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Principal Instructional Leadership in Ga High Poverty Elementary Schools

Ginger W. Spires

PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN GEORGIA HIGH POVERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

GINGER WHITE SPIRES

(Under the Direction of Teri Denlea Melton)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools. As such, this causal-comparative study identified the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices and attempted to determine if these practices can be related to school effectiveness in high poverty schools. The sample of this study consisted of Georgia classroom teachers in high poverty elementary schools, specifically in the categories of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools. Hallinger's (1983) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was utilized to assess the three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the means of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools, as perceived by teachers, were significantly different. Results indicated principals in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the dimensions of Defining the School Mission and Managing the Instructional Program more frequently than principals in Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools. A significant difference did not exist in the dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program between the school groups.

INDEX WORDS: High Poverty, High Performing, Low Performing, Principal Instructional Leadership, Teacher Perceptions, Student Achievement, Georgia, Education, Elementary

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by

GINGER WHITE SPIRES

B.S.Ed. Early Childhood Education, Georgia Southern University, 2006

M.S.Ed. School Psychology, Georgia Southern University, 2008

Ed.S. Educational Leadership, Georgia Southern University, 2012

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GINGER WHITE SPIRES

Major Professor: Teri Denlea Melton
Committee: Yasar Bodur
Paul "Mac" Brinson

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family. My parents, Wayne and Marsha, have always pushed me to do my best and to strive for excellence. They have supported me financially and emotionally in my efforts to accomplish this dream. Many tears have been shed as they have cheered me on.

My husband, Mark, has supported my dream and allowed me to make this dissertation a priority in my life. He has offered support through the good times and the bad.

Without the unwavering support of family and close friends, this dissertation would not have been possible. I look forward to the opportunities that the completion of this document will bring and hope to continue to make my family and friends proud as I utilize my degree to make a positive impact on the education of today's youth.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Poverty rates have risen to new heights as families struggle with economic decline. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), the percentage of Georgia residents living in poverty is among the highest in the United States. It is estimated that 17.4 % of families in Georgia live below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). [Most recent data available] The economic crisis has further contributed to a pre-existing educational crisis as impoverished students remain at-risk for academic failure (Sparks, 2013).

"Inequity in American education derives first and foremost from our failure to educate the children of the poor" (Edmonds, 1979, p. 15). This was true over 35 years ago and remains a key component in ending the cycle of poverty in today's society. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) rated the South as having the highest rate of poverty for school-age children with 23% of students living in a context of deficiency. Georgia, in particular, now has the sixth highest childhood poverty rate in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Schools with large populations of economically disadvantaged students are experiencing a significant amount of pressure to ensure that learners are demonstrating academic growth and achieving at predetermined levels of proficiency. It remains the responsibility of educational institutions, school leaders, and educators to ensure curricula and effective instruction are provided to a diverse student population. Chenoweth (2010) further reiterated the importance of educating the children of the poor by stating that educators "understand that if their students do not have a good education, they may face lives of poverty and dependence" (p. 20).

Research has indicated a correlation exists between low socioeconomic status and underachievement (e.g., Ladd, 2012; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). Though poverty is largely a societal issue, educators are tasked with the challenge of ensuring that all levels of student learners, including those living in a context of poverty, reach a level of predetermined academic

achievement. It must be acknowledged by society that extraneous socio-economic factors significantly impact the education of economically disadvantaged students.

> Children from poor neighborhoods, children with limited proficiency in English, children with special needs, children with preschool language impairments, and children whose parents had difficulty learning to read are particularly at risk of arriving at school unprepared to learn and, hence, of falling behind from the outset. (Stull, 2013, p. 55)

In 2011, nearly one in five public schools across the United States possessed student populations of 75% or greater who qualified for free or reduced lunch (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). As a result of poverty growth, the need for public education to narrow the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged students has been spotlighted. Darling-Hammond (2010) has stated, "It is not only possible but imperative that America close the achievement gap among its children by addressing the yawning opportunity gap that denies these fundamental rights" (p. 8).

The ongoing debate regarding public education and academic achievement has garnered consideration from federal and state officials, principals, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders (Meier, Schmidt, Finn, & Schlechty, 2010). Partially due to economic strife, education has entered a challenging and demanding era of federal mandates and rigorous measures of accountability that have substantially altered the focus of American education. Increased statewide focus on achievement, as measured by standardized tests, has created pressure for students to meet adequate levels of pre-determined proficiency in all academic areas (Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010).

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, a U.S. federal legislation, a greater emphasis has been placed on accountability and has heightened the involvement of the federal government in education. The NCLB sought to narrow and ultimately eliminate the existing achievement gap for poor and minority students (Pepper, 2010).

Subsequently, states were compelled to administer yearly assessments to measure adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward student reading and math proficiency while instituting sanctions and rewards based on annual AYP results (Dee & Jacob, 2011).

Confronting the demands of stringent increases in accountability has led to a reexamination of the effectiveness of principal leadership practices and the instructional methods utilized to increase student achievement. Not only are standardized testing measures employed as benchmarks for student achievement, but these measures are also utilized to measure the overall effectiveness of both teachers and school principals. The failure of NCLB to bring all students to proficiency by 2014 has further spotlighted the need for educational improvement. In response, the practice of monitoring and analyzing student achievement scores to heighten accountability and school effectiveness continues to place significant pressure on principals, teachers, and students, collectively, to perform at high levels.

As a result of increased accountability, rigorous measures of evaluation have been established to hold both principals and teachers firmly responsible for the academic growth of students in Georgia. With implementation of the Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES), today's school leaders are evaluated based on their ability to promote and increase student achievement while simultaneously fostering the continuous professional growth and development of teachers (Georgia Department of Education [GA DOE], 2014). Similarly, the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) holds teachers accountable for instructional practice, student growth, and personal and continuous professional growth as an educator (GA DOE, 2014). This increased emphasis on student performance has spawned an educational culture driven primarily by measures of standardized testing.

This era of increased accountability has spotlighted a need for academic improvement among students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and the schools serving these student populations. Schools possessing large populations of economically disadvantaged

students, such as Title I schools, have viewed increasing accountability demands as yet another challenge that must be overcome. Students enrolled in high poverty schools are expected to meet the same expectations set forth by national or state policy as schools with more affluent student populations. Georgia, in particular, has placed an increased emphasis on achievement as schools strive to provide an appropriate educational experience for students and to generate enough funding to further develop instructional practices to meet diverse academic needs.

Since 1965, Title I programs have focused primarily on closing the achievement gap between socioeconomic groups and ensuring that economically disadvantaged students receive equitable opportunities for academic success. Title I, serving as the largest federal education program, offers funding and support for schools with high numbers of low income students who are at risk of falling behind their peers academically (Hoang, 2010). According to the 2009-2010 published Georgia Title I Annual Report, approximately $508 million was allotted for Title I schools in fiscal year 2010 to provide support for Georgia schools (GA DOE, 2010). Funding allocations have struggled to compete with increases in childhood poverty. With the distribution of these funds comes the expectation that students will demonstrate significant growth and meet predetermined academic expectations.

In Georgia, two categories of Title I schools are recognized for consistent academic achievement: Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools. As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Performing school is categorized as being in the top 5% of Title I schools in the state. These high poverty schools demonstrate the highest performance for the group over a period of 3 consecutive years. These schools must have met AYP requirements in 2011 and may not be identified as a priority school, a focus school, or an alert school (GA DOE, 2014). As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Progress school is among the top 10% of Title I schools in the state that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the

group over a number of years on the statewide assessments and may not be classified as a high progress school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups within the school that are not closing (GA DOE, 2014).

Annual increases in childhood poverty, in combination with rigorous academic expectations, challenge principals in Title I schools to refocus their efforts and place even greater emphasis on increasing results of high-stakes tests. For decades, societal factors have hindered federal and state policies aimed at educational improvement. Increased accountability has heightened the level of involvement of principals as instructional leaders and has necessitated that leaders develop a more comprehensive understanding of the instruction taking place within the classroom.

Research has indicated the existence of a relationship between school improvement and principal instructional leadership (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Supovitz, Sirindes, & May, 2010; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). This line of research proposes that principal instructional leadership is an essential component of school improvement and student achievement. To signify the importance of the principal in regard to student achievement, Leithwood et al. (2004) concluded that principal leadership "is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (p. 5).

For decades, Effective Schools Research and effective principal leadership have served as topics of discussion in the field of education. As the role of the principal continues to evolve, so do the expectations and definitions of the principal as an instructional leader. Stricter accountability has placed principals in a position that requires a reevaluation of the effectiveness of school leadership practices and the influence of these practices on instructional strategies employed to promote academic proficiency.

Statement of the Problem

The consistent rise of families living in poverty has profoundly affected education. Federal and state funding efforts have been unable to effectively support the rapidly increasing number of economically disadvantaged students in classrooms. This trend of deepening poverty has the potential to further complicate efforts to provide the student population of diverse learners with a quality education. As prior research has shown, students living in poverty are not achieving at the same rate as their more affluent peers. This existing achievement gap persists despite educational reform efforts. Existing achievement gaps and the responsibility of principal leadership in regard to student achievement have been further spotlighted by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). In response, the roles of principals are being reevaluated as the effectiveness of school leadership is heavily scrutinized. Because leadership serves as the foundation for school improvement efforts, it is essential to analyze the leadership practices of school principals leading in contexts of poverty. It is necessary to delineate and compare the leadership practices of principals, especially those in high poverty, high performing schools.

In today's society of heightened accountability, principals must improve both teaching and learning. A principal, acting as a building leader, is tasked with establishing the foundation for school improvement. A principal must encourage teachers to exemplify the best instructional practices possible to promote student success. Therefore, accountability for both teacher and student success is reflected upon the principal.

The collaboration of both principals and teachers is essential in promoting school success. This relationship between principals and teachers must be fostered to elicit leadership behaviors and instructional practices aimed at improving student achievement. Teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices are important considerations for school improvement research because teachers are in a unique position to observe the leadership practices and interactions of principals on a consistent basis.

There exists a substantial amount of research regarding high poverty, high performing schools. However, few studies exist comparing and contrasting teacher perceptions regarding the leadership practices of elementary school leaders from high poverty, high performing schools with the leadership practices of elementary school leaders from high poverty, lower performing schools. Studies have examined the effectiveness of leadership practices in selected schools with high contexts of poverty, yet there remains a need for further research. Research spotlighting Georgia elementary schools is limited. This research, focusing specifically on Georgia Reward high poverty, high performing elementary schools, and high poverty, lower performing elementary schools sought to determine a correlation between the instructional leadership practices of principals and school success as perceived by teachers.

As an educator in a high poverty, low performing elementary school, the importance of analyzing leadership practices in high poverty, high performing elementary schools, as perceived by teachers, is central to improving both student achievement and principal leadership. The NCLB Act has increased accountability for student achievement for not only teachers but administrators as well. It is necessary for both principals and teachers to work collaboratively to ensure student success.

Significance of the Study

Increased accountability and scrutiny resulting from NCLB have emphasized the importance of the principal as an instructional leader and the impact of this role on academic success within the classroom. Principals serve as the central force of school improvement since these leaders hold a position overseeing all areas of education. No decisions can be made without the discretion of the principal. Effective leadership is crucial to the development and further improvement of academic achievement among students. The leadership practices of elementary school principals are crucial to student success because attaining a solid foundation of academic skills during the K-5 formative years will promote future success. Yet, there remains a need to

more closely examine leadership practices exhibited by elementary school principals through the perceptions of teachers.

Perception is significant in the educational setting. Principals are perceived as the operating force of a school building and are, therefore, accountable for the success or failure of a school. Teacher support is imperative as principals and teachers must work collaboratively to ensure student success and foster development of the instruction implemented. Therefore, it is important to recognize and investigate teacher perceptions of principal leadership.

This study will contribute to the research base concerning instructional leadership practices utilized by principals in high poverty, high performing elementary schools and high poverty, lower performing elementary schools. Although previous research has suggested a relationship between instructional leadership and school achievement, there is a lack of information regarding principal instructional leadership practices in the specific demographic of Georgia high poverty, high performing elementary schools and high poverty, lower performing elementary schools. This research analyzed teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership in selected high poverty, high performing elementary schools in Georgia. This study was conducted utilizing data from certified teachers in Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools regarding the instructional leadership practices of principals.

Deepening childhood poverty, in combination with an increased emphasis on the instructional role of the principal, provides a compelling rationale for conducting research that identifies principal instructional leadership practices and supports the academic achievement of children living in poverty. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will contribute to the identification of frequent instructional leadership practices being utilized by principals in high poverty, high performing elementary schools and high poverty, lower performing elementary schools. Teacher perceptions of leadership skills will inform instructional leaders serving as

principals as they attempt to improve student achievement or sustain current success in challenging contexts of poverty. The analysis of teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership serves as a promising contribution to the literature.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of this study is: What are the differences in the principal instructional leadership practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

In addition, the following sub-questions guided the primary question:

1. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

2. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

3. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

Research Hypotheses

H_1: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission.

H_2: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between

principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program.

H_3: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program.

Procedures

To answer the research questions posed by this study, a causal-comparative research design utilizing a survey methodology investigated teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership in Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools. This study identified the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices exhibited and attempted to determine if these practices could be correlated to school effectiveness in high poverty schools.

This study was conducted among designated Title I elementary schools in Georgia. A total of 58 Georgia Reward Highest Performing and 59 Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools were identified. Of the identified Georgia Reward schools, permission was obtained to garner teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in 17 of the 58 Georgia Reward Highest Performing elementary schools (n = 510), and 16 of the 59 Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools (n = 480). Together, the available population for this study included approximately 990 certified teachers (n = 990). Teacher participation in this survey was anonymous and voluntary; participants were able to decline or withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty. District Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Georgia Southern University IRB members reviewed and approved the proposed study before data were collected.

Hallinger's (1983) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was utilized to assess the three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promotes a Positive School Learning Climate Program (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Certified teachers at all schools where permission was obtained received a letter explaining the significance of the research, an assurance of anonymity, and a website link to the PIMRS using SurveyMonkey®. A total of 377 teachers responded. A *t*-test was utilized to determine whether the means of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools, as perceived by teachers, were significantly different.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This study possessed limitations that could compromise generalizability. This particular study illustrated teacher perceptions of principals rather than the observed practices of principals by the researcher. Because survey data was based on voluntary efforts, completion of this survey was optional and non-respondents may have differed in responses as opposed to respondents. Further, the reported data from the teachers had the potential to exhibit both bias and flaws. With the understanding that perceptions may vary significantly depending upon job satisfaction and life experiences, there existed potential for these factors to limit the ability of the participants to respond in an unbiased manner.

The participants for this study were selected from the specified category of Georgia Reward schools. The participant selection was further narrowed as only Georgia Reward elementary schools were included in the study. Participation was delimited to elementary schools in districts where approval was granted. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalized to middle schools and high schools in Georgia. Because teacher participants completed an anonymous online survey, any potential bias from the researcher was eliminated. Further, it was assumed that utilization of the PIMRS, a validated instrument, would yield the

results it was purported to measure.

Key Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following key terms were identified:

Communicates the School Goals: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Communicates the School Goals: communicates the mission of the school to school community members, discusses academic goals with members, refers to academic goals regarding curricular decisions, ensures that goals are visibly demonstrated within the school, and refers to goals and school mission in student forums (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Communicates the School Goals will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Coordinates the Curriculum: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Coordinates the Curriculum: provides clear indications of individuals responsible for coordinating the curriculum, utilizes achievement data when making curricular decisions, monitors the curriculum in the classroom to ensure its alignment with school objectives, and participates actively in the review of curriculum materials (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Coordinates the Curriculum will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Defining the School Mission: This is a dimension of the instructional leadership framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Instructional leaders must possess a clear vision of the goals of the school while leading the staff in developing school wide goals and engaging in explicit communication (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). This dimension is comprised of the following two leadership functions: frames the school goals and communicates the school goals. For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership functions comprising the

dimension of Defining the School Mission will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Frames the School Goals: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Frames the School Goals: develops a set of yearly school goals, frames the goals in terms of staff responsibilities, utilizes measures of assessment to secure staff collaboration to develop goals, utilizes achievement data in the development of goals, and develops goals that may be easily implemented by staff members (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Frames the School Goals will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Georgia Reward Highest Performing School: As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Performing school is categorized as being in the top 5% of Title I schools in the state. These schools demonstrate the highest performance for the group over a span of 3 years. These schools must have met AYP requirements in 2011 and may not be identified as a priority school, a focus school, or an alert school (GA DOE, 2012).

Georgia Reward Highest Progress School: As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Progress school is among the top 10% of Title I schools in the state that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the All Students group over a number of years on the statewide assessments and may not be classified as a high progress school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups within the school that are not closing (GA DOE, 2012).

Instructional Leadership: For the purpose of this research, principal instructional leadership will be defined as "an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for

the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvement in teaching and learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012, p. 7).

Instructional Leadership Framework: Hallinger and Murphy (1985) developed a framework of instructional leadership representative of the following dimensions: (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school climate. These three dimensions are further delineated into 10 instructional leadership functions.

Maintains High Visibility: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Maintains High Visibility: talks informally with students and teachers, visits classrooms to discuss issues pertaining to education, attends extracurricular activities, substitutes for teachers during instruction, and tutors students individually or in whole group settings (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Maintains High Visibility will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Managing the Instructional Program: This is a dimension of the Instructional leadership framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). The principal, as a leader, must work collaboratively with staff members in the areas of evaluation, development, and in the implementation of curriculum and instruction (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). This dimension is comprised of the following three leadership functions: coordinates the curriculum, supervises and evaluates instruction, and monitors student progress. For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership functions comprising the dimension of Managing the Instructional Program will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Monitors Student Progress: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Monitors Student Progress: meets with teachers to discuss the progress of students, discusses academic progress data with faculty to address strengths and weaknesses, utilizes data to assess progress toward goals, informs teachers of data in written form, and informs students of the academic progress of the school (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Monitors Student Progress will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS): This survey was originally developed by Philip Hallinger in 1982, was revised to include ten functions of instructional leadership, and is used to measure the frequency of instructional leadership practices. This survey provides a profile of principal instructional leadership (Hallinger, 1983).

Developing the School Learning Climate Program: This is a dimension of the instructional leadership framework developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Within this dimension, a leader must engage in the following practices: maintains high visibility, creates a reward system to reinforce student achievement and effort, establishes clear standards, protects instructional time, and participates in staff development programs in alignment with the school mission (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). This dimension is comprised of the following five leadership functions: protects instructional time, provides incentives for teachers, provides incentives for learning, promotes professional development, and maintains high visibility. For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership functions comprising the dimension of Promotes a Positive Climate will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Promotes Professional Development: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Promotes Professional Development: ensures professional

development activities are consistent with school goals, actively supports the implementation of professional development activities and skills, obtains staff participation in development opportunities, leads or attends professional development focusing on instruction, and sets aside time to share teacher ideas or information from professional development training (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Promotes Professional Development will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Protects Instructional Time: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Protects Instructional Time: limits interruptions to instructional time, ensures that students are physically present during instruction, ensures that tardiness and truancy violations have consequences, encourages teachers to use instructional time most effectively, and limits the effect of extracurricular activities on instructional time (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Protects Instructional Time will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Provides Incentives for Learning: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Provides Incentives for Learning: recognizes outstanding students publicly through written forums and assemblies, contacts parents to communicate student success, and supports teachers in their recognition of students' accomplishments and contributions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Provides Incentives for Learning will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Provides Incentives for Teachers: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Provides Incentives for Teachers: reinforces high quality performance of teachers both publicly and privately, acknowledges teacher performance through

positive additions to personnel files, rewards teacher efforts with professional recognition, and creates rewarding growth opportunities for teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Provides Incentives for Teachers will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Supervises and Evaluates Instruction: The following practices are representative of the instructional leadership function of Supervises and Evaluates Instruction: ensures classroom priorities are consistent with the mission of the school, reviews student work, conducts informal observations, and identifies strengths and weaknesses in teacher instructional practices (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). For the purpose of this study, the instructional leadership function of Supervises and Evaluates Instruction will be defined (represented) by a subscale score on the PIMRS.

Vision: A statement or group of ideas articulated to the school community and stakeholders regarding the purpose of the organization.

Chapter Summary

The education of today's youth is in peril as deepening poverty and educational policy collide. As poverty soars to unprecedented heights, high poverty schools face the daunting task of educating large populations of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to meet the same predetermined levels of academic proficiency as their more affluent peers. The emphasis on increasing student achievement by federal and state entities has placed pressure on principals, teachers, and students to perform at high levels. The implementation of intensive evaluative measures for both teachers and principals has heightened the need for administrators to more fully immerse themselves in the curricular and instructional demands of education. The combination of economic strife, accountability, student achievement, and federal and state policy creates a compelling argument for conducting research that seeks to identify instructional

leadership practices of principals who support children living in poverty.

The purpose of this study was to investigate principal instructional leadership practices as perceived by teachers, in Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools utilizing a causal-comparative approach. Literature that served to inform this study, research methodology, research findings, and a discussion will follow.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the existing research examining the historical development of the role of the principal as an instructional leader will be discussed. The relationship between instructional leadership, accountability and policy change, teacher perceptions, and student achievement will be examined. Further investigation into the rise of poverty in Georgia and the impact of poverty on student achievement will be addressed. This overview of the existing research will conclude by investigating practices and approaches of high poverty, high performing elementary schools demonstrating gains in student achievement. Within this study, further emphasis will be placed on Title I schools. Specifically, importance will be placed on Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools. High poverty, high performing middle and high schools are not included in this study.

Effective Schools Research

Approximately 50 years of research has contributed to the evolution and understanding of the role of the principal as a leader. In 1964, the passage of the Civil Rights Act gave prominence to the issue of equality in education. In a landmark study, Coleman et al. (1966) examined the issue of equality in education among rural, urban, and suburban schools across the nation. In this study, it was determined that educational resources did not emerge as a factor most influential on academic performance. This report indicated that the influential factors of both family and peers contributed significantly in determining academic outcomes. Coleman et al. (1966) determined U.S. public schools had no impact on student achievement and concluded "the stronger variable impacting student achievement was the parent's socioeconomic class" (p. 21).

In an extension of the research of Coleman et al. (1966), Jencks et al. (1972) similarly indicated that U.S. public schools failed to contribute to educational equality as neither teachers

nor school environment impacted student achievement. However, critics of these findings (e.g., Cain & Watts, 1970) identified methodological shortcomings regarding conclusions derived in reference to student achievement. These criticisms reflected issues regarding both the sample size and the presence of unidentified high performing schools.

Research in the late 1960s and early 1970s shaped the belief that educational institutions were incapable of providing students with a quality education. It was determined that the educational development of children was largely independent of school experiences. Socio-economic status, background, and peer influences were determined to be significant factors affecting educational achievement. In response to the findings of researchers such as Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972), a body of research emerged that focused on effective schools serving large populations of high achieving, low socio-economic students. School variables that positively impacted student achievement were identified and investigated. These investigations were known as the Effective Schools Research.

Weber (1971) conducted case studies of four high poverty urban schools that demonstrated high academic achievement. The research focused on school processes such as school climate, principal leadership, expectations, and continuous evaluation of the academic achievement of students. Findings indicated leadership practices contributed to both student and overall school success.

In 1979, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, and Smith published *Fifteen Thousand Hours.* This study attempted to determine the impact of 15,000 hours of school experiences on student development as 15,000 hours is generally the approximate duration of time that a student spends in school during his/her educational career. Twelve inner-city London secondary schools were analyzed over a span of 3 years. The primary research focused on existing differences in the areas of attendance, student behavior, academic achievement, and delinquency. The study

examined both the quantity and quality of interactions between students and educators through interviews regarding school experiences. A comparison of student admission data and academic achievement data upon graduation demonstrated that schools were inherently unequal. Socio-economic status among students differed significantly as some schools were comprised of larger populations of economically disadvantaged children. The study concluded that school resources and student socio-economic background had minimal impact on achievement. Instead, student achievement was influenced through daily interactions with educators and the existence of a positive learning climate. Rutter et al. (1979) concluded that "the results carry the strong implication that schools can do much to foster good behavior and attainments, and that even in a disadvantaged area, schools can be a force for good" (p. 205).

In related research, Brookover and Lezotte (1977) and Edmonds (1979) conducted comparison studies to examine effective and ineffective schools with similar demographics. By determining the characteristics of the effective schools that demonstrated student achievement regardless of student background, correlations were made regarding student achievement. Edmonds (1979) identified an association between effective schools and leaders who exhibited a primary focus on the instructional aspect of the role of the principal. Suber (2011) stated, "These traits that Edmonds attributed to effective schools were distinguished by the presence of strong leadership, safe and positive environment, high expectations for students and frequent monitoring of student progress" (p. 5). In subsequent research, Purkey and Smith (1983) identified the instructional leadership of principals to be a significant contributing factor to the success of schools.

The Effective Schools Research established that instructionally effective schools could educate economically disadvantaged students and yield high levels of academic achievement regardless of family background (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood &

Montgomery, 1982). These findings challenged the earlier notion that schools did not impact the academic achievement of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, the role of the principal as an essential component in school effectiveness was derived from these investigations. Through this research, the most significant factors identified in determining school effectiveness in contexts of poverty were the actions and beliefs of the principal as the school leader (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977).

Era of Accountability

Decades of research have significantly impacted educational policy and reform. In an era of high-stakes testing, rigorous education initiatives established by federal and state government leaders to improve student performance have increased accountability among principals. The accountability movement has emphasized the principal's responsibility for student achievement while budget cuts have simultaneously depleted instructional and personnel resources at the state and district levels (Finkel, 2012). Therefore, the evolving role of the principal as an instructional leader has been further complicated. The role of the principal has increased in complexity due to the expectations of implemented policies, societal factors, and the organizational structure of the educational system (Pepper, 2010; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

No Child Left Behind

On January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was signed into law and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Hoang, 2010). The NCLB Act demonstrated efforts to reform American education through accountability by building upon prior efforts to decrease the achievement gap between minority and non-minority and disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students and to increase proficiency for all types of learners (Maleyko & Gawlik, 2011). The reform sought to hold both educational agencies and states accountable for the academic achievement and continued growth of students.

Suber (2011) stated, "The purpose of this law is to provide a high quality education to children

regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, ability, or background" (p. 2). This reform identified lower performing schools that failed to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students. The accountability provisions intended to transform the identified lower performing schools through the utilization of state assessments designed to ensure that academic expectations were being met.

Due to NCLB, the balance of power between state and district influence has shifted to favor state mandates. "Because states have created accountability systems under the direction of NCLB, many local officials equate alignments with compliance, and concede alignment as a unilateral effort—states set policies while schools and districts comply" (Choi, 2011, p. 4). Ultimately, school districts have been tasked with increased leadership roles to implement, strengthen, and sustain programs promoting student achievement in the areas of reading, math, and science (Hoang, 2010). Rising accountability expectations stemming from NCLB have shaped education reforms and contributed significantly to the changing roles and responsibilities of both principals and teachers.

With the implementation of these stringent policies, Suber (2011) reported the "emphasis is to hold districts, schools, principals, and teachers accountable to access and review the academic growth of students" (p. 13). The mandates challenged educational leaders and teachers to not only improve student performance but to also ensure that all faculty members were highly qualified to meet the needs of the student population. The implemented accountability measures require that all types of learners must meet expectations regardless of disadvantage or diversity. According to NCLB, schools must attain adequate yearly progress on benchmarks in order to be considered successful. Sanctions are placed on those schools unable to meet the provisions.

The failure of NCLB to bring all levels of learners to proficiency by 2014 has further highlighted the overwhelming need for improvements in leadership, instruction, and student

achievement. In response, the practice of implementing high-stakes testing measures to monitor student progress continues to place pressure on principals, teachers, and students, collectively, to perform at high levels. This unprecedented emphasis on accountability has led to an increased interest in school improvement among high poverty schools where students are traditionally underperforming. Schools that are traditionally high poverty, low performing, must meet expectations in the midst of fluctuating budgets, state and local policy misalignment, and short timeframes to produce academic gains (Choi, 2011). In addition, NCLB has demonstrated that there is a need for continued professional growth in the areas of leadership, curriculum, and instruction (Moore, Kochan, Kraska, & Reames, 2011). Choi (2011) has stated, "Preoccupation with accountability could prevent schools and districts from appreciating the broader scope of alignment, its original intent, and proven benefits" (p. 5).

Title I Program

Title I, the largest federal education program, emerged with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and provides federal funding for schools with large populations of economically disadvantaged students considered to be at risk for falling behind academically (Hoang, 2010). The primary purpose of Title I is to close the achievement gap between socioeconomic groups and ensure that economically disadvantaged students receive equitable opportunities for academic proficiency.

According to the 2009-2010 Georgia Title I Annual Report, Georgia schools received a distribution of approximately $508 million dollars (GA DOE, 2010). These distributed funds can be utilized for hiring new employees, tutoring, technology, professional development, and a number of educational resources (Hoang, 2010). As designated Title I schools receive additional funding and resources, an expectation arises that these schools will produce higher levels of student achievement.

The allocation of funding by Title I has struggled to compete with the consistent rise in the number of economically disadvantaged students being served by the program. The combination of economic decline and increased accountability has challenged teachers, principals, superintendents, and educational systems in Title I schools to reevaluate their strategies for student success. Current policy initiatives to reform and improve American education, including NCLB, Title I, high-stakes testing, and evaluative measures, fail to directly address the socio-economic challenges faced by economically disadvantaged students in the push to close the achievement gap (Ladd, 2011). Effectively addressing the educational challenges faced by economically disadvantaged children will require a broader approach than recent reform efforts have suggested.

Principal and Teacher Evaluation

The push for accountability has further led to the implementation of additional evaluative measures with the purpose of holding both principals and teachers responsible for the academic growth of all Georgia K-12 students. With the implementation of LKES, school administrators are evaluated based on their ability to increase and support student achievement while simultaneously fostering the continuous professional growth and development of faculty members (GA DOE, 2014).

Likewise, implementation of TKES holds teachers accountable for curriculum knowledge, instructional practice, student growth, and personal and continuous professional growth as an educator (GA DOE, 2014). The implementation of these evaluative tools in Georgia K-12 schools has placed an increased emphasis on the responsibility of principals and teachers to work in tandem to ensure students are demonstrating academic achievement and continued growth. The push for more accountability for student performance has spawned an educational culture driven primarily by measures of standardized testing.

The heavy focus on the role of the principal has coincided with not only existing research correlating principal leadership and school effectiveness but also with changing federal and state policies regarding K-12 education initiatives (Superville, 2014). Measures of accountability hold principals, teachers, students, and stakeholders at the district, state, and community levels accountable for the academic progress of all levels of learners. "The principal is responsible for collaborating with other school professionals to analyze, interpret, and report student achievement to a variety of stakeholders such as parents, staff, district-and state-level administrators, and the community" (Massey, 2012, p. 66). Principals are still tasked with managerial duties, but increased emphasis has been placed on instructional leadership as teacher instruction and student achievement remain paramount.

This era of accountability has significantly contributed to educational reform through both federal and state mandates. These mandates demonstrate the expectation that schools will continue to seek improvement in the areas of leadership, instruction, and achievement. In response, the emphasis placed on leader accountability has subsequently impacted not only the role of the principal but also the instructional leadership characteristics and practices associated with this role.

Theoretical Framework

Since the 1980s, a primary focus on the role of the principal as an instructional leader has existed (Hallinger, 2003), and instructional leadership remains the foremost conceptual model utilized in the field of educational leadership (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger and Murphy (2010) defined instructional leadership as "an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvement in teaching and learning" (p. 7). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) developed a framework of instructional leadership comprised of the following dimensions: (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) developing the school learning

climate program.

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) framework of instructional leadership serves as the foundation for this research. This framework, which serves as the basis for PIMRS (Hallinger, 1983), was utilized to analyze the instructional leadership of elementary school principals. The literature presented in this review reflects the theoretical and empirical research on Effective Schools Research and principal leadership. Current findings are combined with often-cited findings of prominent authors of research related to the role of the principal as an instructional leader.

The Role of the Principal

Throughout the previous 4 decades, discussion regarding the correlation between principal leadership and school success has not subsided. Fullan (2010) stated, "There has been more written about leadership in the literature on organizations than any other topic, and there are no signs that it is abating" (p. 76). The era of accountability has intensified the level of interest in principal leadership and the impact these practices have on school. "A particularly noteworthy finding is the empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement" (Wallace Foundation, 2011, p. 3).

For decades, the role of the principal as a school leader has been characterized largely by managerial and supervisory skills. Principals primarily impacted the direction of a school through building management, resource allocation, stakeholder relations, and extraneous day to day operational activities.

While general consensus existed concerning the overall significance of instructional leadership, there was less agreement relating to what exactly instructional leadership entailed (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Some perceived instructional leadership as monitoring, observing, and, at times, directing the teaching practices of educators. Some believed a principal's foremost role

was to facilitate instruction in an effort to increase the achievement of all student learners. Cuban (1988) explained that instructional leadership was significant but could not be the only role of the principal. Because the role of the principal has expanded to include a vast amount of responsibility, it was also necessary for principals to be involved in managerial and political roles as leaders.

Horng and Loeb (2010) perceived instructional leadership to be centralized in personnel practices and resource allocation as demonstrated by the principal. The authors highlighted organizational management as a means to effectively improve instruction as opposed to direct involvement in the daily instructional practices of teachers. The authors stressed that the quality of teaching instruction received by students is minimally affected by the direct involvement of the principal. The researchers noted that the greatest likelihood of principal impact on student achievement existed through hiring qualified teachers, teacher assignment, teacher retention, and professional development opportunities provided for the faculty. These factors enabled instructional leaders to engage in organizational management to promote student achievement.

Valentine and Prater (2011) examined managerial, instructional, and transformational leadership and its relationship to student achievement. Variations relating to student achievement were demonstrated since schools involved in the statewide study were categorized based on principal leadership factors. The findings of the study indicated that principals focusing on managerial skills were essential to the success of a school and demonstrated a moderate impact on student achievement. It was also determined that when leader behaviors promoted both instructional and curriculum improvement, a relationship emerged between these behaviors and student achievement. It was further indicated that transformational leadership enabled a principal to act as a visionary, which culminated in the formation of an appropriate model to foster the

goals of the institution as a whole.

The past 40 years have witnessed changes in the role of principals as educational leaders and in the responsibilities of these leaders.

> They need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. They are expected to broker the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, district office officials, unions, state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs. (DeVita, as cited in Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. i)

The role of the principal is more diverse and demanding than ever before as principals face greater measures of accountability for student achievement. In response to increased accountability for student achievement, principals must now reevaluate the allocation of time and attention paid to both the managerial and instructional leadership duties included in the role of the principal as a school leader. Traditional views of the scope of the role of the principal as an authoritative manager of school affairs have been altered to include the principal as an instructional leader who understands, develops, and supports the curricular and instructional dimensions of education (Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, & Leon, 2011).

Principals as Instructional Leaders

Educational trends, including the leadership roles, behaviors, and practices of school principals, cannot remain dormant. "Where once the job was primarily defined as a managerial one, principals are now expected not just to run a smooth operation, but also to be change leaders and improve achievement" (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2013, p. 58). The role of principals must continually evolve in order to adequately address constantly changing student and teacher needs. The evolution of the responsibilities associated with the role of the principal in public education

has been apparent in recent years (Searby, 2010). Bush (2014) has asserted that instructional leadership is "regaining its former significance as research increasingly connects enhanced learner outcomes to leader's engagement with classroom practices" (p. 3).

In the era of NCLB, principals must expand their role beyond that of the traditional administrator. Effective management continues to be an essential role of the principal, but leadership in the areas of curriculum and instruction remain more salient (Ediger, 2014). Hallinger and Murphy (2012) have stated, "Today, we view instructional leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvement in teaching and learning" (p. 7). There exist many variables in education that, when considered separately, have the potential to minimally impact student achievement. It is the role of the principal to identify these separate variables and create conditions for these variables to combine to positively impact student achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2011). Education demands a principal to be the central force of the school in order for successful conditions to occur. Although extraneous variables have the potential to impact student achievement, principal leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influential factor impacting student success (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003).

Existing empirical studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between principal instructional leadership and student achievement. In a synthesis of the literature, Hallinger and Heck (1998) examined 43 studies associating principal leadership and academic achievement. Results indicated a direct correlation existed between student achievement and principal leadership. In recent research, this thought was reiterated as Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) could not identify a single case of a school improving student achievement in the absence of effective principal leadership. This evidence supported research that identified principal leadership as a key to increased student achievement.

The leadership role of principals must be comprised of various dimensions in order to promote school success in the areas of curriculum, instructional guidance, and student achievement. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) suggested that instructional leadership was comprised of three dimensions: Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Climate Program. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission, principals serving as instructional leaders must possess a clear vision of the present and future school-wide goals and communicate this information to school and community stakeholders. Newman (2012) suggested that goal setting is a preliminary step in the transformation of teaching and learning and fundamentally shapes leadership practices within the school environment. In addition, collaborative relationships among principals and teachers elicit, define, and communicate goals aligned to the school direction to promote student achievement (e.g., Goodwin, 2013; Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012).

Within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program, the role of the principal must extend from the traditional role of supervision and evaluation to a role inclusive of the development and management of the curriculum and instructional practice of the teachers. Similarly, Brookhart and Moss (2013) have suggested that the principal must evolve to become the leading learner by assessing student progress through the utilization of evaluative tools. The utilization of this data derived from monitoring student progress allows principals to drive instruction that is closely aligned to the goals of the school (Murray, 2014).

Within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program, principals must influence the attitudes and norms of students and teachers directly and indirectly while simultaneously promoting learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Similarly, Fox (2014) suggested that principals must encourage and influence instructional strategies, identify and target strategies that promote student success, and modify or adopt instructional techniques.

According to Ediger (2014), it is essential for school principals to possess a comprehensive understanding of curriculum and instruction and these leaders must become self-efficacious in these vital areas. Principals serving as instructional leaders must not only possess knowledge of the curriculum, they must also possess the ability to ensure that faculty members are capable of fulfilling expressed academic goals through classroom instruction. Further, instructional leaders must motivate teachers to deliver the curriculum in the most effective manner.

> As building leaders, school principals must ensure that their staff is qualified to develop the literacy of the children in their charge. Much of that responsibility involves arranging for consistent, high-level professional development for teachers; knowing the district's literacy goals and seeing that they are carried out; and being able to adequately report to district superiors and community stakeholders what is happening instructionally in the building. (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011, p. 14)

Principals must be cognizant of the various job functions and leadership practices necessary to positively influence curricular decisions and implement appropriate instructional applications. "A weak knowledge base in curriculum and instruction, fragmented district expectations, territorial treaties negotiated with teachers, and the diverse roles played by the principal keep many site administrators from carrying out this role effectively" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987, p. 57). In regard to instructional leadership, complications arise only when the expectations and specific job functions of principals serving in the role of instructional leader are not well defined for school leaders (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Effective principals should possess a comprehensive understanding of "when, how, and why to create learning environments that support people, connect them with one another, and provide the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to succeed" (Waters et al., 2003, p. 2).

Waters et al. (2003) conducted a meta-analysis that spotlighted specific leadership

behaviors strongly linking school leadership and student achievement. The meta-analysis synthesized 70 studies that focused on the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. A correlation between principal leadership and student achievement was determined. The researchers identified 21 principal leadership practices as positive influences on student learning. Specifically, a school leader "is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems" (Waters et al., 2003, p. 4).

Similarly, recent research conducted by Wahlstrom, Seashore Louis, Leithwood, and Anderson (2010) reported a correlation between high achieving schools and high levels of instructional climate when principals supported the continuous learning of both students and teachers in the learning environment. Effective principals are capable of building their professional communities and relationships and engage students and teachers in continual growth through learning (Wahlstrom et al., 2010).

Hallinger and Murphy (2012) have addressed the importance of principals as practicing instructional leaders. Leading learning through both time and capacity proved problematic in the educational system. Hallinger and Murphy (2012) identified time and implementation of leadership strategies as significant factors presented in instructional leadership and suggested that the alignment of these factors was necessary to evoke successful efforts in leading student learning. It was shown by the researchers that "most principals have a strong intention to improve teaching and learning in their schools" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012, p. 10).

During a 6-year investigation, The Wallace Foundation worked to identify the components of successful educational leadership and to comprehend how leadership can enhance both teaching practices and student achievement. This study found that leadership practices directly aimed at improving instruction have a positive effect on student learning; however, the effect is indirect.

Similarly, Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) analyzed the leadership of principals as it relates to instruction in the classroom and achievement among students. Surveys were utilized to gauge teacher perceptions regarding the leadership of principals and school organizational structures. Multilevel structural equation modeling was utilized to analyze relationships. Findings of this study indicated that differences in classroom instruction within schools were strongly attributed to the leadership of principals through both the quality of professional development and program coherence. However, variations in instruction and student learning are related to leadership practices of principals only through the instructional climate.

The previous findings of the Effective Schools Research have been reiterated as researchers have continued to identify relationships between principal leadership and student achievement. A review of the literature has indicated that principals serve as contributing factors in eliciting positive increases in both student performance and instructional support (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Soehner & Ryan, 2011). The evolving role of the principal as an instructional leader has garnered much interest regarding the effect of instructional leadership on the achievement of students. It has been suggested that principals serving as instructional leaders have the ability to impact the learning outcomes of students both directly and indirectly (Soehner & Ryan, 2011).

Soehner and Ryan (2011) reported principal leadership was a significant factor in student achievement. Principals who served as instructional leaders possessed the ability to impact the learning outcomes of students both directly and indirectly. It was suggested that there had been a "shift in principals' attitudes towards leadership as instructional management became focused on student achievement" (Soehner & Ryan, 2011, p. 278). Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) indicated that principal leaders affected in-school factors in a positive manner and that these leaders could indirectly impact student achievement. In earlier research, Edmonds (1979) had

suggested principals act as a vital factor by indirectly contributing to increases in student achievement. Similarly, Kearney (2010) found an indirect link between leadership quality and student achievement.

American education continuously undergoes reevaluation to identify both strengths and weaknesses. The roles and responsibilities of the principal as an instructional leader have consistently evolved due to continuous changes in American educational policy (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Searby, 2010). Fullan (2010) stated that "the role of the leader is to enable, facilitate, and cause peers to interact in a focused manner" (pp. 35-36). Today's leaders are expected to possess competency in various areas of educational administration. To ensure that these expectations are met, the role of the principal must consistently be reevaluated and redefined in response to continually changing demands on education and changes in the population of students for whom principals and teachers are held accountable.

Teacher Perceptions of Instructional Leadership

A significant link has emerged between principals and teachers since they are both necessary variables of student achievement. Schmidt-Davis and Bottoms (2011) stated, "It is neither teachers alone nor principals alone who improve schools, but teachers and principals working together" (p. 2). Principals must redefine their roles as leaders to foster a collaborative and supportive relationship with teachers in order to promote school success (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). This includes a shift in principals' leadership from traditional roles as managers to roles focusing more on leading through instruction. According to Wahlstrom et al. (2010), "leadership effects on student learning occur largely because leadership strengthens professional community; teachers' engagement in professional community, in turn, fosters the use of instructional practices that are associated with student achievement" (p. 10).

Lee, Walker, and Chui (2012) analyzed the impact of various dimensions of instructional

leadership on the achievement of students in a high accountability environment by examining standardized test scores and teacher perceptions of principals. Results indicated that practices reflective of instructional leadership impacted student achievement positively. Yavuz and Bas (2010) analyzed elementary school principals' instructional leadership behavior as perceived by elementary school teachers. A random sample of 20 elementary school teachers contributed to the data. This qualitative case study utilized a semi-structured interview process and identified five themes of principal instructional leadership: determination of the school's purpose, management of instruction, student evaluation, teacher support, and the creation of an environment supporting teaching and learning. Teachers stated, ". . . school principals should take an active role in providing resources to teachers and improving the instructional environment for the development of teachers from both professional and psychological aspects" (p. 90). Though this study was not conducted in the United States, its relevance is clear as the study specifically analyzed the perceptions of elementary school teachers.

Poverty and Student Achievement

"Poverty is not just inadequate food, worn out shoes or damp bedrooms. It still *is* all those things, but it is also relative; young people become acutely aware that they cannot afford the things their friends take for granted" (Wrigley, 2012, p. 91). Within Georgia, a poverty crisis exists, and the state ranks as the 6th highest in childhood poverty in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). As poverty rates continue to soar, the economic crisis is fueling the existing educational crisis as economically disadvantaged students struggle to make academic gains (Sparks, 2013). Though poverty is fundamentally a societal issue, principals and teachers must face the consequences of this unequal society as they struggle to educate the growing number of economically disadvantaged students.

As Gorski (2013) has suggested, "The only surefire way to eliminate the achievement gap

is to eradicate poverty" (p.48). The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) reported that approximately 75% of public school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in the 2011 school year. For decades, school reform efforts in U.S. public schools have strived to improve student achievement among economically disadvantaged students, yet students from more affluent socioeconomic backgrounds have consistently achieved at higher levels. The existing correlation between poverty and underachievement remains one of the most significant issues in education (Ladd, 2012; Smith & Wrigley, 2013).

Bhattacharya (2010) has suggested the investment in a young child's education is perhaps the greatest educational advocacy as disparities in access to educational intervention measures persist throughout a child's lifetime. However, as poverty rates continue to soar, increasing numbers of economically disadvantaged students continue to lag behind their more affluent peers as educators, principals, and state and federal entities struggle to meet the increasing educational needs of these students. In response, the achievement gap continues to widen. As schools with large populations of low income students have struggled to meet educational demands, programs offering financial assistance, such as Title I, have been implemented to target the needs of these learners.

School District Implications

Principals remain at the center of school effectiveness as accountability and expectations continue to increase. While it is understood that principals serving as leaders in curriculum and instruction are essential, district support is imperative in the facilitation of professional development and in the creation of conditions fostering principal success (Fink & Silverman, 2014). Principals face many challenges in the effort to engage in effective instructional leadership, but a significant challenge lies in the link between the district office and the efforts of the principal.

Fink and Silverman (2014) found that three significant challenges emerged when

examining the relationship between principals and central office expectations. First, many district systems do not possess a comprehensive understanding of the daily responsibilities of a principal and the level of engagement that is necessary to strengthen the academic and personal relationships with teachers and students. Second, district leaders do not provide adequate professional development opportunities to further enable the principal to be an effective instructional leader. Third, districts are unable to provide principals with the time necessary to fully comply with the demands of curriculum, instruction, and engagement with both teachers and students (Fink & Silverman, 2014).

The complicated relationship between principals and the central office places more obstacles in the principal's pursuit of effective instructional leadership. School districts must align their supervisory efforts to focus on improving the instructional leadership practices of principals while simultaneously complying with federal, state, and local mandates and initiatives.

> As the varied demands on principals increase and as districts ramp up the role they play in implementing key initiatives—including college—and career-readiness standards, common-core-aligned assessments, and new teacher- and principal-evaluation systems, district leaders say who principals' bosses are, and what they do in that job, is critical. (Superville, 2015, p. S12)

Leadership from the central office is essential for principals to meet the demands and expectations set forth by not only districts but federal and state entities as well. "The responsibility lies with central office leaders to ensure they have created the expectations, supports, and conditions necessary for principal effectiveness" (Fink & Silverman, 2014, p. 26). The primary responsibility of a school district is to guide principals through evaluative measures and support their growth as instructional leaders.

The leadership of the school district maintains a significant amount of power over the operations of a school and the principal leadership of the building. Often, school operations are

controlled primarily by the district and not school principals. While the district may maintain a significant amount of power, the way in which a principal carries out school plans is significant to curriculum, instruction, and perception. Principals influence school quality through many channels that differ among districts due to variances in the institutional structures that define the authority of the principal (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012). Without the collaboration of district leadership and effective principal leadership, the possibility of all children receiving equitable educational opportunities remains unlikely.

High Poverty, High Performing Schools

"A myth plagues the United States that low income students and students of color arrive at school so damaged that schools cannot be expected to help them achieve at high levels" (Chenoweth, 2010, p. 16). A factor that further complicates student underachievement for principals and educators is the challenge of simultaneously closing an achievement gap while delivering mandated curriculum and standardized assessments (Stull, 2013).

As Mulford and Silins (2011) observed, "the negative effects of socio-economic disadvantage can be moderated" (p. 61). Ramalho, Garza, and Merchant (2010) determined that economically disadvantaged students learn most effectively when held to the same curricular standards and expectations as that of their more affluent peers. While the seemingly unyielding cycle of underachievement persists, schools across the nation have successfully closed the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. Most importantly, successful schools have consistently maintained this level of academic success. Researchers have worked to identify and document the attributes of high poverty, high performing schools in hopes that these attributes can benefit high poverty, low performing schools in their efforts to increase achievement among their own high populations of economically disadvantaged students.

May, Huff, and Goldring (2012) found that principals in more affluent schools allocated

time and attention in a much more varied manner than principals in high poverty schools. Principals who served in more challenging schools were more frequently found to allocate primary leadership efforts toward student affairs or instructional leadership. Similarly, Suber (2011) utilized a mixed method approach to identify characteristics of principals practicing in high poverty, high performing schools in both urban and rural settings. Responses indicated an environment focused on team work fostering a shared responsibility for measures of accountability in high performing schools. Suber (2011) stated that "successful school principals are closely involved with the teachers, instruction, and student learning in their schools" (p. 2).

Chenoweth and Theokas (2013) conducted an 8-year study that correlated leadership with school success. The study was conducted across 19 states and included a sample of 33 principals and assistant principals in high performing, high poverty schools. The schools were comprised of elementary, middle, and high schools located in rural, suburban, and urban locales. On average, 75% of students qualified for free or reduced price lunch. Upon examination, the following four qualities of leadership emerged as contributing factors in the success of these high poverty schools: (a) leaders believed in student potential, (b) leaders placed instruction at the center of their duties, (c) leaders focused on building the capacity of all faculty, and (d) leaders monitored and evaluated indicators of success and learned lessons from failure. Seventy-six percent of principals and assistant principals included in the study defined themselves as instructional leaders. According to Chenoweth and Theokas (2013), "They set measureable interim goals to track progress, assess the rigor of instruction through student work products, and engage their staff with data to discuss instruction" (p. 59). Though this study was conducted across elementary, middle, and high schools, the results remain significant as the leadership qualities identified can be targeted for use in all levels of education. The identification of

qualities contributing to school success is essential to amass evidence of leadership and school improvement.

Deepening poverty contributes significantly to student underachievement (Gorski, 2012). Research has shown that students are significantly more at risk academically in schools possessing a 40% or higher concentration of poverty (Sparks, 2013). However, a high rate of poverty does not necessarily mean a high poverty school will not succeed. There exists evidence of principals leading high poverty schools to success. Though principals leading in a context of poverty face many challenges, research has found that school principals, specifically in the elementary school setting, can successfully promote and foster higher levels of student achievement in high poverty schools (e.g., Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Mulford & Silins, 2011; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Principals leading in a context of poverty can promote student achievement by establishing positive and collaborative relationships. These relationships must focus on collaboration with teachers, interest in curriculum and instruction, and overall student achievement.

Chapter Summary

Poverty rates continue to soar across the nation. The state of Georgia, in particular, has witnessed a significant rise in the number of families facing economic struggle. In response to overwhelming economic hardship, Georgia has become a state with one of the highest poverty rates in the nation. Poverty has not remained a societal problem; instead, the poverty crisis has infiltrated American education. The issue of poverty continues to contribute to the educational crisis as the number of economically disadvantaged students increases. These students remain at risk for academic failure.

Research has indicated an existing correlation between low socioeconomic status and underachievement. In response to poverty growth, schools with high indices of poverty are being

pressured to narrow the achievement gap. Confronting these expectations and rigorous demands has led principals, as school leaders, to reevaluate their roles as instructional leaders.

Approximately fifty years has contributed to the evolution and current practice of the principal as a school leader. As the role of the principal continues to change, the expectations and definitions of this role evolve, as well, to seek to determine the extent of a principal's involvement in the many facets of education. Studies have indicated a relationship exists between school improvement and principal instructional leadership. This line of research proposes that the instructional leadership practices of principals remain central in the efforts to improve student learning and school improvement in both a direct and indirect manner.

Increasing childhood poverty, in combination with a heightened importance on the role of the principal as an instructional leader, provides a rationale for conducting research that identifies targeted principal instructional leadership practices and behaviors that are occurring in high poverty schools. The findings of this study will contribute in the identification of successful instructional leadership practices as perceived by teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

A review of the literature showed a correlation between principal leadership and school effectiveness. Ample studies have identified the instructional leadership practices of principals as having a positive, indirect effect on student achievement. A synthesis of the literature revealed a significant amount of research regarding the characteristics of effective schools and the role of the principal in molding conditions of an effective school. There is an increasing amount of literature focusing on students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and the effect of these demographics on their academic achievement. Principals as instructional leaders remain a consistent variable in the research. However, there remains a need to clarify and identify the practices utilized by principals in high poverty, high performing schools that have proven to be successful as well as the practices of principals in high poverty, lower performing schools that have exhibited positive gains. It is necessary to address the practices utilized by principal instructional leaders to create and sustain improvement in Georgia high poverty schools. Therefore, the purpose of this causal-comparative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) elementary schools. As such, this study identified the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices and attempted to determine if these practices could be related to school effectiveness in high poverty schools.

As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Performing school is categorized as being the top 5% of Title I schools in the state. These schools have demonstrated the highest performance for the All Students group over a span of 3 years. These schools must have met AYP requirements in 2011 and may not be identified

as a priority school, a focus school, or an alert school (GA DOE, 2012). As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Progress school is among the top 10% of Title I schools in the state that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the All Students group over a number of years on the statewide assessments and may not be classified as a high progress school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups within the school that are not closing (GA DOE, 2012). For the purpose of this study, Georgia Reward Highest Performing elementary schools will be referred to as GRH-Performing elementary schools. Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools will be referred to as GRH-Progress elementary schools. This chapter includes a review of: research questions, research design and methodology, study population and setting, procedures, instrumentation, and, data analysis.

Research Questions

The overarching research question within this study is: What are the differences in the principal instructional leadership practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

In addition, the following questions guided the primary question:

1. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

2. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

3. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

Research Hypotheses

H_1: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission.

H_2: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program.

H_3: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program.

Research Design and Approach

This non-experimental research design investigated teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) elementary schools. The quantitative method of research was selected because this method would allow the researcher to collect, analyze, and illustrate findings in an objective manner so as to lessen the potential for researcher bias (Creswell, 2009). Further, the use of quantitative research would enable a selected sample size to represent the population to explain the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2009).

This study utilized a causal-comparative method to analyze teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. Causal-comparative research allows a researcher to examine any existing group differences among the population in the selected categories of schools (Creswell, 2009). In addition, this method attempts to determine the cause for any existing differences between these selected groups. Patten (2012) has suggested that "the causal-comparative method is a powerful scientific tool that provides data on many important issues in all the sciences" (p. 7).

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. As such, this study identified the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices and attempted to determine if these practices could be related to school effectiveness in high poverty schools. For the purpose of this research, principal instructional leadership was defined as "an influence process through which leaders identify a direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvement in teaching and learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012, p. 7).

Population and Setting

In this study, the perceptions of elementary teachers from high poverty schools were investigated. Two categories of Georgia schools were identified: Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) elementary schools. As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a GRH-Performing school is categorized as being in the top 5% of Title I schools in the state. These high poverty schools demonstrate the highest performance for the *All Students* group over a span of 3 years. These schools must have met AYP requirements in 2011 and may not be identified as a priority school, a focus school, or an alert school (GA DOE, 2014). As defined by the Georgia

Department of Education, a GRH-Progress school is among the top 10% of Title I schools in the state that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the All Students group over a number of years on the statewide assessments and may not be classified as a high progress school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups within the school that are not closing (GA DOE, 2014).

The target population of this study consisted of Georgia classroom teachers in high poverty elementary schools, specifically in the categories of GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools with grade configurations of pre-kindergarten through grade 5 and kindergarten through grade 5 during the 2014-2015 school year. The included schools were representative of urban and rural communities. A publicized listing from the Georgia Department of Education website was obtained in order to identify the schools meeting the criteria of GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. Among the identified schools, there were 58 Georgia Reward Highest Performing elementary schools and 59 Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools. Because the number of certified faculty varied among the included schools, a mean was calculated to further determine sample size. The calculated mean of 30 certified faculty per school was approximate as the sample of certified teachers likely fluctuated throughout the study due to turnover, attrition, or other extraneous factors.

The overall population included approximately 1,740 GRH-Performing elementary teachers (n = 1,740) and approximately 1,770 GRH-Progress elementary teachers (n = 1,770). These numbers demonstrated that there existed a balanced number of GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary school teachers.

Instrument

For this type of causal-comparative study, the researcher determined a survey questionnaire would be most advantageous to garner perception data from the selected sample of classroom teachers. A number of instruments were available to measure principal effectiveness

as perceived by teachers. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of available instruments was conducted to select an instrument most appropriate to address the research questions presented within the study.

The Audit of Principal Effectiveness (APE) Teacher Form provides information regarding principal effectiveness in the domains of organizational development, organizational environment, and educational programs as perceived by teachers (Valentine & Bowman, 1988). While this survey focuses on the principal as an educational leader, more emphasis is placed on organizational management than educational programs. Only 15 of the 80 included survey statements are associated with instructional leadership and curriculum development. Similarly, the Learning Community Culture Indicator (LCCI) 4.0 survey developed by Williams, Matthews, Stewart, and Hilton (2007) is comprised of items designed to measure the functionality of professional learning community elements that indicate an overall level of collaborative culture as perceived by teachers. While community culture is part of instructional leadership, it serves as only one domain. As this survey is not inclusive of more domains of instructional leadership, alignment to the study was not deemed appropriate. The Principal Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ) is a perception study focusing on the transformational leadership behaviors of principals (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). While this survey emphasizes principals' support of teachers, it does not emphasize principal involvement in curriculum and instruction.

Hallinger's (1983) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) assesses three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: Defining the School Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Climate Program (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The three dimensions are further delineated into 10 instructional leadership functions. The three domains of the PIMRS are inclusive of the leadership functions as detailed within this study and offered an instrument that was closely aligned to the purposes of the study. This particular instrument has been used in approximately 135 empirical studies over

the previous three decades and the measurement properties remain widely used in the study and assessment of principal instructional leadership (Hallinger, Wang, & Chen, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the PIMRS was utilized intact to assess teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices.

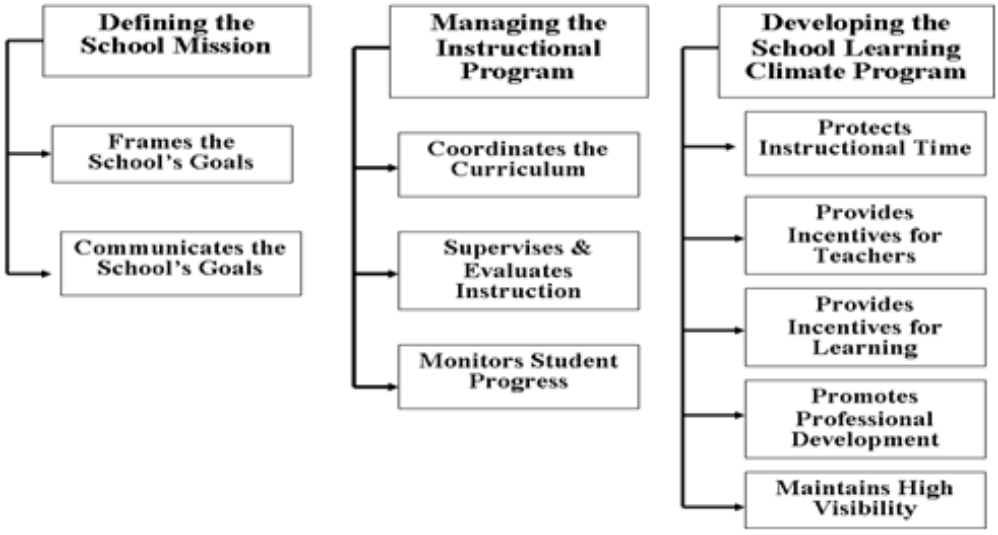

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for dimensions and instructional leadership functions. Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional leadership behavior of principals. *Elementary School Journal*, *86*(2), 217-248.

The PIMRS is designed to provide a profile of principal leadership and was suitable for this study because the instrument is delineated into 10 instructional leadership functions aligning with the research questions to be addressed. Three variations of the PIMRS were available for use: a principal form, a teacher form, and a supervisory form (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). This research utilized the teacher form to garner perceptions of principal practice. Upon selection of an instrument for the purpose of the research, it was vital to explore psychometric soundness. The original validation study found that the PIMRS met high standards of reliability (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). "All 10 subscales exceeded .80 using Cronbach's test of internal consistency" (Hallinger, 2011, p. 277). Additionally, "Studies have further tested the PIMRS for face validity,

content validity, and discriminant validity. Initially, the instrument was judged to be a valid measurement tool for use at the elementary school level" (Hallinger, 2011, p. 277).

The research questions in this study addressed teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. Participants (teachers) were asked to complete Hallinger's (1983) non-interactive survey that was comprised of 10 instructional leadership functions in its entirety.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission was requested from the identified school district superintendents and applications were made to each district IRB based on differing county requirements. Of the identified Georgia Reward schools, permission was obtained to garner teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in 17 of the 58 GRH-Performing elementary schools (n = 510) and 16 of the 59 GRH-Progress elementary schools (n = 480). Collectively, the available population for this study included approximately 990 certified teachers (n = 990).

In compliance with the United States Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP), IRB approval was received from Georgia Southern University (GSU) on December 11, 2014 (Appendix B). No data collection occurred until IRB permissions were obtained. Official permission to use the PIMRS through electronic distribution was obtained from Dr. Philip Hallinger through email. All superintendents of the included schools were forwarded a letter of explanation and a letter of approval.

Once GSU IRB approval was received, the principals of the included schools were forwarded a letter of explanation that included a copy of the Superintendent Approval Letter. Superintendents and principals both received a copy of the PIMRS Teacher Form 2.0. The researcher contacted the administrative assistant in each included elementary school with an attached cover letter and a letter of consent that was forwarded to full time, certified teachers at

all schools where permission had been obtained. The letter included an explanation of the significance of the research, an assurance of anonymity, and a website link to an online survey using SurveyMonkey®.

For the purpose of this research and to ensure anonymity, electronic survey results were garnered from two SurveyMonkey® collectors that utilized different website links. The first SurveyMonkey® website link was used for GRH-Performing elementary schools and the second SurveyMonkey® website link was used for GRH-Progress elementary schools. The two included SurveyMonkey® website links did not disclose any identifying factors in regard to school or personnel.

Data collection began on January 23, 2015. Each survey was initially scheduled to remain open for 2 weeks. However, the allotted time was extended precisely 1 week from the original date of survey closure. Because the desired number of respondents was not achieved at the end of the original 2-week period, the survey closure date was extended and a reminder letter was mailed on February 2, 2015. The survey closed on February 13, 2015.

Data Analysis

The PIMRS Teacher Form 2.0 includes a cover page, a three-part questionnaire of demographic information (Part I), 50 behavioral and practice statements grouped by instructional leadership function (Part II), and an informational page regarding the development of the survey and the author, Dr. Philip Hallinger. For the purpose of this research, Part I of the survey was not included since specific demographic information was not pertinent to the study. All participant responses, both complete and incomplete, to Part II of the survey were accepted as data through SurveyMonkey®.

The responses about instructional leadership practices of principals, as perceived by teachers, were first calculated to find the composite score (mean) for each participant's responses

to the PIMRS. "The *mean* is the arithmetic average of the scores and is the most frequently used measure of central tendency" (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 415). The mean can be calculated by adding the related scores and then dividing that total by the number of scores obtained. However, the mean takes each score into account, and because of this, the mean has the potential to be affected by existing outliers. For the purpose of this study, the mean allowed the researcher to achieve a numerical average for all responses and served, in this particular research design, as the best measure of central tendency. According to Gay and Airasian (2003), the mean is the measure of central tendency most preferred.

A *t* test was utilized to determine whether the means of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools, as perceived by teachers, were significantly different at a selected probability level of .05. According to Gay and Airasian (2003), "In determining significance, the *t* test makes adjustments for the fact that the distribution of scores for small samples becomes increasingly different from the normal distribution as sample sizes become increasingly smaller" (p. 457). A *t* test for independent samples was used to determine whether a significant difference among the means of principal instructional leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools existed. A current version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized. By using SPSS, it was possible to calculate the *t* test for the participant responses as well as calculate a comparison of participant responses regarding the leadership functions of principals, as perceived by teachers.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. As such, this study identified the frequency of principal instructional leadership

practices and attempted to determine if these practices could be related to school effectiveness in high poverty schools. To answer the questions in the study, a causal-comparative study utilizing an anonymous online survey was utilized. This study was conducted among designated Georgia Reward Title I elementary schools in Georgia. A total of 58 GRH-Performing and 59 GRH-Progress elementary schools were identified and 33 schools agreed to participate.

Hallinger's (1983) PIMRS was utilized to assess the three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Developing the School Learning Climate Program. At the conclusion of the survey, the research data was imported into SPSS predictive analytics software. A *t* test was utilized to determine whether the means of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools, as perceived by teachers, were significantly different.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) elementary schools. As such, this causal-comparative study was used to identify the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices and to determine if these practices could be related to school effectiveness in high poverty schools. A total of 377 Georgia classroom teachers in high poverty elementary schools, specifically in the categories of GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools, responded to an online survey. Hallinger's (1983) PIMRS was utilized to assess the following three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: Defining the School Mission; Managing the Instructional Program; and, Developing the School Learning Climate Program. The survey was administered via SurveyMonkey® and utilized two web link collectors for the purpose of comparison. This chapter provides the study results in a manner that describes: the research questions and hypotheses; a description of the respondents; and findings according to research question. A summary of results is presented in the chapter conclusion.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was addressed throughout the study: What are the differences in the principal instructional leadership practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers? In addition, the following sub-questions were addressed:

1. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary

schools as perceived by teachers?

2. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

3. Within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program, what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

Research Hypotheses

H_1: Teachers perceive a difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership function of Defining the School Mission.

H_2: Teachers perceive a difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership function of Managing the Instructional Program.

H_3: Teachers perceive a difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership function of Developing the School Learning Climate Program.

Description of Respondents

The study population consisted of Georgia certified teachers in high poverty elementary schools. Two categories of reward schools were identified for the 2014-2015 school year. As

defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) school is categorized as being in the top 5% of Title I schools in the state. These high poverty schools demonstrate the highest performance for the All Students group over a span of 3 years. These schools must have met AYP requirements in 2011 and may not be identified as a priority school, a focus school, or an alert school (GA DOE, 2014). As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) school is among the top 10% of Title I schools in the state that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the All Students group over a number of years on the statewide assessments and may not be classified as a high-progress school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups within the school that are not closing (GA DOE, 2014). The included schools were representative of both urban and rural communities and included grade configurations of pre-kindergarten through grade 5 and kindergarten through grade 5.

Permission was obtained to gather teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in 17 of the 58 GRH-Performing elementary schools (n = 510), and 16 of the 59 GRH-Progress elementary schools (n = 480). Collectively, the available population for this study included approximately 990 certified teachers (n = 990). These numbers were approximate as the available population of certified teachers likely fluctuated due to turnover, attrition, or other extraneous factors at the time the survey was administered. No demographics specific to individual participants were collected.

Response Rate

A sample was not taken; rather, the survey was provided to all certified classroom teachers in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools where permission had been obtained and that had grade configurations of pre-kindergarten through grade 5 and kindergarten through grade 5 during the 2014-2015 school year. Therefore, the total number of faculty

available to voluntarily participate in this study was approximately 990 certified teachers (n = 990). The survey was open for 22 days. In the category of GRH-Performing elementary schools, a response rate of 178 responses (35%) was calculated. In the category of GRH-Progress elementary schools, a response rate of 199 responses (41%) was calculated. Cumulatively, a total of 377 responses (38%) was recorded in SurveyMonkey® with a 98% completion mean.

The responses from the teacher participants (n = 377) were analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation for each represented behavioral statement, i.e., instructional leadership dimension and instructional leadership function. Complete and partial responses were included. The results are divided into three sections and demonstrate a comparison of teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. Each section is representative of the following instructional leadership dimensions: Defining the School Mission; Managing the Instructional Program; and, Developing the School Learning Climate Program. Each instructional leadership dimension is then further delineated into the instructional leadership functions representative of that specific dimension (Appendix A).

Findings

The overarching research goal was to investigate teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools by determining the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices. The PIMRS utilized a 5-point Likert scale to measure teacher perceptions including: (1) Almost Never, (2) Seldom, (3) Sometimes, (4) Frequently, and (5) Almost Always. The nature of the research questions warranted descriptive and causal comparison data analysis techniques. The results obtained from testing the hypotheses are presented. These results are delineated into sub-sections and

correspond to the hypothesis that was tested in addressing the appropriate research question. The results are presented in narrative and tabular formats.

Defining the School Mission

Research Question 1 asked: Within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission (DSM), what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers? Within the DSM instructional leadership dimension, principals serving as instructional leaders must possess a clear vision of both the present and future school wide goals and communicate this information to school and community stakeholders (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Hallinger's (1983) PIMRS was utilized to measure teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership for the 10 behavioral statements that describe principal practices in the following two instructional leadership functions: Frames the School Goals (FSG) and Communicates the School Goals (CSG).

The responses from the GRH-Performing teacher participants (n = 178) and the GRH-Progress teacher participants (n = 199) were analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation for each of the 10 behavioral statements represented by the survey. The frequencies of participant responses were also generated. A mean and standard deviation was calculated for the two instructional leadership functions of FSG and CSG. Additionally, an overall mean and standard deviation was determined by combining the scores of the 10 behavioral statements that comprise the instructional leadership dimension of DSM. Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for the instructional leadership dimension, the two instructional leadership functions, and the 10 behavioral statements of the GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress participant responses.

Table 1

Functions and Behavioral Statements of Defining the School Mission

Functions and Behavioral Statements	GRH – Performing		GRH – Progress	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Defining the School Mission	4.25	0.67	3.88	1.00
Frame the School Goals	4.39	0.70	3.94	1.03
1. Develop School-wide Goals	4.41	0.82	3.92	1.12
2. Frame School Goals-Staff Responsibility	4.35	0.82	3.88	1.07
3. Use Staff Input on Goal Development	4.24	0.85	3.87	1.08
4. Use Student Performance Data for Goals	4.58	0.65	4.09	1.10
5. Develop Clear and Implemented Goals	4.39	0.74	3.98	1.12
Communicate the School Goals	4.12	0.76	3.85	0.99
6. Communicate School's Mission	4.28	0.77	3.96	1.05
7. Discuss School's Academic Goals	4.29	0.79	3.97	1.07
8. Refer to Academic Goals in Decisions	4.31	0.78	3.94	1.09
9. Ensure Goals Are Visible	3.93	1.04	3.76	1.08
10. Refer to Goals in Forums With Students	3.80	1.09	3.68	1.13

Note. The dimension of Defining the School Mission is comprised of two leadership functions. Each function is delineated into five behavioral statements.

Georgia Reward Highest Performing Elementary Schools. The overall mean for the FSG instructional leadership function was 4.39. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Use Data on Student Performance When Developing the School's Academic Goals (M = 4.58, SD = 0.65), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 115 (64.97%) of 177 participant responses. Fifty-one participants (28.81%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 10 participants (5.65%) selected category 3 (Sometimes) and zero participants (0.0%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.56%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement with the second highest mean, Develop a Focused Set of Annual School-wide Goals, (M = 4.41, SD = 0.82), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 102 (57.30%) of 178 responses. Of these 178 responses, 54 participants

(30.34%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently) and 17 participants (9.55%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, three participants (1.69%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.12%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Develop Goals That Are Easily Understood and Used by Teachers in the School (M = 4.39, SD = 0.74), 50.85% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 90 of 177 responses. Of the 177 responses, 71 respondents (40.11%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Thirteen participants (7.34%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, one participant (0.56%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and two participants (1.13%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Frame the School's Goals in Terms of Staff Responsibilities for Meeting Them (M = 4.35, SD = 0.82) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 92 (51.69%) of 178 participant responses. Sixty-three participants (35.39%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 19 participants (10.67%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and one participant (0.56%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.69%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean was found in the behavioral statement of Use Needs Assessment or Other Formal and Informal Methods to Secure Staff Input on Goal Development (M = 4.24, SD = 0.85), which demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 80 (44.94%) of 178 participant responses. Sixty-seven participants (37.64%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 27 participants (15.17%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and one participant (0.56%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.69%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the instructional leadership function of Communicate the School Goals was 4.12. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Refer to the School's

Academic Goals When Making Curricular Decisions With Teachers (M = 4.31, SD = 0.78), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 85 (48.02%) of 177 participant responses. Sixty-six participants (37.29%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 23 participants (12.99%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and two participants (1.13%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.56%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Discuss the School's Academic Goals With Teachers at Faculty Meetings (M = 4.29, SD = 0.79), 47.19% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 84 of 178 responses. Of the 178 responses, 66 participants (37.08%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Twenty-five participants (14.04%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, two participants (1.12%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and one participant (0.56%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Communicate the School's Mission Effectively to Members of the School Community (M = 4.28, SD = 0.77) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 81 (45.76%) of 177 responses. Of these 177 responses, 67 participants (37.85%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 26 participants (14.69%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, three participants (1.69%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Zero participants (0.0%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Ensure That the School's Academic Goals Are Reflected in Highly Visible Displays in the School (M = 3.93, SD = 1.04), 36.16% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 64 of 177 responses. Of the 177 responses, 56 participants (31.64%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Forty-three participants (24.29%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, eight participants (4.52%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and six participants (3.39%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Refer to the School's Goals or Mission in Forums With Students (M = 3.80, SD = 1.09), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 57 (32.20%) of 177 participant responses. Fifty-eight participants (32.77%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 37 participants (20.90%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 20 participants (11.30%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.82%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Georgia Reward Highest Progress Elementary Schools. The overall mean for the FSG instructional leadership function was 3.94. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Use Data on Student Performance When Developing the School's Academic Goals (M = 4.09, SD = 1.10), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 102 (51.26%) of 199 participant responses. Thirty-eight participants (19.10%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 35 participants (17.59%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 22 participants (11.06%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.01%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Develop Goals That Are Easily Understood and Used by Teachers in the School (M = 3.98, SD = 1.12) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 90 (45.69%) of 197 responses. Of these responses, 41 participants (20.81%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 42 participants (21.32%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 20 participants (10.15%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Four participants (2.03%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Develop a Focused Set of Annual School-wide Goals (M = 3.92, SD = 1.12), 43.72% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 87 of 199 responses. Of the 199 responses, 37 respondents (18.59%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Fifty-two participants (26.13%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 19 participants (9.55%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and four participants (2.01%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Frame the School's Goals in Terms of Staff Responsibilities for Meeting Them (M = 3.88, SD = 1.07) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 77 (38.69%) of 199 participant responses. Forty-five participants (22.61%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 56 participants (28.14%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 18 participants (9.05%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.51%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Use Needs Assessment or Other Formal and Informal Methods to Secure Staff Input on Goal Development (M = 3.87, SD = 1.08), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 79 (40.10%) of 197 participant responses. Thirty-seven participants (18.78%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 61 participants (30.96%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 17 participants (8.63%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.52%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the CSG instructional leadership function was 3.85. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Discuss the School's Academic Goals With Teachers at Faculty Meetings (M = 3.97, SD = 1.07), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 88 (44.22%) of 199 participant responses. Forty participants (20.10%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 49 participants (24.62%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 2 participants (10.55%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.50%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Communicate the School's Mission Effectively to Members of the School Community (M = 3.96, SD = 1.05) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 84 (42.21%) of 199 responses. Of these 199 responses, 46 participants (23.12%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 48 participants (24.12%) selected

category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 20 participants (10.05%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.50%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Refer to the School's Academic Goals When Making Curricular Decisions With Teachers (M = 3.94, SD = 1.09) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 85 (42.93%) of 198 participant responses. Forty-one participants (20.71%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 51 participants (25.76%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 18 participants (9.09%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.52%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Ensure That the School's Academic Goals Are Reflected in Highly Visible Displays in the School (M = 3.76, SD = 1.08), 31.31% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 62 of 198 responses. Of the 198 responses, 58 respondents (29.29%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Fifty participants (25.25%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 24 participants (12.12%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and four participants (2.02%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean was found in the behavioral statement of Refer to the School's Goals or Mission in Forums With Students (M = 3.68, SD = 1.13), which demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 60 (30.15%) of 199 participant responses. Fifty-five participants (27.64%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 51 participants (25.63%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 27 participants (13.57%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Six participants (3.02%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Comparison. Upon evaluation, it was determined that principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the overall dimension of DSM. Further, it was determined that

principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership function of Frame the School Goals (FSG). Similarly, results indicated that principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership function of Communicate the School Goals (CSG).

Table 2

Results of Descriptive Statistics and Independent t*-tests for Defining the School Mission*

	Teacher Perceptions						95% CI for Mean Difference		
	GRH-Performing			GRH-Progress					
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*		*t*	*df*
DSM	4.25	.68	173	3.88	1.00	193	-.53,-.18	-4.1*	339
FSG	4.39	.70	176	3.94	1.03	195	-.63,-.27	-4.9*	343
CSG	4.12	.76	175	3.86	1.00	197	-.44,-.08	-2.8*	361

*$p < .05$

Within the dimension of Defining the School Mission, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing (M = 4.25, SD = .68) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (M = 3.88, SD = 1.00) elementary schools, t (339) = -4.1, p = .00. There was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Frame the School Goals between Georgia Reward Highest Performing (M = 4.39, SD = .70) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (M = 3.94, SD = 1.03) elementary schools, t (343) = -4.92, p = .00.

There was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Communicate the School Goals between Georgia Reward Highest Performing (M = 4.12, SD =

.76) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (M = 3.85, SD = 0.99) elementary schools, t (361) = -2.84, p = .005.

Managing the Instructional Program

Research Question 2 queried: Within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program (MIP), what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers? Within the instructional leadership dimension of MIP, the role of the principal must extend from the formal traditional role of supervision and evaluation to a role inclusive of the development and management of the curriculum and instructional practice of the teachers (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Hallinger's (1983) PIMRS was utilized to measure teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership for 15 behavioral statements that describe principal job practices in the following three instructional leadership functions: supervise and evaluate instruction (SEI); coordinate the curriculum (CC); and, monitor student progress (MSP).

The responses from the GRH-Performing teacher participants (n = 178) and the GRH-Progress teacher participants (n = 199) were analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation for each of the 15 behavioral statements represented by the survey. The frequencies of participant responses were also generated. A mean and standard deviation were calculated for the three instructional leadership functions of SEI, CC, and MSP. Additionally, an overall mean and standard deviation were determined by combining the scores of the 15 behavioral statements that comprise the instructional leadership dimension of MIP. Table 3 represents the means and standard deviations for the 15 behavioral statements, three instructional leadership functions, and the instructional leadership dimension of GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress participant responses.

Table 3

Functions and Behavioral Statements of Managing the Instructional Program

Functions and Behavioral Statements	GRH – Performing		GRH – Progress	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Managing the Instructional Program	4.13	0.67	3.76	0.97
Supervise and Evaluate Instruction	4.22	0.67	3.83	1.01
11. Ensure Consistent Classroom Priorities	4.31	0.76	3.94	1.06
12. Review Student Work	4.01	0.94	3.66	1.11
13. Conduct Informal Observations	4.26	0.83	3.77	1.12
14. Point Out Teacher Strengths	4.30	0.87	3.95	1.14
15. Point Out Teacher Weaknesses	4.27	0.88	3.86	1.14
Coordinate the Curriculum	4.20	0.74	3.81	1.01
16. Make Clear Who Coordinates Curriculum	4.13	0.93	3.84	1.03
17. Use Test Results for Curricular Decisions	4.38	0.76	3.93	1.09
18. Monitor Classroom Curriculum	4.15	0.86	3.80	1.08
19. Assess Curriculum Overlap	4.24	0.78	3.81	1.15
20. Participate in Review of Curriculum	4.11	0.88	3.69	1.15
Monitor Student Progress	3.97	0.78	3.71	0.97
21. Meet With Teachers to Discuss Students	3.67	1.04	3.42	1.04
22. Discuss Performance Results	4.09	0.87	3.82	1.11
23. Use Tests to Assess Progress	4.31	0.78	3.90	1.12
24. Inform Teachers of School Performance	4.23	0.91	3.87	1.12
25. Inform Students of School Progress	3.61	1.05	3.65	1.09

Note: The dimension of Managing the Instructional Program is comprised of three leadership functions. Each function is delineated into five behavioral statements.

Georgia Reward Highest Performing Elementary Schools. The overall mean for the SEI instructional leadership function was 4.22. The behavioral statement with the largest mean, Ensure That the Classroom Priorities of Teachers Are Consistent with the Goals and Direction of the School ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.76$), showed a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 83 (47.16%) of 176 participant responses. Sixty-nine participants (39.20%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 20 participants (11.36%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 4

participants (2.27%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Zero participants (0.0%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Point Out Specific Strengths in Teacher's Instructional Practices in Post-Observation Feedback (M = 4.30, SD = 0.87) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 94 (52.81%) of 178 responses. Of these 178 responses, 50 participants (28.09%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 28 participants (15.73%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, five participants (2.81%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.56%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement, Point Out Specific Weaknesses in Teacher Instructional Practices in Post-Observation Feedback (M = 4.27, SD = 0.88), 49.71% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 87 of 175 responses. Of the 175 responses, 56 participants (32.00%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Twenty-six participants (14.86%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 4 participants (2.29%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and 2 participants (1.14%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Conduct Informal Observations in Classrooms on a Regular Basis (M = 4.26, SD = 0.83) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 83 (46.63%) of 178 participant responses. Sixty-four participants (35.96%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 26 participants (14.61%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 4 participants (2.25%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.56%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Review Student Work Products When Evaluating Classroom Instruction (M = 4.01, SD = 0.94), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 63 (35.39%) of 178 participant responses. Sixty-seven participants (37.64%) selected category

4 (Frequently). In addition, 36 participants (20.22%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 10 participants (5.62%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.12%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the CC instructional leadership function was 4.20. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Draw Upon the Results of School-wide Testing When Making Curricular Decisions (M = 4.38, SD = 0.76), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 94 (53.71%) of 175 participant responses. Fifty-six participants (32.00%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 24 participants (13.71%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and zero participants (0.0%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.57%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Assess the Overlap Between the School's Curricular Objectives and the School's Achievement Tests (M = 4.24, SD = 0.78), 43.43% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 76 of 175 responses. Of the 175 responses, 68 participants (38.86%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Twenty-eight participants (16.00%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, three participants (1.71%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and zero participants (0.0%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Monitor the Classroom Curriculum to See That It Covers the School's Curricular Objectives (M = 4.15, SD = 0.86) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 69 (39.66%) of 174 participant responses. Seventy participants (40.23%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 29 participants (16.67%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 4 participants (2.30%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.15%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Make Clear Who Is Responsible for Coordinating the Curriculum Across Grade Levels (M = 4.13, SD = 0.93) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost

Always) totaling 75 (42.61%) of 176 responses. Of these 176 responses, 59 participants (33.52%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 33 participants (18.75%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, seven participants (3.98%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.14%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Participate Actively in the Review of Curricula Materials (M = 4.11, SD = 0.88), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 69 (39.66%) of 174 participant responses. Sixty-four participants (36.78%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 34 participants (19.54%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and six participants (3.45%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.57%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the MSP instructional leadership function was 3.97. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Use Tests and Other Performance Measures to Assess Progress Toward School Goals (M = 4.31, SD = 0.78), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 82 (46.86%) of 175 participant responses. Seventy participants (40.00%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 20 participants (11.43%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and one participant (0.57%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.14%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Inform Teachers of the School's Performance Results in Written Form (M = 4.23, SD = 0.91) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 87 (49.43%) of 176 participant responses. Fifty-one participants (28.98%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 30 participants (17.05%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and seven participants (3.98%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.57%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Discuss Academic Performance Results With the Faculty to Identify Curricular Strengths and Weaknesses (M = 4.09, SD = 0.87), 36.00% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 63 of 175 responses. Of the 175 responses, 75 participants (42.86%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Twenty-nine participants (16.57%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, six participants (3.43%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and two participants (1.14%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Meet Individually With Teachers to Discuss Student Progress (M = 3.67, SD = 1.04) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 43 (24.57%) of 175 participant responses. Fifty-nine participants (33.71%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 50 participants (28.57%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 18 participants (10.29%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.86%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Inform Students of School's Academic Progress (M = 3.61, SD = 1.05), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 41 (23.70%) of 173 participant responses. Fifty-three participants (30.64%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 55 participants (31.79%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 19 participants (10.98%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.89%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Georgia Reward Highest Progress Elementary Schools. The overall mean for the SEI instructional leadership function was 3.83. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Point Out Specific Strengths in Teacher's Instructional Practices in Post-Observation Feedback (M = 3.95, SD = 1.14), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 91 (45.96%) of 198 participant responses. Thirty-six participants (18.18%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 43 participants (21.72%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 26 participants (13.13%)

chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.01%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Ensure That the Classroom Priorities of Teachers Are Consistent With the Goals and Direction of the School (M = 3.94, SD = 1.06) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 82 (41.62%) of 197 responses. Of these responses, 43 participants (21.83%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 53 participants (26.90%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 17 participants (8.63%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.02%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Point Out Specific Weaknesses in Teacher Instructional Practices in Post-Observation Feedback (M = 3.86, SD = 1.14), 40.40% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 80 of 198 responses. Of the 198 responses, 43 respondents (21.72%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Forty-five participants (22.73%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 27 participants (13.64%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and three participants (1.52%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Conduct Informal Observations in Classrooms on a Regular Basis (M = 3.77, SD = 1.12) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 71 (35.86%) of 198 participant responses. Forty-two participants (21.21%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 58 participants (29.29%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 23 participants (11.62%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Four participants (2.02%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Review Student Work Products When Evaluating Classroom Instruction (M = 3.66, SD = 1.11), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 59 (29.65%) of 199 participant responses. Forty-eight participants (24.12%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 63 participants (31.66%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 23

participants (11.56%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Six participants (3.02%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the CC instructional leadership function was 3.81. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Draw Upon the Results of Schoolwide Testing When Making Curricular Decisions (M = 3.93, SD = 1.09), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 87 (44.16%) of 197 participant responses. Twenty-nine participants (14.72%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 67 participants (34.01%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and nine participants (4.57%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.54%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Make Clear Who Is Responsible for Coordinating the Curriculum Across Grade Levels (M = 3.84, SD = 1.03) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 69 (35.03%) of 197 responses. Of these 197 responses, 46 participants (23.35%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 66 participants (33.50%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 13 participants (6.60%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.52%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Assess the Overlap Between the School's Curricular Objectives and the School's Achievement Tests (M = 3.81, SD = 1.15), 37.06% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 73 of 197 responses. Of the 197 responses, 52 respondents (26.40%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Thirty-seven participants (18.78%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 31 participants (15.74%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and four participants (2.03%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Monitor the Classroom Curriculum to See That It Covers the School's Curricular Objectives (M = 3.80, SD = 1.08) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost

Always) totaling 70 (35.35%) of 198 participant responses. Forty-four participants (22.22%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 63 participants (31.82%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 17 participants (8.59%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Four participants (2.02%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Participate Actively in the Review of Curricular Material (M = 3.69, SD = 1.15), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 60 (30.30%) of 198 participant responses. Sixty-one participants (30.81%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 38 participants (19.19%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 34 participants (17.17%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.53%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the MSP instructional leadership function was 3.71. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Use Tests and Other Performance Measures to Assess Progress Toward School Goals (M = 3.90, SD = 1.12), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 83 (42.13%) of 197 participant responses. Thirty-nine participants (19.80%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 50 participants (25.38%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 22 participants (11.17%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.52%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Inform Teachers of the School's Performance Results in Written Form (M = 3.87, SD = 1.12) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 7 (39.49%) of 195 responses. Of these 195 responses, 46 participants (23.59%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 47 participants (24.10%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 20 participants (10.26%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.56%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Discuss Performance Results With the Faculty to Identify Curricular Strengths and Weaknesses (M = 3.82, SD = 1.11), 37.88% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 75 of 198 responses. Of the 198 responses, 43 respondents (21.72%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Fifty-three participants (26.77%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 24 participants (12.12%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and three participants (1.52%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Inform Students of School's Academic Progress (M = 3.65, SD = 1.09) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 56 (28.43%) of 197 participant responses. Fifty-one participants (25.89%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 60 participants (30.46%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 26 participants (13.20%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Four participants (2.03%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Meet Individually With Teachers to Discuss Student Progress (M = 3.42, SD = 1.04), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 35 (17.86%) of 196 participant responses. Fifty-six participants (28.57%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 67 participants (34.18%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 33 participants (16.84%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.55%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Comparison. Upon evaluation, it was determined that principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the overall dimension of MIP. Further, it was determined that principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership function of Supervise and Evaluate Instruction (SEI). Similarly, results indicated that principals

in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership function of Coordinate the Curriculum (CC). Additionally, results indicated that principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership function of Monitor Student Progress (MSP).

Table 4

Results of Descriptive Statistics and Independent t-*tests for Managing the Instructional Program*

	Teacher Perceptions						95% CI for Mean Difference	*t*	*df*
	GRH-Performing			GRH-Progress					
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*			
MIP	4.13	.67	165	3.76	.97	185	-.54,-.19	-4.1*	327
SEI	4.22	.67	173	3.83	1.01	194	-.56,-.21	-4.4*	338
CC	4.20	.74	171	3.81	1.01	195	-.56,-.20	-4.1*	353
MSP	3.97	.78	171	3.71	.97	191	-.44,-.08	-2.8*	355

*$p < .05$

Within the dimension of Managing the Instructional Program, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing ($M = 4.13$, $SD = .67$) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .97$) elementary schools, t (327) = -4.19, $p = .000$. There was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Supervise and Evaluate Instruction between Georgia Reward Highest Performing ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .67$) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.01$) elementary schools, t (338) = -4.44, $p = .000$. There was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Coordinate the Curriculum between Georgia Reward Highest Performing ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .74$) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress ($M = 3.81$,

SD = 1.01) elementary schools, *t* (353) = -4.18, *p* = .000. There was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Monitor Student Progress between Georgia Reward Highest Performing (*M* = 3.97, *SD* = .78) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (*M* = 3.71, *SD* = .97) elementary schools, *t* (355) = -2.84, *p* = .005.

Developing the School Learning Climate Program

Research Question 3 asked: Within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP), what differences, if any, exist in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers? Within the DSLCP instructional leadership dimension, principals must influence the attitudes and norms of students and teachers directly and indirectly while simultaneously promoting learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Hallinger's (1983) PIMRS was utilized to measure teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership for 25 behavioral statements that describe principal job practices in the following five instructional leadership functions: protect instructional time (PIT); maintain high visibility (MHV); provide incentives for teachers (PIFT), promote professional development (PPD); and, provide incentives for learning (PIL).

The responses from the GRH-Performing teacher participants (*n* = 178) and the GRH-Progress teacher participants (*n* = 199) were analyzed through descriptive statistics to determine the mean and standard deviation for each of the 25 behavioral statements represented by the survey. The frequencies of participant responses were also generated. A mean and standard deviation was calculated for the five instructional leadership functions. Additionally, an overall mean and standard deviation were determined by combining the scores of the 25 behavioral statements that comprise the DSLCP instructional leadership dimension. Table 5 represents the means and standard deviations for the 25 behavioral statements, five instructional leadership

functions, and the instructional leadership dimension of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress participant responses.

Table 5

Functions and Behavioral Statements of Developing the School Learning Climate Program

Functions and Behavioral Statements	**GRH – Performing**		**GRH – Progress**	
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Developing the School Learning Climate Program	3.72	0.72	3.55	0.86
Protect Instructional Time	4.08	0.68	3.79	0.95
26. Limit Interruptions of Instructional Time	4.39	0.80	3.97	1.05
27. Ensure Students Are Not Called to Office	4.01	0.94	3.80	1.02
28. Tardy/Truant Students Have Consequences	3.30	1.26	3.39	1.09
29. Encourage Teachers to Practice Skills/Concepts	4.51	0.68	3.99	1.14
30. Limit Extra-Curricular Activities	4.26	0.85	3.83	1.13
Maintain High Visibility	3.25	0.92	3.21	0.87
31. Talk Informally With Students/Teachers	3.56	1.16	3.49	1.09
32. Visit Classrooms to Discuss Issues	3.54	1.09	3.43	1.05
33. Attend/Participate in Extra-Curricular Activities	4.13	0.93	3.80	1.06
34. Cover Classes for Teachers	2.55	1.39	2.83	1.18
35. Tutor Students/Provide Direct Instruction	2.59	1.32	2.64	1.18
Provide Incentives for Teachers	3.37	1.03	3.48	0.97
36. Reinforce Teacher Performance in Meetings	3.68	1.14	3.76	1.12
37. Compliment Teachers' Efforts Privately	3.60	1.07	3.71	1.08
38. Acknowledge Teacher Performance in Files	3.11	1.21	3.28	1.11
39. Reward Teacher Efforts With Recognition	3.28	1.20	3.39	1.08
40. Create Teacher Growth Opportunities	3.26	1.23	3.37	1.11
Promote Professional Development	4.08	0.77	3.77	0.99
41. Ensure In-Service Activities Are Attended	4.20	0.81	3.91	1.05
42. Support In-Service Skills in Classroom	4.17	0.79	3.82	1.09
43. Obtain Staff Participation in Activities	4.21	0.86	3.89	1.08
44. Lead/Attend In-Service Instructional Activities	4.01	0.93	3.65	1.19
45. Allow Sharing of Skills/Information at Meetings	3.86	1.04	3.61	1.16
Provide Incentives for Learning	3.86	0.87	3.67	1.01
46. Recognize Students With Formal Rewards	4.18	0.96	3.96	1.08
47. Honor Students in Assemblies	4.30	0.92	3.78	1.18
48. Recognize Students in Office	3.57	1.12	3.52	1.15
49. Contact Parents to Communicate Performance	3.38	1.17	3.37	1.17
50. Support Teachers in Student Recognition	3.87	1.08	3.73	1.15

Note: The dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program is comprised of five leadership functions. Each function is delineated into five behavioral statements.

Georgia Reward Highest Performing Elementary Schools. The overall mean for the PIT instructional leadership function was 4.08. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Encourage Teachers to Use Instructional Time for Teaching and Practicing New Skills and Concepts (M = 4.51, SD = 0.68), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 107 (61.14%) of 175 participant responses. Fifty participants (28.57%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 18 participants (10.29%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and zero participants (0.0%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Zero participants (0.0%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Limit Interruptions of Instructional Time by Public Address Announcements (M = 4.39, SD = 0.80) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 99 (56.57%) of 175 responses. Of these 175 responses, 51 participants (29.14%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 20 participants (11.43%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, five participants (2.86%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Zero participants (0.0%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Limit the Intrusion of Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities on Instructional Time (M = 4.26, SD = 0.85) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 86 (48.86%) of 176 participant responses. Fifty-six participants (31.82%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 28 participants (15.91%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and six participants (3.41%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Zero participants (0.0%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Ensure That Students Are Not Called to the Office During Instructional Time (M = 4.01, SD = 0.94), 36.21% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 63 of 174 responses. Of the 174 responses, 63 participants (36.21%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Thirty-five participants (20.11%) selected category 3

(Sometimes). In addition, 12 participants (6.90%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and one participant (0.57%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Ensure That Tardy and Truant Students Suffer Specific Consequences for Missing Instructional Time (M = 3.30, SD = 1.26), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 36 (20.57%) of 175 participant responses. Forty-seven participants (26.86%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 44 participants (25.14%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 30 participants (17.14%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Eighteen participants (10.29%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the MHV instructional leadership function was 3.25. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Attend/Participate in Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities (M = 4.13, SD = 0.93), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 75 (42.61%) of 176 participant responses. Fifty-nine participants (33.52%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 34 participants (19.32%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and five participants (2.84%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.7%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Take Time to Talk Informally With Students and Teachers During Recess and Breaks (M = 3.56, S = 1.16) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 43 (24.43%) of 176 participant responses. Fifty-eight participants (32.95%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 39 participants (22.16%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 27 participants (15.34%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Nine participants (5.11%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Visit Classrooms to Discuss School Issues With Teachers and Students (M = 3.54, SD =1.09) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 40 (22.73%) of 176 responses. Of these 176 responses, 53 participants (30.11%) elected

to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 50 participants (28.41%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 28 participants (15.91%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.84%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Tutor Students or Provide Direct Instruction to Classes (M = 2.59, SD = 1.32) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 17 (9.77%) of 174 participant responses. Twenty-nine participants (16.67%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 43 participants (24.71%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 35 participants (20.11%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Fifty participants (28.74%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Cover Classes For Teachers Until a Late or Substitute Teacher Arrives (M = 2.55, SD = 1.39), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 18 (10.40%) of 173 participant responses. Thirty-four participants (19.65%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 31 participants (17.92%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 33 participants (19.08%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Fifty-seven participants (32.95%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the PIFT instructional leadership function was 3.37. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Reinforce Superior Performance by Teachers in Staff Meetings, Newsletters, and/or Memos (M = 3.68, SD =1.14), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 49 (28.16%) of 174 participant responses. Fifty-six participants (32.18%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of the 174 responses, 42 respondents (24.14%) chose category 3 (Sometimes). Eighteen participants (10.34%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Nine participants (5.17%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, within the behavioral statement Compliment Teachers Privately for Their Efforts or Performance (M = 3.60, SD = 1.07), 23.12% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost

Always) totaling 40 of 173 responses. Of the 173 responses, 55 participants (31.79%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Of these 173 responses, 53 participants (30.64%) elected to choose category 3 (Sometimes). Eighteen participants (10.40%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Seven participants (4.05%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Reward Special Efforts by Teachers With Opportunities for Professional Recognition (M = 3.28, SD = 1.20), 18.60% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 32 of 172 responses. Of the 172 responses, 44 participants (25.58%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Of the 172 responses, 51 respondents (29.65%) chose category 3 (Sometimes). Thirty participants (17.44%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Fifteen participants (8.72%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Create Professional Growth Opportunities for Teachers as a Reward for Special Contributions to the School (M = 3.26, SD = 1.23) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 34 (19.77%) of 172 participant responses. Forty-one participants (23.84%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of these 172 responses, 49 participants (28.49%) elected to choose category 3 (Sometimes). Thirty-two participants (18.60%) elected category 2 (Seldom). Sixteen participants (9.30%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Acknowledge Teachers' Exceptional Performance by Writing Memos for Their Personal Files (M = 3.11, SD = 1.21), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 26 (15.38%) of 169 participant responses. Thirty-seven participants (21.89%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of the 169 responses, 53 respondents (31.36%) chose category 3 (Sometimes). Thirty-five participants (20.71%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Eighteen participants (10.65%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the PPD instructional leadership function was 4.08. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Obtain the Participation of the Whole Staff in Important In-Service Activities (M = 4.21, SD = 0.86), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 77 (44.51%) of 173 participant responses. Sixty-three participants (36.42%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of the 173 responses, 26 respondents (15.03%) chose category 3 (Sometimes). Six participants (3.47%) selected category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.58%) chose category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Ensure That In-Service Activities Attended by Staff Are Consistent With the School's Goals (M = 4.20, SD = 0.81) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 73 (41.95%) of 174 participant responses. Sixty-six participants (37.93%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of these 174 responses, 31 participants (17.82%) elected to choose category 3 (Sometimes). Four participants (2.30%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Zero participants (0.0) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Actively Support the Use in the Classroom of Skills Acquired During In-Service Training (M = 4.17, SD = 0.79) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 68 (38.86%) of 175 participant responses. Seventy-one participants (40.57%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 33 participants (18.86%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and three participants (1.71%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Zero participants (0.0%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Lead or Attend Teacher In-Service Activities Concerned With Instruction (M = 4.01, SD = 0.93), 35.43% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 62 of 175 responses. Of the 175 responses, 66 participants (37.71%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Thirty-five participants (20.00%) selected category 3

(Sometimes). In addition, 11 participants (6.29%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and one participant (0.57%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Set Aside Time at Faculty Meetings for Teachers to Share Ideas or Information From In-Service Activities (M = 3.86, SD = 1.04), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 55 (31.43%) of 175 participant responses. Sixty-four participants (36.57%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 37 participants (21.14%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 14 participants (8.00%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.86%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the PIL instructional leadership function was 3.86. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Use Assemblies to Honor Students for Academic Accomplishments or for Behavior or Citizenship (M = 4.30, SD = 0.92), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 93 (52.84%) of 176 participant responses. Fifty-six participants (31.82%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of the 176 responses, 17 respondents (9.66%) chose category 3 (Sometimes). Seven participants (3.98%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.70%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Recognize Students Who Do Superior Work With Formal Rewards Such as an Honor Roll or Mention in the Principal's Newsletter (M = 4.18, SD = 0.96), 47.16% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 83 of 176 responses. Of the 176 responses, 56 participants (31.82%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Twenty-four participants (13.64%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 11 participants (6.25%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and two participants (1.14%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Support Teachers Actively in Their Recognition and/or Reward of Student Contributions to and Accomplishments in Class (M = 3.87, SD = 1.08) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 63 (36.00%) of 175 participant responses. Fifty-four participants (30.86%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of these 175 responses, 34 participants (19.43%) elected to choose category 3 (Sometimes). Twenty-one participants (12.00%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.71%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Recognize Superior Student Achievement or Improvement by Seeing in the Office the Student With Their Work (M = 3.57, SD = 1.12) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 44 (25.00%) of 176 participant responses. Fifty participants (28.41%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of the 176 responses, 50 respondents (28.41%) chose category 3 (Sometimes). Twenty-six participants (14.77%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Six participants (3.41%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Contact Parents to Communicate Improved or Exemplary Student Performance or Contributions (M = 3.38, SD = 1.17), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 34 (19.54%) of 174 participant responses. Fifty-one participants (29.31%) selected category 4 (Frequently). Of the 174 responses, 47 respondents (27.01%) chose category 3 (Sometimes). Thirty-one participants (17.82%) selected category 2 (Seldom). Eleven participants (6.32%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Georgia Reward Highest Progress Elementary Schools. The overall mean for the PIT instructional leadership function was 3.79. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Encourage Teachers to Use Instructional Time for Teaching and Practicing New Skills and Concepts (M = 3.99, SD = 1.14), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 97 (48.99%) of 198 participant responses. Thirty-two participants (16.16%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 40 participants (20.20%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 28

participants (14.14%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.51%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Limit Interruptions of Instructional Time by Public Address Announcements (M = 3.97, SD = 1.05) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 87 (43.94%) of 198 responses. Of these 198 responses, 36 participants (18.18%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 58 participants (29.29%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 16 participants (8.08%) chose category 2 (Seldom). One participant (0.51%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Limit the Intrusion of Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities on Instructional Time (M = 3.83, SD = 1.13), 39.39% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 78 of 198 responses. Of the 198 responses, 42 respondents (21.21%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Forty-seven participants (23.74%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 29 participants (14.65%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and 2 participants (1.01%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Ensure That Students Are Not Called to the Office During Instructional Time (M = 3.80, SD = 1.02) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 65 (32.99%) of 197 participant responses. Forty-seven participants (23.86%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 67 participants (34.01%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 16 participants (8.12%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.02%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Ensure That Tardy and Truant Students Suffer Specific Consequences for Missing Instructional Time (M = 3.39, SD = 1.09), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 40 (20.20%) of 198 participant responses. Forty-five participants (22.73%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 73 participants (36.87%) selected category 3

(Sometimes), and 33 participants (16.67%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Seven participants (3.54%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the MHV instructional leadership function was 3.21. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Attend/Participate in Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities (M = 3.80, SD = 1.06), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 67 (34.72%) of 193 participant responses. Forty-one participants (21.24%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 69 participants (35.75%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 11 participants (5.70%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.59%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Take Time to Talk Informally With Students and Teachers During Recess and Breaks (M = 3.49, SD = 1.09) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 45 (23.20%) of 194 responses. Of these 194 responses, 44 participants (22.68%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 74 participants (38.14%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 24 participants (12.37%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Seven participants (3.61%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Visit Classrooms to Discuss School Issues With Teachers and Students (M = 3.43, SD = 1.05), 19.59% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 38 of 194 responses. Of the 194 responses, 46 respondents (23.71%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Eighty participants (41.24%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 22 participants (11.34%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and 8 participants (4.12%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Cover Classes for Teachers Until a Late or Substitute Teacher Arrives (M = 2.83, SD = 1.18) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 20

(10.42%) of 192 participant responses. Thirty-two participants (16.67%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 64 participants (33.33%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 47 participants (24.48%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Twenty-nine participants (15.10%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Tutor Students or Provide Direct Instruction to Classes (M = 2.64, SD = 1.18), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 15 (7.89%) of 190 participant responses. Thirty-one participants (16.32%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 49 participants (25.79%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 61 participants (32.11%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Thirty-four participants (17.89%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the PIFT instructional leadership function was 3.48. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Reinforce Superior Performance by Teachers in Staff Meetings, Newsletters, and/or Memos (M = 3.76, SD = 1.12), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 66 (34.02%) of 194 participant responses. Forty-six participants (23.71%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 57 participants (29.38%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 19 participants (9.79%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Six participants (3.09%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Similarly, the behavioral statement Compliment Teachers Privately for Their Efforts or Performance (M = 3.71, SD = 1.08) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 56 (29.02%) of 193 responses. Of these 193 responses, 56 participants (29.02%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 55 participants (28.50%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 21 participants (10.88%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.59%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Reward Special Efforts By Teachers With Opportunities for Professional Recognition (*M* = 3.39, *SD* = 1.08), 20.53% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 39 of 190 responses. Of the 190 responses, 39 respondents (20.53%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Seventy-six participants (40.00%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 29 participants (15.26%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and 7 participants (3.68%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Create Professional Growth Opportunities for Teachers as a Reward for Special Contributions to the School (*M* = 3.37, *SD* = 1.11) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 39 (20.42%) of 191 participant responses. Forty-one participants (21.47%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 72 participants (37.70%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 30 participants (15.71%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Nine participants (4.71%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Acknowledge Teachers' Exceptional Performance by Writing Memos for Their Personal Files (*M* = 3.28, *SD* = 1.11), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 35 (18.52%) of 189 participant responses. Thirty-four participants (17.99%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 78 participants (41.27%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 32 participants (16.93%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Ten participants (5.29%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the PPD instructional leadership function was 3.77. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Ensures That In-Service Activities Attended by Staff Are Consistent With the School's Goals (*M* = 3.91, *SD* = 1.05), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 78 (40.21%) of 194 participant responses. Forty participants (20.62%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 59 participants (30.41%) selected category 3

(Sometimes), and 15 participants (7.73%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.03%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Obtain the Participation of the Whole Staff in Important In-Service Activities (M = 3.89, SD = 1.08) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 80 (41.24%) of 194 responses. Of these 194 responses, 34 participants (17.53%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 62 participants (31.96%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 15 participants (7.73%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Three participants (1.55%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Actively Support the Use in the Classroom of Skills Acquired During In-Service Training (M = 3.82, SD = 1.09), 37.95% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 74 of 195 responses. Of the 195 responses, 35 respondents (17.95%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Sixty-five participants (33.33%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 18 participants (9.23%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and three participants (1.54%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Lead or Attend Teacher In-Service Activities Concerned With Instruction (M = 3.65, SD = 1.19) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 64 (32.82%) of 195 participant responses. Forty-three participants (22.05%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 52 participants (26.67%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 28 participants (14.36%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Eight participants (4.10%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Set Aside Time at Faculty Meetings for Teachers to Share Ideas or Information From In-Service Activities (M = 3.61, SD = 1.16), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 57 (29.23%) of 195 participant responses. Forty-eight participants

(24.62%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 54 participants (27.69%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 28 participants (14.36%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Eight participants (4.10%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The overall mean for the PIL instructional leadership function was 3.67. The behavioral statement with the highest mean, Recognize Students Who Do Superior Work With Formal Rewards Such as an Honor Roll or Mention in the Principal's Newsletter (M = 3.96, SD = 1.08), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 85 (43.59%) of 195 participant responses. Forty-two participants (21.54%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 46 participants (23.59%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 20 participants (10.26%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Two participants (1.03%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Use Assemblies to Honor Students for Academic Accomplishments or for Behavior or Citizenship (M = 3.78, SD = 1.18) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 75 (38.66%) of 194 responses. Of these 194 responses, 37 participants (19.07%) elected to choose category 4 (Frequently), and 55 participants (28.35%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). Additionally, 19 participants (9.79%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Eight participants (4.12%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

In responding to the behavioral statement Support Teachers Actively in Their Recognition and/or Reward of Student Contributions to and Accomplishments in Class (M = 3.73, SD = 1.15), 35.90% of respondents chose category 5 (Almost Always) totaling 70 of 195 responses. Of the 195 responses, 40 respondents (20.51%) chose category 4 (Frequently). Fifty-two participants (26.67%) selected category 3 (Sometimes). In addition, 29 participants (14.87%) selected category 2 (Seldom), and four participants (2.05%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The behavioral statement Recognize Superior Student Achievement or Improvement by Seeing in the Office the Student With Their Work (M = 3.52, SD = 1.15) demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 55 (28.35%) of 194 participant responses. Thirty-four participants (17.53%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 67 participants (34.54%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 33 participants (17.01%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Five participants (2.58%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

The smallest mean, Contact Parents to Communicate Improved or Exemplary Student Performance or Contributions (M = 3.37, SD = 1.17), demonstrated a frequency of 5 (Almost Always) totaling 44 (22.68%) of 194 participant responses. Forty-one participants (21.13%) selected category 4 (Frequently). In addition, 61 participants (31.44%) selected category 3 (Sometimes), and 39 participants (20.10%) chose category 2 (Seldom). Nine participants (4.64%) selected category 1 (Almost Never).

Comparison. Upon evaluation, it was determined that principals in GRH-Performing schools did not exhibit instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the overall dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP). Specifically, it was determined that principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership function of Protect Instructional Time (PIT). However, results indicated that principals in GRH-Performing schools did not exhibit instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership function of Maintain High Visibility (MHV). Similarly, results indicated that principals in GRH-Performing schools did not exhibit instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress elementary

schools in the instructional leadership function of Provides Incentives for Teachers (PIFT). Results indicated that principals in GRH-Performing schools exhibited instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools in the instructional leadership function of Promotes Professional Development (PPD). Finally, results indicated that principals in GRH-Performing schools did not exhibit instructional leadership practices more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools in the instructional leadership function of Promotes Incentives for Learning (PIL).

Table 6

Results of Descriptive Statistics and Independent t*-tests for Developing the School Learning Climate Program*

	Teacher Perceptions						95% CI for Mean Difference	*t*	*df*
	GRH-Performing			GRH-Progress					
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*			
DSLCP	3.72	.72	159	3.55	.86	177	-.33,.00	-1.9	332
PIT	4.08	.68	171	3.79	.95	197	-.45,-.12	-3.3*	354
MHV	3.25	.92	171	3.21	.87	185	-.23,.14	-.45	354
PIFT	3.37	1.03	166	3.48	0.97	186	-.10,.31	.95	350
PPD	4.08	.77	172	3.77	0.99	193	-.49,-.12	-3.3*	356
PIL	3.86	.87	173	3.67	1.01	192	-.38,.00	-1.8	361

*$p < .05$

Within the dimension of DSLCP, there was not a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing (M = 3.72, SD = .72) and GRH-Progress (M = 3.55, SD = .86) elementary schools, t (332) = -1.90, p = .057. There was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Protect Instructional Time between GRH-Performing (M = 4.08, SD = .68) and GRH-Progress (M = 3.79, SD = .95)

elementary schools, t (354) = -3.38, p = .001. There was not a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Maintain High Visibility between GRH-Performing (M = 3.25, SD = .92) and GRH-Progress (M = 3.21, SD = .87) elementary schools, t (354) = -.45, p = .652. There was not a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Provides Incentives for Teachers between GRH-Performing (M = 3.37, SD = 1.03) and GRH-Progress (M = 3.48, SD = .97) elementary schools, t (350) = .957, p = .339. There was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Promotes Professional Development between GRH-Performing (M = 4.08, SD = .77) and GRH-Progress (M = 3.77, SD = .99) elementary schools, t (356) = -3.37, p = .001. There was not a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices in Promotes Incentives for Learning between GRH-Performing (M = 3.86, SD = .87) and GRH-Progress (M = 3.67, SD = 1.01) elementary schools, t (361) = -1.89, p = .059.

Table 7

Results of Descriptive Statistics and Independent t-*tests for Instructional Leadership Dimensions*

Leadership Dimensions	Teacher Perceptions						95% CI for Mean Difference	t	df
	GRH-Performing			GRH-Progress					
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*			
DSM	4.25	.67	173	3.88	1.00	193	-.53,-.18	-4.1*	339
MIP	4.13	.67	165	3.76	.97	185	-.54,-.19	-4.2*	327
DSLCP	3.72	.72	159	3.55	.86	177	-.33,.01	-1.9	332
OVERALL	4.02	.63	150	3.66	.92	162	-.53,-.18	-4.0*	288

*p < .05

Within the dimension of DSM, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing (M = 4.25, SD = .67) and GRH-Progress (M = 3.88,

SD = 1.00) elementary schools, *t* (339) = -4.09, *p* = .00. Within the dimension of MIP, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing (*M* = 4.13, *SD* = .67) and GRH-Progress (*M* = 3.76, *SD* = .97) elementary schools, *t* (327) = -4.19, *p* = .000. Within the dimension of DSLCP, there was not a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing (*M* = 3.72, *SD* = .72) and GRH-Progress (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = .86) elementary schools, *t* (332) = -1.90, *p* = .057. Overall, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing (*M* = 4.02, *SD* = .63) and GRH-Progress (*M* = 3.66, *SD* = .92) elementary schools, *t* (288) = -4.0, *p* = .000.

Chapter Summary

The findings of this study indicated that there was a significant difference in the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission (DSM). Similarly, the findings of this study showed that there was a significant difference in the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program (MIP). However, the findings indicated that there was no significant difference in the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools in the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP). The findings indicated that there was a significant difference in the overall teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The steady increase in poverty has significantly impacted American education. Funding efforts from federal, state, and local initiatives have struggled to financially and academically support the rapidly increasing population of economically disadvantaged students in public schools. Though poverty is fundamentally a societal issue, educators have been tasked with the challenge of ensuring that all students reach proficiency. The existing correlation between poverty and low student achievement continues to spotlight the necessity of public education to narrow the achievement gap for economically disadvantaged students. The struggles that arise from deepening poverty continue to thwart educational efforts bent on closing the achievement gap and providing diverse learners with equitable educational opportunities. Existing achievement gaps and the responsibility of school leadership has been further spotlighted by increasing measures of accountability. In response, principals have been placed in a position of reevaluation as the effectiveness of school leadership is heavily scrutinized.

Specifically, the state of Georgia has placed importance on student achievement as Title I schools strive to provide an equitable education for all students and to produce enough funding to improve instructional practices to meet varied academic needs of Georgia learners. Principal leadership functions as the foundation of school improvement. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the instructional leadership practices of school principals that have been proven successful in raising student achievement in high poverty schools. It is essential to delineate and compare the leadership practices of principals, specifically those in high-poverty, high-performing and high poverty, lower performing schools. The analysis of principal instructional leadership practices and behaviors will help to accurately identify the behaviors and practices most highly correlated with student achievement. Understanding teacher perceptions of principal instructional

leadership is key in targeting and identifying the principal practices occurring most frequently in high poverty, high performing, and high poverty, lower performing schools.

Approximately fifty years of research has contributed to the evolution and understanding of the role of the principal as a leader. The *effective schools research* established that instructionally effective schools could educate economically disadvantaged students and yield high levels of academic achievement regardless of family background (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). For decades, the role of the principal as a school leader had been characterized largely by managerial and supervisory skills. Traditional roles of the principal included budgetary, managerial, and a primarily indirect role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and student assessment as these instructional leadership practices were largely assumed to have a moderate impact on student achievement (Valentine & Prater, 2011). Principals largely impacted the direction of a school through organizational management, resource allocation, stakeholder relations, and extraneous day-to-day operational activities (Horng & Loeb, 2010). The role of principals must continually evolve in order to adequately address constantly changing student and teacher needs.

Decades of research have significantly impacted educational policy and reform. In an era of high-stakes testing, rigorous education initiatives established by federal and state government leaders to improve student performance have increased accountability among principals. Rising accountability expectations stemming from NCLB have shaped education reforms and contributed significantly to the changing roles and responsibilities of both principals and teachers. The allocation of funding by Title I has struggled to compete with the consistent rise in the numbers of economically disadvantaged students being served by the program. The combination of economic decline and increased accountability has challenged teachers, principals, superintendents, and educational systems as a whole in Title I schools to reevaluate their strategies for student success.

Analyses of the data acquired from each of the included Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) elementary schools has presented insight into principal instructional leadership practices as perceived by teachers. These analyses have examined teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership and compared the means based on the three dimensions and ten instructional leadership functions of Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) instructional leadership framework. To answer the research questions, Hallinger's (1983) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) was administered to assess the following three dimensions of the instructional leadership framework: 1) Defining the School Mission (DSM), 2) Managing the Instructional Program (MIP), and 3) Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP). The survey was administered via *SurveyMonkey*® and utilized two web link collectors for the purposes of comparison.

The instructional leadership practices of principals, as perceived by teachers, were first calculated to find the composite score (mean) for each participants' responses to the behavioral statements presented on the PIMRS. A *t* test for independent samples was used to determine whether a significant difference among the means of principal instructional leadership practices, as perceived by teachers, in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools existed. A current version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized. By using SPSS, it was possible to calculate the *t* test for the anticipated participant responses and a comparison of the responses regarding the leadership functions of principals, as perceived by teachers, was formed. The Levene's test for the equality of variances was utilized. This test determined if variances of GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress were equal. Next, the t statistic and its corresponding probability were determined to assess whether a statistically significant difference between teacher perceptions of principal practices was apparent. The following

overarching research question was addressed: What are the differences in the principal instructional leadership practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers?

In addition, the following hypotheses were tested:

H_1: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission.

H_2: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program.

H_3: Teachers perceive a mean difference in the instructional leadership practices between principals of Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program.

Analysis of Research Findings

In response to the overarching research question, an analysis of survey data revealed that overall teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) schools exhibited statistically significant differences in the instructional leadership dimensions of Defining the School Mission (DSM) and Managing the Instructional Program (MIP). However, the overall teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress schools did not exhibit a statistically significant difference in the dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP).

Within the dimension of DSM, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of

principal practices between GRH-Performing (M=4.25, SD=.67) and GRH-Progress (M=3.88, SD=1.00) elementary schools, t (339) = -4.09, p=.00. Within the dimension of MIP, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing (M=4.13, SD=.67) and GRH-Progress (M=3.76, SD=.97) elementary schools, t (327) =-4.19, p=.000. Within the dimension of DSLCP, there was not a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing (M=3.72, SD=.72) and GRH-Progress (M=3.55, SD=.86) elementary schools, t (332) = -1.90, p=.057. Overall, there was a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing (M=4.02, SD=.67) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (M=3.88, SD=1.00) elementary schools, t (288) = -4.0, p=.00. Three research questions further explored the perceptions of teachers in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress schools in regard to principal instructional leadership practices.

Defining the School Mission

Within the instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission (DSM), data revealed that the overall perception of principal instructional leadership practices by teachers in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) schools (M=4.25) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) schools (M=3.88) was statistically different. Upon further analysis of the two leadership functions of DSM, it was determined that GRH-Performing teachers (4.39) expressed a higher rate of perceived principal practices than GRH-Progress teachers (3.94) in regard to the instructional leadership function of Frame the School Goals. Similarly, it was determined that GRH-Performing teachers (4.12) expressed a higher rate of perceived principal practices than GRH-Progress teachers (3.85) in regard to the instructional leadership function of Communicate the School Goals.

Managing the Instructional Program

Within the instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program (MIP), data revealed that the overall perception of principal instructional leadership practices by teachers in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) schools (M=4.13) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) (M=3.76) schools was statistically different. Upon further analysis of the three leadership functions of MIP, it was determined that GRH-Performing teachers (4.22) expressed a higher rate of perceived principal practices than GRH-Progress teachers (3.83) in regard to the instructional leadership function of Supervise and Evaluate Instruction.

Similarly, principals in GRH-Performing schools (4.20) were perceived to be exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Coordinate the Curriculum more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools (3.81), as perceived by teachers. GRH-Performing teachers are perceiving principal practices at a mean of *frequently* while GRH-Progress teachers are perceiving principal practices at a mean of *sometimes*. In addition, Principals in GRH-Performing schools (3.97) are exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Monitor Student Progress more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools (3.71), as perceived by teachers. GRH-Performing teachers and GRH-Progress teachers are perceiving principal practices at varying means of *sometimes*.

Developing the School Learning Climate Program

Within the instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP), data revealed that the overall perception of principal instructional leadership practices by teachers in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) schools (M=3.72) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) (M=3.55) schools was

statistically different. Upon further analysis of the five leadership functions of DSLCP, it was determined that GRH-Performing teachers (4.08) expressed a higher rate of perceived principal practices than GRH-Progress teachers (3.79) in regard to the instructional leadership function of Protect Instructional Time. The results presented indicate principals in GRH-Performing schools perceived principal leadership practices at a mean of 4.08 *(frequently)* and teachers in GRH-Progress schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.79 *(sometimes)* and were statistically different (p= .001).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools were not exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Maintain High Visibility more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. The results presented indicate principals in GRH-Performing schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.25 *(sometimes)* and teachers in GRH-Progress schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.21 *(sometimes)* and were not statistically different (p= .652).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools were not perceived to be exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Provide Incentives for Teachers more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. The results presented indicate principals in GRH-Performing schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.37 *(sometimes)* and teachers in GRH-Progress schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.48 *(sometimes)* and were not statistically different (p= .339).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools were perceived to be exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Promote Professional Development more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. The results presented indicate principals in GRH-Performing schools are perceiving

principal leadership practices at a mean of 4.08 *(frequently)* and teachers in GRH-Progress schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.77 *(sometimes)* and were statistically different (p= .001).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools were not perceived to be exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Provide Incentives for Learning more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. The results presented indicate principals in GRH-Performing schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.86 and teachers in GRH-Progress schools are perceiving principal leadership practices at a mean of 3.67 and were not statistically different (p= .059).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) and Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) elementary schools. As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Performing (GRH-Performing) school is categorized as being in the top 5% of Title I schools in the state. These high poverty schools demonstrate the highest performance for the All Students group over a span of 3 years. These schools must have met AYP requirements in 2011 and may not be identified as a priority school, a focus school, or an alert school (GA DOE, 2014). As defined by the Georgia Department of Education, a Georgia Reward Highest Progress (GRH-Progress) school is among the top 10% of Title I schools in the state that are making the most progress in improving the performance of the All Students group over a number of years on the statewide assessments and may not be classified as a high-progress school if there are significant achievement gaps across subgroups within the school that are not closing (GA DOE, 2014).

This causal-comparative study identified the frequency of principal instructional

leadership practices and determined if these practices could be related to school effectiveness in high poverty schools. The following discussion compares research findings of this study to research presented in the review of literature vis-à-vis the three instructional leadership dimensions identified by Hallinger and Murphy (1985): Defining the School Mission (DSM), Managing the Instructional Program (MIP), and Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSCLP).

Defining the School Mission

The instructional leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission (DSM) is comprised of two instructional leadership functions: Frames the School Goals (FSG) and Communicates the School Goals (CSG). In this study, data revealed that the overall perception of principal instructional leadership practices by teachers in GRH-Performing schools and GRH-Progress schools was statistically different. Principals in GRH-Performing schools are exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of FSG more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. The connection between the establishment and implementation of school goals and higher school performance is supported by the literature. According to Newman (2012), setting goals is meant to be a beginning step in the transformation of teaching and learning. These goals must be shared among administrators, teachers, community stakeholders, and students. School-wide goals provide a means for constructing a baseline, benchmarks for checking progress, and a system to determine if and when the stated goals have been met. These clear goals allow others to implement and strive to achieve the school-wide goals. According to Newman (2012), "Goal setting is one of the most important strategies and routines that can be put in place to fundamentally shape the practice of leadership in a school and more pointedly achieve results" (p. 13). Based upon the research, the lower rates of perceptions of a focused set of school goals in GRH-Progress schools could potentially be a cause for lower school performance.

Principals in GRH-Performing schools are exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of CSG more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. The literature has suggested that effective principal leadership is not established through direct commands, but through leading by persuasion, personal and professional relationships, and shared leadership (Goodwin, 2013). According to Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, and Ikemoto (2012) successful principals designate an allotted amount of time in one-on-one meetings to collaborate and elicit ideas, plans, and goals for student improvement. Similarly, Marzano et al., (2005) reiterated the importance of teacher involvement in the decision-making process, as promoting and fostering a collaborative and communicative school culture is associated with student achievement. In reference to communication with stakeholders, the literature suggests that the effective communication of programs, curriculum, and the recognition of teacher and student achievements are crucial within the context of school improvement (Cox & McLeod, 2014). Poor communication leads to the failure to secure school direction and a reduction in conveyed information that ultimately affects school improvements efforts (Ediger & Rao, 2013).

Managing the Instructional Program

The instructional leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program (MIP) is comprised of three functions: Supervise and Evaluate Instruction (SEI), Coordinate the Curriculum (CC), and Monitor Student Progress (MSP). In this study, data revealed principals in GRH-Performing schools were perceived to be exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of SEI more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools. Based upon the findings, principals in GRH-Performing schools made informal observations, reviewed student work, and ensured that classroom practices were aligned with school goals. The importance of school goals is once again reiterated as instructional practices should relate to the goals set forth to promote student achievement. The analysis of results further

established a connection between principal leadership and student achievement through the key component of evaluation. Brookhart and Moss (2013) have suggested that the principal must become the leading learner in a school environment through the utilization of evaluative tools and assessments to drive student achievement. According to Ediger (2014), it is essential for school principals to possess a comprehensive understanding of curriculum and instruction and these leaders must become self-efficacious in these vital areas. "For example, principals need to know the importance of ensuring that students understand their learning target, assess how close they are to the target, and then plan strategies for their own improvement" (Brookhart & Moss, 2013, pp. 16-17).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools were perceived to be exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of CC more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools. The results reinforce a link between principal leadership and school improvement. The results also highlight the continuing transformation of the role of the principal as an instructional leader. Traditional views of the scope of the role of the principal as an authoritative manager of school affairs have been altered to include the principal as an instructional leader that understands, develops, and supports the curricular and instructional dimensions of education (Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, & Leon, 2011). Similarly, Hallinger and Murphy (2012) have suggested that principal instructional leadership is a process that influences the coordination and implementation of instructional strategies targeting both teacher development and student achievement. The literature further corroborates the findings of the study by highlighting the importance of principal leadership in regard to student achievement. Research has indicated that principal leadership serves as a contributing factor in student achievement that is second only to classroom instruction e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters et al., 2003).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools were perceived to be exhibiting instructional

leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of MSP more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools. GRH-Performing teachers and GRH-Progress teachers are perceiving principal practices at varying means of *sometimes*. These results reiterated the previously suggested connection between instructional leadership and school improvement. A meta-analysis conducted by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified the importance of principal practices in regard to monitoring conditions and processes that affect student achievement. Specifically, it was suggested that student achievement data be monitored systematically by principals (Marzano et al., 2005). The usage of data to drive instruction remains the most significant strategy in addressing federal mandates, high-stakes testing, and the steadily increasing pressure to ensure students meet pre-determined levels of proficiency (Murray, 2014).

Developing the School Learning Climate Program

The instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP) is comprised of five instructional leadership functions: Protect Instructional Time (PIT), Maintain High Visibility (MHV), Provide Incentives for Teachers (PIFT), Promote Professional Development (PPD), and Provide Incentives for Learning (PIL). Within this dimension, principals are exhibiting practices such as limiting interruptions to instructional time, maintaining visibility, encouraging superior performance of both students and teachers, and promoting professional development. The data revealed there was not a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. However, these findings differ from a collection of literature that establishes a connection between principal instructional leadership and school climate. According to Price (2012), the principal serves as the central figure in affecting the school climate in a direct manner. According to Gulsen and Gulenay (2014), “The principal is supportive, listens to teachers, and shows respect for competencies” (p. 94). In addition, a principal affects the school climate

through encouragement, the promotion of positive relationships, and through the demonstration of facilitative leadership practices (Gulsen & Gulenay, 2014).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools are exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Protect Instructional Time more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. These findings are substantiated by the literature that suggests that principals should encourage teachers to utilize instructional time most effectively to implement new strategies and skills. Principals must honor the time committed by teachers to improve and evaluate instructional practices while simultaneously encouraging, evaluating, and collaboratively modifying practices and adopting new techniques (Fox, 2014). Principals must create and foster an environment that promotes a high standard of instructional expectations. "The goal is to identify strategies that increase the likelihood that students will retain, recall, and apply what they have been taught, and, conversely, identify strategies that decrease the likelihood that students will retain, recall, and apply what they have been taught" (Fox, 2014, p. 9).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools are not exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Maintain High Visibility more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. Specifically, principals were rated lower on two behavioral statements within this leadership function. The results indicated principals provided direct instruction to students seldom in GRH-Performing schools and seldom in GRH-Progress schools. Similarly, the results indicated principals engaged in substitute duties seldom in GRH-Performing schools and seldom in GRH-Progress schools. These results represent the time constraint principals now face. The accountability movement has emphasized responsibility for student achievement and has added numerous duties to the already demanding role of the principal. At the same time, budget cuts have significantly depleted instructional and personnel resources at the state and district levels (Finkel, 2012). In response, the responsibilities

and daily demands of the principal have increased in complexity due to the expectations of implemented policies, societal factors, and the organizational structure of the educational system (Pepper, 2010; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

Principals must now reevaluate the allocation of time and attention paid to both the managerial and instructional leadership duties included in the role of the principal as a school leader. The increased duties of the principal place a burden on the level of visibility exhibited by leaders within the classroom. According to Landsman (2014), principals should purposely allocate time to maintain visibility in the classroom through informal observations. Informal time spent in classrooms, informal discussions with both teachers and students, and principal support in instructional activities impacts the collaborative climate of the school in a positive manner (Landsman, 2014). The findings of this study did not corroborate with previous research findings.

Principals in GRH-Performing schools are not exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Provide Incentives for Teachers more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. The results indicated principals in GRH-Performing schools are perceiving principal leadership practices sometimes and teachers in GRH-Progress schools are perceiving principal leadership practices sometimes. This leadership function is representative of positive reinforcement and public recognition of exemplary performance. As the means for GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress schools both represent lower ratings, a breakdown in Communication, support, and positive reinforcement between principals and teachers is suggested. According to Beaudoin (2011), the consistent and increasing pressure on teachers, in combination with under appreciation and the absence of positive reinforcement from principals, has fostered a negative environment for teachers that ultimately affects student achievement. A positive school climate benefits teachers in job satisfaction, student achievement, and in the formation of collaborative and supportive

professional relationships Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2010). In addition, reflective leadership practices contribute to a school learning climate that fosters participation and communication among students, teachers, and community stakeholders (Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008).

Principals in GRH-Performing schools are exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Promote Professional Development more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. These findings are corroborated by the research presented in the literature. To increase student proficiency, teachers' instructional practices must be improved Continuous, high quality teacher development demonstrates significant improvement in teacher quality (Chen, 2012). According to Lewis-Spector and Jay (2011), principals are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring teachers are qualified to develop the academic proficiency of students through the process of arranging high quality professional development opportunities that align with the goals of the school.

Principals in GRH-Performing schools are not exhibiting instructional leadership practices and behaviors in the instructional leadership function of Provide Incentives for Learning more frequently than principals in GRH-Progress schools, as perceived by teachers. Interestingly, teacher perceptions in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress schools both retained their lowest mean in the area of contacting parents for the purpose of communicating exemplary student performance. The findings of the study are not representative of the literature. According to Routman (2013), it is necessary for principals, teachers, and students to feel recognized and appreciated within a collaborative school community. Further, the process of recognizing, acknowledging, and celebrating the specific accomplishments of student learners is imperative in the continued efforts to raise academic expectations (Routman, 2013).

The data revealed no significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal practices between GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools within the instructional leadership dimension of DSLCP. Results indicated teachers perceived instructional leadership

behaviors within this dimension at a lower frequency in comparison to the dimensions of Defining the School Mission (DSM) and Managing the Instructional Program (MIP). These results demonstrate that less of an emphasis was placed on instructional leadership behaviors within the dimension of DSLCP.

The 2014 ISLLC Standards highlight the responsibilities of school leaders working in the context of instructional leadership. Performance expectations of principals as instructional leaders within all instructional leadership dimensions have been increased. Because of this, previous standards from 2008 have been restructured to include additional components relative to the dimensions of instructional leadership. The less emphasized dimension of school climate as demonstrated from the 2008 ISLLC Standards is more heavily emphasized in the 2014 ISLLC Standards. Because a greater emphasis on school climate is demonstrated in the 2014 ISLLC Standards, the results and recommendations of this study will be pertinent to principals serving as instructional leaders.

Summary

The overarching research question stated, what are the differences in the principal instructional leadership practices between Georgia Reward Highest Performing and Georgia Reward Highest Progress elementary schools as perceived by teachers? The study revealed that two of the three instructional leadership dimensions demonstrated a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices in GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. The instructional leadership dimensions of Defining the School Mission and Managing the Instructional Program demonstrated a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices among GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. Though perceptions in GRH-Performing schools retained a higher mean in the dimensions of DSM and MIP, there is still evidence that principals are exhibiting instructional leadership practices in GRH-Progress schools at rates of 3 (sometimes) and 4

(frequently). Overall, this study suggests that higher means signify higher performance and lower rates signify lower levels of performance.

The instructional leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program did not demonstrate a significant difference in teacher perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices among GRH-Performing and GRH-Progress elementary schools. The findings will be delineated into the three instructional leadership dimensions as they relate to the research sub-questions. These findings had implications for the conclusions of this study.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn following the analysis of research findings. The conclusions are presented to address the following three instructional leadership dimensions: Defining the School Mission, Manage the Instructional Program, and, Developing the School Learning Climate Program. The researcher has concluded from the study:

Defining the School Mission

1. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership dimension of Defining the School Mission.
2. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Frames the School Goals.
3. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Communicates the School Goals.

Managing the Instructional Program

4. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership dimension of Managing the Instructional Program.
5. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Supervises and Evaluates Instruction.
6. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Coordinates the Curriculum.
7. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Monitors Student Progress.

Developing the School Learning Climate

8. Teachers do not perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program.
9. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Protects Instructional Time.
10. Teachers do not perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest

Progress schools within the leadership function of Maintain High Visibility.

11. Teachers do not perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Provides Incentives for Teachers.
12. Teachers perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Promotes Professional Development.
13. Teachers do not perceive a greater frequency of principal instructional leadership practices in Georgia Reward Highest Performing schools than that of Georgia Reward Highest Progress schools within the leadership function of Provides Incentives for Learning.

Implications

Much debate continues in the research regarding what constitutes effective principal leadership. The leadership responsibilities, behaviors, and practices of principals must continually evolve to address the consistently changing instructional needs of both teachers and students. Traditional leadership responsibilities that focused primarily on building management must merge with practices targeting curriculum and instruction to effectively address all dimensions of instructional leadership. Researchers have defined instructional leadership in terms of dimensions, functions, roles, practices, and responsibilities. The constructs of principal leadership differ, yet research suggests commonalities of practices and behaviors exist.

As evidenced by this study, principals in high poverty schools should increase the frequency of instructional leadership practices in the instructional leadership dimensions of Defining the School Mission (DSM) and Managing the Instructional Program (MIP). Within the dimension of DSM, principals in high poverty schools should incorporate the behavioral statements representative of the instructional leadership functions of Frames the School Goals and

Communicates the School Goals. Within the dimension of MIP, principals in high poverty schools should implements the behavioral statements representative of the instructional leadership functions of Supervise and Evaluate Instruction, Coordinate the Curriculum, and Monitor Student Progress. While the overall dimension of Developing the School Learning Climate Program (DSLCP) did not demonstrate a significant difference among principals in the compared schools, principals exhibited a higher frequency of practices in two of the five instructional leadership functions. The instructional leadership functions of Protects Instructional Time and Promotes Professional Development demonstrated a significance in the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices. Therefore, the behavioral statements representative of these instructional leadership functions should be adopted as practices of principals serving in high poverty schools.

The conclusions presented in this chapter represent the complexities involved in principal leadership. This research contributes to the existing body of literature focusing on principal instructional leadership and school improvement. This particular study contributes by identifying the specific instructional leadership practices occurring most frequently in high poverty schools. The results of this study may help to guide principals in daily practice and decision making. Additionally, these results may help to inform professional development aimed at improving principal instructional leadership.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Frame the School Goals into professional practice. These practices were perceived at a high frequency in high performing high poverty schools.
2. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Communicate the School Goals into professional practice. These practices were perceived at a high frequency in high performing high poverty schools.
3. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Supervise and

Evaluate Instruction into professional practice. These practices were perceived at a high frequency in high performing high poverty schools.

4. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Coordinate the Curriculum into professional practice. These practices were perceived at a high frequency in high performing high poverty schools.
5. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Monitor Student Progress into professional practice. These practices were perceived at a high frequency in high performing high poverty schools.
6. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Protect Instructional Time into professional practice. These practices were perceived at a high frequency in high performing high poverty schools.
7. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Promotes Professional Development into professional practice. These practices were perceived at a high frequency in high performing high poverty schools.
8. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Maintain High Visibility into professional practice. These behaviors demonstrate importance in the instructional leadership framework, but this study did not find a direct relationship between the practices and principals in high performing high poverty schools.
9. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Provide Incentives for Teachers into professional practice. These behaviors demonstrate importance in the instructional leadership framework, but this study did not find a direct relationship between the practices and principals in high performing high poverty schools.
10. Principals should incorporate the leadership behaviors in the function of Provide

Incentives for Learning into professional practice. These behaviors demonstrate importance in the instructional leadership framework, but this study did not find a direct relationship between the practices and principals in high performing high poverty schools.

Recommendations for Further Study

As the population of students living in poverty continues to escalate, continued research regarding the instructional leadership practices of principals in high-poverty elementary schools is critically important to amass evidence that informs a more comprehensive understanding of the leadership practices most influential on student achievement and growth. Instructional leadership functions have been found to have a relationship with student achievement. Further studies focusing on principal instructional leadership and student achievement in high-poverty schools is a necessary research goal and warrants continued interest from educational research, policy makers, and educational leaders. The following are recommendations for future study:

1. Since the research included only Georgia Reward schools for analysis, further research should be conducted with a larger, more diverse sample to improve the generalizability of the results.
2. This study was exclusive to elementary schools. Further research should be conducted to include middle and high schools.
3. This study analyzed the perceptions of teachers. Further research should be conducted to include the self-perceptions of principals. A comparison of teacher and principal perceptions should follow.
4. As teacher perceptions may be affected by a variety of factors, observations could be used for further studies identifying the instructional leadership practices of principals.
5. This study was quantitative. A mixed-method study would allow for interviews with teachers to gain more clarity in regard to principal instructional leadership practices.

Dissemination

System superintendents and principals of participating schools would be interested in the findings of this research as the study would provide information regarding the frequency of principal instructional leadership practices as perceived by teachers. Further, this study identified the principal instructional leadership practices that are occurring most frequently in high poverty, high performing elementary schools. By analyzing these specific practices, professional development opportunities may be developed for principals leading in a context of poverty. This study will be placed in the Georgia Southern Library and disseminated through online databases in Galileo. In addition, this study will be shared through professional publications.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Dimensions and Delineation of Instructional Leadership Functions of the PIMRS

Defining the School's Mission

1. Frame the School Goals (Questions 1-5)
2. Communicate the School Goals (Questions 6-10)

Managing the Instructional Program

1. Supervise and Evaluate Instruction (Questions 11-15)
2. Coordinate the Curriculum (Questions 16-20)
3. Monitor Student Progress (Questions 21-25)

Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate

1. Protect Instructional Time (Questions 26-30)
2. Maintain High Visibility (Questions 31-35)
3. Provide Incentives for Teachers (Questions 36-40)
4. Promote Professional Development (Questions 41-45)
5. Provide Incentives for Learning (Questions 46-50)

Appendix B

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-478-0843
Fax: 912-478-0719
IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu
Veazey Hall 2021
P.O. Box 8005
Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Ginger Spires
Dr. Teri Melton

cc: Charles E. Patterson
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Approval Date: 12/11/14

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H15197** and titled **"Principal Instructional Leadership: Teacher Perceptions in Georgia High Poverty Elemetary Schools,"** it appears that your research involves activities that do not require full approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) according to federal guidelines.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

B2 Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (I) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (II) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research, as submitted, is exempt from IRB approval. No further action or IRB oversight is required, as long as the project remains the same. If you alter the project, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB and acquire a new determination of exemption. Because this project was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, this project does not require an expiration date.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer