mechanism." She chuckled telling how she and her assistant principal would sometimes act like the kids. She said:

> I think teachers just need to know that you're real. For me, it's a sense of humor. That's kind of natural for me. It keeps the mood light. We take ourselves way too seriously and that's what creates a lot of extra stress.

She explained how she has used personal examples of how she "screwed up" and tried to laugh at the scenario so teachers could see that it is okay to "laugh at ourselves or laugh at each other . . . it's fun."

A participant in Cueva's (2010a) cancer education training expressed "If you don't have fun while you are learning then everything you are learning is just not going to stick" (p. 5). Principals found a variety of ways to have fun and use humor in their school. They have "modeled a new dance move at homecoming, provided birthday shout-outs on the morning announcements, rode the school bus, or wore the school mascot costume" (Sterrett & Hill-Black, 2020). These strategies, along with encouraging laughter can build a community of learners, make others feel welcomed and part of the group, lighten the mood, celebrate humanness, energize the learning environment, and bring a group of learners together in a shared experience.

Creative Expressions. Principals using this strategy push the boundaries of traditional learning by exploring new ways of learning and expressing experiences. Arts in adult learning is more than entertainment; it is a way to value diverse ways of understanding and a way to connect with people. While this strategy ranked last in usage among principals, it was used by suburban principal, P. C. Larsen in monthly meetings.

She said "I really felt like they [teachers] needed an opportunity to learn from other departments." She asked each department to pick a month to present during professional development structured time. She said:

> The art department offered sessions on how to create a pottery piece. The PE department did something on health and fitness and yoga. Teachers could sign up for that and come after school. Even the core departments (e.g. English, Math, and Science) did stuff as well . . . creative writing, map reading, and other interesting stuff.

She found that participants enjoyed learning from one another and trying different activities. "So every group has had a different activity each month. It's an idea to work together. We're learning, you know, we're doing something new."

Principals were able to bring a heart and soul to the learning experience by asking teachers to share power and weave the expressive arts into their learning. Multiple successful female participants in the survey and in the interviews said they used music as a way to promote movement and memory. "We used music to get teacher's attention or to help them focus" said E. I. Tindall (interview). She encouraged teachers to use music in the classroom as a way to motivate students in learning and behavior. "I used a lot of music in my meetings. Every time the music is on, that's when they [the teachers] are supposed to be talking and then when the music stops, that's when they stop talking" (J. M. Daniel, interview). This was a strategy that many teachers implemented in their own classroom. Using it in professional development training was a strategic way for teachers to see how well music worked to control classroom activities. Creative Expressions

allowed principals to invite teachers to engage in their learning process and honor the relationship of spirit, body, and mind as holistic pathways for learning.

Summary. These strategies serve as a framework for adult learning in schools. Nurturing Place seemed to be prominently utilized, while Creative Expressions was used the least. These learning strategies serve as a framework for principals to build a learning oriented school culture for adult development and growth. Without explicitly knowing, the principals seem to use these strategies in creating high functioning teacher learning teams, such as PLCs.

Research Question Two: Successful Female Principals Nurture Teacher Learning

The second research question asked about how female principals in successful high schools nurture adult learning opportunities for their teachers, qualitative data, from interviews and surveys, were analyzed and five major opportunities emerged. The first opportunity for learning, mentioned by all three interviewees, was district initiated learning or contract time, meaning that the learning was built into the weekly and annual school calendar. This included early release every Friday, where students leave school early so teachers can engage in professional development. Additionally, there are a specific number of professional development days built into the annual school calendar.

The second opportunity for learning was school-wide professional development. This learning is usually directed by the principal or her appointee. An urban principal said, "I make it my responsibility to always take some leadership in whatever initiative or whatever school wide focus instructional strategy we're focusing on" (E. I. Tindall, interview). Having the opportunity to work with the teachers in school-wide professional development was a way principals could guide the learning for the teachers.

The third opportunity for learning was teacher self-selected, contract and non-contract time. Principals found empowering their teachers to take on learning was successful. Multiple principals said it was impossible to create learning that would meet everyone's needs, so being able to allow teachers to select their own learning was a successful learning opportunity for teachers.

The fourth opportunity for learning was forming teacher leadership teams. This may be in the form of departmentalized learning, PLCs, or small group learning. In fact, 68% of participants said they used a small group of teacher leaders prior to initiating a school wide activity. "I've got a leadership team that helps run [professional development] (J. M. Daniel, interview).

The fifth opportunity for learning was reflection, which invited teachers to embrace the process of discovery and revelation, bringing meaning to life's moments (Cueva, 2010). "I try to use a lot of probing questions when we do our observation feedback sessions. I ask what they thought about the lesson, what went well, what didn't go well, and then we'll talk about it" (E. I. Tindall, interview). Principals found ways to use reflection when asking teachers to reflect on their lessons in terms of curriculum alignment, building standards, school-wide focus, and how data supports their decision to teach. P. C. Larsen (interview) said that sometimes being "a sounding board" is a great way to help teachers learn through various situations.

Additionally, to answer research question two, principals were asked to reflect on how they viewed their role in teacher learning. Six descriptors emerged from the survey and interview qualitative data (see Table 7).

Table 7

How Principals See Their Role for Teachers

Role as a Principal
• Provide a support system for teachers • Promote and encourage teachers • Be a sounding board for teachers • Model expectations for teachers • Start conversations with teachers • Establish clear purpose for teachers

A rural principal explained how she saw herself as someone who fostered learning to her teachers. "I try to collect some information from them and then just spend time talking. I mean, really, that's what people want. They want to be heard." She also tried to find "ways to motivate" teachers. "They need to have a reason why, and establishing a why is a motive, I think, sometimes helps them to move forward" (J. M. Daniel, interview). P. C. Larsen said:

> I feel like I need to learn about what they're teaching in their classroom and have conversations with them on how to support that learning . . . I think my role is really to be a support system for them and also a sounding board if we need to discuss what learning might need to take place.

Summary. Principals and school districts have set up many venues for adult learning opportunities including district initiated learning, school-wide professional development, teacher self-selected learning, PLCs, and teacher self-reflection. It is through these practices that adult learning can develop and flourish. Principals should continue to see themselves as leaders who provide a support system for teachers, promote

and encourage teachers, are a sounding board for teachers, model expectations for teachers, start conversations with teachers, and establish a clear purpose for teachers. In this manner, principals can ensure successful growth opportunities for all teachers.

Research Question Three: Challenges Faced by Successful Female Principals

The third research question asked about challenges successful female principals experience in nurturing adult learning opportunities. Also, principals were asked what supports they wish they had to improve teacher learning and what challenges they experienced in fostering teacher learning. The qualitative data revealed three themes: time, resources, and balance. These three themes had four subthemes (see Table 8).

Table 8

Themes and Subthemes for Principal Challenges

Theme	Subtheme
Not Enough Time For Adult Learning	• New Teachers • District Driven Initiatives • For Conversations with Teachers • Teachers Learn from Teachers
Limited Context Specific Related Resources	• Money for Teacher Learning • New Teacher Training • Vertical Collaboration • Improve Learning Targets
Managing Adult Learning and Growth Processes	• Accountability for Teacher Learning • Meeting Everyone's Needs • Providing Productive Feedback • Willingness to Learn

Not Enough Time for Adult Learning. Cueva (2010) said, "Time is the biggest gift we can each offer . . . time to be together . . . time to share feelings through laughter and tears . . . time to tell stories . . . time to listen . . . time to reflect . . . time to share

hopes . . . to awaken possibilities . . . to become our dreams" (p. 88). Interview data indicated principals need more time, not just contract time with teachers, but also time to build relationships and help teachers learn. One participant stated, "There can't be a bigger challenge than time" (J. M. Daniel, interview). Similar sentiments were observed from survey text entry data where principals (64%) mentioned the need for more time to "develop new teachers," "pursue district driven initiatives," "weave meaningful conversations to create solid relationships," and "to learn from other teachers."

New Teachers. Principals need more time with new teachers, not just to teach them about district procedures, but time to build relationships, trust, and vision. They need to show new teachers the structure of the school, how individuals work as teams, and where each of them will find their new home. New teachers need to know that principals are available for support, guidance, and direction. They aspire different needs, in regards to time, than returning, experienced teachers.

District Driven Initiatives. Most participants expressed frustrations because the district focus is not always the building focus. "I need more initiatives to build comradery, especially with new teachers, and nurture a successful working relationship" expressed one principal. There has to be time for principals to focus on building needs, rather than just district needs.

For Conversations with Teachers. Principals indicated that time talking with teachers in a meaningful capacity was difficult; there simply was not enough time in the day to have purposeful conversations. A suburban principal expressed that "they [teachers] want to be heard. And that's where I struggle sometimes . . . to find time to talk with 60 people and give them my full attention." She explained how she ran from

the lunchroom to meet with someone and a teacher came in and sat "for like two seconds and said her mom's got cancer and she would be dealing with that." She continued "they just need more of my time" (P. C. Larsen, interview).

Teachers Learn from Teachers. Participants addressed lack of time by encouraging professional learning activities where teachers learned from one another. The majority of participants referred to teacher leadership teams, such as PLCs, as a solution to time. Teams allowed participants to experience stories, friendships, and opportunities that invite possibility, challenges, and expanded their perspectives; however, principals were intentional and purposeful about designing these teams in order to alleviate the challenge of time.

Limited Context Specific Related Resources. While all interviewees said they felt supported by their administration, they expressed the need for other resources, like money, new teacher training, vertical collaboration, and having learning targets to help them as they consciously promoted a place for heartfelt listening and learning.

Money for Teacher Learning. Money was a common theme among participants, as nearly 30% of survey participants mentioned it. Suburban principal said she needed "money to purchase resources to make it [learning] happen" (P. C. Larsen, interview).

New Teacher Training. One challenge E. I. Tindall (interview) faced as a principal of an urban school was a high rate of teacher turnover. Every year she had staff changes and would need to develop relationships quickly, so teachers learned to trust each other and work together. Having resources to help train the staff would be beneficial for her work experience and professional development. She felt passionate

that being able to help teachers learn some behavioral management strategies to go with their instructional strategies would make learning more enjoyable and enriching.

Vertical Collaboration. Vertical collaboration between the middle school and the high school was mentioned by survey and interview participants. Principals found it difficult to know about the students they had coming into their building. "We don't get to spend enough time with those people to understand where their bar is set, where their expectation level is" (J. M. Daniel, interview).

Improve Learning Targets. Principals wanted to be able to focus on the students who come to the high school so "we're better prepared to work with those students." Rural principal continued "sometimes we're just shooting in the dark. We're just hoping to get better and we don't have a strategy . . . we just want to be better." Knowing strategies that have worked for other principals would provide resources to enhance learning.

Managing Adult Learning and Growth. With many facets of adult learning and growth, principals struggle to find balance in managing them. She must consider administrative directives, teacher needs, and student success all while balancing her own home, career, and mental health; she is a collection of stories of who she once was and who she will become. In creating this balance, she focuses on accountability, meeting everyone's needs, feedback to teachers, and teachers' willingness to learn.

Accountability for Teacher Learning. In discussing accountability, J. M. Daniel felt that sometimes teachers needed to "hold each other to a standard" (interview). She said, "It's hard to hold each group accountable for different things. What the PE department is working on may look different than what my Language Arts folks are

working on," she continued, "how can I hold both these groups accountable for the same thing?" P. C. Larsen (interview) confirmed this challenge. "I have never met a teacher who showed up with the desire to be terrible, but I have met teachers who will let their teaching game slide a bit if they are not constantly held accountable."

Meeting Everyone's Needs. When asked what challenges she faced, she replied: "Overseeing so many different departments and trying to figure out what would best meet their needs. I find it almost impossible to pick a professional development that's going to match all of their needs." While training differs with teacher experience, principals said there is a lack of time to provide individualized training. A rural principal said, "Teachers learn like students learn. Their basic needs have to be met first before they are able to learn." She found she was getting more teachers who had more needs than she did 20 years ago. "As administrators, we must ensure their needs are met so they can learn, and in turn, meet the needs of our students" (Z. T. Berger, survey).

Providing Productive Feedback. Feedback to teachers and teachers' willingness to learn were both needed for balance. Principals felt that they did not always have control over how teachers accepted feedback. "Good is an enemy of great" according to suburban principal, P. C. Larsen. She wanted to help all teachers grow and learn, but "adults and students are very much the same" (interview).

Willingness to Learn. This same thought was shared by rural principal, J. M. Daniel (interview), who said, "I've told my folks that I want them to fail. If they're not failing, then they're not pushing themselves," she continued, "I hope they have a lesson that totally blows up because they've tried something new and stretched themselves . . . If they play it safe, then they're not going to have any new learning happening." This idea

was corroborated by suburban principal, P. C. Larsen (interview), who said, "I wish teachers sometimes were willing to learn and willing to take risks and believe me when I tell them that I support them failing forward, just keep trying, keep moving forward."

Being a Female Principal

Participants were asked specifically what it meant to be a female principal. They felt being a female principal required competence and confidence. Understanding the way education worked was essential to success. It "is a lot of proving that you're qualified to do the work and you have a good understanding without being emotional about decisions" (E. I. Tindall, interview). She went on to say being a principal is natural for her, since she is also a mom. She understands how things work. "I run my household; I pay my bills. It [being a principal] falls in line of the leadership I have at home. It's a natural role for me." P. C. Larsen (interview) echoed this understanding, "The difference in some regards is home life, like I don't have a wife [at home] who helps take care of the children." She also spoke at principal conferences about female confidence, which was another major theme of being a female principal. She said "besides uncomfortable shoes and pants with no pockets, then the only real difference is just the way we use our words and express our thoughts." She said women have to be confident and know that being confident is about "what we do and how we use our words." Choosing the right words can be a challenge, but also demonstrates confidence.

Summary. Successful high school female principals face numerous challenges as they pave the way for adult learning opportunities. There is never enough time for adult learning; there is limited context specific related resources, like money and collaboration, plus they have to balance managing adult learning and growth processes because they are

essential to adult success. Despite these challenges, principals have found ways to not only address these issues, but also combat them with a high success rate. They embrace their role as a strong, focused female principal.

Limitations

While the researcher made every effort to develop and conduct a trustworthy study, consistent with all research tenets, this study had limitations. Time constraints limited the number of participants, since they were given only three weeks to respond. Also, this study focused only on successful high school female principals in the state of Missouri. The researcher and research schedule only allowed for three personal interviews, which were not face-to-face, and so some cues might have been lost. Only one measure, 2019 MSIP5, was used as an indicator of the school's success. Different contexts might have different measures, especially in rural schools.

Opportunities for Future Research

This study revealed the opportunity for additional studies that could advance principal understanding and the practice of adult learning opportunities. While this study focused on successful high school female principals, a future study of inclusive gender roles may be beneficial. Expanding this research to other states could also reveal the use of learning strategies at a multi-state or national level. Personally interviewing more high school principals, of both genders, may reveal additional strategies that principals could use in their daily instructional leadership practices.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this study have several recommendations for the practices of current principals in secondary education. The first is that principals should strategically and

thoughtfully cultivate school cultures that support adult learning using Nurturing Place. They can establish schools as communities of professional learning or PLCs by creating venues and continuous opportunities for teacher learning, designed within a framework that considers adult development and learning. Principals should build a learning oriented school culture of success and achievement in addition to creating relationships that are based on trust and mutual respect. They can encourage teachers to know their authentic self through self-reflection, self-knowledge, and self-consistency. Finally, principals need to be deliberate in managing time to create effective systems, prioritizing tasks, and delegating responsibility.

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SECTION SIX: SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

When I was young, my grandma would often tell me her lifelong dream: to see her granddaughter graduate from college someday. Each time, I would smile and say, "Don't you want to see me get married and have a baby?" She would reply, "No, Dana, just graduate from college." My grandma spent her life working in a factory and later cooking in a hot kitchen. She raised two children with an unattentive, mostly inebriated, husband. She divorced, remarried and had two more children, her last one, my dad, at the age of 42. Her life was hard, but she always believed that an education, something she did not have, could make life easier. As my life began to unfold, I had a baby boy, got married, and finally graduated from college. At age 91, my grandma was the honored guest at my ceremony. She said her dreams had been fulfilled and she died four months later. She never knew that this was just the beginning of my educational life.

I went on to earn a Master's degree in Educational Administration. After teaching for nearly 20 years, I was selected as one of 10 educators to earn a Master's degree paid for by the Board of Education in Hollister, Missouri. This was my second Master's degree. My grandma's passion for education prompted me to set a goal to someday earning a doctorate degree. That goal, her dream, my desire, finds me now reflecting on a learning process that has blessed my life, as well as those around me. Over the past three years, during my doctoral studies and during this dissertation process, I have grown as an educational leader in scholarship and in practice.

Growth in Scholarship

While I wrote scholarly practitioner reflections every semester of my doctoral learning, it was this final dissertation that gave me real insight on how the two are separate, yet intertwined. Scholarship is how my study, my knowledge, my insights

impacts the world of research. I read many articles that helped me with the literature review of my dissertation, but when I wrote my own journal article, ready for publication, I understood how each portion was essential to the whole article. I understood how the abstract gave an overall perspective. The introduction, methods, findings, limitations, and implications all played an integral, informative part of my writing. This research has the potential to impact other scholars, and hopefully principal's practice. This is where scholarship and practice intertwine; one impacts the other equally. What practitioners study become actions and actions or practices become research. Scholarship has impacted my learning through data and support.

Data

Data visualization expert Stephen Few said, "Numbers have an important story to tell. They rely on you to give them a clear and convincing voice" (Dykes, 2016). Even though data can be complicated, time-consuming, and sometimes overwhelming, it cannot be set aside. Prior to this program, I would read over numbers as if they were words I could not pronounce. Now, I understand that each number represents a person who interacts with an organization. These numbers and these people are very useful to educational leaders who serve various organizations. When utilizing data as an educational leader, I need to remember first and foremost that there is a person behind each piece of data. Data are not just numbers on a paper, they are a representation of a student, teacher, or other specific person. It is therefore, essential that I focus on ethical data collecting and reporting. "Like health professionals, leaders have a responsibility to attend to others, be of service to them, and make decisions pertaining to them that are beneficial and not harmful to their welfare" (Northouse, 2019, p. 343). In other words,

do no harm. Data can be construed as harmful. It has the potential to alienate teachers, students, and entire school districts. As an ethical scholarly educational leader, I cannot allow this to happen with the data I collect or present. I have an obligation to use data to help others in education.

Support

Just because I said something was true does not mean that there is enough support for others to believe. People need proof of statements. As a scholar, I know how to cite my sources and reference studies that support what I said. I am absolutely amazed to look at group projects from the entire doctorate program. The reference page keeps getting longer. My first paper had five or six references and my last group paper had nearly 40. It is not that more references are impressive; it is knowing those references and using them to support the material. This is the point of the doctorate program - to provide resources that demonstrate a scholarly influence in my practice. As an educational leader, I can suggest a program or evaluate a program to see if it is meeting the needs of the stakeholders. However, if I am able to reference or quote experts in this field, like Rosemary S. Caffarella, Sandra Ratcliff Daffron, Kathryn E. Newcomer, Harry P. Hatry, or Joseph S. Wholey, my words will have more weight and scholarly influence for my suggestions. People may feel more inclined to follow my suggestions because it is not just me, but many other experts who also make these same suggestions. Should I decide to suggest an evaluation of a program, I now have the experts on my side.

When one of my groups first made some suggestions or action steps in research, I said to myself - who are we to make these suggestions to a successful program? Then, as I learned more, I realized that we are doctorate students from the University of Missouri,

who have the working knowledge to make a program better for all stakeholders, policy makers, curriculum writers, and most importantly, the children and families impacted by these decisions. Having the research to support my suggestions made my words more powerful, impactful, and most likely correct.

Growth in Practice

I have been an educator for nearly 25 years. I have grown in my practice, but I made great strides in the past three years of my doctoral education. "People can learn the skills they need for leadership, but they can't learn the commitment, love, and care for the community" (K. Best, personal communication, September 15, 2017). Shadowing the city of Branson's Mayor, Karen Best, taught me about leadership in practice. I knew that being a leader, like the mayor, required skills, but she helped me begin to see that being a leader requires more than just skills I could learn in a classroom.

Leadership

My learning about leadership found a passion and love for people, ideas, and communities. I learned about various leadership styles and theories (Northouse, 2019); this was explicit knowledge that I was learning through readings, but more importantly, tacit leadership knowledge in my educational practice was something I began to embrace as my life's passion (Nonaka, 1994). Until this program, I did not consider myself a real leader. I was not the captain of any team; no one elected me president of any club and the only followers I had were on social media. It was understandable that most good leaders do not consider themselves leaders because they are too busy doing what needs to be done (Asghar, 2014). Before this program, I did not have a name for the type of leader I knew I was born to be. All my life I'd watched my parents serve others in church

and dedicate their lives to people who needed Christ. My dad was a deacon, but neither of my parents were ever in the spotlight for their leadership abilities. It was not until this program that I learned how leaders do not need to be in the spotlight and that real leaders can serve others. Dr. J. Anderson (personal communication, 2017) taught our doctorate cohort about servant leadership. That is the type of leadership my parents are and that is where I see my leadership abilities today. "Servant leaders put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities" (Northouse, 2019, p. 225). As I am a leader in my school, I want to make sure others have what they need to be successful. The intrinsic rewards of serving others motivates me to continue. I learned that being a servant to others is my leadership ability and it is actually very rewarding.

Additionally, as a leader from this program, I have found ways to practice listening, rather than speaking. "Leaders who are open have learned to stop talking and start listening to what others have to say" (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009, p. 21). Initially, I thought of servants as people who listen and obey; however, that is not always true. In the servant leadership style, listening is a practiced and finely tuned skill. Dr. MacGregor always said that in this program we will do four things: read, write, talk, and think (personal communication, 2017-2019). During Summer Two, Dr. Tim Wall added that listening is a skill that should be included in this list (personal communication, 2019). While the suggestion was not accepted, it did make me think about the importance of listening to others. I had heard that most people listen to reply rather than listen to understand (Covey, 1989). By practicing this skill, I have the ability to hear the needs of others and to address the wants of those who need my help the most. From this doctorate

program, I have identified, utilized, and practiced this skill continually so that I may succeed in servant leadership as well as build relationships with others.

Many times, I found myself learning this content by doing something, which is exactly how this program is designed. It is not a program of lecture and regurgitation of the facts, but rather a hands-on experience where learning is cultivated based on the willingness and activation of the participant. In the Fall of 2017, Dr. Weaver (personal communication, 2017) taught about leadership in a way I will never forget. She did not have a great PowerPoint presentation or handouts to reference in the future. She simply asked us all to squat on the floor and close our eyes. She said that once you are tapped on the shoulder, you must stand up and tap someone else on their shoulder. My leg muscles burned with pain, waiting. My auditory senses heightened to hear if others were moving around. What seemed like an eternity ended with a tap on the shoulder. I stood up. I opened my eyes and only saw one other student standing. How was that possible? All this time and only two of us were standing? I must act quickly, as I knew others were in pain and waited for the suggested and hopefully inevitable tap on the shoulder. Later I learned that the student who tapped my shoulder was not tapped at all; she felt compelled to get everyone out of this misery. She had compassion and heart. She acted on what she knew was best for those of us squatting in the room. My takeaway that is forever ingrained in my mind: Do not wait to be asked to be a leader. Stand up and be the leader others need. I have reflected on this activity every semester. Learning is doing.

Female Leadership

From principals to pastors, the leaders in my life have mostly been men. Allan Johnson discussed this concept in his book, *Power, Privilege, and Difference,* "The

farther down you look in the power structure, the more numerous women are. The higher up you go, the fewer women you will find" (2018, p. 77). Women in leadership became an overarching theme that surfaced during Summer One and continued to resonate with my learning throughout the program, eventually the idea developed into a dissertation topic. It is something I use in my daily practice as a teacher leader, now. I encourage women to become leaders in their schools, communities, and organizations. As a woman, I am able to offer a unique approach to leadership, one that may differ from my male counterparts (Levi, 2017). As a doctoral student, and soon graduate, in a prestigious program at The University of Missouri, I have an obligation to speak up for my colleagues. I need to "dare to matter, make noise, be seen, stand up . . . speak out" (Johnson, 2018, p. 121) for those who are underprivileged or feel powerless. My female voice can be heard through my servant leadership and it is through this doctorate program that I was able to find the confidence in my voice.

Teamwork

From my studies in this doctorate program, I no longer see simplistic individual problems; I see a much larger picture of organizational structures, which if done successfully can make programs work in harmony. Likewise, if done unsuccessfully, the organizational structure can lead to an ultimate demise. "We are always participating in something larger than ourselves" (Johnson, 2018, p. 67). This new outlook had me conversing with a grocery cashier about the price of an item being far too expensive, and suggesting that change is possible, if the company would reorganize their structure, focusing more on the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017). While this example is not one of demise, it certainly represents how simple organization can lead to little

inconveniences that impact individual lives. The cashier patronizingly smiled and told me that this change is above her pay grade. This doctorate program made me think about how to reach those in the pay grade, the ones who make the decisions, those people who have a seat at the table (Sandberg, 2013). If they are not informed about what is going on, then changes cannot be made. It is unfortunately true that even if they do know what is going on, still changes may not be made.

As I examined the five organizational theories of Mintzberg (1973) to the four frameworks of Bolman and Deal (2017), it became clear that politics found itself in the middle of education every time. In some ways, analyzing organizations opened my eyes to things I did not like seeing. For instance, education is supposed to be about student success; however, the politics of education doesn't always follow that motto. Educators who are less qualified than the average applicant get jobs because they know someone. Money set aside for educational growth is given to those in higher positions of authority. "No organization exists without political issues that require a leader's attention (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 56). Like it or not, politics is intricately woven into the foundations of education; however, understanding the frames of Bolman and Deal (2017) and looking at situations through this political lens over the past three years helped me understand, as well as successfully maneuver, problems in my personal educational practice. For instance, as one of my research topics in this program, I researched my school district's policy and practice of freezing teachers on a specific pay step to save the district money. Many loyal teachers earn far less money than new hires based on this practice. While I had great participation in my survey from teachers, my recommendations fell on deaf ears of those who can change this practice. The goal of the district has been to recruit new

hires, not retain current staff. In this, they are succeeding. Seeing the problem in practice from many different lenses was insightful, even though change did not happen the way I originally intended.

The structural frame states, "Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 45). Focusing on this definition helped me to collaborate with groups as we studied various community organizations. Each group was based on a collective goal and objective. "The more people work together and help each other, the more committed they become to each other and to their common goal" (Stone, 2012, p. 32). This doctorate program brought together 90 people with a common goal of earning a doctorate degree and created a bond so strong that each of us sincerely cared about the success of one another. The program is a great example of organizational success. Additionally, working together made me learn the value of others, through their stories, efforts, failures, and successes. It also transformed the way I see team learning. As a participant of different teams in this program, I am convinced that team leadership and organization is a practice that should be incorporated in businesses, education, and other organizations whenever possible. "A work team can find a stronger sense of competence and stronger transactive memory system when leadership is shared" (Solansky, 2008, p. 339). I have also humbly learned that "a single leader, no matter how gifted, cannot be right all the time" (O'Toole, Galbraith, & Lawler, 2002); I need others on my team. Others, who have different strengths than mine. Others who have the same goals as I do. Together, we are better. I once believed that I could achieve goals on my own, but I was reminded: "You [alone] are not sufficient" (C. MacGregor, personal communications, April 24, 2019). While my competition strength screams to win, no

matter what the cost (Clifton, Anderson, & Schreiner, 2006), even if I have to do it myself, I have experienced the success of working with others. Over the past three years, as a member of six formal teams, I have learned that if I am going to create high-level, positive change, I must work with others. "Teams that achieve high performance in the workspace go through a process of learning and change that causes them to become increasingly effective" (Gill, 2010, p. 77). This learning and change was my biggest takeaway from this doctorate program. "Since people make a system happen, they can also make it happen differently, changing the consequences as well" (Johnson, 2018, p. 71). The system is the organization to which I belong. My learning from this program will impact that organization and change it for the better, as I continue to work with others toward success.

Growth in Dissertation

Writing has never been a challenge for me. In fact, I find it a wonderful way to relax and get my thoughts together. Throughout this program, I have written a 25 page paper, in addition to several smaller papers, every semester. While this included collaborating with others, citing my sources, and making sure the document was in APA format, it did not compare to the writing I would do on this dissertation. Writing a dissertation is not just writing a research paper or putting my thoughts down on paper, it is a process of creation, editing, deletion, frustration, joy, laughter, and tears.

I was eager to begin this process in Summer One when I decided I would research females in leadership. Every semester, I read more articles, watched more videos and movies, and read more books which helped me begin to form ideas in my head. Each time I wrote a paper, I tried to add an angle to would allow me to look at females in

leadership. I loved it. I truly enjoyed the reading, writing, thinking, and talking processes that Dr. Mac promised in this program. It sounded so simple, yet it was not. It was everything I wanted and just the challenge I needed. As I wrote my first paper, reflecting the thoughts and ideas of this dissertation, I failed miserably. In fact, the night I thought our group would celebrate the completion of our coursework, I was given a failing grade with the opportunity to improve. I was crushed, but I also knew that I did not really know what I was doing for my research and I had to figure out my dissertation. It was not coming to me as naturally as I had hoped. My friend and fellow cohort, April Phillips, completed a class presentation on an article I really enjoyed reading by Cueva (2010). I connected to the author and her ideas. I begin to form my dissertation research around her ideas. When I emailed my ideas to Dr. Mac, she answered: Yes! Yes! Yes! It was then that I knew I was on the right track. That week I wrote and researched more than I had the entire two years. I knew what I wanted to do and I was able to do it.

From that moment of failure to this moment of success, I find myself chuckling at the process. My dissertation looks so different. Of course it's longer, but at one point it was over 215 pages. Dr. Ongaga said I rambled and did not make sense. Some committee members feedback crushed me and I found myself sobbing uncontrollably, wondering if I would make it to this point. Dr. Ongaga always pulled me back up and encouraged me to Keep the Faith. I was learning that writing a dissertation is a process. I had to learn not to hold on to any words, sections, tables or phrases, but keep the big picture in mind. At one point, Dr. Ongaga said "highlight this section and keep highlighting. Yes, keep going. I know that is three tables. Keep highlighting. Okay stop (three pages highlighted). Now, hit delete." What? Delete all those tables, all those

writings? How is this possible? I wiped my eyes. "Dana, don't cry; you don't need this. It's okay." Mentally and emotionally, this process has been more than I ever expected.

A process is what I had to remember. This learning, this writing is all a process. In time, it will be complete. I remember Dr. Graham, the principal who introduced me to this program, told me to "Enjoy the process." I held on to that advice each semester as I struggled to complete the assignments or finish the readings. Now, as I finish this dissertation, I see it as a process, from the mere beginning ideas, to this completed, 193 page document. I never imagined I could read, write, think, and talk about something so much.

Conclusion

I was forever changed by my grandma's educational focus in my life. At the time, I may have loathed her constant push to help me learn to spell big words and memorize my multiplication tables, but today it is her that I thank for instilling in me the desire to learn and keep learning. "Learning is a lifelong process" (Gill, 2010, p. 53). Though I did well in school, earned a college degree, and two Masters degrees, it was not until this doctorate program that I understood who I was as a lifelong learner and how learning never ends, even after death, where many of life's questions may finally be answered (Freeman, 2016). My grandma did not know the term "lifelong learner," but she was the first person I ever met who showed me how education can change a life. "The process of learning is concerned with what goes on in the learner's head, heart, body, and soul that leads to change in behavior or perspective" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 252). This transformative (Mezirow, 2009; Taylor, 2009) learning that I have experienced over the past three years, a mere 6% of my entire life, has changed every

aspect – head, heart, body, and soul - 100% - of my life. Confucius said that reflection is the noblest method for learning wisdom (as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 245). I am blessed to be given this opportunity to reflect on my learning and growth over the past three years. Would I ever want to go back to the way I was? Not a chance. This program has not only made me a better educational leader in practice, the way I teach and collaborate, and improved my ability the think and write in a scholarly fashion, but also made me a better person to my family, friends, and others I encounter on my journey.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed Consent for Dissertation Research

Informed Consent
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
University of Missouri, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

Adult Learning Practices in Successful High Schools in Missouri

Introduction
You are invited to participate in a research survey that gathers information concerning adult learning practices in successful high schools in the State of Missouri. This study has been approved by the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board. This approval verifies that this research study is being carried out in a manner that will protect the confidentiality of your responses. Before you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the study and the procedures involved.

Purpose of the Study
The reason for this survey is to gather data on adult learning practices of high school female principals in successful high schools in the State of Missouri. The goal is to identify and compare adult learning strategies principals use in different social contexts, including rural, urban, and suburban settings. The survey is estimated to take about 10 minutes to complete. If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. There are no known risks to you as a result of participating in this study. While you may not benefit directly from this study, the information provided may contribute to the practice or scholarship of principals in the State of Missouri.

Confidentiality
The results of this study will be confidential and only the researcher will have access to the information which will be kept in password-protected computers. At no time will your actual identity be revealed. Your name or personal identifying information will not be used in any published reports of this research. In order to protect your confidentiality, information collected will only be shared by large demographic groupings like school enrollment ranges and general setting descriptors like rural, suburban, or urban. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. You may withdraw by informing a researcher that you no longer wish to participate (no questions will be asked) or by not clicking on I Do Not Consent to the online survey. In addition, you may skip any question during the survey, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or your role in it, please contact the researcher or research chairman:
Dana M. Woodward: 618-977-3097 or danawoodward@mail.missouri.edu
Dr. Kennedy Ongaga: 417-836-6516 or KennedyOngaga@MissouriState.edu

Consent to Participate
If you want to participate in this study, please consent below:

I have read and understand the information in this form. I have been encouraged to ask questions, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By clicking "I consent," I agree voluntarily to participate in this study. I know I can withdraw from the study at any time.

- o I consent
- o I do not consent

Appendix B

Survey Items for Female Principals in Successful High Schools

1. What is your age?
    - < 25
    - 26 – 35
    - 36 – 45
    - 46 – 55
    - 56 – 65
    - > 66

2. What is your ethnicity?
    - White
    - Non-white

3. What is the highest degree you have completed?
    - Masters
    - Specialist
    - Doctorate

4. How many years have you served as a principal? (Please count part of a year as a one year.)
    - < 2 years
    - 3 – 5 years
    - 6 – 10 years
    - > 11 years

5. How many years have you served as principal in the current school?
    - < 2 years
    - 3 – 5 years
    - 6 – 10 years
    - > 11 years

6. How is the location of your school categorized?

    - Urban
    - Suburban
    - Rural

7. How many students are in your current school?
    - < 200
    - 201 – 400
    - 401 – 600
    - 601 – 800

- 801 – 1000
- > 1001

8. What percent of your students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch?
   - < 10%
   - 11 – 25%
   - 26 – 50%
   - 51 – 75%
   - 76 – 90%
   - 91 – 100%

9. What percent of your students are non-white?
   - < 10%
   - 11 – 25%
   - 26 – 50%
   - 51 – 75%
   - 76 – 90%
   - 91 – 100%

10. What is the total number of teaching staff in your school?
    - < 10
    - 11 – 25
    - 26 – 50
    - 51 – 75
    - 76 – 100
    - > 101

11. What percent of your staff are non-white?
    - < 10%
    - 11 – 25%
    - 26 – 50%
    - 51 – 75%
    - 76 – 90%
    - 91 – 100%

12. The following are research-based strategies that are used for adult learning. Please rank the following adult learning strategies in the order you use them, from 1-6, to foster teacher learning (e.g., professional development, workshops, teacher feedback, classroom observations, informal and formal communications, etc.).

(6 = Always Used, 1 = Never Used)

Strategy	Definition	Ranking Order (6 = Always Used, 1 = Least Used)
Nurturing Place	The leader creates a place of tolerance, understanding, discourse, renewal, hope, peace, dreams, and a sense of belonging. Diversity is invited, encouraged, and respected.	
Sharing Power	The leader invites participants to share their diverse experiences and/or challenges with all participants. She encourages voices from various backgrounds to lead and guide learning.	
Heart Listening	The leader actively listens to others, especially to people with diverse stories. She listens with an open mind; stereotypes are suppressed. Her heart is open to the input and experiences of people from diverse backgrounds.	
Talking Story	The leader encourages participants to share their personal experiences, both in and out of the classroom. She creates an environment where participants are comfortable sharing their story.	
Engendering Humor	The leader understands the nurturing power of humor and how it can energize memory, providing a playful community of learners, encouraging laughter daily as an integral part of learning.	
Creative Expressions	The leader weaves non-traditional ways of learning, including song, dance, movement, drawing, painting, and sculpting to bring heart and soul to the learning experience of all participants.	

13. Please consider your top most adult learning strategies from above (question 12) and briefly describe how you use them to help teachers learn.

Strategy	Example in Practice
Nurturing Place	
Sharing Power	
Heart Listening	
Talking Story	
Engendering Humor	
Creative Expressions	

14. In the follow scenarios, explain how you would respond as a principal:

Scenario	Response
You learned about a new teaching tool that encompasses diverse backgrounds at a conference. It sounds good and you are excited to introduce it to your staff.	
Members of your teaching staff are from diverse backgrounds and have difficulty collaborating.	

15. Please describe major challenges you experience in helping your teachers learn in your school.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

1. Briefly tell me about yourself as a female principal. What is it like to be a female principal?

2. What opportunities do teachers have in your school to learn?

3. Describe your role as the principal in the context of teacher learning?

4. How do you use reflection to foster teacher learning?

5. How do you empower teachers to take the lead in their own learning?

6. How do you use stories as a strategy for teacher learning? How do you tell whose story counts given the diversity of your school?

7. How do you use creative expressions (e.g., drawing, sculpting, painting, singing, dancing, and moving) as a strategy for teacher learning?

8. Describe how you use humor and laughter to help teachers learn.

9. Research shows that listening to peoples of diverse lived experiences and backgrounds is important for leaders (Cueva, 2010). How do you encourage teachers to practice active listening and reflective talking during their learning?

10. What examples can you share of teacher learning activities you have conducted that give them (teachers) a sense of renewal, hope, or/and peace?

11. What supports do you wish you had to improve teachers learning in your school?

12. What challenges do you experience in fostering teachers learning in your school?

Appendix D

Introduction Email to Potential Participants

Dear _____,

My name is Dana Woodward, a doctoral student at University of Missouri. I also work as a teacher in a rural high school in Southwest Missouri. I am conducting research as part of the requirements to complete my dissertation. The purpose of my study is to explore ways high school female principals with challenging student demographics nurture learning opportunities for teachers in their buildings. Learning opportunities may include professional development, formal and informal communication, verbal and non-verbal feedback, classroom observation feedback, and any other professional learning opportunities you provide to teachers in your building.

This study is important because current and future educational leaders could benefit from knowing learning strategies principals use in different contexts, especially at schools with challenging student demographics. This will also be a pertinent addition to the research on leadership practices in such schools.

This survey is conducted through Qualtrics, a secure survey software program through the University of Missouri. Your answers to this survey will be confidential. If you are interested in participating in this study, you will be asked to click on the link and consent to proceed to take the survey. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.

At any time during the survey, you may choose to discontinue participation, or not answer any questions or skip a question but continue to participate in the study. If you want the results of the study, I will be happy to share them with you. You may send me a request. Your participation is voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to participating in this survey.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your participation in this research, feel free to contact me directly at (618) 977-3097 or danawoodward@mail.missouri.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Kennedy Ongaga at (417) 836-6516 or KennedyOngaga@MissouriState.edu.

Sincerely,

Dana Woodward
Doctoral Candidate, University of Missouri

VITA

Dana Moad Woodward has been a high school English teacher for the past 25 years. She currently teaches at Hollister High School and resides at Table Rock Lake in Branson, Missouri, with her husband, Chef Jeff, and her two dachshunds, Rebel and Dixie. She enjoys spending time with her son, Zak, his fiancée, Sarah, and her granddaughter, Miss Emma Grace Woodward.