Examining the Leadership Practices of Turnaround Principals

by

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ABSTRACT

As school reform initiatives bring greater accountability and punitive measures to schools, identifying effective leadership practices of successful turnaround principals is important as school districts continue to identify, hire, and train future principals to lead low-performing schools.

This qualitative research case study focused on examining the leadership practices of turnaround principals in one urban school district located in the Midwest portion of the United States. The study examined how the principals measure their own success, if the turnaround initiatives are sustainable, and how the turnaround process has influenced the school culture. This study was conducted using semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews with four principals who have successfully improved the gap closing measure on the state report card. Change Theory and Transformational Leadership were used as frameworks to examine the leadership practices of turnaround principals.

The results of the study identified nine important findings: Student Growth, Collaboration, Relationships, Feedback, Shared Leadership, Research-based action steps, District Alignment, Clear Goals, and Collective Teacher Efficacy. The implications from this study identified the leadership practices that led to sustainability and provided a rationale for districts to train principals in turnaround practices.

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Finally, to the principals who are committed to doing the work needed to ensure every child has access to a high-quality education, thank you. Your work is of great importance, and you are making a difference in the lives of children every day.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of the principal has shifted from not only being a building manager but also an instructional leader (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Since the 1960s, principals have been responsible for implementing the mandates of state and federal programs such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The enactment of ESEA allowed additional grant money to be provided to ensure low-income families had access to high quality and equitable education (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Arguably the most landmark report that has impacted school reform is the 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education report, A Nation at Risk. The report, released under the Reagan administration, suggested that American schools are failing by not offering students rigorous lessons in math and science. Additionally, students were not prepared for college or careers. The report brought attention to the need for reform in public education (Kasper, 2005). During this same time in the 1980s, policymakers began to investigate the impact a principal has on student achievement (Bloom & Owens, 2011; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994).

The enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 required any school that was identified as low performing, based on not meeting achievement growth measures or Adequate Yearly Progress on standardized tests, receive corrective action to either improve or close the school. Some corrective actions that could be instituted included replacing the building leader and teachers, as well as redesigning the instructional programs within the school. Then in 2015, the state of Ohio instituted House Bill 70,

including the appointment of the Academic Distress Commissions for the restructuring of low-performing schools within state guidelines (Johanek, 2015).

In 2009, during the presidency of Barack Obama, a revision to the NCLB law included Race to the Top (RttT) funding that was provided to the lowest performing schools in order to improve student achievement (U. S. Department of Education, 2009a). With this five billion dollar Race to the Top funding came a greater interest in school leaders and the impact of their work on student achievement. As school reform policies were implemented, researchers studied the principal's role in how it directly or indirectly impacted student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2008).

The implementation of school reform policies has led to a focus on how the building principal impacts student achievement (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994). Since the principal must be an instructional leader ensuring high quality teaching and learning, researchers believe that the building principal impacts student achievement (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994). Building leadership is an important factor for the success of a school, and the leadership practices of the principal vary depending on the current conditions within the school. Hallinger (2003) stated that a building principal's leadership style changes based on the context within the school. Therefore, the leader must be knowledgeable of the subgroups within the school and how the percentage of each has an impact on student achievement and acknowledge achievement gaps within subgroups. The building principal must have a working knowledge of all factors in order to adapt their leadership style for effective school improvement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

The institution of NCLB brought attention to student achievement gaps and the challenges facing low-performing schools that often do not exist in the highest achieving schools (Leithwood et al., 2010). In order to avoid the closing or loss of local control of the lowest-performing school under NCLB, districts began using the RttT money to hire and train principals to turn around failing schools. The intended role of the turnaround principal was to get quick and effective results in a short period of time. These initiatives require urgency and immediate changes affecting the climate and culture of a school.

Then in 2015, NCLB was replaced by the Every Child Succeeds Act while House Bill 70 and the Education Distress Commission were being instituted in the state of Ohio (U.S. Congress, 2015). The removal of NCLB gave states control of accountability while still mandating the lowest-performing school be improved. Once HB 70 was instituted in the state of Ohio, it allowed for the takeover of low-performing schools. The lowest performing schools began turning to turnaround leaders.

Problem Statement

As school reform initiatives bring greater accountability and punitive measures to schools, identifying effective leadership practices of successful principals is important as school districts continue to identify, hire, and train future principals to lead low-performing schools. The role of the principal has changed over time from one that manages a school to one that is an instructional leader needing to observe, evaluate, coach, and support teachers in order to improve student success (Bloom & Owens, 2011).

The essential component of school turnaround is an effective leader (Rhim, 2012). There is great concern about the lack of qualified candidates for principal openings, especially in turnaround schools (Gurley et al., 2013; Kutash et al., 2010). It is important

for researchers to identify the practices and strategies used to effect change in challenging schools so that school districts are able to create a pipeline of potential candidates as vacancies arise (Kutash et al., 2010). The dissertation research of Rebecca Donaldson (2012) examined the strategies implemented to improve one turnaround school. However, the study was limited to the strategies implemented in one school. It is believed that the school reform policies that have been implemented are too new for researchers to have concrete peer-reviewed studies on turnaround schools (Peck & Reitzug, 2014).

To further examine the strategies implemented by successful turnaround leaders this case study, Change Theory and Transformational Leadership, used the theoretical framework to identify the leadership practices of turnaround principals. A turnaround leader is expected to implement immediate and often drastic changes in the school. Senge (1990) asserted that in order for leaders to successfully work through the change process they must fully understand the systems dynamics and complex relationships. Additionally, the leader must monitor the pace of the changes to ensure successful implementation (Yukl, 2013). The turnaround leader works through first and second order change. First order change occurs naturally as the school grows over a period of time. The first order changes allow the leader to build trust in the school before implementing second order changes. Unlike first order change that occurs naturally within the organization, second order change brings the organization to a new direction in both thinking and acting (Levy, 1986). Second order change requires a commitment from the members of the organization and is necessary for school transformation. A transformational leader must focus on change (Burns, 1978).

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Transformational leadership challenges the status quo in a turnaround school (Fullan, 2014). The focus of transformational leadership in an education environment is to restructure the school for student success (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). The transformational leader is motivated to ensure the needed changes are implemented to ensure success (Yukl, 2013). Shared leadership is important for transformation (Hallinger, 2003). The transformational leader is collaborative by developing the skills of those within the organization. The actions of the transformational leader motivates others, and their actions show a commitment to the turnaround work necessary for success (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marzano et al., 2005).

Much research has been conducted on transformational leadership and what first and second order changes are necessary for transformation. However, limited research has been conducted on how Kouzes and Posner's (2017) five exemplary leadership practices align with the transformational leadership needed for successful school turnaround. The goal of the present research is to examine self-identified leadership practices of school turnaround principals. The knowledge gained from this case study will provide districts with the insight needed to both support current principals in turnaround schools and assist districts in creating a pipeline for hiring the best candidates for turnaround schools. The research gained from this case study will provide knowledge of how Kouzes and Posner's exemplary leadership practices align with leadership practices of successful turnaround principals.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to use a qualitative case study to identify the leadership practices implemented by turnaround leaders. The study examined the

leadership practices of principals presiding over turnaround schools that have

successfully improved two or more letter grades of Fs up at least one letter grade on the

state report card. The study examined how the principals measure their own success, if

the turnaround initiatives are sustainable, and how the turnaround process has influenced

the school culture. The findings in this research will provide districts with evidenced-

based leadership practices needed for future principals to lead turnaround schools.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher examined the self-identified leadership practices of

school turnaround leaders. The researcher analyzed the practices identified by the

principals in their lived experiences in both the elementary and secondary school

environment. This study's research questions were designed from the literature review

and examined turnaround principals' lived experiences in elementary and secondary

schools.

1. How do turnaround principals measure their own success?

2. Are turnaround initiatives sustainable in schools?

3. How does the turnaround process impact the culture of the school?

Overview of Methodology

Conducting interviews with the turnaround principals was the primary approach

to this qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The goal of the researcher in qualitative

research is to gain an understanding of the participants' views and perspectives (Merriam,

2009). A case study is a qualitative research designed to provide an in-depth analysis of a

program, process, or individual (s) (Creswell, 2014). The research methodology used for

this qualitative research study was a case study since the researcher examined the

experiences of individuals and looked for patterns within the individual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014).

The three research questions selected identify the leadership practices of turnaround school principals. The research questions were selected from the emerging constructs found in the literature based on transformational leadership and previous research on turnaround leadership outside of an educational setting. The purpose of the research questions design was to add validity to the study by considering evidence of previous research found in the scholarly literature. The participants were selected using purposeful sampling of five current school principals in Ohio who have successfully improved their schools state report card by improving a minimum of two Fs up at least one letter grade. In this case study, semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews were conducted for five turnaround leaders in Ohio. During the interview, additional prompting for clarification occurred. Participants were interviewed using video conferencing software outside of their normal workday. During the direct observations, the researcher silently observed each participant leading a professional learning session or staff meeting. The researcher scribed observations made during the session. The document review was the last method of data collection used for the case study. Each participant was asked to present three artifacts for the document review. The three documents included the school improvement plan, state report card, and a final artifact chosen by the participant. The multiple sources of data improved the validity of the research by using data triangulation. The data were examined for themes within the leadership practices to identify the practices and strategies most effective for turnaround leadership.

Rationale and Significance

School reform initiatives like the No Child Left Behind Act and Every Child Succeeds Act have brought increased accountability measures, and with the increased accountability there is a greater need for understanding the leadership practices of successful turnaround principals. According to Kutash et al. (2010), understanding components of a successful school leader can contribute to the strategies and practices needed in school turnaround. By examining the leadership practices of successful turnaround principals, the research provides a knowledge base for other schools and/or districts needing to place the most effective building leader in a turnaround school. The challenges of successfully turning around a low-performing school combined with the shortage of principals are the reasons that research on the leadership practices of turnaround leaders is essential. Identifying the leadership practices of turnaround leaders will provide school districts with a foundation in supporting, training, and building a pipeline for future principals. Using the validated leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner (2017) as a framework for identifying the effective leadership practices of successful turnaround principals contribute to the professional leadership development in education specific to turning around low-performing schools. This case study will contribute to current research on principal leadership and provide a greater understanding of the leadership practices implemented by successful turnaround principals in both elementary and secondary school settings.

Role of Researcher

The researcher sent invitations to participants to participate in the study and ensured that all Youngstown State Institutional Review Board ethical guidelines were

followed. The participants in this study signed a consent agreement prior to participating in the research. Protocols included in the appendices were followed for the semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews. Triangulation of the data analyzed allowed the researcher to identify themes and patterns. Additionally, member-checking was conducted in which all interview transcriptions were sent to participants prior to analyses to ensure nothing was misquoted or misrepresented. These two procedures used in qualitative research ensure credibility and validity to the data (Creswell, 2014).

Researcher Assumptions

One assumption of this case study is that turnaround leader practices are different from leadership practices in a non-turnaround setting. Another assumption is that during the interview process the interviewee spoke openly and candidly regarding their experiences as a turnaround leader. At the start of the interview, I engaged in conversation about the participant's day and well-being. The goal of this was to build a rapport and develop trust so that the participant would be open and honest during the interview. As a turnaround leader, I also assumed that the experiences of the participants would be similar to my own experiences. Although there were similarities, each principal has their own experience. I needed to ensure that I was objective and did not let my own personal bias influence any of the data analysis which I did using the measures described in the preceding section.

Limitations and Delimitations

This case study was limited because the study only included five participants, and the participants had to be principals who have successfully turned around a school by

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improving two letter grades of F on the state report card. An additional limitation is that the research only focused on turnaround principals' leadership practices. It is possible that if the study included principals in general that the practices may be similar to those of turnaround principals.

A delimitation to this study is the amount of time principals have served in their respective school. The research study examined the practices used by turnaround principals but not the long-term impact of the turnaround initiative. Additionally, the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic has caused schools in the state of Ohio to not have current state report card data. Therefore, the artifact review is of the most recent state report card, not the current year.

Key Terminology

The following key terms and definitions are referenced throughout this case study. The terms principal and leader are used interchangeably throughout this case study to reference the person initiating and leading the turnaround work of a school.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): Federal law that ensures federal funds support school improvement with accountability, local control, and options for parents (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

First Order Change: Changes that are reversible and are implemented to make systems work more smoothly (Levy, 1986).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Federal law enacted to improve student proficiency levels and held states and schools accountable for results. Report cards were instituted on district and building performance (U.S. Department of Education 2003).

Race to the Top: Federal grant money of $4.8 billion dollars that public schools could apply in order to implement strategies to improve student growth and achievement in low performing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009a).

Second Order Change: Changes that are irreversible and incorporate new values, norms, and beliefs (Levy, 1986)

Transformation: A dramatic change with a focus on restructuring for success (Leithwood, 1994).

Turnaround schools: Schools identified as significantly low performing based on standardized test scores. The schools are identified as needing immediate improvement with sustained results (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011). Turnaround schools in this study are schools that have improved their state report card based on standardized test by moving a minimum of two F letters grades up at least one letter grade on the state report card.

Organization of the Case Study

This case study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter of the study outlines the purpose of the study in identifying the key leadership practices while implementing strategies to turn around a low-performing school. The second chapter of the study provides a literature review to understand the reforms that have led to turnaround leadership, types of leadership, turnaround schools, and research on components necessary for school turnaround. The third chapter provides a description of the methodology used to conduct this qualitative case study. The findings of the case study are included in chapter four. The study ends in chapter five with a summary of the key findings and how they contribute to the scholarly research on effective turnaround leadership.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The criteria for identifying a failing school is not consistent from state to state (Leithwood et al., 2010). Each state has a different mandated state test administered to their students. The individual states also determine their own performance criteria that determines if a school is low performing. Additionally, federal and state guidelines for public education continuously change with an increased emphasis on accountability and equity. The continuous changes for public education required the building principal's role to move from a manager to an instructional leader (Alvoid & Black, 2014). Furthermore, school reform efforts initiate school turnaround models to bring immediate improvement and sustainable change to the poorest performing schools. A turnaround leader is capable of implementing the processes needed for immediate improvement (Hassel et al., 2020).

School reform brought forth by federal and state initiatives brings greater accountability and punitive measures to schools. Identifying effective leadership practices of successful principals is important as school districts continue to identify, hire, and train future principals to lead low-performing schools. The challenges continue as the role of the principal has changed over time from one who manages a school to one who is an instructional leader needing to observe, evaluate, coach, and support teachers in order to improve student success (Bloom & Owens, 2011).

The essential component of school turnaround is an effective leader (Rhim, 2012). There is great concern about the lack of qualified candidates for principal openings, especially in turnaround schools (Gurley et al., 2013; Kutash et al., 2010). It is important for researchers to identify the practices and strategies used to effect change in challenging

schools so that school districts are not only able to create a pipeline of potential candidates as vacancies arise but provide professional development to prepare principals to lead turnaround schools (Kutash et al., 2010).

This literature review examines school leadership and its impact on student achievement in the turnaround school setting. The chapter's organization has seven sections: leadership styles, school reform, turnaround schools, turnaround principal, vision, leadership teams, developing teachers, and the five practices of exemplary leadership.

Theoretical Framework

A principal's leadership style directly affects the quality of teaching and learning in a school and its smooth functioning (Nir & Hameiri, 2014). Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) suggested that principals tend to fall into four styles of leadership. In a turnaround school, the principal must implement changes that distribute leadership in the organization. According to Yukl (2013), there will only be a commitment to the change initiative if they believe in the change's rationale and trust the leader. The theoretical framework will focus on Change Theory and Transformational Leadership.

Developed by Fiedler (1967), the Contingency Theory is the idea that a leader is situational. Leadership is a response from those leading, and the leadership style changes to match the situation at hand. Hersey and Blanchard (1977) identified situational leadership under the contingency theory and identified it as directive and supportive leadership. The leader must direct work and monitor progress. The leader must build relationships and praise the work of the subordinates. Although the theory has short-term effects, over time the leader can build relationships and foster confidence within the

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organization to keep the work moving forward (Yukl 2013). A situational leader knows and understands their school culture and can respond to the building's unique situations (Leithwood et al., 1999). It is essential that the leader knows the subordinates' needs and matches their leadership style to the individual or team's needs. The Situational Leadership model shows the individual or team's effectiveness based on how the leader manages the situation. Yet, all components of directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating are necessary to move the subordinates to high commitment and high competence (Paletta et al., 2017). In a school turnaround setting, the leader must act as a coach, delegate work, supervise, and support all of those within the school to implement the necessary strategies to bring essential change to improve student achievement.

Change Theory

Organizational change can be difficult for members of the organization. Before implementing any organizational changes, the leader must be clear on the problem and expected goal outcomes (Yukl, 2013). Senge (1990) asserted that leaders must also fully understand the system's dynamics and complex relationships to work through the change process successfully. Additionally, the leader must build trust within the organization, have a clear vision, and monitor the changes' pace to ensure successful implementation of change within the organization (Yukl, 2013.)

There are two types of changes that an organization will go through, first-order change and second-order change. A situational leader would work through first-order change in an organization. Levy (1986) described first-order changes as those changes in the organization that are reversible. These changes do not cause a paradigm shift but may make systems work more smoothly. Additionally, a first-order change gets the

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organization to begin altering the old way of doing things (Levy). These natural changes are occurring as the organization naturally grows and develops. A principal can implement first-order changes to begin building trust within the school before transforming a school.

The second-order change is the change necessary for school transformation. In second-order change, the organization experiences changes in behavioral aspects and moves in a completely different direction. These changes are irreversible and include incorporating new norms, values, and beliefs within the organization. The second-order change brings the organization to a new way of thinking and acting (Levy, 1986). Although first-order change is necessary to build trust within the school setting, only second-order change can transform a school.

All school principals manage the school and are instructional leaders. In a turnaround setting, the principal is also an instructional leader who evaluates teachers and develops them as high-quality instructors but must act quickly to improve student performance. Additionally, they must have a high level of expertise and build a team of experts to maintain the gains from the turnaround process (Fullan, 2014). No single leadership style is going to work in a turnaround setting. The building leader will need to adapt based on its situations throughout the turnaround process (Paletta et al., 2017). School turnaround leadership requires first- and second-order change. First-order changes occur naturally in the school as the school grows over time.

In contrast, second-order changes require a commitment from the members of the organization. The commitment from the membership allows for the continued changes without continued direction from the principal. The principal doesn't need the entire

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organization to commit to the changes, but the considerable majority influences the others (Leithwood, 1994).

Transformational Leadership

In the education setting, transformational leadership has a positive impact on the teacher's commitment and performance. This, in turn, contributes to the success of the school (Anderson & Sun, 2017). A transformational leader challenges the status quo in turnaround school settings (Fullan, 2014). A transformational leader focuses on change (Burns, 1978). According to Burns, transformational leadership motivates those within the organization to rise above the current status to high levels of performance and achievement by transforming attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of those within the organization (1978). Bernard Bass (1985) expanded on the research of Burns and identified the leadership behaviors of transformation leadership as the following: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These transformational behaviors are reflected in leadership through setting high performance expectations in a manner that motivate the staff, coaching and mentoring based on each individual's needs, and getting others to buy in to the new vision of the school that positively impacts the culture of the building. As described by Leithwood, transformational leadership is productive and focuses on restructuring a school for student success (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood (1994) described the changes needed for transformation as first-order and second-order changes. First-order transitions are those defined as those changes that occur as the organization grows and develops over time. Second-order change is specific to the commitment and motivation of those working in the organization to improve the

school's success. The second order is essential because it shows a staff's commitment without the principal's specific direction to make the change occur. A staff's commitment allows for sustainable growth within a school.

A transformational leader does not work in isolation but collaborative by developing those around them. The leader motivates others, and their actions show commitment to the work (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 1999; Marzano et al., 2005). A transformational leader can build trust amongst their subordinates, and this trust motivated them to do the work necessary for the change (Yukl, 2013). According to Yukl (2013), the leader can encourage by making the importance of the task outcomes known, setting aside self-interest for those of the organization or team, and identifying higher-order needs. Transformational leadership is necessary for building the vision and goals, setting high expectations for all, providing support, and allowing for building collaboration (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999). Research has found that transformational leadership has a positive impact in the education setting (Anderson & Sun, 2017).

Successful leadership practices in turnaround settings first impact teacher change and, in turn, positively affect student performance (Boudett & City, 2013). A successful turnaround leader can put together a group of instructional staff committed to students' success. These instructors will work on their professional practice and create the time needed for student success (Boudett & City, 2013). The leadership qualities and methods required for successful turnaround fall into four categories: setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood et al., 2010). In addition, the leader must have a desire to make a difference, provide clear

direction, keep focused on the goals, think outside of the box and plan, be flexible and adjust as needed, and be persistent (Duke 2015). The leader in a turnaround school must keep a sense of urgency within the organization for change.

Figure 1

Transformational Leadership Model Adapted From Leithwood

Modeling High Expectations Rewards
Culture Building Intellectual Stimulation
Vision Shared Goals
Individualized Support

Note. From Hallinger, 2003.

Hallinger (2003) identified two critical factors of Leithwood's research on transformational leadership. The first is the realization that transformational leadership is not a top-down theory, principal to teacher, but shared leadership amongst the teachers and principal. The second key factor is that transformational leadership requires second-order change. The work of the principal does not direct staff but works through individual needs. The transformational leader can create an environment where the collective group works toward a shared vision rather than individuals working in isolation.

The Transformational Leadership Model (see Figure 1) assumes that leadership is shared between the principal and the teachers. The model works from the bottom up by first identifying individual supports needed. As the leader begins at the bottom providing individuals the necessary support, the model blends with shared leadership. The model shows that a transformational leader is not top-down but builds relationships instead of

only managing and creating an environment for distributed leadership. A transformational leader implements second-order change working through the model bottom-up by increasing the capacity of those within the organization. By doing this, the leader is able to provide individual support as needed and move the building members to share leadership so that all members are working through the stages necessary for transformation (Hallinger, 2003).

School Reform

The concept of school turnaround is a result of school reform initiatives throughout several decades. As state and federal reliance on statewide standardized tests increases over time as a measure of school success, districts that experience high poverty and mobility rates are tasked with implementing additional interventions that will ensure high-quality teaching and learning for all students regardless of socioeconomic obstacles.

Federal and state guidelines for public education continuously change over time with increased accountability, safety, and equity. During the presidency of Ronald Reagan, The National Commission of Excellence in Education (NCEE) released a 26-page report, *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. The report's opening created a sense of urgency in public education. This opening statement of the report, along with President Reagan's press conference on April 26, 1983, in which he presented the report, brought attention to public education and the need for reform to public education. The report stated that the content taught in high schools was not preparing students for college or careers. Students were not taking the rigorous math and science courses with decreased time spent studying at home, yet grades improved. Teacher preparation programs did not provide adequate training for a career in teaching (pp. 18-24). Then during the National Education Summit

in 1989, President George H. W. Bush brought forth three accountability measures for schools that were not previously embedded in education: achievement goals based on academic proficiency for all grades, improvement plans created by schools, and instituting standardized testing to measure student proficiency (Bloom & Owens, 2011).

Goals 2000 in 1994, during the presidency of Bill Clinton, established education goals that would reform public education. Each state was then required under the Improving American Schools Act to develop plans aligned with Goals 2000. The plans required approval at the federal level (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

One of the most significant reforms to change the accountability of public education came in 2002 when President George Bush changed ESEA to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). NCLB required accountability measures for both state educational systems and individual schools. Students in grades 3 through 8 received annual reading and math standardized tests, while a science test administration occurred once in elementary, middle, and high school. Additionally, the mandate required proficiency improvement year to year while closing the achievement gap for identified subgroups (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The results school reports cards were released in each state. Each public school and district in each state received a report rating based on student achievement data, graduation rates, and the percentage of students who did not test. The principal's role moved from manager to instructional leader to ensure that the school they led met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all students of all subgroups (Sanzo et al., 2011). This created a shift in school principal role, now accountable for student performance and achievement. The principal's role was now one of instructional leadership that gets results while still

managing the school, responding to the community, building relationships, and meeting district mandates while maintaining a sense of community (Fullan, 2014).

President Barack Obama brought to education the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in February of 2009. For education, ARRA focused on ensuring each child in every school had both an effective teacher and principal leader. This newest reauthorization of ESEA created priorities for schools to ensure students were college and career ready, improve and administer better assessments, and align the best teachers and leaders in the schools with the highest needs. The accountability system also focused on ensuring equitable opportunities for diverse learners. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009b).

To support schools meeting ARRA's demands, Race to the Top (RTTT) offered schools the financial incentives to focus on high-quality teaching and learning. States received the grant based on the poverty levels of the districts within the states. School districts across the country could apply for grants to improve education areas: standards and assessment, data collection, disaggregation of data to improve student achievement, teacher effectiveness with a focus on equity of high-quality teachers amongst schools, and turning around low-achieving schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009a).

During 2015 under the leadership of Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, Congress voted to replace NCLB and reauthorized ESEA. Under the new mandates of ESEA, the states now have control over creating an accountability and reporting system. This allowed the states to identify additional measures outside of reading and math to determine student performance and school effectiveness (U.S. Congress, 2015). ESEA required states to have the lowest-performing schools create an improvement plan to

address student performance, achievement gaps, and graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Additionally, ESEA recognized the principal leadership role in student achievement (Young et al., 2017). During the time between ARRA and the authorization of ESEA, the state of Ohio was establishing an Academic Distress Commission and House Bill 70. The Superintendent of Public Schools, under Ohio law, was required to create an Academic Distress Commission for all school districts in the state that receive a designation of Academic Emergency. According to the Ohio Department of Education's website, a district's qualifications to receive an Academic Emergency are 0-30% of indicators not met *and* 0-69.9 performance index score *and* adequate yearly progress (AYP) not met. The Academic Distress Commission required the commission to control the majority of the district's operations if deemed to meet the requirements of the Academic Distress Commission. The first commission disbanded in early 2015 after enacting the new state law of HB70, which allowed for state takeover and school choice. For schools in Ohio to avoid falling into state takeover or losing enrollment to charter schools, under school choice, many districts turned to RTTT funds to begin turnaround initiatives in their lowest-performing schools. School districts implementing school turnaround needed to identify the appropriate leaders to implement the school turnaround initiative.

Turnaround Schools

A turnaround school is a low-performing school that implements intensive whole building interventions and has experienced significant gains as measured by statewide-standardized assessments (Klinger et al., 2006). A school is designated turnaround when there is an urgency of improvement in student achievement based on a low state rating. In

many situations, the turnaround schools experience both high poverty and high mobility rates. Research shows that students from high-poverty homes have a much lower success rate in school than students who do not experience poverty (Bernstein & Shierholz, 2014). A comparison of national data from 2009-2016 shows districts with the highest test scores are also districts whose population is in areas with the highest household income. While in contrast, the school districts with the lowest student performance on national test scores had populations living within the federal poverty levels (Bernstein & Shierholz, 2014).

Additionally, the data showed that these low-performing schools also serve minority and underrepresented students (Bourdreau, 2019). Studies have shown that children from families with higher incomes have more significant opportunities to learn at home and experience learning through family educational activities such as trips to the library and museum (Bassok et al., 2016; Reardon et al., 2019). The achievement gap begins with the socioeconomic status conditions from the early stages of learning since the families from high-income homes have the resources to provide learning opportunities before children start school (Reardon et al., 2019). The purpose of the turnaround school initiative is to create a high performing environment that provides an equitable educational experience for all students, not just those students of affluent backgrounds who have readily available resources for success.

A turnaround school's concept is to hire a leader whose leadership style can bring immediate change while creating protocols and procedures that carry a lasting positive impact on closing the achievement gap and student proficiency in the lowest-performing schools (Kutash et al., 2010). A school identified as low performing has a higher level of

accountability and oversight from state or federal departments of education; therefore, the building principal needs to stay focused and manage the high accountability level. A turnaround leader must be able to identify building needs, adapt quickly, and have the ability to match their leadership style with the ever-changing situations that occur within the school (Paletta et al., 2017). This is especially true in a turnaround setting with many interventions and oversight and accountability for change. A school identified as a turnaround school has a higher level of accountability from the district and state and federal departments of education. Therefore, the building principal needs to be able to stay focused and manage the high level of responsibility.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, The Schools to Watch: School Transformation Project funded turnaround initiatives in 18 low-performing middle schools throughout California, Illinois, and North Carolina. The initiative's design plan allowed a four-year implementation of turnaround strategies to transform low-performing schools into high-performing schools. A review of three schools within the Transformation Project showed that all three schools improved student test scores and earned the Schools to Watch status within the four years. Most importantly, the study found that the turnaround success was due to collective efforts around a centralized vision (Flowers et al., 2017). The building leader must create an environment that ensures all individuals, initiatives, interventions, and structures align with turnaround success's central vision.

Low-performing schools can negatively affect student attendance, achievement, and preparation for college and career readiness. Research shows that education is a critical factor for ensuring a better future (Silva-Laya et al., 2020). Children who

continuously attend low-performing schools are at risk of having ineffective teachers, which lowers their chances of graduating and continuing education beyond high school (Hanushek, 2012). The turnaround model for school improvement addresses teacher accountability, evaluation, and high-quality instruction to ensure equitable opportunities for learners not attending high-performing schools.

The impact of children not receiving a quality education goes beyond the classroom. Children from low-performing schools enter the workforce without the necessary skills to be successful (Sheehy, 2012). As children progress through school, and the achievement gap widens, their statistical chance to graduate decreases (Reardon et al., 2019). The current national graduation rate is 84.6%. Yet, students from low-performing schools have a graduation rate below the national average at 77.6% (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). National graduation averages are improving with the implementation of school turnaround efforts. The national four-year graduation rate has increased from 76% in 2011 to 85% presently.

Turnaround Practices

According to Steiner et al. (2008), schools fail because of leadership and management. Turnaround work requires adaptive change. Adaptive change is difficult for leaders, which causes many to focus on technical changes (Heifetz 1994). As a result, many districts have selected and trained principals as turnaround specialists. Research shows that successful turnaround work is a result of the leader's habits, skills, and behaviors (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011).

Fullan's (2011) research showed that turnaround leaders build capacity within the organization and keep a focus on obtaining positive results. Fullan (2011) went further

finding that positive results must stay focused on closing the achievement gap and all work aligns with the overall focus. Additionally, the turnaround leader removes excuses from the team by removing the obstacles or barriers needed for the members of the organization to continue to work towards the overall goal. The leader enables the group to take initiative, supports the work, and encourages through mistakes (Fullan, 2011).

In order for turnaround leaders to improve low-performing schools, they must have the following competencies: desire to make a difference, be able to provide direction, be focused on the vision, plan outside of the norm, be willing to make adjustments, and be persistent (Duke, 2015). The turnaround leader must articulate a sense of urgency amongst the staff who allows for the articulation of a shared vision for future success. The turnaround leader develops trust amongst the organization and keeps the work focused on closing the achievement gap while continuously challenging the high-achieving students (Duke, 2015). A turnaround leader's success in transforming a school comes from staying focused on a clear direction, developing the capacity of the members, redesigning the organization to remove obstacles, allowing a focus on the work, and being an instructional leader to support both teaching and learning (Fullan, 2011).

According to Miller (2012), 40% of executives fail because they are not learning from experiences but are stuck doing things the way they have always been done. An individual's ability to learn from experience allows them to meet the demands of the job as the demands change and the individual continuously works to improve their performance (DeRue et al., 2012). In a turnaround initiative, the school leader needs to have a clear vision, be an instructional leader, share leadership, and develop teachers.

Vision

Regardless of the type of leader running the organization, problems can be complex and ambiguous that to define and resolve them requires the knowledge and participation of more than a visionary leader (Murphy, 2013). Murphy identified six dimensions of leadership: developing a shared vision, asking questions, coping with weakness, listening, and acknowledging, depending on others, and letting go. Educational leaders who work within the six dimensions, "often off stage," have successful education organizations (Murphy, p. 30). A turnaround leader will face many challenges with intense accountability and oversight. Learning to work through the six dimensions sets the organization and leader up for success.

It is not a top-down approach to developing a shared vision. Although the organization leader guides the direction, the leader to the group does not articulate the vision. The leader will "take the initiative, set the agenda, establish the pace, and add to the conversation" (Murphy, 2013, p. 31). A shared vision is "*discovered*" through this process. A strong leader will also ask the right questions to gain the knowledge needed to fully understand the organization and use it to move the organization in the direction of the shared vision.

Instructional Leadership

The research of Ronald Edmonds identified instructional leadership as one of the seven correlates based on effective school research. Leaders who made teaching and learning the focus of their work had a significantly positive impact on student achievement (Bloom & Owens, 2011; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Persell, 2013). Although researchers have stated there is a need for transactional leadership to keep an organization

functional, the impact of instructional leadership results show that leaders need to be less transactional and more instructional based in their leadership style (Richardson et al., 2016). This leadership shift resulted in principals needing to become experts in both curriculum and instruction to observe, evaluate, coach, and support the teachers. (Bloom & Owens, 2011).

However, there is conflict in the research that instructional leadership will directly impact sustainable change in a turnaround setting. Hallinger (2003) found the leadership style to be more transactional since the leader is now the expert and sets the goals expected to be achieved by the staff. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) found it challenging that the principal would need to be an expert in all curriculum and grade levels throughout the school. Shared leadership within instructional leadership would be necessary to build leadership capacity and expertise within the school. Through shared leadership, the principal can work collaboratively on decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Burch, 2010; Kowalski, 2010).

Leadership Teams

A strong leader is going to recognize their strengths and accept their weaknesses. A leader will compensate for their weaknesses by surrounding themselves with individuals who complement their skill set. They will often hire individuals with strengths that complement the leader's weaknesses. A leader is more effective once they accept their areas of weakness (Murphy, 2013).

Leadership in education requires an administrator to have the ability to build on their strengths and recognize their weaknesses. A strong leader recognizes how their strengths fit into the position and will create a team around them that compensates for

their weaknesses and builds on their strengths. The leader needs to manage talent and develop those around him or her to have a sustainable, successful turnaround. The building leader must first begin by developing the leadership team. A leadership team includes those individuals in the building whose strengths and experiences allow them to hold pivotal positions that move the work of the vision and mission. The leadership team needs to own and share the vision and mission of the work to be completed. The building leader needs to model for their team and hold them accountable just as they hold others accountable. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2013) focused on five critical components required to develop a strong leadership team: identify, train, give feedback, practice, and evaluate.

The leadership team's purpose is to ensure that each team member can effectively observe, provide feedback, and hold data analysis meetings and lesson plans with teachers assigned to the specific leader. The first of the four tasks is to identify instructional leaders. The instructional leaders do not have to be limited to just the administration within the school. Instructional leaders may include principal, assistant principal/dean, instructional coaches, and department chairs. The size of the staff determines the number of individuals on the leadership team. The most effective team would be large enough to keep a 15:1 teacher to leader ratio. The individuals selected for the leadership team must be reliable and committed to the work (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).

Before the training, the building principal needs to ensure the instructional schedule has designated times for observations and feedback. The team needs training to "ensure that every teacher in the building is observed, receives feedback, and conducts data analysis with an instructional leader" (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013, p. 338). Leadership

training should be prioritized based on school and individual needs. For example, some members will need training on data-driven instruction and school culture, while others will need data-driven instruction, observation, and feedback (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).

The leadership team should meet regularly and receive feedback to develop their instructional leadership continuously. These meetings must not be a forum for announcements, book studies with no implementation from the learning, or talking about teacher actions and not the teacher feedback (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013). An effective leadership meeting should include one of these components to most effectively benefit from leadership team meetings: role-playing conversations that will occur between the leader and teacher, planning PD sessions, analyzing data, and reviewing feedback given to the teacher and next steps. (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).

Additionally, leaders need to receive an evaluation of the quality of their instructional leadership. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2013) recommended using the Instructional Leadership Rubric to evaluate the individuals on the leadership team. The rubric moves up from Needs Improvement to Advanced with Working Toward and Proficient in the middle. The leadership team evaluation measures the effectiveness of how they are directly leading the teachers they are assigned. The team must be evaluated and provided feedback to continue to improve their practice just as they are working with their assigned teachers to enhance their practice (Bambrick-Santoyo).

Developing Teachers

According to Fink and Markholt (2013), the key to school turnaround is to improve instruction and student achievement. The four major areas needed to improve instruction are learning expertise, teaching expertise, making practice public, and

building a shared understanding. Learning expertise is "the degree to which would-be experts continually attempt to refine their skills and attitudes toward learning" (Fink & Markholt, p. 322) Learning expertise is continuously working to move from a novice practitioner to an expert. Learning expertise requires the educator to be coachable, be willing to make their practice public, and accept critical feedback to improve their practice (Fink & Markholt).

Teaching expertise is the ability for someone to be both an expert and obtain the skill set to teach expertise to others. In many school districts, this would be an instructional coach. However, teaching expertise is not limited to instructional coaches. Building principals and district-level leaders need to be able to model teaching expertise. This is essential for schools to improve practice. Fink and Markholt (2013) used the example of Professional Learning Communities (PLC). PLC's lack of success is a result of a lack of expertise within the group. Without expertise, the group cannot expand its learning (Fink & Markholt). Leaders need to identify and develop teaching expertise within the staff.

Historically, teachers have worked in isolation. For teachers to welcome other professionals into their classrooms, the building principal must create an environment of collaboration and public practice (Fink & Markholt, 2013). The building principal must also be willing to make his/her practice public and model for the staff. Creating this culture of public practice is essential for developing learning and teaching expertise (Fink & Markholt).

To improve instruction, school leaders need to know what to look for in high-quality instruction. Instructional rounds build shared understandings (Fink & Markholt,

2013). During instructional rounds developing a shared understanding of high-quality instruction, "leaders are taught how to stay in the descriptive versus evaluative mode as they observe classroom teaching" (Fink & Markholt, 2013, p. 330). Observers fully describe what they are observing. Shared understanding develops in the descriptive mode of observation.

Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

Kouzes and Posner began their research in 1983. Their objective was to learn what individuals did when they were at their best when leading others. The overall goal of the research was to determine if there was a pattern for success (Kouzes & Posner, 1983). The two researchers spent 30 years collecting individual stories of excellence from leaders. The results from asking individuals the question, "What did you do when you were at your personal best?" have been compiled in *The Leadership Challenge.* (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The only criteria interview selection was that the individual was responsible for leading an organization. The individuals surveyed included middle- and senior-level business managers, community, church, government, and school leaders. Leaders were selected for interviews regardless of race, gender, age, or geographical location. Although the responses were vastly different amongst the leaders interviewed, the five exemplary leadership practices emerged among leaders' diverse groups (Kouzes & Posner 2017).

Kouzes and Posner (2017) collected ongoing empirical data using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). The inventory collects stories of when the leader was performing at their personal best and analyzes the number of times the leader's experiences aligned with the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. The researchers

collected 500,000-750,000 responses to the inventory annually to identify the behaviors that make a difference in leadership success. The LPI also collects data from the organization's direct reports by asking 10 questions to identify workplace culture. The LPI examines workplace satisfaction, commitment within the organization, and pride in the work. Additionally, the LPI analyzes leadership trustworthiness and effectiveness (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Kouzes and Posner's (2017) findings confirmed that 96% of those organizations that reported high satisfaction and commitment in the organization worked under a leader using the Five Leadership Practices. The research confirmed that leaders applying the drive practices had the most significant impact on the organization's success (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The five practices that emerged from the interviews were that influential leaders inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, model the way, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Kouzes and Posner determined that organizations with leaders who exhibited the five leadership practices could accomplish extraordinary change and success.

The work of Kouzes and Posner studied relationships within the business sector. In 2006, Hautula looked at the relationship between transformational leadership and personality through the leaders' and subordinates' lens. The quantitative study used a modified LPI instrument to interview over 400 leaders and subordinates (Hatutula, 2006). Additionally, the study used Kouzes and Posner's foundational question of, "What did you do when you were at your personal best as a leader?" The study findings of Hautula confirmed that the Kouzes and Posner's Five Exemplary Leadership Practices align with the skills needed for transformational leadership (Hautula, 2006).

Although there is limited research applying Kouzes and Posener's (2017) work to education, Balcerek (1999) conducted a study to examine principals' leadership practices in low- and high-performing schools. The quantitative analysis used Kouzes and Posner's LPI for both the principal and teachers to determine the effect of leadership in both school settings. Both groups completed the LPI, and the findings determined that the principal's leadership practices correlated with the students' success in both high- and low-performing schools (Balcerek, 1999).

Petrich's (2019) research study took the work of Kouzes and Posner and completed a qualitative study. Petrich asked seven elementary principals in one school district the Kouzes and Posner's foundational leadership question, "What did you do when you were at your personal best as a leader?" Petrich's (2019) study selected participants from what data showed to be low-performing schools. The study found that principals being able to describe being at their personal best aligned with the Kouzes and Posner's Five Exemplary Practices of Leadership: inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, model the way, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.

Table 1

Five Practices and Ten Commitments of Exemplary Leadership

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership	Ten Commitments
Model the Way	• Clarify Values • Set the Example
Inspire a Shared vision	• Envision the Future • Enlist Others
Challenge the Process	• Search for Opportunities • Experiment and Take Risks

Enable Others to Act	• Foster Collaboration • Strengthen Others
Encourage the Heart	• Recognize Contributions • Celebrate the Values and Victories

Note. (Kouses & Posner, 2017)

Inspire a Shared Vision

The vision is the foundation of any organization. The vision of an organization articulates the priority of the school for its members and stakeholders (Ireland & Hirc, 1992). Senge (1990) asserted that it is impossible to have a learning organization without a shared vision. A vision is not written as a specific goal but as a commitment to an outcome the organization is always working toward and improving on (Baum et al., 1998). Senge (1990) cautioned that a vision can be both positive and negative for an organization. A negative vision stays with the status quo and is not transformative for the organization. A positive vision will motivate, articulate the values of the organization, focus on a better future, and bring sustainable change (Senge, 1990). The vision of the organization guides the work of its members towards the overall success (Mumford & Strange, 2015).

An organization that has sustainable success has a vision that is developed collaboratively amongst the stakeholders (Kantabutra, 2010). Murphy (2013) identified developing a shared vision as one of the six dimensions of leadership. Blankstein's (2013) research found that a vision only has shared meaning and commitment if it is co-created by members of the school and greater community. The school leader brings stakeholders together to think about and articulate a better future for the school (Blankstein, 2013).

According to Hallinger (2011), student learning will only be improved if there is a shared vision amongst the school. The role of the leader is to guide the collective group toward a shared vision and does not create one for the organization in isolation (Murphy, 2013). An effective leader will create an environment that enables the members to develop a shared vision for the organization's future. The leader is collaborative and works with all stakeholders to ensure the vision is truly shared and not one of the leader's personal beliefs. A shared vision is nurtured from valuing all individuals' personal beliefs while focusing on what is best for the organization's future. A great leader will motivate and inspire those within the organization to do the work necessary for the shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). An effective school leader will ensure that the work of the staff and the building resources align with the shared vision (Kantabura, 2010). In a turnaround school setting, this is vital to get the stakeholders to put their efforts into a school's shared vision. This avoids teachers working in isolation with no direction. A vision alone will not provide sustainable change in an organization. The vision needs to be communicated, embedded in the work, used to challenge the norm, and motivate (Kantabutra, 2010).

Challenge the Process

Kouzes and Posner (2017) found that leaders cannot be at their personal best if they do not challenge the process and maintain the status quo. As the leader begins to challenge the process, they will first begin with new initiatives that will generate quick wins (Kouzes & Posner 2017; Steiner et al., 2008). Challenging the process enables the leader to show the organization's members that they are committed to making the changes necessary to ensure the work aligns with the shared vision and avoids mediocrity. With

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challenges to the process comes success and disappointment. The leader will model that the disappointments are learning opportunities for learning and professional growth. As opposed to giving up, the leader shows determination and perseverance (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

An effective leader will take the time to understand the organization and then challenge the organizational norms. By challenging the process, the leader is able to help the stakeholders identify new ideas to improve the organization (Quin et al., 2015). A leader accomplishes this by setting high expectations and showing a commitment to the success of the organization. The leader that challenges the status quo shows that they are open to invitation and ideas that will transform the organization. A transformational leader isn't going to accept the way that things have always been done but will be open to all of the possibilities that will allow for improvement (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Additionally, the leader would create an environment that fosters this behavior amongst all members of the organization. The leader will reevaluate, question, and support members who move the organization's success (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The principal will work collaboratively with the staff and encourage risk-taking to allow innovative reform to occur (Sahin, 2011). A turnaround leader is tasked with entering a school and challenging a building's long-time norms and culture. By questioning and enabling others to question, the leader can begin the change process and develop leadership amongst the members. Kouzes and Posner found that an organization that allows for challenging the process will initiate incremental steps, experience small wins, learn from mistakes, and promote psychological hardiness (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Model the Way

A leader in any organization is most effective if they are respected for their work, not their title (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The leader modeling the way must be intrinsically aware of their core values and beliefs (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Yukl, 2013). The leader must ensure that their core values are in alignment with the shared vision. This builds trust and credibility when what the leader says and does aligns with the shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The leader needs to ensure that their actions model their leadership philosophy and beliefs (Yukl, 2013). Credibility is established within the organization when the leader's actions and words are consistent (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Modeling the way is an effective way to get the staff to commit to the shared vision. The leader is setting the example for the organization and showing that they will work toward the shared vision that was created. The leader needs to be reflective and ensure that their actions are in alignment with the vision and expectations (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Kouzes and Posner's (2017) research found that the results of a leader that effectively communicates and models the way of the shared vision experiences are job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, loyalty, Esprit de corps, clarity about values, pride in the organization, and organizational productivity.

For a leader to model the way, their actions must show their values and beliefs. The leader must have clear values in order for others to follow (Gulcan, 2012). The leader needs to model that their actions support their values in order to build credibility for others to follow (Abu-Tineh et al., 2009). The leader must model a commitment to the organization's goals, vision, and mission. The leader's work ethic and actions will create

a culture of commitment to the organization's goals and success (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). By modeling the expectation, the commitment and work performance of the staff improves because the actions of the leader builds credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The leader modeling and engaging in the work toward the shared vision increases teacher performance and overall success of the organization (Valentine & Prater, 2011). A transformational leader's actions set the example and show a commitment for the work toward the shared vision (Quin et al., 2015). The leader's behaviors and expectations show that they believe in the shared vision. The values of the leader and how they align with the shared vision are viewed by actions not words within the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Enable Others to Act

An effective leader understands that they cannot work in isolation and needs to enable others to act in order to ensure sustained success (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Trust is the key foundation of enabling others to act. According to Kouzes and Posner (2017), the organization is most effective when the leader has developed cohesive teams and engages the teams in planning and the autonomy to make decisions. The leader develops a community of shared leadership, in which everyone has a shared responsibility in the success, not top-down mandates (Kouzes & Posner. 2017).

A transformational leader will identify strengths of the members within the organization and will enable individuals to lead the work necessary to carry out the vision of the school (Hitt et al., 2018). Support and development of teacher leadership is necessary in school improvement (Huggins, 2017). Dimmock (2012o stated that a school has marked improvement when the principal shares and develops leadership capacity

within the school. A research study of principals developing leadership capacity found that a principal must spend the time to know their staff and provide leadership opportunities that both enhance current practice within the organization as well as bring an alternative perspective (Huggins, 2017). Leadership opportunities are provided and supported. The principal needs to understand that enabling others to act means that learning from mistakes is part of developing leadership. The principal needs to be transparent and available to support learning while developing the leadership capacity of the staff (Huggins et al., 2018).

An effective leader will establish trust within the organization, create a collaborative culture, encourage members to take the initiative, and lead. An effective principal will develop their teacher's leadership skills, provide leadership opportunities, and support the teacher (Roby, 2011). The leader will remove obstacles and create an environment that allows the staff to act and lead (Quin et al., 2015; Saleem et al., 2020). The leader believes in the team and the importance of the collective group working toward the shared vision. The leader must build trust within the organization so that the team is productive, supportive, and supported (Gulcan, 2012). Members need to know it is safe to take the initiative and be supported regardless of success and failure. An effective leader will create an environment that not only allows for collaboration but strengthens the team because they are supported and trusted to do the work (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Encourage the Heart

It is important to encourage and inspire the staff of the organization in order to work toward the shared vision (Quin et al., 2015). A strong leader monitors the needs and

supports of those within the organization. The leader must take the time to celebrate the success and contributions of individuals (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). These actions create a sense of community and loyalty to the organization. Members know their ideas and work are valued and essential to the organization's shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Quin et al., 2015). In a turnaround setting the work can initially be overwhelming for the teachers. The leader must encourage, support, and reinforce the work and contributions of all those working toward the school's shared vision and success (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Encouraging the heart is fundamental to improving teaching and learning (Abu-Tuineh et al., 2009). Transformational leaders celebrate and recognize the contributions of their staff to improve the organization. The recognition and celebrations are key to encouraging the heart as they help in developing and maintaining a sense of belonging and commitment to the shared vision of the organization. (Quin et al., 2015; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

The work of Kouzes and Posner found that strong leadership resulted from the leader's behavior. Each of the five exemplary actions has behaviors aligned with the act. Kouzes and Posner referred to these behaviors as the Ten Commitments of Exemplary Leadership (Kouzes & Posner 2017). Table 1 provides a summary of the commitments and how they connect with leadership practices.

Summary

As school reform has evolved over the years from ESEA (1965) through all of the reauthorizations so has the role of the building principal. The role of the principal is no longer a manager of a school, but the building principal is charged with transforming the

school. Principals leading the lowest-performing schools are tasked with making changes that must filter down to have a positive impact on student achievement.

The leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner serve as a framework for this study in examining the Five Exemplary Practices of Leadership with the Leadership Competencies needed for school turnaround. The leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner will be corroborated when asking a turnaround principal to describe being at their personal best as a leader. The five identified leadership practices will be tested against the defining moments of urban turnaround leaders in elementary, middle, and high school to align the leadership practices with leadership competencies that positively impact instruction and student achievement within a school setting.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The changes in public education based on test results and accountability measures has required the building principal's role to move from a manager to instructional leader (Alvoid & Black, 2014). Furthermore, school reform efforts have initiated school turnaround models in an effort to bring immediate improvement and sustainable change to the lowest-performing schools. A turnaround leader is capable of implementing the processes needed for immediate improvement (Hassel et al., 2020).

The five identified leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner (2017) include model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. These leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner serve as the framework used in examining the leadership practices of five urban turnaround leaders in elementary, middle, and high schools to identify the leadership practices that positively impact instruction and student achievement within a school setting.

This qualitative research case study examined leadership practices implemented by five turnaround principals when they answered interview questions to determine how they measure their own success, if the turnaround initiatives are sustainable, and how the turnaround process impacts the school culture. The sample consisted of five principals who work in one urban school district within the midwest United States and represent elementary, middle, and high schools. Each principal has proven success in improving the building level report card grades from two or more Fs up at least one letter grade. Purposeful sampling was used to select the five participants. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, observations, and document reviews. The

information discovered in this case study aligned the principals' leadership actions that directly impact success for school turnaround. The chapter is organized to explain the research purpose and questions, research design, role of the researcher, target population and sampling, procedures, data analysis, validity, and limitations.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to identify the leadership practices of five turnaround principals who have successfully improved their schools' report card. By asking these five turnaround principals a series of interview questions, I was able to analyze their leadership practices. Although much research exists pertaining to leadership and transformational leadership, there is little research explicitly examining turnaround leadership using Kouzes and Posner's (2017) five exemplary leadership practices as a framework.

This study's research questions were derived from a review of the literature and turnaround principals' lived experiences in elementary and secondary schools.

1. How do turnaround principals measure their own success?

2. Are turnaround initiatives sustainable in schools?

3. How does the turnaround process impact the culture of the school?

The participants answered questions regarding leadership, sustainability, and culture specific to their schools which allowed them to reflect on their own personal leadership styles.

Role of Researcher

My interest in the study comes from my own experience as a turnaround leader. I am an educator with more than 20 years of experience working in a large urban school

district in Ohio. Growing up I attended urban schools in both Pennsylvania and Ohio. My experiences drew me to urban education. As an educator, I have experience working as a teacher and an administrator at both the elementary and secondary levels throughout my career. I became very passionate about equity in education for students living in communities with limited resources and attending continuously low-performing schools.

I had the opportunity to lead a low-performing school and receive formal training as a turnaround specialist. I have served as an elementary school turnaround principal. Currently, I work as an elementary principal. As a result of my experience leading low-performing schools, I am very passionate about the work needed to ensure high quality teaching and learning for all students. My experiences have brought me to my belief in the importance of the five exemplary leadership practices and the leadership practices needed for turnaround leaders that lead to success.

As a principal that has led turnaround work in a school, there are both pros and cons in doing this research. I have a personal belief and understanding of what I feel it takes to lead turnaround initiatives in a school. My experience as a trained turnaround leader will allow me to analyze the data and identify themes. However, this experience may pose a threat of bias, even though I recognize each principal's experiences and situations may be different.

As the researcher in this case study, I conducted the semi-structured interviews, observations, and document reviews of the study's five participants. Afterward, I analyzed the data to identify common themes amongst the participants, as well as any data themes that were unique to individual participants. Since I was the researcher conducting and analyzing the data, it was necessary that I stay as objective as possible

and not allow assumptions, biases, and my own past experiences influence the research that was conducted (Creswell, 2014). To promote objectivity, I analyzed a structured interview, taped, and transcribed the interview verbatim, employed member checking, and created an audit trail.

Research Design

The research design provided the structure that was used to answer the questions of the study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The three types of methods used to conduct research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Qualitative research is the most effective research to use if the participants will be interviewed (Creswell, 2014). The five types of qualitative research, according to Creswell (2014) are phenomenological study, ethnography, biography or narrative, grounded theory, and case study. In this case study, the researcher examined turnaround principals' leadership experiences (Creswell, 2014).

A case study is qualitative research designed to provide an in-depth analysis of a program, process, or individual(s) (Creswell, 2014). Based on this study's research questions, it was determined that a case study was the best research method design. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that case studies have limited numbers of participants that can be interviewed or observed and therefore are bounded systems. This case study is bounded because of the limited number of principals who met the criteria of being a turnaround principal. The results from this case study are derived from the analysis of semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews.

The semi-structured interview with turnaround principals was the primary method of research in this case study. The interviews allowed the turnaround principals to share

their personal stories of leadership. The document reviews and observations provided additional data to support the leadership practices identified from the interviews. This case study examined the leadership practices of turnaround principals. The study analyzed the leaders' self-identified leadership practices, leadership documents review, and observations.

After the review of the literature, interview questions were constructed based on priori constructs found in scholarly research. The research participants were made aware of the interview questions prior to the interview. During the interview, additional prompting for clarification occurred. The constant comparative method was used to analyze each interview immediately following the interview to identify themes or patterns within the data. The constant comparative method is best when comparing themes that emerge (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, the interview data were compared to previous participants' responses to identify common emerging themes. The multiple sources of data improved the validity of the research by using data triangulation. A thorough case study requires the researcher to collect multiple pieces of evidence for data to complete a comprehensive data analysis. A case study allows the researcher to examine a phenomenon within the context of real life (Yin, 2014). The data were analyzed and analytical coding was used for the semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews to identify themes within the leadership practices. Analytical coding was used since the themes were derived from interpretation of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher then identified the leadership practices most effective for turnaround leadership. The interview questions were derived from the literature examining the leadership practices of turnaround

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principals. Additional research questions were derived from the literature to examine

emerging themes and patterns of the leadership practices of turnaround principals beyond

those identified in the framework of Kouzes and Posner.

Target Population

This study's target population was building principals who have successfully

turned around a school deemed to be in state improvement status by improving at least

two letter grades of an F on the state report card as well as improvement in closing the

achievement gap for students in the state of Ohio. This study will assist district leadership

and building principals identify the leadership practices needed for successful school

turnaround. This population was targeted so that building principals can learn from

turnaround leaders' experiences to implement the best practices to ensure high-quality

teaching and learning for all students.

Participants and Sampling

The participants in this study were building principals working in low-performing

schools receiving two or more Fs on the state report card and successfully initiated school

turnaround initiatives within their schools as evidenced by improved report card marks.

The five participants are from Ohio and represent both elementary and secondary

schools. The participant pool is limited as the school must have evidence of school

improvement per state guidelines on the most recent state report card. Since the pool of

participants is limited, non-random sampling was used to select the participants for the

study. From the limited selection of schools successful in moving up in the school

improvement status, five were invited to participate in the study based on the trends of

the last three years of most recent school improvement status and state report card grades.

Invitations were sent to the principals in schools that met the criteria using random numbers table until five turnaround principals agreed to participate in the study. To ensure the potential participants were fully knowledgeable of the study requirements, included with the invitation to participate in the study were the specific details of the format of the study (Appendix A). Participants completed an informed consent making them aware of their rights as a study participant. (Appendix B).

Included with the invitation to participate in the study were the requirements for the interviews, document reviews, and observations. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), there is no way of knowing the sample size needed for saturation in qualitative research. Although the sample size was limited to five participants, the researcher used varied methods of data collection in this case study to analyze for themes or patterns within the principals' leadership practices used for school turnaround initiatives.

Procedures

Once the researcher received approval from the university's Institutional Review Board, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and completed a document review of artifacts. The researcher sent participants demographic interview questions to be answered prior to the interview (Appendix D). The researcher conducted the interviews after school hours. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews and observations were held using video conferencing software.

Qualitative research interviews followed by observations and document reviews provided the researcher with details of the participants' lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews are conducted to both ask open-ended questions and probe for greater details and understanding based on the participants'

responses (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were set up with each participant after school hours. Upon the participant logging into the video conferencing link, the researcher welcomed the participant and inquired about their day in order to build a rapport. Building a rapport with the participant creates trust between the researcher and participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Prior to the interview, the participant was asked if they consent and asked to sign the form and scan it back to the researcher prior to the interview. At the start of the interview, the researcher shared their screen and presented the informed consent form that had been mailed to the participant. The participant was also asked for consent to record the interview. The informed consent states:

> I understand that I will be in an interview for 60-90 minutes. I understand that a 30-minute direct observation will occur where I am engaged in any type of professional development with my staff. I understand that I will submit the following three documents for review: school improvement plan, school report card, and a document of the participant's choice that shows building leadership.

The interview was structured first to gain demographic information. Then the participants answered the research questions by answering a series of interview questions that help in identifying how the principals measure their own success, if the turnaround initiative are sustainable, and how the turnaround process has influenced the school culture (Appendix E). The researcher used analytical coding to look for broad themes within the interview (Creswell, 2012). Additional questions from the interview protocol and themes derived from the analytical coding were used to identify the leadership practices implemented by turnaround principals. Each interview was no more than 60 minutes in length and held outside of school hours to limit disruptions.

Each interview was conducted using the same format. At the completion of each interview, a recording of the interview was used to create a written transcription of the interview. Once the transcription was received, the researcher reviewed the document for accuracy. Once the researcher completed the transcription review, it was then shared with the participant to ensure the interview captured the participants' words accurately. Member-checking allows the participant to ensure their words are not misinterpreted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher conducts analytical coding to identify patterns or themes. After the second through fifth interview transcriptions were received, a constant comparative method was used to compare themes that emerged from each of the interviews.

Direct observations of professional learning were set up at an agreeable time for the participant and completed utilizing the invitation from the participant's video conferencing software (Appendix F). The researcher examined building performance data and documents selected by the participants as examples of principal leadership. The documents collected included the school improvement plan, school report card, and a document of the participant's choice that showed leadership within the school in planning and implementing staff professional development.

Direct observations of the building principals were conducted to increase the validity of the research study. According to Merriam (2009), data collection through direct observations can assist in producing valid results. The researcher can record observations using multiple methods, including observation sheets, pictures, audio, and video (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

After the interviews, patterns, themes, and the frequency of the practices were examined individually and then compared amongst the five participants to identify common themes amongst the participants and frequency of implementing specific practices. Since the observation occurred using video conferencing, the meeting was recorded, and common themes were documented and categorized based on the observation notes and reviewing the recording. At the conclusion of the meeting observation, the researcher turned the camera back on, unmuted, and thanked the principal for allowing the opportunity to conduct the observation.

The document review was completed following the semi-structured interviews. A document review is an opportunity to collect additional data outside of interviews and observations (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The documents requested included the school improvement plan, school report card, and an artifact chosen by the principal that demonstrated their leadership in planning and implementing staff professional development. The principals were asked to share the documents with the researcher following the semi-structured interview. The document review form was used to analyze each participant's three documents (Appendix G). The documents were reviewed using the same coding set up as the direct observations.

Data Analysis and Validity

The researcher used a constant comparative to increase the validity of this qualitative case study research. The researcher compared interviews of each participant to look for common patterns and themes. The researcher analyzed interview transcripts, artifacts, and observation notes for themes that emerged within the leadership practices of the participants. The researcher transcribed each interview within 24 hours of the

completion of the interview. Each participant was asked the same initial question derived

from the literature review to ensure reliability. Once transcribed, the researcher shared the

transcription with the participant to review the transcript and analysis to provide

corrections if their sentiments were captured accurately for internal validity. Member-

checking of field notes and transcriptions allows the participant to provide validity to the

research (Creswell, 2014). Member-checking is essential for the validity of the data in

both the semi-structured interviews and direct observations to ensure there is no

misinterpretation of words captured during either event (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Member-checking was conducted with each participant first by email and then a follow-

up phone call if needed.

During the observations, the researcher did not engage or participate in any

portion of the professional learning. The direct observations were then coded for

leadership themes. The researcher also examined the document artifacts. The practices

derived from the interviews, observations, and document review were analyzed for

themes and patterns. The research findings are included in the summary of findings and

identified if it defies or confirms previous research (Yin, 2014).

It was important for the researcher to have several evidence pieces to ensure

triangulation within the research. Triangulation is the combining of multiple datasets to

identify themes (Creswell, 2014). To ensure internal validity, the researcher completed a

triangulation of the interviews, observations, and document review to identify common

themes and patterns within the research. The researcher compared all three data sources

and noted the themes around the leadership practices. In this study, the researcher

examined the interview responses with the observation notes and document artifacts to

identify the common themes. The triangulation of these data sources allowed for identifying themes regarding the leadership practices and how districts can use these practices for identifying future turnaround leaders (Yin, 2014).

Limitations

There are three specific limitations to this research study. The first being the small number of participants since they had to be current principals who have already experienced success leading school turnaround initiatives of low-performing schools. This did not include principals at the beginning stages of turnaround initiatives or retired principals who have experienced proven success in their careers. Additionally, the participant selection was from urban schools and limited by the only districts that would consent to the study.

The second limitation to this specific research study is self-reporting. The participants are answering the questions based on self- identified leadership strategies and practices. The leadership strategy may or may not have been implemented in the way that the leader perceives.

The third limitation is the bias that I bring to the research. As a turnaround principal, I have experienced the success and struggles of transforming a low-performing school. I understand that my personal experiences may impact the interpretation of the data collected in this research study. To ensure validity to the research knowing my personal biases, I utilized member checking and triangulation to ensure that the research was credible.

Summary

This qualitative research case study focused on the leadership practices of five turnaround principals in the state of Ohio. The participants were invited and agreed to be part of the case study. The researcher collected three forms of data and applied triangulation to ensure the validity of the research. The participants agreed to an interview, observations, and a review of documents or artifacts as evidence of school performance and building leadership. The results of this study will provide districts with evidence of the leadership practices needed for a turnaround principal in low-performing schools. The information discovered in this case study will be able to align the principal's leadership actions that directly impact success for school turnaround.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This research study was conducted to identify the leadership practices of turnaround leaders in both elementary and secondary public schools located in the Midwest area of the United States. The principals in this study have successfully improved their schools' state report card. Each principal focused on closing the achievement gap for the minority students and improved one or more Fs at least two letter grades on their state report card. By identifying the leadership practices of the turnaround principals, the study provided a perspective to learn from the principals by answering the following questions: How do turnaround principals measure their own success? Are turnaround initiatives sustainable in schools? How does the turnaround process impact the culture of the school? A qualitative case study was conducted to answer those questions. Four building administrators, three head principals and one assistant principal, participated in the study. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews.

The first section of the chapter provides descriptive information of the sample, background of the school district, and the recruitment process in which the turnaround principals were selected. This is followed by a description of my experiences engaging with the principals with conducted semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and the document review process. The additional sections of the chapter provide a description of each turnaround principal and an analysis of each principal's leadership practices examining how they measure their own success, if the turnaround initiatives are sustainable, and how the turnaround process has impacted the culture of their schools.

Additionally, I triangulate the data for each participant's semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document review. In the last section of the chapter I answer the three research questions, triangulate the data of all participants, and delineate the emerging themes derived from the analysis of the semi-structured interview data, direct observations, and document reviews.

School District Background

The Coral Hills School District is an urban school district in Ohio. Of the current enrollment of 11,318 students, the district's minority enrollment is 30%. State report card data show that the district and three participating schools had an F for Gap Closing beginning with the 2015-2016 school year. Coral Hills implemented a strategic improvement plan to address meeting the educational needs of students. The plan included placing specific principals with previous success in other environments into buildings that were receiving failing grades in meeting the needs of the minority students. Coral Hills School District and the participating schools in this study have proven success in moving the Gap Closing measure from an F to a B in the most recently available report card data of 2018-2019. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no current comparison data beyond the 2018-2019 state report card.

Description of Sample

To protect the confidentiality of the participants pseudonyms were used for all participants and the school district. Four principals agreed to participate in this study to examine the leadership practices of turnaround leaders. Although the research study was not limited to female participants only, all four principals who agreed to participate were women leading schools. Each participant has been a principal in the Coral Hills school

district for at least four years. On average, the participants have been building level administrators for 10 years with a range of 6 to 15 years. All of the participants have master's degrees, and one of the participants holds a doctorate degree. The student enrollment in the school buildings ranged from 260 to 1,340 students. All four participants served in other school districts prior to serving at Coral Hills. Each participant was tasked with implementing turnaround initiatives to improve building performance levels as measured by the state of Ohio. However, not all participants had formal training in turnaround leadership. Demographic data for each participant were collected during the interview process and from the Ohio Department of Education website. The demographical data of the participants and the schools they lead are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Principal Education Background

Pseudonym	Highest degree	Additional training	Years in admin	Years in current position	Student enrollment
Principal Martin	Ed.D.	Harvard Turnaround Leadership	9	7	260
Principal Jones	M.Ed.	N/A	10	6	350
Associate Principal Smith	M.Ed.	Trauma Informed Care and Instructional Practices	6	6	1,340
Principal Gomez	M.Ed.	N/A	15	4	1,340

Table 3

Principal School Demographics

Pseudonym	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multi-racial	Economically disadvantaged	English learners	Students with disabilities
Principal Martin	NA	7%	12%	78%	3%	82%	7%	9%
Principal Jones	4%	8%	14%	70%	4%	70%	7%	10%
Associate Principal Smith	4%	5%	11%	79%	1%	46%	2%	13%
Principal Gomez	4%	5%	11%	79%	1%	46%	2%	13%

Recruitment Process

Prior to the study commencing, invitations were sent via email to 10 Coral Hills district principals. Although multiple attempts were made to gain participants, only three committed to being part of the study. A fourth participant was obtained through a committed participant. The participant requested that both the building principal and assistant principal be able to share their experiences since they were working as a cohesive team through the turnaround initiatives. Due to the low participant response rate, random selection was not utilized. After receipt of the signed informed consent, emails were sent to the participants to set a date and time to conduct the semi-structured interview, observation, and request for documents to be reviewed. All communication, interviews, and observations were completed through email, phone calls, and secured video conferencing software due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Principal Profiles

This section provides a description of the principals who agreed to participate in this research study on examining the leadership practices of turnaround principals. I have provided a background of the principal's key leadership practice that has contributed to their success in improving the gap closing measure and subgroup data in their schools based on the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and direct observations. Each principal in this study has been in their building for at least four years and improved the gap closing measure on the state report card from an F to a B. A description of each principal follows using a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality in the research study.

Participant 1: Principal Martin

Principal Martin has been the leader of her building for seven years. She believes that collaboration has the greatest impact on the academic success of her building. Principal Martin emphasizes the importance of collaboration at the building level and at the district level. She believes that the building and district must work in unison to ensure that everyone has the resources needed and removes barriers for the educators in her building. She believes this level of collaboration builds strong relationships and buy-in. Principal Martin attributes her successful work around the shared vision to the level of collaboration that has developed in the building over her seven years. The work produced by her staff is evidence that they share the vision and are committed and not just compliant. She ensures that she is a learner with her staff so that they see there is a partnership in all that they accomplish together. According to Principal Martin, this level of collaboration has also changed the culture of the school. Her staff can often be found

volunteering to tutor students and staying after school to provide extended enrichment activities. School data for daily and after school attendance, student surveys, and staff surveys support the fact that students feel welcomed, nurtured, challenged, and supported at school.

Participant 2: Principal Jones

Principal Jones has been leading her school for six years. Prior to her appointment as principal of the school, there were six previous principals in seven years. Principal Jones had to figure out how to build trust and show commitment to the school since the staff did not believe she would remain at the school beyond a year. She attributes the success of her school to clear expectations around the shared vision with continuous monitoring and celebrating the accomplishments of her staff and students. Principal Jones ensures that her behaviors, communications, and interactions are always in alignment with the vision; and she is modeling the same behaviors and expectations she would expect from others. Not only does she hold her staff accountable, Principal Jones believes in being a reflective practitioner and provides opportunities for staff to provide feedback regularly.

Participant 3: Principal Smith

Associate Principal Smith has been a leader of her building for six years. It was clear from the interview that there is shared leadership amongst the administrative team and teachers. Associate Principal Smith is a proven instructional leader in the building, working collaboratively with administration and teachers. She believes in creating an environment that fosters collaboration and encourages staff to be innovative and take on leadership roles. Associate Principal Smith uses student growth and staff growth as a

measure of success for the school. She recognizes that the Covid-19 pandemic has created challenges; however, it provided an opportunity to determine how sustainable their initiatives were in the face of an educational crisis. A large portion of her focus this school year was not only student academic success but bringing students back together and focusing on the climate and culture of the school.

Participant 4: Principal Gomez

Principal Gomez has been leading her building for four years. She entered the leadership role following an interim principal who was filling in for the previous building principal who decided to leave the position. Her first challenge was to open communication to begin to change the climate and culture of the school. Her next step was to ensure that the staff was working together and developed a shared vision to align the work and get commitment. It was clear from the interview that there is shared leadership amongst the administrative team and teachers. This was evident by the request of Principal Gomez to include Associate Principal Smith in the study. Principal Gomez believes that strong collaboration and enabling others to take leadership roles are what has made their initiatives sustainable. Although she does not have current state data as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, building level data indicate that the initiatives implemented have sustained throughout the crisis. Principal Gomez ensures that she is modeling for her staff and supporting them in taking leadership roles within the building.

The state data displayed in Table 4 shows that under the leadership of the turnaround principals school report card data improved. As a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the most recent data for this study ranges from 2015-2019. The data

displayed shows the progression for two state indicators; Gap Closing (GC), and Progress (P).

Table 4

State Report Card Data (GC-Gap Closing, P-Progress)

| Pseudonym | 2015-20216 | | 2016-2017 | | 2017-2018 | | 2018-2019 | |
	GC	P	GC	P	GC	P	GC.	P
Principal Martin	F	D	F	D	B	D	B	B
Principal Jones	F	F	F	F	D	F	B	B
Associate Principal Smith	F	F	F	F	F	D	B	C
Principal Gomez	F	F	F	F	F	D	B	C

Note. GC =Gap Closing and P=Progress

Figure 2

State Report Card Data

State Report Card Data
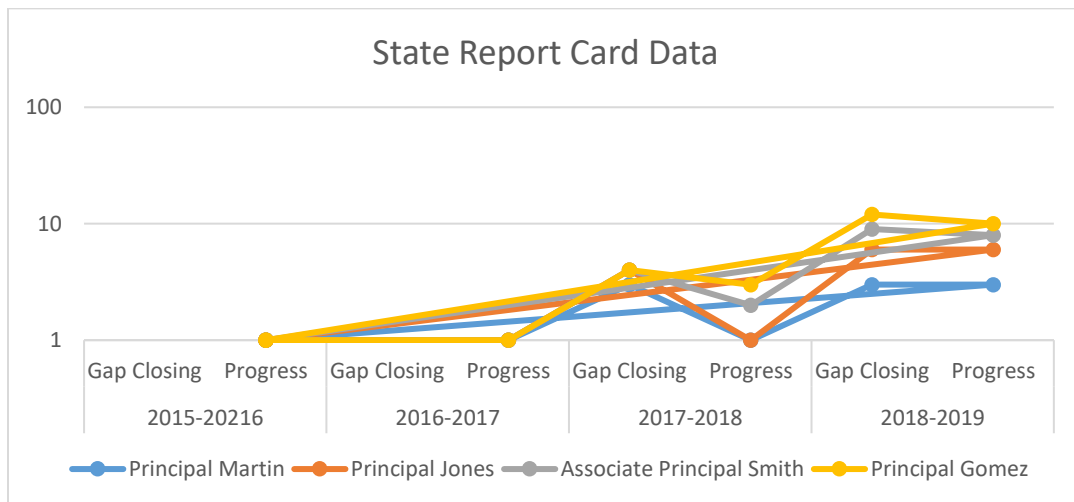
Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

The participants in this research study agreed to participate in one interview lasting 60-90 minutes. The interviews were conducted via secured video conferencing software and were recorded to reference during the analysis of the data. The semi-structured interviews began with introductions and small talk about their day, their school year, and other topics they may have chosen to discuss. This helped to establish trustworthiness between myself and the participants. The interviews began with answering the demographic questionnaire if not previously submitted and moved on to the research questions. Each participant spoke freely and answered all the questions asked regarding their experiences. The participants described specific situations that provided clarity to their responses. Clarifying questions were asked when necessary if a response was unclear. I thanked each participant at the conclusion of the interview for their willingness to participate and confirmed the time for the observation. A transcription of each interview was completed within 24 hours. During the analysis of the interview, data remained securely stored in one location by the researcher. At the conclusion of the research study all interview data were stored in a locked cabinet at Youngstown State University for three years. The interviews provided the most personal depth into the leadership practices of each participant.

Direct Observations

Direct observations were conducted after the completion of the interviews. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the district limited the number of nonessential visitors to the buildings. Therefore, video conferencing software was used for the direct

observations. Initially, I was scheduled to observe staff meetings. However, staff meetings had to be rescheduled and canceled due to the urgent needs of supporting the staff, students, and community through the pandemic. As a result, I was able to observe one admin leadership team meeting and two building leadership team meetings. All three meetings had clear agendas and foci. The three participating schools referenced the district focus and narrowed it to their buildings and teacher behaviors/actions and student performance data. A portion of each meeting was used to address the urgent needs that were continuously changing as each school was navigating the crisis brought on by the pandemic.

Document Reviews

Three documents were reviewed as part of this research study. The first of the documents was the most recent 5 years of the state of Ohio report cards obtained from the Ohio Department of Education. The subgroup and gap closing data were reviewed from the report cards. Additionally, the participants submitted their school improvement plans and one document of their choice that highlighted evidence of staff professional development planning and implementation. The documents included agendas from either administrative team meetings or running agendas for building leadership team meetings. All documents submitted by the principals highlighted the focus of their leadership and how they provide professional learning opportunities to their staff to further develop their professional skills to impact student learning. The comparison of the documents provided a greater understanding of the leadership practices in implementing turnaround initiatives in their schools.

Coding

Each source of data was transcribed and analyzed within 24 hours of the data collection to ensure the most accurate data. Each transcript was coded to identify categories and themes in the research collected. While there were very few isolated categories that emerged by a signal participant, the coding process revealed key categories that were shared by all the participants. During this process it was helpful to review previous research and the conceptual framework utilized and referenced in this study. The findings in this study were then compared against previous research on leadership practices of turnaround principles; the conclusion of this process was key themes which were generated from each research question.

Audit Trail

An audit trail was utilized in order to have fidelity to the data collection and coding process. This process ensured that categories and themes were refined through the process and the most emergent and notable themes were selected.

Member Checking

To ensure that no participant's data were misrepresented in the research, member checking was utilized at the completion of each analysis of the data collection process by sharing the interpretations of the data with the participant to ensure their words and thoughts were captured appropriately for this research study.

Triangulation

Triangulation of data collected was done per participant using interviews, direct observations, and document reviews. To enhance the validity of the data using triangulation, data analysis was completed for each participant as it was collected during

the study. Comparisons to the data collected were done using the document reviews, observations, and interviews. The interview data provided the most evidence to answer the research questions. The observations and document reviews gave clarification and reinforcement to answers provided during the interviews. Additionally, triangulation of the multiple data points provided the opportunity to identify any themes that emerged in the study from the research questions. The relationship between the three data sources and the research questions are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Triangulation Table Research Questions and Sources of Data Collected

Research Questions	Interview	Direct Observations	Document Review
Question1: Measuring Success	X	X	X
Question 2: Sustainability	X		X
Question 3: Culture	X	X	X

Note. The table shows the correlation between the research questions and the sources of data collection.

Research Questions

In this section, the results of the research questions based on the data collected from all four participants are reported. The data are triangulated from all the participants to contribute additional research findings to the scholarly literature on the leadership practices of turnaround principals. Themes that emerged from the data for the research questions are reported.

Research Question 1: How Do Turnaround Principals Measure Their Own Success?

All five participants were first asked what they believe to be the role of leadership in their current position. Principal Martin stated she believes leadership is the responsibility of creating opportunities to grow and strengthen the skill set of the people to make the school a better place. Principal Jones believes that creating an environment where everyone works together for the greater good is key to leadership. Associate Principal Smith sees the responsibility of a leader as service to others, students, staff, and community. Finally, Principal Jones believes her role as a leader is to collaborate and model.

Next, the participants were asked a series of interview questions concerning leadership. Document reviews and direct observation notes were then triangulated against the interview questions to identify the themes that emerged around the research question: How do turnaround principals measure their own success? Although there was evidence of reference to state report card data in the documents reviewed as well as during discussions that occurred during both the interviews and direct observations, it is just one piece of data that all four participants use to measure their own success. The four themes that emerged from the data on how turnaround principals measure their own success are: student growth, collaboration, relationships, and feedback.

Student Growth

All four participants in this research study stated that student growth was an important data point used to measure their own success. Principal Martin stated, "Although I do look at student achievement, it is not my measure of success. I look to make sure all students are making progress." Principal Martin and her team have devised

action steps in the school improvement plan that address individual student growth as well as growth amongst groups of students. There is a process for monitoring and adjusting based on measurable goals set by the team.

Principal Jones looked at student academic growth and social emotional growth as a measure of success. She stated the global Covid-19 pandemic brought to light the need to focus on social emotional learning in order to achieve student academic growth. Principal Jones emphasized that she can only measure her success if she has set clear goals and expectations. Additionally, she has implemented processes to monitor and adjust if they are not meeting the goals. Principal Jones also recognized that celebrations need to occur as benchmarks toward success are being met.

Associate Principal Smith stated that her success is measured by "knowing where kids are and moving them from point A to B ensuring academic growth." There is a clear plan for knowing and monitoring how the kids are performing and growing. The monitoring plan includes not losing track of the student who may be growing at a slower pace or not growing academically.

Principal Gomez emphasized student growth measures on multiple data points to ensure her success as a turnaround principal. The data need to be analyzed by teams to ensure the expertise of all professionals is being utilized to ensure student growth. Analysis includes monitoring the goals, clarifying the goals if necessary, reinforcing what is working, and refining when necessary.

Collaboration

Another theme that emerged from the data sources for all the participants is collaboration. Each participant stressed the importance of involving all stakeholders in

the work. This included all staff members, students, families, and community members. Principal Jones stated, "It's a heavy load and if I try to do it on my own, I will fail my students." She encourages and creates opportunities for her staff to work collaboratively during the week and on professional learning days. The work is aligned to the needs of the students. Principal Martin believes collaboration starts at the school level and reaches out to the district. Her work around collaboration means aligning the school to the district to remove any barriers that might impact the success of her students.

Principal Gomez and Associate Principal Smith stated the importance of using the strengths of those within the school community to meet the needs of the students. Evidence of this collaboration is clear in action steps within the school improvement plans to meet individual student needs, not always a teacher of the student. The action step may be monitored by a community partner or staff member.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all the principals noted the challenges with collaboration outside of the building that were essential to their work. Due to restrictions within the schools, individuals and groups (volunteers or organizations) that may have been part of supporting student needs prior to the pandemic were not brought into the school.

Relationships

Although one may assume relationships are a natural part of collaboration, it is important to recognize this emerging theme from the research data. Each principal noted that they had to first develop relationships prior to being able to implement action steps that would begin the turnaround process. Principal Martin stated, "I would have no success without first building relationships; building relationships is part of getting

commitment to the work." Each principal stated the importance of the school community

first having trust in their leadership so that they could develop relationships. The need to

develop relationships starts with the principal but also needs to be developed amongst the

staff in order to successfully collaborate and work together for the benefit of the students.

Principal Jones stated, "Once the relationships are built, collaboration can occur around

common goals." The research collected in this study confirmed that staff working

together in a school toward a common goal further created collaboration across

departments and grade levels to monitor the progress toward the goals. Teacher-based

teams are sharing results with building leadership teams. In turn, building leadership

teams share results with the district leadership teams. This process involves the district

and enables the school to get additional support that might be needed as a result of the

data and progress toward the goals.

Feedback

Throughout the research study each participant emphasized the use of feedback to

evaluate their performance. Principal Martin recognized that early in her career she did

not do surveys and get feedback. She has since changed that practice and stressed the

importance of feedback. Acquiring feedback allows her the opportunity to regularly

reflect on her professional practice and improve her leadership skills. Although the Ohio

Principal Evaluation (OPES) gives feedback on principal standards, it is the feedback

from the stakeholders that Principal Martin values.

Principal Jones provides regular surveys to her staff to monitor her professional

growth or success. She creates surveys that have open-ended questions. Principal Jones

stated these open-ended survey questions provide more thoughtful responses from her

staff and help her in identifying her areas of refinement as a building leader. She sees this as an additional tool for building trust and modeling professional growth with the staff. This is because the staff regularly sees her seeking feedback and then reflecting on the feedback and in turn using it as a tool to improve her own practice.

Associate Principal Smith along with Principal Gomez model the importance of collecting and reflecting on feedback to improve their practice. They both have implemented an administrative feedback form that is completed by department chairs, teacher-based teams, students, and families. The surveys are used for personal reflection and make any necessary changes if any concerns arise in the surveys. They both see the survey as a positive in both improving their practice and keeping communication open with stakeholders. They believe this has built trust and transparency within the community.

Research Question 2: Are Turnaround Initiatives Sustainable in Schools?

All of the participants in this research study had proven gains from their turnaround initiatives prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The recurring themes that attributed to the sustainability of the initiatives were shared leadership, research-based action steps, and district alignment. However, three of the participants felt it was too soon from returning to in-person learning to gauge if the same initiatives implemented prior to the pandemic were sustainable. This is due to the fact that their schools were fully remote, and students did not return to in-person learning for a year. This sudden change in the school model caused some initiatives to no longer be implemented. However, all of the building and district level school improvement plans showed sustainability in the initiatives prior to the schools shifting to remote learning. For each participant in this

research study, sustainability is attributed to the shared leadership of the building leadership teams and administration in creating clear goals and expectations. These goals are created collaboratively and are not mandated top down. Additionally, these goals for each school were created based on several data points and the action steps were researched based on best practices. The district plan also includes alignment to the building level school improvement plans so that everyone is using the same language and has a commitment to the work.

Research Question 3: How Does the Turnaround Process Impact the Culture of the School?

The school culture is the shared beliefs and values of the school. Addressing school culture was a priority for each participant in this study as they brought both staff and students together for in-person learning after a year of being in a fully remote learning environment. Not only were the students and staff remote from their homes; many were also in isolation from others due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The resulting themes that emerged from the data in this research study around school culture are collective teacher efficacy, shared leadership, and student data.

Collective Teacher Efficacy

Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE) is the shared belief that, regardless of a student's background, each member of the school staff can have a positive impact on student achievement. Each principal recognizes the need to build trust throughout the research study and each believes CTE is another way to build trust amongst their staff. Principal Martin believes that developing CTE amongst the staff is a key factor in any turnaround success. The staff must believe that what they do does make a difference. She

creates opportunities for collaboration that greatly develop the CTE so that teachers are not working in isolation. This is evidenced through the document review in which building goals and district goals are aligned and the focus is clarity, communication, and consistency. I asked for clarification on the focus areas and Principal Martin stated:

> Clarity is to ensure we know our goals and strategies and work together to achieve those goals. Communication is the collaboration component. I ensure I am clearly communicating our goals and keeping focused in all meetings and providing time for collaboration for teams to communicate with each other to work toward the shared vision. Consistency is my guarantee that I am not going to continuously change goals, strategies, or focus. We believe in the work that we are doing, and I need to ensure that I do not create barriers or disrupt the work.

Prior to the pandemic in fall of 2019, one of Principal Jones' main focuses was CTE. She recognized the importance of making this a priority and has implemented practices that will further develop the CTE within her staff. She has emphasized teams this year and created a schedule that built staff collaboration into the workday. She is regularly recognizing individual strengths and creating opportunities for individuals to lead work. Through the document review, it was evident that each committee or team was working toward shared goals, and the documents showed evidence of a teacher collective efficacy of the goals and their impact on student success. Conversations during the observation showed additional evidence of CTE as one teacher reminded another as she was discussing the home life of a child, "Remember, what do we impact? Do you believe the work we are doing will help this student?" The second teacher reflected to the goals and her role in supporting students and the goal being discussed, "You're right, what we

are doing will give him the interventions needed." This is allowing everyone to see the professional expertise of the group and recognize the impact they have on student academic success when they believe in each other and work together.

Prior to this year, Principal Gomez tasked Associate Principal Smith with redoing the master schedule to ensure teacher-based teams could meet regularly during the week. They both recognized that this year was more difficult to meet at times due to the staffing shortage that faced districts across the country as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the work did not stop and evidence of a culture of CTE was visible through teacher actions. The administrative team received invitations to meetings that were occurring after school on a voluntary basis since the teams were unable to meet during the day. Principal Gomez stated in the interview process, "Leadership is creating the opportunities to collaborate." She followed up with the importance of creating opportunities of modeling collaboration by working with her building leadership team, department chairs, and teacher-based teams. Both Principal Gomez and Associate Principal Smith emphasized that collaboration is most effective when teachers are working toward shared goals and believe in their responsibility in supporting students to achieve success. This belief that the team models collaboration and creates opportunities for the teaching staff to collaborate was evidenced in the direct observation of the leadership team meeting. The leadership team was focused on teacher success and how to continue to support the collective work of the teachers. The meeting was used to review feedback from walkthroughs and attendance at teacher-based team meetings. The leadership team found evidence that the teachers were implementing the strategies that would be used to meet the shared goals for student success. Additionally, the leadership

team found that each teacher-based team aligned the team goals to the shared goals of the school and district. Principal Gomez stated, "This intentional planning and implementing is ensuring that we are working towards the same goals."

Shared Leadership

Data collected throughout this research study show evidence of shared leadership. Each principal participant in this study identified creating a shared vision with their staff and community. Each principal participant had evidence through the data analysis of shared leadership opportunities and utilizing the expertise of their teachers. Document reviews showed evidence of shared leadership for each school. Both Principal Martin and Principal Jones submitted school improvement documents that showed evidence of shared leadership. Both documents had task completion timelines aligned to strategic implementation of strategies towards the building goals. On each of the documents neither principal was named for holding responsibility over monitoring action steps. These were not logistical or functional-based action steps but staff development action steps.

The school improvement plan submitted by Principal Jones had specific action steps for implementing best practices in the classroom as identified by the team. One of the action steps was ensuring peer classroom observations of best practices following the team developed protocol. This action step did state that Principal Jones would assist with creating the peer observation schedule. However, implementation and analysis of the observations were handled by team members. Additionally, meeting notes showed the building leadership team works collaboratively with the principal, sharing leadership roles amongst the team. This was evidenced by the building school improvement plan

action steps that stated what teachers would be sharing the results of the best practice strategy observations during the upcoming professional development day and how they would model the best practices during their presentations. Principal Jones stated, "To develop shared leadership it is my responsibility to move them to a place that they may not go on their own, build their confidence, support them, and encourage them to act."

During the direct observation of Principal Martin there was evidence of shared leadership from the beginning of the meeting. Principal Martin started the meeting by stating, "Let's begin with reviewing our goals that we have determined to be a priority." Additionally, as the observation progressed, Principal Martin went on to discuss an upcoming professional day. During the discussion Principal Martin called on the two teachers who will be leading the morning of the professional development day, "Do you guys need any help or assistance with your presentation to the staff?" During the interview process, Principal Gomez stated she believes in shared leadership and works collaboratively with her building leadership team to ensure decisions are not made top down. This was evidenced in the direct observation when the leadership team discussed the shared vision and that building leadership team would be handling all of the professional learning that would occur during their upcoming professorial development day.

Principal Gomez and Associate Principal Smith value shared leadership amongst their staff. Principal Gomez stressed during the semi-structured interview, "I believe in working together for the benefit of our students. If I mandate everything, teachers work for compliance and are not committed to the work. This does not help our students when teachers do not believe in the value of the work and share in the responsibilities."

Additionally, Principal Gomez went on to state the importance of teachers providing feedback to one another based on their work within the school improvement plan. "Department chairs, building leadership team, and mentors all provide feedback on our implementation and progress to create a culture owning the work and leading together." Associate Principal Smith stated during the interview process, "In this building we believe that we must all work together and share responsibility in order to have the greatest impact on our students." The belief of shared leadership expressed by both Principal Gomez and Associate Principal Smith was evidenced in the document review. Meeting notes and the school improvement plan provided evidence that teachers are not only responsible for monitoring the implementation of specific action steps but are then tasked with the responsibility of sharing with the staff monitoring data and providing additional support where needed.

This shared leadership creates a culture where people are committed to the work and the success of the students. Students in turn know the expectations and see the staff working as a collaborative team and not in isolation of one another.

Student Data

It was clear in analyzing the data in this research study that data were the driving factors in each decision and action step for the participants represented in this study. Student growth data were used as a measure for determining each participant's success. Additionally, student data are used in examining the culture of each building in this study. Each principal participant submitted both their school improvement plans and the district improvement plan. There was evidence of alignment of the individual school plans to the district improvement plans. The district improvement plan was focused on

the district student achievement data and growth toward the achievement goal. Each of the school plans submitted by the participants used correct student achievement data to determine student growth goals toward improving student achievement. Additionally, each of the participants' improvement plans showed evidence of monitoring subgroup data. Although the schools represented both elementary and secondary levels, the plan alignments to the district and building goals were evident. Through the document review, it was discovered that the action steps in all three plans showed intentionality in both identifying and monitoring action steps. Specific action steps for each school monitored standards-based instruction, literacy strategies, and the teacher implementation of best practice strategies. The plans monitored adult actions and identified student outcome based on the action steps. Each plan additionally monitored each subgroup to ensure no student group is experiencing a deficiency in showing growth toward achievement.

During the semi-structured interviews each principal made statements about the importance of the school improvement plans and monitoring the implementation. Principal Martin stated, "We need to be evidenced-based thinkers and use the data to implement change, not feelings." Principal Jones stated, "You need to clearly monitor student growth throughout the year. You use the data to celebrate and make adjustments as needed." Associate Principal Smith stated, "In order to ensure students are learning, you need to know where they are starting and identify where they need to be and measure the growth throughout." Principal Gomez stated, "You will only know if you are successful if you have a plan and monitor student outcome data."

Each plan went beyond student achievement data and had action steps and monitoring of social emotional support. For example, each plan had an action step for

identifying students who would fall under a tier II level of support and listed the staff members who would support those specific students. Each principal participant discussed, during the semi-structured interviews, the importance of the student feeling as though they belong, being loved, being challenged, and being supported. Principal Martin stated, "We need to love our students and appreciate them. We need to build relationships and ensure we have supports for students who are experiencing behavior difficulties or feel as though they do not belong." Principal Jones stated:

I believe my most important role is to first make sure students feel safe. They are not able to learn if they do not feel safe in school. I need to monitor how my students and staff feel and make the adjustments needed to ensure relationships are built and students are loved, supported, and challenged.

Associate Principal Smith stated:

Relationships need to be built and we need to monitor how our students feel about school. If a student does not feel safe and loved, they will not want to come to school. This can prevent them from learning and not graduating.

Principal Gomez stated:

Kids need to feel connected to their school. I need to monitor the student lens and ensure that the school is providing the supports outside of academics that are needed so that the student can be challenged and focus on learning.

The principals all recognized that if a child did not feel as though they belonged or were wanted at the school, the child would not have success at school. The participants were using student data points to measure these components. Data used in all four schools were student surveys, attendance data, student discipline referral data, and

student positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) data as well as student extra-curricular data to ensure that there were extended learning opportunities or activities available for all students.

The themes derived from the research are summarized in Table 6 with examples for the data collected.

Table 6

Themes and Participant Quotes

Research Questions	Themes	Examples from the Research
Question1: Measuring Success	Student Growth	"Looking for a minimum of 5% student growth each year"
		"Track student growth to make sure achievement measures are met"
		"Know exactly where students are at academically and what needs to happen to ensure growth"
	Collaboration	"Collaborate with the staff, students, families, and community"
		"Collaborate with staff and community"
		"Collaborate and make sure your staff has what they need"
	Relationships	"Allows lead with transparency and build trust"
		"Open door policy to build trust and get to know my staff and community"
		"Build relationships with your entire community, not just a few"
		"Build a culture of trust and develop relationships"
	Feedback	"I welcome feedback from the department chairs, grade level teams,

		and community. It allows me to professional reflect my practice."
		"Give immediate feedback on teacher performance and welcome immediate feedback on my performance, always have an exit ticket with open ended questions"
		"Give feedback on instruction, be an instructional leader"
		"reflective feedback helps me improve my area of refinement in my leadership"
Question 2: Sustainability	Shared Leadership	"It is a collaborative relationship within each committee and decision making, we share the work load"
		"Collectively monitor implementation and share accountability"
		Evidenced in School Improvement plan for implementation, timeline, and responsible person(s)
		"Shared leadership, it's a heavy load, you can't do it alone"
	District Alignment	"Work toward a common goal" School Improvement Plans identified district goal & school goal with specific action steps"
		"Collaborate at the building and district level to ensure resources are available and the work is aligned"
		"Clear goals, with monitoring and celebration at the building and district level"
Question 3: Culture	Student Data	"Graduation rate increase"
		"Evidenced based thinker, data shows change is needed, not what I feel"
		"If data shows something isn't working, change it, don't wait"

		"PBIS student survey data to know how students are feeling about their school and environment"
		"Continuously monitor student data for achievement, discipline, and attendance"
	Shared Leadership	"Share the workload and involve the students."
		Shared leadership p of the School Improvement Plans evidenced in action steps
		"Shared leadership and everyone believes in the work"
	Collective Efficacy	"Everyone work together toward the shared goals and vision"
		"Model alongside and all work together toward, sharing a collective belief it is possible"
		"Everyone works toward a common goal and beliefs in the ability of the team"

Note. Table 6 displays participant quotes aligned with emergent themes and research questions

Summary

The data collection and analysis from the semi-structured interviews, observations, and document reviews of the four turnaround principals in this study provide a lens into their leadership practices. The turnaround principals in this research study participated in semi-structured interviews, allowed for virtual direct observation of meetings, and provided documents that highlighted their leadership in how they measure their own success, if their turnaround initiatives are sustainable, and how the turnaround process impacts the culture of the school. All four principals selected for this study are from the same urban school district in the state of Ohio and have successfully improved

the GAP Closing Measure on the state of Ohio report card from an F to B. All four principals served as building level administrators and have an average of 10 years as a building level administrator.

In triangulating all of the data from the analysis of the semi-structured interview, document reviews, and direct observations from each research question three main themes emerged from the data and are supported in the research of each participant. Each theme is supported in the research data from the research questions. The three main themes derived from the research are: Shared Leadership, Collective Teacher Efficacy, and having a Shared Vision based on data.

In conclusion, each participant identified important personal and professional practices for future principals tasked with implementing immediate change in a turnaround setting. Principal Martin emphasized the importance of being a continuous learner and modeling your learning with your staff. Do not ever be complacent with the status quo. Principal Jones reminded future leaders of the importance of having both a mentor and sounding board, a person you can trust to talk through situations and help provide professional guidance. In addition, she learned through the Covid-19 pandemic, have a shut off time where you are home and disconnected from work. Associate Principal Smith recognized the importance of building mutual trust and respect. She stressed, "we won't always agree, but this creates a culture of professionalism where we can agree to disagree." Principal Gomez's advice to future leaders "own it." Do not try to hide things and cover them up, own it, make corrections, and work with your staff. They will have a greater respect for you in the end.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Introduction

A turnaround leader is a leader who is able to go into an organization and implement immediate changes that reveal improved results. The changes implemented range from first order changes (or those changes that quickly improve a process and can be reversed) to second order changes that are irreversible and the beliefs, values, and norms of the organization are completely changed. The leader may change logistical processes during first order change that assist daily transitions in running more smoothly. Second order changes come after the leader has built trust and relationships during first order changes. Second order changes in a school are imbedded in the professional practice of the teachers. Teachers must be reflective of their practice and become continuous learners. This can be very personal for a teacher to recognize their areas of needed refinement so that they are able to continuously improve professionally. As a result of second order changes being personal, there is initially resistance. However, these second order changes are necessary for teachers to acknowledge that their actions have a direct impact in the success of the school; and this belief changes the culture of the school. Turnaround leadership is the ability of an individual to bring improved results to an organization by working through first and second order change. This research student examined the leadership practices of turnaround leaders in an urban district in the state of Ohio. Leadership practices that contributed to the turnaround success as measured by the gap closing indicator on the state report card were examined. The sample included three building principals and one associate principal. Although not the intent of the study, the

sample included all female principals. The sample represented acting principals of both elementary and secondary level schools. Semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews were used for data collection and analysis.

In order to gain insight into the leadership practices implemented by each participant and to examine how those practices impacted their schools, the following research questions were asked: How do turnaround principals measure their own success? Are turnaround initiatives sustainable in schools? How does the turnaround process impact the culture of the school? This research study supports existing literature on transformational leadership and instructional leadership. The participants in this study implemented processes needed for school improvement by focusing on instruction and school culture instead of focusing primarily on managerial duties (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Hassel et al., 2020).

The organization of this chapter is as follows: Introduction, Summary of Findings, Conclusions, Discussion, Recommendations for Future Research, and Summary. The critical findings from the analyzed data in the study are highlighted and the conclusions are discussed. The patterns and themes show relevance to the study and the findings are connected to established research. Additionally, this chapter identifies any limitations and provides suggestions to further the research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study and final conclusions.

Summary of the Findings

Through the analysis of the data on the practices of four turnaround principals, eight findings emerged: student growth, collaboration, relationships, feedback, student, data, shared leadership, district alignment, and collective teacher efficacy. In this section,

the findings that emerged from the analysis are discussed and connected to literature and the theoretical frameworks. Two of the themes that emerged are not connected to previous literature reviewed in this study but emerged from the data gathered and analyzed in this research study.

Student Growth

Analysis of the data collected in this research study showed evidence that all four participants use student growth to measure success. This was measured on both the Ohio State report card and through formative and summative assessments examined by teacher-based teams throughout the year. The participants also emphasized that benchmark goals need to be set with clear expectations for instruction and monitored to achieve student academic success. Principal Martin referred to student growth stating, "Although I do look at student achievement, it is not my measure of success. I look to make sure all students are making progress." This process ensured the students are continually making growth toward their academic goals. Research showed that leaders who focused on teaching and learning positively impact student academic achievement (Bloom & Owens, 2011; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Persell, 2013). Principal Jones, along with Associate Principal Smith, emphasized the importance of knowing where kids are academically, setting goals for growth, and then monitoring adjustments to ensure the students are moving from point A to B to ensure academic growth. Principal Gomez provided examples of using multiple data points for student growth and explained how a team shares the responsibility of monitoring and refining as needed.

Monitoring student growth and setting high expectations requires creating a school culture where everyone understands the data and uses it as a decision-making tool

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for adjusting instruction. Fullan's (2011) research stated that the building leader must ensure that the focus on data must be around closing the achievement gap, and the leader must model that focus to the building to emphasize the importance of student growth. Each participant in this research study was able to improve the Gap Closing score on their school's individual state report cards from an F to a B by focusing on student growth and monitoring progress towards goals while focusing on subgroup growth data.

Collaboration

Each participant in this research study acknowledged that involving all stakeholders in the work was necessary to ensure success. Principal Jones stated, "It's a heavy load; and if I try on my own, I will fail my students." The participants all agreed that they must model collaboration to create a culture of collaboration in their schools. There was also an emphasis amongst the principal participants that they must collaborate at a district level to ensure alignment. Principal Martin created opportunities at the building level for collaboration and moved to ensure collaboration occurred at the district level to ensure alignment and support of the building level work. Two of the participants discussed collaborating with community to use the strengths of others to meet the needs of students. Evidence of collaboration for each participant was found throughout the data collection process. The research of Fink and Markholt (2013) referenced earlier in this study showed that instruction is improved when teachers no longer work in isolation, and a culture of collaboration is created where teachers, building leaders, and stakeholders work together for the benefit of the students.

The work of Kouzes and Posner (2017) examined leaders in both the private business sector as well as public education, and they found that an effective leader who is

able to create a collaborative culture also creates a culture of support and trust within the organization. This finding is directly connected to the theoretical framework of transformational leadership; turnaround change must include collaboration (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Relationships

It is important to recognize relationships as an emerging theme from the research and not assume it is a natural progression from collaboration. The theoretical framework identified previously in this study is change theory. First order changes are implemented in order for the leader to build trust within the organization in order for second order change to occur. Second order changes are needed for the transformational leadership in a turnaround process; yet none of it is possible without trust (Burns, 1978; Levy, 1986). During the semi-structured interviews each of the participants in this research study spoke of the necessity of building relationships in order to build the trust needed to implement any processes for change. Principal Martin discussed that without relationships, she would not have the trust of the group in her leadership. She knows building relationships is the first step to getting commitment to the work. Principal Jones emphasized that collaboration around common goals could not begin until relationships are formed. Yukl's (2013) research noted earlier in this study also stated that there will only be a commitment to change if those within the organization trust the leader.

Feedback

Although the role of a building leader is to evaluate and provide feedback to their teachers, the participants in this research study spoke about receiving, not giving feedback. During the semi-structured interviews each participant spoke of the importance

of themselves using feedback to reflect and improve their practice just as they expect their teachers to do with the feedback they receive. Early in Principal Martin's career she did not create opportunities for staff to provide her with feedback. Since changing the practice and creating opportunities to receive feedback from her staff, she recognizes that it has made her a more reflective practitioner and has strengthened her leadership. Principal Jones continuously asks open-ended questions of her staff so that she is able to obtain thoughtful feedback that she uses to identify her own strengths and areas of refinement. Both Principal Gomez and Associate Principal Smith have a regular feedback form that is completed by department chairs, teacher-based teams, students, and families. These feedback forms give them an opportunity to reflect on their leadership from the lens of multiple stakeholders. Each participant spoke of the need to be transparent and welcome the feedback. According to the previously reviewed research of Fink and Markholt (2013), in order to obtain expertise an educator at any level needs to be willing to accept critical feedback in order to improve their practice. At no time should the building leader be resistant to feedback when it is a valuable tool to help them refine their professional practice and become a more effective leader for their community.

Student Data

Student data are identified as a separate finding from student growth because of the intentionality that each participant spoke of each in the findings. Although student growth was referred to by the participants to measure success, it was clear in the analysis of the data collected that student data were the bases for each decision and action step. Every decision was made based on many elements of student data not just student growth

measures. Student data were used to measure academic achievement and to reflect and examine the culture of the building.

Each participant submitted their school improvement plan and their district improvement plan. Each school showed alignment of their individual plans with the district plan using student data measures. The building level school improvement plans identified current achievement levels and set goals to improve achievement. Each plan showed evidence of monitoring student data and using student data in the decision-making process for student academic achievement. Each plan also had actions steps and monitoring of subgroups to intentionally ensure no student group was experiencing a deficit in student achievement. The plans monitored adult implementation of action steps and identified the student outcome data goals based on the current data. Principal Martin emphasized the importance of student data by stating, "we need evidenced-based thinkers and use the data to implement change, not feelings." Principal Jones stressed the importance of using student data to celebrate accomplishments and adjust as needed. Principal Gomez stated, "You only know if you are successful if you have a plan and monitor student outcome data."

During the semi-structured interviews, each participant spoke of the necessity for the students to feel as though they belonged, were loved, and supported in their schools. Principal Martin stated the importance of needing to love and appreciate her students and additionally having supports in place for any student exhibiting negative behaviors or feeling as though they don't belong. Evidence of each participant prioritizing the social emotional learning of the students was found in a separate climate portion each school improvement plan. Just as teachers make changes to instruction based on student data,

nonacademic student data were used in each school represented in this research study to ensure there were no barriers to students having access to learning. Each of the four plans used student surveys, attendance data, student discipline referral data, student positive behavior and supports (PBIS) data to measure the action steps focused on student belonging and social emotional learning. Both Principal Jones and Associate Principal Smith spoke of the importance of monitoring if students feel safe and cared for at school and used the data to make the necessary adjustments needed in the plan. Additionally, each plan showed evidence of action steps involving the culture of the building. The monitoring of each action step was the responsibility of identified staff members of the building not the administrative team. Just as teachers make changes to instruction based on student data, teachers work collectively with the administrative team and stakeholders to make changes to the culture of the building based on student data.

Each participant spoke on how the culture of the building changed when intentionally implementing and monitoring the social emotional supports. Using change theory as a theoretical framework in this research study, it is important to note that second order change that is needed to transform an organization can only occur when the change involves new norms, values, and beliefs (Levy, 1986). A belief system can be changed in a way that all teachers believe that their impact makes a difference for each student.

Shared Leadership

Throughout the data collection process and analysis, it was clear that each participant believed in and practiced shared leadership. Each participant believed that initiatives implemented under their leadership were sustainable because they did not

practice top-down leadership but shared leadership amongst members of the building. Evidence of collaboration in creating, implementing, and monitoring goals was found in the semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document review for each participant. The school improvement plans for each school provided evidence of shared leadership in the monitoring components in both the academic and climate portions of the plans. Throughout all four plans that the participants shared, there was evidence of implementation and monitoring responsibilities of all team members.

Principal Jones' school improvement plan showed evidence of shared leadership. Each action step was developed by the team as evidenced by meeting notes. In the plan, Principal Jones shared equal responsibility in monitoring and supporting the action steps as the other team members. The meeting notes showed and agendas confirmed that the school improvement plan was created collaboratively and additionally shared out to the staff by team members, not the administrative team. Principal Jones stated that her role is develop an environment of shared leadership that moves individuals to a place that they may not go on their own, support them, build their confidence, and encourage them to act.

During the direct observation of Principal Martin, the meeting began with, "Let's review our shared goals that we have determined are our priority." The direct observation was focused on preparing for an upcoming professional development day. The focus of the meeting was ensuring each member of the team was prepared for their portion of the professional learning that would be presented to the staff. The same evidenced was collected during Principal Gomez's direct observation where the teacher leaders were preparing for providing professional learning to their staff. Principal Gomez discussed the

importance of shared leadership during the semi-structured interview. She recognized that commitment comes from teachers being engaged in the decision making and implementation not from mandates. She stated that mandates create compliance, not commitment.

The transformational leadership theoretical framework used in this research study confirms that in order for sustainable change, leadership is shared amongst the administration and the teachers. The transformational leader is responsible for fostering an environment that supports and brings the collective group together in creating and working collectively toward shared vision (Hallinger, 2003).

District Alignment

Although not previously reviewed in the research literature of this case study, each of the participants in the study emphasized that their goals and processes aligned with the district goals. Two participants acknowledged that they had to build trust and show results with data. The staff needed to see that the processes implemented were effective and positively impacted students at the school level before their staff could see the connection to the district goals. This allowed for the big picture to come together and ensure supports are in place for all schools. Additionally, three participants noted that the importance of district alignment had contributed to the sustainability and creditability of the work. In each of the school improvement plans analyzed from the document review there was evidence of district alignment to the overall goals.

Collective Teacher Efficacy

This is a significant finding that has emerged throughout the analysis of the data in this research study. However, it was not a theme reviewed in the literature and is a new

finding. Each important finding throughout this research study shows evidence of collective teacher efficacy. Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE) is the belief of the group of teachers in a school that their sense of competence, or belief in their competence, has a direct correlation to student outcomes (Donohoo, 2017). The visible learning research of John Hattie (2016) has identified CTE as the number on factors that influence student achievement. Therefore, if a school leader in any environment is able to establish culture where the collective group believes that their competences directly improve student achievement, that school will show growth and improvement.

Through the data collection process of this research study, some participants explicitly stated they worked to develop CTE, while others gave examples of how they worked to bring the staff together celebrating and supporting using student data to bring the staff to realize their impact if they had CTE. During the semi-structured interview, Principal Martin stated that building CTE amongst her staff is what she believes to be the number one factor in the turnaround process because the staff must believe that they have a direct impact and make a difference. She strategically creates opportunities for collaboration and ensures no teacher works in isolation to develop CTE. The review of documents showed evidence with a focus on clarity of communication and consistency at both the district and building level. Principal Martin explained:

> Clarity ensures we all work together to implement the evidenced-based strategies toward the shared goals. Communication is the alignment of all work toward the shared vision during all meetings and creates collaboration time for teams to align their work to the shared vision. Consistency is the leader's commitment that goals, strategies, and focus will never change without the team.

Principal Jones' team created specific action steps to develop CTE. All focus of the work is around the shared goals through shared leadership. Principal Jones creates opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. She wants her teachers to realize their impact on student achievement when they believe in the work and the expertise of the team. The document review analysis provided evidence that each participant works to create opportunities that develop CTE. Examples included collaboration within the master schedule, a shared vision, shared leadership, and evidence of outcome data while monitoring student data and the impact of the adults' actions on student achievement.

CTE is an example of this research study's turnaround principal participants implementing second order change. The organization's members have new ways of thinking and acting and are committed to the work (Levy, 1986). The staff moves from compliance to commitment and believes in the impact of their work on the success of the students. Collective teacher efficacy is more greatly developed when the norm changes to openness, collaboration, and cooperation. Teachers no longer work in isolation but value the expertise of one another and the collective believe in their work and impact on student success (Donohoo, 2017).

Discussion

This case study provided insight to the leadership practices of four turnaround principals. Although not the intent of the case study design, all the participants in this study were females leading schools. In the summary of the findings, research from the literature review supported the significant findings from this case study based on the three research questions: How do turnaround principals measure their own success? Are turnaround initiatives sustainable in schools? How does the turnaround process impact

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the culture of the school? Turnaround principals have the responsibility to quickly implement changes for improvement by restructuring, often in dramatic ways, systems, processes, and beliefs to gain sustained results (Kowal & Ableidinger, 2011; Leithwood, 1994). Turnaround principals play a key role in ensuring an equitable education for all students regardless of their environments. This study has proven the importance of the role of the principal in transforming a school.

History of the Principalship to Turnaround Principals

The educational system in the United States has evolved over time. Education started with one room schoolhouses serving multiple aged students. However, as enrollment increased, the need for the role of the principal developed (Campbell, 1990). At the inception of the role of the principal, the job was managerial. However, this began to shift with the enactment of The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) in 1965. ESEA instituted mandates to school programs from both the state and federal level. The enactment of ESEA was to provide grant money to ensure all students had access to equitable and high-quality education. Although the enactment of ESEA added to the workload, the role of the principal was to manage the programming. However, the shift in education and the role of the principal came from the 1983 National Commission on Education report. This report stated that the schools in America were failing because the students were not receiving a rigorous education in science and math. Simultaneously during this time, the impact of the principal on student achievement was being investigated. The role of the principal was shifting from manager to that of instructional leader. The principal's role included being responsible for supervising teachers to ensure

high quality instruction was being provided to the students (Bloom et al., 2011; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994).

As mandates continued over time, the enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2002 required schools not making adequate yearly progress as measured by standardized tests to either improve or close. Many schools during this time redesigned their instructional programs and replaced the principal. This reinforced the research that the principal has a direct impact on student outcomes. The role of the building principal shifted again from manager to instructional leader to turnaround leader with the enactment of Every Child Succeeds Act in 2015. Many school districts began to focus on placing principals in buildings to turnaround academic performance. School districts intentionally hired and trained principals to turn around what the states identified as failing schools based on standardized test scores. In some instances, the principals received formal training, while in other schools or districts, the principal tasked with the responsibility of improving what was identified as a low performing school did not receive any formal training.

This study examined the turnaround leadership practices of principals who were both formally trained and those who had received no formal training but were all charged with the same task of turning around their schools. The participants in this research study were tasked with immediately making changes that would improve their Gap Closing results on the state report card. According to the research of Duke (2015), the leaders charged with the responsibility of being a turnaround principal must have the desire to make a difference, be able to provide clear direction in order for others to follow, keep everyone focused on the goals while allowing the ability to be innovative, be flexible, persistent, and make necessary adjustments as needed. That data gathered in this study

did show that the participants were committed to the work and were able to achieve the student outcomes based on the goals each one had set.

Turnaround Leadership Practices

The role of the principal is one that must manage the daily operations of the building, work with the community and stakeholders, and develop leadership capacity of those within the organization. The data analysis of this research case study and the research in the literature review confirms that a turnaround leader does do all of those things. However, they are additionally tasked with doing these things quickly and transforming the school environment including the climate and culture.

Although the literature on Instructional Leadership and Transformational Leadership were examined separately in this research study, it was clear from the data the themes that emerged from this research study that one cannot occur without the other in a turnaround setting. The turnaround leader must have credibility understanding teaching and learning while simultaneously implementing changes that positively impact the culture of the building and the two types of leadership blending together to ensure the ultimate goal of success for all students. During the data analysis of the semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and review of documents there were three themes that continuously emerged from the research questions: shared leadership, collective teacher efficacy, and shared vision. It was also evident that a building cannot get to collective teacher efficacy if they are not sharing leadership responsibilities and working towards the same goals developed from the shared vision.

The National Standards for Principals

The national standards for principals were updated in 2015 by The National Policy Board for Educational Administration. There are 10 professional standards for education leaders:

Standard 1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Standard 2. Ethics and Professional Norms,

Standard 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Standard 4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Standard 5. Community of Care and Support for Students

Standard 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel

Standard 7. Professional Community for Teachers

Staff Standard 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

Standard 9. Operations and Management and

Standard 10. School Improvement. (National Policy Board, 2015)

In reviewing the list of standards, it is clear that a turnaround leader is meeting the national standards for educational leaders based on the data gathered in this research study. Although each standard was not explicitly touched upon in the analysis of the evidence gathered, components of the standards were found throughout, and connections can be made in the important findings. Each participant in the study worked toward a shared mission and vision. Each school improvement plan submitted for the document review had a clear mission and vision that aligned the work. There was a clear focus that guided all the work in the building. The research also showed evidence of developing the professional capacity of the personnel. Each participant emphasized the importance of

shared leadership and created strategic plans to create a culture of shared leadership. The participants encouraged and supported their teachers to lead professional learning opportunities. Additionally, the teacher leaders shared responsibility over the implementation and monitoring of the actions steps within the school improvement plans at each school. This is further evidence that a turnaround leader not only has the task of transforming a school but does it while meeting the ethical and professional standards expected of all building leaders. The concept map in Figure 2 reveals the key findings repeated from each research question that identifies the key leadership practices for turnaround success and sustainability. The role of the principal is to be a visionary leader who shares leadership and collaborates to develop a shared vision amongst the school which in turn creates an environment for collective teacher efficacy. Figure 2 shows that the strategies used to improve the culture of the school mirror those of transformational leadership and the intentional practices implemented by the participants in this study through the turnaround process. In order for sustainability the leader builds a culture of collective teacher efficacy by strategically working through first order changes. The leader implements data-driven decision making, welcomes and provides feedback, and aligns the work. While working through first order change, relationships are built allowing for second order change to occur. During second order change the leader creates opportunities for collaboration, shares leadership, and creates an environment of collective teacher efficacy. These practices become embedded in the culture of the building.

The principal participants in this study were tasked with the responsibility to turn around the performance of their schools. It is important to note that each principal

participant developed the relationships and trust within the organization in order for change to occur. Research shows that the leader has the greatest impact of the behaviors to follow within the organization. Therefore, when the leader leaves, the culture of the building changes (Slaughter, 2022). The incoming principal needs to enter the school with the same commitment to success and continue with the shared leadership model that had been developed and use it to continue to elevate the building. Data in previous turnaround schools across the country show a decline in data the first year of the new principal (Chiles, 2020).

Figure 3

Turnaround Leadership & School Culture
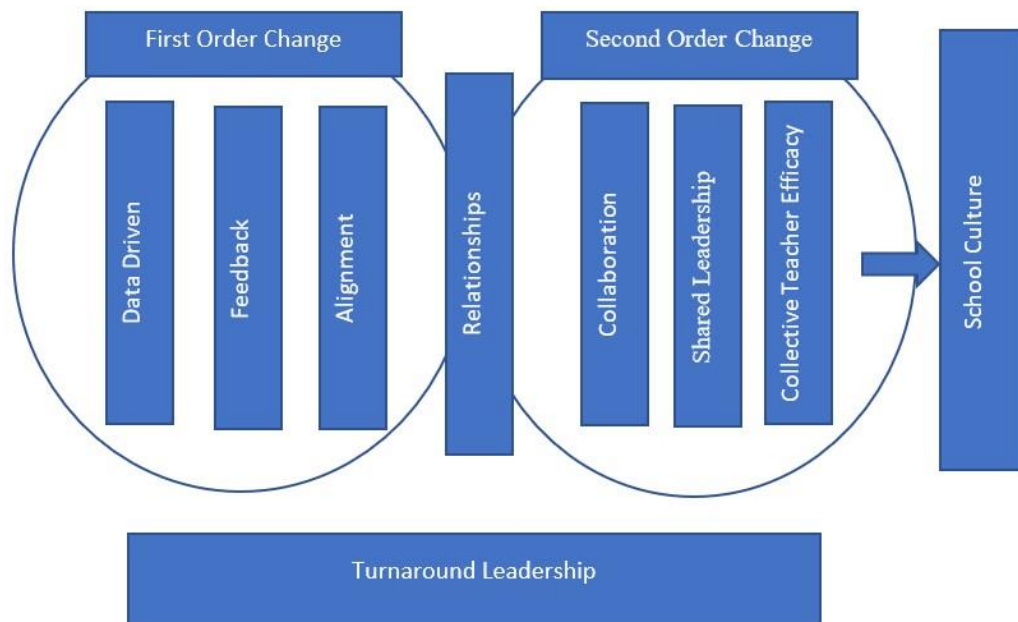
Note. Figure 3 displays the leadership practices implemented through first and second order change to transform the culture of the school.

Change Theory

  Historically, teachers have worked in isolation taking care only of their classroom and their students. However, this model has proven to not be effective for systematic changes in schools. As indicated in the findings, change theory is important to gain an understanding of the principal's responsibilities and tasks in a turnaround school setting. Changes within any organization can be difficult for its members. Senge (1990) stated that in order for change to occur, the leader must fully understand the complex relationships and the system dynamics for the change process to be successful. Principals tasked with turnaround responsibility are expected to make immediate changes and may not have had the time to fully understand the dynamics and complex relationship within the school. Therefore, the principal needs to build trust and relationships in order for implementation of the initiatives and processes.

  Initially in the change process, the principal will make first order changes. These are changes that can be reversed. These changes will help the leader begin to build trust because the changes help the organization run more smoothly. Each principal spoke of the importance of first building trust amongst their staff. They recognized that no matter how urgent the task, without trust there would be no collective effort towards the goals of the vision and mission of the building. During the semi-structured interviews, the participants spoke of implementing first order changes. Principal Jones implemented a basic feedback form after each meeting. The teachers completed feedback forms on administration and themselves to begin a practice of reflection. Principal Jones admitted that the forms were short and provided surface level feedback. However, she would address her feedback globally with the staff and adjust. This practice built trust and began

the shift for second order changes to occur. Although first order changes are not the changes that will shift beliefs and culture within the school, it was clear that the first order changes were important for building the trust needed to lead the building through the second order changes that build collective teacher efficacy within each school.

In order for the building leader to transform the school, second order change is necessary. Second order changes are irreversible and create shifts in beliefs and behaviors. The changes implemented at this stage are created to bring new norms, values, and beliefs (Levy, 1986). Once each participant established trust, they were able to use student data evidence to create a sense of urgency. They were each able to implement the evidence-based practices needed for each student to grow academically. This enabled the members of the school to understand the importance of their work and have clear goals for student outcomes. Additionally, the leader creates opportunities for teacher and administrative collaboration so that the building does not have individuals working in isolation. The evidence gathered showed collaboration in action steps amongst all four school improvement plans. Each plan identified the individuals or teams responsible for implementation and monitoring. This showed evidence that the buildings do not work in isolation and are getting results from the collective efforts of everyone. In addition, the leader welcomes feedback which, in turn, builds greater trust within the organization. Principal Jones uses the feedback received to be a reflective practitioner. She welcomes it and recognizes it in front of the staff to continue to build trust and keep open communication that is needed throughout the change process. Throughout the second order change relationships are built and strengthened. Collectively, this creates an

environment where the teachers all believe in the goals and work together to achieve those goals.

Instructional Leadership

The role of the principal has moved from one who manages a school to an instructional leader. The building principal must be knowledgeable of the curriculum and standards ensuring that all students have access to rigorous teaching and learning experiences. The building leader intentionally works on instructional processes and gets the student outcome results while still managing the school, working with the community, building relationships, ensuring district mandates are met, and maintaining a sense of community within the school (Fullan, 2014). The participants ensure district mandates are met by aligning their individual school improvement plans to the district plan. In addition to district alignment, each building level plan had action steps specific to evidence-based teaching strategies. Best teaching practices were modeled during peer observations in Principal Jones' building. Principal Martin has teachers present evidence-based teaching strategies at each staff meeting with a follow up of peer coaching to ensure implementation in all classrooms. Research has found that building leaders who focus their work on instruction, making teaching and learning their primary focus, have shown significant positive growth on student achievement data (Bloom & Owens, 2011; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Persell, 2013).

The research of Hallinger (2003) and Leithwood (2000) states that instructional leadership will bring change. The findings in this study show that instructional leadership paired with shared leadership is necessary for sustainable change. Building leaders would need to be experts in all curriculum for grade levels. Shared leadership builds the

capacity of those within the school. This enables the principal to collaborate and review the data with teachers to set goals and make decisions in order to best impact student achievement. This leadership practice is evidenced in the school improvement plans of all four participants. Teachers are implementing and monitoring action steps around teaching strategies and student growth based on learning standards. Teachers are modeling and supporting the work for colleagues. Once again, the leader is bringing the staff together to collectively work toward the same goals. This in turn creates sustainability in the school.

Transformational Leadership

The role of the transformational leader is to challenge the status quo of the building in order to make change (Fullen, 2014). However, it is important to note that challenging the status quo is only beneficial when changes within the education environment are challenged, restructured, and implemented to ensure success (Leithwood et al., 1999; Yukl, 2013). The transformational leader develops and enables shared leadership amongst their staff. The development of shared leadership enables the building principal to motivate others and build commitment to the turnaround work necessary for student growth and success (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 1999; Marzano et al., 2005). The data gathered in this research study showed evidence of shared leadership and the impact on student achievement. The documents reviewed for each participant showed evidence of teacher leaders sharing responsibility and the impact on student growth and achievement. The monitoring and adjusting of the action steps in the building school improvement plan showed student growth toward achievement goals and teachers, not administrators alone, responsible for each action step. The ability of the participants to

develop and create opportunities for the staff to share leadership created a culture of collaboration and commitment to the work.

The transformational leader has the responsibility of mentoring and coaching the staff to understand the relationship between their individual and collective impact on the student data. The transformational leader works with their staff to share leadership responsibility to ensure all stakeholders are working toward the same shared vision. The intentional work toward the shared vision creates a culture of collaboration in the building. The stakeholders have a collective buy in and commitment to the shared vision, process, and procedures developed through shared leadership (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999).

Principal Hiring Practices

Research shows that schools in the fourth year of turnaround initiatives begin to see the effects of change and those changes are evident in the school report card data (Hough, 2013). However, the national average for principal tenure in 2016-2017 was only four years (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Hiring practices in the state of Ohio contribute to the high rate of principal turnover. Principals are hired into districts under one- or two-year contracts. Only if the principal has been with the district for more than three years can a contract exceed two years (Ohio Revised Code, 2012). A principal hired for the purpose of turning around a school is not offered a contract that allows for adequate time to implement and achieve the results needed to successfully turn around a school.

Significance of the Study

This case study added to the research of turnaround leaders. This case study examined the leadership practices of four turnaround principals in the Midwest area of the United States. The research from this study provided insight to three factors of turnaround leadership. The research examined how four successful turnaround principals measured their own success, how the leaders ensured the turnaround initiatives were sustainable in schools, and how a successful turnaround principal positively impacts the culture of the school. Providing equitable experiences for all students is not only part of the national standards for buildings leaders but a goal for public education. The findings from this case study will provide insights to the role of the principal and inform districts on the professional development needed to ensure best practices in transforming and improving schools and overall student performance outcomes. Two participants in the study received specific turnaround training while two did not. This shows evidence from the research that it is important to have someone committed to implementing the changes needed (Duke, 2015). A committed leader to the turnaround process is needed to implement and sustain the change. Ongoing professional learning opportunities are needed for the turnaround principals to ensure best practices are being implemented. The results in this case study confirm the key practices that improved the state report card for four schools.

This research study confirmed that a successful school turnaround leader shares leadership. The findings in this study confirm the research of Leithwood (1994) and Hallinger (2003) that leadership is not top-down but shared leadership amongst the principal and teachers. The evidence provided in this study confirms that each participant

built the leadership capacity of the teachers within the school. Teacher leaders within the organization implement and monitor the action steps working toward the shared vision of the school. Research confirms that schools have marked improvement when the principal develops the leadership capacity of its teachers and shares leadership within the school (Dimmock, 2012). It is important to recognize that this is no longer a top-down management position but interconnected throughout the organization. This means that the leader needs to create opportunities to build the capacity of their staff in order to share leadership responsibilities and decision making. This is significant for districts to ensure opportunities continue to develop teacher leaders beyond their individual buildings to create collective efficacy across the district.

Building leadership capacity is only one part of the process to ensure success. Teacher leadership support and development is necessary for school improvement (Huggins, 2017). It is important that the building leader also creates a culture of collaboration amongst all stake holders. Once again, this requires trust and the ability to share leadership. The research gathered confirms the role of the principal is not top down; therefore, the principal should not create vision in isolation. Doing so would remove trust and the work of the school would be misaligned since there would be no stakeholder ownership of the vision. The building principal works collaboratively with the stakeholders to create together an agreed upon vision. By creating a shared vision, a culture is created where everyone is working toward the same goals, believes in the work, and is committed to the work toward the shared vision, and has a belief in the work.

The role of the principal to create a culture of shared leadership and ensuring the work aligns to the shared vision directly impacts the self-efficacy of the educators in the

building. The teachers now believe in the work that is being done in the building and have direct ownership of its success. The culture created does not allow for teachers to work in isolation, but the principal strategical through the process has created an environment of positive collaboration working toward a shared vision. This process moves teachers from self-efficacy to collective teacher efficacy, where they believe they as a group have the competence to positively impact student achievement. This development of collective teacher efficacy according to John Hattie (2012) has the greatest impact on student growth and achievement with an effect size of 1.57.

The findings from this study confirm previous research on transformational leadership and change theory. The findings make connections between the research on turnaround leadership to the research of John Hattie and research on collective teacher efficacy. According to Hattie's' research, turnaround leadership has a small effect size of .11 to student's achievement. According to the research, an effect size greater than .40 is needed to have a positive impact on student growth (Hattie, 2012; Robinson et al., 2008). The research gleaned from this case study shows that turnaround leadership sets the tone for urgency and the ability to begin implementing changes from first order to second order. However, the leader's success was determined by all the combined evidence-based research strategies implemented to bring the collective group together working toward a shared vision.

The findings in this research study are important as districts across the country are trying to fill voids created by the unprecedented number of educators who have left the profession. The turnaround leader not only brings immediate change but does so in a way that is sustainable. The intentionality of building collective teacher efficacy within the

schools may contribute to the commitment and longevity in the career of education. As more schools develop a culture of collective teacher efficacy, the students are the ones who benefit. Teachers are collectively working together to ensure all students are receiving the best research-based strategies to ensure successful student outcome data. Districts are able to use the information gleaned from this research study to develop professional learning opportunities to further develop the capacity of their administrative teams. Additionally, districts could use the information gathered from this research study for recruitment purposes when filling leadership openings.

It is important to note that this case study has limitations and delimitations. The study is limited because it only included four participants. In addition, the research only focused on the leadership practices of turnaround principals, and the principals had to have already shown improvement on the state report card. It is a possibility that if the study interviewed principals in general, the results may prove that the leadership practices are similar to those considered to be turnaround principals. A delimitation to the study is the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Schools in the state of Ohio do not have current state report card data. Therefore, state report card data used was the most recent (2018-2019), not the current year. Since there are missing state data, it is unclear how long and if the turnaround initiatives have been sustained to the current year based on the state of Ohio report card.

Suggestions for Future Research

The research findings from this study concluded that transformation leadership and instructional leadership are interconnected in order for the leader to be effective in the turnaround process. The leader must build creditability with the staff with

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curriculum and instruction. In order for the leader to support the staff through teaching and learning, they must be knowledgeable of the standards and how the curriculum supports the standards. The leader must have knowledge of the available resources for the teaching staff in order to support instruction. Additionally, the leader is making the time to observe and provide appropriate feedback that improves the teaching process. Without credibility it is possible the leader could be viewed ineffective in supporting teaching and learning. However, the leader must simultaneously implement the second order changes needed in transformational leadership while ensuring credibility as instructional leader. During this time the leader is developing shared leadership and collective efficacy amongst the staff to ensure systemic changes within the school that change the culture and belief system amongst the stakeholders.

As a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic, all aspects of this research study were conducted virtually. It would have added to the research to observe in person and see the reactions, body language, and engagement in person to get a fuller understanding of the involvement and commitment from the staff. This idea could be further developed and researched as the role of the principal has evolved and changed over time. One could also research the leadership practices from the lens of those within the organization who share leadership, not just the building principal, to gain further insight to the turnaround practices of the stakeholders in the change process. Would the same themes emerge from the data if the research was conducted to include not the leader but the stakeholders? One could also conduct the research to include both the leader and stakeholders to get a collective lens of the practices and examine the themes that may emerge.

Although the data in Table 4 showed that each participant was able to see gains in their school's performance within four years, there was not a pivotal moment where they could identify a specific moment in time, significant event, or strategy implemented that emerged as the moment the participant knew or felt school turnaround was occurring in the building Additional research could be done on identifying the specific moments in the turnaround process that emerge as the time in which the leader was able to identify that turnaround change was occurring.

Summary

The role of the principal is key to the success of the school. However, the research gained from this study confirms that the principal is not able to implement and sustain turnaround practices in isolation. The research confirms that the building principal must, enable the capacity for others to share leadership responsibilities, work toward a collective shared vision that the organization is committed to, and create an environment of collective teacher efficacy to have the greatest positive impact on student growth and achievement. The hope is that this study inspires principals to commit to children in what are deemed to be low performing schools and take on the challenge to turn around the school and provide the equitable learning opportunities that all children deserve.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

September 28, 2021

Dear (Participant),

I am currently a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Youngstown State University. I am conducting a study examining the leadership practices of school turnaround principals. As part of my research study, I will be conducting semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews. As a principal in a school that has experienced school improvement, you are among a small number able to contribute to the scholarly research regarding turnaround leadership. This letter serves as a formal invitation to participate in my research study.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form to participate in a 60-minute interview via video-conferencing. Confidentially will be maintained at all times. Data will be collected and kept private and you will select a pseudonym of your choice. After the audio-recordings have been transcribed, you will have the opportunity to review the data prior to submission for my study. This will ensure that I have accurately represented your comments.

In addition to the semi-structured interview, the study involves a 30 min observation of you with your staff either in a meeting or professional learning opportunity. I will not be a participant in the meeting and will not interfere with the observation. Once the meeting has started I will mute my microphone, turn off my camera and silently observe the meeting.

As part of the research, I am also requesting that you provide three artifacts for document review. These documents include your building school improvement plan, school report card, and a document of your choice that you feel captures your communication and leadership within your school. Examples of the third document could include but are not limited to; professional-development presentations, meeting notes, newsletters, community engagement materials.

By participating in this study, you are contributing to research that will fill a gap in the literature concerning the leadership practices of turnaround principals. Please understand, I will take the necessary steps to protect your confidentiality, including using a pseudonym and omitting details that might be used to identify you; however, it is possible that your responses may identify you and may lead to potential risk. Although I will make every effort to protect your confidentiality, this potential breach in confidentiality may lead to adverse physical (employment) and social consequences. To this end, you are free to share as much or as little information pertaining to their professional or lived experiences, thus you have the freedom to only share information you are comfortable discussing in a public setting. Additionally, this may also bring up thoughts and feelings from your past that may cause emotional harm. You may opt out of this study at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

I sincerely hope that you will consider contacting me to participate in my study. If you would like to participate, please contact me no later than seven days after the date of this email. Once you agree to participate, a consent form will then be emailed to you.

Sincerely,

Sherry L. Bennington
Doctoral Candidate, Youngstown State University

INFORMED CONSENT

Consent for Participation in Research Study

Dear_____,

I am a doctoral student from Youngstown State University. I am conducting a qualitative case study to investigate the leadership practices of school turnaround principals. Semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document reviews will be used as data collection methods to determine my outcomes. This research study will enable other building principals to learn from turnaround leaders' experiences to implement best practices to ensure high-quality teaching and learning for all students.

Through my participation, I understand that I will be involved in an interview that will last no more than 60 minute via video-conferencing. During the semi-structured interview, the researcher will ask follow-up questions to gain insight into the participants' leadership practices. Handwritten notes will be taken during the interview as well as the interview will be both audio and video recorded using the video conferencing software.

I understand that I will be involved in a direct observation that will last 30 minutes engaging in the role as a principal. Field notes will be taken, and the principal's actions will be documented on an observation form. I understand that due to COVID-19 restrictions, the researcher will be invited to observe via video-conferencing, and the observation may be recorded.

I understand that I will submit three documents to be reviewed by the researcher. These documents include your building school improvement plan, school report card, and a document that shows a day of professional development for your school. Examples of the third document could include but are not limited to; professional-development presentations, meeting notes, and agendas.

I understand that by participating in this study I am contributing to research that will fill a gap in the literature concerning the leadership practices of turnaround principals. I understand the researcher will take the necessary steps to protect my confidentiality, including using a pseudonym and omitting details that might be used to identify me. Only the researcher will have access to the data gathered during this study. The data will be stored securely so that only the researchers has access and anonymity will be maintained at all times.

I understand, as a participant in this study, several benefits exist. One benefit will be the opportunity to reflect on my own leadership practices and how my leadership contributes to student success. I may also benefit from learning about the leadership practices of my colleagues as they navigate being a turnaround leader. The possible risk, harm, discomfort or inconvenience from this study is minimal. Although the researcher will take every precaution to protect my confidentiality, it is possible that my responses may

identify me which may lead to various risks including adverse social or professional consequences. Consequently, I am encouraged to only share the information I feel comfortable sharing.

I volunteer to participate in this research study conducted by Mrs. Sherry L. Bennington from Youngstown State University. I understand this study will gather data identifying the leadership practices of school turnaround principals.

I understand that I will not be identified by name in any reports or publications. My confidentiality will be ensured during this study and all data gathered will be subject to standard data use policies which protect my privacy and personal information. Only the researcher will have access to the data gathered during this study.

I understand if I feel uncomfortable at any point during this study, I have the right to opt-out of participating in the study.

If you have any questions about this research project please contact Sherry Bennington slbennington@student.ysu.edu or Dr. Jane Beese jbeese@ysu.edu. If you have about your rights as a participant in a research project, you may contact the Office of Research Services, Compliance & Initiatives at YSU (330-941-2377) or at YSUIRB@ysu.edu

I have read all the above information about the research study and my rights as a research participant. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form.

My Printed Name: _____

My Signature: _____   Date: _____

Permission to Record Interview & Observation Signature:_____

Date:_____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Sherry L. Bennington

Youngstown State University

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW)

Select interview candidates based on data that shows a successful turnaround from low-performing to no longer having a state designation of low performance.

1. Contact interview candidates by email invite them to be part of the research study.

2. Email both the consent form and interview questions to the participant once they respond agreeing to the study.

3. Have the participant create their own pseudonym for the study.

4. Call the participant to go over the consent form, ask them to sign and scan back

5. Confirm date, time, and format of the interview by email three days prior to agreed upon date.

6. Log into the interview 10 minutes before the scheduled interview time.

7. Once the interviewee arrives, greet the interviewee by welcoming them to the meeting

8. "Thank you for agreeing to meet and talk with me today."

9. Introduce myself as the interviewer, your role, reason for the interview, and explain that

10. you will be recording this interview today in order to capture everything that is said.

11. Explain to the participant that you may ask them to elaborate on their answers and that their answers may lead to additional questions during the interview.

12. Tell the interviewee "at this time, I will push record on my device, and we will begin the interview."

13. Push record.

14. Begin the interview by stating the following into the recording device:

15. "My name is Sherry Bennington, a doctoral candidate through Youngstown State University";

16. "Today is (the date) and it is currently (time you are starting the interview)";

17. "Today I have (state the number of the principal, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) with me who is the building leader at (state the name of the building). Thank you for meeting with me today";

18. "For the record, (state the name of the participant) has signed the consent form and has been provided a copy of the question for the interview";

19. Read the first question

20. Make eye contact after reading the question and listen to their answer. Since this is being recorded, having active listening skills will allow you to ask for elaboration or ask additional probing questions as needed.

21. 1Write down essential elements you want to make sure you remember as the interviewee

    talks

22. Once all questions are asked and answered, thank the interviewee for his or her time and ask if they have any final thoughts they would like to share.

23. State "this concludes this interview. Thank you for taking the time today to talk with me."

24. Stop the recording device.

25. Thank them for joining and invite them to log off

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the demographic questionnaire below. Please write or type your responses and email it back to the researcher or have it at the interview.

1. What pseudonym would you like to be referred to in this study?

2. What is the highest degree attained?

3. What professional licenses do you hold?

4. Please state any additional training you have received to prepare you for your current position.

5. How many students and staff in your school?

6. What are the demographics of your school?

7. How many years of experience do you have as a building principal?

8. How long have you been in your current position?

APPENDIX E

RESEARCH AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. How do turnaround principals measure their own success	• What does leadership mean to you? • Describe a situation in which you were at your personal best as a leader. • What leadership practices or strategies have had the greatest impact on the academic success of your school? • What is your criteria for significant positive growth? • Do you see yourself as a successful turnaround leader? What do you contribute to your success as a turnaround principal? • How do you measure your personal performance as a leader? • How do you continue to learn and develop your own leadership? • How will you know you have successfully completed the turnaround process?
2. Are turnaround initiatives sustainable in schools?	• How would you describe your roles and responsibilities influencing the staff, students, and community? • What do you believe are your greatest roles and responsibilities as a leader? • In what ways have you encouraged your staff to be innovative?

	• How do you empower those within your staff to take leadership roles? • How do you know they are committed and not following the will of the leader? • What procedures or programs are contributing to the turnaround process? • What district or school professional development has occurred that you believe has contributed to the turnaround process?
3. How does the turnaround process impact the culture of the school?	• What has been your experience in challenging the status quo of the school? • What leadership practices have you implemented that have not resulted in positive outcomes and how did you address it with the staff to make changes? • Describe a time when experienced resistance to change from the staff or community? How did you respond and did the change sustain? • How do you build a collective efficacy to the turnaround process? • What are some strategies you use to keep your staff motivated and committed to the work? • How do measure a positive cultural change in the school and community through the process?

APPENDIX F

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

One direct observation will be completed where the researcher is quietly observing the building leader conducting staff professional learning. Observing professional learning aims to identify the practices that the leader utilizes while directly working with their staff. Specifically, developing others within the school and how accountability protocols are built into the organization to ensure follow through on professional development.

The researcher will record data scribing anecdotal notes on a legal pad and observation protocol sheet. This is a more comfortable and faster form of note-taking than typing while listening. The researcher will observe professional learning both after school and during instructional improvement days when schools are closed for students. The reason for observing both is to look for differences based on time with the staff (during the day vs. an hour after school) and motivation of staff for implementation. Each observation will last between 60-90 minutes.

During the direct observations, the researcher will use a scribing technique to capture notes directly on the observation protocol sheet. The purpose of the observation is to code the notes to look for patterns and themes of leadership practices in the work of the participants as well as the frequency of leadership practices. The researcher will examine these patterns, themes, and the frequency of the practices individually and then compare amongst the five participants to identify common themes amongst the participants and the frequency of implementing specific practices.

Observation Record Sheet

Name:	
Date:	
Meeting being Observed:	
Observations of Teacher/ Principal behaviors, actions, and words (scribed during the observation)	
Teacher	**Principal**

(Measure Success, Sustainability, Climate/Culture & Themes that emerge from the research)			
Measure Success (M)	**Sustainability** (S)	**Climate & Culture** (C)	
Additional Themes and coding:			

APPENDIX G

IRB LETTER OF PERMISSION

To: Jane Beese <jbeese@ysu.edu>;Sherry L Bennington <slbennington@student.ysu.edu>

Y | YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

Jan 7, 2022 11:23:52 AM EST

Jane Beese
Teacher Ed and Leadership St

Re: Exempt - Initial - 2022-98 Examining the Leadership Practices of Turnaround Principals

Dear Dr. Jane Beese:

Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board has rendered the decision below for Examining the Leadership Practices of Turnaround Principals.

Decision: Exempt

Selected Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,
Youngstown State University Human Subjects Review Board