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# Creating Conditions For A Collaborative Relationship Between Principals And Their Supervisors: A Change Initiative

Noah Riley

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CREATING CONDITIONS FOR A COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
PRINCIPALS AND THEIR SUPERVISOR: A CHANGE INITIATIVE

Noah L. Riley

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

In the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

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## Document Origination Statement for Digital Commons @ NLU

This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership Ed.D. is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006). For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

EXAMINING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS TO IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT FROM CENTRAL OFFICE:  
A PROGRAM EVALUATION

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN  
PRINCIPALS AND THEIR SUPERVISOR:  
A CHANGE INITIATIVE

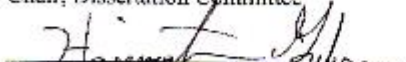
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A POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

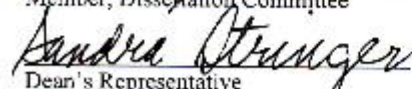
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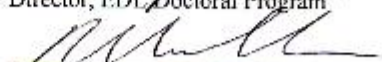
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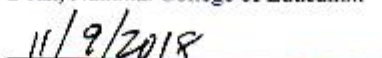
  
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Dean's Representative

  
Director, EDI Doctoral Program

  
Dean, National College of Education

  
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## ABSTRACT

Studies by Kelley and Peterson (2002), Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano & Asghar (2013) and other researchers, have shown that in order for principals and other building leaders to be able to demonstrate the required expectations of “new” principal standards, they must engage in ongoing supervision, evaluation, coaching, and continuous career-long professional development. These studies also suggest that school districts, in their support and development of principals’ growth in competency capacity building, are more effective when the principal supervisor works in collaboration with principals they supervise/evaluate in a trusting, mutually respectful relationship of shared accountability for improving instruction and learning. This change plan initiative explores a *mentor-coach* model as an effective means of increasing principals’ ability to influence instruction and learning in their schools.

## **PREFACE: LESSONS LEARNED**

As a former principal of approximately 20 years, I have noticed that in that role standards for principal evaluation have been continuously evolving in light of accountability demands accelerated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, the Race to the Top (RTT) initiative, and most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Furthermore, having worked in both high performing and low performing schools I've experienced the disparity of facing challenges without the support of central office and relevant professional development. Since 2000, growing percentages of principals have now reported having received mentoring or coaching in support of their growth and development (Manna, 2015). Similarly, the most powerful experience of assistance to me as principal of one of only seven schools in the state of Michigan classified as *unaccredited* during the late 1990s was a collaborative *mentor-coach* relationship developed between a Department of Education state-appointed professor (Dr. Mark Smith) from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan and me. As a model for supporting principals in their growth and development, a mentor-coach approach has been validated by researchers (Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano & Asghar, 2013; Kelley & Peterson, 2002) and others, in its impact of collaboration in supporting principals' ability to influence instruction and learning in their schools. Built on a trusting and mutually respectful relationship between Dr. Smith and me, a shared accountability partnership was established that made the difference in not only my attitude towards personal responsibility for improving instruction and learning but also, that of the faculty, staff, parents, and students I served. This collaborative relationship



built on trust and mutual respect helped create the context and climate for creating opportunities in improving instruction and learning in the district.

As a result of this collaborative *mentor-coach* partnership, my competence capacity for influencing instruction and learning increased; and within the first year of implementation, the Michigan Department of Education reclassified the school to *interim accredited*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my family and siblings, close friends, confidants, and my church family for their support and encouragement during the research and writing of this comprehensive document. A special thanks to my oldest sister (Jacintha), my brother-in-law (Carl), and nephew (Ramon) for their *unconditional positive regard*. They assisted to ensure I maintained a place of residence, a mode of transportation and a comparable lifestyle to that which I had grown accustomed to during my years of employment before deciding to become a full-time doctoral student. Special thanks, also, to Madame Edna Gregory-Crittenden, for her continued prayers and spiritual insight to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit in support of me in this endeavor. Thank you, my Christian Tabernacle Church family, for your continued prayers of intercession for *good* success. Thank you, my lifelong undergraduate college mates, Olevia Davis and Maurice Washington, for your ongoing and constant encouragement during this journey. Thank you, too, Felix Ross, Jr., for your close-up support and encouragement. Thank you, Clifton McGee, for being my best friend whose motto regarding our friendship remains: *What's mine is yours!* I appreciate you and your family filling the gap wherever and whenever I needed. I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Gloria McDaniel-Hall, my dissertation chairperson and superintendent intern supervisor, along with my committee chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson, for your *non-pressing* yet supportive style during the dissertation writing process. Thank you, Amy Hall, assistant professor at the Chicago downtown library campus, for your untiring and continuous support with my technical difficulties with Zotero. Thank you, 'Charles the computer man,' who revived my laptop *numerous* times when it seemed to have crashed. Last but certainly not least, thank you, my

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## **DEDICATION**

This document is dedicated with heartfelt appreciation and gratitude

to

Dr. Bernice Holloway,

former superintendent of Bellwood School District 88/Bellwood, Illinois,

for her enthusiasm, spirit of encouragement, and confidence in giving me

my first experience as a school principal;

and to

Dr. Mark Smith,

professor emeritus of Wayne State University/Detroit, Michigan,

whose *mentor-coach* relationship with me helped establish the foundation

for growing my leadership ability to influence instruction and learning in the

schools I served.

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## SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

Principals and other building leaders, in adapting to and preparing for a demonstration of new required expectations that focus more on instruction and learning must continue to maintain and deliver their responsibilities related to organization and management as well. The new focus and expectations brought about by new principal standards often require more than the usual recruitment, licensure, preparation, and placement of principals. Those who evaluate and supervise principals, likewise, often perform multiple roles and must juggle competing demands for their time. At the same time they are expected to play an essential role in the affairs of the district office; participating in planning and policy meetings and overseeing responsibilities related to school administration and operations (Corcoran, Casserly, Price-Baugh, Walston, Hall & Simon, 2013).

Research shows that for principals and other building leaders to be able to demonstrate required expectations of “new” principal standards, they must engage in ongoing supervision, evaluation, coaching and continuous career-long professional development (Kelley & Peterson, 2002; Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano & Asghar, 2013). These studies indicate that districts must create opportunities and support that will provide time and resources to relieve principals from other responsibilities so that they can benefit from collaboration with their supervisors. Opportunities that encourage coaching and mentoring can support principals’ development and help them meet the challenges of *adaptive leadership* (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). School districts nationwide, including U.S. School District X, are recognizing how important *principal*



*supervisors* are in helping principals prepare for a demonstration of the new required expectations. Pressed by the competing responsibilities and demands, accordingly, they have begun devising systems that enable principal supervisors to help develop and grow principals' ability to influence instruction and learning.

Gill (2012) and others, Superville (2015), Turnbull, Anderson, Riley, MacFarlane and Aladjem (2016), posits that creating opportunities for principals and their supervisors to experience a *mentor-coach* partnership, merits consideration as a means of meeting this goal of growing principals' ability to better function as instructional leaders. This collaborative orientation is in opposition to the standard supervisory practices of memos and occasional monthly principals meetings with a focus on the organizational management aspect of principalship. While these-non-instructional tasks are vital and important in schools, the amount of time school leaders spend on the day-to-day instructional tasks must significantly increase if they are to effectively execute quality instruction. The amount of increased time devoted to useful instructional tasks correlates with improved instruction, and ultimately increased student achievement.

How school leaders use their time is the single most significant determinant of whether their schools will succeed. This new collaborative orientation creates opportunities for principal supervisors to train principals in executing quality instruction and culture. Also, it creates opportunities for supervisors of principals to coach them continuously, utilizing face-to-face activities on quality instruction and culture in real time. This is an opportunity for principal supervisors to build and use tools to monitor progress on what matters most—executing quality instruction and culture (Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser, 2012).

This change plan initiative examines how leadership competency and capacity development, with a specific focus on mentoring and coaching, may be improved through a collaborative partnership built on trust and mutual respect between principals and their supervisors (Superville, 2015). It will examine how to intentionally incorporate ongoing job-embedded principal professional development promoting collaboration and reflective practice. Specifically, the change initiative examines the use of a mentor-coach relationship experience as an alternative to the standard supervisory practices that focus on the organizational management aspect of a principalship. The intent of this change initiative, ultimately, is to improve U.S. School District X principals' ability to influence instruction and learning.

Findings from the program evaluation (Riley, 2016) identified that principals perceived U.S. School District X as a district of *management*. Principals further observed that they received little or no district support or professional development to ensure their ability to influence quality instruction and learning in their buildings; especially in coaching teachers to improve their instructional practices. Principals had a minor influence on decisions concerning determining the content of in-service professional development programs for principals in the district. The district provided principals with little or no time for professional development during regular contract hours. Principals took the primary lead in taking responsibility for their development. No structured system of PD and support was in place that aligned with the Illinois Principal Evaluation Plan (IPEP) that requires assessment of both the principal's professional *practice* and students' growth. The principal supervisor's role was that of supervisor-evaluator. These combined factors resulted in a culture of cautious trust (mistrust) and a lack of mutual

respect characterized by individual principal accountability for school success and isolation among principals.

As the new IPEP process assesses principals' professional practice and students' growth, creating opportunities for principals to experience a mentor-coach partnership with their supervisor, provides a structured means for the district to give support and offer job-embedded PD to principals in developing their professional practices. A mentor-coach partnership also establishes a climate of trust, leading to a culture of collaboration that promotes shared accountability for improved instruction and increased learning. By focusing on a mentor-coach relationship between principals and their supervisor, the district ensures leadership competency development; and helps build principals' confidence in their ability to influence instruction and learning (Superville, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2016).

The change plan initiative suggests places a mentor-coach relationship can support principals by helping to identify target areas for professional growth; providing formative feedback based on observation; encouraging reflection on their job performance related to leadership standards; and identifying and understanding appropriate measures of student growth. By changing the role of the principal supervisor to reflect a mentor-coach partnership, the district increases its potential to realize the context, culture, conditions and competencies that focus on instructional leadership aligned with the district vision of learning and achievement goals (Wagner et al., 2006).

### **Rationale**

When I conducted my program evaluation (Riley, 2016) in U.S. School District X, I found that the overarching perception from the principals of the district was one of

*organizational management* rather than *instructional*. There was little or no ongoing district sponsored job-embedded support, or professional development wherein principals could share their challenges and reflect on practice *with* colleagues. Findings also affirmed the need for training that was designed to support principals' ability to guide their school in defining the roadmap for data-informed instruction (i.e., rigor, and adapting teaching to meet students' needs). Also, findings affirmed the need for training designed to support principals' ability to strengthen both culture and instruction within their school with hands-on training. Further, findings affirmed the need for training designed to support their ability to expand the school leadership team's impact on instruction and culture throughout the school. As principal leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors as an influence on student learning (Riley 2016), the obligation of U.S. School District X to provide ongoing job-embedded PD to principals is critical.

Recommendations from the program evaluation (Riley, 2016) offered insight into ways to fulfill its district obligation; and pointed to specific actions and tools that the district can use to grow leadership competency and build capacity. All recommendations focused on the district redefining the role of the principal supervisor and re-establishing its priorities to provide opportunities for principals to develop their instructional competency and leadership capacity. One recommendation suggested the district provide opportunities for principals to experience working in a leadership learning community that included discussions among colleagues reflecting about their work challenges. Still, other recommendations included organizing principals' book study groups, and allowing time for school inter-visitation and principal *buddying*. The most important research

validated recommendation focused on engaging the principal supervisor and principals in a relationship of *mentor-coach*. The structured system of principal PD and support created from the proposed change initiative will provide an opportunity for principals to develop their competencies, build their leadership capacity, and increase their confidence in their ability to handle the complexities of their work environment. Drago-Severson's adult learning theory (2009) played a significant role in my decision to consider this approach to PD opportunities and the conditions that are likely to support U.S. School District X principals and their learning needs.

Another consideration in pursuing this program change initiative came as I reflected on past experiences I had during my twenty years tenure as principal. A common thread among each of the districts I have worked was the fact that a significant obstacle to building district principal instructional leadership capacity was the excessive time devoted to managing compliance and regulations rather than focusing on improving instruction and learning. One of the under girding contributors to this problem, in my observation, was the districts' history of superintendent and principal supervisor turnover. With each new superintendent, obviously, came a 'new' vision, new plan and new philosophy; and new appointments in key positions (i.e., principal supervisor). District continuity between superintendents' assignments became a major challenge. Superintendent turnover, coupled with budget constraints in a few cases, often resulted in a change in organizational structure in key district positions. Principal supervisors sometimes transitioned from former management roles under a previous organizational structure. At one time, I recalled, one of the districts I worked in had an organizational structure similar to that of the Montgomery County School District (Childress, Doyle, &

Thomas, 2009). There were three clusters of schools within the district; each including elementary, middle and high schools that theoretically served the same potential students and their families geographically; each cluster headed by a *director* (supervisor of schools and principals). Each cluster director reported to the superintendent. Principal supervisors, however, were not well-matched to the needs of the schools, nor principals assigned to them. Two of the cluster directors had served as an elementary (K-8) school principal, and one had never been a school principal. No cluster director had high school principal experience; although being assigned to one of (at one time) five high schools in the district.

Even though a proven organizational structure (Childress et al., 2009) was in place, lack of background and expertise along with competing responsibilities and demands of the position made it difficult to effectively and equitably support all of the schools and principals they supervised. Low-performing schools often took up the largest share of a supervisor's time. Little or no time was devoted to coaching principals. Cluster directors often spent their time in district-level meetings dedicated to handling crises and a multitude of compliance, administrative, and district budget issues.

District professional development for principals and principal meetings focused on *leadership management* development rather than on improving instruction and learning. Principal supervisors usually shared highlighted information from their meetings with the superintendent and professional development with us. They seldom shared any information about their professional development that provided them an understanding of how to identify and support high-quality instruction at any grade level.

During the time of conducting my program evaluation, the superintendent of U.S. School District X was endeavoring to build a district culture that was *student-centered*. A *student-centered* environment combines a focus on the best available knowledge about learning and the teaching practices that support learning for teachers and all students with an emphasis on individual learners (McCombs & Miller, 2007). In collaboration with the superintendent, I have purposefully designed this change plan initiative as an effort to realize that vision. Developing and implementing a system for instructional improvement and learning through leadership development, built on a culture of collaboration, in a climate of trust and mutual respect will help to promote a more student-centered environment for U.S. School District X.

### **Goals**

While research has shown that next to teachers, what principals do has the most significant influence on student achievement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010), the work of their supervisors as partners with them is rapidly being seen as an influence as well (Honig, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011). Relationships between principals and their supervisor are essential to the realization of excellent teaching and learning for all students (Corcoran et al., 2013). The goal of this *change initiative* is to champion principals' instructional leadership skills in U.S. School District X by creating conditions for a collaborative relationship built on trust and mutual respect between principals and their supervisor; with shared accountability for improved instruction and learning. The redefining of the role and re-prioritizing of the responsibilities of supervisors of principals will be the focus of the

change initiative providing opportunities for leadership competency development through a collaborative partner relationship with the supervisor of principals as mentor-coach.

Implementation of this change initiative and intermediate goals are intended to influence the impact principal supervisors have on principals in improving their instructional leadership capacity to impact teachers' instructional practices to improve student learning and achievement (Wagner et al., 2006). Guided by new principal supervisor professional standards to improve how he/she supports principals and their schools in helping all students learn and achieve:

1. The principal supervisor and principals develop a shared understanding of effective teaching and learning; using the seven levers of quality instruction as a framework (Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser, 2012). This shared understanding may result in higher levels of trust, mutual respect, and shared accountability between the principal supervisor and principals for improving instruction and student learning.
2. The principal supervisor creates a protocol for using student data to drive a cycle of continuous improvement (Hirsch, Psencik, & Brown, 2014).
3. Principals identify and implement protocols for observing instruction & providing useful and meaningful feedback to teachers. These protocols may result in higher levels of trust, mutual respect, and shared accountability between principals and their teachers for improving instruction and student learning.
4. Principals identify and implement protocols to guide collaborative conversations with teachers.



The redefining of the role and reprioritization of the principal supervisor's responsibilities, along with increased principal competency and leadership capacity, ultimately will impact the culture of the district; in its quest to become a district of continuous progress (Wagner et al., 2006).

### **Setting/Demographics**

U.S. School District X is a suburban high school district of three schools serving grades 9-12. The district serves 5,072 students: 87% black, 10% Hispanic, 1% white, 1% two or more *races*, 01% Pacific islander, 2% homeless, 5% English learners, 19% with disabilities, and 66% low income. Instructional spending per pupil is \$11,420; and operational spending per pupil is \$19,830. The graduation rate is 74%; and ready for the next level rate is 11.8%. Regarding college readiness, 11% of students meet or exceed ACT college readiness benchmarks; 65% of graduates enroll at colleges and universities, and 81% of graduates enrolled in Illinois community colleges require remedial coursework. The district has an attendance rate of 92%; a chronic truancy rate of 13%, and a student mobility rate of 14%. Average ACT composite score for the class of 2016 is 16. Post-secondary remediation rate is 81%. Only 12% of students met or exceeded benchmarks on the PARCC. U.S. District X has the largest discipline student suspensions rate in the state among similar schools (Illinois Board of Education District/School Report website, 2015-2016/*IllinoisReportCard.Com*).

On the PARCC in specific math or English Language Arts (ELA) courses 43% did not meet, 27% partially met, 18% approached, 11% met, and 1% exceeded state benchmarks. By student groups on the PARCC, 23% of white students did not meet, 38% of white students partially met, and 38% of white students met benchmark

standards. Forty-one percent of black students did not meet, 28% of black students partially met, 19% of black students approached, 11% of black students met, and 1% of black students exceeded state benchmarks. Twenty-nine percent of Hispanic students did not meet, 26% of Hispanic students partially met, 24% of Hispanic students approached, 16% of Hispanic students met, and 5% of Hispanic students exceeded state benchmarks. Forty percent of low-income students did not meet, 27% of low-income students partially met, 20% of low-income students approached, 11% of low-income students met, and 1% of low-income students exceeded state benchmarks. Forty-three percent of English learners did not meet, 30% of English learners partially met, 20% of English learners approached, and 7% of English learners met state benchmark standards. Seventy-one percent of students with disabilities did not meet, 24% of students with disabilities partially met, 3% of students with disabilities approached, and 2% of students with disabilities met benchmark standards (Illinois Board of Education District/School Report website, 2015-2016/*IllinoisReportCard.Com*). Although U.S. District X is an average-low performing district according to its demographics, there is no indication that any demographic barriers will impact the implementation of this proposed change initiative.

## **SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 C'S**

### **Arenas of Change (As-Is)**

Currently in U.S. School District X, of the four arenas of change (context, culture, conditions, and competencies) described by Wagner et al. (2006) that exist, none are conducive to creating an environment where principals are effective in positively influencing instruction and learning (see Appendix A--AS-IS chart). This prognosis of its current state regarding principal leadership is the basis for creating this change plan initiative (Heifetz et al., 2009); and is critical to diagnosing the needed change process before its implementation (Wagner et al., 2006).

### **Context**

Although out-of-district cultural, political, economic and educational factors may influence what happens within U.S. School District X and are often perceived to be things beyond its control these factors tend to impact the work of the district profoundly. At the time of conducting my program evaluation, U.S. School District X had experienced three superintendents over the last six years. The current superintendent was in his/her first year as interim superintendent. His/her predecessor had served two years as interim superintendent as well. Before that, the district superintendent had served over three consecutive years.

In his/her first year as interim superintendent, the current superintendent faced challenges from the community, the school board, and the district faculty association. The problems had the effect of polarizing factions inside and outside of the district. Overarching these challenges was the fact that the new superintendent had to balance the district budget.

In response to declining enrollment, declining average daily attendance, decreasing tax collection and declining fund balances, the new superintendent had to reduce the teaching force. Accordingly, the teaching force was decreased by seventy-five faculty members. There had not been a reduction in force (RIF) in nine consecutive years.

Despite the fact that prior to accepting the position as interim superintendent the new current superintendent had previously served elsewhere in positions of teacher, elementary and secondary school principal, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, and superintendent, he/she was not positioned to provide direct supervision and coaching to the district's three high school building principals. His/her role in that position was more as *supervisor-evaluator*. Probing questions during interviews for my program evaluation (Riley, 2016) revealed there had been no coaching from previous superintendents as well.

The school district had experienced an average of two principal(s) at the same school over the past six years. District-wide, in the last three years, an average of 92% of teachers returned to the same school each year. Of the three current principals, one was in his/her first year as principal; one had served five years as a principal in the district, and the other six years as a principal in the district. The first year principal had served as an assistant principal of the school he/she was assigned to prior, and the other two had served in a position of an assistant principal prior to becoming a principal also. Two of the current principals had at least six years of elementary and/or secondary teaching experience, and one had none. Two of the current principals had experienced participation in an Aspiring Principals training program.

The Illinois 5Essentials Report predicts school improvement. According to the researchers, schools strong on the 5Essentials are more likely to 1) improve student learning and attendance year after year; 2) graduate students from high school; 3) improve student ACT scores; 4) get students into college, and 5) keep their teachers. Schools/Districts strong on at least three (3) out of five (5) Essentials are ten times more likely to improve student learning (UChicago Impact, 2016). Even though U.S. School District X has a 92% teacher retention rate and thus, considered strong in essential five (keep their teachers); according to the 5Essentials Survey in 2016, U.S. School District X was *not yet organized for improvement*.

As previously mentioned, the current superintendent was not positioned to provide direct supervisor and coaching to the district principals; and consequently, maintained a role as *supervisor-evaluator*, rather than mentor-coach. Likewise, as previously mentioned, there was no indication that the two veteran principals had received any coaching from previous superintendents. One of Drago-Severson's (2009, 2013) foundational pillar practices that support principal development is *mentoring*. Regarding professional development (PD) for principals, the district provided *informational PD* that focused on increasing knowledge and leadership managerial skills; not on improving their professional practices. Leadership, therefore, in the district was focused on management and compliance both at the district and building level (Riley, 2016); even though the Illinois Performance Evaluation Act (IPEA) process now requires assessment of principals' professional practice and student growth. The framework and method of the new IPEA with its new expectations provides a platform for collaborative *mentor-coach* experiences between principals and their supervisor. The literature review

showed there is a direct link between instruction and learning, and principals (Corcoran et al., 2013). As a result of this managerial approach to leadership, the district school report card suggested principals had little influence in affecting instruction and learning in their schools. Research suggests principals need support from those who supervise them to influence instruction and learning effectively (Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011; Corcoran et al., 2013; Drago-Severson et al., 2013).

### **Culture**

As is typical when a superintendent takes office, he/she sets forth his goals and expectations for the school district. Despite the new interim superintendent of U.S. School District X adhering to this practice, the culture of the district pointed to reality around the way things currently played out across the district. There was a fundamental divide between the superintendent's beliefs and interpretations and the behavior and interactions within the district. There was, unfortunately, also a fundamental divide between the superintendent as supervisor-evaluator of principals and the principals he served. There was a lack of trust and openness between principals and the superintendent. The exhibited trust level between them was, at best, one of respectful cautiousness. This trust level was perhaps a result of principals' supervisor-evaluator relationship with previous superintendents.

The program evaluation (Riley, 2016) revealed that principals considered the district leadership as one of management and compliance. Accordingly, a lack of shared accountability for improved instruction and learning among principals and the superintendent existed. Because of the increased complexity and changing expectations of principals as instructional leaders, there is a critical need for shared accountability

between principals and those who supervise them (Drago-Severson, 2009; 2013). To further complicate matters, a climate of isolation among principals characterized leadership relationships in the district. This coupled with the managerial approach to leadership creates a culture where relational trust is difficult to build across the district. The difficulty in building relational trust is representative of the culture within the buildings and across the district. District leadership instability in the district, the challenges faced by and with the new interim superintendent, and the lack of intentional job-embedded principal PD, and many other contextual uncertainties made it difficult to nurture a culture of trust not only between principals and their supervisor but also across the district as well. Relationships are a crucial element of building trust in schools (Drago-Severson, 2009; Heifetz et al., 2009).

According to the 2016 5Essentials Report teacher survey rating, in the category of *ambitious instruction*, classes in U.S. School District X are rated neither *challenging* nor *engaging*. According to the 2016 Illinois 5Essentials Report teacher survey rating, principal-teacher, and teacher-teacher relationships in the district became increasingly ineffective as trust throughout the system declined. By focusing on a mentor-coach relationship between principals and their supervisor, leadership competency development and confidence in their ability to influence instruction and learning has the potential to increase (Superville, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2016). A culture of trusting relationships not only between principals and their supervisor but also principals and teachers in U.S. School District X is the intended result.

## **Conditions**

Any factors of conditions played a dual role of intended support, yet perceived constraint by some stakeholders, to the change process in the district and guided the way the district functioned under the new superintendent. The RIF resulting from having to balance the district budget, the addition to the district organization chart of new division leader positions under principal supervision, and implementation of the new IPEP were all contributing factors. Due to the current supervisor-evaluator role of the superintendent and the fact that the district is in its first year of implementation of the new IPEP, principals are inexperienced at setting their professional goals on their individual growth and student performance. In light of new professional leadership standards, recognition of the value and importance of collaborative conversations between principals and the superintendent has yet to be realized; even though the new IPEP is focused on professional performance practices and student growth. The focus of the goal for this change plan initiative is on championing principals' instructional leadership skills by creating conditions for a collaborative relationship built on trust and mutual respect between principals and their supervisor; with shared accountability for improved instruction and learning.

## **Competencies**

The specific skills and knowledge of principals and their supervisor and their social-emotional dispositions in performing their responsibilities all impact their leadership and communication styles; and the way they interact with one another (Wagner et al., 2006). These needed skills are critical to the success of any change plan initiative. Interpreting the school report cards in U.S. School District X, one could infer



that performance practices are not grounded in the transformational understanding of the relation between their work and role, and the improvement of instruction. Principals require training in modeling effective leadership practices and building competency skills for facilitating quality instruction. The principal supervisor requires PD using protocols for collaborative and reflective practice. Principals require PD in the use of protocols in providing useful and meaningful observation feedback on instruction and learning. Principals require PD in use of protocols in coaching teachers to use reflective practice. The principal supervisor and principals require training in supporting adult growth and learning. The change plan initiative focuses on a collaborative partnership between principals and their supervisor as a means of developing these needed competencies and dispositions required to influence instruction and learning.

Establishing a culture of collaboration through a mentor-coach partner relationship between principals and their supervisor has the hope that U.S. School District X principals and their supervisor will be able to create constructs for promoting shared accountability for improved instruction and increased learning; and that principals will be recognized as instructional leaders in their buildings. The 'To-Be' as envisioned is the desired shift from the current 'As-Is' in U.S. School District X (Wagner et al., 2006). Heifetz et al. (2009) points to the importance of being aware of vulnerabilities and need for openness in the adaptive change process. Awareness of vulnerabilities and the need for openness will be a critical factor in monitoring the progress of the proposed change plan initiative.

### **SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY**

As reported in my program evaluation (Riley, 2016), U.S. School District X is a high school district of three schools. At the time of conducting the program evaluation, one of the principals was in his/her fifth year at the same school in the district, one in his/her sixth year at the same school, and one was a new first-year principal. Each of the principals had unique leadership styles, dispositions, and backgrounds; with only one not having had any elementary or secondary teaching experience. Despite the smallness of the district, the three campuses were very competitive with each other, and each building represented a different culture and climate.

During the interviews conducted during the program evaluation (Riley, 2016) the new first-year principal, having completed an Aspiring Principal Program before becoming principal, and characterized himself/herself as striving for transformational leadership. A second, who despite the fact had also participated in a similar program a few years back indicated that he/she believed that no principal preparation program or course could prepare one "...to deal with the complexities of the student-teacher-parent relationship and the political framework of how things work, because things are unique to every building and district" (Riley, 2016). The senior veteran principal of the group considered discipline and management to be his field of strength as principal and not in the area of instructional leadership. The superintendent was in his second year in the district, having spent his first year as interim superintendent. As previously mentioned earlier in this document, faced with financial and political challenges of the school district, devoting significant time to direct support and supervisor of the principals was not his number one priority. He had a leadership philosophy he referred to as

‘thoroughbred horse’ style. Despite having heard his interpretation of this philosophy, articulation of his true and intended meaning often varied among principals and other executive district office administrators. One interpretation was that the superintendent chose to give ‘expectations’ and ‘goals,’ then allow recipients to run the race at their own pace, using their roadmap. If and when, however, in his observation, one of them got off course, he (superintendent) would pull the ‘rein’ and assist him/her in getting back on track. Having heard the articulation from the superintendent and having conversed with him and observed his mode of operation from a *balcony view* perspective, I can unequivocally attest that this one interpretation is not as intended by the superintendent. For the purpose of this change plan initiative, however, the point to be made is the fact that understanding and articulation of a shared vision will also be critical to a successful buy-in and implementation of the recommended change plan initiative. Wagner et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of ongoing constructive conversations among stakeholders about quality teaching, and a desire to develop a shared understanding.

### **Research Design**

The context, culture, conditions, and competencies described in the ‘As-Is’ section of this document, and the extension of the program evaluation findings set the stage for a needed change plan initiative and served as the foundation for purposefully selecting and intentionally organizing the research design as presented. I made use of the literature review information on strengthening principal instructional leadership competencies, focusing on case study principals’ perceptions, helping design a plan for creating conditions for a collaborative partner relationship between principals and their supervisor.

This research change plan initiative is an extension of my program evaluation (Riley, 2016) and followed a sort of *quasi*-mixed methodology design (James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, 2008); through a utilization-focused perspective (Patton, 2008). I use the term ‘quasi’ since my data was gathered mainly from a survey and interviews conducted during the program evaluation. To strengthen the quasi-methodology validity, I utilized data analysis techniques to inform my analysis and interpretations of findings. Using this interpretative approach, I examined the perceptions of the three case study principals in U.S. School District X on the professional development, and school district support they were receiving that developed their ability to influence instruction and student learning (Riley, 2016). During extended data collection gathering for the change plan initiative, I sought additional feedback from the case study principals to help clarify my interpretation of program evaluation data. Also, I extended the original survey (Riley, 2016) to be taken by the superintendent from his viewpoint as the supervisor of school principals. After receiving the supervisor questionnaire, the superintendent and I sat down for a semi-structured one-on-one interview based on the same questions asked of principals during their conversations in the program evaluation data gathering phase. The utilization-focused perspective allowed me to take a look at relationships and dispositions among principals, and also between them and their supervisor to design the change plan initiative. The initiative is intended to help convey the urgency of the need to create conditions for a collaborative relationship built on trust and mutual respect between principals and their supervisor; with shared accountability for improved instruction and learning. By design, the change plan initiative will impact not only district principals but their supervisor as well.

## **Participants**

In the Program Evaluation (Riley, 2016), the three U.S. School District X principals were surveyed and interviewed to determine the existence, content, and nature of professional development for principals in the district. Principals were asked to respond to an online survey questionnaire and questions during a one-on-one interview conducted in person. During the data gathering phase of the change plan initiative, the U.S. School District X principal supervisor (superintendent) also participated in an online survey questionnaire and a one-on-one semi-structured interview. In each phase, all participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that neither their participation nor refusal to participate would result in consequences to them. The superintendent, having permitted to invite principals to join in the program evaluation, apparently, realized his participation was likewise voluntary. I informed participants that they could choose not to answer any question they wanted to skip for any reason on both the survey questionnaire and during the interview, and that data would be collected anonymously and any indirect identifiers would be removed when data collection was completed, and that data would be reported in aggregate. Also, I informed all participants, including the principal supervisor, that one-on-one interviews would be recorded for transcript analysis. Participants were given the option to decline participation.

## **Data Collection Techniques**

To collect and be able to interpret data for my change plan initiative, I revisited the findings from the program evaluation (Riley, 2016), principal survey questionnaire, and interviews. For the change plan, also, I conducted an online supervisor survey

questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with the superintendent of U.S. School District X. Identifying key data points from the program evaluation was a first step in establishing greater understanding and urgency for needed change. To help case study principals and their supervisor (the superintendent) better understand the impact of a potential structured, systemic support and development system for building principal leadership capacity, these key data points were identified to begin the thought process and determine their readiness for [consideration of] the change plan initiative process (Wagner et al., 2006).

### **Survey**

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, I revisited data that was collected from the program evaluation survey for examination through a lens of change. The purview of the program evaluation was intended to explore perceptions related to the existence, content, and nature of professional development and support for school leaders. A secondary goal of the survey was to provide descriptive quantitative data on the context of principals and their school and on their personal characteristics. The survey questionnaire specifically asked principals to respond to questions related to the value of district-sponsored PD for principals in developing their ability to influence instruction and learning in their building. The choices for response were never, seldom and frequently. Question eight (see Appendix F), with eight distinct sub-questions, of the survey questionnaire, was examined and analyzed for patterns in principals' responses. For comparison, I also examined and analyzed principals' responses with the responses of their supervisor (superintendent).

## **Interviews**

Data collection for the change plan initiative consisted of a one-on-one semi-structured interview with the superintendent, and was designed to gather additional data regarding my intended plan to recommend *new ways of doing* in the role of supervisor in the form of a mentor-coach relationship with principals. This action, of course, was in response to data findings gathered through the initial program evaluation. Including the superintendent in this round of interviews was to collect additional data to compare his/her responses with the perceptions and reactions of principals. Examining and making these comparisons helped establish contextual factors for the ‘To-Be’ strategy and action plan (see Appendix B) of my change plan initiative.

## **Data Analysis Techniques**

Combined findings, additional feedback, and revisited program evaluation survey information, along with the superintendent questionnaire and interview, all viewed through a change-plan lens, helped to inform my strategy and action plan for transitioning to a collaborative environment (Patton, 2008). The survey administered to the three case study principals included a demographic breakdown by the number of years of experience as a building principal, either as an assistant or building principal, participation in an Aspiring Principal Program previously, and elementary or secondary teaching experience (see Appendix F). These demographic indicators were considered relevant for investigating patterns relative to perceptions related to the *existence* and *effectiveness* of professional development and support for school leaders in the district. I initially analyzed the survey for patterns in the perception data around the impact on each

principal's ability to positively influence instruction and student learning. A discussion of this survey data follows.

Respondents were given a choice of *no influence*, *minor influence*, *moderate influence* or *significant influence* to indicate their perception level response. Perhaps due to the small number of participants, no significant demographic patterns were yielded re the impact of district PD and support on principal instructional competency development. Few major demographic differences existed among principal participants. The superintendent online survey questionnaire included a demographic breakdown by the number of years of experience as a supervisor of principals, as either an elementary or secondary school principal, and any training for coaching principals. These demographic indicators for school leaders and their supervisor were considered relevant for investigating patterns relative to perceptions related to the *existence* and *effectiveness* of professional development and support to principals in the district. Interview responses from both school leaders and their supervisor served as the focus of the data analysis.



## SECTION FOUR: LITERATURE REVIEW

School districts across the United States and abroad are deliberately setting forth support and training to help principals obtain necessary competencies to carry out their duties and responsibilities as *instructional leaders* effectively. The success of their efforts and initiatives help define the difference of districts being labeled as *high-achieving* or *low-performing*; and more importantly, providing the highest and best educational learning experience to the students they serve. Through the literature review, I present and discuss literature relevant to leadership development; with particular emphasis on the relationship between school leaders and those who supervise and evaluate them. The primary question explored through this area of the literature review was whether or not a collaborative mentor-coach relationship between principals and their supervisor has the potential to grow and develop principals as instructional leaders. The literature review examines what principals and supervisors and evaluators in a collaborative mentor-coach relationship role do, and answer the related question of what is its potential for influencing instruction and student learning?

To explore this topic, I examined several studies of low-performing (urban) school principals who experienced a mentor-coach relationship with either their supervisor or a person in the position of leadership coach. The studies examined what principals and their coaches and supervisors did in the new roles; and the resulting impact on principals (James-Ward, 2011). Specifically, to begin with, I reviewed new expectations, guidelines, and standards for instructional leaders. Secondly, I examined growth and development. Thirdly, through examination of Drago-Severson's (2009) *Four Pillar Practices*, I reflected on the potential of what principals and their supervisors

in a new collaborative partnership role can do; and the resulting impact it could have on their growth and development. These three focus areas of the literature review answer the primary question: Does a collaborative mentor-coach relationship have the potential to champion principals as instructional leaders?

### **Addressing Expectations, Guidelines and Professional Standards for Principals**

The increasing recognition in recent years, supported by research, that principal leadership is second in importance only to teaching among school-related influences on student achievement, has led to increased efforts, initiatives, policy and legislation from state and district officials, policymakers and others to promote excellence in education (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom, 2004). One such reform program birth under the presidency of Barack Obama was the Race to The Top (RTT) initiative. It weaved the development, reward, retention and equitable distribution of effective principals into requirements for states seeking funding from a \$4.35 billion budget. The investment was an acknowledgment that improved leadership is closely related to improved instruction, student learning, and achievement. State policies and practices, too, have evolved over the years. States set standards, create accountability systems, generate data about student performance and enforce education codes; all of which influence what happens in schools. These state standards, accountability systems, and codes define what school leaders need to know and be able to do, make sure training programs prepare principals with the required knowledge and skills, establish guidelines for rewriting licensure requirements, and mandate coaching or mentoring for new principals and ongoing professional development for all principals (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Since the release of the 1987 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, *Leaders for America's Schools*, much attention has been devoted to finding ways to improve the quality of principal leadership in schools and school districts (Murphy 1998). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA)--an alliance of six leading professional organizations committed to advancing school leadership (Principals, Superintendents, Curriculum Directors, and Supervisors) endorsed Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). These Standards--formerly Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards (Murphy, 1998) and their indicators were adapted from the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) and the National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA) as approved by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in January of 2002.

These standards set broad expectations for the preparation, practice, and evaluation of school leaders. They incorporate the latest research indicating what school leaders can do to create a productive learning environment conducive to providing what students need to become successful learners. The standards address the need for educational leaders to facilitate a vision of learning, promote and maintain a positive school culture for learning, manage the organization, operations, and resources, and collaborate with families and other community members and mobilize community resources, respect the rights of others--acting responsibly, and advocate for all students (National Policy Board, 2015).

The Standards reflect interdependent domains, qualities and values of leadership work that research and practice suggest are integral to student success: 1) mission, vision,

and core values, 2) ethics and professional norms, 3) equity and cultural responsiveness, 4) curriculum, instruction and assessment, 5) community of care and support for students, 6) professional capacity of school personnel, 7) professional community for teachers and staff, 8) meaningful engagement of families and society, 9) operations and management, and 10) school improvement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

National Board Standards (2010) for Accomplished Principals represent a professional consensus on the unique practices that distinguished, accomplished principals should know and be able to do. These principals know a full range of pedagogy and make sure that all adults have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to support student success. Accomplished principals build organizational capacity by developing leadership in others. They ensure that teaching and learning are the primary focus of the organization; working collaboratively to implement a common instructional framework that aligns curriculum with teaching, assessment, and learning, and provide a common language for instructional quality that guides teacher conversation, practice, observation, evaluation, and feedback. These principals develop systems so that individuals are supported socially, emotionally, and intellectually, in their development, learning, and achievement. These principals strategically seek, inform, and mobilize influential educational, political, and community leaders to advocate for all students and adults in the learning community. They consistently demonstrate a high degree of personal and professional ethics exemplified by integrity, justice, and equity. They are reflective practitioners who build on their strengths and identify areas for

personal and professional growth (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010).

The Illinois State Model for Principal Evaluation was designed to satisfy the State Board of Education's statutory requirement of The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (P.A. 96-861) which required the State Board of Education to develop and implement a "principal model evaluation template" that incorporated the requirements of Article 24A of the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/24A. Although no school district was required to use the State Model for Principal Evaluation, all school districts were recommended to use the model to customize their evaluation instrument in their effort to meet compliance requirements with the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/24A-20 (a) (2)). The content of the template incorporates two significant areas: performance practice, and student growth; and includes a description of the principals' duties and responsibilities and the standards to which they are expected to conform.

A research report of the Illinois Five Essentials Supports framework (2015) asserts that effective (principal) leadership, acting as a catalyst, is the first essential support for school improvement. The leader must stimulate and nourish the development of four additional core organizational supports: collaborative teachers, involved families, supportive environment, and ambitious instruction. Studies undertaken in schools and districts across the United States confirm that these specific domains are related to improving student outcomes (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Hoy, Tarter, & Hoy, 2006; Leithwood & Louis, 2012; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Wenglinsky, 2000). Effective leadership requires taking a strategic approach toward enhancing the performance of the four other domains, while simultaneously nurturing the social

relationships embedded in the everyday work of the school. Leaders advance their objectives, particularly regarding improving instruction, while at the same time seeking to develop supportive followers for a change. In the process, they cultivate other leaders—teachers, parents, and community members—who can take responsibility for and help expand the reach of improvement efforts (Illinois Five Essentials Supports framework, 2015).

Of the 21 behaviors researchers cite as most highly correlated with student learning, the highest correlates include: 1) shaping a vision of academic success for all students, 2) creating a climate hospitable to education, 3) cultivating leadership in others, 4) improving instruction, and 5) managing people, data, and processes [Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards, 2002; Illinois Five Essentials Supports framework, 2015; Illinois State Model for Principal Evaluation, 2012; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, 1997; National Board Standards for Accomplished Principals, 2010]. The environment and conditions under which these behaviors can occur is the responsibility of principals. Research further shows that when schools are led by highly effective principals who live up to their responsibility to ensure these factors are present, the percentage performance points is ten points higher than if an average school principal leads the same school (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The presence of these indicators have led other researchers to conclude that these same ordinary schools with highly effective principals, based on value-added scores, improve student achievement from the 50th percentile to between the 54th and 58th percentile in only one school year (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2009; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

## **Addressing Principal Growth and Development**

A growing body of research (Bedard & Mombourquette, 2015; Honig, 2012; Kelley & Peterson, 2000; Manna, 2015; Marsh et al., 2005; Mendels, 2012) has documented the critical roles that districts play in supporting and building capacity for instructional leadership development; making a strong case that executive-level district office administrators (e.g., superintendent, those close to the superintendent, deputy superintendent, etc.) could and should take the lead in helping principals learn to strengthen their instructional leadership. This research reveals that high-achieving districts do more than revise their organizational charts to show a shift in responsibility on paper but change their day-to-day work to provide support for principals' development as instructional leaders. Executive-level district office administrators engage in new relationships with their school principals and provide job-embedded professional development support in building principals' capacity as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011, retrieved from Riley, 2016).

Despite the differences in characteristics and demographics of low-performing and high-achieving districts the challenge is to support, grow and develop principals as instructional leaders that, despite challenges can lead and assist teachers in providing the best quality instruction to students. The literature revealed numerous districts of similar 'high-needs'/urban demographics that have succeeded in developing principals with indications that the support and development provided to them has made a notable and impressive difference in the overall academic achievement of the schools they lead (Honig, 2012; New Teacher Center, 2009; Warren & Kelsen, 2013; ).

One such study (Honig, 2012) involving three different urban school systems: Atlanta Public Schools (GA), New York City Public Schools/Empowerment Schools Organization (NYC/ESO), and Oakland Unified School District (CA), examined work practices of executive-level central office staff utilized in providing instructional leadership support to district principals. The study identified six specific practices of central office administrators consistent with helping principals learn to strengthen their instructional leadership capacity. The six practices they engaged in were: a *focus on joint work, modeling, developing and using tools, intentional design and use of materials, brokering* and *creating and sustaining social engagement* (Honig, 2012). These practices were built on the premise that principals sustain their engagement in performance practices in ways essential to their growth and development when they participate in activities they view as crucial to the social or cultural contexts of their job responsibilities (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003; Wenger, 1998).

In *focusing on joint work*, district supervisory, administrative staff and principals worked alongside each other in the form of a mentor-coach relationship, in improving principals' instructional leadership, and taking joint ownership and responsibility for the results. Those in district supervisory positions modeled, by demonstrating instructional practices with principals rather than just talking about them or directing principals to participate or initiate them. Observing their mentor-coach in action afforded principals the opportunity to conceptualize what the target task looked like before attempting to execute it with their teachers (Collins et al., 2003). Through *reflective practice*, supervisors and principals engaged in dialogue about the importance of such practices



(Drago-Severson et al., 2013). As used here, in achieving a goal task, *tools* are particular materials (e.g., classroom observation protocols, etc.) used to negotiate discussions about what should or should not be done (Barley, 1986; Weick, 1998). The use of *materials intentionally designed* was used to engage principals in new ways of thinking and acting consistently with particular practices (e.g., rubrics such as “26 Best Practices”, worksheets, self-evaluation guides, classroom observation, cycle-of-inquiry, or data-based protocols, etc.) in tandem with an explicit definition of the kind of teaching practice being worked with principals to support. District central supervisory administrators operated as *brokers* (contributing new ideas, understandings, and other resources that might advance the learning in the relationships); to keep the relationships productive (Wenger, 1998). *Social engagement*, such as conversations with others, was foundational in executing all of the practices; providing a means of making sense of the use and relevance of new information (e.g., what performance practices were being modeled and captured in *tools*) and how to integrate it into their own actions and thinking.

Another investigative study sponsored by the Wallace Foundation (Warren & Kelsen, 2013) assessed the effects of leadership *coaching* on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of urban public school administrators in P-12 underperforming schools. The study identified twenty-one leadership responsibilities of principals (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) and determined that after *coaching* nine of them showed significant growth and increased leadership capacity; resulting in positive student achievement gains. Principals and coaches noted high levels of change in knowledge, skills, and dispositions as a result of the *coaching* experience. The concept is that the principal uses

the nine responsibilities to enlist the leadership of others (school leadership team), who in turn enacts all twenty-one responsibilities and brings transformational changes in the school/district.

The nine leadership responsibilities (principal's specific duty to perform) that a principal uses to build a school staff's leadership capacity and a purposeful community are *input*, *affirmation*, *relationship*, *visibility*, *situational awareness*, *communication*, *optimizer*, *ideals/beliefs*, and *culture*. *Input* involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies. *Affirmation* recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures. *Relationship* demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff. *Visibility* has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students. *Situational awareness* is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems. *Communication* establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students. *Optimizer* inspires and leads new and challenging innovations. *Ideals/Beliefs* communicate and operate from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling. *Culture* fosters shared ideas and a sense of community and cooperation (Marzano et al., 2005).

Principal participants identified the importance of context-specific instruction, modeling, and reflection inherent in the *blended coaching model* used for their growth and development. This model, based on more than fifteen years of fieldwork at the New Teacher Center, University of California, Santa Cruz--recognized that productive coaches move between *facilitative* and *instructional approaches* in their practice, and has made a

meaningful difference in dozens of school districts nationwide (New Teacher Center, 2009).

The principals and their coaches acknowledged that the *blended coaching* experience provided support through: *trusting relationships* (a trusting relationship with an outside, experienced expert), *feedback* (feedback that was constructive, corrective, goal-oriented, and non-evaluative), *resources* (resources in the form of readings, site visits, and referrals to outside experts), *relationship building* (relationship building ideas on how to work with, support, and communicate with teachers, students, staff, parents, and the district office), changing school cultures, team building, political savvy (ideas for improving school cultures, team building, and becoming more politically savvy), *school management* (school management help with site-specific examples), *reflection and accountability* (encouragement to become more reflective and accountable), and *instructional leadership* (a focus on instructional leadership toward student achievement, always guided by a vision and beliefs, including use of data to inform decisions) (Warren & Kelsen, 2013).

Collectively, the literature review suggests attributes of executive-level district support and professional development for building and sustaining the instructional leadership capacity of principals and other building leaders. District academic administrators would do well to intentionally make themselves accessible to building instructional leaders and maintain a relationship that is open, collaborative and reciprocal. Districts must deliberately establish structures that encourage and provide opportunities for face-to-face sharing of information and advice among principals and between

principals and district academic administrators; especially district executive-level administrators (Leithwood & Azah, 2016, retrieved from Riley, 2016).

### **Addressing Adult Learning (Four Pillar Practices)**

The literature revealed what principals should know and be able to do (Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser, 2012). The presence of expectations, guidelines, professional leadership standards, and robust evaluation tools, however, does not guarantee the growth and development of principals to demonstrate their efficacy in meeting the demands of the job. As districts increasingly place their focus on creating conditions for collaborative relationships between principals and their supervisors, they would do well to examine what the literature says about theories and practices related to adult learning.

Drago-Severson (2009, 2013) has provided a learning-oriented model that applies to school leaders and leadership in general. This model of *Four Pillar Practices* for adult growth: *teaming, providing leadership roles, collaborative inquiry, and mentoring*, offers insight into how *all* adults can grow from participating in these practices—independently and collectively; and how employing the pillar practices can help build capacity also respectively, and contribute to improving experiences and outcomes for students and adults alike. They offer hope to principals in understanding how adults learn; and increases their knowledge about how they can create high-quality learning opportunities for these adults with different needs, preferences, and developmental orientations, to be able to support their learning and growth in the school.

The pillar practices can support adults with qualitatively different ways of understanding and interpreting experiences; to increase their internal capacities. They can be implemented in schools and districts to help facilitate adult development and to

strengthen capacity building. Use of pillar practices is productive among not only principals but also all educators and leaders as well.

For this study, I presented only descriptive information. I included recommendations for further use and implications in the *Strategies and Actions for Change* section of this document. Definitions and explanation of a few terms, however, may prove helpful in beginning to understand the concept of the model.

Drawing on what is known as *adult developmental theory* (Kegan, 2000), Drago-Severson (2009) defines *growth* as “increases in one’s cognitive, affective (emotional), interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities that enable him/her to manage better the complex demands of teaching, learning, leadership, and life.” An increase in these capacities enables one to take broader perspectives on others and themselves. The four pillar practices support transformational learning (*growth*) (Drago-Severson, 2009).

*Constructive-developmental theory* (Kegan, 2000) informs the learning-oriented model and centers on two fundamental premises that adults actively make sense of their experiences (constructivism); and that the ways adults make meaning of their encounters can change—grow more complex--over time (developmental). Drago-Severson (2000) and Kegan (2000) postulate that in any school, it is likely that adults will be making sense of their experiences in developmentally different ways. They hypothesize further that, accordingly, principals would need to attend to this developmental diversity to understand and respond to the different ways of knowing of each staff member. According to this theory, a person’s way of knowing shapes how he understands his role and responsibilities, and how he thinks about what makes one effective—no matter the

character, and the types of supports and developmental challenges needed from other staff to grow from professional learning opportunities.

Kegan (2000) identifies three common adult *ways of knowing* (how adults make sense of): the *instrumental*, the *socializing*, and the *self-authoring* way of knowing. In ordinary terms, the perspective of a person with an *instrumental* way of knowing is “*What do you have that can help me? What do I have that can help you?*” when it comes to teaching, learning, and leading. Their orientation is to follow the rules, and they feel supported when others provide specific advice and explicit procedures so that they can accomplish their goals. They find it difficult to consider or even acknowledge another person’s perspective. For staff with an *instrumental* way of knowing to grow, they must be afforded opportunities to experience situations where they must consider multiple aspects. The four pillar practices can play a crucial role in guiding this process.

Unlike *instrumental knowers*, *socializing knowers* can think abstractly and consider the perspectives and other people’s opinions and expectations of them. Understanding other people’s feelings and judgments about them and their work are of great concern and importance to them. *Socializing knowers* value the expectations of those in authority and often makes those expectations theirs. Also, they hate interpersonal conflict and almost always experience it as a threat to their self. Support for their growth must be in the form of encouraging them to share their perspectives about pedagogy, student work, and policies in pairs or small groups before sharing them with a larger group; thus helping them to clarify their own beliefs and, over time, to construct their values and standards, rather than adopting those of their authorities.

Adults with a *self-authoring way of knowing* identify with a litany of attributes. These attributes include the developmental capacity to generate their internal value system, and the capacity to take responsibility for and ownership of their inner authority. Also, they can identify abstract values, principles, and longer-term purposes. They have the ability to prioritize and integrate competing values, and to assess other people's expectations and demands and compare them to their inner standards and judgment. Although they can reflect on and manage their interpersonal relationships, however, they are limited in their ability to recognize that others can have oppositional perspectives that can inform theirs. To grow, they must be challenged, although carefully, to let go of their attitudes, and embrace alternative points of view that could inform their own; even those that may be opposed to their own.

The four pillar practices: *teaming*, *providing leadership roles*, *collaborative inquiry*, and *mentoring*, take into account how adults make meaning (ways of knowing) of their experiences to grow from participation in them. Each pillar practice centers on adult *collaboration* and creates opportunities to engage in *reflective practice* as a tool for professional and personal growth (Drago-Severson, 2009).

### **Teaming**

*Teaming* provides growth opportunities for individuals, organizations, and systems. Through collaboration, principals can promote not only their learning and capacity building but also that of those they oversee as well (Drago-Severson, 2009). Whether working on curriculum, literacy, technology, teaching, or diversity, teaming is a proven way to support adult development. It overrides participants' lack of communication and isolation, enabling them to share leadership roles. Teaming is an

effective tool to use when addressing adults' resistance to change, and helps to enhance the implementation of the change process. Whether, for instance, evaluating curricula, examining student work, discussing pedagogy, or developing school mission statements, through teaming, adults can question their own and other people's assumptions about decisions that need to be made collaboratively. Teaming provides for growth and creates a safe place for adults to share their perspectives and challenge each other's thinking. Understanding Kegan's *constructivist theory* (2000), one realizes that adults with different ways of knowing will experience teaming differently and will benefit from team members offering different kinds of supports and challenges for growth. Applying Kegan's theory, thus, instrumental knowers will need supports and developmentally appropriate challenges to be able to consider multiple perspectives. Socializing knowers will need encouragement to understand that conflict can be a means of developing more effective solutions to dilemmas. Self-authoring knowers' growth, in contrast, can be supported by encouraging them to consider perspectives that oppose their own (Drago-Severson, 2009).

### **Providing Leadership Roles**

Effective principals involve their staff in what is commonly known as *distributive leadership*; inviting other administrators, teachers, and staff to share in leadership roles. Providing leadership roles is an opportunity for *transformational learning*; giving participants practice in sharing authority and ideas in working toward building community, sharing leadership, and promoting change. Working with others in a leadership role helps adults uncover their assumptions and test out new ways of working as professionals. As with teaming, assuming leadership roles is experienced differently



by adults with different ways of knowing. Instrumental and socializing knowers, for instance, will require a lot of support at the offset of taking on new leadership roles; while self-authoring knowers will appreciate the opportunity to put their ideas into action and to offer their ideas for improving school initiatives (Drago-Severson, 2009).

### **Collegial Inquiry**

The pillar practice of *collegial inquiry* is shared dialogue with the purpose of helping people become more aware of their assumptions, beliefs, and convictions about their work and those of their colleagues. The practice can be used to engage adults in conflict resolution, goal setting, decision making, and increasing their knowledge about educational issues. The *pillar* is an avenue for adults to think and talk about their practice on a regular basis; encouraging self-analysis and individual improvement as well as improving school and district practices. Although similar to *teaming*, *collegial inquiry* provides adults with opportunities to develop more complex perspectives through listening to and learning from their own and others' perspectives. Adults can engage in collegial inquiry by reflecting privately in writing in response to probing questions during a professional development exercise, followed by discussion, for example. They can also participate in an exercise of collaborating in the process of goal setting and evaluation with others. Further, they can respond to questions related to a school's mission and instructional practices; or reflect collectively during the process of resolving conflict resolutions. In experiencing *collegial inquiry*, *instrumental knowers* will assume that their supervisor (principal, superintendent, etc.) knows what is the right decision or direction and should tell them. Instrumental knowers' growth can be supported by their supervisors offering questionable potential decisions and direction, providing step-by-

step procedures, and encouraging instrumental knowers to move toward making their decision. *Socializing knowers* expect that their supervisor knows what is best for them. While these knowers generate some decisions internally, they are often reticent about voicing them. Their growth can be supported by encouraging them to express their opinions, and eventually, to separate them from those of their supervisors or others. *Self-authoring knowers*, on the other hand, will inform their own decisions. They can be challenged to grow through a process that helps them become less invested in their personal goals and able to look at a variety of alternatives (Drago-Severson, 2009).

### **Mentoring**

Mentoring is a form of *coaching*. Similar to the collegial inquiry, it, too, creates an opportunity for adults to broaden their perspectives, examine their assumptions, and share their expertise and leadership; however more privately—usually one-on-one vs. in a group; although not always. *Mentoring* takes many forms, from exchanging information to providing emotional support to new and experienced staff or principals.

One essential element in structuring mentoring relationships is to consider the fit between the mentor and mentee and the fit between the principal's expectations for teachers and teachers' developmental capacities to engage in this practice. A person's ways of knowing will influence what he expects and needs from mentors and influence the kinds of supports and challenges that will help their growth. Mentors attempting to grow *instrumental knowers*, for example, can give support by helping them meet their concrete needs and goals with step-by-step procedures. As time goes on, a mentor can support instrumental knowers' growth by encouraging them to move beyond what they

see as the right way to do things and toward engaging in continuing discussion about alternative decisions.

Mentors can best support *socializing knowers*, contrary to instrumental knowers, by explicitly acknowledging the importance of socializing knowers' beliefs and ideas. This form of support from their mentors will enable socializing knowers to take greater learning risks. More cautiously, mentors can support socializing knowers' growth by encouraging them to voice their perspective before learning about other people's perspectives.

*Self-authoring knowers* is another way of knowing. Mentors grow *self-authoring knowers* by enabling them to learn about diverse perspectives, critique and analyze their own and their mentor's perspectives, goals, and practices. This approach encourages them to move away from their investment in their philosophy without feeling internally conflicted (Drago-Severson, 2009).

The way in which principals, their supervisors, or any adult learner engage in the four *pillar practices* will vary according to how they make sense of their *means of knowing* (their experiences). Through ongoing, useful job-embedded professional development utilizing these tools of supports and challenges (embedded in the *four pillar practices*), principals and their supervisors and all adults alike can grow and participate in these processes even more effectively.

## SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Collected data suggested underlying causes supporting the ‘As-Is’ context, conditions, culture and competencies within U.S. School District X. To implement the recommended change plan initiative, an in-depth analysis of this data is essential. I built the change plan initiative on a vision of supporting and growing competent principals as instructional leaders; initiated through a collaborative relationship between principals and their supervisor. This changing *supportive role* and *collaboration* between the principal supervisor and the principals focus on developing principals’ competencies in improving instruction, learning and student achievement.

The literature review emphasized the importance of principals engaging in “ongoing evaluation and supervision and coaching” and “continuous career-long professional development” for growing as instructional leaders. This finding and the perceptions of principals, revealed through the program evaluation data (Riley, 2016), along with the comparison of responses of the principal supervisor on the online supervisor survey questionnaire and extended interview of the change plan inquiry phase indicate this changing *supportive role* and *collaboration* are crucial to the implementation of effective change. Also, trusting relationships between principals and their supervisor will be a significant critical factor in achieving this goal and in the realization of excellent teaching and learning for all students. Through my data analysis, I examined potential opportunities for ongoing job-embedded professional development through a new mentor-coach partner relationship between principals and the principal supervisor, to impact leadership competence in effectively influencing instructional practices of teachers and student achievement and growth. Even though one component of the

Performance Evaluation Reform Act (P.A. 96-861) of 20--established guidelines for creating conditions for effectively supervising and evaluating principals' *practices*, current supervisor/evaluator-principal relationships and professional development in U.S. School District X do not create the conditions that this act reflects. The collected data indicated there is a gap in the perceptions of principals and that of the principal supervisor in this area. This gap was an indication to me of the importance of including opportunities for principals and their supervisor to develop more complex perspectives through listening to and learning from their own and others' perspectives in the change plan initiative (Drago-Severson, 2009). The proposed change plan will help create this and other desired conditions, as well as grow and develop necessary principal competencies that will ultimately lead to improved instruction and student learning and achievement. Data from the online surveys and interviews provided keen insights for the realization of the recommended new mentor-coach partner relationship between principals and their supervisor/evaluator in U.S. School District X (Superville, 2015); guided by principal supervisor professional standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015).

### **Analysis of Survey Data**

Three themes emerged from analysis of survey data: (1) effective in influencing instructional leadership competencies, (2) includes principals' influence on determining PD content, and (3) opportunities to experience reflective practice (Riley, 2016). The survey data indicated the majority of self-directed principal PD had occurred outside of district-sponsored activities. One could easily see this as meaning the absence of useful ongoing job-embedded professional development for principals in U.S. School District X.

### **Effective in Influencing Instructional Leadership Competencies**

While the survey data of the program evaluation revealed that principals had participated in various professional development (PD) opportunities during the 12 months before to taking the survey, the majority of that PD (according to their perception) was non-district sponsored and experienced outside of the district. Also, all of the principals agreed that district-sponsored PD opportunities seldom, if ever were held during regular contract hours or, more importantly, designed or chosen to increase their ability to influence instruction and learning effectively.

### **Includes Principals' Influence on Determining PD Content**

Further, the survey data also indicated that principals were divided on the amount of influence they had on decisions concerning determining the content of in-service PD programs. An in-depth analysis of the responses to the sub-questions on that topic points to specific reasons and justification for principals' responses. From their responses, one could conclude that the reason the PD is not sufficient is that its content does not include opportunities for experiencing proven research-based practices that influence instruction and learning.

Principals' responses on the survey were all in the negative to these sub-questions containing practices such as data-informed instruction, mentoring/coaching, culturally responsive curriculum, a culture of continuous improvement, providing leadership roles, or monitoring and evaluation of PD's effectiveness on improving student achievement. The subsequent question further validated principals' responses.

## **Opportunities to Experience Reflective Practice**

The survey question asked principals to indicate their PD participation over the past 12 months before taking the survey. None of the principals selected experiences of *visits to other schools* designed to improve their work as principal or *mentoring* and *peer observation* and *coaching of principals*, or participation in a *leadership book club*. Each of these experiences is examples of opportunities for principals to engage in *reflective practices* and *collegial inquiry*; both of which are proven adult practices that are effective in improving adult learning that results in improved student achievement (Drago-Severson, 2009). Case study principals instead selected university course(s) related to their role as a principal, participated in a network of school leaders (e.g. a group of principals organized by an outside agency/IPA or through the internet), and workshops or conferences in which they were not a presenter as their PD experiences.

Ironically, after probing follow-up interview questions with principals, when pressed to help clarify and justify their original responses to this survey question, principals each agreed that perhaps their responses had need of an explanation in a couple of areas. First of all, relating to *a culturally responsive curriculum*: Principals acknowledged that during the current year the district hosted a renowned expert on the subject to speak at the district's opening of school convocation and addressed the superintendent's executive council (of which principals are members) during a summer retreat. Also, principals also acknowledged that the superintendent had instructed the district-wide school improvement plan committee include a section focusing on a culturally responsive curriculum.

Regarding their response to *a culture of continuous improvement*, principals acknowledged that the new superintendent had included them on a district team and had begun planning and preparation for district-wide instructional walks. Regarding participation in *a leadership book club*, principals acknowledged the fact that they had participated in the reading and discussion of two books at district-wide administrators (e.g., central office and building principals, and the new division leaders, etc.) monthly training sessions. A discussion of my analysis of interview data follows.

### **Analysis of Interview Data**

Since the survey data indicated the majority of self-directed principal PD had occurred outside of district-sponsored activities, the interviews were designed to explore the PD experiences principals considered to be valuable regarding supporting their development and growth. The recommendations from my program evaluation (Riley, 2016), and the proposed change plan initiative is in response to the need for ongoing job-embedded professional development for principals in U.S. School District X. The change plan initiative is intended to provide opportunities for principals and their supervisor/evaluator to experience a collaborative partnership that grows and improves their development to becoming competent instructional leaders. A critical factor in the realization of this change plan initiative is the establishment of a new mentor-coach partner relationship between principals and their supervisor/evaluator in the district (Kelley & Peterson, 2002; Drago-Severson et al., 2013).

The focus, therefore, in analyzing data, went beyond creating conditions for collaboration; and included a focus on the opportunities for *experiences* that would result from a mentor-coach relationship. I examined the data from the construct of what the



literature review identified as useful district support and professional development, and the benefits of investing in collaborative partnerships. During the one-on-one interviews, principals identified their perception of what they considered to be most and least valuable PD experiences (from district-sponsored and outside the district) within the last twelve months before the interviews. Of noted interest is the fact that two out of three case study principals only considered non-district sponsored PD as being most valuable to them. Also, case study principals were asked to share the extent to which they take responsibility for their PD. This was intended to show their personal commitment to their PD. The work of Drago-Severson (2009, 2013) supports the idea that when principals maintain a commitment to their learning and growing, they model the type of openness and vulnerability necessary for influencing the same of the teachers they serve. Accordingly, the interview data related to both valuable and least valuable PD was examined based on perceptions of the three case study principals. Framing from this perspective is based on the idea that the *support* and opportunities identified from the literature review can be compared to what the case study principals shared as valuable experiences to validate or refute the findings of the literature review. In doing so, it further strengthened the argument for the implementation of the proposed change plan initiative.

### **Opportunities to Participate in Reflective Practice and Collegial Inquiry**

The perception interview data pointed to opportunities where principals were able to collaborate and to engage in reflective practice and collegial inquiry as most valuable. One first-year principal (Principal A), shared his/her experience of having served as president of the district professional development committee for eight and a half years

and chairperson of his/her school improvement committee. Although the PD had been designed for teachers and paraprofessionals (not administrators), the topics addressed, and lessons learned presented opportunities for investment in his/her personal development when he/she became principal. Specifically, she spoke of the *collaboration* with her committee colleagues, of creating surveys for staff feedback (*collective inquiry*) followed with committee discussions (*reflective practice*) using survey *data to inform* PD decisions. (It was valuable)--“being able to be a part of that whole conversation with staff. Being able to create surveys and get feedback about what they thought they needed instead of just creating professional development for them without their input; which as you know would not always take with staff. We had to have some data with the rationale to back it up.”

In response to being asked ‘Did that experience impact your performance *practices* on what you did as an administrator?’ Principal A shared “It did; particularly at the school level because with it I helped to craft the professional learning opportunities that we had in-house and also the ones that we went to (outside of the district) and helped us to create our school transformational committee goal at the conference at the time; so I was able to plan with the teachers and watch learning targets that we focused on grow and become a school-wide thing.” Principal A went on further to say “So it did help me as an administrator so that when I went into the classroom I knew what I was looking for and I understood from the standpoint of being on the committee and helping them to learn about learning targets and understand it’s one thing to be on learning targets but then to actually see the outcomes in the classroom. So it sort of came full circle for me.”

Principal B shared his/her experience of having participated in a roundtable discussion (*collegial inquiry* and *reflective practice*) at the recent American Educational Research Association Conference AERC). One topic of discussion that focused on questions of knowledge and action to achieve equal educational opportunity included: understanding and addressing perennial issues such as school quality and problems such as violence in schools. Another topic included the diversity and complexity of circumstances that students, families, and communities (e.g., indigent and underserved) face. Still, other topics included eradicating social disparities that lead to marginalization and poor school outcomes, educational issues such as teaching and student engagement, and visible problems such as homelessness, trauma, and incarceration that affect students' ability to thrive (American Educational Research Association, 2017). "There was a roundtable discussion that I just came from the American Educational Research Association Conference which was very, very, very informative. That was an opportunity to have courageous conversations with other principals and experts from around the nation about major issues I have to deal with throughout the school year. Of course, it was the end of the year. "...So you know, there are some things you can look at to carry into from theory to practice over the summer." He/she went on to say "These were topics that affect challenges I deal with every single day."

Both Principal A and Principal B considered their experience of having participated in an Aspiring Principal Training Program as a valued experience; although the training had been received more than twelve months before taking the online survey. They spoke of the experience of having participated in activities of *reflective practice*. Principal A stated "...we went away one weekend a month for courageous conversations

*(reflective practice/collegial inquiry)* on transformation leadership.” Principal B shared his/her enthusiasm with the experience this way. “It was a program that offered a vast wealth of information to principals; and engaged in things to think about (*reflective practice*).

### **Opportunities for a Mentor-Coach Relationship**

In addition to opportunities to participate in reflective practice and collegial inquiry, the perception interview data also pointed to an opportunity for a mentor-coach relationship as valuable. Principal B, for instance, further shared one of the benefits of his participation in the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) was the opportunity to have a mentor-coach. “... another good thing about that (APP) is that they even assigned you a mentor, right. Somebody to come in and meet with you; I think once a month or every two weeks, something like that. We would kind meet with this person who would say, ‘Hey, what’s going on in your building? Or say, ‘Hey, consider this’ or whatever. It was a sort of sounding board. I got some good ideas in my one year of that. I got some good ideas from my mentor, you know.”

Principal A was more specific than Principal B. In expressing his/her value of attending conferences as a means of taking responsibility for his/her PD, and in confirming his/her perceived value of opportunity for a mentor-coach relationship, he/she stated: “I tend to try to seek out training through ASCD (Association of School Curriculum and Development), or IPA (Illinois Principals Association) and organizations such as those because there is a big focus on, you know, principal training and coaching (*coach-mentor*).”

## **Opportunities for Providing Leadership Roles**

Embedded in the response of one case study principal from the perception interviews was an *opportunity for providing leadership roles* as valuable. The principal recalled district-sponsored PD on making use of the Mastery Connect curriculum in which part of the training indirectly promoted the idea of *providing leadership roles* for teachers. “They had a segment for administrators. They targeted leadership, teacher leaders (*providing leadership roles*), and principal leaders, and district leaders.”

These findings related to effective adult learning practices are validated by the study involving the urban school districts of Atlanta, Georgia, New York City, and Oakland, California (Honig, 2012) whose study concluded that experiences of mentor-coach relationships that provided opportunities for reflective practice, for example, were successful in helping principals learn to strengthen their instructional leadership. U.S. School District X principals’ perceptions of value in opportunities to participate in reflective practice and collegial inquiry, to have a mentor-coach relationship between principals and their supervisors/evaluators, and to provide leadership roles among staff are further validated by the literature review. The literature review offered insight into how *principals* can develop and grow from participating in these and similar adult learning practices. The literature review further gave insight to how employing these practices can lead to improved instruction and learning (Drago-Severson, 2009; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; New Teacher Center, 2009; Warren & Kelsen, 2013); and recommended in the program evaluation (Riley, 2016).

Reflecting on the overall responses of principals and their supervisor, I took an interpretative perspective approach. American political strategist Lee Atwater is credited

with the simple, and succinct phrasing of “perception is reality” (Forbes 2008). Although the debate of the truth of this phrase continues, both sides generally agree that conditions, circumstances, situations, and distractions can change perceptions. From analyzing the data findings, one could interpret that, in this case, perception is not necessarily evidence of reality.

I interpret this from an analytic comparison of original and adjusted responses with those of their supervisor. The probing questions during the interviews helped narrow the gap between both perceptions, and can perhaps best be explained by considering findings from the perspective of both principals and the principal supervisor. Principals, although acknowledging the existence of related district-wide PD on surveyed topics seem to interpret *district-wide* involvement as not being specific to meeting their unique needs as principals.

The superintendent, on the other hand, seems to view these district-wide PD opportunities as precursors to individual principal development while focusing on district systems change. Educators understand that one of the best ways to alter perception is to provide other understandings (Whittaker, 2012). Creating the conditions for trust and mutual respect through a collaborative partnership, in the form of mentor-coach, offers the potential for meshing these perceptions.

Furthermore, addressing these perceptions during a school leaders’ session with their supervisor is a good starting point for a collaborative relationship. The process would allow principals and their supervisor to establish a protocol for filtering out any perception they might interpret as negative. More importantly, it would help build a relationship of trust and mutual respect.

Additionally, the data and findings from the online surveys and one-on-one interviews offer insightful evidence that participating in effective research-based adult learning practices through the creating of conditions for collaborative relationships between principals and their supervisor may contribute significantly to realizing the goal of the change plan initiative. These findings from the program evaluation and change plan initiative on the perceived value in these practices help to conclude that establishing a protocol for in-district ongoing job-embedded principal PD with a focus on collaborative opportunities between principals and their supervisor is an essential investment in the future development of principals as effective instructional leaders is U.S. School District X.

## **SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO-BE)**

The vision of success for the change plan initiative goes beyond U.S. School District X just revising its organizational chart and principal supervisor job description to show a shift in responsibility on paper, but actually results in a change of day-to-day work by him/her and principals; to provide support for principals' development and growth as instructional leaders. The vision of success calls for the executive-level district office administrator to engage in new relationships with school principals and providing ongoing job-embedded PD support in building principals' capacity as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011). The focus of the Illinois Principal Evaluation Plan (IPEP), established under the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (P.A. 96-861), is on facilitating *meaningful* and *productive* systems change. Building leadership capacity is a necessary component of the school leader evaluation process. Drago-Severson et al. (2013) pointed to the benefits of collaborative relationships through *reflective practice* as a hopeful tool for a more sanctions-oriented approach to leadership and school improvement. The research and data collection focused not only on researched-based adult learning practices, but the implications of relationships that impact the context, culture, conditions, and competencies for the realization of district-wide change (Wagner et al., 2006).

### **Context**

In a conversation with Michael Fullan during the break at a full-day training session, Fullan (2017) reiterated the importance of having a moral purpose when beginning the change process. Fullan posits the intent of the change process must be to make a positive difference in the lives of the people it affects. The creation of conditions



and realization of *meaningful* and *productive* systems change in U.S. School District X ensures a contextual shift in relationships and mode of operation between the principal supervisor resulting from intentional, ongoing job-embedded PD that increases the capacity of principals to influence and impact district-wide instruction and learning. *Meaningful* and *productive* systems change is research-based, and defined as reflecting the best thinking of the current school community. *Productive systems change* is defined as resulting in improved instruction and student growth (IPEP). Making the shift mentioned above begins, of course, with redefining and reprioritizing the relational roles between principals and their supervisor; guided by principal supervisor professional standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015). The work of Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007) stresses that evaluation, supervision, and PD must be interlinked and job-embedded to create a context for professional growth. Their work further suggests assessment based on principals' performance such as the IPEP model has the potential of enhancing opportunities for development and growth.

During the one-on-one principal interviews, case study principals valued PD that gave them opportunities for *reflective practice* and developing a *mentor-coach* relationship. The shift in the role of their supervisor in U.S. School District X is from traditional *supervisor-evaluator* to that of *supervisor (mentor)-coach*, and provides the context for collaboration through *reflective practice* and relationship building. The principal supervisor, in building a trusting relationship with his/her principals is continuously mindful of the necessary steps to trust building: demonstration of sincerity, demonstration of reliability, and demonstration of competence (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005); and establishes protocols for doing so. The literature review showed

the *mentor-coach* experience provides a means for assisting principals in devising systems that promote improved teaching and increased learning (Drago-Severson et al., 2013). Superville (2015) also pointed to the context in the mentor-coach role as significant to building principal leadership capacity. He emphasized the importance of supervisors collaboratively working with principals rather than issuing authoritarian commands. Superville further stressed the importance of supervisors understanding the components of principals' job and how to evaluate them regarding instructional leadership; rather than using evaluation rating as a means of weeding out ineffective leadership.

Case study principals of U.S. School District X indicated their desire for on-going job-embedded PD designed to ensure the execution of quality instruction in their buildings. Accordingly, they took responsibility for their growth and development through PD from various out-of-district agencies (Riley, 2016). The program evaluation further revealed their awareness of and need for making and adjusting to the necessary contextual shifts for successful implementation of a change plan initiative. U.S. School District X and its principal supervisor having bought into the change plan initiative, sets the condition for an orientation with principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach, on how they will implement the change plan initiative. The implementation will be guided by and aligned in a context as established through the IPEP.

### **Culture**

Though the focus of the program evaluation (PE) and change leadership plan initiative (CLPI) was on building leadership capacity, that one component, although necessary, is not sufficient of itself in facilitating district-wide *systems change*. During

the one-on-one interviews, when asked what training the district had provided to principals to ensure the execution of quality instruction in their building, one case study principal replied “We’re a district of management; not a district of instruction. The district hasn’t provided any training to help improve teaching and learning in the classroom; to support principals in supporting teachers” (Riley, 2016). This response was later adjusted and clarified during the extended interviews conducted during the CLPI data gathering phase. The response of being a district of ‘management’ did not change. The principal, however, relented to the fact that the district had begun planning for and implementing district-wide instructional walks, and had hired division leaders to serve as content, instructional coaches to teachers under the supervision of their school principals. Embedded in the process of data collection in both the PE and CLPI was the underlying, unspoken intent to influence the overall culture of practices within the district ultimately. Not only are relationships between principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach crucial to the realization of excellent teaching and learning for all students but the relationships between principals and their teachers as well (Superville, 2015). In the conversation I had with Michael Fullan (2017), he went on to say “Moral purpose is number one, but don’t forget that relationships are number two.” As principals become confident in their ability to build trusting partner relationships with their supervisor (mentor)-coach, they likewise strengthen their confidence and ability to create a culture of trust and ownership with their teachers through collaboration. Taking on a resemblance of *reflective practice* in the form of reciprocal exchange of ideas and expertise between principals and their staff leads to a balance of both direction and capacity to make *informed* collective decisions leading to *systems change* (Drago-Severson et al., 2013). Research supports

the idea of this type of *systems change* impacting school culture and climate and having a significant effect on instruction and learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). The process develops into a culture of trust, shared ownership and accountability of improvement in instruction and learning (Superville, 2015).

Case study principals valued PD that [also] presented opportunities for providing leadership roles; thus giving all administrators and teachers practice in sharing authority and ideas in working toward building community, sharing leadership, and promoting change. Working with others in a leadership role helps adults uncover their assumptions and test out new ways of working as professionals. Collectively, these new ways of working help promote a culture of *transformational learning* in a climate of trust and collaboration. Zepeda and Kruskamp (2012) postulate this type of cultural climate enables staff to engage in reflective practice with commitment effectively. The establishment of a partner relationship, between principals and their supervisor transfers to a partner relationship between principals and their teachers setting the stage for a district-wide culture of this nature.

### **Conditions**

Data from the online survey indicated case study principals perceived they did not have significant influence on decisions concerning determining the content of in-service PD programs for principals in the district. Once principals are considered crucial in decision making regarding their in-district PD, central office administration can begin to create suitable conditions not only for partner collaboration with principals but also for *collegial inquiry* among principals; and in identifying the nature and frequency of needed job-embedded PD experiences. Fullan (2017) further posits that policies and strategies

must be aligned with assessment and professional development to make things coherent during the process of change. The interview findings revealed that case study principals felt the district was a district of ‘management’ rather than ‘instruction’; and did not provide training to principals to ensure the execution of quality instruction in their buildings (Riley, 2016). The culture, birth through a systems change in the *new ways of doing* in the school district, paves the path for to implement effective strategies and actions for creating necessary conditions for maintaining a climate of trust, ownership, and collaboration.

In response to findings from a district-sponsored curriculum audit (December 2016), in the mid-2017-2018 school year, the district hired six division leaders (DL’s) for each building. Serving in the capacity of content *instructional coaches*, they are intended to be extensions of principals’ instructional arm in helping to monitor and supervise teaching and learning. Their major responsibility is working with teachers directly in improving their instructional content practices. This addition to the building leadership team helps create the condition for further specific job-embedded PD (e.g., blended coaching, etc.) for principals, and for further collaboration between principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach in building principals’ capacity and competencies to collaborate effectively with their DL’s; who in turn, assist principals in supporting collaboration through *reflective practice* among teachers. The literature review (Collins et al., 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Smagorinsky et al., 2003; Wenger, 1998) pointed to the involvement of staff in PD experiences they view as important to the social or cultural contexts of their job responsibilities creates a condition for sustained PD engagement in ways essential to one’s individual growth and development. Also, serving as *brokers*

between principals and teachers, DL's further help create the condition for building trust and ownership between teachers and principals.

### **Competencies**

In the same conversation with Michael Fullan, Fullan (2017) spoke on his position regarding needed skills in the change process. Fullan posits that in building competencies, one must focus on collective 'capacity building' for the organization. Both principals and their supervisor must develop needed competencies for capacity designed for a successful implementation, for the above-stated goal of this change initiative to be realized. Making a shift to a mindset of *mentor-coach* in a partner relationship, guided by professional leadership standards (PLS), is an opportunity to experience effective practices that align with PLS. Through the use of protocols, principals and their supervisor learn skills and processes for working effectively together to ensure they each contributes to and learns through the process. Structured *collaboration* through *reflective practice* experiences establishes conditions to achieve the goal of the change plan initiative. Protocols are used intentionally to help principals build their leadership capacity to influence instruction and learning. The collaborative nature of a mentor-coach partner relationship challenges the principal supervisor and principals to spend time intentionally working in *new* and *different ways* to build this capacity; with an intended goal of creating the foundation for *change* in the district. Also embedded in achieving the change initiative *goal* is the planned utilization of time and resources for reflective practice between fellow principals. The literature review pointed to the fact that a mentor-coach partner relationship helps principals hone their skills for these needed opportunities and experiences (Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2007; Donaldson,

2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Wagner et al., 2006). In both instances, in the case of principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach, however, there is the potential for vulnerability and reluctance to a growth mindset of openness. I previously mentioned the importance of the ‘trust’ factor in establishing a new mentor-coach partner relationship.

Wagner et al. (2006) point to the need to address this big assumption of building a culture of trust necessary to enact a process of change. To address this concern, I have structured an actionable test to provide both principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach to include protocols for modeling the type of openness and vulnerability necessary for influencing their learning and growth (Drago-Severson, 2009; Drago-Severson et al., 2013). As this same concern will most probably emerge when implementing the future intended process of adaptive systems change (Heifetz et al., 2009) in the district, it will be necessary to be mindful of other leadership team members’ and teachers’ responses as well.

## **SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE**

Having considered each of the change levers: data, accountability, and relationships (Wagner et al., 2006) during the course of examining principals' perceptions of the support and principal PD in U.S. School District X (Riley, 2016), and developing a change plan initiative, the district has completed the *preparing phase* and has entered the *envisioning phase* of the change process (Wagner et al., 2006). This level of progress is evident through the effort that has begun towards organizing for collaborative work and reflective practices through the establishment of a new partner relationship between principals and those who supervise them. This new partner relationship has the potential of deepening needed mutual trust and professional respect in building leadership capacity. Fullan (2017) posits that policies and strategies aligned with assessment and professional development result in coherence during the process of change. Three major strategies provide a framework of transitioning from 'As-Is' (see Appendix A) to 'To-Be' (see Appendix B) in U.S. School District X; using Wagner et al.'s (2006) model for change leadership. The three primary strategies include: 1) establishing the foundation for trusting relationships, 2) redefining the roles of principals as instructional leaders, and principal supervisors to reflect a mentor-coach partnership, and 3) developing further constructs to build instructional competencies for school leaders. The focus of each of these strategies is on collaborative work and reflective practice.

### **Establishing the Foundation for Trusting Relationships**

Because the challenges and responsibilities of a principal as an instructional leader are uniquely and individually varied in nature, setting the foundation for trusting



relationships among principal colleagues and between their supervisor (mentor)-coach is critical. The premise is that establishing trusting and mutually respectful relationships, set the conditions for reaching the goal of aligning performance practices and competency development with Illinois Principal Professional Leadership Standards and the IPEP; but keeping it distinct from evaluation. Relationships between principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach are essential to the realization of excellent teaching and learning for all students. This mentor-coach relationship also helps initiate a new form of shared accountability. Heifetz et al. (2009) points to the benefit of nurturing shared responsibility in the adaptive change process. As a precursor to implementing the change initiative, the principal supervisor engages in a book study using *Blended Coaching* by Bloom et al. (2005). The supervisor and the superintendent or his/her designee can conduct the book study. Currently, in U.S. School District X the superintendent is responsible for supervising and evaluating school principals. Hopefully, the district will eventually consider opening a new position (e.g., Leadership director/coach, etc.) with these responsibilities. Other alternatives for conducting the book study may include a cohort of superintendents, or of other supervisors/directors in the district, or with a hired retired credentialed principal. The focus of the book study is to identify protocols for implementing collaborative conversations with principals. In addition to identifying and implementing protocols to guide collaborative discussions with principals, the supervisor designs a goal setting process aligned with the Illinois Professional Principal Leadership Standards and the Illinois Principal Evaluation Process. Subsequent to conducting the book study, when the supervisor is ready to implement and jumpstart the change initiative, principals complete a self-analysis worksheet tool. They use an agreed-upon

protocol to help identify their key strengths and critical opportunities for improvement. Also, they conduct an analysis of student performance in their buildings. Principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach collaboratively set goals based on the self-analysis worksheet tool and analysis of student performance. This process becomes ongoing throughout the school year, and helps establish common goals between principals and their supervisor in their new partnership role. The periodic process helps to provide guidance and focus for collaboration. In developing the foundation for trusting relationships (Wagner et al., 2006), the supervisor (mentor-coach) seeks and considers input from principals in decisions concerning PD. As the supervisor works with principals in his/her new role as mentor-coach, and principals begin to engage in reflective practice with colleagues, A culture of isolation and caution is replaced with one of collaboration as the supervisor works with principals in his/her new role as mentor-coach, and principals begin to engage in reflective practice with colleagues. As a result, trust and mutual professional respect is deepened (Wagner et al., 2006); further setting the stage for the supervisor (mentor-coach) to establish a culture of working with principals in new ways in the district.

A significantly related move by the district in helping to build a culture of trusting and respectful relationships in general, among not only principals but also assistant principals, has been reflected in the last two hiring to fill vacant principal positions. Although the district has not taken steps to systematically select, induct, and coach assistant principals to strengthen the pathway to a principalship, the district, in doing so, perpetuates the perception that it views the assistant principal's position as a proving ground for its future principals. Challenges still remain, however, in reconciling the

instructional leadership and managerial expectations of both the principals' and the assistant principals' positions.

### **Redefining the Role of Principal Supervisor**

Both simultaneously with and after the precursor of building the foundation for trusting relationships, is the most significant action intended to support the successful implementation of the change plan initiative—that of redefining the role of the principal supervisor. This idea is birth from the research conducted on the topic. Several studies relating to the research presented positive findings to its potential impact on supporting the development of principals as instructional leaders and creating a culture of intentional collaboration and reflective practice (Superville, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2016; Warren & Kelsen, 2013). These studies suggest many places a mentor-coach relationship can support principals by helping to identify target areas for professional growth; providing formative feedback based on observation; encouraging reflection on their job performance related to leadership standards; and identifying and understanding appropriate measures of student growth. The research studies noted that, in this redefined role, the principal supervisor must possess specific characteristics and demonstrate knowledge in critical areas to be effective in his/her new role. These characteristics and knowledge can be developed through professional development focused on mentoring skills, aligning performance practice with Illinois Professional Leadership Standards and the expectations of the IPEP. Key characteristics and abilities of effective mentor-coaches include the ability to assist principals in reflecting on particular issues and developing a range of solutions. Effective mentor-coaches also listen and provide non-judgmental, constructive feedback and advice. They are empathetic, and relate to the

unique and individual challenges of principals. They provide differentiated strategies, and are knowledgeable of current leadership best practices (Reiss, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2016). The preference would be, of course, to have professional providers conduct mentor-coach training. An alternative could be a train-the-trainer approach using a retired credentialed principal as a consultant to help implement the program in the district. At a minimum, however, the initiative could initially be achieved by conducting a book club study (e.g., *Blended Coaching*). At times, it may be appropriate for the supervisor (mentor)-coach and principals to attend targeted professional development together to deepen their mentoring conversations. Both supervisor and principals could further conduct a book study together using *Leadership Coaching for Educators* (Reiss, 2015) once the culture and climate of collaboration have been ingrained. Professional development for both principals and their supervisor (mentor)-coach should be ongoing and collaborative.

In the new role as mentor-coach, the principal supervisor works with principals in new ways. He/she, for instance, ‘job shadows’ principals in their buildings to see what kinds of challenges they are dealing with, helping identify practices and norms that could assist them in their new roles as mentor-coach. The mentor-coach views ongoing job-embedded professional development for principals as essential to student success.

In its most real sense in operation, the supervisor and principals would meet informally to discuss the results of individual principal self-analysis tool and school assessment report, principal’s goals and expectations before to a formal goal-setting meeting. At the goal-setting meeting, for instance, they would discuss the principal’s target for the year, how he/she planned to achieve it; using diagnostic data from the

student performance analysis with collaboration to measure. They would also discuss the school's strengths and weaknesses, the changes that need to occur to correct those weaknesses, and how they would monitor progress. Daily interactions between supervisor (mentor)-coach and principal would include telephone and email communication in addition to one-on-one sit-downs or troubleshooting when necessary. Having established the foundation for trusting relationships, fostering quality collaborative conversations will be further enhanced. The principal supervisor (mentor)-coach would conduct monthly meetings and peer-coaching sessions with a focus on instruction and learning.

The chronology of actions needed in achieving this goal, as already described in the previous section on building trusting relationships includes the following. The principal supervisor conducts a book study using *Blended Coaching*, by Bloom et al. (2005) identifies and implements protocols to guide collaborative conversations with principals and; designs a goal setting process aligned with the IPPLS and IPEP. Principals and supervisor (mentor-coach) collaboratively set goals based on principals' self-analysis worksheet tool and analysis of student performance in their building. In his/her new role, the supervisor (mentor)-coach creates opportunities for and encourages principals to experience reflective practice and collegial inquiry with their colleagues. Ongoing regular site visits to schools by the supervisor (mentor)-coach is now a part of the district culture. Heifetz et al. (2009) points to the invaluable development potential of high-quality day-to-day supervision. In this manner, principals and their supervisor both learn to lead on the job.

## **Building Principal Instructional Leadership Capacity**

Of most importance in achieving this goal is the action of principals conducting a book study using *Leverage Leadership*, by Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser (2012). The objective of holding the book study is to identify and implement protocols for observing instruction and providing useful and meaningful feedback to teachers. As the principals and their supervisor continuously engage in ongoing efforts to build trusting relationships, and the principal supervisor, in the mentor-coach role, adjust to new ways of doing, principals, likewise, will need to purposefully focus on building their capacity to translate their collaborative and reflective practice experiences to carry out their daily responsibilities as instructional leaders. Accordingly, another suggested book club study for principals is *Coaching: Approaches and Perspectives* (Knight, 2009); which offers practical guidelines for selecting the right type of coaching for teachers and students. In this useful guidebook, Knight brings together the voices of recognized experts in the field including Joellen Killion, Cathy Toll, Jane Ellison, Randy Sprick, Jane Kise, Karla Reiss, Lucy West, and, of course, Knight himself, to present unique approaches for coaching teachers and leadership team members. The objective of using these protocols is improved instruction and increased student learning. To respond to the inevitable adaptive challenges of the change process (Heifetz et al., 2009), principals will be wise to utilize Drago-Severson's (2009, 2013) four pillar practices: teaming, reflective practice, providing leadership roles, and collegial inquiry; in establishing protocols for staff adult learning; and in supporting staff readiness and growth.

A final posit shared with me by Michael Fullan (2017) during our conversation as mentioned earlier was that change involves *slow knowing*. He explained that this means

the organization/district must be willing to absorb any disturbances (challenges) and to be able to draw out (plan for) new patterns of improvement. It is the hope that the findings and recommendations from this study, along with the research from the literature review, establish an argument to advocate needed policy supporting creating opportunities for meaningful and productive systems change in U.S. School District X. The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (P.A. 96-861) and the Illinois Principal Evaluation Plan (IPEP) framework, establishes the groundwork for adopting such a policy proposal.

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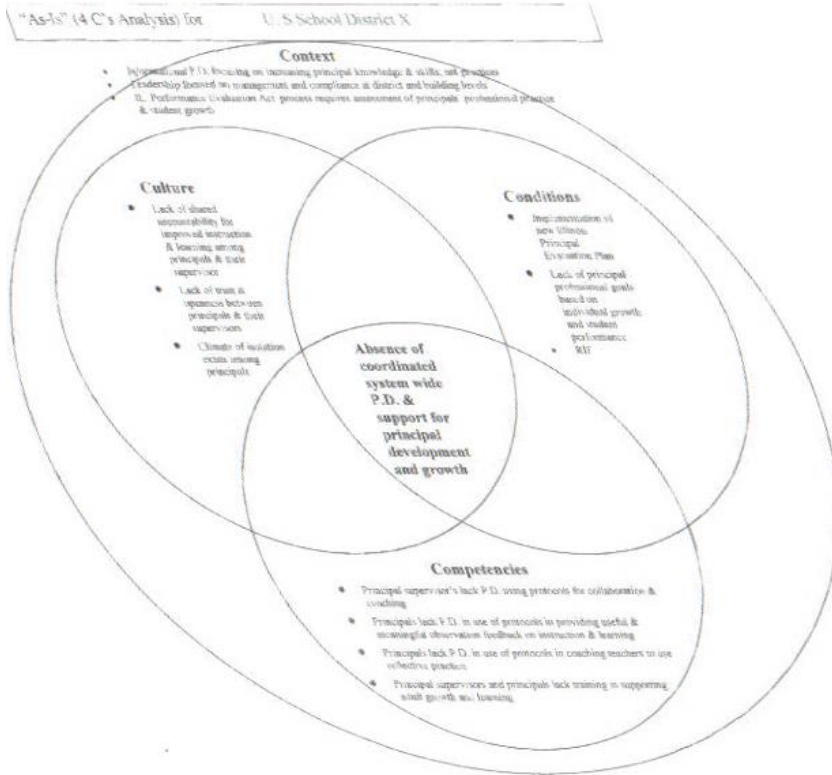
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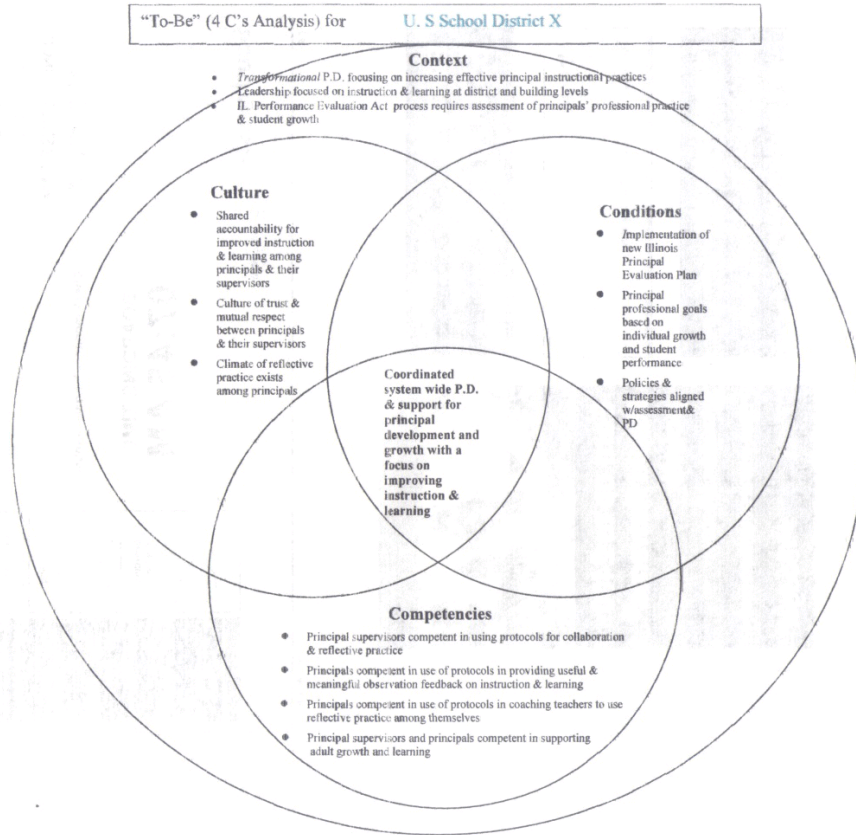
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# APPENDIX A: AS-IS CHART





## APPENDIX B: TO-BE CHART



## APPENDIX C: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

**Big Assumption:** I assume if the district redefines the role of the principal supervisor, then principal supervisors and principals may feel vulnerable and become reluctantly cautious with each other based on the *superior-subordinate* relationship they experienced in the past. Becoming partners to improve instruction and learning through collaborative and reflective practice may be seen as a loss of power and control for supervisors; and create skepticism among principals.

**Actionable Test:** Bring in a retired credentialed principal to train the supervisor in the art of being a mentor-coach. Use the train-the-trainer approach to familiarize the supervisor with various protocols for effectiveness.

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
Establish the foundation for trusting relationships	Principal supervisor conducts a book study using <i>Blended Coaching</i> , by Bloom et al. Principal supervisor identifies & implements protocols to guide collaborative conversations with principals. Principal supervisor designs a goal setting process aligned with the IPPLS and IPEP. Principals & supervisor collaboratively set goals based on self-analysis worksheet tool & analysis of student performance. Principal supervisor seeks and considers principal input in decisions concerning principal PD.
Redefine the principal supervisor role	Principal supervisor conducts a book study using <i>Blended Coaching</i> , by Bloom et al. Principal supervisor identifies & implements protocols to guide collaborative conversations with principals. Principal supervisor designs a goal setting process aligned with the IPPLS and IPEP. Principals & supervisor collaboratively set goals based on self-analysis worksheet tool & analysis of student performance. Principal supervisor creates opportunities for principals to experience reflective practice with
Build principal instructional leadership capacity	Principals conduct a book study using <i>Leverage Leadership</i> , by Bambrick-Santoyo. Principals identify & implement protocols for observing instruction & providing useful and meaningful feedback to teachers. Principals conduct a book study using <i>Coaching: Approaches and Perspectives</i> , by Knight et al. Principals identify & implement protocols to guide collaborative conversations with teachers.

## APPENDIX D: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Focus: The *existence, content, and nature* of principal professional development in the district)

**What has been your greatest & least valuable professional development experience as principal in the past twelve (12) months? Why was it valuable/least valuable?** (Probe: Try to get him/her to talk about the nature of the professional development, and how it has affected his/her practices as an instructional leader (e.g., learned about effective teaching and curriculum, how to evaluate and provide feedback to teachers, how to use data in providing feedback to teachers to improve student performance).

**To what extent do you as a principal take responsibility for your own professional development? What examples do you have of you doing this?** (Probe: Try to get him/her to talk about university courses related to the principal role, individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to him/her professionally, participation in a principal network organized by an outside agency or through the internet, or other workshops, conferences, or training in which he/she was not a presenter—all mentioned in the survey questionnaire responses).

**Tell me about the Aspiring Principals training or development program you participated in prior to becoming a principal.** (Only those who indicated ‘yes’ on survey questionnaire).

The superintendent often uses the term “student centered”. According to the definition from the source he references (McCombs & Miller) book-- *a focusing on individual learners (students) and combining with a focus on the best available knowledge about learning and the teaching practices that support learning for all teachers and students.* **Has the district provided professional development for PRINCIPALS designed to support your ability to create a student-centered culture in your building?**

One of the questions on the survey questionnaire basically asked the same thing several ways. The essence of the question was: **Has the district, and if so, how often, sponsored professional development for PRINCIPALS that was designed to support your ability to coach teachers to improve their instructional practices?**

The board has approved the superintendent’s recommendation to replace *Area Instructional Leaders* with *Division Leaders*. For the most part these new positions and their job description will at best provide content-specific assistance to (you) and your teachers. Although this is a good thing, there is no definite indication that simply adding such a position with a new job description is going to guarantee the practices and strategies necessary for growing and supporting teachers in improving instruction. **What training has the district provided you to insure the execution of quality instruction in your building? What professional development and training do you see yourself needing to become effective in this area?**

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your professional development experience influence in U.S. District X on your leadership development or ability to carry out your duties and responsibilities as an instructional leader? (**Probe:** Try to get his/her view on what ways, if any, would he/she like to improve professional development (learning) opportunities in the district context? What, if anything, does he/she wish could occur)?

## APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Focus: The *existence, content, and nature* of principal professional development in the district)

**In your opinion, what has been the greatest & least valuable professional development experience the district has provided to principals in the past twelve (12) months? Why was it valuable/least valuable?** (Probe: Try to get him/her to talk about the nature of the professional development, and how he/she sees it having affected principals' practices as an instructional leader (e.g., informed/taught about effective teaching and curriculum, how to evaluate and provide feedback to teachers, how to use data in providing feedback to teachers to improve student performance).

**To what extent have you as principal supervisor seen principals take responsibility for their own professional development? What examples do you have of them doing this?** (Probe: Try to get him/her to talk about university courses related to the principal role, individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to principals professionally, principals' participation in a principal network organized by an outside agency or through the internet, or other workshops, conferences, or training in which principals were not a presenter—all mentioned in the survey questionnaire responses).

You, as superintendent, often use the term "student centered". According to the definition from the source he references (McCombs & Miller) book-- *a focusing on individual learners (students) and combining with a focus on the best available knowledge about learning and the teaching practices that support learning for all teachers and students*. **Has the district provided professional development for PRINCIPALS designed to support their ability to create a student-centered culture in their building?**

**Has the district, and if so, how often, sponsored professional development for PRINCIPALS that was designed to support their ability to coach teachers to improve their instructional practices?**

The board has approved your recommendation to replace *Area Instructional Leaders* with *Division Leaders*. For the most part these new positions and their job description will at best provide content-specific assistance to principals and their teachers. Although this is a good thing, there is no definite indication that simply adding such a position with a new job description is going to guarantee the practices and strategies necessary for growing and supporting teachers in improving instruction. **What training has the district provided principals to insure the execution of quality instruction in their building? What additional professional development and training do you see principals needing to become effective in this area?**

**Is there anything else you'd like to share about the district's professional development and support to principals to influence their leadership development or ability to carry**

out their duties and responsibilities as an instructional leader? (**Probe:** Try to get his/her view on what ways, if any, would he/she like to improve professional development (learning) opportunities in the district context? What, if anything, does he/she wish could occur)?

## APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### *Principal Experience and Training*

1. PRIOR to this school year, how many years did you serve as the principal of THIS OR ANY OTHER School?
2. PRIOR to this school year, how many years did you serve as the principal of THIS SCHOOL?

### *Principal Professional Development*

3. Before you became a principal, did you participate in any district or school training or development program for ASPIRING school principals?
4. In the past 12 months, have you participated in any professional development activities related to your role as a principal?
5. In the past 12 months, have YOU participated in the following kinds of professional development?
  - University course(s) related to your role as principal
  - Visits to other schools designed to improve your own work as principal
  - Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally
  - Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching of principals, as part of a formal arrangement that is recognized or supported by the school or district?
  - Participating in a principal network (e.g., a group of principals organized by an outside agency or through the internet)?
  - Workshops, conferences, or training in which you were a presenter?
  - Other workshops or conferences in which you were not a presenter?
1. How much ACTUAL influence do you think you have as a building principal on decisions concerning the content of in-service professional development programs for principals in the district?
2. Does the district provide PRINCIPALS with time for professional development during regular contract hours?
3. How often is district-sponsored professional development for PRINCIPALS in your district –
  - Designed or chosen to support your ability to guide your school in defining the roadmap for data-driven instruction (i.e., rigor, and adapting teaching to meet students' needs)?
  - Designed or chosen to support your ability to give all teachers professional, one-on-one coaching that increases their effectiveness as instructors?
  - Designed or chosen to support your ability to guarantee every student well-structured lessons from their teachers that teach the right content?
  - Designed or chosen to support your ability to strengthen both culture and instruction within your school with hands-on training that sticks?
  - Designed or chosen to support your ability to create a strong school culture where learning thrives?

Designed or chosen to support your ability to build and support the right team for your school?

Designed or chosen to support your ability to expand the school leadership team's impact on instruction and culture throughout your school?

Evaluated for evidence of improvement in student achievement?

### ***Contact Information***

The survey questionnaire may involve a brief follow-up. The following information would assist me in contacting you if you have moved or changed jobs. Please keep in mind that all information provided here is strictly confidential and will only be used in the event that I need to contact you for follow-up. All your responses that relate to or describe identifiable characteristics of individuals may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, unless otherwise compelled by law. Please indicate your name, cell number, and your e-mail address; in addition to your responses regarding questionnaire completion.

What is your first name?

What is your last name?

What is your cell phone number?

What is your work e-mail address?

Please enter the date you completed this questionnaire. (Use 01/07/2016 format).

Please indicate how much time it took you to complete this questionnaire—not counting interruptions. (Please record the time in minutes; e.g., 5 minutes, 17 minutes, etc.).



## APPENDIX G: SUPERVISOR SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### *Principal Supervisor Experience and Training*

1. PRIOR to this school year, how many years did you serve as the supervisor of principals of THIS OR ANY OTHER District?
2. PRIOR to this school year, how many years did you serve as the supervisor of principals of THIS DISTRICT?
3. Before you became a principal supervisor, how many years of elementary or secondary principal experience did you have? (Count part of a year as 1 year. If none, please mark (x) in the box).

### *Principal Supervisor Professional Development*

4. Before you became a principal supervisor, did you participate in any training or development program designed to prepare you to coach principals?
5. After becoming a principal supervisor, have you participated in any professional development activities related to coaching principals as instructional leaders?
6. How much ACTUAL influence do you think building principals have on decisions concerning the content of in-service professional development programs for principals in the district?
7. Does the district provide PRINCIPALS with time for professional development during regular contract hours?
8. How often is district-sponsored professional development for PRINCIPALS in your district –
  - Designed or chosen to support principals' ability to guide their school in defining the roadmap for data-driven instruction (i.e., rigor, and adapting teaching to meet students' needs)?
  - Designed or chosen to support principals' ability to give all teachers professional, one-on-one coaching that increases their effectiveness as instructors?
  - Designed or chosen to support principals' ability to guarantee every student well-structured lessons from their teachers that teach the right content?
  - Designed or chosen to support principals' ability to strengthen both culture and instruction within their school with hands-on training that sticks?
  - Designed or chosen to support principals' ability to create a strong school culture where learning thrives?
  - Designed or chosen to support principals' ability to build and support the right team for their school?
  - Designed or chosen to support principals' ability to expand the school leadership team's impact on instruction and culture throughout their school?
  - Evaluated for evidence of improvement in student achievement?

### *Contact Information*

The survey questionnaire may involve a brief follow-up. The following information would assist me in contacting you if you have moved or changed jobs. Please keep in mind that all information provided here is strictly confidential and will only be used

in the event that I need to contact you for follow-up. All your responses that relate to or describe identifiable characteristics of individuals may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, unless otherwise compelled by law. Please indicate your name, cell number, and your e-mail address; in addition to your responses regarding questionnaire completion.

What is your first name?

What is your last name?

What is your cell phone number?

What is your work e-mail address?

Please enter the date you completed this questionnaire. (Use 01/07/2016 format).

Please indicate how much time it took you to complete this questionnaire—not counting interruptions. (Please record the time in minutes; e.g., 5 minutes, 17 minutes, etc.).