USING EVIDENCE-BASED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS
TO IDENTIFY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS
OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS SERVING ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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Using Evidence-Based Conceptual Frameworks to Identify Leadership Practices of Principals of Successful Schools Serving ELA Learners

Thesis directed by Professor Connie L. Fulmer.

ABSTRACT

This study is one of five thematic dissertations investigating the leadership practices of principals leading successful schools serving ELA learners. Schools selected for participation in this study had (a) an open enrollment policy, (b) at least 40% of total enrollment consists of ELL students, (c) has earned a School Performance Framework (SPF) rating greater than 49%, (d) at least 50% of the students qualify for a free or reduced lunch, (e) have demonstrated gains on the CSAP/TCAP and CELA tests for the past three years relative to schools serving the same grade levels, and (f) a principal in place for at least three years. The conceptual framework for this study was constructed from two evidence-based frameworks (VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I Framework) derived from research on learner-centered leadership. The VAL-ED survey provided evidence of the leadership strengths of the principal. From these findings, two interview protocols, a leadership practice interview and a narrative interview, were used to uncover leadership practice and critical work and life incidents that have influenced leadership practice. A cross-case analysis was conducted to determine leadership practice common to principals of these successful schools serving ELA learners. Results from this study can be useful to other principals, professional development of principals, and for preparation programs that train future principals.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Connie L. Fulmer
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my many colleagues who give unselfish and dedicated leadership to our schools daily.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

As a school principal for more than 15 years and an educator for more than 23 years, I have experienced my share of programs, strategies and improvement initiatives that were aimed to make right all that is wrong in education. From my experience, the school leader of today must take into account the multitude of demands on the school’s resources. They include a stagnant economy and reduced budget, state and federal mandates—such as standardized testing, and meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Additionally, the daily tasks and challenges like maintaining school safety and security, monitoring instructional practice, driving curriculum development, and fostering the professional development of the faculty and staff also confound and define the complicated nature of my job. Although this is not an exhaustive list, the few named expectations, duties, and responsibilities illustrate the high level of leadership skill and ability that I as a leader must bring to the table. In order to be effective in these many facets of school leadership, and to impact student achievement and foster systemic school improvement, it would be instructive for me as a leader if this research study could identify a set of successful leadership practices for possible use and further development within my school.

For decades, researchers, education practitioners, lawmakers, many governmental agencies and non-profit entities have sought to improve the quality and standards of public education. The history of public education throughout the 20th century is laden with school reform efforts (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Ravitch, 2010). The publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) warned
that national security was at risk because of a substandard public system of education in America. The report called for the implementation of standards, increased rigor, and extending the length of the school day and school year (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In 1989 President George H.W. Busch held an educational summit with the nation’s governors. A focal point of the summit was to encourage the decentralization of authority and decision making at the district level with the goal to empower school-site leadership the responsibility to set goals and determine the means to accomplish goals while being held accountable for success. The flood of school reform efforts continued with the George W. Busch administration, leading public education into the current era of high-stakes testing and increased accountability with the introduction of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2000. This landmark, bi-partisan reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) stipulated that schools must show improvement through student achievement on standardized tests, and continue this effort until 100% of students are proficient in reading, writing and math by 2014. And most recently, in the era of President Barack Obama, efforts to amend NCLB to ensure that every high school graduate is ‘college and career ready’ are being carried out through billions of dollars in incentives to states through the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative. Regardless of the era, school reform legislation, policy and initiatives have been the construct that defines what school leaders must do to be accountable to achieving the demands of local, state and federal goals and expectations.

Deep in the current reform effort, along with the pressure and need for school reform, reside a sundry of initiatives and strategies such as a national Common Core State Standards (CCSS), performance based compensation linked to student achievement,
and how teachers and school leaders are trained, educated, and prepared for their professional roles. This emphasis on teacher and principal preparation has led to the concept of educator effectiveness, and in Colorado this is outlined in current legislation and will be measured through school and student performance on standardized testing and other factors such as attendance rates, graduation rates and second language access (Colorado SB 10-191). This brings new or heightened awareness to the potential impact that highly skilled and qualified teachers and school leaders can have on school improvement and student achievement.

The importance of teachers and principals as leverage points for student achievement is well cited in research (Cotton, 2003; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010). A recent study (Leithwood, Seashore-Lewis, Anderson & Whalstrom, 2004) illustrated that successful leadership is highly significant to school improvement and student achievement. In fact, these researchers concluded with the two claims that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, and leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most” (p. 5). The current purview of research on the topic of educator effectiveness and the impact school leaders have on student achievement is in its infancy and beseeches continued research that goes much deeper and in search of what defines the practices of an effective school leader.

With this new interest and understanding that leadership in schools does matter, researchers are motivated to delve further into what specifically comprises or defines an effective leader. With more and more focus on educator effectiveness, it is imperative that teachers and school leaders are well prepared with concrete and researched-based
best practices, as well as to put this knowledge and these skills into practice. Toward this effort, it is vital that the influence of specific leadership practices of successful principals in successful schools is identified to illustrate how leaders are effectively and successfully advancing the performance of the school, and within the many circumstances and environments that challenge educators daily.

Population migration is one example of a current circumstance or phenomena that further challenge leadership to be effective and successful toward initiating school reform and improvement efforts. Population migration in itself is a complicated issue with many ramifications to the work conducted by schools and school districts. A factor that is common and significant to this study are the immense challenges of educating an influx of English Language Learners (ELL) that schools and school district must consider as a result of population migration. In Colorado, the emergence of Latinos has had an impact on how to educate a whole population of English Language Acquisition learners (ELA learners). One Colorado report from the Office of Language, Culture and Equity, (2011) confirms that Colorado has been a destination state for Latinos in the United States. Since 1994, Colorado has experienced more than a 200% growth in its ELA learner population (Colorado Office of Language, Culture and Equity, 2011).

The impact of this population demographic shift includes the following statistics: (a) total K-12 enrollment growth for Colorado is15.6% over the past 10 years, (b) for ELA learners, the enrollment growth rate is 260%, with a total of 109,328 enrolled ELA learners, (c) the Denver-Metro area includes 68% of Colorado’s EL enrolled population, (d) the majority ethnicity is Hispanic at 81% of the ELA learner population, (e) of the total school-age enrolled ELA learners, 81% are Non-English Proficient (NEP) or
Limited-English Proficient (LEP), and (f) the statewide graduation rate in 2010 was 72%, for ELA learners the graduation rate was 49%, (Colorado Office of Language, Culture and Equity, 2011). These data detail the urgency for school leaders to make a difference in meeting the needs of these students to achieve school goals.

The marked graduation rate gap of 23% between English speaking students (72%) and ELA learners (49%) is equally evident with respect to student performance on standardized assessments. ELA learners lag behind in almost every state mandated standardized assessment. For example, on the Colorado ACT, the statewide composite score for all students tested is 19.92 while ELA learners have a reported composite of 14.03 (Colorado Office of Language, Culture and Equity, 2011). This disparity is also evident within the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests in reading, writing and math. The 2011 administration of the CSAP shows proficiency of ELA learners on the tenth grade math assessment to be more than 30 percentage points less than the state-wide proficiency (Colorado Office of Language, Culture and Equity, 2011). These data further demonstrate the need to identify and connect the best and most effective leadership for impacting the growth and achievement of ELA learners as measured on standardized tests and the acquisition of the English language.

As a practitioner of educational leadership at the school level, the idea of investigating leadership traits, responsibilities and characteristics that research indicates are effective for impacting student achievement and school improvement is intriguing. The high demands on school leaders today—to both manage and be the initiators of strategies that lead to increased student achievement—this research to identify specific leadership practices employed by successful school principals is warranted. Further, as a
school leader, who has worked in a variety of cultural and socio-economic settings, I understand the added challenges that come with poverty, gaps in education, and English language acquisition in many school environments. In this regard, it will be valuable and useful to further define leadership practices of principals in successful schools. In the next section, further problems of practice facing principals in schools that are highly impacted with ELA learners are presented.

**Statement of Problem**

In Denver Public Schools (DPS), the second largest school district in Colorado, where ELA learners make up 34% of the approximately 81,800 student population, an absorbing question exists: Why do some schools have documented success in their work with ELA learners while other schools show little or no gain in academic achievement indicators? While it might appear that effecting growth in achievement in such a diverse and growing ELA learner population would be improbable at best, there are in fact schools in DPS that have demonstrated growth in ELA learner populations and continue to demonstrate success while other schools do not. The problem that invites investigation, in spite of the omnipresent existing context associated with teaching and learning in schools today, is what are the leadership practices and stories behind the leaders that have led these highly impacted schools serving ELA learners to success? Studying principal leadership in successful schools serving ELA learners can help to define those leadership practices that are value added for student achievement. This case study is designed to discover and name the specific leadership practices and stories behind principals’ success in schools that are showing strong achievement and growth among ELA learner populations.
Purpose

The purpose of this case study—which is part of a larger multiple-case thematic dissertation study focusing on the leadership of principals of successful schools serving ELs—is to identify specific and particularized leadership practices used by the principal that resulted in students and teachers reaching the levels of student achievement that have led to sufficient gains on the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) and Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) tests in these schools for the past three years.

Research Questions

Research questions that guide this study on identifying specific and particularized leadership practices used by principals of successful schools serving ELA learners are listed below.

1. Using the definition of a leadership practice as a guide (developed in research question number 5), what are the specific and particularized self-identified leadership practices being used by the principal in this study to ensure a positive impact of that school on student growth/achievement?

2. How do the identified successful leadership practices align with key conceptual and evidence-based frameworks (VAL-ED Matrix and the Essential Supports & Indicators Framework) used in this study?

3. How do stories of this principal’s critical incidents (both work and life related) contribute to an understanding of how self-identified leadership practices were developed and why these leadership practices emerged and flourished within this particular school and community context?
4. What leadership practices used by principals of successful schools serving ELA learners in this study are common to the leadership practices of the other principals participating in this study?

5. Based on a review of relevant literature (the conceptual underpinnings and evidenced-based strategies) and evidence gathered in this study, what is an applied definition of a leadership practice?

Since this study is one of five thematic dissertations being conducted in successful schools serving ELA learners, research question four is a cross-case analysis question that will be answered from data collected from the three instruments used at each of the five case study schools.

**Conceptual Frameworks**

In the current public education era of high-stakes testing and accountability to improve the achievement of all students, there is a deep and extensive focus on leadership effectiveness in urban schools. Two evidence-based conceptual frameworks associated with learner-centered leadership and school improvement guide this study: (a) the VAL-ED Matrix, and (b) the Essential Supports and Indicators (ES-I) framework. The VAL-ED Matrix was derived from the work of Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott & Cravens (2009) in their study on learner-centered leadership. From a study conducted in Chicago elementary schools in the mid 1990’s, researchers developed an evidenced-based framework of essential supports and indicators to help explain the cultural and organizational dynamics required for improving schools (Bryk, Sebring, Allenworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). This framework of five essential supports and fourteen indicators illustrates the understanding that “schools are complex organizations
consisting of multiple interacting subsystems” (p. 45). These two evidence based frameworks pertinent to this study are described in the sections that follow and a rationale for use in this study is also presented.

**VAL-ED Matrix**

The VAL-ED Matrix (see Figure 1) focuses on two key evidence-based dimensions of leadership behaviors, core components and key processes (Goldring et al., 2009) and is created by the intersections of the six core components and the six key processes (see Figure 1). The core components are those characteristics within schools that support learning and enhance teaching. These core components help create a picture of what a culture of learning and professional behaviors look like. The six core components include:

1. **High Standards for Student Learning**- individual, team, and school goals for rigorous student academic and social learning.

2. **Rigorous Curriculum**- ambitious academic content provided to all students in core academic subjects.

3. **Quality Instruction**- effective instructional practices that maximize student academic and social learning.

4. **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior**- integrated communities of professional practice in the service of student academic and social learning. There is a healthy school environment in which student learning is the central focus.

5. **Connections to External Communities**- linkages to family and/or other people and institutions in the community that advance academic and social learning.
6. Systemic Performance Accountability—individual and collective responsibility among leadership, faculty, and students for achieving rigorous goals.

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<td>Rigorous Curriculum</td>
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<td>Quality Instruction</td>
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<td>Culture of Learning &amp; Professional</td>
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**Figure 1.** Vanderbilt assessment of leadership in education. Note: core components & key processes as arranged in a 6 x 6 matrix illustrating the 36 intersections between key processes and core components.

The key processes are about the actions of the principal to influence the school and teachers to achieve the core components. There are also six key processes that include:

1. Planning—this is articulating the shared direction and coherent policies, practices, and procedures for realizing high standards of student performance.
2. Implementing—leaders implement; they put into practice the activities necessary to realize high standards for student performance.
3. Supporting—leaders create enabling conditions; they secure and use the financial, political, technological, and human resources necessary to promote academic and social learning.
4. Advocating- Leaders promote the diverse needs of students within and beyond the school. Advocating for the best interests and needs of all children is a key process of learning-centered leadership.

5. Communicating- Leaders develop, utilize, and maintain systems of exchange among members of the school and with its external communities.

6. Monitoring- systematically collecting and analyzing data to make judgments that guide decisions and actions for continuous improvement.

The VAL-ED Matrix was chosen as the conceptual framework for this particular study for several reasons. The matrix identifies specific, research-based components and processes that provide a rich data source when studying leadership. The skill in which the principal performs within the core components and key processes is assessed not only by the principal, but the teachers in the building as well as the principal’s supervisor. This 360 degree assessment allows for deeper contextual understanding of the work of the principal in a variety of situations and from the perspective of followers and leaders. Finally, the framework lends itself to guiding the development of the interview protocols and research instruments for this study, as well as the analysis of data.

**Essential Supports – Indicators (ES-I) Framework**

The second conceptual framework is the ES-I framework (see Figure 2) which is comprised of five essential supports and fourteen indicators that are related to school improvement. The essential supports and associated indicators from this work (Bryk et al., 2010) include:

- School leadership- the principal is a catalyst for change, building agency at the community level, and nurturing shared leadership and vision. The single
indicator in this ES includes *school leadership* and encompasses inclusive principal leadership, teacher influences on decisions, the contributions of the Local School Council (LSC), the principal as an instructional leader, program coherence, and the implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

- Parent-community-school ties - the outreach to families and the immediate community to establish a welcoming environment and strengthen relationships. Indicators in this ES include *teacher ties to the community* and *parent involvement in the school*.

- Professional capacity of the faculty - developing a quality instructional staff that functions as a professional learning community focused on continuous improvement. The indicators in this ES include *teacher background, frequency of professional development, quality of professional development, changes in human resources, work orientation, and professional community*.

- Student-centered learning climate - nurturing an environment that is safe and facilitates engagement in learning that is rigorous and supportive. The indicators in the ES include *safety and order* and *academic support and press*.

- Instructional guidance - school-wide supports in the areas of curriculum and instruction to promote ambitious academic achievement for all. The indicators in this ES include *basic skills* and *application emphasis*.

The influencing subsystems include structural factors, trust and relationships across the school community, and the local school community context. The subsystems interact with one another and each of the essential supports has an impact on what
Figure 2. Framework of essential supports for school improvement. Note: An illustration of the five essential supports impacting classroom instruction and the subsystems influencing the school.

happens in the “classroom black box”. Each essential support has associated indicators that help define the complexity of this important work.

The ES-I framework offers contextual depth as well as a systems perspective to this study. It will be used, in conjunction with the core components and key processes of the VAL-ED Matrix, to develop two different principal interview protocols. The analysis of interview data through the lens of the ES-I framework and the VAL-ED Matrix will broaden the scope of study of the principal’s leadership practices.

Significance of Research

This study is significant for the following reasons: (a) it is focused on leadership practices of principals in successful schools serving ELA learners at a time when the local and national trend of ELA learners enrolled in our schools is on the rise, (b) two evidence based frameworks are being used to identify the specific and particularized
leadership practices of successful principals in schools serving ELA learners, and (c) a construct of a leadership practice will be drawn from the literature and defined.

Investigating leadership practices of principals in successful schools serving ELA learners has the potential to contribute to more thoughtful hiring of principals, specific and targeted professional development for principals, and augmentation and support of particular leadership practices. This case study will help flesh out leadership practices that better serve a widely under-served population of students and families. This research study also has the potential to offer valuable insight for researchers, policy makers and district leadership on common leadership practices used by principals that impact the achievement and growth in schools highly impacted with EL populations. Findings from this case study promise not only to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on professional development for supporting ELA learners but also to sharing evidenced-based school leadership practices currently working in DPS schools with other school leaders.

**Research Assumptions**

This study was constructed on the following four assumptions.

1. The school selected for this case study was identified as being successful based on five criteria for inclusion, one of which was standardized achievement data. This successful achievement is based on the growth of students as measured by the CSAP and CELA.

2. Another assumption is that in order for the leadership practices of the principal to have impacted this achievement growth, the principal had to have been in place at the school for at least three years.
3. A third assumption is that the evidence-based leadership frameworks used in this study to create the interview protocols and the related codes will be useful in being able to identify the specific and particularized leadership practices that most impact student achievement at this school.

4. A final assumption is that while specific and particularized leadership practices that are identified may not be transferable to other schools with a high percentage of ELA learners, what is learned about how these principals use leadership practices (leaders, followers, and contexts) can be generalized and contribute to a better understanding of the leadership practice construct.

Limitations/Delimitations

The schools selected for this research study and the larger thematic case study had to meet the criteria of high poverty, tenure of the principal at three or more years, a high percentage of ELA learners, and an open enrollment policy that did not discriminatingly select students based on prior academic performance or behavior patterns. The limitations of this study include:

1. While 22 schools qualified for the study based on the first five selection criteria, only 13 remained once it was determined that the principal had to have 3 or more years in the role of principal. Thus, one limitation is the size of the pool of sites for this study.

2. The use of a case study limits results to the descriptive rather than the predictive (Merriam, 2009).

3. The results of the study may not be generalizable to other principals and schools. However, the construct of a leadership practice will be further detailed through a
review of the literature and the identification of actual leadership practices in this successful school will provide guidance for others to develop their own leadership practices.

4. One delimitation to this study is the selection criteria for case study schools. Specifically, the number of schools that could be considered for the study was significantly reduced. The requirement that the principal have at least three years as principal at the case-study school disqualified many schools from the study. While I acknowledge these limitations, the case study method is best for trying to identify specific and particularized leadership practices of successful principals. The size of the pool focuses on successful principals in successful schools serving EL-learners.

Operational Definitions

This research study will utilize the following definitions of key terms relevant to this study.

1. CELA (Colorado English Language Assessment) - annual assessment of English language proficiency administered to EL-learners in the state of Colorado.

2. CSAP (Colorado State Assessment Program) - annual assessment given to all students in grades 3-10 in the state of Colorado to measure proficiency in reading, writing, math and science.

3. ELA (English Language Acquisition) - common term used to describe non-English speaking students that are learning the English language.

4. EL (English Learner) - common term used to describe a student who is not a native English speaker.
5. ES-I (Essential Supports and Indicators Framework)- a set of defined practices that comprise a framework for leadership and school improvement.
6. MGP (Median Growth Percentile)- a measure from the CSAP used to gauge student growth from year to year.
7. SPF (School Performance Framework)- the report format that is used in the state of Colorado to communicate the performance of a school and the rating of the school’s progress from year to year.
8. VAL-ED (Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education)- an evidences based matrix that evaluates the intersection of six core concepts and 6 key processes.

**Summary**

In this introductory chapter, I present the increasing trend in ELA learners attending public schools, both locally and nationally, as the context in which there is need to further identify specific and particularized leadership practices that successful school principals used to serve ELA learners. Two evidence-based frameworks have been introduced as the best and most current research on leadership practice to help identify specific and particularized leadership practices use by successful principals in successful school serving EL-learners. The first framework, the VAL-ED Matrix, focuses on learner-centered leadership with six core components and six key processes. The second conceptual framework, the ES-I, offers leadership as the driver for change in influencing the five essential supports and fourteen indicators in the work of school improvement. This study is significant to the field in that the focus is on leadership practices of principals in successful schools serving ELA learners, and utilizes two evidence based
frameworks to identify and bring deep understanding of the specific and particularized leadership practices of successful principals in schools serving ELA learners. To fully understand the substance of educational leadership that leads to the development and understanding of the concept of leadership practice, the following chapter will present relevant literature on these topics, in addition to the relevance of the two evidenced-based conceptual frameworks that are central to this study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leadership has many definitions with several specific to educational leadership. Before leadership practices are identified, it is important to have some understanding of what leadership is or how it can be defined and relevantly applied to the school setting. The goal here is not to operate within a textbook definition of leadership, but rather draw on how current leadership is defined and applied in education and eventually define a leadership practice construct. In this chapter, separate sections will provide an overview of what leaders know about ELA learners, the precursors of leadership practice constructs, and early references to leadership practice research. The final two sections of the chapter will review the research on the conceptual frameworks that support leadership practices, and argue for a definition of a leadership practice.

What Leaders Know about English Language Learners

School leaders understand the added accountability to educate ELA learners in not only core content, but in the acquisition of English language as well. The acquisition of English is measured annually in most states, and in Colorado, at the time this study was conducted, the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) was the state mandated measure for student monitoring and school accountability. In this context, leadership from the school principal that specifically effects the achievement of ELA learners is critical to meet state and federal accountability as well as the moral and ethical commitment to educate all students.

Primarily, leadership behaviors that shape the instructional guidance system in classrooms will most impact the achievement of ELA learners (Bryk et al., 2010;
Lochmiller et al., 2012). There is immense support in the research for the implementation of a variety of classroom interventions and strategies that are specific to supporting ELA learners. For example, Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008) provide a model for lesson planning and implementation that provides English learners access to grade-level content standards. Freeman and Freeman (2002) focus on the particular issues of secondary ELA students by organizing curriculum around themes, using predictable classroom routines, and scaffolding instruction in a variety of ways. Garcia (1991) outlined a set of effective instructional practices that included organization of learning around themes and the consistent use of collaborative learning. Gay (2000) recommends that teachers develop a knowledge base about the cultures that they serve and that they provide a culturally relevant curriculum to their students. Ladson-Billings (1995) describes the most effective classroom for ELA students as exhibiting pedagogical excellence steeped in cultural relevance. Mace-Matluck, Alexander-Kasparik, and Queen (1998) describe successful newcomer programs in secondary schools as providing multiple and flexible learning pathways. Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, and Clew (2000) suggest the implementation of appropriate assessment techniques and programs that address literacy needs of secondary ELA students. This body of research speaks to the principal’s focus on instructional leadership and the importance to develop an instructional model that specifically serves ELA learners. In addition, another body of research focuses on decision making and the leadership structures, suggesting that selecting and implementing appropriate instructional strategies is not enough (Miramontes, Nadeau & Commins, 2011). School principals must establish a model of shared or inclusive leadership that includes visionary planning and clear communication.
that will engage teachers in systemic improvement strategies that appropriately serve ELA learners.

Leadership practices can affect all aspects of how the ELA learners are served in secondary schools (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix & Clewell, 2000). Such practices include selective placement practices, scheduling structure that allow for extra learning time, and collaborative work and planning time for teachers (Fullan, 2007; Kostecki & Bers, 2009; Walsh, 1999). These practices are about the decisions a leader makes to build a school climate and culture that is most conducive to teaching and learning. Inclusive to an efficient and productive school climate and culture is the leadership style of the school principal. Carrejo and Cortez (2010) claim that principals can impact achievement of students by changing their leadership style from supervisory to a more supportive and shared leadership style modeled after communities of practice and transformational leadership. Similarly, Miramontes, Nadeau, and Commins (2011), advocate that principals leading in ELA learner schools should “shift from the top-down manger to the role of instructional leader in a shared decision making process” (p.142). This shift in leadership philosophy will delegate the power of decision making and help build collaboration. Thus the principal will become effective through influence, rather than through command and control (Miramontes, et al., 2011).

In conjunction with a shift to a shared leadership model is the careful selection the appropriate program for ELA learners and the model of delivery that will help influence systemic reform efforts for educating ELA learners. Miramontes et al. (2011) clearly state that along with strong leadership, “a component of educational reform is that change is systemic” (p.136). The leadership of the principal is critical to changes in these
organizational structures and key to establishing systemic change and systemic strategies that encourage differentiated instruction that effectively serve and meet the needs of ELA learners (Miramontes et al., 2011).

In this section, a brief review of the literature on leadership practices specific to working with ELA learner populations was presented. A model to develop effective classroom instruction, and the importance of decision making and leadership philosophy were briefly discussed. The next section will move from the context of educating ELA learners to elements of leadership literature that are precursors to the emergence of a construct of a leadership practice in the broader spectrum of educational leadership.

Precursors of a Leadership Practice Construct

In this section, leadership philosophies and theories that have impacted the development of a leadership practice construct will be discussed. Specifically, a review of the literature on effective schools, the direct and indirect effects of the principal on student achievement, and instructional leadership will be reviewed. The purpose here is to reveal the shift in the role of the principal from that of a manager to a leader that has developed a leadership practice(s) that successfully impact student achievement and specifically how the leadership practice(s) are applied in the context of leading schools serving ELA learners.

Effective Schools Research

For many decades, the quest to improve the academic achievement of students attending public schools in America has not been overwhelmingly successful. In the 1960’s, after the launch of Sputnik, the first manned spacecraft by the USSR, there was a perception that American students might be falling behind in math and science as
compared to other industrial nations. In 1966, with the release of the publication the Coleman Report - Equality of Educational Opportunity (Coleman, 1966) and then in 1983 with the release of A Nation at Risk, (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), academia and politicians inundated the public school system with information relative to the ineffectiveness of public schools. As a result, a school reform movement, that continues today, swept across the education community, spawning a plethora of research findings to support and defend public education.

Bringing deep credibility to the impact of school personnel on student achievement, in response to the 1966 Coleman Report, which argued that student background and socioeconomic status more often determined educational outcomes than did differences in school resources (i.e., per pupil expenditures), a group of researchers (Brookover & Lezotte, 1978; Edmonds, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979) set out to prove that indeed schools do make a difference and conducted studies that are foundational to the effective schools research movement.

In comparing the differences in effectiveness among improving schools and declining schools, Brookover and Lezotte (1978) defined 10 recommendations for improving student achievement. The recommendations included: (a) using information was the difference among achieving school and declining school staffs to re-orient their efforts toward student achievement, (b) setting goals in reading and math and making them non-negotiable, (c) increasing the emphasis of mastery of basic skills, (d) focusing attention to achievement of minimum level of academic objectives are achieved by all students, (e) emphasizing the role of the principal as a director of instruction and evaluator of the schools instructional program and accountable for improvement, (f)
using educational assessment and evaluation measures as a means of accountability, (g) emphasizing teacher professional development and professional responsibility to educate their students, (h) holding teachers responsible and accountable for student attainment of basic goals, (i) monitoring time spent on direct instructional activities that lead to mastery of basic objectives, and (j) defining the teachers role as a production oriented job designed to accomplish defined goals (Brookover & Lezotte, 1978). A final recommendation from this study encouraged the professional staffs at declining schools to embrace these recommendations and “re-orient their efforts” to become higher achieving schools (Brookover & Lezotte, 1978). This line of research inspired more research that produced a variety of recommendations, guidelines and components critical to what constitutes an effective school.

Edmonds (1982) presented a list of five ingredients of an effective school: (a) the principal’s leadership and attention to the quality of instruction, (b) a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus, (c) an orderly safe climate conducive to teaching and learning, (d) teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery, and (e) the use of measures of student achievement as the basis for program evaluation. Edmonds’ list is adapted from the research of others (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Rutter, 1979) and stipulates that this research has yet to demonstrate that the characteristics of this list are the cause of instructional effectiveness nor have the characteristics been ranked. Thus, it is concluded, to advance school effectiveness, a school must implement all of these characteristics at once (Edmonds, 1982).
Also contradicting Coleman (1966) research conducted by Purkey and Smith (1983) searched for characteristics of effective schools from an organizational theory perspective. Their findings suggested that the most important organization structure variables include the following characteristics: “instructional leadership, school site management, staff stability, curriculum articulation and organization, school wide staff development, parental involvement and support, school wide recognition of academic success, maximized learning time and district support” (Purkey & Smith, 1983, p. 444). Thus, Purkey and Smith (1983) challenged the Coleman report’s claim that schools have no impact on student learning by clearly delineating school level factors that promote learning in the classroom.

Effective schools research set the stage for future research in many areas, including instructional leadership, and has gained significant traction in the field of educational leadership and led researchers to further focus on effective leadership of school principals.

**Direct and Indirect Effects of Principals on Student Achievement**

In this section, several research studies will be presented that define the direct and indirect effects of the school principal. These studies support the case that principal leadership is critical to the success of schools.

Research conducted by Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996), a sample of 87 U.S. elementary schools, was used to explore the extent of the principal’s direct and indirect leadership effects on reading achievement. The study utilized a multidimensional model to measure principals’ effect on student learning. Data gathered from principal and teacher surveys and student test scores, relationships between several
context variables, instructional leadership, instructional climate, and reaching achievement were investigated. The results showed that there were no evident direct effects of the principal instructional leadership on student achievement (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996). However, there was evidence that the principal can have an indirect impact on student achievement. Through the principal’s actions that shape the school’s learning climate—school mission, student opportunity to learn, and teacher expectations for learning—student achievement can be impacted. The data from Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) support “this constellation of instructional climate variables had a positive subsequent effect on student achievement in reading ($p < .05$)” (p. 543). This and other research studies support that the perception of the principal as a strong instructional leader promotes student achievement through influencing the components of a positive school-wide learning climate (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, Beady, Flood & Wisenbaker, 1978; Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). This understanding that the principal can have a significant indirect effect presents the need to fully investigate and define the principal’s role as an instructional leader.

In related research on the role of the principal as an instructional leader, Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan and Lee (1982), set out to develop a framework for understanding this principal leadership role. This work considered the several key components—instructional organization, school climate, influence behavior and the context of principal management—to make sense of what it is that principals do as instruction managers to impact student achievement. The framework (see Figure 3) developed by Bossert et al. (1982) presents graphically how
attention must be given to the interrelationship of the defined key components relevant to the principal as an instructional leader. Influencing factors on the principal’s behavior as a manager include: personal characteristics, district characteristics, and external characteristics. With these influences, the managerial behaviors of the principal will indirectly impact his/her leadership style and decision making, thus shaping the school climate and instructional organization which directly influence student learning. The conclusion of the study reinforces, through the development of the framework, the complex nature of the role of how the principal indirectly impacts student achievement. More importantly, the study concluded that the “principals management behavior has both direct and indirect effects on student learning” (Bossert et al., 1982, p. 54).

It is clear that the direct and indirect effects of the principal on the many facets of school leadership and management can impact student achievement. Two bodies of research have been presented that support this claim by clearly illustrating the multiple roles of a school principal, including the role of the principal as an instructional leader, which is the topic of discussion in the next section (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger et al., 1996).
**Instructional Leadership**

A critical component to sustaining quality instruction or the improvement of inadequate instruction can be leveraged through the instructional leadership behaviors of the school principal. Strong principal instructional leadership has been shown to correlate with student achievement (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger et al., 1996; Heck, Larsen & Marcoulides, 1990). In this section, a discussion of the literature on principal instructional leadership and the impact this has to student achievement will be presented.

In 1990, Heck, Larsen, and Marcoulides, set out to test a theoretical model on how elementary and secondary principals can influence student achievement through implementing certain instructional leadership behaviors. The methodology of the study controlled contextual variables and hypothesized that are three variables contributing the principal’s instructional leadership (school governance, instructional organization, school climate) that affect student achievement. The results and conclusion of the study are numerous, of which, principals in high-achieving schools are substantially different from their counterparts in consistently low-achieving schools (Heck et al., 1990).

The effects of the principal of as an instructional leader on school effectiveness and student achievement continues to receive immense attention in the academic research arena. This, along with effective schools research and the direct and indirect effects of principals, has been reviewed as precursors to a leadership practices construct. In an effort to get a grasp on the work of an effective school leader, many researchers have produced lists of behaviors, traits, and responsibilities of the school principal (Cotton, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003).
Instructional leadership research conducted by Cotton (2003), summarized research from 81 studies which focused on what effective principals in successful schools do, resulting in 26 behaviors that contribute to student achievement. These behaviors fall into five categories: (a) establishing a clear focus on student learning; including having a vision; clear learning goals; and high expectations for all students, (b) interactions and relationships that include communication and interaction; emotional/interpersonal support; visibility and accessibility; and parent/community outreach and involvement, (c) school culture which supports shared leadership/decision making; collaboration; support of risk taking; and continuous improvement, and (d) instruction that involves discussing instructional issues; observing classrooms and giving feedback; supporting teacher autonomy; and protecting instructional time, and (e) accountability, monitoring progress and using student progress data for program improvement (pp. ix-x).

These 26 behaviors that contribute to student achievement follow: (a) safe and orderly school environment, (b) vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning, (c) high expectations for student learning, (d) self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance, (e) visibility and accessibility, (f) positive and supportive school climate, (g) communication and interaction, (h) emotional and interpersonal support, (i) parent and community outreach and involvement, (j) rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions, (k) shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment, (l) collaboration, (m) general findings about instructional leadership, (n) ongoing pursuit of high levels of student learning, (o) norms of continuous improvement, (p) discussion of instructional issues, (q) classroom observation and feedback to teachers, (r) support of teacher autonomy, (s) support of risk taking, (t) professional development opportunities
and resources, (u) protecting instructional time, (v) monitoring student progress and sharing findings, (w) use of student progress data for program improvement, (x) recognition of student and staff achievement, (y) role modeling, and (z) what these principals don’t do. Cotton’s conclusion is that these many leadership traits and behaviors are positively related to student achievement.

Another meta-analysis study that connects principal leadership to student achievement is detailed by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005). This meta-analysis of 69 different studies covering 35 years of research suggested a set of leadership responsibilities that effect student achievement. These researchers identified 21 leadership responsibilities (in alphabetical order): affirmation, change agent, communication, contingent rewards, culture, discipline, flexibility, focus, ideals/beliefs, input, intellectual stimulation, involvement with curriculum-instruction-assessment (CIA), knowledge of CIA, monitor/evaluate, optimize, order, and outreach (Marzano et al., 2005).

And finally, also in pursuit of defining a collection of leadership strategies that effect student achievement, Fullan (2005) references a study by the Council of Chief School Officers (2002) and contends that “leadership at the schools was identified as crucial to success” (p.3). This argument is supported by eight leadership strategies that the Council’s study found were utilized by successful school leaders: (a) setting high expectations for students, (b) shared leadership and engagement, (c) collaboration of staff, (d) using data to support success, (e) staying focused on students, (f) identifying learning barriers, (g) learning at home is reinforced, and (h) employing a system of interventions. These examples of leadership behaviors, traits and strategies only scratch
the surface of the early research to define principal leadership, however, the five categories of the 26 leadership behaviors (Cotton, 2003), the 21 leadership responsibilities (Marzano et al. 2005) and the eight leadership strategies defined by the Council of Chief School Officers (2002) are foundational to defining the term leadership practice. One of the earliest references to leadership practice is discussed in the next section.

Clearly, there is evidence to suggest that a shift in the role of the principal from that of a manager to one of an instructional leader is occurring. These precursors of a leadership construct—effective schools research, direct and indirect effects of principal leadership on student achievement, and instructional leadership—laid a foundation to begin a discussion on early references to the leadership practices construct.

**Early References to Leadership Practices**

Accepting that leadership is a set of multiple strategies, behaviors and responsibilities and principal leadership has impact on student achievement, the term leadership practice is becoming the focus of research that investigates the effectiveness of the leaders. In this section the topics of leadership practice inventory, research on high poverty-high performing schools, and distributive leadership will be presented in three separate sections.

**Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI)**

In 1983, Kouzes and Posner conducted research in search of defining what practices by leaders is evidence of their best work. From a case study analysis of leaders describing their personal-best leadership experiences, they developed a model of leadership called The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership: (a) model the way, (b)
inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enabling others to act, and (e) encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2000). The term leadership practice became a common association with the work of Kouzes and Posner (2002) and the development of the Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI). The LPI was originally set up on a five point Likert-scale base on a set of statements describing each of the five leadership practices. In 1999, the LPI was redesigned using a ten-point Liker-scale to increase the robustness and sensitivity of the inventory. The LPI contains 30 statements, with six statements in each of the five leadership practices of exemplary leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2000). The LPI inventory can be considered a 360 degree survey as the subject of the survey completes the self-survey and then the recommendation is to request between five to ten other people familiar with the subjects work to complete the observer-survey. The authors of the survey claim that the LPI is based on sound psychometric properties and have yielded consistent results over time.

For the purpose of this study, the LPI provides insight to the use of such assessments to evaluate the effective leadership practices when assessing an individual’s leadership capabilities. And more importantly, rudimentary knowledge of what constitutes a leadership practice has been established. The work of Kouzes and Posner (2002) provides evidence that “the five practices of exemplary leaders do make a difference at the personal, interpersonal, small group, and organizational level” (p.18).

**High-Poverty, High Performing Schools (HP-HP)**

The adverse effects of poverty on student performance are well documented (Guskey, 1997). However, there is evidence of schools challenged with high poverty achieving high performance. In this section, the critical research on HP-HP schools reviewed.
Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, and Lash (2007) provide research findings that share how a small number of schools are successfully serving high-poverty student populations which are similar to the lowest performing schools in the country. These findings show that these HP-HP schools exhibit three characteristics. These researchers have used these three characteristics and related elements in their Readiness Model for School Turnaround (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4. The readiness model for school turnaround efforts.](image)

The implications from this work are that in order for schools to be successful in school turnaround or improvement work, they need to assess their readiness for change in three key areas: (a) readiness to learn, (b) readiness to teach, and (c) readiness to act. In the first key area, readiness to learn, three school characteristics are deemed necessary for improvement are: (a) safety, discipline, and student engagement occurs when students feel secure and inspired to learn, (b) schools take action against adversity and directly
address their student’s poverty-driven deficits, and (c) in order for students to have positive and enduring mentor/teacher relationships, closer student-adult relationships have to be encouraged and nurtured. For the second area, readiness to teach, the following characteristics must be present: (a) staff feel a deep accountability and missionary zeal for student achievement, thus a shared responsibility for student achievement will be present in that school, (b) teachers are able to personalize instruction by basing that instruction on both diagnostic assessment and adjusting time on task for learning experiences, and (c) a pervasive professional teaching culture where the practice of continuous improvement occurs through collaboration in job-embedded learning. For the third key area, readiness to act, speaks to an organizations capacity to act in these three areas: (a) resource authority – school leaders can make mission-driving decisions regarding people, time, money, and programs, (b) resource ingenuity – leaders are adept at securing additional resources and leveraging partner relationships, and (c) agility in the face of turbulence – leaders, teachers and systems are flexible and inventive in responding to constant unrest.

This particular body of work on turnaround schools in general and this particular readiness model described and illustrated above was selected for inclusion in this literature review for two reasons. The first is that it is a newer and more advanced version of the school effectiveness research study, but much more nuanced. The second is that it provides and supports the search in this study for an applicable definition of the construct of a leadership practice. Added to this literature review, a clear picture of the complex nature of context in which a school leader must work. The next reference to leadership practices was made by the literature on distributed leadership.
Distributed Leadership Practices

Distributed leadership is often misunderstood as leadership that it is embedded in shared, collaborative, or extended leadership models (Spillane, 2006). However, when examined more closely, the complexity of distributed leadership can be seen when focusing on the actions of the leader and the type of interactions between the leadership practice and the type of the interactions between leaders, followers, and the situation (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004). In order to truly appreciate the complexity of distributive leaderships, Spillane and Diamond (2007) have argued that it is insufficient to study leadership by observing the leader, and that it must be studied from a distributed perspective. This perspective includes looking at the leaders interactions with others in context within a framework in an effort to understand the internal dynamics of leadership practice. The complexity of distributive leadership is within the distributed leadership practice, which involves two aspects, the leader plus aspect and the practice aspect. The leader plus aspect refers to the fact that multiple individuals participate in formal and informal leadership roles within an organization. The practice aspect of distributed leadership is the interactions of school leaders with others in the organizational situation. The complexity of these two aspects of distributive leadership creates a web of connections and interactions between leaders, followers, and the situations they function in, which forms leadership practice (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). The interaction of these three elements, leaders, followers and situations is what establishes the idea of a leadership practice and requires further investigation (Spillane & Diamond, 2007).
The first elements, leaders and leadership is extended through the work of several leaders (Spillane & Diamond, 2007) and can be characterized by types of co-leading: (a) collaborated distribution – leadership work carried out by multiple leaders working together at one time and place, (b) collective distribution – leadership work carried out separately but interdependently, and (c) coordinated distribution – leadership work carried out in a sequence of steps carried out in logical order following completion of prior steps. The second element, followers, is the people who move in and out of leadership and follower roles or positions. Followers are those who choose to listen to leaders and the interactions are multi-directional. The interactions of the followers with leaders and leadership are essential to defining leadership practice (Spillane & Halverson, 2007). Leadership practice is found in the interactions of followers with leaders in the various aspects of a situation, thus followers help define leadership practice (Spillane & Halverson, 2007). The third element of leadership practice is the situation, which makes it more or less difficult to lead. Within any situation, or context, there are tools, processes and procedures and other aspects that create further opportunity for leader-follower interaction in situ, thus contributing defining leadership practices (Spillane & Halverson, 2007).

This initial description of distributed leadership shows how this particular type of leadership can move our thinking about leadership beyond the concepts of leadership traits or behaviors, or principles, or commitments. The idea of distributed leadership moves our thinking to the idea that a leadership practice includes multiple leaders and followers that move in and out of leadership and followership roles, and the aspects of the situation in question all interact with each other to advance or hinder the efforts of
leadership. It is this construct of a distributed leadership practice that provides a framework for conceptualizing and analyzing leadership interaction (Harris, 2010).

**Conceptual Frameworks Supporting a Leadership Practice**

The previous section laid out early references to leadership practices and has helped create a foundational understanding from which to develop a general definition of leadership practice. However, further understanding of leadership practice in the context of the two evidenced-based frameworks pertinent to this study must occur. To support the development of Leadership Practice in these frameworks, a macroscopic view of leadership practice is presented.

From distributive leadership research, a construct for leadership practice is defined as the activities distributed among three constituting elements: leaders, followers and situation (Spillane et al., 2004). The interconnectedness (see Figure 5) and interactions of leaders, followers and situation is the web of activity that is a leadership practice in the context of leadership tasks. The key understanding here is that a leadership practice is not entirely dependent on the abilities, skills, personality, experience, or cognition of the leader.

Similarly, a leadership practice does not reside in the activity of the followers or the specific situation in which individuals or groups of individuals interact. In a distributive model of school leadership, one which leaders and followers utilize available resources, skills, abilities and expertise in situ, to complete work tasks and solve problems and issues causing an the interaction among the constituting elements—leaders, followers, and situation—is where the leadership practice is defined (Spillane et al., 2004).
To further understand the interactions of leaders and followers and the interactions occurring during work tasks in a given situation, happens through analyzing this work in terms of macro-functions and micro-tasks (Spillane et al., 2004). In their work (see Table 1), Spillane et al. (2004) synthesized several important leadership functions important for instructional leadership they call macro-functions. These leadership functions provide a framework to analyze the work of leaders, however, focusing on macro functions alone does not allow for the understanding of Leadership Practice as they are focused only on the leaders.

The work by followers combined with the work by leaders as defined in the micro-tasks (see Table 1) contributes to the execution of macro-functions (Spillane et al., 2004). For example, providing time for teachers to meet within the work day or having common planning for teachers of the same grade level is a micro-task that helps execute the macro-function of building norms of collaboration to support successful change or school improvement initiatives (Spillane et al., 2004).
This basal understanding of a leadership practice from a distributive leadership perspective will be discussed in the context of both the VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I frameworks in the sections that follow. These two evidenced-based frameworks are the most promising frameworks to help investigate current leadership practices used by the principal and to answer the research questions of this study. Both frameworks are grounded in evidence-based research and methodology and were developed to be applicable to school leadership that effects school improvement and student achievement.
VAL-ED Matrix

The VAL-ED Matrix is the leadership framework that underpins the concept of leadership practice. In short, the VAL-ED survey, matrix and conceptual framework assess leadership at the intersection of two dimensions: what leaders create and how they create it (Goldring et al., 2009). In this work, the researchers utilized an operational definition of leadership taken from Patterson (1993) as “the process of influencing others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes for the organization” (p.3). This operational definition establishes that: (a) leadership is a process; it is not a personal trait or characteristic of the individual, (b) leadership involves influence and requires interactions and relationships among stakeholders, and (c) leadership involves purpose, which requires the school leader to focus on reaching desired goals. Within this definition, the Learning-Centered Leadership framework (see Figure 6) was constructed to further understand leadership from the perspective of learning. This framework was a precursor to defining the core components of the VAL-ED matrix: (a) high standards of performance, (b) rigorous curriculum, (c) quality instruction, (d) culture of learning and professional behavior, (e) connections to external conditions, and (f) systemic performance accountability to effect outcomes of student success. But rather than assess school leaders exclusively on these student outcomes, the researchers introduce six key processes: (a) planning, (b) implementing, (c) supporting, (d) advocating, (e) communicating, and (f) monitoring that intersect with the core components (Goldring et al. 2009). The intersection of the six core components and six key processes creates a matrix of 36 leadership behaviors that are the boundaries for defining leadership practices utilized by principals.
Figure 6. Learning-Centered Leadership Framework. How a leader’s knowledge, experience, personal characteristics, and values and beliefs influence leadership practice (Goldring et al., 2009).

A deeper look at any one intersection of the VAL-ED Matrix through the lens of what leaders and followers do in a given situation can reveal leadership practice in action. The six core components can be understood as what leaders and followers do as they utilize their skill-set and leadership ability. The six key processes are how leaders and followers work within a situation to complete tasks. Referring back to Spillane et al. (2004) who define a leadership practice as the interrelatedness of the work between leaders and followers in situ, through macro-functions and micro-tasks, a parallel with the VAL-ED Matrix can be drawn. The six core components can be viewed as macro-functions while the six key processes are micro-tasks, or at least are made up several micro-tasks. An example might be found in the VAL-ED core component of Rigorous Curriculum and the leaders desire to enhance the selection of course offerings by
developing a thoughtful matriculation of students from general content courses to the more rigorous honors content courses and eventually to the most rigorous challenge of Advance Placement® courses. Working in this core component of a situation defined by meeting a district goal to increase the enrollment of students in Advance Placement® courses will then prompt the principal to execute the Rigorous Curriculum core component by giving careful thought to the key process. For example, rather than mandate the creation of new Advance Placement® courses, the principal may want to assemble a study group of teachers in the planning phase thus ensuring that the faculty is engaged in the process and brings content expertise and instructional pedagogy into the dialogue. This is one example of a leadership practice that includes the interrelations and interactions of the school principal (the leader) with faculty (the followers) to complete a task to through collaborative planning to execute the core component (or macro-process) in a situation to meet a district-defined goal.

To help pinpoint the specific leadership practices utilized by principals, questions for the leadership practice interview specific to this study were developed from the VAL-ED Matrix and leadership framework. Keeping with the previous example at the intersection of the Rigorous Curriculum core component and the Planning key process an interview question might be: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans (a) to develop a rigorous curriculum for all students, and (b) access to rigorous curricula for students with special needs (i.e. second language acquisition), in order to achieve rigorous curriculum content that is prevalent in this school? The design of these questions is intended to facilitate reflection and analysis by the principal on his/her own leadership and ultimately define specific and particularized leadership practices utilized
by the principals in successful schools serving ELA learners.

**Essential Supports and Indicators**

Similar to the VAL-ED, the ES-I framework developed by Bryk et al. (2010) was created from leadership behaviors that are connected to student outcomes. The ES-I framework was developed during a period from 1990-1996 in Chicago elementary schools in era of extraordinary school reform mandated by the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act (Bryk et al., 2010).

Bryk et al. (2010) identified supports directly related to leadership that support school improvement. These are designated as the five essential supports. The ES-I Framework of five essential supports includes (a) leadership as the driver for change, (b) parent-community ties, (c) professional capacity, (d) a student-centered learning climate, and (e) instructional guidance (Bryk et al., 2010, p. 46). At the center of this framework is leadership as the driver for change, the vital component to ensure improvement occurs in the other four essential supports--parent and community ties, professional capacity of faculty and staff, a student-centered learning climate, and an instructional guidance system (Bryk et al., 2010). Leadership as the driver for change is the key pivot point to this framework, and without this essential support, the framework will not be useful to enact school improvement efforts.

The 14 indicators defined by Bryk et al. (2010) are embedded in each of the five essential supports. The 14 indicators are: (a) school leadership, (b) parent involvement, (c) teacher ties to community, (d) professional community, (e) work orientation, (f) teacher background, (g) change in human resources, (h) frequency of professional development (i) quality of professional development (j) academic support and press, (k)
safety & order, (l) curriculum alignment, (m) applications emphasis, and (n) basic skills emphasis.

Once again, applying the leadership practice model from Spillane et al. (2004) a clear distinction of the work and interrelations between leaders and followers in situ can be made. The *instructional guidance* essential support can be thought of as the macro-function similar to the VAL-ED Matrix core component of *Rigorous Curriculum*. The work and relationship of the principal and faculty is found in the ES-I framework indicator of *application emphasis* and would include many micro-tasks that define the work of principals and faculty, such as developing and aligning *rigorous curricula* with National Common Core Standards.

The ES-I framework, like the VAL-ED, will also shape the interview protocol used in this study. An example of an interview question that reflects the *instructional guidance* essential support and the *application emphasis* indicator might be: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for *instructional guidance* (subject matter students study across grades) with an *application emphasis* (active student applications emphasis) for achieving *rigorous curriculum* – *Content* already prevalent in this school? Also note that this question is connected to the VAL-ED Matrix *rigorous curriculum* core component and the *planning* key process. This allows for the cross referencing of the two research-based frameworks to provide meaning and allow for categorization of behaviors and processes that can be used to define leadership practices of principals in successful schools serving ELA learners.
**Definition of Leadership Practice**

Two evidenced-based conceptual frameworks have been introduced in this study as foundation and to set boundaries to define leadership practices in successful school serving ELA learners. Each of these frameworks, either directly or indirectly, address many important aspects that pertain to school leadership such as building a positive school climate and culture, effective program design and implementation, budget and resource oversight, and hiring and training of a highly qualified staff. This helps define the work that principals do, which is part of leadership. However, to move beyond leadership behaviors and responsibilities, and to define a leadership practice, we must understand the how and why of what school leaders do.

It is insufficient to observe school leadership in action and produce extensive narration and feedback of observed practices. Rather, in this study, successful leadership practices in action are brought into the context of the VAL-ED Matrix and ES-I framework to clearly name the specific practices of these leaders. The six core components from the VAL-Ed Matrix and the five essential supports provide the context and a macroscopic perspective of what leaders do. How leaders conduct this work and why they do it are found in the VAL-ED six key processes and the ES-I 14 indicators and are found in the smaller tasks that leaders accomplish in a collaborative or distributive leadership process. The convergence of how the VAL-Ed Matrix and the ES-I framework are used in this study to flesh out what successful leaders do and formulate these actions helps define leadership practice within the context of the Leadership Practice triangle from Spillane et al. (2004).
Given the premise that school leaders and the faculty and staff within the school set a goal or a set of goals, leadership practice in the school then becomes defined in the convergence of the work of the principal and the faculty to conduct tasks and meet goals in a given situation (see Figure 7). Thus, a leadership practice for this study can be defined as the processes in which the principal (leader) interacts and influences the faculty and staff (followers) in this particular school (situation) by focusing efforts on certain areas (e.g., core components, key processes, essential supports, or indicators) in order to establish the conditions required to meet identified school improvement goals.

Figure 7. Defining a leadership practice.
Summary

This chapter reviewed the leadership literature and argued for the development of a leadership practice construct. Four bodies of leadership literature were reviewed. The first was the literature on what leaders know about ELA learners. The second body of literature reviewed early precursors of the leadership practice construct: effective schools, direct and indirect effects of principal leadership on student achievement, and instructional leadership. The third body of literature that was reviewed focused on early references to the leadership practice construct: the LPI, the readiness model drawn from HP-HP literature, and the importance of distributed leadership. The final body of literature in this chapter reviewed the two conceptual frameworks used in this study as the context to define leadership practice. The next chapter will outline the research procedures that will be used to identify the specific and particularized leadership practices currently being used by the principal who leads the successful school serving ELA learners.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the details of the methodology used in this study to answer the research questions. The first section outlines the methods used in this research: case study analysis and narrative inquiry. The second section will focus on the research design elements: site selection, subjects, unit of analysis, and the seven stages of this research study. The third section describes the research instruments used in this study; the VAL-ED Survey, the Leadership Practices Interview Protocol, and the Narrative Interview Protocol. The following section outlines data collections strategies to be used for each instrument. Next data analysis procedures will be presented. Data coding inventory development will be explained in the next section. Finally, this chapter ends with how data were triangulated and member checking procedures used for ensuring trustworthiness of data in this study.

Methods

Two methods of research were utilized in the study; case study analysis and narrative inquiry. The following two sections will briefly describe these methods and the relevance of their use in this study.

Case Study

Case study analysis is appropriate for this study in that the aim of the study is to search for meaning and understanding of leadership practices and the researcher functions as the primary instrument for data collection (Merriam, 2009). Stake (2006) explains, “a case is a noun, a thing, an entity. . . . Schools may be our cases—real things that are easy to visualize” (p. 1). In addition, Merriam (2009) introduces the concept of
boundaries in her definition of case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). Understanding the meaning of a bounded system is important in that it defines the context of what is actually being studied (Merriam, S.B., 2009; Stake, R. E., 1995). Yin (2008), defines case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

In this study, each school in the DPS school system participating in this study is considered a bounded system. Each case study school is highly impacted (greater than 40%) with ELA learners and has demonstrated success through increased student achievement as evidenced by growth in standardized test performance in the context in which leadership practice will be studied. The in-depth description and analysis to understanding the meaning of leadership practices will define the leadership practices used by successful principals. The use of two interview protocols, the Principal Interview and the Narrative Interview, were used as the primary instruments to gather the information about the leadership of the principal at the determined site. For these reasons, utilizing case study analysis in conjunction with information gathering through interviews are appropriate methodologies for this study.

Narrative Inquiry

Webster and Mertova (2007) report that while the use of stories of experience has not often been seen as an inquiry method, but rather as a way to collect data, narrative inquiry is set in human experience and human stories and therefore is “well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience of teaching and learning” (p. 1) and leading. Bell (2002) also reports that the process of narrative inquiry is based
on the assumption that human beings make sense out of their life experiences by telling stories. Early proponents or narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Grumet, 1981; Gough, 1991) argued that narrative inquiry is an important and compelling methodology best suited to uncover what may otherwise be invisible to us, but through the use of storytelling methodologies. Webster and Mertova report that narrative inquiry is becoming a respectable method, particularly in educational research (2007, p. 24). Additionally, Reissman (2008) cautions that narrative inquiry methodological perspectives “have elusive, contested, and indeterminate borders” (p. 183). Reissman (2008) also contends that the validity or “trustworthiness” of narrative inquiry methodology should be “assessed from within the situated perspectives and traditions that frame it” (p. 185). In this study that situated context is a school, it’s cultural and academic contexts, and the specific and particularized leadership practices that the principal has put into place over a period of at least 3 or more years. For these reasons narrative inquiry was selected for use in this study.

**Research Design Elements**

This section will review the elements of the research design for this study. The first section will discuss site selection. The second section will discuss the subjects for this study. The third section will present the unit of analysis pertinent to the case study. Finally, the seven stages that comprise this research study are presented.

**Site Selection**

The research was conducted in Denver Public Schools (DPS) during the 2012-13 school year and completed by the spring of 2013. Schools included in this study met the following five criteria: (a) an open enrollment policy, (b) at least 40% of total
enrollment consisting of ELL students, (c) a total School Performance Framework (SPF) rating greater than 49% for elementary schools, and great than 45% for middle schools and high schools, (d) having at least 50% of the students qualify for a free or reduced lunch, and (e) having demonstrated growth gains on the CSAP and CELA tests for the past three years relative to schools serving the same grade levels. Final determination of school sites included 22 schools in DPS that fit these five criteria.

Also, the principal of the schools must have at least three years of service to the school in the role of the principal. When including this final requirement, 13 schools completed the final list, of which one elementary school was selected based on the willingness of the principal to participate in the study.

Subjects

The case study included the principal, the principal’s supervisor, and the teachers within one school of the 13 qualifying schools in the DPS system. At the selected site school, the subjects include the principal of the school who has served in this leadership role for more than three years. Each of the subjects—the principal, the principal’s supervisor, and 27 teachers—completed the online VAL-ED survey. The principal participated further through the principal interview narrative inquiry protocol. The subjects of this research study were not be required to participate and were given the choice to option out of participation in the research at any time during the study. A total of 22 teachers did not complete the VAL-ED survey.

Unit of Analysis

The units of analysis for this case study were the specifically identified leadership practices that are rated as the principals strengths. The principal was described in the
context of observable leadership behaviors as well as the stories she conveyed about her leadership practices.

**Seven Stages of This Research**

The basic overall design of this study was a staged, qualitative/quantitative case study design (Merriam, 2009). The seven stages are listed and described briefly below.

**Stage one—literature review.** This stage is a historical review of literature on learner-centered leadership from effective schools research, to the key conceptual frameworks used in this study, with a specific focus on the emergence of the construct of a leadership practice.

**Stage two—identifying schools, building tools, and piloting.** In this stage, a single school was identified from the list of successful schools identified within the Denver Public School District where the principal and the teachers and principal’s supervisor were willing to participate in this study. Of the 22 schools that met the five site selection criteria, only 13 remained when the sixth criteria of the principal having at least three years of experience was applied. The researcher made initial contact with the school to explain the study and to acquire the commitment to participate in this study. All interview protocols, coding instruments, and related IRB protocols/applications, forms, and related permissions required for research from Denver Public Schools and the participating school were prepared. The researcher conducted pilot interview protocols with practicing principals who are not part of the study and made modifications to protocol questions. There were no adjustments to the questions, however, all members of the thematic dissertation group agreed to strictly adhere to the interview protocol. The researcher practiced using an Echo Smart Pens for note taking and recording strategies.
Stage three—administration of VAL-ED survey. The researcher visited the school during a portion of a faculty meeting to present the study to the teachers and to share the logistics of the online administration of the VAL-ED survey. The researcher’s mentor, Dr. Connie L. Fulmer, administered the survey ID and PASSWORD CODES for the school principal, the principal’s supervisor, and each teacher in the school. All teacher data collected through the VAL-ED survey was aggregated and no data was identified as coming from any particular teacher. Data were analyzed in house at Discovery Education (www.discoveryeducation.com) and a detailed principal report was produced. The IDs and PASSWORDs were sent by email or hand delivered to the participants (principal, principal’s supervisor, and the teachers) along with the URL for the survey. Teachers were given a start date and an end date for participation in the survey. The principal reports were returned from Discovery Education and the higher rated areas on the VAL-ED Matrix for the principal of this study were identified and used to develop the interview protocol instruments used in Stage Four.

Stage four—constructing and using leadership practice interview protocol. Based on the areas of strength on the VAL-ED survey, the researcher drew relevant questions from the Leadership Practice Interview Protocol associated with those areas. The researcher set an interview date with the principal to go over the VAL-ED results and conduct an interview to determine specifically WHAT she is doing in this successful school serving ELA learners and in particular, HOW is she doing it. This stage resulted in a list of leadership practices that were detailed using codes from the Leadership Practice Study Coding Protocol. The coding system (see Appendix E) for Leadership
Practice Interview was developed a priori utilizing the specific terms and definition from the two evidence base frameworks: the VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I framework.

This stage shows the alignment between the specific and particularized leadership practices and the two conceptual frameworks guiding the study. The Principal Leadership Practice interview was tape recorded (with permission of the principal) and then transcribed for analysis. In addition, the researcher took field notes during the interview using pre-prepared forms that provided for tally options and short notes related to the five essential supports and the fourteen key indicators associated with the Essential Supports & Indicators (Bryk et al. 2010) and the VAL-ED matrix (Goldring, 2009).

Interview transcripts were analyzed using DEDOOSE (http://www.dedoose.com), a quantitative/qualitative data analysis web application. The interview protocol used in this stage is tightly aligned with the two previously mentioned key conceptual frameworks that guide this study.

**Stage five—narrative inquiry protocol.** The interview protocol used in this stage is designed to be much more open ended and elicit critical life and work events from the principal, or her back story of how specific and particularized leadership practices were developed, implemented, improved, and maintained. The interview was recorded (with permission of the principal) and then transcribed. The transcript was shared with the principal for the purpose of clarification, refinement and member checking of the interview protocols.

**Stage six—cross-case analysis.** Since this study is one of five thematic dissertation studies being conducted by the School of Education and Human Development and five of Denver Public Schools successful schools serving ELA
learners, at this point in all five studies, there were questions that emerged from these individual dissertations that were answered using data already collected.

Stage seven—presentation of research findings. At the completion of this work, research findings were prepared for presentation. A defense of this work with the UCD Dissertation Committee was conducted. After a successful defense and incorporating any requested changes or recommendations, I will schedule a presentation with the appropriate players from Denver Public Schools. I hope to present these researching findings at Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) annual conference and publish one or more articles of this work for the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. In collaboration with my thematic dissertation colleagues and Dr. Fulmer, we have plans to include these findings in a book on Successful Leadership Practices for ELA learners.

The seven sections above were created for the IRB approval processes required for this study and present a research chronology of this work. Both UCD and DPS IRB review panels have approved this study. A final step before beginning is to present this study to the dissertation committee to solicit feedback and to incorporate any changes or final recommendations for improving this work.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this study. In this section, the each instrument will be thoroughly described. The instruments are the VAL-ED survey, and two interview protocols. The Leadership Practices Interview is a protocol that will be administered following the completion of the VAL-ED survey. The second interview
protocol is the Narrative Inquiry protocol and will be administered following the Leadership Practices Interview.

**VAL-ED Survey**

The VAL-ED survey is considered to be a 360 degree instrument since the principal will complete a self-assessment and the supervisor of the principal and teachers at the selected school will also be asked to complete a survey. The VAL-ED survey is based on 36 intersections of the six core components and six key processes defined in the VAL-ED Matrix.

The survey (see Appendix A) is approximately 72 questions in length and will require about 25 minutes to complete. Each item is answered using a five point Likert-scale of 1- “ineffective” to 5- for “outstandingly effective”. Percentile ranks are also reported. These percentile ranks are based on a national field trial in which the performance standards were set by a 22-member panel of experts. The specific instructions for the online survey will be accessed by the subjects at the provided URL. The results of the survey will be compiled by the Discovery Education, the VAL-Ed survey vendor and this data will be accessible in online report formats.

**Leadership Practices Interview Protocol**

This interview is the more formal protocol of the two interview protocol instruments developed for this study. The interview will be conducted after the completion of the VAL-ED survey. Formal interview questions were developed using the key components of the conceptual frameworks to try to elicit which were used in the principal’s self-identified leadership practices. This process served to align the leadership practices back to the VAL-ED matrix and the ES-I framework for school
improvement. Several possible questions (see Appendix B) were written for use during the interview. From this extensive list of questions, only those questions that are related to the highest rated leadership practices on the VAL-ED Matrix were utilized. The interview protocol was conducted by the principal investigator and is considered formal as strict adherence to the selected questions was followed. Only additional questions for clarifying terminology, projects, strategies and program specific the school were asked. The interview was conducted in approximately 90 minutes at the case study site.

**Narrative Inquiry Protocol**

The Narrative Inquiry Protocol was designed to gain further insight into the life events and work events that may be relevant to the leadership practices utilized by the principal. This interview protocol was administered after the completion of the Leadership Practice interview and is the more informal interview of the two interview protocols utilized in this study. The sample questions (see Appendix C) for this interview protocol were designed to be open ended and will be developed, in part, based on the principal’s answers from the Leadership Practices Interview protocol. The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to provide the principal the opportunity to reflect on any life-event and work-event that may be of significance to the development of her specific leadership practices. For example, the principal may reflect on their formative leadership years as a young person to early adult leadership roles to deeper understanding of leadership in practice and context while they were an aspiring leader working on a higher academic degree. As the interviewer, the principal investigator—on occasion—asked deeper or more probing questions to help flesh out details of the principal’s work and life experiences. The data gleaned from this narrative inquiry allowed for further cross-
checking with the principal’s ratings on the VAL-ED survey and cross-connection of identified leadership practice with the VAL-ED and ES-I frameworks. During the first part of the narrative inquiry interview, several clarifying and probing questions—developed from the leadership practice interview—were asked for the purpose of member checking and verification of facts. This connection allowed for the development of a set of specific “look-for” terminology and thinking that were helpful in coding responses to the interview questions.

**Data Collection**

Data collection for this study was attained through the use of the three instruments described in the previous section. In this section, the process of collecting data through the use of the VAL-ED survey, the Leadership Practices Interview, and the Narrative Inquiry Interview protocol will be discussed.

**VAL-ED Online Survey**

A meeting with the principal, the school staff, and the principal’s supervisor was to be conducted by the University of Colorado, Denver (UCD) Faculty Advisor of the Principal Investigator (PI) of this research study. The purpose of this meeting was to explain the details and timeline for completion of the survey. The VAL-ED survey was completed using an online format where participants are given an anonymous ID code and password to take the survey located at a specified URL. The UCD advisor functioned as the custodian of the ID codes and was responsible for the distribution of the codes in an effort to maximize subject confidentiality and privacy. The online survey was open to the subjects for two weeks during which time the UCD advisor and PI monitored
the number of survey returns and communicated with the research subjects as needed to maximize participation in the survey.

**Leadership Practices Interview Data**

The Principal Leadership Practice interview protocol was conducted by the PI of the study as he interviewed the school principal. The interview was completed within the 1-2 hour time interval determined for this interview protocol. The method for recording the interview was through the use of a digital recording device, the Echo Smart Pen. During the interview, the researcher used the Echo Smart Pen device similar to writing with a regular pen or pencil. The Echo Smart Pen device is a combination audio recording and digital converter of hand-written note device. Both the recorded audio and digital version of the notes can were downloaded using associated software for further and more detailed and accurate transcription of the interview.

**Narrative Inquiry Interview Data**

Following the Leadership Practice interview, a second interview using narrative inquiry was conducted. This interview was also be conducted by the PI and was completed within the 1-2 hour time interval defined for this interview protocol. The use of the Echo Smart Pen was the primary tool for providing an audio recording and a digital recording of written notes during the interview. Using associated software with the Smart Pen allowed for the download of the digital notes and audio recording for further and more detailed and accurate transcription of the interview.

**Data Analysis**

Three forms of data were analyzed for this study. In this section, the data analysis
of the VAL-ED survey, the Leadership Practices Interview and the Narrative Inquiry protocol will be discussed in three separate sections.

**VAL-ED Survey Data**

Data from the VAL-ED online survey was analyzed in house at Discovery Education (http://valed.discoveryeducation.com/). Data from all survey respondents was included in the statistical calculations and compiled into usable reports for further analysis and interpretation. Provided in the reports was a distribution of scores on all survey items in three categories, (a) how the principal scored herself, (b) how the supervisor of the principal scored the leadership behaviors of the principal, and (c) how the teachers as a group scored the principal. This data is reported as a mean ($M$) score for each item on the survey by each of the categories.

The compilation and comparison of the mean scores from each item in each category are interpreted against a national representative sample, thus providing a percentile rank. Further, a proficiency rating assigned as compared against a set of performance standards evaluated on a four-point rubric that includes the descriptors, below basic, basic, proficient, and distinguished, is provided. The resulting data analysis provides a comprehensive analysis of each item form each of the respondent categories and reporting a mean score, a nationally normed percentile rank, and a standards-based proficiency rating.

**Analysis of Leadership Practices Interview Data**

The use of both qualitative and quantitative data are included in the methodological design of this study, thus a software platform that assists the researcher in handling these different forms of data will be utilized. DeDoose is a cross-platform, web-
based software application that allowed the researcher to cross-analyze the coded text data from the transcribed Leadership Practice interview with the quantitative data obtained from the VAL-ED survey as well as the VAL-ED and ES-I frameworks. The cross analysis of this coded data provided context and information for further discussion of results and conclusion of leadership practices utilized by principals in successful schools serving ELA learners.

**Analysis of Narrative Inquiry Interview Data**

The transcribed text and audio recording of from this interview was uploaded to the DeDoose software platform. This data, which reflects the life events and work events that may be pertinent to the principal’s leadership practice was coded to the VAL-ED and ES-I frameworks. Specifically, analysis of the Narrative Inquiry Interview data was performed by separating the resulting ideas into themes that include, but are not limited to work events and life events. Life events categories may be further analyzed as early childhood, young adulthood, adulthood, professional learning and preparation for work, and experiences from work. Analysis of idiosyncratic stories of the principals from successful schools did reveal how the constructs contained in the foundational conceptual frameworks apply to these data. The analysis of this data was useful in cross-checking the principal’s strengths as identified on the VAL-ED survey with the specific leadership practices identified from the Leadership Practice interview.

**Coding Inventories**

The coding inventories (see Appendix D and E) for the Leadership Practice and the Narrative Inquiry interview protocols are described in this section. Because two evidenced based frameworks, the VAL-ED and ES-I, are used to underpin the
understanding of the leadership practice of principals, it is critical to this to study to connect the terminology and meaning of these two frameworks. The resulting coding inventories serve both to separate distinct practices and to align the constructs with each other. The process for developing the coding inventories is discussed in the next two sections: essential supports and indicator codes, and essential supports and indicator codes aligned with VAL-ED codes.

**Essential Supports and Indicators Codes (ES-I).** The first step in developing the coding inventories included assigning codes that were identifiable with each of the five essential supports and fourteen indicators embedded in the essential supports from the ES-I framework (see Appendix D). Obvious letter abbreviations are used to identify each of the five essential supports and the fourteen indicators. For example, the *instructional guidance* essential support is assigned a code of IG. Similarly, the two indicators contained in IG, *basic skills* and *application emphasis* are assigned the code BS and AE respectively. To further identify the evidence that *instructional guidance* is supported through the indicator of *basic skills*, the code IG-BS is assigned to this essential support-key indicator combination. As the text of the transcribed data is reviewed, these codes will be used to highlight the principal’s responses that correspond to the ES-I essential supports and key indicators.

**Essential Supports and Indicator Codes Aligned with VAL-ED.** In order to accomplish the cross-connection of the interview protocols data with the VAL-ED and ES-I frameworks, as system of coding to support this task was developed. Similar to the coding system developed for the ES-I framework, a coding system for the VAL-ED Matrix was also developed. Codes were assigned at each of the 36 intersections between
the core components and key processes that comprise the VAL-ED Matrix. For example, the first intersection on the VAL-ED Matrix is between the *high standards* (HS) core component and the *planning* (P) key process. The resulting code assigned to this intersection on the VAL-ED Matrix is HS-P. This process was repeated for the entire VAL-ED Matrix and thus corresponding codes were assigned to each of the 36 matrix intersections. To align the ES-I coding inventory with the VAL-ED coding inventory (see Appendix E), a process to blend the two coding inventories was utilized. For the *high standards-planning* intersection or HS-P on the VAL-ED Matrix, the essential supports-indicator codes that align with this intersection are *instructional guidance-curriculum alignment* or IG-CA and *instructional guidance-application emphasis* or IG-AE.

**Triangulation and Member Checking**

Reliability and validity of data collection was established through data triangulation and member checking. The VAL-ED survey data, the Leadership Practices Interview data, and the Narrative Inquiry Interview data were the basis to establish factual accuracy (Krathwohl, 2009). This method of data triangulation to compare data from each of the data collection instruments was essential to checking for consistency in the defined leadership practice(s) that have had a significant impact on the success of the subject principal at the case study school. This is also especially useful since the meaning or context of leadership practice is yet known and was covertly buried in the situation and work of the principal (Krathwohl, 2009). By utilizing The VAL-ED survey data, principal leadership strengths will be easily pinpointed. The Leadership Practices Interview then allowed the interviewer to focus on specific strengths and allow the
subject principal to elaborate on the VAL-ED survey data. The third form of data, the Narrative Inquiry interview provided data from the perspective of principal as she tells the story of their leadership journey through her life-events and work-events. The life events and work events aided in cross checking the leadership strengths from the VAL-ED survey that too were discussed in the Leadership Practice Interview protocol. This triangulation helped unveil any covert meaning or understanding of the specific and particularized leadership practices employed by the principal (Krathwohl, 2009).

The VAL-ED survey not only informed the researcher of the principal’s leadership strengths, but also served as a “point in time” review for the principal. The VAL-ED data was made available to the subject principal and the highest rated matrix intersections were discussed as the researcher performed a cursory overview of the results with the principal. This interaction was a form of member checking as the subject principal reviewed the VAL-ED data and provide further insight and interpretation of the results through her answers to questions from the two interview protocol. Further member checking occurred after the Leadership Practice interview as the subject’s answers were reviewed with the subject during the Narrative Inquiry interview.

Summary

This study uses the definition of leadership practices and results from the VAL-ED Survey to identify leadership practices that are being used by the principal of a successful school serving ELA learners. Schools were identified from the list of successful schools serving ELA learners in DPS. Subjects from the study school participated in rating the principal by completing the VAL-ED survey. The subjects in this case-study included the principal, the principal’s supervisor, and the teachers at the
school. The principal also participated in an interview, and a narrative inquiry session to further highlight her leadership behaviors. Three data collection instruments were used and include the VAL-ED survey, the Leadership Practices Interview Protocol, and the Narrative Inquiry Protocol. Data from the online VAL-ED survey was analyzed by Discovery Education (http://valed.discoveryeducation.com/) for all VAL-ED surveys returned by subjects at the case study school. Data collection was conducted during the fall semester of 2012, and analysis continued throughout the spring of 2013. The purpose of this research is to identify specific and particularized leadership practices being used by principals in successful schools serving ELA learners. The findings of the study will contribute towards an understanding of how to positively impact academic achievement of ELA learners.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the findings of the research questions used to investigate the leadership practices of principals in successful schools serving ELA learners. The first section outlines the demographics of this case study school. The next five sections of this chapter discuss the results and findings for each of the five research questions vital to this investigation: (a) research question #1- what are the self-identified leadership practices, (b) research question #2- how do these leadership practices align to the two evidenced based frameworks (VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I), (c) research question #3- how does the principal’s story (life and work events) contribute to the development of her leadership practices, (d) research question #4- identification of common leadership practices of principals at the case-study schools that were part of this thematic dissertation group, and finally (e) research question #5- how does the definition of a leadership practice derived from the literature hold up based on the findings of this study.

Case Study Demographics

The case study school, Riverbank Elementary, is located in the large urban Denver metropolitan area with a population of approximately 2.7 million people. The school is part of Denver Public Schools (DPS) the second largest school district in Colorado which serves about 80,000 students in the city and county of Denver. The school was selected from a list of 22 schools that met specific demographic, school performance, and program criteria. Of the 22 schools, only 13 schools had principals in
place that met the criteria for serving in the role of principal at the school for at least three years.

Riverbank elementary school is located in a neighborhood community that primarily consists of families of Hispanic origin. Subsequently, of the 680 students enrolled at the school, 643 or 95% are Hispanic (see Table 2), according to the data retrieved from the DPS enrollment snapshot for the 2012-2013 school year. Other important and impacting demographics (see Table 3) for Riverbank elementary school

Table 2
Enrollment and Race and Ethnicity Demographics for Riverbank Elementary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year (enrollment)</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian Pacific Islander</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Multiple Races</th>
<th>Percent Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009 (681)</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010 (632)</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011 (682)</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012 (666)</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013 (680)</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>96.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

includes 660 students (97.1%) who qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL), there are 469 students (69.0%) classified as ELA learners, and 81 students (11.9%) qualify for special education services. Grade levels for the school include an Early Childhood Education (ECE) program as well as Kindergarten through the fifth grade. There are 49 licensed staff and 68 total staff employed at the school.
The principal—Anna Marie Alicea (who prefers to be called Marie)—was previously an ESL teacher at the school, and after several years away from the school, serving as an Instructional Coach and Assistant Principal in DPS, Marie returned to the school as the principal. This is her fifth year of service to the school in this role. During her interview for this principal position, Marie was very clear and adamant about her commitment to immediately bring a \textit{transitional English language program} for ELA learners to the school. She believed that this effort would better prepare students for state mandated assessments by the midway point in the third grade.

Table 3

\textit{Program Demographics for Riverbank Elementary School}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year (enrollment)</th>
<th>FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH</th>
<th>ELA LEARNERS</th>
<th>SPECIAL EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students Qualified for FRL</td>
<td>% FRL</td>
<td>ELA Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009 (681)</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010 (632)</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011 (682)</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>97.8%</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012 (666)</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013 (680)</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To this day, the transitional English language program for ELA learners, an immense paradigm shift from the bilingual classroom model that was well entrenched at the school, remains in place and is considered the major contributing factor to the school’s
high academic growth and improved achievement on state and district standardized assessments.

As a Title 1 qualified school, both full-day ECE and Kindergarten are offered and taught in Spanish. The school was designated as an Effective Practice Incentive Community (EPIC) school in DPS for establishing a school-wide transition program for ELA learners. This designation means that principal and teacher compensation is linked to purposeful sharing of effective educational practices in the pursuit of increased student achievement and teacher efficacy. Because the school is located in a bilingual and primarily Hispanic community, the Mexican-American culture is embraced by the school through celebrating and respecting many traditions that identify the community.

**Research Question #1**

*Using the definition of a leadership practice as a guide (Chapter II), what are the specific and particularized self-identified leadership practices being used by the principal in this study to ensure a positive impact of that school on student growth/achievement?*

A leadership practice was defined as having three components in which the leader interacts and influences the followers in a particular situation by focusing work efforts on certain areas (e.g., core components, key processes, essential supports, or indicators) in order to achieve school goals. The first component, the leadership practice triangle (see Figure 5) illustrates the complex interactions of leaders and followers in the context of specific situations. The second component is found in the specific situation in which the work is defined, as determined by the leaders and followers, to forge forward. Finally, to forge forward, the leaders and followers define both proximal and distal goals that help them meet challenges and solve problems within the context of specific situations. Along
with these critical components of a leadership practice described above, Marie also described a variety of tools and activities that were used to achieve the proximal and distal goals. These tools and activities that emerged uncovered during the two interview sessions conducted with Marie for the purpose of this case study. The specific and particularized particular leadership practice that emerged from this study and the components of this leadership practice are unpacked below.

A Leadership Practice Uncovered

In the spring of 2007, Marie interviewed for the position of principal at Riverbank elementary school. It was during this interview that Marie made clear her intentions and the direction in which she would take the school. One of those directions for Marie was a non-negotiable.

~ “One of the pieces I spoke to at the interview that was a non-negotiable was to really improve our transition to English Plan.”

At the time of the interview, Riverbank elementary school was on academic watch and by current standards would have been considered to be a priority improvement school. Marie felt that an emphasis to accelerate the transition of English language acquisition of the large majority of Spanish speaking students was critical to the school’s success.

~ “This was basically a 180, we were going from the majority taking the 3rd grade reading and writing in Spanish to taking it in English.”

The goal here was to shift the administration of state mandated assessments to English, rather than in Spanish. Marie’s clear communication and her commitment to bring this “non-negotiable” change to the school is evidence of the motivation for her leadership practice of initiating a broad scope paradigm shift or change in an organization.
Leadership Practice Triangle

To facilitate the extreme change Marie began to identify and involve pertinent staff for specific tasks and challenges. She understood the importance of developing or capitalizing on staff buy in as a leverage point to build leadership capacity. Marie fostered leadership capacity by creating various leadership groups or teams such as the building level leadership team, grade level teams, and a Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS) team. In each case, Marie functions as the leader, providing clear direction and goals for each team. However, each team is empowered to develop the plan of action, solutions—the work—in which they will engage to meet proximal and distal goals to overcome the challenges of the school situation. For Riverbank, the context of the situation is defined in the complexity of challenges and barriers of a school with an almost 70% ELA learner population and 97% FRL population. It was through this model of distributive leadership that Marie’s leadership practice was able to create the critical mass in the school to not only facilitate large scale change, but to do it with a high level of empowerment and employee satisfaction.

The Work Focus of the Leadership Practice

With the commitment to establish an effective school-wide English language transition program, Marie had to establish a strong sense of professional capacity that incorporated a distributive leadership model. Within this model of distributed leadership, Marie understood the importance of staff buy-in to embrace this immense change and the need to build and foster the leadership capacity among the staff. Additionally, the academic and learning culture of the school had to change. Marie’s leadership work focus (see Table 4), is separated into three broad categories: systemic change.
professional capacity, and the culture of learning. Through these three broad categories of Marie’s leadership focus, the work—or the activities and tools created and used by followers—can be clearly delineated and easily understood. These work activities and tools are described in the next section.

**Tools and Activities Related to the Work Focus**

There are three sets of groups of tools and activities associated with the leadership practice of this principal. The first group contains activities to prepare students to be able to take tests in English. The second group of tools and activities focuses on daily and bi-weekly collaborative team meetings focused on specific work targets. The third group of tools and activities centers around a strong focus on maximizing the learning environment for students. Each is noted in Table 4 below and detailed further below in the paragraphs that follow.

**A focus on the importance of learning English.** The first broad leadership focus is the bold leadership decision and commitment of Marie to point Riverbank elementary school in the direction of a key paradigm shift—moving from a bilingual classroom model to a more accelerated English language transition program—that has been critical to the school’s recent achievement and growth gains. Marie realized the importance of building relationships and recruiting the right people to help launch this work.

~ “The best buy-in piece, when I became principal in 2008 was that I was an assistant principal here for three years, then I left, then I was selected to come back as the principal. So that was my first buy-in that required effort on my part but made my job easier, because of relationships I had. I knew half of the staff.”
Table 4
*A Derived Leadership Practice Logic Model at Riverbank Elementary School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK FOCUS</th>
<th>TOOLS/ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>PROXIMAL GOALS</th>
<th>DISTAL GOALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Systemic Change or Improvement Strategy</td>
<td>Preparing students to take standardized tests in English Building capacity for systemic change</td>
<td>Primary language of instruction is English Increase the number of 3rd grade students taking the CSAP in English</td>
<td>Implement Language Transition Program to facilitate student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Capacity</td>
<td>Daily grade level team meetings Bi-weekly grade-level team meetings (extended time) Gathering practice writing in various genres (summary writing) Grouping/regrouping students for instruction</td>
<td>Progress Monitoring School-Wide Writing Benchmarks and Rubrics Scoring Conferences Longitudinal Data Response to Intervention Distributed Leadership Teams (i.e., Leadership Team, PBIS Team, and Grade Level Teams)</td>
<td>Grade level proficiency in reading, writing and math Develop strong life skills for college and workforce readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of Learning</td>
<td>Focus schedule on core academics Minimize distractions and disruptions Maximize instructional time Hold high standards for ELA learners</td>
<td>Grade Level Proficiency (in reading, writing, and math) Powerful Culture of Learning for Students</td>
<td>Increased student achievement and growth on standardized tests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To bring a sense of urgency, Marie describes how she communicated this to staff and leveraged relationships to set the best scenario for success:

~ “The buy-in started with something the staff knew we needed. I think that they work well together, they like coming to work, this seems simple, yet it is important. I give them a lot of flexibility of course within my non-negotiable. “

~ ”And I have relationships with people here. I have strong relationships.”
Relationship building is also critical to Marie’s leadership focus to build professional capacity, as it is through these relationships and the immense mutual respect and trust that exist at Riverbank elementary, that many other work-focus activities and tools to emerged.

**Collaborative teams focused on specific work targets.** As is typical of large-scale or systemic change in a school, the work that defines this change occurs in small increments and through small delegated groups or committees. To build this level of professional capacity, and conduct the work critical to meeting several proximal goals and the more important distal goals of increased student achievement and growth, several committee structures were created along with specific initiatives and classroom tools. The tools and activities here are contingent on the widespread use of distributive leadership in the form of planning and implementing several leadership groups (e.g., leadership team, the PBIS team, and grade-level teams) there are several examples that demonstrate widespread leadership capacity throughout the school. Each leadership group has clear direction and expectations as communicated by the principal. However, each leadership group is empowered to make decisions, seek out, design and implement their own solutions, interventions and plans of action to address identified challenges and problems.

One leadership group that is key to Marie’s strongest key processes—planning and implementing—is the school leadership team.

~ “and we have a leadership team with 13-14 team members. This team deals with anything about instruction, scheduling, assessments.”

Marie describes this team as representative of the school staff, having a teacher from each grade level, specials teachers, and other critical personnel (e.g., literacy facilitator, special
education teachers) as part of the team to make the main decision for the school and
direct and re-direct the work focus. Evidence of the importance of leadership team
decisions and direction are found in the creation of grade-level teams and the PBIS team.

Marie views the grade-level teams as the real work horses of the distributive
leadership model at Riverbank elementary. Each grade-level team has a team leader,
who is the grade-level representative on the leadership team and thus becomes the
primary communicator for the team between the principal and the leadership team. The
grade-level teams meet almost daily at a minimum and for an extended period of time
every other week. Marie explains the structure and purpose of grade-level teams in the
following way.

~ “I participate in extended grade-level meetings, so I see the teachers face to
face at least every other week or once a week for sure. That gives me face time for
1.5 hours. I think this is one of the best ways to communicate.”

The work of the grade-level teams is well defined and monitored by Marie, however
there is a deep belief (Marie’s non-negotiable) and empowerment of the teams to go
about the work as the team decides and in an effort to meet student needs and organize
their work-life.

The best example is the school-wide agreement and commitment to conduct five
benchmark writing prompts per year. Each grade level team is responsible for
implementing the benchmark writing assessment. Each team brings the student writing
samples to a scoring conference that includes the teachers on the grade-level team, the
literacy facilitator, the principal and other support teachers (i.e. special education
teachers). At every scoring conference, every student at the grade level is discussed,
whether the student completed the assessment or not. This ensures the students name and status and progress surfaces at least three times in the school year. The scoring of the writing prompts is a collaborative process and writing samples are scored against a set of school-wide writing rubrics for the specific genres of writing. Every writing sample is evaluated and a collaborative agreement is reached. The results for all student writing are collected at a central point and made available to all teachers throughout the school.

Marie describes this work activity as follows,

~ “We have two specific ways to monitor. For writing we have school wide writing prompts. We try to do five per year. We have our own way to collect data. We have these forms, we keep it simple. For reading we have something similar. We call them reading benchmarks; they are grade level reading passages. Kids are asked to summarize, there is short constructed response, and there is always an inference. We use these to measure against grade level. This is important because we regroup for reading and so we want to see progress from a starting point, but also compare against grade level standards.”

Over the course of several years, teachers will have available to them the longitudinal performance data for each student on multiple grade level writing benchmarks. A similar process is in place for reading and math. All licensed teachers in the core academic areas are assigned a grade-level team and participate and contribute to the benchmark assessment process.

This obvious and deliberate commitment to facilitate the major improvement strategy to accelerate the English language transition program through the use of a distributive leadership model is deeply embedded in the many work related activities and
tools in place at Riverbank elementary. However, many of these work related activities and tools are focused largely on the professional capacity and behavior of the staff. Complimentary to this work focus is also Marie’s leadership focus to establish a culture of learning that is conducive to creating an environment that allows the above activities and tools to thrive and meet distal and proximal goals. This learning environment work focus is discussed in the next section.

Maximizing the learning environment for students. Parallel to the time that Marie initiated the plan to implement the shift in English language acquisition, she also focused on establishing a culture in which teaching and learning are the priority work of the school. Examples in this area include the planning and implementation of a daily schedule that is conducive to supporting students and teachers through the use of time, limiting interruptions and distractions and celebrating student and teacher successes. Many examples of this are listed below.

~ “We started this here with the schedule. The starting point is in terms of the language we use is in maximizing the instructional time.”

~ “Nothing interrupts instructional time.”

~ “I would use the word PROTECTING the instructional time”

~ We started with a schedule that had everybody teaching the same subject at the same time, allowing people common planning time in the morning and once during the day and getting rid of stuff.”

~ “Getting rid of assemblies that wasted time, getting rid of most parties. Except Valentine’s Day and Halloween, these and those are more community expectations, especially Halloween.”
~ "We set guidelines around that. Everything has to happen after 2:30. It is not that we are no fun, but it can’t take the entire day."

~ “Along with that we did away with all announcements. We schedule ‘charge drawings’ once per week as a reward for kids and this happens first thing on Monday morning only.”

~ "No phone calls to classrooms. The phones are set to go directly to voice mail. We told parents we will not transfer calls to classrooms. It has made a difference. You should be able to teach for a chunk of time with no interruptions."

Now that the work focus activities and tools have been discussed, the next section will connect the leadership focus and the work focus with specific and corresponding proximal and distal goals presented in Table 4.

**Proximal Goals of the Work Focus**

The proximal goals associated with the work focus of the leadership practice are also associated with specific distal goals (see Table 4). This section discusses the proximal goals that are direct results of the tools and activities used to achieve them. Proximal goals are defined as the short-term goals or stepping stones that lead the way to meeting the broader or larger distal goals.

Marie’s leadership focus as a change agent—to enact the systemic change to create and implement an English language transition program—had only one very simple and clear proximal goal. It was to increase the number of students in the third grade taking the CSAP in English.

~ "We had students at the fifth grade scoring incredibly high on the CELA-Pro in Spanish and were reading at the Kindergarten level in English.”
To accomplish this proximal goals, Marie had to convince the staff to phase out the bilingual instruction approach in most classrooms and infuse teaching and learning in English as the primary language for instructional delivery.

~ “we had no plan to transition kids to English. We had this old fashioned philosophy that kids had to be proficient in Spanish before we could transition them to English.”

Marie had other proximal goals (see Table 4) that became the impetus to drive the work required to build a collaborative work culture and establish a school environment that made teaching and learning a priority. The proximal goals that support Marie’s work focus on professional capacity of staff include: (a) progress monitoring activities, (b) developing school-wide writing benchmarks and rubrics, (c) scoring conferences (d) longitudinal data, (e) response to intervention strategies, and (f) the creation of several distributed leadership teams (i.e., leadership team, PBIS team, and grade-level teams). Often the goals of these teams crossover and create a mesh of support and focus on students.

~ “The modifications or changes (to the curriculum) were done in collaboration with the grade-level teams.”

~ “All of the changes we have done to the reading planning guides for example, narrowing down the number of reading strategies that we teach and aligning them vertically was done first by the grade-level teams, then aligned vertically by the school leadership team, by looking at K-5, and looking at what we were asking the children to do.”
The same thing with the rubrics and that took us a long time. We still continue to improve on the rubric. We continue to work on what is an acceptable work product for the grade level.”

The goal of creating a variety of leadership groups is a foundational component to Marie’s distributive leadership approach, in that she values the skills and abilities of her staff and realizes to do the work and meet goals, building leadership capacity is critical to the school’s success.

“For people to be invested and for people to want to come to work and make meaning in what they do, they need to be involved in decision making. I don’t think a good leader is a police; I don’t like to lead this way. I also want to enjoy what I do. In order to manage such a large building, we created the team leaders structure so that there is a team leader for every grade-level, the specials, and special education.”

The proximal goals that support Marie’s work focus on creating a culture of learning include: (a) meeting grade-level proficiency targets in reading, writing, and math, and (b) the inclusion of students in creating a powerful culture of learning. The setting of high standards for students is of great importance and priority for Marie to meet the goals related to the school’s culture and environment work.

“we also worked on is purposely setting very high standards for the writing rubrics. Meaning that students scoring proficient or advanced on 90% of the items must be the target we meet. We did this purposely and we continue to struggle as it is difficult for our students. It keeps us honest.”
The proximal goals set by Marie and the Riverbank elementary school staff is part of the driving forces that keep the work activities alive and the ability to monitor progress toward the larger scope of distal goals.

**Distal Goals Resulting from the Work Focus**

The work focus areas selected by Marie for her leadership practice, and related tools and activities, which she created and implemented, along with resulting proximal goals achieved, all work together synergistically to produce (or achieve) those desirable distal goals (see Table 4): (a) implementing an English language transition program to facilitate student achievement, (b) increasing grade level proficiency in reading and writing and math, (c) develop strong life skills for college and workforce readiness, and (d) increase student achievement and growth on standardized tests. Distal goals are larger in scope and are usually incorporated into the school’s compressive Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). There is not much adjustment to these goals throughout the year, as this occurs through the monitoring and attainment of proximal goals.

~ “We have stayed with what we were doing, making small adjustments, and small improvements . . . we need to continue the work, it becomes evident what you need to do, what the next step is. The changes now are small; we have not had any other large scale change like the language transition program. Now we adjust, get supplemental materials, adjust the schedule, and make smaller changes.”

In this logic model of Marie’s leadership practice, work activities and proximal and distal goals, there is evidence that the work related to her leadership focus and the effort to
meet proximal and distal goals is effective. Speaking specifically to the distal goals, Marie recalls:

~ “There was a lot of uncertainty when it came to language of testing and language of instruction. If we had done poorly, I would have had to rethink the process. But we didn’t [do poorly] so we made the right decision. And it is still foundational to the school; we increased by 10% just last year.”

In summary, the discussion above for Research Question #1 includes explanation of the leadership practice construct, which included the components of the leadership practice triangle (leader, followers, and the situation), the focus on the leadership practice work (tools, activities, and proximal goals) and the intentional focus on district and UIP goals—the distal goal. In each of these areas, findings were explicated and supported with quotes from interviews with the principal. These findings provide evidence of the literature review derived definition of a leadership practice in context of this particular study school.

**Research Question #2**

*How do the identified successful leadership practices (leadership practice triangle, focus of the work, and proximal and distal goals) align with the key conceptual and evidence-based frameworks (VAL-ED Matrix and the Essential Supports & Indicators Framework) used in this study?*

After analysis of the results of the VAL-ED survey, it was evident that two areas of strength (see Table 5) for the principal at the case study school had emerged. The opinion of the school staff, the principal and the principal’s supervisor indicated that the principal had high proficient ratings on the VAL-ED Matrix core components of *High*
Standards for Student Learning \( (M = 3.73, n = 29) \) and Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior \( (M = 3.75, n = 29) \). Other core components that received proficient ratings include Quality Instruction \( (M = 3.60, n = 29) \) and Performance Accountability \( (M = 3.60, n = 29) \). The core component, Rigorous Curriculum \( (M = 3.34, n = 29) \) was rated as basic. The only core component that received a below basic rating was Connections to External Communities \( (M = 3.06, n = 29) \).

Reviewing the data for the key processes (also see Table 5) the highest proficient ratings are for Implementing \( (M = 3.68, n = 29) \) and Supporting \( (M = 3.77, n = 29) \). All other key process, Planning \( (M = 3.49, n = 29) \), Advocating \( (M = 3.30, n = 29) \), Communicating \( (M = 3.56, n = 29) \), and Monitoring \( (M = 3.50, n = 29) \) are rated as basic.

The overall effectiveness score for the principal, \( M = 3.54 \), resulted in a performance level rating of basic.

Disaggregating the survey results by employee group, Principal \( (P) \), Teacher \( (T) \), and Supervisor \( (S) \), a clearer perspective of the overall effectiveness of the principal can be seen. Table 6 shows the mean scores of each core component and key processes evaluated by each employee group. It is very obvious that the self-survey by the principal yielded the lowest mean score rating among employee groups in every core component. For example, in the core component of High Standards for Student Learning the overall mean is \( M = 3.73, n = 29 \) which equates to a proficient performance level. When taking out the self-rating by the principal \( (M = 2.83, n = 1) \), the mean value of all other respondents (teachers and the supervisor) for this core component increases to \( M = 4.18, n = 28 \) which is at the distinguished performance level. This phenomenon of a lower self-rating is also evident in each of the Key Processes (see Table 6). From the
Table 5
Riverbank Elementary—Mean Score Ratings for Core Components and Key Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SUMMARY OF CORE COMPONENT MEANS</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF KEY PROCESS MEANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Performance Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Standards for Student Learning</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigorous Curriculum</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Instruction</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of Learning &amp; Professional Behavior</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections to External Communities</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>Below Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Accountability</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results taken from The VAL-Ed Survey Principal Report from Discover Education. n=29 (includes principal, the principal’s supervisor, and 27 staff members).

perspective of the principal’s teachers and supervisor, this individual is more viewed as a school leader that is highly proficient-distinguished in most areas on the VAL-ED core components and key processes matrix thus functioning at a highly effective to outstandingly effective performance level.

Additional evidence of the Marie’s strength is found in the transcript analysis of the Leadership Practice Interview and the Narrative Interview. The coding described in Chapter 3 helped to surface other leadership strengths in Marie’s leadership practice. The code frequencies that demonstrate Marie’s leadership practice as they cross over to the ES-I framework are found in Table 7. The most frequent coding occurrences are found
Table 6.
Mean Effectiveness Ratings for VAL-ED Core Components and Key Processes by Respondent Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE COMPONENTS</th>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>KEY PROCESSES</th>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Effectiveness Across Core Components</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>Total Effectiveness Across Key Processes</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3.90</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>Implementing</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Standards for Student Learning</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>3.25</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigorous Curriculum</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<td>Principal</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>3.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Instruction</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<td>Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Culture of Learning &amp; Professional Behavior</td>
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</table>

Note: Results taken from The VAL-Ed Survey Principal Report from Discover Education. \( n = 29 \) (includes principal, the principal’s supervisor, and 27 staff members).

in the Professional Capacity (PC, \( n = 33 \)) and School Leadership (SL, \( n = 27 \)) essential supports. Within the Professional Capacity ES, the indicators of Work Orientation (\( n = 18 \)) and Professional Community (\( n = 24 \)) are most frequently coded. The essential
support of School Leadership has only one indicator, School Leadership that had coding occurrences of \( n = 26 \). The frequency of these codes appearing in the transcript support Maries Core Component and Key Processes strengths on the VAL-ED Matrix discussed above.

The Leadership Practice Interview was focused on the core components and key processes strongest scores from Marie’s VAL-ED survey results. The transcript coding frequencies for both interviews (see Table 8) indicate Marie’s strong leadership practice as related to the *High Standards* \( (n = 53) \) and *Culture of Learning/ Professional Behavior* \( (n = 91) \) core components. Also supporting the results from Maries VAL-ED survey report and high coding frequencies in the *Planning* \( (n = 18, n = 13) \) and *Implementing* \( (n = 8, n = 24) \) key process within the two strongest core components.

In summary, the data most pertinent to aligning the identified leadership practices with the VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I framework was presented. A review of the mean score rating of from the VAL-ED principal report was discussed in relation to the principal’s highest rated core components and key process. Further discussion of the VAL-ED survey results presented the mean score ratings from each employee group participating in the VAL-ED survey for principal effectiveness within the six core components and six key process of the VAL-ED Matrix. Finally, coding frequency data was presented to build the case that elements of both of these evidence evidence-based frameworks (VAL-ED Matrix and the Essential Supports & Indicators Framework) do exist in the work of the principal.
Table 7

*Essential Support (ES) and Indicator (I) Code Frequencies (n) Resulting from Transcript Analysis*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS (ES) – INDICATORS (I)</th>
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<td>TiC (1)</td>
<td>PCST-TiC (7)</td>
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<td>PI (6)</td>
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<td>CHR (3)</td>
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<td>Professional Capacity – Work Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Capacity – Professional Community</td>
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<td>PC (24)</td>
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<td>S&amp;O (6)</td>
<td>SCLC-S&amp;O (29)</td>
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<td>AS&amp;P (17)</td>
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<td>CA (11)</td>
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<td>Instructional Guidance – Basic Skills</td>
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<td>Instructional Guidance - Application Emphasis</td>
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Table 8
*Core Components and Key Processes Code Frequencies (n) Resulting from Transcript Analysis*

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<tr>
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<td>CLPB-C (14)</td>
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<td>CEC-C (0)</td>
<td>CEC-M (0)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>P-P (1)</td>
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<td>PA-A (1)</td>
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<td>PA-C (3)</td>
<td>PA-M (4)</td>
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</table>

**Research Question #3**

*How do stories of this principal’s critical incidents (both work and life related) contribute to an understanding of how self-identified leadership practices were developed and why these leadership practices emerged and flourished within this particular school and community context?*
Background

Before delving into the many experiences and stories that have influenced Marie’s leadership practice, it is necessary to establish pertinent background information that surfaced during the Narrative Interview. One of the most interesting and likely influential pieces of background information is that Marie herself is an ELA learner. Marie was born and raised in South America and grew up speaking Spanish, while learning English though her private schooling. As a young graduate with a Bachelor’s degree in education, Marie arrived in Denver, Colorado to live with family and seek out her career. She eventually assimilated to the American culture and continued her education, and started a career and family. Some of the most pertinent pieces of Marie’s background are:

~ “I was living with relatives, so my transition and assimilation was better.”

~ “I met my husband at 22. We have two teenage boys.”

~ “I worked as an ESL teacher for Arapahoe Community College, and then for Jewish Family Services.”

~ “I very quickly got word DPS was looking for bilingual teachers. I was offered a job in DPS with no interview. I have never gotten a job so easily, I couldn’t believe it.”

~ “I have been in DPS since 1992. I started teaching in a fifth grade bilingual classroom. I loved teaching fifth grade, that age group is my favorite.”

Eventually, Marie’s career allowed her to build a resume of experience in ESL and serve in a variety of roles at several schools in DPS. This continued path of learning on the job prompted Marie to consider school leadership.
~ “For a few years I was a Title 1 writing teacher. Then I got an itch to do something else, so I became a literacy coach. I completed that qualification process and then worked at three different schools. I then became very interested in administration through this work.”

~ “I got a job as an AP right away. I was very surprised that at my first try I got a job. Now I am a principal and I really enjoy my job. It’s exhausting but I enjoy working with people.”

Critical Work Related Incidents

The Narrative Interview provided Marie the opportunity to tell her story, thus surfacing the most impacting life and work experiences that influence her leadership practice. The work related experiences most evident in her story are most influential on her commitment to model professional behavior and create a work environment that has a high level of trust and mutual respect.

**Modeling professional behavior.** Marie often speaks of how fortunate she has been able to advance her career within the DPS system. Along the way, as a fifth grade ESL teacher, as an instructional coach/literacy facilitator, and as an assistant principal she has been influenced by a range of effective to ineffective school leaders. From her many experiences, she was able to learn from good and poor examples of leadership. Most evident of this learning and her experiences is a very strong, ethical sense of professional behavior and her belief that she must model this daily.

~ “One reason I became an administrator, was because as a teacher I had poor experiences with principals. I had some principals that were just very poor role models.”
“Being at three different schools I was able to compare the leadership and became very much aware of the difference it makes in what I was doing and the difference to the entire school. I could see which schools were more successful than others.”

Marie has a commitment to establishing and modeling professional behavior that will foster the needed trust and mutual respect that is a core component of highly collaborative organizations. Marie’s experience of preferential treatment in her years as a teacher is very telling and eventually became the seed that prompted her to become a principal.

“They [some principals] became very comfortable in their jobs. They develop a circle of friends that they kept close and they have no idea what is happening anywhere. I worked for two entire years where nobody ever came to see me in my classroom for two years. I received outstanding evaluations. Actually I did my own; the principal gave me the form and had me fill it out.”

This work experience was the early start to Marie’s formulation of how a leader should conduct themself professionally.

“I have no respect for that educator, whatsoever. I can rise above that, I don’t want to do my own evaluations; I don’t want work for someone so lazy. I could see I was allowed an opportunity because I wasn’t giving anyone any trouble. I was a typical teacher who didn’t cause problems, wouldn’t send children to the office. I was rewarded by giving myself outstanding in everything. I think that most smart people can see that this is not okay. That was one of my reason I was thinking I could do better as a leader.”
In her work as a school principal, Marie is visible and engaged with her staff and students. She is also very transparent with expectations of professional behavior for herself and her staff.

~ “I like being with people, I like to engage with students. I don’t hide in my office. To me it’s no effort to do this.”

**Modeling equity and fairness.** The perception of fairness and equity is one of Maries strongest leadership attributes, and is likely very instrumental in establishing a highly collaborative work environment. It is evident that she models and practices these attributes in her daily work and interactions with staff.

~ “We work hard not to create unjust or fair practices. People resent unjust or unfair practices. The favoritism issue has influenced me not to have favorites. I would be taken aback if someone said I have favorites.”

The leadership focus Professional Capacity (see Table 3) is clearly evident in Marie’s leadership practice to develop a distributive leadership model that has network of leadership groups that function in a highly collaborative work environment. Past work experiences have definitely helped Marie realize the importance of modeling professional and ethical behaviors.

~ "Fairness is was always important to me. Being fair, as a child and also as an adult. Situations that were unfair or situations in which decisions were made based on the privileged few or those with connections or those in the inner circle were things that always bothered me as a child and in high school and as a teacher.”
The fair and equitable treatment of staff by Marie has served her well to establish the professional capacity to function as a highly collaborative and successful school.

The critical work experiences for Marie have been the foundation for her deep belief and commitment to modeling professional behavior and creating a work environment based upon fairness and equity. In the next section, the critical life experiences that helped mold Marie throughout her childhood and young adult life present similar foundational importance to the emergence and development of her leadership practice.

**Critical Life Related Incidents**

When speaking of critical life incidents, Marie recalls two school experiences and the political scenery in her birth country during parts of her childhood that have been very influential to her leadership practice. The two school experiences have embedded the passion that resides in Marie’s vision of what school should be for young students.

~ “*What I draw from these experiences is that it is very important that my own children and the children that came to my own classroom when I was a fifth grade teacher and all of the children here at Riverbank have a positive experience in school.*”

Unfortunately for Marie, school as a young child was not a good experience. At the urging and wish of her parents, Marie was enrolled in an English teaching school with very strict behavior standards and a traditional approach to teaching. Marie recalls the continuous angst of attending school. The strict authoritarian structure did not make sense to Marie and she rebelled by running away from school. Eventually, Marie decided to no longer attend the school.
“I did not do well, I struggled a lot at the school. I have a real problem with authority that makes no sense to me. I was becoming sick, my parents would be driving me to school, I would be sick to my stomach due to how much I hated that school. And I always remembered that, because the worst thing that could happen is for a kid to hate coming.”

Drawing from this experience is what drives Marie’s commitment to developing a culture of learning at Riverbank that finds appropriate balance between establishing a safe and welcoming learning environment, an academic approach that sets high standards for student performance, and celebrating the accomplishments and success of student performance.

“The conversation I have with staff that struggle with students is that the worst thing you can do to a student is make them hate school. Because they will not come to school, they have to feel welcome; someone has to like them...especially in elementary school. Maybe this is different when they are older, but when you are little, that is what you are looking for; to feel welcome and for people like you.”

These life experience stories are clearly connected to Marie’s identified strength on the VAL-ED Matrix—culture of learning and professional behavior—and the ES-I framework—student centered learning climate—as well as being evident through her leadership practice as the principal at Riverbank elementary school. Also having influence is Marie’s remembrance of the impact that a political regime can have on the quality of education for students.
Marie remembers the political climate in her country, although perceived to be democratic, it was more military rule, and much of how schools were operated and what was taught, was dictated by the military regime that controlled the country.

~ “I grew up under military government in my home country. We did not have any democracy until 1983. My school years were under military dictatorship. I later realized that school really was important, and when I was older, I realized how government really could manipulate minds. Not here so much, because government here hasn’t been overthrown. But when governments are overthrown, and you have dictators or like in Venezuela a quasi-democracy, they change the curriculum. All of a sudden you don’t learn about the three powers, you don’t learn about the congress. You don’t know there is a constitution. They begin to manipulate the history curriculum. They begin to dictate; they put their pictures in all classrooms, and only allow certain things to be taught. As I was growing up I realized these things.”

The impact to Marie in this part of her story is communicating the importance of education, and reminding herself and her staff daily the importance of the focus of the work they do and the goals they strive to achieve. Marie puts the work at Riverbank in perspective by advocating for the English language transition program from the perspective of her students competing academically and for jobs beyond their time in DPS.

~ “It has influenced me as I get older and think about how much we take for granted our free public education. Here it’s normal, one of few places where it’s normal and expected and nobody thinks twice about it.”
Importance of Story to a Leadership Practice

The art and science of leadership practice for any individual is influenced by a multitude of critical life and work experiences. Leaders, in nearly everything they do, regardless of the many traits and qualities that define them (confidence, decisiveness, intellect, etc.) are influenced by critical life and work experiences. The range of these life and work experiences occurs early in childhood, during young adulthood, and as an experienced leader. One way to understand the influence of such critical life and work experiences is to know the leaders life and work story.

For this study, the story is told through narrative inquiry after defining Marie’s most evident and strongest leadership practices. Because the research design surfaced the leadership practices in a prior interview, some obvious connections could be easily made while analyzing the narrative inquiry transcript. In Marie’s story, several examples of how critical life and work experiences have influenced her as a leader are presented.

One example is Marie’s total commitment to create a culture of learning that is not only academically challenging and responsive but also one that creates an environment that is welcoming and the sense that students want to be at school. At first glance, creating this kind of culture of learning might be thought of as common to the work of any principal at any school. However, after studying the leader’s story, much deeper and meaningful drivers for her leadership practice emerge. For Marie, her own dislike for school and her reaction of being sick at the thought of attending school created a long and lasting memory for what she now believes school should be for all students, a place they love to come. Having the awareness of a leader’s story often creates a picture
of deeper meaning and understanding of how a leadership practice evolves or why it even exists.

**Research Question #4**

What leadership practices (work focus, tools and activities) used by principals of successful schools serving ELA learners in this study are common to the leadership practices (work focus, tools and activities) of the other principals participating in this study?

The data and results to be analyzed for this cross-case study analysis are taken from four cases comprising this thematic dissertation research study. Each of the cases being considered in the cross-case study has met the same selection criteria presented in Chapter 3. The cross-case analysis is based on the use of quantitative data taken from the VAL-ED survey and coding frequencies from interview transcripts, along with qualitative data in the form of excerpts from the interviews. The coding was conducted by fellow doctoral candidates comprising this thematic group dissertation.

The analysis of coding frequencies from the Leadership Practice and Narrative interview transcripts for each case study school reveals very apparent commonalities among the schools. The combined coding frequencies for the two interviews for each case school—which are in regard to Core Components and Essential Supports—are presented in Table 9. The most apparent common theme is within the Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior (CLPB) core components. In each of the cases, the coding frequencies for this core component are the highest, with Case 2 (n = 32) being the exception in which CLPB is the second highest coding frequency. The CLPB coding
frequency is the coded core component for Case 1 \((n = 140)\), Case 3 \((n = 100)\), and Case 41 \((n = 67)\). Other commonalities exist, but do not hold for all cases.

Also in Table 9, the mean score effectiveness rating for each VAL-ED Matrix core component for each case study principal is presented. It is important to note the mean score effectiveness rating for CLPB: Case 1 \((n = 3.75, \text{ proficient})\), Case 2 \((n = 3.45, \text{ basic})\), Case 3 \((n = 4.34, \text{ distinguished})\), and Case 4 \((n = 3.46, \text{ basic})\), reveal that each principal is effective in the area of CLPB at the basic or higher level.

The coding frequencies for the ES-I Framework reveals that the top three most frequently coded essential supports—professional capacity (PC), school leadership as the driver for change (SL), and student centered learning culture (SCLS) are common to each case. Professional capacity is the most frequently coded ES for each case, Case 1 (PC, \(n = 77)\), Case 2 (PC, \(n = 66)\), Case 3 (PC, \(n = 100)\), and Case 4 (PC, \(n = 97)\). The essential support—school leadership as the driver for change (SL)—is the second commonly coded ES for three cases, Case 1 (SL, \(n = 62)\), Case 2 (SL, \(n = 36)\), and Case 4 (SL, \(n = 35)\). The third most frequently coded essential support is SCLC, Case 1 (SCLC, \(n = 55)\), Case 2 (SCLC, \(n = 38)\), and Case 4 (SCLC, \(n = 19)\). Although Case 3 is an exception in the common order of the three most frequently coded essential supports, the trend of the three most frequently coded essential support hold in that SCLC is second and SL is third, but by a narrow difference of only three code frequencies. With this minor difference, the important point here is that the three most frequently coded essential supports for each case are the same.
Table 9
Cross-Case Analysis of Coding Frequencies for VAL-ED Matrix and ES-I Framework

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>CORE COMPONENT</th>
<th>VAL-ED MATRIX</th>
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<th>ES-I FRAMEWORK</th>
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<td>VAL-ED MEAN</td>
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<td>ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS</td>
<td>Frequency*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Frequencies were tabulated from the code application matrix (See Appendix E) by summing all code frequencies (Core Component and Key Processes) for the VAL-ED Matrix (B = Basic, P = Proficient, D = Distinguished) and all code frequencies (Essential Supports and Indicators) for the ES-I framework.
To help flesh out the common work focus of the principals in these cases and make connections to the common coding themes among the core components and essential supports that are evident, a connection to the actual work focus (tools and activities) is in order. Evidence of the work focus of each principal is presented in Table 10, Table 11 and Table 12 below. Each table presents the highest common coded Core Concepts and Essential Supports from Table 9, along with specific quotes from the principal at each case study school. This data has been categorized into three relevant work focus concentration areas: (a) learning culture, (b) strategic change, and (c) professional capacity.

The VAL-ED core component—Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior—was highly rated in each case study. Evidence of the work focus at each case study school in regard to learning culture is presented in Table 10. What is conveyed in the words of these principals is the work they do to ensure there are integrated communities of professional practice focused on student academic and social learning in a healthy school environment where student learning is the central focus.

The same approach of connecting the principal’s words to frequently coded Core Components and Essential Supports (see Table 11) is also utilized to demonstrate the work focus in the area of systemic change. Principals at the case study schools, in response to low performance and an era of high accountability, have identified at least one area in needing immediate systemic change. The excerpts presented in Table 11 provide evidence of systemic change as well as the skill of these principals in a variety of areas such as addressing instructional issues, making curricular decisions, and responding to various performance measures.
Table 10  
Evidence of Common Work Focus (Activities/Tools) - Culture of Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case ID</th>
<th>Coding Evidence</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASE 1</td>
<td>CLPB HS SL SCLC</td>
<td></td>
<td>We all understand our purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>We are clear why we work in an elementary school that would be a culture of learning, we are here for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
<td>We are here to provide a successful learning experience to our students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>We make decisions for student and we put our needs as adults second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE 2</td>
<td>CLPB HS SL SCLC</td>
<td></td>
<td>We are a learning community and while it wasn’t as open and trusting I would have liked, it’s developed over the years and so we have it where teachers work together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>We have common assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>We have teachers planning their units and aligning them back to common core standards. Right now we’ve done that work before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE 3</td>
<td>CLPB HS SL SCLC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday morning is data teams meetings and Thursday morning is data teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>So I have the data teams divided up into primary, and then intermediate, math and literacy because my intermediate is platooned, and so I really just have content teachers more in the intermediate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE 4</td>
<td>CLPB HS SL SCLC</td>
<td></td>
<td>I start with everyone identifying their beliefs and their values and then coming together to find commonalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>And you do a distillation process about the vision and then you keep the vision everywhere. And refer to it. It’s about building in those collaborative pieces, building in the distributed leadership, and it’s a lot of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, evidence of established professional capacity in these case study schools through the words of each principal at each case study school is presented in Table 12. The professional capacity essential support and the culture of learning and professional
Table 11
Evidence of Common Work Focus (Activities/Tools) - Systemic Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case ID</th>
<th>Coding Evidence</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASE 1</td>
<td>CLPB SL SCLC</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One of the pieces I spoke to at the interview that was a non-negotiable was to really improve our transition to English Plan. Everybody wanted that, but it is such a political issue, so it had never been touched. We had students at the 5th grade scoring incredibly high in Spanish and were reading like Kindergartners in English. I made this a very important part of my interview as I was aware of this problem and we had to do something about changing that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE 2</td>
<td>CLPB SL SCLC</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It’s about introducing English sooner. The minute they walk in the door they have their ELD book about English development. It’s a half day program, 30 minutes, if it’s a full day program, 45 minutes. So the kids are learning and according to their language ability and instruction transitioning. And we still have some that are Spanish speakers but we are getting other ones where transition model really are transitioning the kids into English instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE 3</td>
<td>CLPB SL SCLC</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>So number one, foundationally intentional was work around climate and culture and developing that culture of trust. Being very transparent and articulating that on a consistent basis. Especially year one, year two. There wasn’t a level of trust here when I came here and so that took a lot of work. So that would be number one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASE 4</td>
<td>CLPB SL SCLC</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On my walkthroughs I would say, well I had this expectation, but I only saw 45% of folks who had small group instruction in writing and reading. And I would publicize that data and then every week it would begin to change. I’d say that ‘Hey, do you guys realize that 80% of our kids, now are getting individualized, small group instruction. Let’s get 100%’. We probably started at about 20%, and the teachers just don’t think you’ll follow through or publicize how we’re doing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behavior core component are strong indicators of the work focus of each principal to build professional capacity in their schools. Each excerpt provides insight to the collaborative cultures that have spawned a variety of activities and creation of tools such as shared goals and values, a focus on student learning, shared work, and reflective dialogue.
### Evidence of Common Work Focus (Activities/Tools - Professional Capacity)

**Table 12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case ID</th>
<th>Coding Evidence</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE 1</strong></td>
<td>PC, CLPB, SCLC</td>
<td>77, 140, 55</td>
<td>Three times per year we call them the RTI meetings. I am present at every one of them. They are led by our psychologist, I am there to answer or resolve issues or answer complicated questions. The entire GL team participates. We have different jobs for different people. Cindy types in the information in our shared folders. Everybody has access. You can see all the notes taken since a student has been at Knapp so we can see patterns. My nurse attends and takes notes such as complaints about glasses, hearing, and anything about health. The Humanities Facilitator takes notes on interventions, collection of data points for possible Sped. Testing. Teachers show up with data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE 2</strong></td>
<td>PC, CLPB, SCLC</td>
<td>66, 32, 33</td>
<td>So we try to do a lot of letting teachers have a lot of input into professional development through the SLT. So we ask for teacher input just about everywhere…. This morning I met with my SLT and we were talking about extending the school day again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE 3</strong></td>
<td>PC, CLPB, SCLC</td>
<td>100, 100, 48</td>
<td>I have teacher leaders that facilitate data team meetings, grade level team meetings, the school-leadership team is facilitated by a teacher leader, and collaborative school committee is facilitated by school leader. I mean, by the end of this conversation, you are going to look at me and say “what do you do?” So I meet with them weekly and together we plan the agenda we talk about appropriate protocols, we talk about what happened at the last meeting, and debriefing that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CASE 4</strong></td>
<td>PC, CLPB, SCLC</td>
<td>97, 67, 19</td>
<td>We have weekly grade level meeting, and I sit in on every grade level. I’ll say, ‘OK, this week, I need you to bring your running records’. I’ll sit with the third grade and we’ll look at our running records and see how we’re doing. Someone will say, ‘Oh, I don’t know how to teach our kids beginning sounds’ or something like that. As a group about that. I don’t have all the answers, I don’t know everything. I rely on them to have this dialogue, I just create the place for them to do that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cross-case analysis of four case study schools serving ELA learners has been presented in the form of quantitative data taken form the VAL-ED survey and qualitative data retrieved from the coding of interview transcripts and excerpts from the transcripts.
The data is presented as evidence—based on transcript coding frequencies and strengths on the VAL-ED survey—of the common work focus of these principals.

**Research Question #5**

*Based on a review of relevant literature (the conceptual underpinnings and evidenced-based strategies) and evidence gathered in this study, what is an applied definition of a leadership practice?*

The purpose of this section is to discuss the foundational evidence and information from this investigation to create an applied definition of a leadership practice. First, a review of a definition of a leadership practice prior to this study will be discussed. With the goal of developing an applied definition of a leadership practice, the next section will present new elements of a leadership practice that emerged during data analysis and detailed in several sub-sections: work focus, tools, activities, proximal goals, critical work experiences, and critical life experiences. Finally, with these emerging elements presented, the final section will provide an emergent and applied definition of a leadership practice.

**Definition of a Leadership Practice Prior to Study**

Leadership practice for this study has been defined through the convergence of the VAL-Ed Matrix and the ES-I framework used in this study with context of the Leadership Practice triangle(see figure 7). Thus, prior to this study, leadership practice was defined as the processes in which the principal (leader) interacts and influences the faculty and staff (followers) in this particular school (situation) by focusing efforts on certain areas (e.g., core components, key processes, essential supports, or indicators) in order to establish the conditions required to meet identified school improvement goals.
Elements of a Leadership Practice That Emerged In Data Analysis

The findings of this study show how the following additional concepts are fundamental to developing an applied definition of leadership practice within the context of successful schools serving high poverty ELA students. They include the following additions: (a) work focus, (b) tools, (c) activities, (d) proximal goals, (e) critical work experiences, and (f) critical life experiences.

**Work focus.** The concept of work focus first emerged as leadership strengths of the principal through the results of the VAL-ED survey. The leadership practice interview protocol, which focused on the principal’s highest VAL-ED core components and key processes effectiveness ratings, unearthed the principals most significant work focus in relation to learning culture, professional capacity and strategic change. With respect to the constituents named in the leadership triangle (leaders and followers) work focus is typically established by the leader. For a leader to lead, clarity has to be established in the form of work focus or foci, thus allowing other emerging elements, tools, activities, and goals to be created and evolved.

**Tools.** Once work focus is established, the necessary tools must be acquired or created. Tools are often developed through the need and desire to complete tasks, meet deadlines and timelines, and accomplish goals. This element of leadership practice can be conducted by both leaders and followers, as each are invested in the work to improve and meet goals.

**Activities.** Often a sundry of activities and events will emerge as the leaders and followers engage in the work to address identified problems, plan strategically, and meet defined goals. Activities of work focus can be found in organizational structures such as
professional learning communities and cultures of learning. In a distributive leadership model, the work activities are most often led by the follower and monitored by the leader in his/her own specific, but related, work activity as the organization strives to meet goals. Work activity in the context of leader, followers, and situation is typically where progress or lack of progress toward proximal and distal goals can be found.

**Proximal Goals.** School improvement is most often charted in some form of a broad spectrum school improvement plan. Specific to the case study schools in this research study the overarching long-term (at least the length of time in the school year) student achievement goals are outlined in the UIP. It is common to find mention of the collaborative teams, grade-level teams or leadership teams to be responsible for creating short-term progress monitoring goals as part of their work tools and activities. These goals are usually referred to as SMART goals (strategic, measureable, attainable, relevant and timely), and for the purpose of this research study these are called proximal goals. The proximal goals are what help drive the organized work focus that spawns the creation of tools and impactful activities to meet proximal goals as well as advancement toward accomplishing distal goals.

**Critical work experiences.** The journey to leadership is influenced by a myriad of professional life and work experiences. From the perspective of work experiences, this influence can be in the form a mentor, a previous boss, or a professional development conference or workshop. Regardless of the form of the work experience, it becomes part of the leader’s story and in this story emerges the work experiences having influence on the strengths and weaknesses of the leaders practice.
Critical life experiences. Similar to critical work experiences, leadership is also influenced by critical life experiences. In the field of education, life experiences influencing principals are often attached to their own experiences as a student at some point in their formal schooling. Emerging from the life stories of the principals in this case study are a combination of positive and negative life experiences that had some influence on the principal’s decision to enter school administration and influence on his/her continuous learning and evolution as a leader.

An Emergent and Applied Definition of a Leadership Practice

A leadership practice is interwoven in how the leader interacts and influences the followers in a particular situation through a clearly defined work focus. Within the activity of the work focus, several relevant tools and activities are created that drive the work of leaders and follower in their efforts to meet pre-defined and evolving proximal and distal goals. Therefore, a leadership practice can be defined as the work a leader conducts and participates in through clearly defined work foci within the context of a given situation that inspires the followers to create and evolve a set of tools and activities that drive the work and interactions among the leader and followers that eventually progress toward and meet both proximal and distal goals.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, three sections are used: a summary section, a conclusion section, and a recommendations section. The summary section reviews the following elements of the study: purpose of study, research questions, conceptual frameworks, criteria for selecting study schools, the subjects studied and the unit of analysis, data collection instruments and methods used to collect data. The conclusions section presents key findings from the study, relationship to relevant literature, and major implications of those findings for practice. The final section, recommendations, focuses on recommendations for principals, school districts and preparation programs. Additionally recommendations are made for future research studies on this important leadership practice construct.

Summary of Research Study

The purpose of this study was to identify specific and particularized leadership practices used by the principal that resulted in students and teachers reaching the levels of student achievement that have led to sufficient gains on the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) and Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) tests in these schools for the past three years. This work was guided by the following five research questions:

1. Using the definition of a leadership practice as a guide (developed in chapter two), what are the specific and particularized self-identified leadership practices being used by the principal in this study to ensure a positive impact of that school on student growth/achievement?
2. How do the identified successful leadership practices align with key conceptual and evidence-based frameworks (VAL-ED Matrix and the Essential Supports & Indicators Framework) used in this study?

3. How do stories of this principal’s critical incidents (both work and life related) contribute to an understanding of how self-identified leadership practices were developed and why these leadership practices emerged and flourished within this particular school and community context?

4. What leadership practices used by principals of successful schools serving ELA learners in this study are common to the leadership practices of the other principals participating in this study?

5. Based on a review of relevant literature (the conceptual underpinnings and evidenced-based strategies) and evidence gathered in this study, what is an applied definition of a leadership practice?

Since this study was one of five thematic dissertations being conducted in successful schools serving ELA learners, research question four is a cross-case analysis question that will be answered from data collected from the three instruments used at each of the five case study schools.

Schools for this study were selected using criteria established in a concurrent study being conducted in Denver Public Schools by the University of Colorado Denver. The schools were determined to be a “successful school” and selected for this case study based on the following five criteria: (a) an open enrollment policy, (b) at least 40% of total enrollment consisting of ELL students, (c) a total School Performance Framework (SPF) rating greater than 49% for elementary schools, and great than 45% for middle
schools and high schools, (d) at least 50% of the students qualify for a free or reduced lunch, (e) have gains on the CSAP and CELA tests for three consecutive years relative to schools serving the same grade levels, and (f) a principal in place for at least three years.

Following standard case study protocol, a subject and unit of analysis were identified. The subject of this case study was the principal who has been identified as leading a successful school serving a number of ELA learners. The principal, the principal’s supervisor and all teachers participated in the VAL-ED survey. The unit of analysis was the specific and particularized leadership practices exhibited by the principal. The construct that resulted from review of the literature was named a leadership practice and is aligned with two learner-centered and evidenced-based conceptual frameworks.

Data collection was conducted utilizing three instruments— the VAL-ED Survey, the Leadership Practice Interview Protocol, and the Narrative Inquiry Protocol. Participants in the VAL-ED survey were the principal, the principal’s supervisor, and teachers in the school. Results from the VAL-ED survey, helped guide the follow-up interviews, as questions were selected from a bank of questions based on the highest rated areas on the survey. The Narrative Inquiry Protocol was used to prompt the principal to share the life and work experiences that were critical to influencing their current leadership success and development of their leadership practice.

The VAL-ED survey data was compiled and analyzed in-house at Discovery Education (www.discoveryeducation.com) and a detailed principal report included mean and median effectiveness scores generated through the six core components and six key processes. The coding system (see Appendix E) was developed a priori utilizing the
specific terms and definitions from the two evidence-based frameworks: VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I Framework. Two coding inventories—the ES-I and the alignment of ES-I to VAL-ED were created for the purpose of coding the two interview transcripts. The transcribed interview text and coding system were loaded into DeDoose, a cross-platform web based software application. Coding frequency and co-code occurrence data were analyzed and findings were revealed related to each research question.

This summary reviewed the purpose of study, the research questions, the conceptual frameworks, the criteria for selecting study schools, the subjects studied, the unit of analysis, data collection instruments and methods used to collect data. The next section will discuss the conclusions drawn from this research.

**Conclusions**

The following section will present findings from this case study that promise not only to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on professional development for supporting ELA learners but also to the sharing with other school leaders, the evidenced-based school leadership practices currently working in DPS schools. This section is organized under three main headings: summary of key findings from the study, relationship to relevant literature, and major implications of those findings for practice.

**Summary of Key Findings**

Several key findings related to the research questions are evident in the study. Each key finding is presented below.

1. This first key finding related to research question one—which set out to identify the specific and particularized leadership practices used by the principals in this thematic dissertation study—is that there were identifiable leadership practices
used by principals of successful schools serving ELA learners—*Not only is a leadership practice a viable concept derived from a literature, it also exists in practice.*

Additionally, it was discovered that these leadership practices are deeply embedded in the complexity of the leadership practice triangle (see Figure 5). The idea of a leadership practice was found to be more clearly defined through an understanding of Spillane and Diamond’s (2007) two aspects of distributive leadership—the leader plus aspect and the practice aspect of distributive leadership, According to Spillane, these two aspects are key to why the idea and application of any of these leadership practices were successful. Data collected and described in Chapter IV provide evidence of both the *leader plus* and the *practice aspect* of the Marie’s leadership practice.

2. The second key finding of this study is that leadership practice of these principals leading successful schools serving ELA learners *do align to the two evidenced-based frameworks pertinent to this study, the VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I Framework.* Data from the VAL-ED survey revealed the most effective leadership core components and key processes and subsequent analysis of the two interview protocols were conducted utilizing the VAL-ED Matrix and ES-I code table (see Appendix E). Frequency counts can be seen in Chapter IV Tables 6, 7, and 8. Examples of the principals work focus, the tools and activities created by followers, and examples of proximal and distal goals are prevalent throughout both interview protocols.
While the idea that a leadership practice does exist—not just conceptually but also in practice—is informative, to be able to align that practice with evidenced-based frameworks is powerful. It brings further merit to the idea that a principal’s leadership practice can bring about specific and intentional school improvement efforts. Additionally, the codes as applied to the transcripts help to identify specific leadership practice work foci.

3. The third major finding relates to research question three and shows evidence that life and work related critical incidents, as told through the narrative inquiry protocol, do contribute to an understanding of how the principal’s leadership practice was influenced and developed over time. However, data that links one or two critical incidents to the depth and complexity of leadership practice are lacking. For the connection of these critical incidents to be made to a particular leadership practice, further interview protocols would need to occur with the goal being to draw out more details of the incidents that align with the two frameworks pertinent to this study.

4. The fourth major finding associated with research question four and the cross-case analysis conducted by this researcher—to identify common leadership practices of these successful principal’s—is that there are common leadership practice work foci among the four case study schools comprising this thematic dissertation. They are: (a) creating a culture of learning, (b) initiating strategic and systemic change, and (c) building professional capacity. Due to the nature of leadership practice and the complexity of the various interactions among leaders, followers and situations, it would be inappropriate to simply state that common
leadership practices exist in these case study schools. Rather, it is more appropriate to dissect each principal’s leadership practice to reveal the leadership work focus, and thus look for similarities and parallel work tools and activities. In each of the case studies, relevant tools and activities were evident that served similar purpose to meet similar proximal goals within the identified work foci common to these leaders.

5. Another key finding within research question four surfaced interrelations among the key players—the leaders, the followers, and the situation—of the leadership practice triangle. Although the leadership practice triangle indicates the complexity of interaction among these constituents, it does not name or detail these complexities. The finding here is that the complexity of interactions can be traced through the work focus, tools and activities, and proximal and distal goals which surfaced during this investigation. The enhancement to the leadership practice triangle (see Figure 8) now names these complex interactions.

6. A final key finding is in the wealth of information and the evidence that actual leadership practices were found to exist in the case study school. As a result of this evidence and the information contained in the literature on the topic of leadership practice, both an emergent and an applied definition of leadership practice have been created.

**Relationship of Key Findings to Literature**

Effective schools research set the stage for future research in many areas, including instructional leadership, and has gained significant traction in the field of educational
Effective schools research arose to challenge the findings of the Coleman report that claimed that schools do not make a difference and cannot overcome the challenges of student background and socioeconomic status (Coleman, 1966). In response to the Coleman Report several researchers (Brookover & Lezotte, 1978; Edmonds, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979) conducted studies that are foundational to the effective schools research movement. This era of effective schools research included such findings as: (a) 10 recommendations for improving student achievement from Brookover and Lezotte (1978), (b) a list of five ingredients of an effective school from Edmonds (1982), and (c) common characteristics of organizational structure of effective schools from Purkey and Smith (1983). This study supports many of the findings in the earlier research and that effective schools do make a difference. Further, this study contributes to the evolution of this theme in that the work
focus of the principal and the larger construct of principal’s leadership practice also influence the effectiveness of the school. The theme of effective schools research continues to evolve and this study brings a new sophisticated view to the topic.

Building on effective schools research, the focus of school success shifted to the work conducted by the principal. The direct and indirect effects of the principal is well founded in the research of Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) which determined that the principals action to shape the school’s learning climate are critical to impacting student achievement. Following this line of research, other research studies also supported that strong instructional leadership promotes student achievement through influencing a positive school-wide learning climate (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, Beady, Flood & Wisenbaker, 1978; Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). The positive impact of the indirect and direct effects of the principal on school achievement is also supported in this study, goes beyond previous research by defining the why, what and how of the direct and indirect effects on student achievement. These direct and indirect effects of the principal's leadership is found in the principal’s work focus—the why—and the tools and activities created by the followers—the what and the how—which help advance student achievement.

Principal’s direct and indirect effects prompted the next era of research, which further delved into examining the principal as an instructional leader. In this body of research immense attention was given to investigating the effects of the principal as an instructional leader on school effectiveness and student achievement. To grasp the vast duties, responsibilities and work that define an effective school leader, many researchers
have produced lists of behaviors, traits, and responsibilities of the school principal
(Cotton, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). Further, this body of
research established the importance of strong principal instructional leadership and that it
does correlate with student achievement (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger et al., 1996;
Heck, Larsen & Marcoulides, 1990). From the analyses of the data gathered in this study
there is clear affirmation that the principal—as an instructional leader with a work focus
of building professional capacity and a culture of learning—is indeed critical to students
achievement.

To weave these big ideas from effective schools research and instructional
leadership, this study sought out to define a leadership practice. The earliest reference to
leadership practice is found in the leadership practice inventory (LPI) developed by
Kouzes and Posner (1983). This inventory was derived from The Five Practices of
Exemplary Leadership model (Kouzes & Posner, 2000). For the purpose of this study, the
LPI provides insight to using an inventory or assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of
a leader along with rudimentary knowledge of what constitutes a leadership practice.

With and a rough construct of leadership practice established, a framework in
which to apply leadership practice—and specifically in schools impacted with ELA—
learners and low SES—the HP-HP readiness model developed by Calkins et al., (2007)
served this purpose. Many aspects of the HP-HP model—readiness to teach, readiness to
learn, and readiness to act—were evident in the case study school, thus validating the
worth of this research (Calkins, et al., 2007). However, this study extended the idea of
leadership practice two evidenced-based school improvement models—the VAL-ED
Matrix for leadership effectiveness from Goldring et al., (2009) and the ES-I framework
for school improvement developed by Bryk et al., (2010)—by finding emergent leadership practice.

Also from HP-HP the power of empowerment and sharing the work of school improvement was revealed. In looking at this from a distributed leadership perspective, the complex interactions of the work of the leader, followers, and the situation, is revealed (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004). This complexity of distributed leadership can be seen when focusing on the actions of the leader and the type of interactions between the leadership practice and the type of the interactions between leaders, followers, and the situation (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004). In this case study, focusing on the actions of the principal’s with others in context of two evidenced-based frameworks, not only brought understanding to the internal dynamics of leadership practice, but it assisted in naming the complex interactions of the leadership triangle and constructing an emergent and applied definition of leadership practice.

Further relationships of the key findings to the literature reviewed in this study are discussed below.

1. The idea of a leadership practice, a viable concept derived from a literature, also exists in practice. The design of this study was purposeful in studying leadership from a distributive perspective by looking at the leader in action with others in context within a framework (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). Applying this approach presents the best opportunity to understand the internal dynamics of leadership practice. For this study, the context is found in the challenges found in schools highly impacted with ELA learners and a low SES demographic. The
framework is actually found in the two frameworks pertinent to this study: (a) the VAL-ED Matrix from the work of Goldring et al. (2009) which focuses on two key evidence-based dimensions of leadership behaviors, core components and key processes, and (b) and the ES-I framework of Bryk et al. (2010), which is comprised of five essential supports and fourteen indicators that are related to school improvement. Through these two frameworks, the most effective leadership strengths of principal serving ELA learners at the successful school were identified.

Continuing with the dissection of the work accomplished by the principal, the two aspects of distributive leadership mentioned in the literature, the leader plus aspect and the practice aspect helped guide and name the work of the principal in the context of leaders, followers and the situation (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). The leader plus aspect refers to the fact that multiple individuals participate in formal and informal leadership roles within an organization. The practice aspect of distributed leadership is the interactions of school leaders with others in the organizational situation. The complexity of these two aspects of distributed leadership creates a web of connections and interactions between leaders, followers, and the situations they function in forms leadership practice (Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

2. Leadership practice does align to the two evidenced-based frameworks pertinent to this study, the VAL-ED Matrix and the ES-I Framework. The relation of this finding to the literature is found in a variety of research studies that have defined instructional leadership behaviors that are elemental to the daily routines and
tasks of a principal, but lack the depth and context of leadership practice, as the focus of these studies is primarily on the principal, and give limited attention to followers and the situation. Examples of instructional leadership research producing lists of leadership traits include: (a) a study conducted by Cotton (2003), that summarized research from 81 studies which focused on what effective principals in successful schools do, and resulted in 26 behaviors that contribute to student achievement, (b) A meta-analysis of 69 different studies conducted by Marzano et al., (2005) suggested 21 leadership responsibilities that effect student achievement, and (c) the eight leadership strategies referenced by Fullan (2005) from a study by the Council of Chief School Officers (2002). These studies serve as precursors to establishing the work of school principals and helping to define and align leadership practice to a specific framework. The six core components and six key processes of the VAL-ED Matrix from Goldring et al. (2009) and the five essential supports and the 14 indicators of the ES-I framework from Bryk et al. (2010) are learning centered frameworks that advance the understanding of leadership practice beyond lists of leadership traits and behaviors.

3. *Life and work related critical incidents do contribute to an understanding of how the principal’s leadership practice was influenced and developed over time.*

Narrative inquiry was chosen for this study to reveal the principals story and show that leadership knowledge and skill is influenced by personal characteristics, and values and beliefs as told through critical life and work experiences. Webster and Mertova (2007) contend that *narrative inquiry* is set in human experience and
human stories and therefore is appropriate to drawing out the complexities of the human experience. Also supporting this use and validating this finding is Bell (2002) as the process of narrative inquiry helps human beings make sense out of their life experiences by telling their story. In this study, there was success in uncovering the critical life and work experiences that may have influence on leadership practice, however, making a direct connection of these life experiences and the influence on specific aspects of leadership practice needs further investigation.

4. **There is common leadership practice work foci among the four case study schools comprising this thematic dissertation, and the complexity of interactions can be traced through the work focus, tools and activities, and proximal and distal goals which surfaced during this investigation. The enhancement to the leadership practice triangle (see Figure 8) now names these complex interactions.**

Once again, the two evidence-based frameworks the ES-I framework from Bryk et al. (2010) and the VAL-ED Matrix from the research of Golding et al. (2009) were the reference points to flesh out effective instructional leadership that were coded to reveal elements of actual leadership practices and the most effective activities and tools of these leadership practices. Excerpts from the transcripts in each case study were mapped to the strongest evidence of the key components and essential supports to provide evidence of at least three common work focus categories that drive principal leadership practice: (a) creating a culture of learning, (b) initiating strategic and systemic change, and (c) building professional capacity. Within these common foci—what the leaders does to define the work
focus—became evident and is found in the dynamic interactions between the leader and situation of the triangle (Spillane et al., 2004). The leadership triangle from Spillane et al., (2004) introduced a construct for leadership practice as defined through the activities distributed among three constituting elements: leaders, followers and situation. Figure 5 illustrates the interactions of leaders, followers and situation, and Spillane et al., (2004) speak to this as a web of activity that is a leadership practice in the context of leadership tasks. In this web of activity the driving forces can be considered to be the need for the leader to react or lead the school in the context of the given situation (see figure 8) the first enhancement to the leadership triangle. The next enhancement of the triangle is illustrated in interactions between leaders and followers as the creation of the tools and activities in response to the work focus defined by the leader. Lastly, from this key finding the third enhancement to the triangle is between the interaction of followers in the context of a specific situation and have been named as the work tools and activities created by followers to monitor and attain the proximal goals.

5. Both an emergent and an applied definition of leadership practice have been created. The earlier definition of leadership practiced lacked clarity and detail of the complex interactions among the leader, the followers, and the situation. Successful leadership practices in action were brought into the context of the Goldring et al., (2009) VAL-ED Matrix and ES-I framework from Bryk et al. (2010) to clearly name the specific practices of these leaders. The convergence of how the VAL-Ed Matrix and the ES-I framework (see figure 7) fleshed out what
successful leaders do and formulate these actions to help define leadership practice within the context of the Leadership Practice triangle from Spillane et al. (2004). But beyond the convergence, findings from this study revealed what exists within a principal’s leadership practice, which are the complex interactions, which include: (a) work focus of the leader, (b) the creation of tools and activities by the leaders and followers, and (c) the monitoring and attainment of identified proximal and distal goals.

**Implications of Findings**

1. Finding evidence of actual leadership practice is valuable and helpful in further leadership development. Often leadership evaluation focuses on the strengths of the leader while giving little attention to areas of ineffective practice. The first step to the further development and maintenance of leadership practice is to identify the practice and then analyze strengths and weakness. Continued leadership growth and refinement can be instrumental to the continued success of an improving or highly successful school.

2. The ability to align leadership practice to evidenced-based frameworks brings applicable understanding and meaning to leadership practice. To try to simply improve upon one’s leadership practice is too broad and undefined goal. However, aligning leadership practice to an evidenced based framework puts the practice into the context of a model or language that is relevant, bringing identity to the daily work and activities, thus putting into context what principals do in their identified leadership practice. This creates opportunity to set specific leadership practice growth goals.
3. Knowing the stories of principals and connecting them to leadership practice can be instrumental in identifying why some leaders have well defined or robust leadership practice and why some principals do not. The insight of a story reveals the depth of a leadership practice. With this knowledge, leaders, followers and supervisors can work together to develop a principal’s leadership practice, accommodate for missing or weak elements and thus continue to advance the work focus and the development and maintenance of the principal’s leadership practice.

4. Identifying the common work focus of leadership practice can inform supervisors, staff developers and other leaders of what constitutes the best leadership practice producing immediate and sustainable results. Further, this can provide an insight on how to replicate effective leadership practice.

5. A clear description of the complex interactions and interrelations between the situation-leaders, leaders-followers, followers-situation within the leadership practice triangle begs for further research and expansion of this study. This expansion of the research will uncover more tools and activities that are driven by the work focus established by the leader. In this regard, a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions and interrelations can be learned.

6. Having an applied definition of leadership practice now advances the understanding and knowledge of what really constitutes leadership practice. With this definition, future researchers have a new foundation in which to build a deeper and more comprehensive knowledge base of leadership practice.
Recommendations

This section will present several recommendations for practice from the findings and implications of this investigation in three areas. First, recommendations will be provided for the benefit of principal in the field. Second, recommendation to school districts will be presented. Finally, recommendations for principal preparation programs will be discussed. Finally recommendations will be offered for future research studies.

Recommendations for Practice

The key findings of this research study should certainly be shared with school principals, school districts and institutions of higher education with the goal to advance new principal development and enhance the professional learning and growth of current principals. The following three sections will outline recommendations for practice in these areas.

Principals

Recommendations to principals are as follows:

1. It is recommended that principals participate in a process to flesh out their most effective leadership activities through the use of a 360-degree survey tool such as the VAL-ED survey. This activity will inform principals of the concept of leadership practice and the use of evidenced-based frameworks, such as the VAL-ED matrix and the ES-I framework can be instrumental in honing in on leadership strengths and weaknesses.

2. It is recommended that principals participate in leadership practice interviews with colleagues to further map their leadership practice (work focus, tools, activities, proximal and distal goals) to a framework to gain deeper understanding of their role as
the leader and the importance of the influence they have with their followers and situation.

3. It is recommended that principals use reflective and evaluative activities to understand their leadership practice through the applied definition presented in this research study.

**School Districts**

Recommendations to principals are as follows:

1. It is highly recommended that school districts take notice to the emergent and applied definition of leadership practice and the activities (VAL-ED survey, Interview Protocol) that led the investigator to this definition. In the Colorado political landscape SB-191 calls for extensive monitoring and evaluation of effective leadership. A survey based on evidence-based frameworks could inform district leaders on the effectiveness (strengths and weaknesses) of principals.

2. Be informed about identifying leadership practices of principals and create professional development opportunities that would further develop the emergence of budding immature, or ineffective leadership practices and help implement and maintain effective leadership practice.

3. Create systemic tools and activities that would help replicate the impact of an effective leadership practice that is applied in context in another school.

**Principal Preparation Programs**

Recommendations to principal preparation programs are as follows:

1. Principal preparation and licensure programs should take notice to the key findings from this investigation with the goal of introducing the concept of leadership
practice into the curriculum. Often principal licensure programs focus on the managerial aspect of school leadership. Shifting this focus to have students observe mentor principals from a leadership practice perspective could bring deeper learning and understanding of instructional leadership.

2. Principal preparation and licensure programs should include a comprehensive study of leadership practice to introduce a foundational understanding of distributed leadership, along with the added dimension of the complex interactions of leaders, followers, and situation within the leadership practice triangle. Again, shifting from the focus of the work of the principal as a manager to a focus on leadership practice could convey the tools and skills necessary to be an influential instructional leader.

3. Principal preparation and licensure programs should utilize the applied definition of leadership practice and the several aspects of the framework can provide foundational support and deeper understanding for new leaders to build on what they have already do and know.

**Recommendations for Research**

To further this research and account for the limitations of the small number of case studies in this thematic group dissertation, the following recommendations should be considered. Developing an applied definition of a leadership practice only scratches the surface of what is a highly complex and interconnected web of activity that occurs formally and informally on a daily basis in most schools. One limitation of this study is the small number of cases in the case-study pool, thus the results of the study and may not be generalizable to other principals and schools. To remedy this limitation and advance this research the following recommendations should be considered:
1. Expand the scope of the investigation to include more case studies.

2. Broaden the selection criteria for case selection to incorporate a case sample that is reflective of the population of all schools and not just schools serving a large ELA learner population or a population highly impacted with students qualified for FRL, or a specific school performance rating. The selection criteria should also include schools that are at a variety of performance levels and not highly impacted by ELA learners or students qualified for FRL. This expansion of the selection criteria would expand the case study pool and allow for further generalizability of the findings.

3. Add to the methodology to include site observations of the principal/school activities of leadership practice.

4. Add to the methodology to include a longitudinal component to conduct the case study over a period of time extending to 1-2 years.

**Final Thoughts**

As a high school principal for ten years and having 17 years of school leadership experience, I have most certainly lived a variety of critical work experiences that have shaped and molded my own style of leadership. Until taking on this topic of leadership practice, my leadership was characterized through a set of traits, responsibilities and behaviors, most of which are identified in the literature review of this study. Then my mind started spinning and churning as I dwelled on how to define my leadership through the application of the concept of a leadership practice.

For most of the duration of this study, the idea of a leadership practice has been nebulus to me and difficult for me to define. Fortunately, the methodical approach to the
review of the literature eventually brought some clarity and meaning to at least the words, the concepts of leadership and practice that I eventually understood as the construct—
a leadership practice. But even with all the practical experience and the applied knowledge of my work as a school principal, I still could not put words, a definition or description, to my own leadership practice.

What finally help me put this new construct—a leadership practice—into context was my work conducting the two interview protocols and the follow-up activities of transcribing, coding and analyzing the data. The mere process of being an outside observer of the leadership practice of another principal helped me understand the difficulty, as a principal, to be able to see your practice in action let alone define it. We first looked for a self-identified leadership practice, and while I’m sure that principals would recognize themselves in the research that we have produced, many were not able to articulate this up front, or overtly, but instead we had to “mine” these leadership practices.

My final thoughts are in the way of recommending that principals, in an effort to fully grasp this leadership practice construct, and then define their own leadership practice, should participate in an extensive evaluation—incorporating many pieces of the methodology of this case study—by an outside party or colleague.
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<tr>
<td>monitors the curriculum through frequent visits to classes.</td>
<td>listens to faculty about how to strengthen the curriculum.</td>
<td>discusses during faculty meetings how to improve the rigor of the curriculum.</td>
<td>supports participation in professional development that deepens teachers' understanding of a rigorous curriculum.</td>
<td>coordinates a rigorous curriculum across grade levels.</td>
<td>develops a rigorous curriculum for students with special needs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Reports From Others</th>
<th>Personal Observation</th>
<th>School Documents</th>
<th>School Projects or Activities</th>
<th>Other Sources</th>
<th>No Evidence</th>
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<th>Effectiveness Rating</th>
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<th>Minimally Effective</th>
<th>Satisfactorily Effective</th>
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<td>Observes each teacher's instructional practices routinely to provide feedback.</td>
<td>Uses data to monitor the quality of instruction.</td>
<td>Discusses instructional practices with faculty.</td>
<td>Communicates feedback to teachers about their instruction.</td>
<td>Advocates additional instructional opportunities for students most in need.</td>
<td>Collaborates with the community to provide additional instructional resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secures resources necessary to deliver high quality instruction.</td>
<td>Implements procedures to project instructional time.</td>
<td>Implements a mentoring program for new teachers focused on effective instructional practices.</td>
<td>Plans opportunities for teachers to improve their instruction through professional development.</td>
<td>Plans faculty hiring policies with a focus on effective instructional practices.</td>
<td>How effective am I at ensuring the school...</td>
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**Ratings:**
- Highly Effective
- Satisfactorily Effective
- Minimally Effective
- Ineffective
- No Evidence
- Other Sources
- School Projects or Activities
- School Documents
- Personal Observation
- Reports From Others

**Solutions of Evidence:**
- Check Key Sources of Evidence
- Entertainments Rating

**Completed:** 12 out of 12

**Quality Instruction**
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<td>Students' learning behavior: behaviors that enhance the culture of learning</td>
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<td>Monitors the school climate.</td>
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<td>Student learning behaviors: behaviors that enhance the culture of learning</td>
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<td>Communicates with students about the aspects of a positive culture focused on learning.</td>
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<td>Communicates with students about the aspects of a positive culture focused on learning.</td>
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<td>Promotes teacher behavior that is respectful of the diverse backgrounds of students.</td>
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<td>Recognizes the contributions of diverse students in developing school culture.</td>
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<td>Encourages collaboration among faculty that creates a culture of learning.</td>
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<td>Provides a positive environment in which student learning is the central focus.</td>
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<td>Builds a school environment that is safe and orderly for all students.</td>
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<td>Builds a culture of continuous improvement.</td>
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<td>Plan for a culture of lifelong responsibility for the social and academic learning of students.</td>
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<td>Plan strategies to develop discrete behaviors about professional practice.</td>
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How effective am I at ensuring the school...
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**Challenges to External Communities**

- How effective am I at ensuring the school...

**Connections to External Communities**

- Includes ways to involve families, communities, and stakeholders in decision-making processes.

**Key Sources of Evidence**

- Personal Observation
- School Projects
- School Documents
- Other Sources
- No Evidence
- Minimally Effective
- Satisfactorily Effective
- Highly Effective
- Outstandingly Effective

**Reports From Others**

- District
- Other Schools
- Parents/Students
- Community Members

**Analysis of Effectiveness**

- Analyzes the effectiveness of the partnerships with the community in advancing academic and social learning.

**Lenses to Families Regarding the Social and Academic Learning of Their Children**

- Discusses the results of student achievement tests with parents.

**Advocates for Social Services Needed by Students and Families**

- Supports teachers to work with community agencies on behalf of students.

**Motivates Teachers to Be Responsive to All Families**

- Implements programs to help parents assist their children to be successful in school.

**Builds a Positive, Open Relationship with the Community**

- Programs for the use of external community resources to promote academic and social learning.
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How effective am I as ensuring the school...
APPENDIX B

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Core Component: High Standards for Student Learning and All Key Processes

You [name of principal] were scored at a high level in the area of *High Standards for Student Learning* on the VAL-ED Survey. I am trying to identify specific and particularized leadership practices that you may be using to have earned this rating on this 360-degree evaluation from self, your supervisor and the teachers in this school. I would like to ask you some questions about this area and will be interested in hearing your responses about the leadership practices that you have in place for *planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring* school activities that are related to the area of achieving *High Standards for Student Learning* (individual, team, and school goals for rigorous academic and social learning).

**Starter Question**: What does it mean to have *High Standards for Student Learning* at this school?

1. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *plans* for (a) rigorous growth targets in learning for all students, and (b) targets of faculty performance that emphasize improvement in student learning, in order to achieve *High Standards for Student Learning* (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [**CODE: HS-P**]

   ➤ **IG-CA [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *plans* for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a curricular alignment (pacing and subject matter demand by grades) focus to achieving *High Standards for Student Learning* already prevalent in this school?

   ➤ **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) that results in achieving *High Standards for Student Learning* already prevalent in this school?

2. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *implements* (a) (creates) buy-in among faculty for actions required to promote high standards of learning, (b) (creates) expectations that faculty maintain high standards for student learning, in order to achieve *High Standards for Student Learning* (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [**CODE: HS-I**]

   ➤ **IG-CA [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements instructional guidance
(subject matter students study across grades) with a **curricular alignment** (pacing and subject matter demand by grades) for achieving **High Standards for Student Learning** already prevalent in this school?

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school **implements instructional guidance** (subject matter students study across grades) with an **application emphasis** (active student applications emphasis) for achieving **High Standards for Student Learning** already prevalent in this school?

3. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school **supports** (a) (encourages) students to successfully achieve rigorous goals for student learning, and (b) teachers in meeting school goals, in order to achieve **High Standards for Student Learning** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: HS-S]

- **IG-CA [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school **supports instructional guidance** (subject matter students study across grades) with a **curricular alignment** (pacing and subject matter demand by grades) for achieving **High Standards for Student Learning** already prevalent in this school?

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school **supports instructional guidance** (subject matter students study across grades) with an **application emphasis** (active student applications emphasis) for achieving **High Standards for Student Learning** already prevalent in this school?

- **SCLC-AS&P [Student Centered Learning Climate—Academic Support & Press]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school **supports** a **student centered learning climate** with **academic support & press** (press for academic achievement in their classrooms, classroom personalism, classroom behavior, academic engagement, peer support for academic work) for achieving **High Standards for Student Learning** already prevalent in this school?

4. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school **advocates** (a) for high standards for student learning when writing and implementing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), (b) (challenges) low expectations for special needs students, in order to achieve **High Standards for Student Learning** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: HS-A]

- **IG-CA [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school **advocates instructional guidance** (subject matter students study across grades) with a **curricular alignment**
(pacing and subject matter demand by grades) focus for achieving High Standards for Student Learning already prevalent in this school?

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving High Standards for Student Learning already prevalent in this school?

5. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates (a) rigorous goals for student learning to faculty, and (b) with families and the community about goals for rigorous student learning, in order to achieve High Standards for Student Learning (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: HS-C]

- **IG-CA: [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a curricular alignment (pacing and subject matter demand by grades) focus for achieving High Standards for Student Learning already prevalent in this school?

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving High Standards for Student Learning already prevalent in this school?

6. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors (a) student learning again high standards of achievement, and (b) disaggregated test results, in order to achieve High Standards for Student Learning (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: HS-M]

- **IG-CA [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with curricular alignment (pacing and subject matter demand by grades) for achieving High Standards for Student Learning already prevalent in this school?

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving High Standards for Student Learning already prevalent in this school?
Other Possible Prompts/Follow Up Questions for any of the questions above:

1. What did that look like?
2. Why did it work?
3. Who else was involved?
4. What else happened as a result?
5. What else can you add?
6. Why did you try this strategy?
7. What made you think this would be successful?
8. How did this interview process make you think differently about your leadership practices?
9. What else should I have asked you about why you were scored high on High Standards for Student Learning?

Core Component: Rigorous Curriculum—Content and All Key Processes

You [name of principal] were scored at a high level in the area of Rigorous Curriculum—Content on the VAL-ED Survey. I am trying to identify specific and particularized leadership practices that you may be using to have earned this rating on this 360-degree evaluation from self, your supervisor and the teachers in this school. I would like to ask you some questions about this area and will be interested in hearing your responses about the leadership practices that you have in place for planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring school activities that are related to the area of achieving Rigorous Curriculum—Content (ambitious academic content provided to all students in core academic subjects).

Starter Question: What does it mean to have Rigorous Curriculum—Content at this school?

1. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans (a) to develop a rigorous curriculum for all students, and (b) access to rigorous curricula for students with special needs, in order to achieve Rigorous Curriculum—Content (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: RC-P]

- IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum—Content already prevalent in this school?

- SCLC-AS&P [Student Centered Learning Climate—Academic Support & Press]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans a student centered learning climate with academic support & press (press for academic achievement in their classrooms, classroom personalism, classroom behavior,
academic engagement, peer support for academic work) for achieving Rigorous
Curriculum – Content already prevalent in this school?

- IG-CA [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a curricular alignment (pacing and subject matter demand by grades) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum – Content already prevalent in this school?

- SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum – Content already prevalent in this school?

2. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements (a) (creates) a rigorous sequences of learning experiences/courses, and (b) a rigorous curriculum in all classes, in order to achieve Rigorous Curriculum—Content (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: RC-I]

- IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum – Content already prevalent in this school?

- SCLC-AS&P [Student Centered Learning Climate—Academic Support & Press]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements a student centered learning climate with academic support & press (press for academic achievement in their classrooms, classroom personalism, classroom behavior, academic engagement, peer support for academic work) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum – Content already prevalent in this school?

- IG-CA [Instructional Guidance—Curriculum Alignment]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a curricular alignment (pacing and subject matter demand by grades) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum – Content already prevalent in this school?

- SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of
teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum — Content already prevalent in this school?

3. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports (a) (secures) the teaching materials necessary for a rigorous curriculum (b) teachers to teach a curriculum in consistent with state and national content standards, in order to achieve Rigorous Curriculum — Content (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: RC-S]

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum — Content already prevalent in this school?

- **SCLA-AS&P [Student Centered Learning Climate—Academic Support & Press]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports a student centered learning climate with academic support & press (press for academic achievement in their classrooms, classroom personalism, classroom behavior, academic engagement, peer support for academic work) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum — Content already prevalent in this school?

4. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for (a) for a rigorous curriculum that honors the diversity of students and their families (b) and challenges faculty to teach a rigorous curriculum to students at risk of failure, in order to achieve Rigorous Curriculum — Content (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: RC-A]

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum — Content already prevalent in this school?

- **SCLC-AS&P [Student Centered Learning Climate—Academic Support & Press]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for a student centered learning climate with academic support & press (press for academic achievement in their classrooms, classroom personalism, classroom behavior, academic engagement, peer support for academic work) for achieving Rigorous Curriculum — Content already prevalent in this school?

5. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates (a) (discusses) state curriculum frameworks, and (b) (discusses) the importance of
addressing the same academic content in special and regular program, in order to achieve **Rigorous Curriculum—Content** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: RC-C]

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *communicates* for *instructional guidance* (subject matter students study across grades) with an *application emphasis* (active student applications emphasis) for achieving **Rigorous Curriculum – Content** already prevalent in this school?

- **SCLC-AS&P [Student Centered Learning Climate—Academic Support & Press]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *communicates* a *student centered learning climate* with *academic support & press* (press for academic achievement in their classrooms, classroom personalism, classroom behavior, academic engagement, peer support for academic work) for achieving **Rigorous Curriculum – Content** already prevalent in this school?

6. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *monitors* (a) (evaluates) the extent to which all students complete a rigorous curricular program, and (b) (evaluates) the rigor of the program, in order to achieve **Rigorous Curriculum—Content** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: RC-M]

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *monitors* *instructional guidance* (subject matter students study across grades) with an *application emphasis* (active student applications emphasis) for achieving **Rigorous Curriculum – Content** already prevalent in this school?

- **SCLC-AS&P [Student Centered Learning Climate—Academic Support & Press]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *monitors* a *student centered learning climate* with *academic support & press* (press for academic achievement in their classrooms, classroom personalism, classroom behavior, academic engagement, peer support for academic work) for achieving **Rigorous Curriculum – Content** already prevalent in this school?

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *monitors* *school leadership* (driver for improvement) with a focus on *inclusion/instructional leadership* (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving **Rigorous Curriculum – Content** already prevalent in this school?
Other Possible Prompts/Follow Up Questions for any of the questions above:

1. What did that look like?
2. Why did it work?
3. Who else was involved?
4. What else happened as a result?
5. What else can you add?
6. Why did you try this strategy?
7. What made you think this would be successful?
8. How did this interview process make you think differently about your leadership practices?
9. What else should I have asked you about why you were scored high on Rigorous Curriculum (Content)?

Core Component: Quality Instruction and All Key Processes

You [name of principal] were scored at a high level in the area of Quality Instruction—Pedagogy on the VAL-ED Survey. I am trying to identify specific and particularized leadership practices that you may be using to have earned this rating on this 360-degree evaluation from self, your supervisor and the teachers in this school. I would like to ask you some questions about this area and will be interested in hearing your responses about the leadership practices that you have in place for planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring school activities that are related to the area of achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy (effective instructional practices that maximize student academic and social learning).

Starter Question: What does it mean to have Quality Instruction—Pedagogy at this school?

1. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans (a) instructional services for students with special needs using assessment data, and (b) a schedule that enables quality instruction, in order to achieve Quality Instruction—Pedagogy (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: QI-P]

- IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

- IG-BS [Instructional Guidance—Basic Skills]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a focus on basic skills (didactic teaching of
basic skills) for achieving **Quality Instruction—Pedagogy** already prevalent in this school?

- **PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a **Quality Instruction—Pedagogy** that is prevalent in this school.

2. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements (a) (coordinates) efforts to improve instruction in all classes, and (b) recruits teachers with the expertise to deliver instruction that maximizes student learning, in order to achieve **Quality Instruction—Pedagogy** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [**CODE: QI-I**]

- **IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving **Quality Instruction—Pedagogy** already prevalent in this school?

- **IG-BS [Instructional Guidance—Basic Skills]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a focus on basic skills (didactic teaching of basic skills) for achieving **Quality Instruction—Pedagogy** already prevalent in this school?

- **PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a **Quality Instruction—Pedagogy** that is prevalent in this school.

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional
guidance system) for achieving a Quality Instruction—Pedagogy that is prevalent in this school.

3. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports (a) collaborative among faculty to improve instruction that maximizes student learning, and (b) teachers’ opportunities to improve their instructional practices, in order to achieve Quality Instruction—Pedagogy (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: QI-S]

- IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

- IG-BS [Instructional Guidance—Basic Skills]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a focus on basic skills (didactic teaching of basic skills) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

- PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a Quality Instruction—Pedagogy that is prevalent in this school.

- PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a Quality Instruction—Pedagogy prevalent in this school.

4. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates (a) for all students to regularly experience effective instruction, and (b) for opportunities for high quality instruction beyond the regular school say and school year, in order to achieve Quality Instruction—Pedagogy (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: QI-A]
IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

IG-BS [Instructional Guidance—Basic Skills]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a focus on basic skills (didactic teaching of basic skills) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy that is prevalent in this school.

5. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates (a) (discusses) instructional practices during faculty meetings, and (b) with faculty about removing barriers that prevent students from experiencing quality instruction, in order to achieve Quality Instruction—Pedagogy (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: Q1-C]

IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates about instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

IG-BS [Instructional Guidance—Basic Skills]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a focus on basic skills (didactic teaching of basic skills) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates about professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy that is prevalent in this school.
6. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors (a) and evaluates how instructional time is used, and (b) evaluates teachers’ instructional practices, in order to achieve Quality Instruction—Pedagogy (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: QI-M]

- IG-AE [Instructional Guidance—Application Emphasis]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with an application emphasis (active student applications emphasis) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

- IG-BS [Instructional Guidance—Basic Skills]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for instructional guidance (subject matter students study across grades) with a focus on basic skills (didactic teaching of basic skills) for achieving Quality Instruction—Pedagogy already prevalent in this school?

- PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a Quality Instruction—Pedagogy that is prevalent in this school.

- PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a Quality Instruction—Pedagogy that is prevalent in this school.

Other Possible Prompts/Follow Up Questions for any of the questions above:

1. What did that look like?
2. Why did it work?
3. Who else was involved?
4. What else happened as a result?
5. What else can you add?
6. Why did you try this strategy?
7. What made you think this would be successful?
8. How did this interview process make you think differently about your leadership practices?
9. What else should I have asked you about why you were scored high on Quality Instruction (Pedagogy)?

Core Component: Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior and All Key Processes

You [name of principal] were scored at a high level in the area of Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior on the VAL-ED Survey. I am trying to identify specific and particularized leadership practices that you may be using to have earned this rating on this 360-degree evaluation from self, your supervisor and the teachers in this school. I would like to ask you some questions about this area and will be interested in hearing your responses about the leadership practices that you have in place for planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring school activities that are related to the area of achieving Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior (integrated communities of professional practice in the service of student academic and social learning; healthy school environment in which student learning is the central focus).

Starter Question: What does it mean to have Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior at this school?

1. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans (a) programs and policies that promote discipline and order, and (b) for a positive environment in which student learning is the central focus, in order to achieve a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CLPB-P]

➤ PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior that is prevalent in this school.

➤ PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this
school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior** that is prevalent in this school.

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]**: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school plans for school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior** already prevalent in this school?

2. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements (a) a learning environment in which all students are known and cared for, and (b) (builds) a culture that honors academic achievement, in order to achieve a **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CLPB-I]

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior** that is prevalent in this school.

- **PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior** that is prevalent in this school.

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]**: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school implements school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving **Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior** already prevalent in this school?

3. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports (a) (allocates) resources to build a culture focused on student learning, and (b) collaborative teams
to improve instruction, in order to achieve a *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior* (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CLPB-S]

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior* that is prevalent in this school.

- **PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior* that is prevalent in this school.

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]:** How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school supports school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior* already prevalent in this school?

4. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates (a) a culture of learning that respects diversity of students, and (b) for students to be involved in the school community, in order to achieve a *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior* (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CLPB-A]

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a *Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior* that is prevalent in this school.
PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior that is prevalent in this school.

SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school advocates for school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior already prevalent in this school?

5. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates (a) with parents about the aspects of a positive school culture, and (b) (discusses) standards of professional behavior with faculty, in order to achieve a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CLPB-C]

PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates regarding professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior that is prevalent in this school.

PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior that is prevalent in this school.

SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school communicates for school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Culture of Learning and
Professional Behavior already prevalent in this school?

6. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors (a) the participation of every student in the social and academic activities, and (b) (assesses) the culture of the school from students’ perspectives, in order to achieve a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CLPB-M]

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior that is prevalent in this school.

- **PC-WO [Professional Capacity—Work Orientation]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a focus on work orientation (teachers are willing to try new things, they are encouraged to stretch and grow, they would recommend this school to others, they are loyal to this school) for achieving a Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior that is prevalent in this school.

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]**: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school monitors for school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior already prevalent in this school?

**Other Possible Prompts/Follow Up Questions for any of the questions above:**

1. What did that look like?
2. Why did it work?
3. Who else was involved?
4. What else happened as a result?
5. What else can you add?
6. Why did you try this strategy?
7. What made you think this would be successful?
8. How did this interview process make you think differently about your leadership practices?
9. What else should I have asked you about why you were scored high on Culture of Learning and Professional Behavior?

Core Component: Connections to External Communities and All Key Processes

You [name of principal] were scored at a high level in the area of Connections to External Communities on the VAL-ED Survey. I am trying to identify specific and particularized leadership practices that you may be using to have earned this rating on this 360-degree evaluation from self, your supervisor and the teachers in this school. I would like to ask you some questions about this area and will be interested in hearing your responses about the leadership practices that you have in place for planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring school activities that are related to the area of achieving Connections to External Communities (linkages to family and/or other people and institutions in the community that advance academic and social learning).

Starter Question: What does it mean to have Connections to External Communities at this school?

1. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans (a) for school/community relations that revolves around the academic missions, and (b) for community outreach programs consistent with instructional goals, in order to achieve Connections to External Communities (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CEC-P]

➢ PCST-TtC [Parent Community School Ties—Teacher Ties to Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for parent community school ties focused on teacher ties to community (teachers’ knowledge of community, personal ties to community, use of community resources for teaching) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

➢ PCST-PI [Parent Community School Ties—Parent Involvement]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for parent community school ties focused on parent involvement (teachers outreach to parents, parents involvement in school) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

2. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements (a) programs to help address community needs, and (b) (builds) business partnerships to support social and academic learning, in order to achieve Connections to External Communities (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CEC-I]
PCST-TtC [Parent Community School Ties—Teacher Ties to Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements parent community school ties focused on teacher ties to community (teachers’ knowledge of community, personal ties to community, use of community resources for teaching) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

PCST-PI [Parent Community School Ties—Parent Involvement]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for parent community school ties focused on parent involvement (teachers outreach to parents, parents involvement in school) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

3. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports (a) (secures) additional resources through partnering with external agencies to enhance teaching and learning, and (b) (allocates) resource that build family and community partnerships to advance student learning, in order to achieve Connections to External Communities (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CEC-S]

PCST-TtC [Parent Community School Ties—Teacher Ties to Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports parent community school ties focused on teacher ties to community (teachers’ knowledge of community, personal ties to community, use of community resources for teaching) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

PCST-PI [Parent Community School Ties—Parent Involvement]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports for parent community school ties focused on parent involvement (teachers outreach to parents, parents involvement in school) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

4. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates (a) (promotes) mechanisms for reaching families who are least comfortable at school, and, (b) (challenges) teachers to work with community agencies to support students at risk, in order to achieve Connections to External Communities (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CEC-A]

PCST-TtC [Parent Community School Ties—Teacher Ties to Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates parent community school ties focused on teacher ties to community (teachers’ knowledge of community, personal ties to community, use of community resources for teaching) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.
PCST-PI [Parent Community School Ties—Parent Involvement]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates for parent community school ties focused on parent involvement (teachers outreach to parents, parents involvement in school) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

5. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates (a) (listens) to feedback from the community, and (b) (listens) to the diverse opinions and needs of all families, in order to achieve Connections to External Communities (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CEC-C]

PCST-TtC [Parent Community School Ties—Teacher Ties to Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates parent community school ties focused on teacher ties to community (teachers’ knowledge of community, personal ties to community, use of community resources for teaching) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

PCST-PI [Parent Community School Ties—Parent Involvement]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school communicates for parent community school ties focused on parent involvement (teachers outreach to parents, parents involvement in school) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

6. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors (a) (collects) information to learn about resources and assets in the community, and (b) the effectiveness of community-school connections, in order to achieve Connections to External Communities (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: CEC-M]

PCST-TtC [Parent Community School Ties—Teacher Ties to Community]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors parent community school ties focused on teacher ties to community (teachers’ knowledge of community, personal ties to community, use of community resources for teaching) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.

PCST-PI [Parent Community School Ties—Parent Involvement]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for parent community school ties focused on parent involvement (teachers outreach to parents, parents involvement in school) for achieving Connections to External Communities that is prevalent in this school.
Other Possible Prompts/Follow Up Questions for any of the questions above:

1. What did that look like?
2. Why did it work?
3. Who else was involved?
4. What else happened as a result?
5. What else can you add?
6. Why did you try this strategy?
7. What made you think this would be successful?
8. How did this interview process make you think differently about your leadership practices?
9. What else should I have asked you about why you were scored high on Connections to External Communities?

Component: Performance Accountability All Key Processes

You [name of principal] were scored at a high level in the area of Performance Accountability on the VAL-ED Survey. I am trying to identify specific and particularized leadership practices that you may be using to have earned this rating on this 360-degree evaluation from self, your supervisor and the teachers in this school. I would like to ask you some questions about this area and will be interested in hearing your responses about the leadership practices that you have in place for planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring school activities that are related to the area of achieving Performance Accountability (leadership holds itself and others responsible for realizing high standards of performance for student academic and social learning, individual and collective responsibility among the professional staff and students).

Starter Question: What does it mean to have Performance Accountability at this school?

1. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans (a) for individual and collective accountability among faculty for student learning, and (b) for emphasizing accountability to stakeholders for student academic and social learning, in order to achieve Performance Accountability (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: PA-P]

- SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school plans for school leadership with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school?

- PC-CHR [Professional Capacity—Changes in Human Resources]: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans professional capacity
(teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) and changes in human resources (capacity to hire quality teachers and remove problematic teachers, and the intensity with which they pursued both) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school?

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school plans for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school.

2. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements (a) (uses) faculty input to create methods to hold faculty accountable, and (b) social and academic accountability equitable for all students, in order to achieve Performance Accountability (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: PA-I]

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]:** How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school implements for school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Performance Accountability already prevalent in this school?

- **PC-CHR [Professional Capacity—Changes in Human Resources]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) and changes in human resources (capacity to hire quality teachers and remove problematic teachers, and the intensity with which they pursued both) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school?

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school implements for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school?
guidance system) for achieving a **Performance Accountability** that is prevalent in this school.

3. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports (a) (allocates) time to evaluate student learning, and (b) time to evaluate faculty for student learning, in order to achieve **Performance Accountability** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: PA-S]

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]**: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school supports school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving **Performance Accountability** already prevalent in this school?

- **PC-CHR [Professional Capacity—Changes in Human Resources]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) and changes in human resources (capacity to hire quality teachers and remove problematic teachers, and the intensity with which they pursued both) for achieving **Performance Accountability** that is prevalent in this school?

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]**: How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school supports professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving **Performance Accountability** that is prevalent in this school.

4. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school advocates (a) (challenges) faculty who blame others for student failure, and (b) that all students are accountable for achieving high levels of performance in both academic and social learning, in order to achieve **Performance Accountability** (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: PA-A]

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]**: How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school advocates school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving **Performance Accountability** already
prevalent in this school?

- **PC-CHR [Professional Capacity—Changes in Human Resources]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *advocates professional capacity* (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) and *changes in human resources* (capacity to hire quality teachers and remove problematic teachers, and the intensity with which they pursued both) for achieving *Performance Accountability* that is prevalent in this school?

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *advocates* for *professional capacity* (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for *professional community* (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving *Performance Accountability* that is prevalent in this school.

5. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *communicates* (a) (discusses) progress toward meeting school goals with parents, and (b) to faculty how accountability results will be used for school improvement, in order to achieve *Performance Accountability* (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [*CODE: PA-C]*

- **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]:** How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school *communicates* about *school leadership* (driver for improvement) with a focus on *inclusion/instructional leadership* (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving *Performance Accountability* already prevalent in this school?

- **PC-CHR [Professional Capacity—Changes in Human Resources]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *communicates* about *professional capacity* (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) and *changes in human resources* (capacity to hire quality teachers and remove problematic teachers, and the intensity with which they pursued both) for achieving *Performance Accountability* that is prevalent in this school?

- **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school *communicates* about *professional capacity* (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for *professional community*
(teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school.

6. How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors (a) (analyzes) the influence of faculty evaluations on the rigor of the curriculum, and (b) the accuracy and appropriateness of data used for student accountability, in order to achieve Performance Accountability (or synonyms provided by principal from starter question) that is prevalent in this school? [CODE: PA-M]

➢ **SL-I/IL [School Leadership—Inclusive/Instructional Leadership]:** How do you engage our faculty to ensure that this school monitors for school leadership (driver for improvement) with a focus on inclusion/instructional leadership (reaching out to faculty encouraging parent community involvement, extent of teacher involvement in school decisions, parent and community influence on school improvement efforts) for achieving Performance Accountability already prevalent in this school?

➢ **PC-CHR [Professional Capacity—Changes in Human Resources]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) and changes in human resources (capacity to hire quality teachers and remove problematic teachers, and the intensity with which they pursued both) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school?

➢ **PC-PC [Professional Capacity—Professional Community]:** How do you engage your faculty to ensure that this school monitors for professional capacity (teacher’s capacity to problem solve regarding classroom concerns and to coordinate instructional work) with a mindset for professional community (teacher classroom work public for colleague and external consultant examination; critical dialogue about what’s happening/or not, do we know what’s working or not, collaboration among teachers to strengthen the instructional guidance system) for achieving Performance Accountability that is prevalent in this school.

**Other Possible Prompts/Follow Up Questions for any of the questions above:**

1. What did that look like?
2. Why did it work?
3. Who else was involved?
4. What else happened as a result?
5. What else can you add?
6. Why did you try this strategy?
7. What made you think this would be successful?
8. How did this interview process make you think differently about your leadership practices?
9. What else should I have asked you about why you were scored high on Performance Accountability?
APPENDIX C

NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Think of one memory you have of developing, implementing, or the emergence of your successful leadership practice (and I could actually name one or more of the leadership practices identified earlier in this study). Tell me about it.

2. Thinking back to that time (of that developing/emerging leadership practice), what do you remember?

3. If there was one main memory of this time of putting strong leadership practices in place, it would be …..

4. Within this effort of putting strong leadership practices in place to support ELA learners, do you remember a particularly stressful period?

5. How would you say has it influenced you?

6. What role did others play in this event (efforts toward implementing LP) (critical others)?

7. If there was one thing you would say about that event (LP efforts) it would be …..

8. How would you describe or tell of the challenging influence and long lasting effects?
## APPENDIX D

### ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS AND INDICATORS CODING FRAMEWORK

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Note: Shaded rows are not included in interview protocol questions.
# APPENDIX E

## ES-I Codes within the VAL-ED Codes

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