

ENHANCING LITERACY ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF
ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL'S
ROLE IN ENHANCING LITERACY ENGAGEMENT IN A TEXAS SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Education

Sam Houston State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

by

Robert Sterling Davis

December, 2018

ENHANCING LITERACY ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF
ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL'S
ROLE IN ENHANCING LITERACY ENGAGEMENT IN A TEXAS SCHOOL

by

Robert Sterling Davis

APPROVED:

Dr. Debra P. Price
Dissertation Director

Dr. Robert M. Maninger
Committee Member

Dr. Melinda S. Miller
Committee Member

Dr. Prasopsuk Y. Pinto
Committee Member

Dr. Stacey L. Edmonson, Dean
College of Education

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to those people who have made the most indelible impact on my life.

First and foremost, to my son, Alex. Throughout this process your support remained strong, your patience remained steady, and your love and respect remained enduring. Your abilities to learn, understand, and adapt to any situation inspire me, and your quick-witted sense of humor never ceases to amaze me and make me laugh. Because of you, I know and understand what unconditional love is.

Second, to my mother Peggy. Although you are the youngest of eight children, you are undoubtedly the wisest. You learned many valuable lessons as you grew up living in and enduring an impoverished life. The most valuable perhaps was understanding when it was appropriate to speak and when it was better just to keep your mouth shut. You may not have coined the phrase, “If you don’t have anything nice to say, say nothing at all” – but you certainly taught it and I am forever, lovingly grateful.

Third, to my sisters Cathy and Vicki. You grew up with me as your older sibling. And, even though I far too often was not the big brother and friend I should have been, you still looked up to and respected me. I am blessed to have sisters who love me and please know that your love is reciprocated and my respect for you is great.

And finally, to my dad Bobby. To say that you are the quintessential tough guy is indeed an understatement. You hold a black belt in Karate, were a semi-pro boxer, a weightlifter, the quarterback of our hometown football team when you were in high school and served in the United States Navy. You taught me how to be tough regarding

life and how to let no-one or no-thing bring me down or defeat me. You have my loving respect.

ABSTRACT

Davis, Robert Sterling, *Enhancing literacy engagement: A case study of perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents about the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in a Texas school*. Doctor of Education (Literacy), December, 2018, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of key stakeholders in an elementary school regarding the school principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in the school. Does the principal's presence in the school drive literacy engagement? More specifically, do the principal's leadership abilities and leadership qualities drive literacy engagement in the school? Or, can the principal's perceived knowledge of literacy and subsequent use and/or display of that knowledge garner greater engagement in literacy instruction and activities in the school? The questions guiding this study were designed to examine the perceptions of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement as perceived by the school principal, teachers in the school, and parents of students attending the school and begin to determine if the principal's role is essential to engagement.

This study sought to present perceptions in comparison to knowledge principals should possess as presented in the literature. Stake (2010) suggests a qualitative approach for studies where the researcher is attempting to describe the perceptions of participants. Correspondingly, this study employed a descriptive case study research design. The study contains multiple case studies, collected to illustrate the phenomenon in-depth and in natural settings (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005; Yin 2009).

The learning environment in schools is becoming increasingly more complicated and complex. School principals must deal with ever changing state and federal mandates and implement local school board requirements, all while making sure students are

making the necessary academic gains that will allow them to be successful contributors to society. The findings of this study revealed a positive overall perception of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in the school.

The findings led to the emergence of seven influencer themes that describe ways the school principal's perceived knowledge and actions affect literacy engagement in the school. The first theme that emerged was Influence of Vision which represents how stakeholders are inspired by the principal's directional guidance of the school. The second theme was Influence of Opportunity that elaborates on the principal's willingness and ability to develop instructional practices while attending to the emotional needs of the stakeholders involved. The third theme is Influence of Atmosphere which illustrates the principal's keenness in understanding the importance of developing a sense of respect and encouragement in the school. The fourth theme, Influence of Purpose, represents the principal's passion for promoting multiple reasons for engaging in literacy. Influence of Observation is the fifth theme and elaborates on the principal's insightful abilities to be in touch with the physical, mental, and emotional states of school stakeholders. The sixth theme is Influence of Practice which illustrates the importance of the of the influence the principal's own actions in direct connection with student engagement. Finally, Influence of Style, the seventh theme, demonstrates how the principal's managerial style impacts literacy engagement.

KEY WORDS: Principal's perception, Teachers perception, Parents perception, Principal's role, Enhancing literacy engagement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and thankfulness to my Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Debbie Price for her guidance and encouragement throughout the course of my doctorate. She has always been available to provide advice while equally lending an ear of understanding. I greatly appreciate her knowledge and her willingness to share it to the benefit of others. Her kindness and compassion have meant and will continue to mean so much to me.

I am grateful that Dr. Melinda Miller is part of my Dissertation Committee. When I first walked into her class, I knew immediately who she was, though she did not recognize me from years earlier. When I spoke of who I was, the smile that came upon her face is forever etched in my mind. That smile reminded me of the beautiful person I had known before and revealed the beautiful person she continues to be on the inside as well as the out. She is an amazing teacher with an even more amazing heart.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude and respect for Dr. Bob Maninger as a member of my Dissertation Committee. His astute ability to explain and make understandable some of the more challenging and difficult coursework required in the Doctoral Literacy Program is nothing less than amazing. He teaches from the heart, reaching out to his students and getting to know them personally so that he might better meet their academic needs. His personality along with his teaching style prove him to be extremely knowledgeable and equally warmhearted.

I am also very grateful to have Dr. Peggy Pinto as part of my Dissertation Committee. It was she that first introduced me to the Doctoral Literacy Program at Sam Houston State University. Although I had been accepted into doctoral administrative

programs at two other universities, she was insistent that I meet with Dr. Price and discuss what a literacy doctorate might provide. Her tenacious spirit is accompanied by a love for teaching and a genuine desire to see others succeed. She is a cherished, far better friend than I deserve, and I am forever indebted for her endless caring, encouragement, and support.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to the ladies of the Great 8 (listed alphabetically by first name): Miss Christi, Miss Jessica, Miss Kim, Miss Lauren, Miss Mindy, Miss Sara, and Miss Vicki. I was the token male of the cohort and these good ladies laughingly never let me forget that. They were a constant source of encouragement, an always ready source of information, and a strong shoulder to lean on in times of difficulty. They moved from just being members of my cohort to becoming my friends.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| DEDICATION..... | iii |
| ABSTRACT..... | v |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | vii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | ix |
| LIST OF TABLES..... | xii |
| CHAPTER | |
| I INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Purpose of the Study | 5 |
| Research Questions..... | 6 |
| Philosophical Stance | 6 |
| Theoretical Framework..... | 7 |
| Study Significance | 9 |
| Limitations | 10 |
| Delimitations..... | 11 |
| Summary..... | 11 |
| II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE | 12 |
| Introduction..... | 12 |
| Historical Perspective of the Principal’s Role | 13 |
| Defining the Leadership Qualities of the Principal..... | 16 |
| The Role of the Principal | 20 |
| The Principal as Literacy Instructional Leader..... | 22 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Summary | 32 |
| III METHODOLOGY | 37 |
| Overview of Methodology and Approach | 37 |
| Study Location | 40 |
| Participants..... | 41 |
| Data Collection | 42 |
| Data Analysis | 47 |
| Data Coding Process | 49 |
| Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Transferability..... | 50 |
| Ethical Considerations | 51 |
| Summary | 51 |
| IV FINDINGS | 53 |
| Introduction..... | 53 |
| Procedures..... | 55 |
| Perceptions of the Principal | 58 |
| Perceptions of Teacher A..... | 65 |
| Perceptions of Teacher B | 72 |
| Perceptions of Parent A | 79 |
| Perceptions of Parent B..... | 85 |
| Comparisons Across Participants | 88 |
| Summary | 110 |
| V DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS | 112 |
| Summary of the Study | 112 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Themes Generated by the Data | 114 |
| Implications for Educators | 122 |
| Future Research | 122 |
| Final Thoughts | 123 |
| REFERENCES | 125 |
| APPENDIX A..... | 145 |
| APPENDIX B | 146 |
| APPENDIX C | 147 |
| APPENDIX D..... | 148 |
| APPENDIX E | 150 |
| APPENDIX F..... | 152 |
| VITA..... | 154 |

LIST OF TABLES

| TABLE | Page |
|---|-------------|
| 1 Teacher Participants Experience in Teaching English/Language/Arts (ELAR)... | 56 |
| 2 Parent Participants Experience Relating to Association or Volunteering in the School | 57 |
| 3 Sample of Values Coding Relating to Principal Interview | 65 |
| 4 Sample of Values Coding Relating to Teacher A Interview..... | 72 |
| 5 Sample of Values Coding Relating to Teacher B Interview..... | 79 |
| 6 Sample of Values Coding Relating to Parent A Interview | 84 |
| 7 Sample of Values Coding Relating to Parent B Interview | 88 |
| 8 2014 Performance Index Report | 120 |
| 9 2017 Performance Index Report | 121 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Retired school principal Ernestine Mitchell wrote in *The Learner's Creed* (1988), "I will do my best not to waste this day, for this day will come no more." Her words inspired and directed me when I exited from the corporate world to become a teacher. As a teacher, I had the distinct privilege of assisting in the developing of very impressionable minds. I helped shape lives not only through the passing on of knowledge, but also through instilling values and beliefs. My mission then was not merely to educate my students solely with academics, but also to provide them with the skills they would need to effectively communicate and be productive citizens in our society. This I did each day knowing that the day I had been given, that one opportunity to make a difference in the life of a child, would come no more.

A meaningful, purpose filled education enables students to become successful in their lives. Dedicated teachers consider the needs of their students and strive to understand what is important to them, those things that matter the most to them and will be the most useful for them in the real world. The student's needs must somehow be intertwined into the educational requirements so that the student sees relevance in learning. Master teachers bring relevance to learning by bringing an excitement to the classroom that invigorates and inspires students. I had become a master teacher and was ready to expand my abilities as an administrator.

Moving into the administrative side of education, I expected that my role as a teacher would simply be enhanced through expansion. The dedicated teacher that I had been would guide my actions as an administrator and according to Leithwood, Seashor-

Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004), alongside teaching, leadership has the most significant impact on student achievement. Thus, the school would become my classroom, allowing me to positively impact the lives of a greater number of students while helping teachers achieve greater success in their roles. My philosophy of leadership finds root in my genuine desire to see others develop and bring out the very best they have to offer, while building confidence in their own abilities. Regardless of age, each individual has within them capacity to acquire new information to better themselves and those around them. I look for that ability in those I work with and teach both as a teacher proper, and as an administrator who is a teacher. I do this by presenting a learning environment that is emotionally safe and supportive in order to encourage additional exploration and foster learning. Helping others achieve growth and guiding them toward a desired success is a privilege - privilege and an honor that cannot be approached lightly, but rather with nobility and an authentic devotion to assist them in developing a quest for improvement. However, my dreams of being the ultimate teacher as an administrator rapidly began to unravel.

Becoming an administrator was an idea recommended to me by administrators I worked with. Why? I believed it was because they saw that I understood the benefits print-rich environments had upon students, and eagerly and equally grasped the benefits provided in technology-rich environments as suggested by Maninger (2006). I also believed that they saw my ability to help my students understand that literature was the motivating context understanding the code and conventions of our language (Price, 1998). In addition, I believed like Pinto, Simpson, and Bakken (2009) that all students, regardless of ability, had a fundamental right to learning that allowed them to

meaningfully participate in society. And, to complete the spectrum of my naivety, I believed they saw in me a teacher who through excellent instruction, prepared my students to be full, literate members of our society, and not just passers of the test (Higgins, Miller & Wegmann, 2006). However, the trite saying *perception is not always reality* garnered new meaning to me when I stepped into world of the school administrator and concluded that I was selected because I had the abilities to play the role.

When I asked other administrators how they went about improving the overall success of their students, I was shocked to discover that many were concerned only with improvement as it related to the STAAR (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) test. While I had long understood the pressure teachers and students feel associated with high-stakes testing (Moon, Brighton, Jarvis & Hall, 2007), I felt the burden was mine to bear as a teacher since I had always been told that is where the responsibly lie. Further inquiry led some to inform me that my duty as an administrator was to manage the building and student behavior, and let teachers do the teaching. One colleague even chuckled while telling me that I would soon learn my place and realize my plate was full enough without trying to be a teacher as well. I was basically told not to come into the job looking to be a hero and would be better off focusing on doing an administrator's job. Leave teaching up to the teachers in the classroom. Naivety compelled me to seek counsel from these learned administrators as to just what it was that a successful administrator was supposed to do. Their advice came back full circle as they reiterated the necessity of managing the building, the teachers, and students, and added let the rest of the pieces of the puzzle fall where they may.

The role of the school administrator finds root in the early years of public education when the principal teacher was in charge of the school (Kafka, 2009), leading to the adjectival form of the present title given to the one in charge of the school learning environment, the principal. The principal teacher moved away from the classroom and direct teaching duties, to become more managerial and other task oriented, but was still closely tied to student learning. According to Pierce (as cited in Kafka, 2009), the role of the principal developed during the mid-1800s through the mid-1930s. Pierce continues by noting that the principal became the building manager, instructional administrator, and the public persona of the school (as cited in Kafka, 2009). The role of principal evolved into a position of prominence, defined and separated from that of a classroom teacher (Kafka, 2009). Research indicates that the role of the principal began with the intent of encompassing the craft of teaching, as indicated by the title of principal teacher. Possibly, the increase in authority and the separation of teacher from the title given the principal teacher has led some to misunderstand the primary purpose of the position. How did public education move from creating and embracing the role of the principal teacher as one of importance and necessity for student achievement, to relegating the role to that of a building manager and disciplinarian?

The school principal indirectly affects the productivity of the school and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). A principal, though not assigned to a single classroom, is a teacher and plays a vital role in assuring that students get the education they need to succeed (Haycock, 2007). Researchers agree that for improvement at the school level to successfully occur, the principal is fundamental in the process (Fullan, 2003; McNeal & Christy, 2001). Numerous studies suggest that school circumstances

have an effect on the kind of leadership implemented by the principal (Hallinger, 2003). However, other studies yielded mixed results on the relationship between principal guidance and student performance (Bell, 2001; Clark & Clark, 2002; DuFour, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the topic of the relationship of the campus principal and enhancing literacy engagement in the school and begin to determine if the perceived role of the principal is elemental to such engagement. There was a time not so long ago when the campus principal did little more than manage the day-to-day operations of the building (Beck and Murphy, 1992). Central administration was content as long as every classroom had a teacher, the building was clean and orderly, and every student moved forward from grade to grade, to graduation (Beck and Murphy, 1992). The community was satisfied as peace was kept order prevailed, and the students appeared happy. Principals fulfilling these criteria could expect to stay in a given location as long as desired (Beck and Murphy, 1992). However, such no longer seems to be the case.

Principals today face an intensely complicated learning climate, complete with ever changing Federal, State, and local regulations. Educational leaders must respond to a myriad of topics inclusive of the broadening gaps in student learning capabilities (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), including literacy deficits. State legislatures have responded to rising expectations in the workplace by setting higher standards for schools by implementing rigorous high stakes assessments. Schools that attain higher, desirable levels of student achievement will do so because of strong administrative leadership (Cotton, 2000).

Should campus principals focus time, consideration, and resolution toward changing what students are taught and how they are taught, to enhance literacy engagement among students so that they are adequately prepared for success in relation to accountability measures and to become viable members of our rapidly changing global society? Can the perception of the principal's knowledge of literacy programs and tools that enhance literacy gains actuate engagement or interest in literacy?

Research Questions

The questions guiding this study were designed to examine the perceptions of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement as perceived by the school principal, teachers, and parents in a Texas school.

1. How does the select school principal perceive his/her duties regarding school wide literacy instruction?
2. How do select elementary school teachers perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?
3. How do select elementary school parents perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?

Philosophical Stance

Vygotsky (1978) conceived social constructivism. A fundamental concept in social constructivism is the zone of proximal development, which refers to the concept of the task difficulty required to enhance learning with appropriate support - support which could be garnered through observing and modeling the behavior of others (Bandura, 1977) as exhibited through knowledge. Bandura (1977) also suggest that modeling can be explicit. Knowledge then, perceived or real, could be exhibited by the principal relating

to the culture expected within the school. Bandura (1993) then purports that school culture can be modified to stimulate school improvement and greater student achievement. The theoretical approach for this study appreciates social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) through an achievement goal theory (Elliot, 2005) lens.

Theoretical Framework

The school environment is of extreme importance to the principal, as well as other stakeholders, from an applied perspective because of the positive relationship toward student achievement (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Cozby (2001) concludes that a theory is comprised of a combination of numerous ideas concerning a subject or phenomenon that relates to human conduct which involves learning, memory, and personality.

Achievement goal theory, developed by Ames, Dweck, Maehr, and Nichols in the 1970s (Elliot, 2005), is considered one of the more outstanding theories of achievement motivation (Meece, Anderman & Anderman, 2006). Evidence suggests that students in elementary schools exhibit greater positive motivation and learning achievement when their school environments highlight understanding, improving skills, and mastery (Meece, Anderman & Anderman, 2006). Achievement goal theory compliments a fundamental concept in social constructivism, Vygotsky (1978), the zone of proximal development, which refers to the concept of the task difficulty required to enhance learning with appropriate support. A tenant of constructivism is the need to understand the unique perspective of each individual (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Vygotsky (1978) asserted that all children can learn. Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory emphasized the child as a learner in social interaction with adult assistance. Dweck (2006) suggests that adults – parents, teachers, coaches – play an integral role in helping students develop

growth mindsets. A growth mindset generates beliefs focused on change (Dweck, 2006). Students who are taught that their intellectual abilities can be developed are more successful in the school (Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

The school is an organization. According to Koch (2006), organizational behavior is the examination of how people and groups function and interact within an organization. Koch (2006) purports that examination and interpreting of the people and environment within an organization leads to the identification of the cause and effects of organizational difficulties and challenges. Applied research is conducted to answer specific questions or examine real-world experiences of people involved (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Patton, 2003). This study will examine a key component of the school organizational structure, the principal, and the real-world perceptions of the principal's role in enhancing literacy success within the natural setting of a school. The analytical approach for this study will be based in an organizational behavior and achievement goal theory framework.

Achievement goal theory considers student motivation in academic settings (Pintrich, Conley & Kempler, 2003). The achievement goal approach asserts a clear representation of achievement motivation by outlining the distinctive characteristics of ability types, recognizing achievement motives and achievement attributes as explanatory constructs (Elliot, 2005). Target goals do not address rationale for goal attainment (Pintrich, 2000). The general goal concept attempts to determine the range of goals that could promote motivated behavior (Pintrich, 2000). Achievement goals find ground between target and general goals, pursuing achievement task goals applicable to academic learning (Pintrich, 2000). Achievement goal constructs were expressly

developed to illustrate achievement motivation and behavior (Elliot, 1997). Perception, good or bad, can motivate or demotivate and affect behavior. The individual's orientation to the situation or task determines their purpose for achievement (Pintrich, Conley & Kempler, 2003). Through differentially reinforcing some goals, while purposefully not reinforcing others, student learning can be influenced, and their motivation changed (Covington, 2000).

Study Significance

This study is significant because seeks to discover and explore perceptions of three groups of elementary stakeholders (the principal, teachers, and parents) regarding the perception of the principal's knowledge base, as well as responsibility for and use of this knowledge toward enhancing literacy engagement. The study will investigate if the knowledge foundation principals are proposed to possess according to the literature compares to the perceived knowledge they are believed to possess, and if perception enhances student engagement in literacy. Although active leadership can make a difference in improving learning, it is less clear how effective leadership is in bolstering the learning of students, and what the indispensable components of successful leadership are (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). A previous study conducted by Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) linked improving student achievement to the instructional leadership of the school principal. However, the study did not specifically examine the perceived subject knowledge of the principal and ability to convey support or leadership, and the perceived ability and support to stakeholders (other administrators, teachers, and parents) in literacy.

To the degree that leadership methods are linked to student achievement within the school, this research will add to the literature regarding the relationship between student literacy and the perception of the principal's role in enhancing student engagement in literacy. What is not specifically clear in the literature is whether how stakeholders perceive and evaluate the principal's abilities has any relationship to how much students' engagement can be improved. Providing that a relationship exists, then understanding this relationship by focusing on the principal's literacy knowledge and/or beliefs and how said is conveyed to the stakeholders, it could be possible to link student engagement in literacy to the knowledge and abilities exhibited by the principal as perceived by the stakeholders.

Limitations

Researcher bias was considered a limitation for this study. The researcher was a former teacher and current administrator at the school. The researcher's views were exhibited during the study using a personal journal and observations. Acknowledgment of personal biases provides to inform readers of possible partiality in the results (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The study was also limited based on the truthfulness and/or bias the principal, teacher, and parent respondents may have expressed due to outside factors or influencers. A combination of open-end and closed-ended questions in a semi-structured interview were employed to provide beneficial qualitative data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Creswell 2009). Adherence to the interview protocol was upheld (Yin, 2003).

Another limitation is the relatively small sample size of participants. Although the research will focus on the administrators, teachers, and parents' perceptions of the

principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement, having so few participants, with all participants working at the same school, could cause the generalizability of the study to be limited.

Delimitations

The study will be limited to the administrators, teachers, and parents associated with one school in Southeast Texas. The school principal is the chief administrator for the school and the researcher serves as the school's assistant principal. The teacher selection will include teachers who currently teach at the school. Parents participants will be selected from parents who participate in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) within the school during the current school year.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement among students. A phenomenological study details the lived experiences of individuals involved in a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). According to Jewell-Lapan (1936), "behavior which occurs seldom is as real as behavior which is frequent or even continuous." Perception and knowledge must be differentiated between the contexts in which it exists and is considered (Jewell-Lapan, 1936). This study will seek to present perceptions in contrast to knowledge principals should have as presented in the literature. A qualitative approach is recommended for studies where the researcher is attempting to describe the perceptions of participants (Stake, 2010). The next chapter will present a synthesis of prevailing literature relating to this investigation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Since the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, there has been increased emphasis on literacy curricula and research based instructional practices. The emphasis will no doubt continue with the transition to and implementation of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2017. Literacy is central to achieving the type of education that is pivotal to economic and political influence (Schmoker, 2008). Furthermore, the development of literacy skills is recognized as the major foundation for all school-based learning (Bean, 2013). Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) add that the systematic vocabulary instruction enhances literacy attainment and argue that students must come face-to-face with words in contextual settings more than once to learn them. The opportunities for academic and occupational success are narrowed without the ability to read (Lyon, 2003). Moreover, the advancement in student achievement in the area of literacy as demonstrated by the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) has been negligible at best (Allington, 2006; Cavanagh, 2007). Gaffney, Hesbol, and Corso (2005) suggest, while intensity on high stakes tests has surely placed more emphasis on instructional accountability, "Over focusing on the bottom line – that is the number on a scale – may distract responsible leaders from attending to the processes that facilitate or interfere with academic achievement." Researchers (Booth, 2007; R. DuFour & Berkey, 1995; Lezotte, 1991; Marzano, Walters & McNulty, 2005) place considerable emphasis on the important role of the principal in facilitating change leading to school improvement and heightened student achievement. Marzano, Walters, and McNulty

(2005) in their book *School Leadership that Works* state, "...our meta-analysis indicates that principals can have a profound effect on the achievement of students in their schools (p 25). The demand on educators to assemble the necessary programmatic and instructional components needed to facilitate and support students' acquisition of literacy skills is ever increasing. Educators must unite in their efforts to create and share a common vision of what constitutes effective literacy instruction. The principal as a transformational instructional leader plays a compelling role in this endeavor. Collaborative efforts to create and share common understandings about literacy for students fosters positive change (Bean, 2013). According to Booth and Roswell (2007), "The more evidence there is of teamwork in a school, the more significant the change in literacy standards" (p.15).

Texas public schools are currently enduring criticism and scrutiny perhaps greater than ever before (Booker, Gilpatric, Gronberg & Jansen, 2008). Legislators, parents, and educators are distressed about the capability of today's students to equally compete in a technologically driven global economy. Developing an instructional environment where learning is paramount is crucial for student success and the principal must fully understand what it means to engage the student, why it matters, and how to explore it within the school environment (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May 2010). This review of the literature explores (a) historical perspective of the principal's role, (b) the principal as instructional leader and, (c) the principal as literacy leader.

Historical Perspective of the Principal's Role

The depiction of the school principal of the past, the principalship, is not based in substantial archival history (Kafka, 2009). According to Beck and Murphy (1992), for

decades American's were led to understand that the front office, and teaching and learning, operated and existed as two separate worlds. The administration provided appropriate support for teaching, but the quality of teaching was dependent solely upon the teacher (Beck & Murhpy, 1992). For the most part, principals have fallen through the middle, according to Kafka (2009), meaning too low on the political radar for historians to notice, but not necessarily close enough to the top for scholars to pay particular attention to. Rousmaniere (2007) presents three possibilities for why such occurred. First, non-historians offered advice without regard to historical record; second campus-based leaders found themselves aggregated together with district leaders, specifically superintendents, with attention on success focused toward the top; and third, personal memories of the principal as the disciplinarian clouded historian's views.

Building principals assumed and amassed power in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Kafka, 2009) as school districts grew during bureaucratic expansion. The office of principal gained prestige and grew in local prominence with the establishment of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in 1916, and the National association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) in 1921 (Kafka, 2009). The supervisory responsibilities given to the principal, placing the principal in almost complete control of all which occurred in the building, including the hiring and firing of teachers, bolstered the prestige of the office and clearly delineated the principal from a teacher (Kafka, 2009). Principals then broadened their reach outside the school in into the community, in practicality for their students and strategically for themselves (Cuban, 1988), further establishing the role as authoritative. In the political sense, principals

became public relations specialists, garnering support from parents and community members showing themselves as experts (Cuban, 1988).

The role of the principal in the school setting evolved significantly from the 1960's through the 1990's (Hallinger, 1992). The principal's role moved from being merely a building program manager, to an instructional leader, then a transformation leader (Hallinger, 1992). Whereas program leaders lead day-to-day operations and instructional leaders lead daily operations and facilitate best practices among teachers and within the school, transformational leaders bring about change that is systematic, long-term, and provides for sustainable gains in improvement among students and thus the school (Hallinger, 1992).

More recently, education decision makers, lawmakers, and researchers have become more and more interested in the leadership provided at the school level (Kafka, 2009). The growing interest in school leadership is mirrored by the growing interest in the school principal - a role that is arguably becoming more arduous, time demanding, and vital today than ever before (Adams & Copeland, 2005). Prevailing research and studies on the role of the principal compare and contrast the duties of school principals today to those of building principals in the past and assert that the role of principal of the 21st century demands profound change from how it once existed (Mazzeo, 2003).

The office of principal as it presently functions is somewhat of a contemporary conundrum in respect to the history of public education (Kafka, 2009). As schools moved from one room, one master (teacher) models to larger organizations, the role of principal teacher was developed (Kafka, 2009). Through the course of time, the principal teacher, who was usually a male, gave up the responsibilities of teaching and assumed the role of

a building manager, personnel manager, administrator, instructional leader, and even a politician (Rousmaniere, 2007), as the principal must collaborate, work with, and appease all stakeholders within the education system. The expectation has become that the school principal be a manager, instructional leader, teacher mentor, politician within the community, and student advocate (Matthew & Crow, 2003). The change in mindset from focusing on individual leaders and individual behaviors to focusing on the results of an educational system lead by leaders has helped to redirect attention from the management of schools to leadership of schools (Murphy, 2002).

Defining the Leadership Qualities of the Principal

The principal as a successful leader must be the instructional leader as well (McEwan, 2003). The principal as the instructional leader leads with a strong intellect and knowledge of research-based curriculum and instruction, and positively promotes the development of students, teachers, and self (McEwan, 2003). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) developed a comprehensive leadership assessment processes to identify leadership strengths and areas needing improvements. The behaviors identified allow school principals to develop positive learning environments. The NAESP outlined six standards for “What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do” (NAESP, 2001) regarding instructional leadership. These include:

Standard One: Lead schools in a manner that places student and teacher learning as a main priority.

Standard Two: Set high expectations and standards for the academic and social improvement of all students and the job performance of teachers.

Standard Three: Require curricular content and instruction that assure student

attainment of concerted academic guidelines.

Standard Four: Develop and nurture a culture of continuous learning for teachers connected to student learning and other school goals.

Standard Five: Use multiple data sources as diagnostic tools to identify, assess, and administer instructional improvement.

Standard Six: Actively engage community members to develop a shared accountability for student and school success (pp.14 & 15).

Daresh (2002) advises that leadership is an interpersonal relationship in which an individual can influence and guide the behavior of others, and that leadership involves movement in the organization or in the behaviors of people. Black and William (2003) assertion that effective instructional leaders understand cognitive learning theories that guide students to become competent learners. According to Black and William (2003) the principal as a well-informed instructional leader is knowledgeable regarding curriculum and instruction and methods that evoke student problem solving. The effective instructional leader empowers others to take control of their learning and the learning process (Daresh, 2002). The principal as a productive instructional leader sets and sustains learning standards, included those which define acceptable teaching and student work (Black, 2003). The abilities noted for strong instructional leadership point to the principal having a comprehensive background in curriculum and instruction. After a review of research, Cotton (2003) described ways in which effective instructional leaders may operate and refine their abilities. These include:

- Constantly seeking increased levels of student learning
- Establishing a pattern of incessant improvement

- Promoting discussion of instructional matters
- Modeling by example
- Consistently observing classrooms and supplying feedback to teachers
- Respecting teacher independence in practice of craft
- Safeguarding instructional time
- Providing staff development opportunities and exercises
- Monitoring student progress and evaluating results
- Using and desegregating student achievement data to refine programs
- Acknowledging student and teacher accomplishments

Commonalities appear in the lists of expectations of the principal as an instructional leader. Sergiovanni (2006) recommends that the principal become the heart, head, and hand of leadership in the school. Setting high expectations for both students and teachers is crucial. Fager (2002) points out the importance of high expectations as set by the school principal in a study conducted in an elementary school. Other common beliefs include assessments of both teacher and student learning to ascertain progress, provide feedback to teachers and students, furnish a plethora of supports and resources including time, staff development, and materials to strengthen teacher accomplishments, and, in general, looking upon teachers as the professional educators that they are within the school (Fager, 2002). Researchers suggest there is a link between student achievement and the principal's engagement in these common behaviors, along with a general knowledge of curriculum and instruction (Cotton, 2003; Heck, 1993). Researchers agree on the relevance of the principal as instructional leader. In addition to this, Cotton (2003) states, "Scores of studies show that student achievement is strongly

affected by the leadership of school principal." The principal must determine how to balance the management issues introduced each school day with the instructional leadership practices related to school improvement (Alvy & Robbins, 2005). Strong leadership from the principal encompasses the perceptions of the principal as an instructional resource, a resource provider, effective communicator, and a visible presence within the school (Andrews & Soder, 1987).

This study will tighten in on the principal specifically as a literacy instructional leader due to the importance related to this skill area for students. Literacy is an integral part of and affects all other areas of content study and is vital to student achievement, thus the stakes are high regarding the impact literacy has upon students (Allington, 2006; Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Lyon, 2003; Marzano et al., 2001). This study proposes to throw light on the importance of the perceived literacy knowledge base of the principal as the literacy instructional leader. Reading is the gateway skill that builds all other academic success (Fager, 2002). This information is important when considering how the perception of the principal as a literacy leader influences the actions and subsequent results literacy instruction produces within the school. Examining perceptions of teachers, parents, and the principal regarding the principal as a literacy instructional leader helps to define the expectations of the position. The question comes back to how important various areas of literacy knowledge and actions are using the knowledge expected of a principal as a literacy instructional leader, as perceived by teachers, parents, and the principal.

The Role of the Principal

Increasingly, the expectation for principals is to take on more tasks and assume more responsibilities making change inevitable (Goodwin, Cunningham & Eagle, 2005). The role of the school principal in modern times demands different behaviors from those prescribed in the past. The expectation in this era of accountability is that the principal possesses an extensive knowledge of teaching and learning and can plan and put into action educational programs that encourage academic rigor and achievement (Murphy, 2002). Accountability has created the framework for a new school leadership orientation (Lashway, 2002). Business (Collins, 2001) and education researchers (Fullan, 2007; Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Marzano et al, 2005) contend “Having a first-rate school without first-rate leadership is impossible” (NAESP, 2001). According to The United States Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity (1970), the principal is the most influential person within the school. Mazzeo (2003) and Brookover and Lezotte (1973) assert that the leadership of the building principal is an elemental ingredient of an effective school. In addition, Peterson and Deal (2011), describe the principal’s role as critical in shaping school culture and a developing professional learning community among staff. The school principal models’ behavior and demonstrates knowledge that complements their management and leadership responsibilities (Peterson & Deal, 2011).

A study conducted by DuFour and Berkey (1995) perceived the principal as having "the fundamental role to help create conditions which enable a staff to develop so the school can achieve its goals more effectively" (p. 14). DuFour (2002) later asserts the significance of the principal’s role as lead learner in developing a professional learning

community within the school. Boyer (1983), in the Carnegie Report on High School Education wrote, "in schools where achievement was high and where there was a clear sense of community, we found, invariably, that the principal made the difference."

Lambert (2003) opines that the principal holds a distinctive position when it comes to building leadership competency in schools because of their unique relationship to teachers within the building in focusing on student achievement.

The managerial expectations for principals have veered over time, with instructional leadership taking priority over the managerial expectations of the position (Hallinger, 2003). The principal as instructional leader steps into the role of lead learner and works collaboratively with teachers (Lambert, 2003). The principal as instructional leader is looked upon as a facilitator helping to build leadership capacity within teachers in the school to bolster meaningful change within the school (Lambert, 2003). Hallinger (2003) provides a conceptualization of how the principal influences school instructional culture through the Instructional Management Framework. The framework suggests three dimensions of the instructional leadership construct: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and developing a positive school-learning climate (Hallinger, 2003). Although the principal may have some direct effect on students' learning it appears most often there is an indirect effect by way of the principal's interaction with those who come in direct contact with students in the instructional setting, "our own belief is that the linkages between principal leadership and students are inextricably tied to the actions of others" (Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996). Presumably it would appear to be valuable for both principals and teachers to have an analogous vision, knowledge, and purpose when it comes to student learning.

The Principal as Literacy Instructional Leader

Student achievement in literacy has been at the center of increased attention. The focus on literacy as pivotal to student learning connects to NCLB legislation and The National Reading Panel Report (2000) on reading and its implications for reading instruction. Literacy is intimately connected to student success in school (Fullan, 2007; Reutzel & Cooter, 2000). “Of all subject areas, literacy stands as one of the most effective vehicles for school change, that success in literacy ensures success in other curriculum areas” (Booth & Roswell, 2007). An increasing body of literature exists which asserts that the principal’s knowledge and instructional leadership in literacy is pivotal to providing “high-quality literacy programs” (Reeves, 2008). • Leithwood, Seashor-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) believe when principals and teachers share leadership, teachers’ working relationships are stronger and student achievement is higher. Lofton (2009) notes “The higher the principals’ level of management support for scheduling, financing, and evaluating of literacy initiatives, the greater the impact on students who scored below basic, proficient levels...” (p. 80). Principals need to be passionate and dedicated in their support of literacy initiatives, as well as persistent in building their own knowledge and experience base to successfully bolster reform within the school (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Jacobson, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1992).

Reeves (2008) declares that even with all the consideration given to literacy instruction in schools there are still difficulties in providing programs that meet students’ needs. The following statement provides the foundation for this researcher’s study of the perception of the principals’ literacy leadership; “Part of the problem is that in many schools, administrators and teachers have not developed common understandings of the

essential elements of effective literacy instruction, ... If school leaders really believe that literacy is a priority, then they have a personal responsibility to understand literacy instruction, define it for their colleagues, and observe it daily” (Reeves, 2008). Defining what the essential elements of literacy instruction include can be problematic.

Researchers and experts continually attempt to define this important leadership factor.

Yet, getting various stakeholders to agree upon the knowledge and support necessary by the principal so that they can effectively and successfully fulfill their role as literacy instructional leader creates disagreement (Reeves, 2008). .

Sanacore (1997) presents the principals language arts leadership as having a considerable influence on children’s literacy learning. Sanacore (1997) also declares that principals must address instructional leadership in various ways depending on the staff, the students, and culture of the school, as well as the principal’s own individuality, strengths, and experiences. The culture and climate of the school must be contemplated along with the resources available for use. One reading program or instructional method cannot meet all learners’ needs. Correspondingly, there is no one way to change or improve literacy instruction in every school. Sanacore (1997) expresses the following guidelines for principals for successful reading leadership:

- Keep current concerning English, languages arts, and reading
- Work collaboratively with teachers and staff
- Advocate different learning styles and assessment methodologies
- Encourage lifetime literacy through engaged reading
- Invite and include parents in their children’s literacy learning

The guidelines presented here are extensive enough that they may be applicative to varying school situations and settings in numerous ways. Although Sanacore's (1996) guidelines do not lead to a conclusive knowledge base a school principal needs to uphold efficacious literacy curriculum and instruction within the school, there is a distinct connection present to the principal as the lead learner, which is insinuated in much of the literature and research regarding the principal as the instructional leader.

Reinforcing the notion of the principal as the lead learner, McKewan (1998) proposes the following actions for the principal to effectively champion literacy instruction within a school.

- Work with the staff to conclude what is best for the students and school
- Read about literacy to become acquainted with what works
- Conduct site-based research analysis of current literacy programs
- Become the lead change agent for the school
- Aim attention at what can be changed within the school including;
 - 1) Resources
 - 2) Scheduling
 - 3) And staff development to increase teacher effectiveness
- Become the instructional leader of the school (McEwan, 1998)

These recommendations are incorporated and expanded upon by other researchers and initiatives. Fulfilling the role of literacy instructional leader requires a deeper literacy knowledge and understanding which goes beyond that of an instructional leader as previously described in this literature review.

Booth and Roswell (2007) indicate that a Literacy Principal bolsters student success by employing a combination of leadership skills, coordinated curriculum, and implementing the best instructional practices of teachers. The guiding components suggested by Booth and Roswell (2007) to structure a framework for literacy-based school modification include:

- Catalyze a shared literacy vision that is distinct and fashioned by the uniqueness of the school climate and community.
- Recognize and appreciate the textual worlds of students and the habitudes that accompany those texts.
- Work with teachers and staff as a school literacy team, building a culture of literacy in the school.
- Create time and opportunities for professional development for all stakeholders.
- Recognize literacy in the community, new literacies, and district literacy plans.

While analogous points are made of McEwan (1998) regarding vision, creating a partnership with staff, and appropriate staff development, Booth and Roswell (2007) present a clear linkage to the contextual components of the school, community, and the world when contemplating the principal's role as the literacy instructional leader. Booth and Roswell (2007) also acknowledge the importance of utilizing the expertise of teachers within the building to assist with staff development. Better still, Cobb (2005) suggests that shared leadership, which starts with commitment from every stakeholder involved that learning is the major priority within the school, will lead to meaningful change in instruction and improvement in student achievement.

The Knowledge Base of the Principal as the Literacy Instructional Leader.

Blokker, Simpson, and Whittier (2002) suggest that the initial step in creating a school-wide literacy endeavor is for the school principal to commit that every student's success is dependent on their ability to read and write on grade-level. Possessing an understanding of how a student becomes a fluent decoder of texts is critically important for the school principal (Carbo, 2005).

Possessing a literacy knowledge base, while outwardly important, is only advantageous if it can be used to support effective literacy instruction within the school. Tooms, Padak, & Rasinski (2007) purport, "Avoid jacking up your literacy jargon if you cannot clearly explain what you believe about literacy instruction." Jacobson, Reutzel, and Hollingsworth (1992) concluded that school principals not only need to understand the issues, but also need precise recommendations regarding the selection of promising reading programs for use in their schools.

The presence of the principal in school classrooms has a powerful effect on student success (Andrews & Soder, 1987). As a literacy instructional leader, a powerful connection is made based on the principal being present in classrooms. The principal cannot have complete, unlimited knowledge of all that takes place within a school (Cobb, 2005; Tooms, Padak, & Rasinski, 2007). Nevertheless, through routine classroom visitations to observe students learning and teachers teaching, the principal as a literacy instructional leader will be more conversant to answer or comment on questions concerning literacy instructional practices posed by various stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, and the community (Cobb, 2005; Tooms, 2007).

Sanacore (1997) asserts that even though assessment tools are available which empower a principal to observe and assess classroom literacy instructional practices, a literacy knowledge base is beneficial in understanding exactly what is being assessed. Sanacore (1997) continues with although knowledge by itself is no guarantee that an administrator will be an effective literacy leader, it suggests that he/she is committed to literacy instruction and has the potential to be a major source of support and “able to engage in substantive sharing when dealing with issues concerning language arts and related fields” (p. 3).

Numerous experts (Gaffney et al., 2005; Henk, Moore, Marinak, and Tomasetti, 2000; Henk, Moore, Marinak, and Mallette, 2003; Levesque, & Carnahan, 2005) recognize the demand for accountability prompted by national and state legislative mandates have provided frameworks for principals, teachers, and literacy specialists to employ to evaluate classroom instructional practices regarding literacy instruction. Levesque & Carnahan (2005) provide an observation template for principals and to use when observing teachers in the classroom to give concentrated feedback on what is occurring during classroom literacy instruction. Levesque & Carnahan (2005) also produced a form for teachers to complete regarding the impact of the principals’ observational visits on literacy instruction.

The best practices of literacy instruction are the cornerstone of both The Reading Lesson Observation Framework (RLOF) (Henk et al., 2000) and the Writing Observation Framework (WOF) (Henk et al., 2003). The objective of the RLOF and WOF frameworks is to provide familiar language that may enhance communication among educators within the school to initiate discussions of what is occurring and what changes

may need to be brought about in the future (Henk et al., 2003; Henk et al., 2000). When considering the RLOF (Henk et al., 2000) and WOF (Henk et al., 2003) instruments the complexity involved in the teaching of reading and writing is apparent. While a deeper understanding of literacy instructional practices would certainly broaden the principal's ability to use these assessment instruments productively, the frameworks of the instruments could possibly increase the principal's literacy knowledge base.

Utilization of tools such as the ROLF and WOF aid the principal in framing what productive literacy instruction and classroom literacy practices should look like to help guide teachers in their own self-assessment toward improving instructional practices and classroom climates supportive of greater student achievement in literacy (Reeves, 2008). This self-assessment encourages and supports increased leadership capacity allowing teachers to use these tools to evaluate their own instruction and assist in guiding and developing their colleagues.

The importance of the principal building the leadership capacity of individuals, teams, and the school can be considered as an element of their own success (Hirsh & Killion, 2009). "When the principal induces high levels of commitment and professionalism from teachers and works interactively with teachers in a shared instructional leadership capacity, schools have the benefit of integrated leadership; they are organizations that learn and perform at high levels" (Hallinger, 2003). Sanacore (1997) and (Jacobson (1992) both assert emphasis toward the principal's perceptions of the knowledge base needed to satisfactorily support productive literacy instruction. These same studies (Sanacor, 1997; Jacobson, 1992) also indicate the need that the principal be

current regarding their knowledge of best literacy instructional practices to be indispensable for promoting of appropriate staff development.

The principal's knowledge base of literacy instruction can impact the quality of staff development pertaining to literacy (Murphy, 2004; McGhee & Lew, 2007). The higher principals consider and rank their own knowledge of literacy, the more likely they are to readily assist teachers with guiding support in literacy instruction and staff development (Murphy, 2004; McGhee & Lew, 2007). Principals who viewed their knowledge of literacy as lacking were considerably less likely to help teachers with literacy instruction or discuss literacy goals and attainment in faculty meetings or individual grade-level meetings (Murphy, 2004; McGhee & Lew, 2007).

The findings conveyed by Murphy (2004) and McGhee and Lew (2007) are worthy of further consideration as the results point to the interaction between principals and teachers based on the principal's perceived level of knowledge in literacy and literacy instruction. Professional development in literacy is crucial and must be implemented into the daily school life, rather than occasionally visit to the classroom (Lofton, 2009). Developing and utilizing their own understanding of literacy, principals need to be able to identify who the literacy experts are within the school and acclaim their expertise through encouragement of presenting staff development for other teachers (Lofton, 2009; Murphy 2004). "Teachers learn best from other teachers, in a context of shared leadership" (Gaffney et al., 2005). According to Carbo (2005), although most principals do not teach reading, it is critically important that they know how reading should be taught, especially in the younger grades (p. 46).

Booth & Roswell (2007) determined shared leadership is essential for building capacity and climate for teacher acceptance and commitment to a literacy projects and initiatives. Student literacy skills and performance improve when knowledgeable literacy educators work collaboratively (Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996). A like-minded understanding on the part of both principals and teachers regarding the knowledge base necessary to support literacy instruction would seem valuable in implementing progress initiatives and staff development (Reeves, 2008). The lack of knowledge and expertise relating to literacy on the part of the principal and the subsequent effect on guiding teachers and effectively improving teaching practices is not clear. Separate studies have considered the principals' perceptions and attitudes regarding their role in literacy instruction (Murphy, 2004; McGhee & Lew, 2007).

Lofton (2009) studied the perceptions of literacy coaches regarding principals' literacy leadership. While Lofton (2009) found experts and researchers who had developed ideologies about what principals should understand about literacy, reports comparing the perceptions of the literacy coaches and teachers in a single study were not evident. Murphy (2004) and Lofton (2009) each recommend additional study on how teachers perceive the principal's role as instructional leader in relation to literacy. Blokker, Simpson, and Whittier (2002) assert that such information would be ostensibly useful in configuring and supporting literacy teams and other cooperative leadership partnerships within the school to increase literacy skills for students.

This study proposes an investigation of the perceptions of teachers, parents, as well as the principal, concerning the importance of areas of principal's literacy knowledge and responsibility and use of this knowledge in their leadership role within

the school to support literacy engagement. Some principals may not have sufficient knowledge of research-based literacy practices. Furthermore, the perception of the principal in relation to a literacy knowledge base he or she may need to competently support effective literacy instruction may not align with the perceptions of teachers. The misperceptions of common beliefs or understandings teachers have may influence the principal's capability to support and perform the instructional leadership role of working with teachers to increase student success in the discipline of literacy. The National Reading Panel Report (2000) on reading and its implications for reading instruction suggests the following:

1. Understand the role of language as an imperative part of children's literacy development
2. Determine learner needs in order to plan relevant instruction
3. Fashion well-organized and print-rich learning environments
4. Employ research-based literacy instruction
5. Purposely teach and model how to apply literacy skills and literacy strategies across the curriculum
6. Modify instruction to accommodate needs of the learner
7. Involve the entire school and community.

Researchers (Allington, 2013; Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Keene, & Zimmermann, 2007; Reutzel, 2004; Routman, 1998) indicate that no one reading program meets the needs of all learners. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) emphasize the importance of using a balanced approach to literacy instruction, that integrates the use of authentic literature to teach skills through a Release of

Responsibility Teaching Model that implements both large and small group instruction through direct teaching, guided practice, independent practice, and shared learning.

Routman (1998) encourages going beyond the basic skills in literacy to include critical and creative thinking strategies within literacy instruction. Routman (1998) declares, “Without such a literacy of thoughtfulness, basic skills have no meaning.” Routman (1998) contends that students need to have the ability to read and write for their own purpose to make sense of their world. When children are denied the opportunity to express themselves through literacy, society will become basic, dull, and unimaginative (Routman, 1998). As the literacy instructional leader, school principals need to be involved with a broad spectrum of literacy knowledge and support both teacher and student literacy needs.

Summary

Since the inception of NCLB (2001) there has been greater emphasis placed on researched-based best practices for literacy instruction in schools. The emphasis will undoubtedly continue with the transition to and implementation of ESSA in 2017. However, relatively little research has been conducted on the effect elementary principals’ instructional leadership and literacy knowledge base have on schools’ instructional programs or student achievement.

Under NCLB (2001) and ESSA (2017), effective literacy instruction is crucial to a school’s achievement in attaining Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) and meeting the four performance indicators specified in ESSA. These pieces of legislation recognize the vital role principals play as instructional leaders. Literacy instruction falls under the direct supervision of the school principal. Staff development, a fundamental part of

NCLB and ESSA, often falls upon the principal to plan and/or provide, with input from the central administration office, curriculum specialists, and school staff. The principal may also be charged with assessing staff development needs of teachers in all discipline areas, including literacy.

The principal's global perspective of the school and vision for the future facilitates the fundamental change needed for improvement in the school (NAESP, 2001: Sergiovanni, 2006). The principal's global view is determined through using student data, from both formal and informal assessments, to address instructional practices and diagnose student needs in all areas, first and foremost in literacy. Principals must exercise their knowledge base to work effectively with their staff on collecting, organizing, and interpreting data (NAESP, 2001: Sergiovanni, 2006).

The principal's knowledge base is essential because it forms the basis for the support of literacy instruction within the school. Reeves (2008) asserts, "If school leaders really believe that literacy is a priority, then they have a personal responsibility to understand literacy instruction, define it for their colleagues, and observe it daily." It is likely that teachers, parents, and other school stakeholders have their own perceptions of the literacy knowledge base and actions principals should use to frame and support effective literacy instruction.

Comparing the perceptions of teachers, parents, and the principal through this study may help determine what is essential for principals to know when working with teachers and the school community on literacy instruction. This is critical in creating an atmosphere within the school where teachers and principals work together to create a learning community that leads to greater student engagement and achievement. To

successfully encourage teacher growth, administrators must be able to correctly identify any engagement problem and then address it precisely by furnishing tailored approaches that help teachers analyze their methods and beliefs so that they can capture and foster genuine student engagement and bolster positive learning outcomes (Quinn, 2002).

The initial obstacle for the administrator in bringing about a fundamental change within the school is to help teachers arrive at a common understanding of what student engagement is (Quinn, 2002). The administrator must spur the understanding that engagement is central to the success of teachers and their students. An administrator must lead toward raising teachers' awareness of the levels of student engagement and teach them how they can boost greater participation in their class. The principal as the chief school administrator must take advantage of every opportunity to reiterate and accentuate active student engagement and consequent learning results in faculty meetings, Team Leader meetings, and individual conferences with teachers (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). By suggesting strategies to teachers that will focus on the components of instruction that are missing or require change, the administrator cultivates a climate of achievement while fundamentally improving how students acquire learning.

The basic content that students learn in school is what their teachers determine to teach them (Stern & Kysilka, 2008); specifically, what learning outcome is desired. For learning to have a purpose, for acquisition of learning to take place, instruction must have a purpose. The concept of interaction is the key (Stern & Kysilka, 2008), and if we expect that students be successful and acquire knowledge, administrators must take back and live up to the original meaning associated to the administrative office of principal, the principal teacher.

Setting high standards is essential, but high standards alone cannot guarantee student success. The expectation that all students master demanding subject matter and apply what they have learned to solve real-world problems does not address the challenge schools face. The challenge and reality is that schools must change fundamentally and begin focusing on intended learning outcomes for students (Supovitz et al., 2010). Students need to be actively engaged in the learning process so that they acquire knowledge. Vigor produces rigor, which is necessary for assimilation into the learning model, a model that transforms itself on practically a daily basis (Supovitz et al., 2010). To ensure that students are appropriately engaged, administrators must scrutinize and interpret what goes on in the classroom, determine a specific area on which to focus, and take definitive action to move things in the appropriate direction (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

By directing attention toward learning acquisition rather than on teachers' behavior, administrators can encourage effective, learning-centered classrooms in which students are active participants in their own learning and work in partnership with the teacher, freeing him or her to focus on instructional planning (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Weimar (2013) suggests five key changes in instructional practices to foster learner-centered classrooms. First, teachers should not make all the learning choices and should involve students in the decision-making process (Weimer, 2013). Second, the function of content should be expanded to include student awareness (Weimer, 2013). Third, the role of the teacher changes from knowledge transmitter to learning coordinator (Weimer, 2013). Fourth, students assume and take more direct roles in their learning acquisition (Weimer, 2013). And lastly, evaluation of learning shifts

from marking papers to providing constructive feedback and assistance (Weimer, 2013). The teacher can then take on a less-directive, more-facilitative role, establishing a classroom culture in which students know that they may take learning risks without fear of failure and resultant complications (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology guiding this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the topic of the relationship of the campus principal and enhancing literacy acquisition in the school and begin to determine if the perceived role of the principal is elemental to student engagement in literacy. This chapter includes the following: (a) an overview of research design, (b) the study location, (c) participants' demographics, (d) data collection process, (e) data analysis methods, (f) a discussion of the issues of credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability, and (g) ethical considerations.

Overview of Methodology and Approach

Based on the review of literature and the theoretical framework guiding this study, research questions were generated and designed to discover and compare perceptions of three groups of elementary stakeholders (the school principal, teachers, and parents) regarding the relationship of the principal's literacy knowledge base, as well as responsibility for and use of this knowledge toward enhancing engagement in literacy. As presented in Chapter I, the guiding questions for the study are:

1. How does the select school principal perceive his/her duties regarding school wide literacy instruction?
2. How do select elementary school teachers perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?
3. How do select elementary school parents perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?

The study employed a multi-case study design. The study utilized semi-structured, opened-ended and closed-ended interview questions, with the objective of understanding the perceptions of the administrator, teacher, and parent regarding the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement within the school. This made possible a comparison across interviews (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Data was also collected through a reflexive journal, compiled by the researcher. The researcher's personal reflexive journal presents a possibly bias perspective when considered with other participant interviews (Ortlipp, 2008).

This study sought to present perceptions in comparison to knowledge principals should have as presented in the literature. A qualitative approach is recommended for studies where the researcher is attempting to describe the perceptions of participants (Stake, 2010). The particular description and themes developed in context of a specific site is the value and trademark of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Correspondingly, this study engaged a descriptive case study research design. The study consisted of multiple case studies, compiled to illustrate the phenomenon in-depth and in natural settings (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005; Yin 2009). Data from multiple case studies are more easily generalized, which provides a higher degree of confidence (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Barone (2011) suggests that case study promotes understanding of intricate circumstances that cannot be made unambiguous in most other research designs. Yin (2009) declares that case studies are the favored method when *how* or *why* questions are being asked, and the attention is on phenomenon within a real-life context. Analysis of the data using a qualitative design investigated the

participants' perceptions of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement among students.

Descriptive studies are usually the best methods for collecting information that demonstrates relationships and describe the world as it exists (Bickman & Rog, 2008). Descriptive studies can also answer questions such as "what is" or "what was" or "how much" (Bickman and Rog, 2008, p. 10). Moore, Lapan, and Quartaroli (2012) note that case studies consist of one or several cases of the same phenomenon and can be conducted at numerous sites.

The researcher is the principal implement in conducting qualitative research (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Qualitative research lends insight into the participants' experiences and personal perspectives (Gall et al., 1996). A tenant of constructivism is the need to understand the unique perspective of each individual (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Achievement Goal Theory in which its basic assumptions consider student motivation in academic settings (Elliot, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005; Pintrich, Conley & Kempler, 2003). The achievement goal approach asserts a clear representation of achievement motivation by outlining the distinctive characteristics of ability types, recognizing achievement motives and achievement attributes as explanatory constructs (Elliot, 2005). Achievement goals find ground between target and general goals, pursuing achievement task goals applicable to academic learning (Pintrich, 2000). Achievement goal constructs were expressly developed to illustrate achievement motivation and behavior (Elliot, 1997). Perception, good or bad, can motivate or demotivate and affect behavior. The individual's orientation to the situation or task determines their purpose for achievement (Pintrich et al., 2003).

Social constructivism is one of the qualitative theoretical perspectives available to the researcher which addresses the understanding individuals seek from the world in which they live and work (Cresswell, 2007). The goal of this study is to examine in-depth consideration (Bernard & Ryan, 2010) of the phenomenon of perceptions of the principal's role in enhancing literacy in a school.

Study Location

Hill Country Independent School District (pseudonym) is in the southeastern part of Texas and the study took place at Pine Cone Elementary School (pseudonym). According to the Texas Education Agency (2017), the school district consists of three elementary schools (kindergarten through fifth grades), one junior high school (sixth through eighth grades), and one high school (ninth through twelfth grades). Pine Cone Elementary School was chosen because the researcher is currently employed as an administrator at the school and has worked in the school district for the past eight years. Furthermore, the school principal was willing and desired to better understand perceptions of the stakeholders connected to the school.

According to the Texas Education Agency's (2017) most current data, as displayed in the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), the staff of Pine Cone Elementary School has an average of 7.4 years of teaching experience. Additionally, 12.3% of the teachers are male and 87.7% are female, with 7.4% of the teachers classified as new, and 2.5% of the teachers classified as having over 20 years of experience. Pine Cone Elementary school serves approximately 700 students.

Participants

Participants in the study were a purposeful sample and have a direct relationship with Pine Cone Elementary School. The participants consisted of the principal, two classroom teachers, and two parents who are known to volunteer their time at the school. Johnson and Christensen (2012) observed that in purposive sampling, the characteristics of the population needed are specified by the researcher, who then locates participants who have those characteristics. The researcher met with the school district Assistant Superintendent of Academic and Human Resource Services to obtain permission for official access to the school for the purpose of conducting a research study. A meeting was then held with the principal to solidify participation and request access to teachers and parents.

To obtain teacher participants, I sent an initial communication to all teachers (Appendix A), explaining the general purpose of the study and requested that any interested teachers contact me via email. From those contacts, I developed a very basic literacy questionnaire (Appendix B) to select the two teacher participants. This type of selection process is purposive sampling (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2012), where purpose of the participants is specified by the researcher. I met with the two teacher participants, individually, and explained in detail the purpose of the study, how data will be collected, and answer any questions. Parents were given the opportunity to participate via my addressing a parent volunteer meeting and providing an informational flyer for any parent who may be interested (Appendix C). The names of interested parents were placed in a fish bowl and two names were drawn in lottery fashion. Selecting the two parents' lottery style allowed for a fair, unbiased selection. A final

detailed meeting was conducted with the principal, teacher, and parent participants, individually, to assure they understood the purpose and process of the study. The readiness of participants is significant for the researcher to productively analyze the information and experiences from participants who appear to offer the opportunity (Stake, 2005).

Data Collection

Following the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Sam Houston State University, consent from participating administrators, teachers, and parents were obtained. All participants were provided informed consent for participation in the study as prescribed by the IRB. After the approvals were completed, the researcher met with administrator, teacher, and parent participants to clearly explain the overall purpose of the study and answer any questions concerning the study. According to Creswell (2009), researchers spend appreciable time in natural settings collecting information. The data collection process in qualitative research involves four types including interviews, observations, audio-visual materials, and documents (Creswell, 2009), each represented in form in this study.

In addition to the basic literacy questionnaire given teachers, data from open-ended and closed-ended questions (Appendix D, Appendix E, & Appendix F) through personal one-to-one interviews digitally recorded and the researcher's observations through a reflexive journal provided a more extensive perspective (Creswell, 2009). A researcher's role is that of a learner; a learner who is willing to listen (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The researcher's professional role and relationship with the participants warrants

that the researcher ensure their confidentiality and protect them from all other ethical considerations.

Interviews. The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). A qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences as the researcher attempts to describe the perceptions of participants (Stake, 2010). "An interview is an interpersonal encounter" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). A good interview consists of questions that are neutral, non-leading, and non-suggestive (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). Bodgan and Biklen (2006) characterize interviewing as "a purposeful conversation that is directed by one in order to get information from another" (p. 93).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a face-to-face format. During the interview process, questions were asked to obtain detailed information from the participants about the topic under study. Interviews were structured with specific wording while allowing for flexibility and exploration (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011) when applicable. Creswell (2009) demonstrates that interviewing, specifically one-to-one interviews, provides the researcher with the advantage of controlling the questioning. The researcher in this study engaged participants with both open-end and closed-ended questions in a semi-structured interview, to provide beneficial qualitative data (Bernard &

Ryan, 2010; Creswell 2009). The interviews are intended to elicit the perceptions of the participants (Bogdan & Bilken, 2006; Creswell, 2003).

Interviews allowed the researcher to obtain pertinent information on the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement. The interviews provided descriptive data in the participants' own words to garner insight into the participants perceptions (Bogdan & Bilken, 2006).

Digital audio recording documented the interviews as they occurred. In addition, the researcher recorded notes in a reflexive journal concerning any information which might not be digitally recordable, including facial and body expressions. Audio recordings constitute raw data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Processing this data required time and repeated evaluation to understand distinctions and likenesses. The researcher conducted five one-to-one, face-to-face interviews; with one principal, with two teachers, and with two parents. The interviews were approximately 45-minutes in length. The interviewee, who made up the second principal and completed triangulation, was the researcher, as the assistant principal in the school. The researcher could not interview himself, however, using a reflexive journal the researcher can express thoughts, opinions, and beliefs in relation to the research topic of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement.

The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). A qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually

more difficult to interview on a meaning level (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences as the researcher attempts to describe the perceptions of participants (Stake, 2010).

“An interview is an interpersonal encounter” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). A good interview consists of questions that are neutral, non-leading, and non-suggestive (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). Interviewing is characterized by Caulley (2007) as conversation purposed towards getting information from another. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a face-to-face format. During the interview process, questions were asked to obtain detailed information from the participants about the topic under study. Interviews will be structured with specific wording while allowing for flexibility and exploration (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011) when applicable. Creswell (2009) demonstrates that interviewing, specifically one-to-one interviews, provides the researcher with the advantage of controlling the questioning. The researcher in this study engaged participants with both open-end and closed-ended questions in a semi-structured interview, to provide beneficial qualitative data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Creswell 2009). Interviews allowed me to obtain pertinent information on the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement within the school.

Digital audio recording documented the interviews as they occurred. In addition, the researcher recorded notes in a reflexive journal concerning any information that might not be digitally recordable. Audio recordings constitute raw data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Processing these data will require time and repeated evaluation to understand distinctions and likenesses.

A computer-assisted digital recording device aided the researcher in documenting participants' responses and dialogue. Silverman and Marvasti (2008) suggest that analysis of computer-assisted recording increases confidence in data existence. No video recording will take place. All digital recordings were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. Transcriptions and any reflexive journal entries relating to an interview were used concurrently to assure the certainty of the data collected. Transcription of participant responses and dialogue took place promptly following the event (Merriam, 1998). As a researcher observer during the audio recording, this allowed for analysis and expansion of thoughts via the reflexive journal.

Reflexive Journal Observations. A reflexive approach to the research process is widely acknowledged in a great deal of qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008). Journals allow for the refining of ideas, beliefs, and responses during the research process (Janesick, 1999). Reflexivity allows the researcher to become more self-aware and to consider and control their own biases (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Instead of attempting to restrict researcher values through method or by classifying beliefs, the purpose is to intentionally recognize those values (Ortlipp, 2008). Researchers are encouraged to consider and talk about themselves and their experiences during the research procedure. Increasingly qualitative research is:

Presented in ways that make it clear how the researcher's own experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies have influenced their research interests, the way they choose to do their research, and the ways they choose to represent their research findings (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 325).

Morrow (2005) suggests that the self-understandings which arise during the reflexive process can be scrutinized and then embodied into the analysis. When the qualitative researcher acknowledges the human process involved during the analysis, assumptions, points of view, and consequences may be made clear (Wertz et al., 2011). A reflexive journal can serve as a looking glass, allowing the researcher to respond to the study process (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Russell & Kelly, 2002).

The process of reflexivity is a process of self-reflection and served to support understanding of the events under study (Kleinsasser, 2000). Reflexivity allows the researcher to unravel individual and philosophical commitments and closely examine philosophy and beliefs (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Kleinsasser, 2000). Reflexive journal writing can deepen the researchers' understanding of the aspects involved in the research process (Borg, 2001). Reflexivity provided me an avenue for immediate reflection regarding my impressions, interpretations, and thoughts related to the study. According to Kleinsasser (2000), reflexivity is writing to learn and unlearn. "When thinking becomes visible, it can be inspected, reviewed, help us for consideration, and viewed as a set of data" (Kleinsasser, 2000, p. 159). Reflexivity assisted in identifying and understanding my own bias and provided further opportunity for triangulation of data sets at multiple levels (Janesick, 1999).

Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data begins with a look at the overall picture and classifying emerging themes from the literature review and in the data collection (Mills, 2007). (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Cozby (2001) concludes that a theory is comprised of a combination of a multifold of ideas concerning a particular subject or phenomenon that

relates to human conduct which involves learning, memory, and personality.

Achievement goal theory, developed by Ames, Dweck, Maehr, and Nichols in the 1970s (Elliot, 2005), is considered one of the more outstanding theories of achievement motivation (Meece, Anderman & Anderman, 2006). Achievement goal theory compliments a fundamental concept in social constructivism, Vygotsky (1978), the zone of proximal development, which refers to the concept of the task difficulty required to enhance learning with appropriate support. A tenant of constructivism is the need to understand the unique perspective of each individual (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). I analyzed the data through the lens of achievement goal theory.

The analysis included thoroughly evaluating data and determining the themes that emerged using an In Vivo (Saldana, 2013) coding scheme. Thornberg & Charmaz (2012) suggest that grounded theory allows for data collection that best fits the research and provides a means for ongoing data analysis. Furthermore, data analysis is the re-examination, re-categorizing, or otherwise recombining the data, to derive empirically based conclusions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Yin 2009). Throughout the course of this qualitative element of the study, the data will be attentively and precisely analyzed from the interviews and researcher's reflexive journal.

Audio recordings constitute raw data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Evaluation and interpretation of digital audio recordings will provide for identifying recurring themes, phrases, and ideas (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). In addition, the researcher will analyze concurrently notes from the reflexive journal concerning any information which was not digitally recordable. Loose coding categories will then identify similarities and differences and allow for organization of data.

Attention to the researcher's reflexive journal allowed the researcher's thoughts to become visible, thus inspect-able. Kleinsasser (2000, p. 159) states that "when thinking becomes visible, it can be inspected, reviewed, help us for consideration, and viewed as a set of data." Hatch (2002) contends that the perceptions and experiences of the researcher be considered to avert bias and assumptions. Reflexivity will also help in identifying and understanding the researcher's own bias. A reflexive journal enabled this researcher to document thoughts, experiences, questions, and draw conclusions.

The analysis for this study consisted of a constant comparative approach, categorical coding and triangulation. A constant comparative approach continually inspects and compares the data (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008). Effective qualitative data analysis strategies consist of using analytic tools inclusive of thinking techniques used to facilitate coding, questioning to start the line of inquiry and guide theoretical sampling, comparative analysis to determine similarities and differences within the data, and word meanings which are interpreted from the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). According to Corbin & Strauss (2014) and Yin (2009), constant comparisons is among the analytical tools. The researcher will employ a constant comparative approach and coding to cultivate and categorize the themes and patterns and developing themes identified during the study.

Data Coding Process

Categorizing and coding qualitative data classifies, summarizes, and accounts for data collected during fieldwork (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012), establishing a framework for systematizing and portraying data (Patton, 2002). Categories and codes form the basis for the emerging data (Creswell, 1994). Data was analyzed in this study through

segmenting and coding. Segmenting data is the process of dividing the data into meaningful analytical parts, and coding is the process of marking the data segments (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Coding data is achieved through descriptive words, symbols, or category names (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Furthermore, Patton (2002) asserts that coding provides “standardization and rigor to the analytical process.”

Coding allows the grounded theorists to analyze and interact with data by asking questions of the collected data (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012). According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), qualitative researchers traditionally produce their code and category names directly from their data. Values Coding is particularly appropriate for qualitative studies that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies (Saldaña, 2013). Values Coding is practicable to interview transcripts and reflexive journals (field notes) in which the participants natural actions of values, attitudes, and beliefs are recorded (Saldaña, 2013). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) contend that using interview transcripts and field notes “corroborates the coding and enhances the trustworthiness of the findings” (as cited in Saldaña, 2013, p. 111). I used Values Coding to theme the data (Saldaña, 2013) and to discover the significant information from participants world view contained in the data (Warren, 2002).

Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Transferability

Standards and objectivity must be maintained in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). The researcher is the instrument of data collection in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the researcher must consider, address, and report potential bias and error (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, Morrow (2005) state that credibility is internal consistency, achieved, in part, through in-depth field observations and reflexivity. The

credibility for this study will be supported by my intimate relationship to the setting, Pine Cone Elementary School, and my familiarity with the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) profess that establishing credibility is foundational for establishing trustworthiness. Mertens (2012) asserts that research has transferability when a study can be generalized to like samples from the same population. I provided study transferability through detailed descriptions about the participants, including myself, and the setting.

Ethical Considerations

Marshall and Rossman (2001) point out that ethical research is “grounded in the moral principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice” (p. 47). I used this as a guideline for my research, along with the guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (2011) and the Institutional Review Board at Sam Houston State University. All participants were explicitly informed of the purpose and intent of the study. To protect the identity of participants, all personal names, and the name of the participating district and school were kept confidential with pseudonyms used in their place (Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Stake 2010). Data files, electronic and written, were kept in a locked, secure location.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to present a description of the rational and methodology used to present data pertaining to this multiple case study. The research methodology addressed the following (a) an overview of research design based on grounded theory; (b) a description of the study site; (c) information regarding the five study participants; (d) the researcher’s reflexive journal; (e) data collection procedures; (f) data analysis course; (g) credibility, trustworthiness, and transferability

considerations; and (h) ethical considerations. Chapter IV will address the three individual research questions and present the data collected during the research process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this collection of multiple studies was to examine the perceptions of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement as perceived by the school principal, teachers, and parents in a Texas school. A multiple case study design involving qualitative components was conducted to gather meaningful data that reflected the participants' perceptions of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement within the school.

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Achievement Goal Theory in which its basic assumptions consider student motivation in academic settings (Pintrich, Conley & Kempler, 2003). The achievement goal approach asserts a clear representation of achievement motivation by outlining the distinctive characteristics of ability types, recognizing achievement motives and attributes as explanatory constructs (Elliot, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005). Achievement goal constructs were expressly developed to illustrate achievement motivation and behavior (Elliot, 1997). Perception, whether good or bad, can motivate or demotivate and affect behavior. The individual's orientation to the situation or task determines their purpose for achievement (Pintrich, Conley & Kempler, 2003). Social constructivism is one of the qualitative theoretical perspectives available to the researcher that addresses the understanding all individuals seek from the world in which they live and work (Cresswell, 2007). The goal of this study was to examine consideration of the phenomenon of perceptions (Bernard & Ryan, 2010) of the principal's role in student engagement in literacy in a school.

The sample for this study involved semi-structured interviews with the school principal, two teachers, and two parents, all associated with the same elementary school. The study was conducted at Pine Cone Elementary School in the Hill Country Independent School District, located in the southeastern part of Texas. To protect identities, pseudonyms for all participants and the research site are used throughout the study (Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Stake 2010). Interviews upon completion were transcribed and validated by having each participant verify the accuracy of the transcription. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions to identify any emerging themes using Saldaña's (2013) initial and values coding.

This chapter presents a summary of findings obtained during face-to-face interviews with each of the five participants using a computer assisted digital audio recorder, and researcher reflexive journal. The chapter is organized to present the findings using: procedures, the principal's perception, participant teacher perceptions, participant parent perceptions, comparisons across participant responses, and provide interpretation to the research questions. The following research questions were examined to assist in gaining a more in-depth understanding of perceptions of the principal's role in engaging students in literacy activities in an elementary school.

1. How does the selected school principal perceive his/her duties regarding school wide literacy instruction?
2. How do the selected elementary school teachers perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?
3. How do the selected elementary school parents perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?

Procedures

The researcher served as the assistant school principal at Pine Cone Elementary School located in the Hill Country Independent School District. The school principal and teachers had full knowledge of the researcher's pursuit of a doctoral degree; however, unknown to either the principal or teachers was the exact topic matter of interest to the researcher. After receiving approval from the IRB at Sam Houston State University, the researcher met with the principal and explained the purpose of the study. The principal agreed to participate.

A flyer detailing the proposed study was prepared by the researcher and distributed to all teachers by means of an in-school mailbox system to solicit teacher participation. The criteria to participate required the participant teach reading/language arts or have an interest in increasing literacy engagement among students, which potentially opened the door for all teachers to participate. Interested teachers were given a basic literacy questionnaire to complete and then return if still interested in participating in the study. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide a degree of assurance of genuine interest in participating in the study, thus answers submitted were not considered as part of selecting participants. The returned literacy questionnaires were placed in a box and two were drawn in lottery style format. Both teachers agreed again to participate and were interviewed at an agreed upon time.

The two teacher participants drawn from submitted questionnaires taught English/Language Arts/Reading (ELAR). Their experience ranged from 3 to 7 years teaching ELAR. Length of experience teaching was not a consideration for participation in the study. Teaching at Pine Cone Elementary and Teaching ELAR or a genuine

interest in participating in the study were the only determining factors. Experience in teaching is presented for interest and is considered in discussion and implications in Chapter V of this study. The data in Table 1 provide information of the experience of the teacher participants.

Table 1

Teacher Participants Experience in Teaching English/Language/Arts (ELAR)

| Participant | Position | Years in Teaching | Years in ELAR |
|-------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Ms. Smith | Teacher A | 7 Years | 7 Years |
| Ms. Landers | Teachers B | 3 Years | 3 Years |

Parent participation was encouraged using a researcher prepared informational flyer in conjunction with publicly addressing a meeting of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Informational flyers were given to all parents attending the meeting. Interested parents were asked simply to write their name and phone number on the flyer and return it to the researcher following the meeting. The flyers received from interested parents were placed in a box and two flyers were drawn in lottery style. The first parent contacted declined to participate. Another flyer was drawn from the box in lottery style. The second and third parents contacted agreed to participate and were interviewed at an agreed upon date and time. Time associated with the school and time spent volunteering within the school is presented for interest and is considered in discussion and implications in Chapter V of this study. The data in Table 2 provide information of the

time associated with and the time spent volunteering with the school of the parent participants.

Table 2

Parent Participants Experience Relating to Association or Volunteering in the School

| Participant | Position | Years Associated | Years Volunteered |
|-------------|----------|------------------|-------------------|
| Ms. Adams | Parent A | 3 Years | 3 Years |
| Ms. Curtis | Parent B | 5 Years | 5 Years |

Additionally, the data collected were obtained from one-to-one digitally recorded open and closed ended questions during interviews to gather information from the principal, teacher, and parent participants. The interview protocol determined to examine the perceptions of the participants regarding the principal's role in engaging students in literacy activities. The interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed using questions from the researcher-generated interview protocol for the principal, teachers, and parents. The interview protocols were comprised using the same 20 questions, addressed to the specific interviewee. Thus, the participants answered the same questions. The interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes. The digital recording was transcribed and analyzed using Saldaña's (2013) Values Coding. Constant comparisons were also used for transcribing and analyzing the interview data (Yin, 2009).

Finally, a reflexive journal was written as an audit trail (Kleinsasser, 2000) to document the researcher's thoughts throughout the data collection phase of the study. Notes were written during and immediately following interviews as part of the audit trail

to collect information related to the interviews and emerging themes and questions that may have developed during the study. Interview data were transcribed immediately following the interviews to enable the researcher to analyze the participants responses and allow for an additional follow up for participant checking and triangulation.

Perceptions of the Principal

The principal, Ms. Jones, had been with the Hill Country Independent School District for four years, serving as the principal of Pine Cone Elementary School. The principal's stated literacy vision for the school was that both students and staff enjoy reading and learning. She works toward supporting this vision by sharing books, articles, and readings with students and teachers, and by avidly reading and sharing thoughts and ideas gleaned from texts, thus positively promoting the development of students and teachers (McEwan, 2003). The principal sees literacy as intimately connected to student success in school (Fullan, 2007; Reutzel & Cooter, 2000).

Ms. Jones noted that a better understanding of literacy and the skills required to teach literacy skills was not prevalent among all teachers within the school. She saw the importance of understanding literacy concepts and applications resting upon the shoulders of the teachers who taught those subjects (ELAR). Her belief was that those teachers, because they had to help students understand, had to dig deeper to develop the literacy skills they currently possessed. She had sought, supported, and assisted in the evaluation of literacy initiatives (Lofton, 2009), but attributed uncooperative behavior and improper attitude as forces that drove some teachers away from further literacy knowledge and understanding. The principal stated that she was passionate and dedicated in her support of literacy initiatives, as well as persistent in building her knowledge and

experience base to successfully bolster reform within the school (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Jacobson, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1992). Ms. Jones also added that numerous opportunities were provided for growth in literacy pedagogy, including: one-to-one teacher observations with feedback, allowing teachers to observe other teachers, and grade-level staff development sessions.

According to Ms. Jones, the greatest physical obstacle restricting improvement in literacy instruction was time. The conundrum as she stated it is, “You need time to talk about what is working and not working” when it comes to students understanding and participating in literacy activities. But, she continued, literacy instruction and engaging students more in literacy activities are “not necessarily the same thing.” The principal was constant in her view that meaningful change in instruction (Cobb, 2005) would lead to greater student achievement, that is engagement by the students.

Regarding the students’ value of and attitude toward engaging in the literacy components at school, the principal’s response was somewhat ambiguous. Ms. Jones was uncertain that elementary students valued academic learning of any kind, including the benefits of literacy skills. She felt that elementary students do what they do and learn what they learn because they are basically told to do it. However, she did note that a minority of students did value literacy and enjoyed reading, writing, researching, and sharing their experiences with others.

Ms. Jones did not see the staff, overall, as nurturers of a literacy learning environment. “When you have adults, who say they do not read, then they are not going to nurture that or encourage that in children.” She perceived the reading teachers as the only nurturers of literacy on the campus. Further, she indicated the positive effects of

teachers who through their own engagement in literacy, encouraged student engagement. The principal was adamant in her view of the teachers taking an active role in cultivating the students interests and appreciation for literacy. She said that teachers who shared and talked about their own literacy experiences “plant seeds of curiosity in students’ minds.”

The principal did not see herself as an avid communicator with parents. She indicated that outside the bi-weekly newsletter that she, the assistant principal (the researcher), and the counselor take turns writing, she rarely communicated with parents. In person contact with parents was basically as infrequent. Ms. Jones did affirm that when a parent did ask for advice regarding improving their child’s academic abilities, regardless of subject, she always encouraged two types of increased reading time. The child reading alone and the child and parent reading aloud together.

When it came to her own strengths in literacy, specifically as a leader, Ms. Jones was precise about two: she loved to read, and she loved the process of helping students learn to read. Because she taught reading and language arts, the principal believed she could guide the teachers to a deeper appreciation for literacy. She celebrated her efforts to lead by example by conducting two voluntary book clubs with the teachers. Her purpose for the book clubs was not just to get the teachers to read, but to excite them to talk about and share their experience with the selected book. She believed that exciting the teachers about literacy would encourage them to excite their students about literacy. She saw the students’ perceptions as their reality. According to Ms. Jones, “If books are used to improve their life, then it’s going to be regarded as something they want to do, so how they consider literacy is extremely important.”

The principal exuded unwavering confidence concerning the atmosphere created within the building, that students' felt safe, valued, and encouraged. Ms. Jones saw herself and the assistant principal as active participants in the day-to-day activities of the building and lives of the students and staff. She unambiguously observed that the students enjoyed being around the administrators and being in the administrators' offices, and that the students did not view the administrators in a negative way. "They feel like they belong," said Jones. She continued that such created an atmosphere where the students wanted to be and encouraged the students to learn.

When provided the opportunity to offer any closing thoughts, Ms. Jones replied that literacy was the most important discipline for students to learn. The principal pointed out that understanding simple texts was not enough. She continued that for success in life, students needed to be able to interpret and understand information so that they can use that information to their own advantage.

Reflexive Journal. A reflexive journal was written by the researcher throughout the interview process of the study development. A reflexive approach to the research process is significantly acknowledged in a great amount of qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008). The reflexivity process allowed the researcher to self-reflect and served to support in understanding of the events under study (Kleinsasser, 2000). Reflexivity aided in recognizing and understanding my own bias and supplied further opportunity for triangulation of data sets at multiple levels (Janesick, 1999).

Data from the researcher's reflexive journal indicated that Ms. Jones had a profound connection to literacy as she was an avid reader, writer, and storyteller. She read for pleasure and she read to attain knowledge. She wrote for pleasure and she wrote

to communicate ideas. And, she enjoyed telling others of what she had read or written. Thus, she expressed difficulty in understanding how anyone could not love literacy and was perplexed that all teachers had not come to understand the importance of literacy in respect to their own success and that of the students. As the school principal, Ms. Jones wrestled with innovative methods that would incite greater interest in literacy by the staff, outside of those who taught ELAR.

Ms. Jones often strayed from the interview questions and would elaborate about specific teachers and students as she spoke of the need for literacy improvement in the school. Describing the principal as passionate about literacy is an understatement at best. She repeatedly interjected the importance of modeling literacy engagement with the students, referring to numerous occasions where she and I engaged the students impromptu to excite their literacy learning to the point of enjoyment. The principal vented that if she and I could engage the students off-the-cuff, certainly teachers could do the same with preparation, following our lead by example approach.

Still, the principal was committed to moving students to where she felt they needed to be in literacy engagement, and apart from example setting she was committed to providing professional training to motivate the teachers. Teachers were provided with numerous tools to learn from and giving opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions, but time and student material were often insufficient. Without time and without relevant materials, she declared that some teachers would not be willing to step up to the challenge. New and repeated training opportunities would separate the teachers who wanted to improve and engage their students in literacy activities from those who would not.

When distinguishing between what students' value about literacy and students' attitudes toward being engaged in literacy, the principal turned emphasis toward what the teacher was willing to instill in the in the students. This led her back to examples of she and I working at instilling motivating strategies in teachers by modeling strategies that motivate or excite the students to become engaged in literacy. She spoke vividly of how we had adlibbed mini Reader's Theaters during classroom walk throughs on many occasions. She was adamant about making literacy exciting through storytelling, character portrayals, and mood setting using lights and sound. She concluded that such activities make kids curious and motivate them to "know more about what they have gotten a taste of."

I continued to observe an underlying tone throughout the interview with Ms. Jones – that reading, writing, and language are critically important skills that both teachers and students need to understand are vital for them in so many ways. She continually weaved the words excitement and respect into her comments. Her recurring questions to me about the success she and I had witnessed from our own efforts to present literacy as vital were always accompanied by a positive comment about the results that were seen.

Definitively, the principal's desire to improve literacy engagement among students was not limited to one grade level, nor was it limited to students who were not actively excelling in literacy activities at the time of the study. I observed the principal actively engaging with struggling students who could not read or write with the same level of incitation as she did with those students who read and wrote with elaboration. She was comfortable enough with the students that she could lie down in the floor with

them just as easily as she would sit down on a bean bag with them to get involved in whatever it was the student(s) was working on.

Ms. Jones had developed a noticeable degree of comfort and respect with the students regarding engaging in literacy activities. Presumably, she sought to develop and nurture a degree of comfort and respect for engaging in literacy activities among the teachers as well. During this study, the principal created an after-school reading club for any interested staff member. The purpose of the club was to provide an opportunity for the staff to come together and discuss a non-instructional book that was read simply for enjoyment. Whether realized by the participants and staff or not, the principal had led by example, showing that appreciating and understanding literacy is more than just reading.

Table 3 provides a sample of Values Coding used for reflection regarding the statements of the principal. The researcher's observations of a participant lean upon the researcher's own values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldaña, 2013). Through face-to-face interviewing and interaction, I present a perceived understanding of the respondents' world view (Warren, 2002). Saldaña explains that:

Value is the importance attributed to a person, thing, or idea. An attitude is the way one thinks about a person, thing, or idea. Finally, beliefs are part of a system that includes one's values and attitudes, and adds personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretative perceptions of the social world. The Values Codes used in the sample are differentiated using V: (Value), A: (Attitude), and B (Belief), (2013, p. 111).

Table 3

Sample of Values Coding Relating to Principal Interview

| Response to Question One | Values Code |
|--|--|
| Yes, I think ¹ literacy needs to improve in any school, no matter what school you're at. But ² improving literacy is more than just improving reading because literacy involves appreciating language, ³ appreciating literature and understanding it more than just being able to read it fluently. My vision is that students and staff will enjoy reading, enjoy learning, and ⁵ wanting to know more. And one of the things that I do is I demonstrate because I read all the time, I share things to read. I talk about things I have learned and why ⁵ it's important to read. Those are things that I do that promote that vision. | ¹ A: Literacy needs to improve ² V: Improving involves appreciating ³ B: Appreciating is more than just reading ⁴ B: All will enjoy reading ⁵ B: It's important |

Perceptions of Teacher A

Teacher A, Ms. Smith, had been with the Hill Country Independent School District for seven years, teaching ELAR at Pine Cone Elementary School in both third

and fourth grades. Teacher A believed that the principal had a clear, defined vision for literacy improvement within the school. Ms. Smith understands that vision to be that literacy should be merged into every subject and not taught independently. She went further to include that students were not only taught the process skills of literacy, but also how to communicate the concepts as well.

Ms. Smith viewed literacy as the ability to understand someone's message whether the message was in print, verbal, or any other form. She felt that for one to be literate, one had to possess the ability to discern the literal message along with any message implied. Remarking that her approach to teaching literacy utilized exposing students to language in differing forms, she lauded that this provided opportunities for students to practice using language. Teacher A said she regularly read with her students and actively discussed literacy skills with them, such as: making judgments, inferring, drawing conclusions, making connections, and comprehension. Ms. Smith asserted that she worked to engage her students by making literacy relevant to them.

Teacher A saw the principal as proactive in providing numerous opportunities to learn about literacy and diverse ways to teach literacy skills. Ms. Smith described collaborative sessions that occurred throughout the year that allowed teachers to work with teams and participate in mini-demonstrations that modeled literacy rich activities. Booth and Roswell (2007) found significant benefit in employing the use of teachers to assist other teachers within the building. She also recalled several workshops that taught strategies for engaging students in literacy conversations and interaction skills. Teacher A also felt that the principal was understanding of the students' social literacy skills and

provided venues for teachers to improve in their ability to assist students with those needs.

Regarding the conditions necessary for building a literacy learning culture, Ms. Smith believed the structure for continued growth in literacy skills had been created. Considering the four years that include the principal, Ms. Jones, Teacher A is certain that conditions for improving literacy increased each year. She stated that teachers presented lessons with ideas and concepts directly related to improving students' literacy skills and thus student engagement. She recalled many discussions that focused on activities explicitly intended toward increasing student engagement. Additionally, Ms. Smith said that the students became unintended resources for techniques and strategies that most benefited them while learning, which teachers then used with other students.

The physical resources needed to improve literacy instruction should include spaces that are language-rich, with plenty of hands-on activities, according to Ms. Smith. She sees it as important that students have opportunity to manipulate resources that are relevant to them, which included incorporating multiple technologies. Teacher A said that students were engaged in literacy activities using techniques that were old and boring, which only put students through the motion of being actively involved. Ms. Smith elaborated further that continued, increased engagement in literacy must include the use of virtual classrooms, augmented reality, and other applications that students were interested in.

Ms. Smith asserted that students only valued literacy and learning literacy if they had a vested interest in the learning process. Her students valued literacy, she said, because they understood the connection between literacy skills and success with other

subjects or objects. She described how many students came to her with predetermined, negative ideas about literacy learning being nothing more than filling in worksheets. Her objective with those students was to help them begin to appreciate how understanding literacy elements could positively impact them. Ms. Smith proclaimed that by positively modeling her appreciation for literacy, she engaged the students and their attitudes began to adjust to the affirmative. Smith declared, “Students will only see the benefits of achieving personal reading benchmarks better, when they have played a part in determining what their own literacy strengths and weaknesses are.”

Teacher A contended that communication between the principal and parents was an area that could use improvement. Although the principal had worked with teachers to provide venues that involve the parents, Ms. Smith believes more could be done. She believes the parents need more education so that they understand how important literacy skills are for the students’ success. Her conclusion was that parents would be more involved if they knew how important possessing literacy skills is for the students.

According to Ms. Smith, the principal’s greatest strength as a leader of literacy instruction is encouragement and support to be innovative in engaging students. She realized that the principal had modeled methods of integrating available technologies into lessons and had provided in-district technology training for teachers when available. Ms. Smith also recognized that the principal had created a committee of teachers who were “technologically savvy” to assist other teachers who may not understand how the technologies worked. Booth and Roswell (2007) acknowledge the importance of the principal utilizing the expertise of teachers within the building.

Teacher A expressed her belief that teachers have the greatest impact on literacy engagement in the classroom. She conceded that a “trickledown effect” from the principal’s managerial style was possible, and that student performance could be affected positively or negatively. However, she maintained her position that the teacher was the decisive element in the classroom and that a good teacher would develop literacy skills among the students despite the management style of the principal.

Ms. Smith was absolute concerning her view that the students’ perspective should be considered when planning and then implementing literacy instruction. She saw the threat of drowning in educational philosophy as real and inserted that “too many teachers had sunk to the bottom of the pool.” Educational rhetoric, she noted, had disconnected some teachers from understanding what it was like to be a student. The students are the ones who keep teachers relevant, she continued. Teacher A maintained that effective teachers are those who are willing to alter their perception to include the students’ point of view.

Regarding the atmosphere within the school, Ms. Smith saw it as completely conducive to fostering literacy engagement. She indicated that the safety, acceptance, and value provided to any one student was provided equally to all students. In addition, she furthered her ideas about actively involving students in the learning process by grooming them to understand the importance of their contributions toward their own literacy success. With the school atmosphere being where it needed to be, Teacher A declared that students need to take hold of their role in the engaging themselves in literacy. Smith added, that if the school continued with the idea that education is an ever-evolving craft, the atmosphere within the school would continue to be conducive to literacy engagement.

When afforded the opportunity to offer any closing thoughts, Ms. Smith reiterated the importance of getting parents more involved in the literacy learning process. She sensed that parents did not know what literacy is, what literacy looks like, nor why literacy is important for their child's success. She restated the need for improved flexibility in communication and adaptability to the information available to students and how that affects their learning.

Reflexive Journal. Collected data from the researcher's reflexive journal suggested that Teacher A believed the principal played an integral role in literacy engagement at the school. The interview with Ms. Smith occurred in her classroom. The atmosphere in the room was upbeat and exciting, although the students had already gone home for the day. She was elated about the opportunity to speak concerning her students and the school.

Teacher A was very poised and prepared for the interview and her responses were precise, even though she was not privy to the specific questions in the study. Ms. Smith knew the topic area of the study as presented in the informational flyer, thus she had numerous examples of student work, lesson plans, and activities ready to present. We reviewed and discussed the items she had prepared for presentation before the interview began. As mentioned in the paragraph above, the atmosphere in her classroom was exciting because she was excited about what she and her students had done.

Ms. Smith credited the principal for the numerous opportunities presented her to be a better ELAR teacher. I could sense in her the same appreciation for literacy that was expressed by the principal. Her face almost glowed as she spoke, especially when speaking of getting personal with students to help them develop a connection to literacy.

She touted the principal's support in presenting lessons that were innovative and for providing open praise to both teachers and students. However, Teacher A was straightforward in avowing that it was the teacher's responsibility, not the principal's, to develop students' literacy skills.

Teacher A presented herself as a strong presence to her students. She had clearly defined and set high ELAR expectations for the students. The students accepted that the expectations were not open for debate and therefore rose to meet the expectations. The atmosphere and culture Ms. Smith created in her classroom is reflective of how she assimilated to her role in respect to the principal. Although she clearly believed it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure students engage in literacy, she understood such is what the principal expected from her. Thus, by owning up to the principal's expectation of greater student engagement in literacy, Teacher A ensured that the engagement occurred.

Ms. Smith was determined that for literacy engagement to truly be improved and continuing, parents had to be educated and involved. She inserted the parents as necessary instruments for student learning. Teacher A looked at the school as more than just a building, rather she saw the school as a centerpiece of the community. She was vehement in her assertion that unless the community idea was embraced, we would become ineffective as educators. I attribute this belief to the fact that the teacher grew up in another country where she experienced a close school, community relationship.

Table 4 provides a sample of Values Coding used for reflection regarding the statements of Teacher A.

Table 4

Sample of Values Coding Relating to Teacher A Interview

| Response to Question One | Values Coding |
|--|--|
| Yes, our principal ¹ definitely has a vision for improving literacy in our school. Our principal's vision is to merge literacy with every subject and to ³ move away from thinking of it as one subject taught separate and independent from every other skill. She ⁴ encourages teachers to incorporate literacy in every subject we teach and ⁵ describe those concepts effectively. | ¹ B: Definitely has a vision ² V: Merge literacy ³ A: Move away from thinking ⁴ V: Encourages teachers ⁵ B: Describe concepts effectively |

Perceptions of Teacher B

Teacher B, Ms. Landers, had been with the Hill Country Independent School District for three years, teaching ELAR at Pine Cone Elementary School in fifth grade. Teacher B believed that the principal had a clear, defined vision for literacy improvement within the school. Ms. Landers understands that vision to be that students would become lifelong readers and writers. She went further to include that she saw the principal actively cultivating that vision among teachers and students.

Ms. Landers viewed literacy not just as a subject, but also as an art that was taught. She had noticed a lack of relevance to the students in much of the curriculum provided. Teacher B then described taking what the school district supplied as a balanced literacy program, dissecting what she felt was beneficial, then incorporating her own ideas to provide the students with a literacy package that better fit their needs. The most important thing Ms. Landers felt she could do for her students was to envelope them with literacy. Through enveloping the students, she suggested, the students learn to appreciate literacy and become literacy lovers and not just completers of assignments.

Teacher B saw the principal as proactive in providing numerous opportunities to learn about literacy and diverse ways to teach literacy skills. Ms. Landers described several district literacy initiatives that the principal supported and recalled that the principal was instrumental in helping teachers understand and apply components of the initiatives in their classrooms. She found the principal's support of the districts literacy initiatives to be somewhat of a conundrum, as she viewed them as "cookie cutter models." Landers insisted that it was the teachers' responsibility to reach outside pre-planned initiatives to find, understand, then incorporate literacy strategies that work best for their students.

Concerning the conditions necessary for building a literacy learning culture, Ms. Landers believed the structure for continued growth in literacy skills had been created. Considering her three years at the school, Teacher B is certain that conditions for improving literacy increased each year. She stated that teachers were given ideas and concepts directly related to improving students' literacy skills and thus engagement. She recalled that during literacy initiative trainings, the teachers were provided with time to

collaborate and share ideas about teaching. Ms. Landers added that a culture for professional learning about literacy was prevalent, but such was irrelevant to the teachers who did not want to learn.

Ms. Landers chuckled as she began discussing the physical resources in place and the resources necessary to engage students in literacy. She recalled that the principal had given her three books her first year to begin a classroom library. Thinking to the present, she added that her classroom library had about 300 books because she had either bought or acquired the books through donations. She also recognized the necessity of building an electronic library of books, e-books, and said that both the physical and electronic libraries were well used and beneficial to the students. Landers made it clear that the literacy resources that existed in her classroom, both physical and electronic, were present because of her efforts.

According to Ms. Landers, the literacy engagement among students is greater if the students have an interest in the materials presented to them. For example, she said that her students had no interest in what she called “classic literature.” Thus, she obtained literature dealing with pop culture and began adding graphic novels to her physical and electronic library. The only way to teach kids the literacy skills they needed, she continued, was to engage them by providing them with resources they were interested in and wanted to know more about.

Teacher B presumed that for the most part, students did not value literacy nor learning through literacy. She placed fault for the student’s attitudes on a culture she said society had created by placing more and greater emphasis on standardized testing. She claimed that standardized testing had driven students away from a love for reading

beginning at an early age. Landers surmised that ELAR classes from third grade up through twelfth, were basically classes taught with emphasis toward the required standardized test, rather than toward an appreciation for literacy.

Ms. Landers did observe that even though students may not value literacy, their attitudes toward engaging in literacy activities could be manipulated. She described situations where students were given the opportunity to “self-select” literature. Self-selecting significantly increased student engagement and prompted thought provoking discussions with the teacher and classmates. Then she began to pull back on the self-selection process and student engagement diminished. Teacher B said that was when she realized developing positive attitudes about literacy was all about giving students an active voice in their learning.

Teacher B did not clearly identify the principal as a key communicator with parents, although she did mention that administrators “preached” the importance of communicating with parents throughout the year. Ms. Landers applauded the efforts of the reading committee and the annual reading night the committee organizes. She included how non ELAR teachers were supportive of the need to increase students’ literacy skills, as literacy skills impact performance in other subjects. She believed teachers assumed the lead role of communicating about literacy with parents and felt that such was prevalent throughout the school.

Considering how the managerial style and philosophy of the principal influenced students’ literacy engagement, Ms. Landers saw the school district’s initiatives and expectations as more of a concern. She speculated that labeling students by reading level, a component of one of the district’s literacy initiatives, limited the students’ self-worth

and desire to engage at a higher level. She echoed her previous thoughts regarding the students being allowed to self-select, and how self-selecting proliferated engagement. Teacher B praised the principal for allowing her to modify the implementation of the district's literacy initiatives, which gave the students more freedom to choose. She also praised the principal for creating a culture within the building that encouraged a love for lifelong reading and writing.

Ms. Landers was adamant that student perceptions played a vital role in their participation in, or disconnection from literacy activities. She stated that, "you have to have student buy in to teach anything." Teacher A continued, that teachers needed to look for the individual students "best way" of being taught, both in the classroom and home settings. She claimed that she was more than willing to consider games, gaming manuals, magazine, and blogs as viable sources of literacy, if that is what it took to engage the student. Landers expressed that if the students' perception was not accordingly recognized and utilized, the result was diminished engagement from the student.

Regarding the atmosphere within the school, Ms. Landers saw it as completely conducive to fostering literacy engagement. She declared that the safety, acceptance, and value was openly seen and experienced by students. Teacher B also asserted that the atmosphere was created by the actions of the principal and the assistant principal. She added that it was common to see the principal and assistant principal positively interacting with students and taking an interest in the students' lives. Additionally, Ms. Landers recognized the principal and assistant principal as cultivators of student learning through their ability to create meaningful relationships with the students.

When provided the opportunity to offer any closing thoughts, Ms. Landers restated the importance of respecting student perspectives and allowing students to utilize non-traditional literacy sources to learn with. She stressed that there was value in cultural literacy, media literacies, and literacy practices that fall outside the defined parameters of education. She maintained that too much emphasis was placed on mastery of certain skills and argued that the aim would be better focused on creating lifelong lovers of literacy.

Reflexive Journal. Collected data from the researcher's reflexive journal indicated that Teacher B considered the principal's role in literacy engagement was noticed and experienced by the students. The interview with Ms. Landers occurred in the researcher's office after school had dismissed for the day. She was eager to participate in the interview and was pleasantly forthcoming with her responses.

Throughout the interview we were often side-tracked by the teacher and myself laughing and carrying on about a time when either I, the principal, or both had walked into her classroom when she was teaching the students in a manner some would consider offbeat or unorthodox. The unusual teaching style of Teacher B is what made her classroom so unique and I would add also allowed her students to be so successful. The interview, designed to take approximately forty-five minutes, lasted over 2 hours.

Teacher B was an avid reader and writer; therefore, she readily accepted and propagated the principal's focus on greater literacy engagement. She did note conflicts however between exciting students to engage them in literacy activities and meeting district local and state test score objectives. Ms. Landers indicated that a paradox existed regarding mandated district ELAR initiatives. The district ELAR initiatives, mandated to

increase literacy skills, were negatively impacting literacy engagement. Teacher B was insistent that telling students they had to learn something was altogether different from engaging students in learning.

Ms. Landers was amazingly forthright concerning the culture that she felt standardized testing had created. According to Teacher B, the test culture had moved students, teachers, and parents away from appreciating and valuing literacy and literacy learning in their lives. She observed that forcing students to read and forcing them to know what they are reading about on a test stifles the students natural desire for self-selection. That is where she, as a teacher, reckoned she could make the greatest impact. Through conducting and having deep conversations with students about books they had read or writings they had composed, Ms. Landers believed she could spike students' interests grow them into life-long lovers of literacy.

Teacher B was free-spoken as she linked student positive attitudes toward literacy to the principal and the ability to self-select. She applauded the principal's open mindedness and for giving her the freedom to implement the required literacy curriculum to best fit her students. Teacher B was unreserved about not implementing the required district ELAR curriculum and laughingly touted that scores were all the district cared about, and her scores were high. Ms. Landers viewed the principal's genuine love for literacy as the catalyst that sparked both students and teachers to consider how literacy skills could improve, and even make more interesting their lives.

Table 5 provides a sample of Values Coding used for reflection regarding the statements of Teacher B.

Table 5

Sample of Values Coding Relating to Teacher B Interview

| Response to Question One | Values Coding |
|--|--|
| ¹ I definitely think that our principal has a vision for improving literacy in our school. ² I think that she definitely wants to encourage lifelong readers and writers. | ¹ B: I definitely think |
| I do see that ³ the principal does demonstrate this, she does talk about books quite frequently with other students and with teachers. ⁴ I do think that sometimes students ⁵ don't necessarily see the overall vision because ⁶ I think there is just a focus so much on standardized testing versus on ⁷ reading for pleasure versus reading purely for the test. | ² B: I think that she definitely wants ³ V: The principal does demonstrate this ⁴ A: I do think that ⁵ B: Don't necessarily see ⁶ A: I think there is just a focus so much ⁷ B: Reading for pleasure versus |

Perceptions of Parent A

Parent A, Ms. Adams, had one child who attended Pine Cone Elementary School in third grade. Parent A was a member of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and was an active classroom volunteer who volunteered at the school two or more days each week. She also worked as a substitute teacher for the district and had been a substitute at

Pine Cone Elementary on occasion. Ms. Adams believed that the principal had a “big vision” for literacy at the school. She noticed that principal pushed every grade to read more, something she did not observe at other schools. Parent A expressed that pushing all grades to read more was important and not like other schools, where only the testing grades were pushed to read more.

Ms. Adams was unsure if there was a right or wrong way to teach literacy. She stated that students need to know how to read but teaching students by telling them “you have to do it” was probably not the best approach. She suggested that explaining to the students what they learn through reading was a better approach. Parent A added that explaining to the students why they are reading would also benefit the students. Furthermore, she had noticed that the principal frequently spoke about the importance of reading and that the district conducted trainings to help the teachers better help the students.

Concerning the conditions necessary for building a literacy learning culture, Ms. Adams believed the principal was doing things to encourage teacher involvement, therefore student improvement. Specifically, she observed the principal working with teachers and through implementing a book study and was amazed that she was given the opportunity to participate. Parent A suggested that through helping the teachers understand better how to teach reading with the book study, the principal was using the greatest resource the school had for literacy improvement among students – the teachers.

Ms. Adams sensed that the students valued learning, especially what they learned while reading and writing. She noticed on numerous occasions, in different classrooms, that students had been excited about reading and writing, particularly when the students

were discussing aloud what they had read or written about. And the enthusiasm was not confined to a few students, she commented, but to most of the students in the classroom. Parent A even noticed students and teachers reading books together during lunch and recess. According to Ms. Adams, when students participate or observe these types of activities occurring, literacy is nurtured, and interest grows.

Parent A did not see the principal as having regular communication with parents. Although she communicated with the principal regularly because of her work as a parent volunteer, Ms. Adams claimed the principal was too busy and always in meetings. Consequently, there was little time for speaking with parents. Furthermore, she believed most of the parents would find listening to the principal confusing and be incapable of following any advice the principal may offer. However, she continued, with training the parents could understand. Ms. Adams concluded that parents needed to be taught how to understand literacy so that they could help their children, but that such had not occurred.

Regarding the principal's greatest strength toward engaging students in literacy, Ms. Adams referred to her previous comment about the principal "pushing reading" in all grade levels. She valued that the principal expected that all students in all grade levels would be active readers and writers. She also perceived that since the principal had the same expectations for each grade level, no grade level would slack off and not contribute to the students' development. Parent A recognized the principal as having created a conformable, fair system of expectations, crediting her management style as consistent. Ms. Adams interjected that the principal's willingness to lead by example and set high expectations had effectuated a positive atmosphere that inspired students to read and write.

Ms. Adams believed that the students in the school were safe, valued, and encouraged. She attributed the large number of parents, who fill the parent section of the cafeteria during lunchtime, to the positive feeling that permeates throughout the school. The students and their parents enjoy the sense of belonging that has embodied among the administrators, teachers, and staff. When asked to offer any additional thoughts or comments, Ms. Adams commented, “Continue to push children in a positive way and they will be able to transfer their knowledge to any material they see.”

Reflexive Journal. Collected data from the researcher’s reflexive journal suggested that Parent A considered the principal’s role in literacy engagement was noticeably different from other schools in the district. The interview with Ms. Adams took place in the school cafeteria during the school day following the completion of the lunch schedule. Parent A had volunteered to work in the school on that day and assisted other parents in decorating the cafeteria stage for a lunch event. Hence, no students, teachers, or other persons were present in the cafeteria.

Ms. Adams was relaxed, smiling, and very excited to be asked her opinion about the principal and the school. She expressed gratitude that her opinion mattered and appreciated that the principal, myself, and the teachers thought her feelings were important enough to ask about. She was as giddy as a school girl and her eyes welled-up with tears.

Parent A spoke of the principal and the school almost interchangeably, holding each in high esteem. She also spoke of herself from the perspective of a teacher, parent, and a learner. Having substitute taught in the school and having volunteered her time as a parent to assist teachers and the school on various occasions, it is probable that she took

her duties seriously and desired to do the best she could in those roles to help the students.

There were several times during the interview that Ms. Adams referred negatively to other schools. She spoke directly regarding the positive atmosphere that was prevalent in the school as compared to the other schools and attributed the positive difference to the school administrators. Parent A was forthright concerning the principal's part in establishing expectations and saw the principal as equitable in holding all teachers accountable.

Ms. Adams conveyed a genuine interest in the school becoming an even better place for learning than she already highly esteemed it to be. She spoke fondly of her inclusion in a book study the principal was currently conducting and pondered how to get more parents involved. She unequivocally stated that the parents did not know enough, therefore they did not have the necessary skills to help their children. Parent A noted that the parents needed to be taught what to do and how to do it. She continued, if the parents have a better understanding, they will help their children have a better understanding. When the parents help the teacher teach the students, and the teachers continue receiving positive support from the principal, such will trickle down to the students. The students will continue to be successful.

Table 6 provides a sample of Values Coding used for reflection regarding the statements of Parent A.

Table 6

Sample of Values Coding Relating to Parent A Interview

| Response to Question One | Values Coding |
|--|---|
| ¹ I do believe she has a big vision for reading. ² What I notice different in this particular school is that she pushes every grade. Since I taught, last year I subbed in first grade, ³ I saw that it's pushed from the early grades on which ⁴ to me that means a lot. Because normally when I taught fourth or third grade at the other schools, the ⁵ teachers felt the stress particularly in third and fourth grade and not in the early grades. And ⁶ I see a difference here. In their attitude towards how they did homework, how they did extra recess where we really didn't here, but here, ⁷ I notice that big change; more trainings, I felt, for the younger grades ⁸ which is good. | ¹ B: I do believe ² A: What I notice different ³ V: I saw that it's pushed ⁴ V: To me that means a lot ⁵ B: Teachers felt stress ⁶ B: I see a difference here ⁷ V: I notice that big change ⁸ V: Which is good |

Perceptions of Parent B

Parent B, Ms. Curtis, had one child who attended Pine Cone Elementary School in the second grade, and a child who had previously attended kindergarten through fifth grade at Pine Cone Elementary. Parent B was a member of the PTO and attended all school functions that pertained to her child. She had not recently observed any vision for literacy for the school, as expressed by the principal in word or action. Ms. Curtis noted that when her previous child attended the school, a vision for literacy existed. She went further to add that she was certain a vision existed before, and that one could possibly be in place, but she was not aware of it.

Ms. Curtis reasoned that literacy, specifically reading, was taught at too early of an age. She protested that “teaching ABC’s is one thing but forcing a kindergartner to put words together and read” was too much too soon. Parent B did not express any reasoning offered by the principal relating to helping her develop an understanding as to why reading was taught in earlier grades. She credited the school for having the conditions necessary for building a culture for literacy learning, but furthered the culture was not as prevailing as in prior years.

Regarding the resources essential for improving literacy instruction, Ms. Curtis perceived the resources as readily available. She particularly commented about the library and the availability of books at various reading levels for the students. Nevertheless, she did not sense that the opportunities to engage students in the literacy instruction were being pursued to the fullest. Parent B affirmed that opportunities to engage students in literacy were not being “pushed as hard” as in previous years. She indicated that even if different resources were added or available, opportunities to engage the students might

not occur. Her assumption was based upon the students' desire to engage in literacy instruction and the parents' willingness to "push it and get involved with it."

Concerning the principal communicating with parents about the literacy process and collaborating to engage students, Ms. Curtis voiced that an open-door policy had always existed. She expounded by discussing the friendly nature exhibited by the principal but specified that most of her communication was directed to and came from the assistant principal. The parent added that both she and her husband had developed a trusted working relationship with the assistant principal primarily because of the relationship between her daughters and the assistant principal. Parent B furthered that when kids see that the assistant principal is interested in their learning, it stands to reason that the principal would be interested as well. She noted that the assistant principal's attitude is likely reflective of the principal's and underscored that the principal's managerial style could dramatically impact whether students engaged in literacy.

When given the opportunity to offer any additional comments, Ms. Curtis reiterated the idea that literacy engagement among students was not as prevalent as she had observed in prior years. Notably absent was a program that had inspired her older daughter to be more engaged in reading. The program was a district literacy initiative that had been cut due to a significant increase in the program costs. The researcher prompted the parent with the program name and the parent continued. Parent B viewed the discontinued program as significant in engaging students because the program provided students the opportunity to select readings of their own interest. Supplying students with activities that are not always centered around a grade, she concluded, will garner excitement and ultimately engage them more in literacy learning.

Reflexive Journal. Collected data from the researcher's reflexive journal indicated that Parent B had not noticed at a time recent to the interview that the principal presented a vision for literacy. The interview with Ms. Curtis took occurred immediately following dismissal from school while her daughter attended a meeting of an organized club that met regularly at the school building. Parent B was cordial but did not express an air of excitement or enthusiasm regarding the interview and almost seemed intimidated, even though the parent and I were very familiar with one another.

The answers provided by Ms. Curtis were short with slight elaboration and were sprinkled with a few negative responses, even though both of her children had been extremely successful academically at the school. Her negative comments were directed toward initiatives that were no longer part of the schools reading program. Unbeknownst to the parent, the school district had defunded certain programs due to significant cost increase. However, Parent B held the school, thereby the principal responsible for the programs that were no longer available that she deemed important for her children.

Though she presumed the teachers were taught and received what they needed to improve literacy engagement, Parent B connected literacy and literacy engagement primarily to the school library. She determined that the library provided the students with the appropriate materials. Ms. Curtis also supposed that students were given ample opportunities to retrieve materials and books from the library as appropriate to their age. She added, that with the materials available for the students the one component lacking for elevated literacy engagement was more push from the principal.

Ms. Curtis did acknowledge that the principal actively supported literacy instruction but held back on connecting instruction to engagement. She beheld that

principal promoted an encouraging atmosphere for student learning in the school. However, concerning the literacy engagement available to her first daughter attending the school versus the literacy engagement available to her second daughter attending, she declared a noticeable decline. Parent B noted a specific program that rewarded students with points and trinkets upon reading and completing books at various reading levels. Funding for the program noted by the parent was cut by the school district.

Table 7 provides a sample of Values Coding used for reflection regarding the statements of Parent B.

Table 7

Sample of Values Coding Relating to Parent B Interview

| Response to Question One | Values Coding |
|---|---|
| ¹ I actually haven't seen anything recently and it might be out there - ² I just haven't seen it. I don't know, given as far as that. And when my first daughter was here, ⁴ I could see it but not with my second daughter. | ¹ B: I actually haven't seen ² A: I just haven't seen it ³ A: I don't know ⁴ A: I could see it |

Comparisons Across Participants

The study was limited based on the truthfulness and/or bias the principal, teacher, and parent respondents may have expressed due to outside factors or influencers. During the interview, the researcher asked probing questions that allowed the participant to be

specific and give examples of points that were made (Bodgan & Bilken, 2006). A combination of open-end and closed-ended questions in a semi-structured interview was employed to provide beneficial qualitative data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Creswell 2009). Adherence to the interview protocol was upheld (Yin, 2003). The researcher employed interviews to obtain descriptive data in the participants' own words to develop insight into how the participants' perceptivity of the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction (Bodgan & Bilken, 2006) The participants were purposively selected because they had an empirical relationship to the school.

The Principal and The Teachers. Teacher A and B each acknowledged the principal had a vision for literacy within the school. Whereas Teacher A's description of the vision more closely resembled the principal's stated vision, Teacher B's understanding of the vision had much similitude. Incorporating reading into all subject areas and helping students become lifelong readers and writers was the vision the teachers witnessed being purported by the principal. The teachers also validated that the principal articulated and actively engaged students and teachers in literacy conversation and activities.

The teachers each spoke with purpose as they described how they taught, and thus engaged their students in literacy activities. Teacher A and B purposefully selected the materials and literacy components that most benefited their students. Each teacher saw the necessity to develop not only critical thinking and analytical skills, but also a desire and appreciation of literacy among their students. The approach the teachers utilized coincided with the principal's statement that ELAR "teachers have had to go into more depth." The teachers also concurred that professional development and opportunities to

learn more about literacy and how to teach literacy were made available to teachers throughout the school year. Teacher A and B also agreed that the principal provided support and feedback via classroom observations, one-to-one conversations, and grade and subject level meetings.

The principal's view regarding the conditions needed to build a culture for professional learning about literacy was more inflexible than the teachers. As mentioned already, the principal observed ELAR teachers had to "go into more depth." The principal did not recognize the entire staff as "wanting to know more about how to improve literacy" for the students. Conditions were conducive to building the culture, commented the principal, but more work was needed. Teacher B assessed that the conditions needed to build a culture for professional learning were present, noting that reading teachers were always placed together during training to facilitate collaboration. Teacher A reasoned that a culture for professional literacy learning existed because the students had been given prominent roles in deciding what they learned. Neither teacher mentioned anything negative about the school's literacy culture and its potential.

Regarding the physical resources imperative for supporting improvement in literacy instruction, the principal and the teachers presented differing viewpoints. The principal recognized time, specifically not enough time to analyze, reflect, then confer upon what literacy activities were working. And if those activities were not working, why were they not working? The principal then injected personnel into the discourse, alluding to her previous comments about all staff not "wanting to know more about how to improve literacy." Combining time and personnel together, the principal was indicating that there was not enough time to cultivate and work with teachers who needed grooming

to become more effective literacy instructors. Teacher A and Teacher B approached the question considering the physical resources needed by the students themselves.

Collectively, the teachers agreed that more print media was needed and furthered that access to electronic media was inadequate compared to the electronic medias the students experienced outside of the school. Additionally, Teacher A contended that students needed resources that would allow them “to pursue their own learning objectives and enrichment” in literacy.

Teacher B and the principal had similar perceptions about the students valuing literacy and literacy engagement. Even though Teacher B said students did not value literacy, she attributed the disconnect toward literacy to the students age, as did the principal. Although Teacher B named age as a factor, she assigned more fault to standardized testing, claiming standardized testing had abated the students’ desire to value literacy. The principal supposed that elementary students engaged in literacy activities because they were required to do so and not because they valued what they were doing. In contrast, Teacher A expressed that students did value literacy because they understood the connection between literacy skills and finding success in other subjects. Teacher A took opportunity once again to profess her conviction that students “value learning when they have a vested interest in the process.”

Interestingly, the teachers and the principal subscribed to the idea that a positive attitude toward literacy was dependent upon the individual student. However, their appreciation for what cultivated positive attitudes about literacy among students varied somewhat. Teacher A accounted that the teacher’s presentation of materials and ability to engage the students through the sharing of ideas produced a gain in positive attitude

among the students. Teacher B held the opinion that allowing students to self-select in literature by not confining them to certain levels or genres not only nurtured positive attitudes it also instilled a love for literacy. The principal considered the individual students' initiative in researching topics of interests or investigating authors of writings the student had previously enjoyed, as growth agents of positive attitudes toward literacy.

The principal contended that nurturing students through and with literacy was not occurring on the campus to the fullest degree possible. "When most of the adult's themselves do not love literacy," she maintained, "why would anyone expect that students would be nurtured and encouraged in literacy?" The principal echoed her thoughts that generally only ELAR teachers found it necessary to nurture literacy amidst the students. She conceded that some non-ELAR teachers were lovers of literacy and enjoyed learning, indicating that those teachers were the exception and not the rule. The teachers however, depicted a different summation of how literacy was nurtured in the school.

When speaking of teachers, Teacher A spoke inclusively, placing herself among the teachers at the school, signifying that teachers' model and encouraged good literacy practices. She then redirected her words and began to speak of how she nurtured students individually by conferring with the students and helping them set individual goals. Teacher A recapitulated the importance of providing ways for students to assume roles in determining their personal strengths and weaknesses in literacy. Teacher B also acclaimed that teachers across-the-board were nurturing literacy among the students. She touted that science, math, and social studies teachers were noticing and nourishing students' interests in non-ELAR subjects using literacy materials based in those subjects.

Teacher B praised teachers as a group for fostering and nurturing positive attitudes regarding literacy all over the campus.

The principal and Teacher A agreed that communicating with parents concerning the importance of the literacy process and engaging students could be improved. The principal professed that opportunities to communicate with parents rarely occurred. Teacher A spoke of initiatives that had been pursued to engage the parents and cultivate communication, specifically a school-wide reading night. Still, Teacher A declared that a void existed regarding effectively communicating with parents so that the parents fully understood the need of having their children engaged in the literacy process. Although Teacher A did not directly attribute the void in communication with parents to the principal, she suggested that more should be done to educate the parents. Teacher B beheld no deficiencies in parent communication.

The principal's self-professed greatest strength in encouraging literacy engagement is her love for reading. Teacher B concurred with the principal's self-assessment and added that the principal also talks about literacy with the students and works with students individually to improve their literacy skills. Likewise, Teacher B spoke of the students' enthusiasm when given the opportunity to share what they had experienced from reading a book or writing a poem or story. Teacher A recognized the promotion of the use of innovation literacy tools and techniques as the principal's greatest strength in encouraging literacy engagement. Additionally, Teacher A praised the principal for utilizing individual teacher strengths to bolster and support the literacy skills of other teachers within the school.

When speaking of how her managerial style could affect literacy instruction and engagement, the principal was certain that any effects of her actions were toward the positive, with teachers and with students. Notably, she referred to book clubs she had created for the teachers. The books clubs occurred outside of school hours and were purposed at providing the teachers a venue for expressing and sharing the literacy experienced from selected books. The principal said that the books clubs were designed to provide an opportunity for teachers to think outside the norm and have fun with reading and writing, and that “formality” was purposefully left at the door. By leaving formality at the door, she hoped that the teachers would become inspired and excited by informality of the reading and writing activities and then carry that excitement back to their classrooms to stimulate the same excitement within their students.

Teacher B subscribed to the idea that the managerial style of the principal could directly impact literacy instruction and student engagement in literacy. She understood the principal to be a lover of literacy and learning and applauded the principal for creating an atmosphere conducive to learning above the mandates of standardized testing. Even so, she was critical of literacy programs that were implemented as part of school district mandates, condemning the programs as deterrents of developing lifelong lovers of literacy. Specifically, Teacher B claimed that the programs leveled students into categories of ability to read and required that the students test to move themselves out of the assigned level. She added that the levels prohibited students from reading and writing about topics available at other levels, thus stifling student interest and engagement.

Teacher A postulated that the principal’s managerial style had little to no influence on the instruction taking place within the classroom. She reasoned that the

teacher fashioned the environment in the classroom, consequently having the greatest impact on the students and literacy engagement within the classroom. She did recognize that the principal's management style could influence a teacher's demeanor or behavior but avowed that "a good teacher would help students develop literacy in spite of the principal's managerial style."

The principal, Teacher A, and Teacher B equally assessed the importance of considering student perceptions of literacy as high. The principal stated that "a student's perception is their reality," and if their perception is the topic is boring, they are not going to engage. In like manner, Teacher A spoke of student perceptions constantly changing and expressed, "as times change, so do people." Teacher A furthered, that too often teachers drown themselves in educational philosophies and are so engaged in educational rhetoric that they become disconnected from understanding their students. Teacher B interjected the indispensability of "having students buying in" to the literacy learning process. Student perceptions must be considered as a "major factor," continued Teacher B, in the planning process and presentation of literacy materials and activities.

Regarding the existence of an atmosphere where students were safe, valued, and respected, the principal and the teachers concurred that the atmosphere was present and consistently encouraged. The participants also agreed that the sense of belonging the students experience at the school is a feeling they live through every day. Teacher B expounded "that students truly do feel valued every single day that they walk through our door," continuing "and I think it does start with the administrators, down." The principal also suggested that the atmosphere of belonging that existed within the school began with the administrators. Referring to herself and the assistant principal, the principal said, "the

students like being around us. They do not view being in our offices as negative.” The principal observed the student’s “comfort” around the people students normally do not like associating with in a school – the administrators. Teacher A’s acknowledgement of the mentioned atmosphere credited the participation of all the school’s staff members in creating the atmosphere of belonging for the students.

The principal and both teachers coincided that students feeling a sense of belonging was integral for producing student success. However, the principal was unambiguous in her statement that, “Success can be pushed upon people.” She saw the enjoyability of the learning experience as the catalyst behind student engagement from which success is begotten. Teacher A supposed that student ownership in their role in their own learning was the key factor in feeling a sense of belonging, thus bringing about academic success. Interesting, the response from Teacher B more closely aligned with the normed idea of a person feeling a sense of belonging as related to life, often referred to as fitting in or assimilating. Teacher B focused on the learning environment as a family like setting, where the students felt respected and valued, which consequently effectuated student success.

The belief that an atmosphere conducive to learning that specifically fostered literacy engagement was harmonious among the principal and teacher participants. The principal proclaimed that all staff members, teachers, and administrators openly worked at promoting a positive environment that created a setting where students wanted to be, hence learn. Teacher A credited the availability of technology used for integrating literacy instruction and professional development for teachers to grow their craft as key supports for the learning atmosphere. Although in agreement that the overall atmosphere

within the school was conducive to literacy learning, Teacher B interjected that some teachers placed more emphasis upon assessment scores rather guiding students to become life-long learners.

The principal's concluding thoughts regarding the importance of literacy in the life of students indirectly mirrored those of Teachers A and B. Success in life was hinged upon the skills developed in literacy according to the principal. The principal saw importance in understanding and applying the complexity of skills gained through literacy acquisition as advantageous for students for the entirety of their lives. Teacher A embraced a broader approach in expressing her thoughts about the importance of and improvement of literacy and students.

Teacher A expounded greater community involvement and educating parents on what literacy is and why it is important. The teacher viewed parental involvement as paramount in improving literacy skills within the community, thus improving interest in literacy and subsequently literacy skills among students. She furthered, that adaptability and flexibility in the communication of information were key elements in the process of students learning literacy skills.

"Literacy is life," according to Teacher B. Resemblant of Teacher A, Teacher B looked outside the school setting to support thoughts concerning the improvement of literacy within the school. The teacher observed that literacy practices outside the school setting were often far different than the literacy experience students were exposed to within the classroom. Teacher B noted the importance of intertwining the digital and media literacy practices students engage in outside the school with the literacy practices they traditionally engage in within the school. Melding new literacy practices with

traditional literacy practices provides a greater sense of value and incentive to the student, according to Teacher B.

The Principal and The Parents. The perceptions of Parent A and Parent B were distinctively different even though both parents would be considered as actively involved in their children's lives as their children were model students who exhibited excellent behavior, were socially accepted among other students, and had excellent academic grades. The participation role each parent played in their child's daily school activities could explain why their perceptions seemingly vary so dramatically. While both parents were members of the PTO, only Parent A volunteered time to work at the school during the school day. Parent A was also a substitute teacher on occasion at the school. Parent B's interaction with the school was limited only to after school activities that involved her child.

Parent A observed the principal being actively involved with both teachers and students in the literacy process. The parent saw the principal reading to and with students, which aligns with the principal's self-proclaimed vision of reading continually and then sharing with others. Parent A also compared the ELAR activities she observed at Piney Cone Elementary to those she saw presented on other campuses. She accredited principal at Pine Cone Elementary for "pushing every grade" in the subjects that build students to become better readers; reading, writing, and spelling. In stark contrast to Parent A, Parent B specified that no vision for improving literacy was evident within the school. Parent A also declared that "forcing kindergarten" students to do anything outside of learning their ABC's, such as "putting words together and reading" was too much, too early.

The principal expressed that most teachers teach literacy as they learned it in college, unless they specialized in reading, which then gave them a deeper understanding of how to teach literacy. Likewise, the principal noted that teachers had to learn on their own or attend trainings to gain proficiency in teaching literacy. Parent A's views aligned closely to the principals regarding how literacy should be taught. The parent did not recognize a right or wrong way to teach literacy subjects but concurred that with understanding what students knew and what they needed to know, student needs could more easily be met.

When asked if the principal provided any avenues for gaining a better understanding of literacy, Parent B responded with a pleasant, although definite, "No." Parent A offered a more positive response, "I think so," referencing the trainings offered by the school district to teachers. Parent A went on, that a "clear uniform message" of improvement for the staff was evident. The principal's perception of providing venues for better more understanding of literacy coincided more with Parent A. Whereas the principal had included the use of Positive Learning Community (PLC) meetings in conjunction with district trainings for teacher improvement, neither parent would necessarily be privy to what PLC meetings were, nor what the meetings were designed to accomplish. PLC meetings at Pine Cone Elementary were conducted by grade level to provide teachers the opportunity to discuss teaching practices and receive suggestions for change and or improvement in pedagogy.

Ensuring that teachers are delivering the necessary instruction so that students can learn is accomplished using walk through observations and analyzing student score data, conveyed the principal. Parent A agreed that walk through observations occurred and

understood the purpose of the observations. In like manner, Parent A understood that specific practices and implementation of curricular programs was looked for during observations., along with how engaged in the learning process students were. Parent B offered no insight and replied, “I don’t know what they are doing.”

The parents both agreed that conditions existed within the school for building a literacy culture. Though she had not observed it, Parent B believed the necessary conditions were present although not as “strong recently as in the past.” Parent A spoke of an after-school book study, conducted by the principal, that was open to all staff members. Parent A concluded that the book club was indicative of teachers being shown the value of learning how to participate in and share literacy. The principal tied conditions for building a literacy culture to the “attitudes and behaviors” of the teachers. All teachers within the school were not willing to improve themselves in literacy pedagogy, thus improve their student’s literacy abilities. Therefore, the principal concluded that an atmosphere for building a literacy culture was lacking and showed room for improvement.

The principal averred that a plethora of opportunities were provided for teachers to learn more about literacy concepts, fundamentals, and pedagogy skills. Struggling teachers received coaching, grade level teams of teachers met on a regular basis with the principal, and teachers had the opportunity to observe other teachers who were successful in teaching literacy skills. The principal added that teachers observed successful literacy teachers and then conducted in-depth, question filled conversations on improving literacy pedagogy. Parent A and Parent B both affirmed that they perceived such opportunities were in place. Neither parent offered comments germane to the question posed.

The principal proclaimed that greatest physical resource needed to improve literacy instruction was time, linked closely to personnel. Time, not in the sense of time with students, rather time spent with teachers to discuss and guide them in areas needing improvement. Dissimilarly, Parent A and Parent B considered the physical aspects involved in learning within the school setting.

Parent A asserted that the school did not provide adequate technology for students to use in literacy, specifically computers. A belief that computers could be used to increase student literacy skills was apparent in Parent B's statement. Parent B directed her comments toward the use of appropriate literacy materials and books. The school library was filled with books and materials that Parent B reckoned were readily available for student use. Parent B added that students were not "pushed hard enough" toward engaging in literacy activities to build student interest but was uncertain if such pushing would engage students more in literacy.

Students valuing literacy was an interesting concept according to the principal. The principal was uncertain that elementary students could value learning about literacy and believed elementary students primarily engaged in literacy activities because their engagement was required. Valuing literacy in and of itself was deemed a different concept by the principal. Slanting toward reading and literature the principal held that elementary students who valued literacy was few.

Parent B concurred with the principal's assertion that students did not value literacy learning, offering no explanation nor differing understanding of the interpretation of literacy and literacy learning. Parent A presented a positive response, noting specifically that she had witnessed students valuing literacy in the classroom. Furthering,

Parent A observed that students valued literacy and literacy learning even on occasions when the students were not successful. Adding the word “enjoy” into her comments, Parent A described the experience of the students in the literacy learning process as led by the classroom teacher.

Possessing or displaying a positive attitude concerning literacy was dependent upon the individual student, expressed the principal. Furthering, the principal expounded that there were students who seek out literature and reading topics on their own. Some students ask to go to the library, on their own, doing research on authors or characters and electing to write their own books because “they have fallen in love with a subject,” she added. Although the principal indicated that there were students in the school possessing positive attitudes about literacy who openly displayed their interest literacy through discussions and writings, she reiterated that the number was few.

Parent B agreed with the principal’s assertion that a positive attitude about literacy was dependent upon the individual student. The parent conceived that students’ attitudes could be positively cultivated toward literacy, especially when a student’s parent becomes involved. Parent A viewed parental involvement as a key factor in shaping a student’s attitude. Parent A visualized that most of the students within the school had positive attitudes about literacy. Particularly, Parent A concluded, based on personal observation, that 98% of the students held positive attitudes regarding literacy. The remaining 2% were struggling readers, thus she perceived that those students would not have positive attitudes regarding literacy.

Nurturing literacy among students was an area the principal believed needed much improvement. The principal viewed most of the staff as non-lovers of literacy, ergo

she was not persuaded that staff members, other than ELAR teachers felt any need or saw any necessity in nurturing literacy among students. She added that if a non ELAR teacher loved reading, that the teacher would nurture literacy due to their personal passion. Continuing, the principal expounded that when students get a “small taste” of their teacher’s excitement about a book, a character, or a literacy-based activity, curiosity drives the students to want more.

Parent A and Parent B both declared the importance of nurturing literacy outside the school setting, specifically pointing to the role parents should play in the nurturing process. Parents A and B agreed that parental involvement in nurturing literacy was lacking among most of the students in the school. Parent B furthered her previous sentiment relating to students’ attitude toward literacy, noting that if parents “push it and get involved with it” literacy nurturing could be improved. The only comments relating to the school staff were offered by Parent A, injecting that “lots of opportunities” for nurturing literacy were existent within the school, including small group instruction and tutoring.

Regarding communicating with parents concerning cultivating literacy within the school and engaging students, the principal did not see herself participating in that role. Occasionally, a one-to-one conversation with a parent about a problem a student was having led to ideas to improve the student’s academics with a general increase in reading being suggested, but such was not a regular occurrence. The principal reasoned that other than sporadic articles in the school’s bi-weekly newsletter, she did not communicate with parents often about literacy topics.

Parent A's observations closely aligned with the principal's reflections. Although Parent A did not mention or use the word principal, she did suggest that communication concerning cultivating literacy was something "we're lacking" within the school. She understood how important literacy was for her own child's success but expressed that many parents did not. Parent A saw necessity in "showing" parents the important role literacy plays in their child's success so that those parents know "what they are supposed to do to push their child or at least provide support for the school." Parent B's response was not negative and was directed toward what she viewed as an in-place, open door communication policy that provided for the addressing of concerns when they occurred, not literacy per se.

Speaking of her strengths as a literacy instructional leader, the principal identified two: a love for reading, and an understanding of the process of helping students become literate. The principal declared herself to be an avid reader and a professed a love for reading. She stated that she "purposefully" read children's books. Doing this provided the principal the opportunity, that when she saw a student reading a book she had read, she could have a conversation about aspects of the book with the student. "Students came to me and suggested books for me to read," the principal added, because of the connection she made with the student through interest in what the student was reading.

The second strength the principal capitalized on as a literacy instructional leader was her experience as an ELAR teacher and the process of helping students become literate. She had taught kindergarten, first, and second grade. Most of the principal's ELAR experience as a teacher was with kindergarten. She trumpeted the importance of engaging the students through enjoyment. The principal, as a teacher, garnered and

maintained student enjoyment by understanding their interests. Keeping students interested in literacy by focusing on their interests, the principal concluded, makes the process of becoming literate enjoyable, thus attainable.

Parent A recognized that the principal as a literacy instructional leader was fair and consistent regarding literacy expectations in all grade levels. Particularly, Parent A observed that teachers at each grade level were expected to help students meet the literacy requirements of that grade level. Parent B concurred with Parent A that fairness of expectations was apparent across all grade levels, adding that student success was equally applauded among all grade levels as well. Parent B also acknowledged that the principal's interest in literacy and heralding student success in literacy, as perceived by the students, was beneficial for the students.

Considering her managerial style, philosophy, and demeanor and how it could affect literacy instruction and/or engagement, the principal related that in everything there exists room for development. Unknowingly reiterating comments made by Parent A, the principal expounded on her implementation of a staff book studies. The purpose of the book studies she implemented was twofold. First, remarked the principal, the idea was to get the staff interested in reading. Secondly, she persisted, was to engage the teachers in reading about things they could implement to improve student engagement. And engagement, declared the principal, is an integral component of instruction.

The comments from Parent A relating to the principal's managerial style, philosophy, and demeanor toward literacy instruction and/or engagement leaned toward the performance of duties of teachers and volunteers as perceived by the principal. Speaking of feedback, thoughts or impressions based upon what the principal observed,

the parent commented that when feedback occurred, it was slow in coming. Parent A had served as a substitute teacher and volunteer in the school and desired the thoughts and impressions, feedback, from the principal whether the feedback was good or bad. Parent B responded that she did not feel she could answer the question.

Regarding the positive or negative impact that her managerial style could impose upon literacy engagement, the principal reiterated her belief in engaging students in learning by making learning enjoyable. She noted that if literacy, using reading as an example, is viewed by a student as something negative because it is used as a punishment, why would a student want to read? Whereas, if something was viewed as enjoyable, again using reading as an example, then students would want to participate in those types of activities. The principal averred the indispensability of providing students with an atmosphere conducive for an enjoyable learning environment in literacy.

Parent A and Parent B coincided in their belief that the principal's managerial style could positively or negatively impact literacy engagement in the school. Parent A's thoughts were directed toward the relationship between the principal and the ELAR teacher. Similar sentiment was expressed previously by Parent A as she discussed feedback from the principal. She viewed the students as impacted based upon how competent ELAR teachers felt in their abilities, based upon feedback dispensed to the teachers by the principal.

Parent B's reasoning was trained toward the impact the principal's managerial style had upon the students, not considering the teachers. She voiced that all students learn differently. Some students, according to Parent B, do better "they are pushed a little harder." Other students, she continued, do better when you give them "kudos." Parent B

ended with the idea that the principal was flexible and adapted to individual student needs.

Concerning the sort of ways literacy was taught, supported, and encouraged in the school, and the students' perception of such, the principal considered her role as that of a straightforward influencer. Accepting that student perceptions were student realities, she believed that if students viewed books, writing, and language as boring, difficult, or not important, they would not engage in activities associated with literacy. On the other hand, if students perceive that books, writing, and language can improve their lives, the students will engage in literacy activities because they deem the activities important.

Both parents felt that the students' perceptions of how literacy was taught, supported, and encouraged in the school was important. Each parent offered a resounding "yes" in response to the question. Parent A included an observation with her response, conveying that the overall perception among students regarding literacy and literacy instruction within the school was positive.

Addressing whether the principal and/or the school administration provided an atmosphere within the school in which students feel safe, respected, and valued, the principal responded in the affirmative. She spoke vehemently that both she and the assistant principal were very much a presence in the building. The principal defined presence to mean "out and about" in the hall and in classrooms often during each school day. She touted the idea that students enjoyed coming to the school's front office and enjoyed visiting with the administrators. Lauding the thought that students enjoyed spending time with the administrators, the principal voiced pleasure in the notion that

students enjoyed seeing and speaking with the administrators rather than fearing and trying to avoid them.

Considering whether the principal and/or the school administration provided an atmosphere within the school in which students feel safe, respected, and valued, Parents A and B each responded affirmatively. Parent A offered further insight, saying that a positive atmosphere “trickles down” from the administrators and is esteemed by students, teachers, and parents. She credited both the principal and the assistant principal for the positive atmosphere within the school. Parent A said the positive atmosphere exists and is experienced by all daily.

Having to do with student success through students feeling a sense of belonging, the principal related that success can be pushed upon students whether they like it or not. Whether the students enjoy the situation and their willingness to put forth effort and try in such a situation is different scenario. Students who put forth effort and try because they feel that they belong, she added, learn at a quicker pace. When a student does not feel a sense of belonging, the principal unbendingly opined that the student would not put forth his or her best efforts.

Parents A and B concurred that students having a sense of belonging was imperative for the student success. The parents equally voiced that the impact of a student not having a sense of belonging would be negative. Additionally, Parent A commented that when a student is drawn in to be part of a group, regardless of what that student contributes, the result will be positive for that student.

The belief that an atmosphere conducive to learning that specifically fostered literacy engagement was consonant among the principal and parent participants. The

principal asserted that all staff members, teachers, and administrators openly worked toward promoting a positive environment that created a setting where students wanted to be, thus learn. Parent A applauded what she viewed as a positive atmosphere conducive to learning, tacking on that even the morning school announcements, which included an idiom for the day, promoted literacy learning. Parent B replied with a one worded, although affirming answer, “Yes.”

The principal’s concluding thoughts regarding the importance of literacy in the life of students were not directly reflected in the concluding thoughts of either parent A or B. Success in life was grounded upon the skills evolved through literacy according to the principal. The principal saw importance in understanding and applying the complexity of skills gained through literacy acquisition as advantageous for students for the entirety of their lives. Parent A embraced a specific approach in expressing her thoughts about the importance of and improvement of literacy and students. Helping students understand genre by using fairy tales, poetry, fiction, or nonfiction, seemed to be the best approach to teaching and increasing literacy engagement, according the Parent A. Parent A furthered by expressing that in teaching students by genre, the students would be better able to transfer knowledge to other subject and content areas.

The concluding comments offered by Parent B were negative when compared to her previous phraseology which was inclined toward positive statements. Parent B opined that the level of literacy engagement by students was lacking when likened to the literacy engagement of students several years back. She specifically reflected upon her older daughter, who is now at the junior high school, had previously attended the school. When

Parent B's daughter attended Pine Cone Elementary School, the district subscribed to and purchased, thus the school employed the Reading Counts program.

The Reading Counts program is owned and operated by the Scholastic Corporation. The purported goal of the Reading Counts program is to build a love for reading among students. Students participate in the program by reading a book then taking and passing an online test about the book. Students who successfully pass the book test were awarded points and are afforded the opportunity to redeem the points for various levels of prizes. The Hill Country Independent School District previously subscribed to the Reading Counts program, but determined the monies used for the program would be directed toward other endeavors. Therefore, the Reading Counts program was not implemented during the study at Pine Cone Elementary School.

Parent B directly related literacy engagement within the school to the Reading Counts program. The parent remembered her older daughter actively reading books to earn prizes and wanting more books to read so that she could earn more prizes. She did not see her daughter who currently attended the school always reading books, and asking for more books to read, as she had observed with her older daughter. Consequently, the parent concluded that literacy engagement and active involvement by students in reading was deficient.

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of data collected from interviews and my reflexive journal observations of each of the five study participants: the school principal, 2 teachers, and 2 parents. The chapter was organized into divisions describing each of the participants' perspectives and presented a cross comparison of perceptions of the

principal to the teacher participants and the principal to the parent participants. The findings revealed a positive overall perception of the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in the school. Presented data in chapter V is discussed based on the research questions guiding this study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was an endeavor to investigate teachers, parents, and the principal's perceptions of the principal's influence toward enhancing literacy engagement in the school. In this chapter a summary of the study will be provided. Then, I present themes which emerged from the coded data from the study. Finally, I discuss implications and possible topics for further research to expand upon the findings and conclusions regarding the principal's role in engaging students in literacy.

Summary of the Study

To better understand the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents about the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement, the review of literature and this research study were designed to answer the following three questions:

1. How does the select school principal perceive his/her duties regarding school wide literacy instruction?
2. How do select elementary school teachers perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?
3. How do select elementary school parents perceive the duties of the principal regarding school wide literacy instruction?

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the principal's role in gaining a greater commitment or engagement from students in literacy.

The methodology of the study employed a multi-case study design using semi-structured, opened-ended and closed-ended interview questions. The objective of the

questions was to gain deeper understanding the perceptions of the administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the principal's role in enhancing literacy acquisition within the school by cross comparing the responses (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

The review of literature examined research related to principal leadership. The first part of the review addressed the historical perspective of the principal, although not from substantial historically archived records (Kafka, 2009). The front office and teaching were often viewed as separate operations (Beck & Murphy, 1992). Rousmaniere (2007) contends that principals fell through the cracks historically because they were in a not so fondly thought of position that was too far low below the political radar (Kafka, 2009).

The literature review also explored the principal's leadership qualities and student achievement. Research identified the principal's instructional leadership as a key component of successful schools (Black & William, 2003; Daresh, 2002; McEwan, 2003; NAESP, 2001). Studies on the principal as a successful leader and successful schools indicate a set of attributes that define effective principals (Fullan, 2007; NAESP, 2001; Marzano et al, 2005). Research indicates that effective school principals hold common behaviors and competencies that can be accredited to a school's success (Cotton, 2003; Fager, 2002; Heck, 1993; NAESP, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2006).

Last, the literature review examined the knowledge base of the principal. The principal's literacy knowledge base is deemed significant only if the principal can express that knowledge in an understandable way to stakeholders in the school (Tooms, Padak & Rasinski, 2007). Principals must possess the ability to understand the issues facing students and be able to communicate pinpoint recommendations of literacy programs that

will most benefit their school (Jacobson, Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1992). The greater knowledge the principal has of literacy practices increases the principal's ability to guide and develop literacy instruction (Murphy, 2004; McGhee & Lew, 2007).

Many current principal leadership models (Hallinger, 2003; Lambert 2003; Marzano, 2005; Peterson & Deal, 2011) use different adjectives to describe the role of the school principal. Researchers agree that even those schools that have performed well on standardized assessments must continue to perfect their results. Cotton (2003) detailed ways in which the principal as an effective instructional leader could manage and enhance their abilities. The role of the principal throughout this study was defined more by what the principal was expected to do and know and not what the principal knew. However, a fundamental knowledge of the process that links all facets of learning together, literacy, can positively improve the perception of the principal among stakeholders in the school.

Themes Generated by the Data

Rigorous coding and analysis of the qualitative findings revealed patterns and produced seven themes. These themes or influencers describe ways the school principal's perceived actions and knowledge affect literacy engagement in the school.

Influence of Vision. This theme represents how stakeholders are inspired by the principal's directional guidance of the school. The principal clearly communicated what literacy needed to look like in the school. Involving teachers and parents in identifying and setting goals and implementing strategies for literacy improvement garnered motivation toward achievement of those goals. School stakeholders were actively involved in open, direct communication with the principal and allowed to contribute their

suggestions and voice their concerns. Thus, the principal's course of action, or direction for improving literacy became a shared vision among teachers and parents.

Influence of Opportunity. This theme elaborates on the principal's willingness and ability to develop instructional practices while attending to the emotional needs of the stakeholders involved. There was a time when only teachers needed training in new methods of pedagogy and ways to engage learners. The increase of immigrant learners finds immigrant parents needing instruction in how to assist in their children's education. As technologies continually develop making digital natives of students, both teachers and parents find themselves lagging at times. Teacher A stated, "Our principal made workshops available where teachers and staff are taught different strategies to engage students in conversation and interaction skills." By providing Teacher A engaging opportunities to learn how to engage her students, the principal presented an avenue for the teacher to feel and become confident. The teacher was then empowered to create the same feeling and confidences among her students.

Influence of Atmosphere. This theme illustrates the principal's keenness in understanding the importance of developing a sense of respect and encouragement in the school. Ms. Jones was the epitome of the idiom *Talking the Talk and Walking the Walk*. She desired that the teachers be competent in the craft of literacy and expected the same competency from the students. The researcher heard the principal say to both staff and student on numerous occasions, "Remember the little engine that could." The principal set high expectations for literacy engagement through personal modeling. According to Teacher B, "Our school does an amazing job of promoting respectfulness and encouraging students." Teacher B continued, "And I think it does start with the

administrators down.” The principal was equally comfortable teaching teachers and teaching students. She was equally comfortable reading and writing with teachers and reading and writing with students. Regardless of who she was working with, the principal not only saw the individual as important, she genuinely worked at making the individual feel relevant, thus respected.

Influence of Purpose. This theme represents the principal’s passion for promoting multiple reasons for engaging in literacy including reading and writing to gain knowledge, reading and writing to express knowledge, and reading and writing for pleasure. Appreciating literacy is just as important as understanding literacy. Whereas literacy skills are necessary for demonstrating competency in all education subject matter, valuing what literacy can produce and provide the individual is the hidden treasure of reading, writing, and language arts. Both Teacher A and B saw importance in connecting students individually to literacy. Teacher A observed how the principal had fostered literacy engagement through expressing how literacy is alive and part of all academic subjects and personal interests. Teacher A continued, “It’s not just happening in reading class,” students are being nurtured to appreciate the relevance of subjects they enjoy, both academic and non-academic. Hence, a purpose for reading, writing, and language arts was fostered among students that increased their academic stamina by fueling their personal interests.

Influence of Observation. This theme elaborates on the principal’s insightful abilities to be in touch with what is transpiring in the building physically, mentally, and emotionally with teachers, parents, and students. Academic programs and teacher practices of pedagogical concepts must be melded together in a manner best suited for the

individual student. According to the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS), teachers must differentiate their instruction by aligning methods and techniques to meet diverse student needs. This is certainly critical in literacy as literacy plays an integral part in all academic subjects. The principal's astute power of observation allowed her to perfect teacher skills and construct an intrinsic sense effective practices for student engagement. Teacher A affirmed that the principal entered classrooms to observe how the teacher and the students were engaged in learning. Teacher A furthered by stating that engagement was "an academically beautiful synergy between teachers and students teaching and learning from each other."

Influence of Practice. This theme illustrates the importance of the of the influence the principal's own actions in direct connection with student engagement. The principal was openly a practitioner of reading and writing and regularly joined with students who were in engaged in literacy activities. Regardless of the grade level or subject matter, students were expectant and accepting of the principal sitting with them and reading what they were reading or writing what they were writing. She routinely and eagerly shared her thoughts and opinions about reading passages and writing excerpts, and with eagerness and anticipation listened as students did the same. Parents A and B both acknowledged the principal's active involvement with students. Parent B asserted that when the students see those who are supposed to be over them "interested in what they are doing. I think it's very helpful." Teacher A touted the principal's willingness to help teachers become literacy practitioners, while Teacher B noted that the principal "encourages a love for learning and literacy" among her students.

Influence of Style. This theme demonstrates how the principal's managerial style impacts literacy engagement. What the principal sees as important or places emphasis toward trickles down to teachers and ultimately to the students. When a principal's focus is geared solely or more directly to the superficial, i.e. standardized tests scores, the results produced by students will likely be superficial as well. Instead of producing a love for learning and a love for literacy that drives learning, students will regurgitate back just enough to take care of business and meet the prescribed testing standard. Whereas, a principal who is focused on "creating lifelong readers and lovers of literacy," as suggested by Teacher B inspires students to want to learn more and more. Such learning positively benefits the student and positively benefits society and the world.

Engaging Students in Literacy. The data analysis presented in Chapter IV yielded findings that suggested that teachers, parents, and the principal viewed the principal's leadership style similarly. There appeared to be no difference in the perceptions of teachers and parents when they viewed the principal's leadership style when compared to the principal's perception of her own leadership style. The teachers and parents viewed the principal's leadership style as supportive, innovative, and productive. Although Parent B made a couple of negative comments, those comments regarded the loss of reading reward programs that were outside the purview of the principal. Ergo, the teacher and parent participants overwhelmingly viewed the principal's leadership style as welcoming and guiding (influence of style).

The teacher and parent participants viewed the principal as campus leader who had many goals that focused her vision. They saw that the principal genuinely cared for the students, teachers, and parents. They felt the principal as capable of maintaining a

balance between student achievement, support for the staff, and support for parents. The findings of this research support other studies (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Jacobson, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1992; Reeves, 2008) that suggest that principals who support literacy initiatives are viewed by their teachers as leaders who are focused on greater student achievement. Teachers become aware of their importance which motivates them to generate persistent changes that improve behavior and foster positive attitudes. Thereupon, parents see the principal, the teachers, and the school as valued components of their child's success (influence of vision).

Regarding literacy knowledge and its use, it was clear from the participant's that while the principal's involvement was critical, other stakeholders needed to realize the importance of their role. The principal was the key authority in developing a sense of shared responsibility among teachers, parents, and students (influence of purpose). The data suggests that the principal be able and willing to share leadership with teachers when implementing literacy curriculum and instruction. This approach is supported by Killion and Roy (2009) who affirm that building leadership among teachers increases commitment and professionalism. Booth and Roswell (2007) also support the idea that the principal should team with teachers to increase student achievement. The principal employed the same teaming concept when working with parents and when working with students in the school. Parents were encouraged to volunteer in the school and students were encouraged to become excited about learning (influence of atmosphere).

Engaging students yields increased performance. Principals do influence student academic achievement in literacy. The data from this study suggests that the influence is both direct and indirect. Teachers are the primary connection to students in

the classroom. However, the principal can be a close secondary connection to the student through interaction with teachers and with the students themselves. This observation can be seen in data published by TEA relating to accountability and Pinecone Elementary School.

The principal at Pinecone Elementary School assumed the principalship beginning with the 2013-2014 school year with accountability measured by TEA in August 2014. This study was conducted during the 2016-2017 school year, specifically during the Spring semester, with school accountability measured in August 2017. The results of progress in student performance show notable increases over the four-year period of the principal's taking office. Although Pinecone Elementary School Met Standard as prescribed and defined by TEA in the years ending in 2014 and 2017, the increases in the four Index areas measured by the Performance Index Report of the Accountability Summary and the number of Distinction Designations earned is significant.

Table 8

2014 Performance Index Report

| Index 1 | Index 2 | Index 3 | Index 4 |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Student Achievement | Student Progress | Closing Performance Gaps | Postsecondary Readiness |
| 74 | 39 | 36 | 23 |
| Target Score = 55 | Target Score = 33 | Target Score = 28 | Target Score = 12 |

Table 9

2017 Performance Index Report

| Index 1 | Index 2 | Index 3 | Index 4 |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Student Achievement | Student Progress | Closing Performance Gaps | Postsecondary Readiness |
| 83 | 55 | 50 | 42 |
| Target Score = 60 | Target Score = 32 | Target Score = 28 | Target Score = 12 |

The greatest increase in the Accountability Summary from the year ending 2014 to the year ending 2017 was seen in Index 4, Postsecondary Readiness with an increase of 45% over the four-year period. The second significant increase was in Index 2, Student Progress with a 29% increase followed by Closing Performance Gaps with a 23% increase. Student Achievement increased 10% from the principal's first year in office.

For the school year ending 2014, Pinecone Elementary School did not earn an academic Distinction Designation in any of the six eligible categories. During the study year, the school year ending in 2017, Pinecone Elementary School earned three academic Distinction Designations: Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps, Top 25 Percent Student Progress, and Academic Achievement in Mathematics. These achievements occurred despite an increase in student population, an increase in the number of students considered economically disadvantaged, and an increase in students classified as English Language Learners.

Implications for Educators

A conclusion reached through this study is that the principal's possession of a far-reaching knowledge and understanding of literacy and effective literacy practices positively impacts engagement in literacy in a school. Whereas the principal's literacy knowledge base is important, understanding how to use that knowledge in various capacities with teachers, parents, and students is indispensable. Louis et al. (2010) assert that the stakeholders in a school comprise a collective leadership and furthers that the principal must support and motivate these groups toward achievement. Achievement motivation is a component of Achievement Goal Theory (Elliot, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005) which examines goals and why we seek to fulfill them.

Perception can positively or negatively affect behavior. Behavior in this study was addressed as engagement. How a person finds themselves aligned to a situation or task determines the individual's purpose for achievement (Pintrich, Conley & Kempler, 2003). Consequently, perception can motivate or demotivate teachers, parents, and students - the stakeholders of the collective leadership in a school. The principal at Pinecone Elementary Schools combined use of gained and personal knowledge of literacy and literacy practices, conjoined with Influence of Observation provided an idea venue and opportunistic setting for literacy engagement.

Future Research

In his book *Engaging Students* (2011), Phillip Schlechty contends that a combination of four components determine student engagement (p. 14). The student is attentive, committed, persistent, and finds meaning and value in the task at hand. This study focused on the perceptions of parents, teachers, and the school principal regarding

the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in a school. Three of the questions in the interview protocol addressed students in relation to engagement in literacy.

1. Do the students value literacy and literacy learning?
2. Do the students have positive attitudes regarding literacy? How do the students show, express their attitude regarding literacy?
3. How are the student attitudes regarding literacy learning being nurtured?

Although the responses to these questions provided value and merit based on the scope of the study, an intrinsic value of literacy and literacy practices relating directly to students and their engagement cannot be determined as no students were part of the study. In the future, I recommend a second study using the same questions rewritten to solicit response from students. I also recommend that the second study include at least three elementary schools, preferably within the same school district. Such a study would provide interesting insight to the significant role the principal can play in the engagement of students in literacy and literacy activities. Comparisons and conclusions could be drawn using the student perceptions and data provided by the state.

Final Thoughts

The participants in the study and their overall responses toward the positive confirmed what I believed to be most important in enhancing literacy in a school. Knowledge of literacy and effective literacy practices is paramount for a school principal. However, of greater importance appears to be the willingness and the capability to share that knowledge with teachers, parents, and students.

My experience with the principal at Pinecone Elementary School has been unlike any experience I have had with other campus administrators. The principal openly

expresses and displays an interest in the staff, in parents, and most importantly in students. I believe the principal's approach to learning and enhancing literacy in the school has led the students of the school to achieve the phenomenal results they have celebrated over the four years of this study.

I am reminded of the Morgan Freeman movie *Lean on Me* (1989). Morgan Freeman played the role of a school principal in the film. He played a character who was harsh and demanded and subsequently got results from his teachers and his students. However, throughout the movie there was an underlying tone that deep inside, the principal really did care for the teachers and students he worked with but had forgotten compassion because of the bureaucratic system in education. Accordingly, the movie ends with the principal coming to the realization that he could achieve greater results with those he was working with when he exhibited and employed his compassionate side.

The care and concern of principal at Pinecone Elementary Schools for the success of others is the pinnacle of the schools increased academic achievement. By getting to know her students and staff personally and through willingly sharing ideas, thoughts, and passions of her own, the principal has developed an atmosphere conducive not just for learning, but also for living.

REFERENCES

- Adams Jr, J. E., & Copland, M. A. (2005). When Learning Counts: Rethinking Licenses for School Leaders. *Wallace Foundation, The*.
- Allington, R. L. (2012). What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs. New York, NY: Pearson.
- Allington, R. L. (2013). What really matters when working with struggling readers. *The Reading Teacher, 66*(7), 520-530.
- Allington, R. L., & Cunningham, P. M. (2002). Schools that work: Where all children read and write. Allyn & Bacon, 72 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116.
- Alvy, H., & Robbins, P. (2005). Growing into Leadership. *Educational Leadership, 62*(8), 50-54.
- American Psychological Association. (2011). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. New York: American Psychological Association.
- Andrews, R., Soder, R., & Jacoby, D. (1987). Student achievement and principal leadership. *Educational Leadership, 44*(6), 9-11.
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational psychologist, 28*(2), 117-148. doi:10.1207/s15326985ep2802_3
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. New York: General Learning Press.
- Bean, R (2013). Developing a comprehensive reading plan. In Wepner, S. B., Strickland, D. S., & Quatroche, D. J. (Eds.). (2013). *The administration and supervision of reading programs*. New York, New York: Teachers College Press.

- Beck, L. G., & Murphy, J. (1992). Searching for a Robust Understanding of the Principals' Role. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 28(3), 387-96.
doi:10.1177/0013161X92028003009
- Bell, J. A. (2001). High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools. *Leadership*, 31(1), 8-11.
- Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G. W. (2010). *Analyzing and qualitative data: Systematic approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C. E. (2004). *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report from Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Retrieved from
https://www.carnegie.org/media/filer_public/b7/5f/b75fba81-16cb-422d-ab59-373a6a07eb74/ccny_report_2004_reading.pdf
- Bickman, L., & Rog, D. J. (Eds.). (2008). *The Sage handbook of applied social research methods*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Black, P., & William, D. (2003). 'In praise of educational research': Formative assessment. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(5), 623-637.
- Blair, T. R., Rupley, W. H., & Nichols, W. D. (2007). The effective teacher of reading: Considering the "what" and "how" of instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(5), 432-438. doi: 10.1598/RT.60.5.3
- Blokker, B., Simpson, A., & Whittier, P. (2002). Schoolwide literacy: The principal's role. *Leading literacy communities*. Middle Matters, 7.
- Bodgan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

- Booth, D., & Rowsell, J. (2007). *The literacy principal: Leading, supporting, and assessing reading and writing initiatives*. Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers Limited.
- Borg, S. (2001). The research journal: A tool for promoting and understanding researcher development. *Language Teaching Research*, 5(2), 156-177. doi: 10.1177/136216880100500204
- Brookover, W. B., & Lezotte, L. W. (1979). *Changes in School Characteristics Coincident with Changes in Student Achievement. Occasional Paper No. 17*. Michigan State University, Lansing, MI: Institute for Research on Teaching.
- Carbo, M. (2005). What Principals Need to Know about Reading Instruction. *Principal*, 85(1), 46-49.
- Caulley, D. N. (2007). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 7(2), 106-108.
- Cavanagh, S., & Manzo, K. K. (2007). NAEP Gains: Experts Mull Significance. *Education Week*, 27(6), 1, 16-17.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). Newbury Park, London: Sage Publications.
- Clark, S. N., & Clark, D. C. (2002). Making Leadership for Learning the Top Priority. *Middle School Journal*, 34(2), 50-55.
- Cobb, C. (2005). Literacy teams: Sharing leadership to improve student learning. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(5), 472-474.

- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cotton, K. (2000). *Schooling practices that matter most*. Alexandria, VA: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Cotton, K. (2003). *Principals and Student Achievement: What the Research Says*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Covington, M. V. (2000). Goal theory, motivation, and school achievement: An integrative review. *Annual review of psychology*, 51(1), 171-200.
- Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Columbus, OH: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches*. New York, New York: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 124-130. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2
- Cutcliffe, J. R. (2003). Reconsidering reflexivity: Introducing the case for intellectual entrepreneurship. *Qualitative health research*, 13(1), 136-148.

- Daresh, J. C. (2002). *What it means to be a principal: Your guide to leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The handbook of qualitative research*. (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dewey, J. (1998). *Experience and education: The 60th anniversary edition*. West Lafayette, IN: Kappa Delta Pi.
- DuFour, R. (2002). The learning-centered principal. *Educational leadership*, 59(8), 12-15.
- DuFour, R., & Berkey, T. (1995). The principal as staff developer. *Journal of Staff Development*, 16(4), 7-12.
- Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, New York: Random House.
- Elliot, A. J. (2005). A conceptual history of the achievement goal construct. *Handbook of competence and motivation*, 16(2005), 52-72. New York, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Elliot, A. J., & Dweck, C. S. (2005). Competence and motivation. *Handbook of competence and motivation*, 3-12. New York, NY: Guilford Publications.
- Fager, J. (2002). Highland Elementary School. Learning by Example Series. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED460788.pdf>
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, VA: Heinemann.
- Fullan, M. (Ed.). (2003). *The moral imperative of school leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. London: Routledge.
- Gaffney, J. S., Hesbol, K., & Corso, L. (2005). Is Your School Fit for Literacy? 10 Areas of Action for Principals. *Learning Point Associates/North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED489513.pdf>
- Gall, M. D., Borg, W. R., & Gall, J. P. (1996). *Educational research: An introduction*. New York, New York: Longman.
- Glaser, B., & Holton, J. (2004). Remodeling Grounded Theory. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 5(2). Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/607/1315>
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Goldring, E. B., & Pasternack, R. (1994). Principals' Coordinating Strategies and School Effectiveness 1. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 5(3), 239-253. doi:10.1080/0924345940050303
- Goodwin, R. H., Cunningham, M. L., & Eagle, T. (2005). *The changing role of the secondary principal in the United States: An historical perspective*. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 37(1), 1-17. doi.org/10.1080/0022062042000336046
- Graczewski, C., Knudson, J., & Holtzman, D. J. (2009). Instructional leadership in practice: what does it look like, and what influence does it have?. *Journal of education for students placed at risk*, 14(1), 72-96. doi: 10.1080/10824660802715460

- Hallinger, P. (1992). The evolving role of American principals: From managerial to instructional to transformational leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 30(3). doi.org/10.1108/09578239210014306
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of education*, 33(3), 329-352. doi:10.1080/0305764032000122005
- Hallinger, P., Bickman, L., & Davis, K. (1996). School context, principal leadership, and student reading achievement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 527-549. doi.org/10.1086/461843
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980-1995. *Educational administration quarterly*, 32(1), 5-44. Doi: 10.1177/0013161X96032001002
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 9(2), 157-191. doi.org/10.1080/0924345980090203
- Harrison, J., MacGibbon, L., & Morton, M. (2001). Regimes of trustworthiness in qualitative research: The rigors of reciprocity. *Qualitative inquiry*, 7(3), 323-345. doi: 10.1177/107780040100700305
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Haycock, K. (2007). Education Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform. *Wallace Report on The Foundation. National Education Leadership*, 25-32. Retrieved from

<https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Bridge-to-School-Reform.pdf>

- Heck, R. H., Larsen, T. J., & Marcoulides, G. A. (1990). Instructional leadership and school achievement: Validation of a causal model. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 26(2), 94-125. doi: 10.1177/0013161X90026002002
- Henk, W., Marinak, B, Moore, J, & Mallette, M. (2003). The writing observation framework: A guide for refining and validating writing instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(4), 322-333. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.shsu.edu/stable/20205368>
- Henk, W., Moore, J., Marinak, B., & Tomasetti, B. (2000). A reading lesson observation framework for elementary teachers, principals, and literacy supervisors. *The Reading Teacher*, 53(5), 358-369. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.shsu.edu/stable/20204805>
- Higgins, B., Miller, M., & Wegmann, S. (2006). Teaching to the test... not! Balancing best practice and testing requirements in writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(4), 310-319. doi: 10.1598/RT.60.4.1
- Hirsh, S., & Killion, J. (2009). When educators learn, students learn. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(7), 464-469. doi.org/10.1177/003172170909000704
- Hsiao, H. C., & Chang, J. C. (2011). The role of organizational learning in transformational leadership and organizational innovation. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 12(4), 621-631. doi: 10.1007/s12564-011-9165-x

- Janesick, V. J. (1999). A journal about journal writing as a qualitative research technique: History, issues, and reflections. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(4), 505-524. doi: 10.1177/107780049900500404
- Jacobson, J., Reutzel, D. R., & Hollingsworth, P. M. (1992). Reading instruction: Perceptions of elementary school principals. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 85(6), 370-380.
- Jewell-Lapan, W. (1936). Perception and reality. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 33(14) 365-373. doi: 10.2307/2016546
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational research, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kafka, J. (2009). The principalship in historical perspective. *Peabody journal of education*, 84(3), 318-330. doi:10.1080/01619560902973506
- Keene, E. O., & Zimmermann, S. (2007). *Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Killion, J., & Roy, P. (2009). *Becoming a learning school*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joellen_Killion/publication/265455025_Becoming_a_Learning_School/links/54f76c950cf210398e92afdb/Becoming-a-Learning-School.pdf
- Kleinsasser, A. M. (2000). Researchers, reflexivity, and good data: Writing to unlearn. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 155-162. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip3903_6

- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Lapan, S. D., Quartaroli, M. T., & Riemer, F. J. (Eds.). (2011). *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs* (Vol. 37). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lashway, L. (2002). Developing instructional leaders. Retrieved from <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/3383/digest160.pdf?sequence=1>
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999). The relative effects of principal and teacher sources of leadership on student engagement with school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(5), 679-706. doi: 10.1177/0013161X99355002
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational administration quarterly*, 44(4), 496-528. doi: 10.1177/0013161X08321501
- Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). Review of research: How leadership influences student learning. Retrieved from <http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/2035/1/CAREI%20ReviewofResearch%20How%20Leadership%20Influences.pdf>
- Leithwood, K. A., & Montgomery, D. J. (1982). The role of the elementary school principal in program improvement. *Review of Educational research*, 52(3), 309-339. doi: 10.3102/00346543052003309

- Leithwood, K. A., and Riehl, C. (2003). What we know about successful school leadership. Retrieved from www.cepa.gse.rutgers.edu/whatweknow.pdf
- Leithwood, K. A., Seashor-Louis, K., Anderson, S., and Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York, New York: Wallace Foundation
- Leitner, D. (1994). Do principals affect student outcomes: An organizational perspective. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 5(3), 219-238.
doi:10.1080/0924345940050302
- Levesque, J., & Carnahan, D. (2005). Stepping Stones to Evaluating Your Own School Literacy Program. Learning Point Associates/North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED489528.pdf>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lofton, M. (2009). *Literacy Principal's: Literacy Coaches' Perceptions of Principal's Literacy Leadership*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina.
- Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., Anderson, S. E., Michlin, M., & Mascall, B. (2010). Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning. *Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement/University of Minnesota and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto*, 42, 50. Retrieved from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/8530141/learning-from->

leadership_final-report_march-
 2010.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=153784
 5370&Signature=zNWzdMugk4o4EXFtEiwP1Gk2U%2Fc%3D&response-
 content-
 disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DLearning_from_leadership_Investigatin
 g_t.pdf

Lyon, G. R. (2003). What principals need to know about reading. *PRINCIPAL-
 ARLINGTON-*, 83(2), 14-19. Retrieved from
[http://www.foundationstutoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-
 Principals-Need-to-Know-About-Reading.pdf](http://www.foundationstutoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-Principals-Need-to-Know-About-Reading.pdf)

Maninger, R. M. (2006). *Student test scores improved in an English literature course
 through the use of supportive devices*. *TechTrends*, 50(5), 37-45. doi:
 10.1007/s11528-006-0045-x

Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: An
 integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational
 administration quarterly*, 39(3), 370-397. doi: 10.1177/0013161X03253412

Marshall, C., & Rossman, g. (2011). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks,
 CA: Sage Publications.

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works:
 Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA:
 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Mazzeo, C. (2003). Improving teaching and learning by improving school leadership. *NGA Center for Best Practices*. Retrieved from <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Improving-Teaching-and-Learning-By-Improving-School-Leadership.pdf>
- McEwan, E. K. (1998). *The Principal's Guide to Raising Reading Achievement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- McEwan, E. K. (2003). *Ten traits of highly effective principals: From good to great performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- McGhee, M. W., & Lew, C. (2007). Leadership and writing: How principals' knowledge, beliefs, and interventions affect writing instruction in elementary and secondary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(3), 358-380.
doi.org/10.1177/0013161X06297202
- McNeal, L., & Christy, W. K. (2001). A Discussion of Change Theory, System Theory, and State Designed Standards and Accountability Initiatives. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED481980.pdf>
- Meece, J. L., Anderman, E. M., & Anderman, L. H. (2006). Classroom goal structure, student motivation, and academic achievement. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 57, 487-503.
[doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070258](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070258)

- Mertens D. (2012). Grounded theory, In S. D. Lapan, M. T. Quartaroli & Y. S. Denzin (eds), *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs* (1st ed., pp. 41-67). Thousand Oaks, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Miller, R. J., & Rowan, B. (2006). Effects of organic management on student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(2), 219-253. doi: 10.3102/00028312043002219
- Mills, G. E. (2000). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Mitchell, K. L. (2004). Perceptions from the Principals' Desks: African American Elementary Principals and Reading Curriculum and Instruction in a Central Florida County. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida. Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=http://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=2160&context=etd>
- Moon, T. R., Brighton, C. M., Jarvis, J. M., & Hall, C. J. (2007). State Standardized Testing Programs: Their Effects on Teachers and Students. *National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505375.pdf>
- Morrow, L. M. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250

- Morrow, L. S., & Smith, M. L. (2000). Qualitative research for counseling in psychology. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 199-230). New York, New York: Wiley Publications.
- Murphy, J. (2002). Reculturing the profession of educational leadership: New blueprints. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(2), 176-191.
doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02382004
- Murphy, J. (2004). Leadership for literacy: A framework for policy and practice. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 15(1), 65-96.
doi.org/10.1177/0013161X09347341
- National Association of Elementary School Principals, R. V. (2001). *Leading Learning Communities: NAESP Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do. A Guide for Those Who Care about Creating and Supporting Quality in Schools*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED459518.pdf>
- National Reading Panel (US), National Institute of Child Health, & Human Development (US). (2000). Report of the national reading panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health. Retrieved from <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/documents/report.pdf>
- Neumerski, C. M. (2013). Rethinking Instructional Leadership, a Review What Do We Know About Principal, Teacher, and Coach Instructional Leadership, and Where Should We Go From Here?. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(2), 310-347.

- O'Donnell, R. J., & White, G. P. (2005). Within the accountability era: Principals' instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement. *NASSP bulletin*, 89(645), 56-71. doi: 10.1177/019263650508964505
- Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *The qualitative report*, 13(4), 695-705.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, London: Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pierce, P. R. (1935). *The origin and development of the public school principalship*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Pinto, P., Simpson, C., & Bakken, J. P. (2009). Based Instructions to Increase Communication Skills for Students with Severe Disabilities. *International Journal of Special Education*, 24(3), 99-109. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ877942.pdf>
- Pintrich, P. R. (2000). An achievement goal theory perspective on issues in motivation terminology, theory, and research. *Contemporary educational psychology*, 25(1), 92-104. doi: 10.1006/ceps.1999.1017
- Pintrich, P. R., Conley, A. M., & Kempler, T. M. (2003). Current Issues in Achievement Goal Theory and Research. *International Journal Of Educational Research*, 39(4), 319-337. doi: 10.1016/j.ijer.2004.06.002
- Price, D. P. (1998). Explicit instruction at the point of use. *Language Arts*, 76(1), 19-26.

- Quinn, D. M. (2002). The impact of principal leadership behaviors on instructional practice and student engagement. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40*(5), 447-467. doi: 10.1108/09578230210440294
- Reeves, D. B. (2008). Leading to Change/The Leadership Challenge in Literacy. *Educational Leadership, 65*(7), 91-92.
- Reutzel, D., & Cooter Jr, R. B. (2000). *Teaching children to read: Putting the pieces together*. Des Moines, IA: Prentice Hall.
- Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational administration quarterly, 44*(5), 635-674. doi: 10.1177/0013161X08321509
- Rousmaniere, K. (2007). Go to the principal's office: Toward a social history of the school principal in North America. *History of Education Quarterly, 47*, 1-22.
- Routman, R. (1998). Literacy at the crossroads: Crucial talk about reading, writing, and other teaching dilemmas. *Literacy, 3*(3).
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Russell, G. M., & Kelly, N. H. (2002). Research as interacting dialogic processes: Implications for reflexivity. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung 3*(3), Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/831/1806RUSSELL>
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Sanacore, J. (1997). Guidelines for successful reading leaders. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 41(1), 64-68.
- Schlechty, P. C. (2011). *Engaging students: The next level of working on the work*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Schmoker, M. (2008). Measuring what matters. *Educational Leadership*, 66(4), 70-74.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2006). *The principalship: A reflective practice perspective*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Silverman, D., & Marvasti, A. (2008). *Doing qualitative research: A comprehensive guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Soehner, D., & Ryan, T. (2011). The Interdependence of Principal School Leadership and Student Achievement. *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, 5(3), 274-288.
- Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2001). Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational researcher*, 23-28.
- Stake, R. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, New York: Guilford Press.
- Stern, B. S., & Kysilka, M. L. (Eds.). (2008). *Contemporary readings in curriculum*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Supovitz, J., Sirinides, P., & May, H. (2010). How principals and peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(1), 31-56. doi: 10.1177/1094670509353043

- Sweetland, S. R., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). School characteristics and educational outcomes: Toward an organizational model of student achievement in the middle schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(5), 703-729. doi: 1177/00131610021969173
- Texas Education Agency. (2014). Accountability summary. Retrieved from <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2014/static/summary/campus/c170907102.pdf>
- Texas Education Agency. (2017). Accountability summary. Retrieved from <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker>
- Texas Education Agency. (2017). Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR). Retrieved from https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&year4=2017&year2=17&_debug=0&single=N&title=2017+Texas+Academic+Performance+Report&_program=perf rept.perfmast.sas&prgopt=2017%2Ftapr%2Ftapr.sas&ptype=P&level=campus&search=campname&namenum=greenleaf&campus=170907102
- Thornberg, R. & Charmaz, K. (2012). Grounded theory, In S. D. Lapan, M. T. Quartaroli & Y. S. Denzin (eds), *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs* (1st ed., pp. 41-67). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tooms, A., Padak, N., & Rasinski, T. (2007). *The Principal's Essential Guide to Literacy in the Elementary School*. New York, New York: Scholastic.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Warren, C. A. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*, 839101. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412973588>
- Waters, T., Marzano, R. J., McNulty, B., & Mid-Continent Regional Educational Lab., A. C. (2003). *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us about the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement. A Working Paper*. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED481972.pdf>
- Weimar, M. (2013) *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wertz, F. J., Charmaz, K., McMullen, L. M., Josselson, R., Anderson, R., & McSpadden, E. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis*. New York, New York: Guilford.
- Witziers, B., Bosker, R. J., & Krüger, M. L. (2003). Educational leadership and student achievement: The elusive search for an association. *Educational administration quarterly*, 39(3), 398-425. doi: 10.1177/0013161X03253411
- Wolters, C. A. (2004). Advancing Achievement Goal Theory: Using Goal Structures and Goal Orientations to Predict Students' Motivation, Cognition, and Achievement. *Journal of educational psychology*, 96(2), 236. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.96.2.236
- Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. S. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4), 302-314.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

APPENDIX A

SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Attention Teachers:

Are you interested in taking part in an interview study that will examine increasing literacy engagement among students?

What will we be studying?

The Study will consider the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents about the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in a Texas school.

Who we need?

Any teacher who teaches English/Language/Arts or is interested in increasing literacy engagement among students.

Study details

The purpose of this study is to investigate the topic of the relationship of the campus principal and enhancing literacy engagement in the school and begin to determine if the perceived role of the principal is elemental to such engagement.

Rewards benefits

The study will investigate if the knowledge foundation principals are proposed to possess according to the literature compared to the perceived knowledge they are believed to possess, and if perception enhances student engagement in literacy. Although active leadership can make a difference in improving learning, it is less clear how effective leadership is in bolstering the learning of students, and what the indispensable components of successful leadership are.

APPENDIX B

Literacy Questionnaire: Teacher

1. What is literacy?

Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in a manner which allows one to communicate effectively.

2. Why do literacy skills provide a student?

Literacy provides one the ability to go beyond reading and writing and apply skills to effectively connect, interpret, and understand the complexities of their surroundings.

3. Why is literacy important?

Strong literacy skills are a key tool used for interpreting and understanding information in all disciplines.

APPENDIX C

SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Attention Parents:

Are you interested in taking part in an interview study that will examine increasing literacy engagement among students?

What will we be studying?

The Study will consider the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents about the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in a Texas school.

Who we need?

Any parent who has a child currently enrolled in the school.

Study details

The purpose of this study is to investigate the topic of the relationship of the campus principal and enhancing literacy engagement in the school and begin to determine if the perceived role of the principal is elemental to such engagement.

Rewards benefits

The study will investigate if the knowledge foundation principals are proposed to possess according to the literature compares to the perceived knowledge they are believed to possess, and if perception enhances student engagement in literacy. Although active leadership can make a difference in improving learning, it is less clear how effective leadership is in bolstering the learning of students, and what the indispensable components of successful leadership are.

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions: Principal

1. Do you have a vision for improving literacy in your school? If so, what is that vision? What behaviors do you demonstrate to promote this vision to others?
2. What do your staff know about literacy and how to teach it?
3. How do you help your staff learn more about literacy?
4. What do you do to ensure teachers are teaching literacy curriculum and students are learning?
5. Does the school have the conditions needed to build a culture for professional learning about literacy?
6. Are opportunities to learn more about how to teach literacy concepts/fundamentals and to improve pedagogy provided to teachers?
7. What are the appropriate physical resources needed to support improvement in literacy instruction?
8. Are the physical resources needed to support improvement in literacy instruction the same as those needed to engage students more in literacy?
9. Do the students value literacy and literacy learning?
10. Do the students have positive attitudes regarding literacy? How do the students show, express their attitude regarding literacy?
11. How are student attitudes regarding literacy learning being nurtured?
12. Do you communicate with parents about the literacy process and collaborate with parents to cultivate and engage students in literacy on the campus?

13. What do you see as your strengths as a literacy instructional leader/manager regarding literacy instruction, guidance in literacy practice, and encouragement toward literacy engagement?
14. Considering your managerial style, demeanor, and philosophy, are there areas you feel could be developed relating to literacy instruction and engagement, and if so, would you mind elaborating?
15. Could the managerial style of the principal either negatively or positively impact how literacy is engagement occurs on a campus?
16. Do you feel the student's perception is important and/or worth considering regarding literacy and the way literacy is taught, supported, encouraged?
17. Does the principal and/or administration, do they provide an atmosphere within the school in which students feel safe, respected, encouraged, and valued?
18. If students do not feel a sense of belonging can success be garnered?
19. Is the overall atmosphere in the school conducive to learning, specifically fostering literacy engagement?
20. Do you have any thoughts on your own about the importance of literacy and/or improving literacy within a school and where that can take students?

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions: Teacher

1. Does the principal have a vision for improving literacy in your school? If so, what is that vision? What behaviors do you see the principal demonstrating to promote this vision to others?
2. What do you know about literacy and how to teach it?
3. Does/has the principal provide ways for you to learn more about literacy?
4. What does the principal do to ensure teachers are teaching literacy curriculum and students are learning?
5. Does the school have the conditions needed to build a culture for professional learning about literacy?
6. Are opportunities to learn more about how to teach literacy concepts/fundamentals and to improve pedagogy provided to teachers?
7. What are the appropriate physical resources needed to support improvement in literacy instruction?
8. Are the physical resources needed to support improvement in literacy instruction the same as those needed to engage students more in literacy?
9. Do the students value literacy and literacy learning?
10. Do the students have positive attitudes regarding literacy?
11. How are student attitudes regarding literacy learning being nurtured?
12. Does the principal communicate with parents about the literacy process and collaborate with parents to cultivate and engage students in literacy on the campus?

13. What do you see as the principal's strengths regarding literacy instruction, guidance in literacy practice, and encouragement toward literacy engagement?
14. Considering the managerial style, demeanor, and philosophy of the principal, are there areas you feel could be developed relating to literacy instruction and engagement, and if so, would you mind elaborating?
15. Could the managerial style of the principal either negatively or positively impact how literacy is engagement occurs on a campus?
16. Do you feel the student's perception is important and/or worth considering regarding literacy and the way literacy is taught, supported, encouraged?
17. Does the principal promote/provide an atmosphere within the school in which students feel safe, respected, encouraged, and valued?
18. If students do not feel a sense of belonging can success be garnered?
19. Is the overall atmosphere in the school conducive to learning, specifically fostering literacy engagement?
20. Do you have any thoughts on your own about the importance of literacy and/or improving literacy within a school and where that can take students?

APPENDIX F

Interview Questions: Parent

1. Does the principal have a vision for improving literacy in your school? If so, what is that vision? What behaviors do you see the principal demonstrating to promote this vision to others?
2. What do you know about literacy and how it is, or should be taught?
3. Does/has the principal provide ways for you to understand more about literacy?
4. What does the principal do to ensure teachers are teaching literacy curriculum and students are learning?
5. Does the school have the conditions needed to build a culture for learning about literacy?
6. Are opportunities to learn more about how to teach literacy concepts/fundamentals and to improve pedagogy provided to teachers?
7. What are the appropriate physical resources needed to support improvement in literacy instruction?
8. Are the physical resources needed to support improvement in literacy instruction the same as those needed to engage students more in literacy?
9. Do the students value literacy and literacy learning?
10. Do the students have positive attitudes regarding literacy?
11. How are student attitudes regarding literacy learning being nurtured?
12. Does the principal communicate with parents about the literacy process and collaborate with parents to cultivate and engage students in literacy on the campus?

13. What do you see as the principal's strengths regarding literacy instruction, guidance in literacy practice, and encouragement toward literacy engagement?
14. Considering the managerial style, demeanor, and philosophy of the principal, are there areas you feel could be developed relating to literacy instruction and engagement, and if so, would you mind elaborating?
15. Could the managerial style of the principal either negatively or positively impact how literacy is engagement occurs on a campus?
16. Do you feel the student's perception is important and/or worth considering regarding literacy and the way literacy is taught, supported, encouraged?
17. Does the principal promote/provide an atmosphere within the school in which students feel safe, respected, encouraged, and valued?
18. If students do not feel a sense of belonging can success be garnered?
19. Is the overall atmosphere in the school conducive to learning, specifically fostering literacy engagement?
20. Do you have any thoughts on your own about the importance of literacy and/or improving literacy within a school and where that can take students?

VITA

Robert Sterling Davis

EDUCATION

Doctoral Candidate in Department of Language, Literacy, and Special Populations Program, *Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX*. December 2018.

Dissertation Title: Enhancing Literacy Engagement: A Case Study of Perceptions of Administrators, teachers, and parents about the principal's role in enhancing literacy engagement in a Texas school.

Master of Education in School Administration May 2011.

Concordia University Texas at Austin, TX

Thesis Title: Computers in the classroom: Why all teachers are not buying in.

Bachelor of Business Administration in Management, May 1984.

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX

Honors and Awards

Doctoral Reading Scholarship, 2013 – 2014

Doctoral Reading Scholarship, 2014 – 2015

Teacher of the Year (2006)

Teacher of the Year (2003)

Teacher of the Year (2002)

New Teacher of the Year (1997)

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Davis, R. Inviting the Digital Age into the Reading Classroom – Poster Session at the 2016 Texas Association of Literacy Educators Literacy Summit. University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas. February 2016.

Davis, R. Utilizing Transmedia Texts in the Classroom – Speaking session providing an overview of Transmedia literacy, offering examples of these texts and the benefits and advantages of using them in the classroom. Presented at the 2015 Texas Association of Literacy Educators Literacy Summit. Sam Houston State University, Woodlands Campus, The Woodlands, Texas. March 2015.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Honor Society, Inducted Spring 2017

Texas Elementary and Secondary Principal's Association, Joined Fall 2013

Pi Lambda Theta Honor Society, Inducted Spring 2011

TEXAS EDUCATOR CERTIFICATIONS

Principal, Grades EC-12

All-Level Physical Education, Grades PK-12

English as a Second Language, Grades PK-12

Gifted and Talented, Grades PK-12

Generic Special Education, Grades PK-12