

THE ROLE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TURNAROUND
PRINCIPALS' APPROACH TO RAISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by

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Dedication

To my wife Karen and daughters Gabriella and Clarke

Acknowledgements

Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth. – Ecclesiastes 12:1

To my wife, for her patience and unwavering belief that I could finish this journey.

To my daughters Gabriella and Clarke, may you someday find in the completion of this work inspiration to seek a place in the world to make your mark and to make it.

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Abstract

THE ROLE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TURNAROUND PRINCIPALS' APPROACH TO RAISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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Using a collective case study methodology, this study explored how high school turnaround principals operationalized their roles as school leaders. Specifically, the study sought to discover the extent to which turnaround principals leveraged the professional development of teachers as a mechanism for raising student achievement. The study also sought to capture the characteristics of the professional development programs these principals implemented. Interview data were collected from five turnaround principals and from teachers who served under their leadership using a semi-structured interview protocol. Interview data were coded and analyzed to determine the frequency with which principals and teachers referred to specific leadership approaches in relation to their own leadership practice, in the case of principal interviews, and the type of leadership they experienced while teaching in schools to which the principals had been appointed, in the case of teacher interviews. The frequency of references to specific professional

development program characteristics from principals and teachers were used to determine professional development plan coherence. Student pass rates on standardized tests in math and reading were used to measure student achievement during each principal's tenure. A cross-case analysis of the five cases examined in the study revealed key leadership considerations and professional development plan characteristics that appear associated with increased student achievement. Implications for the effectiveness of the turnaround leadership model and turnaround leadership practice are presented.

Chapter One

Statement of Problem

For more than three decades, education leadership research has explored ways in which various leadership constructs have been applied to the complex problem of sustainable school reform. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), with its mandated sanctions for schools that fail to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) in student achievement as measured by standardized test data, refocused the attention of researchers on the role of leadership in improving struggling schools. More recently, the Obama administration's *Race to the Top* initiative intends to spend \$4.35 billion to turn around the nation's 5,000 poorest-performing schools over the next five years. This initiative regards *turnaround* as a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that: 1) produces significant gains in achievement within two years; and 2) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high performing organization (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah & Tallant, 2010).

In response, state and local education agencies across the country have sought to qualify for these federal funds by submitting plans that detail how they would leverage the block grants to maximize student learning. Many districts have adopted the turnaround principal model as part of a comprehensive way forward (Duke, 2004; Guenter, 2005; Tucker, Salmonowicz & Levy, 2008). They are recruiting, training, and

appointing turnaround specialists to failing schools, granting them wide authority to implement strategies to reverse the negative achievement trajectory of targeted schools, without fully understanding the specific leadership behaviors successful turnaround principals actually employ in such a process. As states and districts settle on this approach to reform, it is important to understand school leadership from this unique context. The direct impact teachers have and the mediated impact principals have on student learning are well-established in the literature (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). What is less understood is the impact principals, as instructional leaders, have on the capacity of teachers to deliver higher quality instruction as a mechanism for raising student achievement in turnaround contexts.

Purpose

One of the most persistent findings from school improvement research is the relationship between the professional development of teachers and school improvement (Supovitz & Turner, 2000). Effective professional development gives teachers the knowledge and skills that shape their attitudes about their practice. The purpose of this study is to discover turnaround principals' logic of action regarding instructional leadership, a part of which is promoting coherent professional development, as a mechanism for increasing teachers' capacity for improved instruction, and thereby, raising student achievement in secondary schools. This study is guided by the following research questions: 1) How do principals operationalize their role as turnaround leaders? 2) How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional

development of teachers within their turnaround leadership practice? and 3) What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals implement?

Significance

According to the latest U. S. Department of Education data, five percent of the nation's public schools are chronically failing to educate 2.5 million children (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah & Tallant, 2010). These schools are often plagued by crumbling infrastructure, scarce resources, ineffectual teaching, and beleaguered leadership. Chicago's Renaissance Schools, Miami-Dade's School Improvement Zone, and New York's Chancellor's District all incorporated turnaround principals in an effort to bring transformational leadership to troubled schools. Massachusetts' *Turnaround Collaborative* spent \$25 million dollars, \$250,000 per school, for outside turnaround principals and partners, professional development for staff and other support for its schools in crisis (Guenter, 2005). The Virginia Department of Education spent five years (2004-2009) and \$4.4 million on its Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program (VSTSP), designed to apply successful business leadership techniques to rescuing failing schools across the state. In this program, prospective *turnaround specialists* examined the characteristics of high-performing organizations, personal leadership qualifications, turnaround leadership skills, and school turnaround planning before being deployed as principals in under-performing schools (Duke, 2004; Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008). In 2005, Arizona outlined its program for dispatching turnaround principals to its failing schools, empowering them to make decisions regarding operations, budgets,

personnel, instruction, assessment, and professional development of teachers in the schools to which they were assigned (Arizona Department of Education, 2006).

The assumption inherent in each of these programs and in programs like them is that improved student achievement is possible given the right leadership despite a variety of ecological concerns such as low parent socioeconomic status, diverse language background of students, and parents' limited participation in their children's educations (Heck, 1992). It is significant to the field to determine if turnaround principals and the programs that prepare them prove successful at producing sustained improvement in student learning in the schools to which they are appointed, and if so, the degree to which the professional development of teachers figures in that success.

Currently, a gap exists in education leadership research literature concerning effective leadership approaches to increasing teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction through coherent professional development in secondary schools educating poor and/or minority students in urban or rural areas of the United States (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Decidedly more research in this area has been conducted in elementary and middle schools because they are simply easier to reform and the strategies used to reform them are relatively easy to identify because they produce dramatic effects in student learning (Duke & Jacobson, 2011; Farrar, Neufeld, & Miles, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). In comparison, secondary schools have larger faculties teaching a broad range of curricula and older students who are also more susceptible to external pressures on motivation and academic achievement (Berliner, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which makes reforming secondary schools more

challenging and identifying the leadership strategies used to reform them more difficult to identify and quantify (Duke & Jacobson, 2011; Fullan, 2000).

However, research on effective school leadership has identified the qualities of an ideal turnaround principal, which include that s/he: exercises strong educational leadership; fosters teamwork and collaboration; sets clear curricular and instructional goals that are aligned with tests; frequently monitors student progress; and ensures the professional development of teachers (Duke, 2004; Tucker, Salmonowicz, & Levy, 2008).

Anecdotal, largely self-promoting evidence from organizations like *School Turnaround*, part of the Rensselaerville Institute, points to the success of principals who have gone through the organization's training programs and who are implementing school improvement strategies (set targets, have a compelling message, diagnose the source of failure, align curriculum with specific assessments, make data-driven decisions, and spend time in classrooms) the organization espouses. There is no mention of the principals' ability to implement an effective professional development plan for teachers, within a larger conception of instructional leadership, as a mechanism for raising student achievement (www.schoolturnaround.org).

Additionally, despite a considerable body of literature on professional development, teacher learning, and teacher change, little systematic research has been conducted on the effects of professional development on student outcomes (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). This study explores the extent to which turnaround principals act as instructional leaders and implement as part of that leadership

professional development plans that have as their aim increasing teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction. The implied purpose of this approach would serve to positively impact student achievement in a turnaround context.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study, as shown in Figure 1, draws from five perspectives: 1) The role of principals as instructional leaders; 2) Principals' professional development of teachers as part of instructional leadership; 3) Professional development as a mechanism for altering teachers' practice; 4) The impact of coherent professional development on teachers' practice; and 5) The impact of teachers' practice on student outcomes. This framework is grounded in the integration of two established school leadership constructs – Leithwood and Jantzi's (2006) *transformational* leadership construct and Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe's (2008) *instructional* leadership construct. In order for a school leader to affect sustainable reform, the leader must engage in behaviors that positively impact teachers' motivation, that increase teachers' capacity to deliver high quality instruction, and that improve the conditions in which teaching and learning occur. This approach is a distillation of the researchers' broader categories embedded in transformational and instructional leadership practices, which encompass setting directions, redesigning the school, and developing teachers. This study is situated at the intersection of the two models—developing people, which more specifically refers to increasing teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction through professional development. This study also seeks to explore the extent to which instructional leadership practices are elevated over transformational school leadership practices, which focus on

setting direction and redesigning school, to most inform the work of turnaround principals.

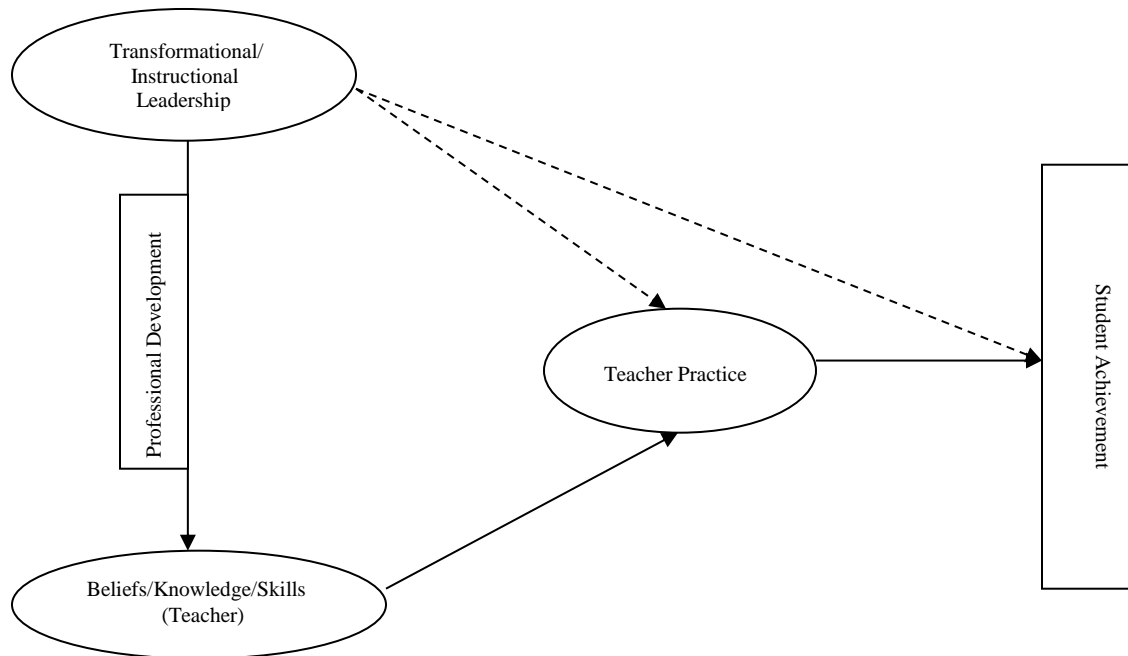


Figure 1. Explaining principal effects on teacher practice and student achievement.

Principals as Instructional Leaders

Building capacity for improved student learning requires competent, inspired instructional leadership. Broadly, effective principal leadership fosters organizational learning which preserves and develops deep learning for all in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefits for others now and in the future (Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). While it is true that sustainable change in schools involves everyone in the school and that there may be many leaders, the principal is key. The

principal is the second most influential intra-school variable affecting student achievement after teaching (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996).

Empirically, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) showed that the average effect of instructional leadership on student outcomes was three to four times that of other transformational leadership practices – building school vision and establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modeling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

More specifically, Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Duke (2004), Tucker, Salamonowicz, and Levy (2008), and Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) identified four leadership practices of effective instructional leaders: 1) establishing goals and expectations; 2) using resources effectively; 3) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and 4) promoting and participating in teacher learning and development. Principals influence teachers who, in turn, affect students (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). The potency of leadership for increasing student learning hinges on the specific classroom practices which leaders stimulate, encourage, and promote as facilitators rather than as authority figures (Drago-Severson, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The significance of this study lies in its examination of the impact instructional leadership practices, specifically professional development, have on teachers' practice and ultimately student learning within a turnaround context.

Professional Development of Teachers as Instructional Leadership

Leadership has significant effects on teachers' leadership practice, but not directly on student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). So if turnaround principals are successful at improving student learning, it must be through the mediated effect of promoting and facilitating teachers getting better at teaching. If principals are going to lead pedagogical change, they need to know how to promote the learning of teachers. Coherent professional development presents a mechanism for doing so (Robinson, 2006).

More important, successful principals know that for change to occur, teachers and students must have a sense of ownership for both the educational process and the product (Day, 2007). In this case, the product is increased student learning through improved instruction. The process involves expanding teachers' capacity to deliver such instruction, through coherent professional development. When a principal employs practices that support teacher learning, teachers thrive, as they are challenged to grow (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). This study will explore the extent to which successful turnaround principals' leadership behaviors actually align with this model of school leadership—building capacity for improved instruction through instructional leadership that leverages the professional development of teachers.

Research suggests that there may be specific considerations around the professional development of teachers successful turnaround principals should operationalize to increase teachers' capacity to deliver the level of instructional quality needed to raise student achievement. In order for principals to maximize the potential for professional development to impact student learning, they need to acknowledge the expertise teachers already possess by allowing them to assess their professional

development needs and to elect their own professional development accordingly. Additionally, principals should create time and space for teachers to implement and reflect on new instructional practices (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Drago-Severson, 2004; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Coherent Professional Development

The chief objective of professional development should be to foster changes in teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, as these components of teacher cognition show a strong correlation to teachers' classroom practices (Knapp, 2003; Richardson, 1996). To achieve this effect, professional development should be focused and iterative. Coherent professional development: 1) focuses on teachers' content (e.g. math and science) knowledge and how students learn content, rather than on general, pedagogical strategies; 2) employs in-depth, active learning strategies (e.g. observing and analyzing teaching and learning, reviewing student work, obtaining feedback on instruction); and 3) takes place for an extended duration (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 1995). In this study, I use these criteria to frame the professional development programs principals describe.

More specifically, in this study I seek to understand and evaluate the professional development programs successful turnaround principals employed as part of their exercise of instructional leadership through these six dimensions of professional development: 1) content of sessions; 2) process of delivery or implementation; 3) allotment and use of time; 4) outcomes sought; 5) teacher behaviors impacted; and 6) capacity built. The second dimension of professional development is further

conceptualized as: Who conducts it? Is teacher participation voluntary? Is it embedded or stand-alone? Is it continuous or a single event? How are outcomes assessed? These six dimensions are accessed by the second of the three research questions that anchor this study.

Impact of Professional Development on Teachers' Practice

Teachers are the elusive *intervention* school districts are seeking to improve student learning and raise the performance of struggling schools. Teachers are necessarily at the center of school reform (Cuban, 1990). The success of ambitious school reform initiatives hinges on the effectiveness of teachers who feel supported as professionals and are given opportunities to increase their capacity for growth (Silins & Mulford, 2004). However, building capacity for improved instruction presupposes that teachers are willing to be guided and supported by the principal in their own professional development.

Coherent professional development builds and replenishes the human capital within schools that successful turnaround principals expend in the process of raising student achievement. Though high quality instruction depends upon the competence and attitudes of each individual teacher, teachers' individual knowledge, skills and dispositions (beliefs) must be put to use in an organized, collective enterprise (King & Newman, 2001). By implication, the principal should be the intentional organizer and collector of these assets within the organization.

Knowledge. What teachers know and think about teaching forms a large part of their individual capacity to deliver quality instruction. Positive relationships exist

between certainty of practice and personal teaching efficacy, and between personal teaching efficacy and change (Silins & Mulford, 2004; Smylie, 1988). Teachers' personal teaching efficacy is shaped by their: 1) basic skills, especially literacy skills; 2) subject matter content knowledge; 3) pedagogical skill; 4) pedagogical content knowledge; and 5) classroom experience. An understanding of how teachers interpret the needs of their students and the nature and value of external reform efforts requires attention to teachers' mental models—the way teachers interpret their environment through a set of cognitive maps that summarize ideas, concepts, processes or phenomena in a coherent way (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Effective professional development reshapes teachers' mental models, which changes their practice, and increases their capacity to deliver higher quality instruction.

Effective professional development of teachers contains several core features: 1) the explicit goal of improving students' achievement of clear learning goals; 2) an emphasis on students' thinking; and 3) access to alternative ideas, methods, and opportunities to observe these in action and to reflect on the reasons for their effectiveness. More specifically, teachers take back useful information to their classrooms when professional development includes: presentation of theory around a new teaching strategy; demonstration of the new strategy; initial practice using the new strategy in the professional development session; and prompt feedback on their efforts using the new strategy in the classroom (Hiebert, 1999).

What teachers gain through this process is *procedural knowledge*. This knowledge is the basis of skilled practice, and develops through repeated cycles of

teachers: 1) developing a knowledge structure of teaching and learning to guide their mental activity; 2) engaging in teaching and learning guided by the that knowledge structure; 3) obtaining feedback about the adequacy of their teaching; and 4) refining their knowledge structure on teaching and learning in response to that feedback. School reform initiatives that increase teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction must include opportunities for repeated iterations of this cycle (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Skills. Teachers' skills are the currency by which they operationalize their beliefs and knowledge to affect student learning. Skills are a manifestation of the mental models teachers' have developed over time coupled with professional knowledge they have acquired and offer clues to the impact of professional development on teachers' practice. Skills are what teachers use to *do* the work required in classrooms.

Skills related to effective teaching include strategies for delivering content, but are not limited to them. Professional development can contribute to teachers' knowledge of assessment, particularly the process of setting student performance outcomes, technical aspects of scoring student work, and the complexities of designing curriculum and teaching to help students perform at expected levels. Skills that enhance culturally competent teaching have been shown to have a positive impact on student learning (Newman, Kings, & Young, 2000).

Beliefs. Teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction is rooted in teachers' belief that they can be necessarily instrumental in improving students' learning. This sense of efficacy is enhanced by teachers' confidence in their own technical

competence and certainty about their practice (Bandura, 1977). Coherent professional development builds that technical expertise and, in doing so, bolsters teachers' confidence. The positive, direct effect of certainty of practice, brought about through professional development, on teachers' quality of instruction suggests that the more certain teachers are of their practice, the more likely they are to change it. From this perspective, what teachers *think* about teaching determines what teachers *do* when teaching. Moreover, teachers who felt best about themselves transferred nearly seven times more of the knowledge and skills they gained from professional development than teachers whose self-concepts were most precarious (Showers, Joyce, & Bennet, 1987).

Teacher Capacity and Student Learning

The core mission of schools is teaching and learning, which occur mostly in classrooms. Although change in schools often occurs as a result of top down decisions, leadership practices that matter should also arise, inductively, from the classroom to support the work of teachers and students. Viewing the classroom as a genesis for leadership, rather than a target for it, captures the aspect of reform essential to sustainability (Fullan, 2006). The classroom (instruction), not the principal's office (leadership), should be the epicenter in any school reform effort. School reform efforts collapse when, among other factors, they fail to provide the training and development opportunities and ongoing support necessary for staff to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge. That is, they fail to build the individual and collective power of the staff to improve student well-being and achievement, otherwise known as capacity building (Day, 2007).

Conclusion

Through this introduction, I have sought to illustrate how sustainable school reform requires insightful school leadership that recognizes that the most important work done in schools is learning, not leading, and that the most effective way to impact learning is to improve teaching. More specifically, principals who leverage coherent professional development as a mechanism for increasing teachers' capacity to deliver better instruction create a culture of learning and continuous improvement in a school that outlives their tenure and enables once failing schools to stay "fixed" well into the future. This study seeks to add to our understanding of the extent to which this is true in turnaround high school contexts and, if so, to identify the characteristics of the professional development programs principals employ to produce the outcomes in student learning school districts expect.

In the next chapter, I will present a review of the established literature base that supports the hybridized conceptual framework for this study. It is drawn mostly from what we know about increasing student achievement in elementary schools. However, a significant gap in that base exists when it comes to addressing the unique school leadership challenge of improving student learning in struggling high schools, hence the focus of this study.

Chapter Two

The number of schools nationwide failing to meet the educational needs of students, as measured by *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* benchmarks for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), has increased and without successful interventions could continue to increase over the next five years (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010). Under *NCLB*, such schools are required to be dismantled and restructured, which in effect means firing the principal and faculty and hiring a new faculty to serve under a new principal. Since 2009, in order to receive school improvement grants provided by the U. S. Department of Education under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, such schools have been given the option to adopt and implement one of four specified school improvement models. Ninety-four percent of schools across the nation that received grants adopted one of two models in which the responsibility for change rests squarely on the principal, the *transformation* model and the *turnaround* model. Under the *transformation* model, first among other steps to be taken, schools are to replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness. In contrast, the *turnaround* model calls for: 1) replacing the principal; 2) rehiring no more than 50% of the school staff; and 3) granting the principal sufficient operational flexibility to implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes (Center on Education Policy, 2012).

A significant challenge for education leadership research is to identify those alterable school conditions likely to have direct effects on students and to inquire about the nature and strength of the relationship between those conditions and school leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). One alterable condition is quality of instruction, which places teachers necessarily at the center of any school reform effort. Teachers must carry out the demands of high performance standards designed to increase student learning in the classroom. The success of both *transformation* and the *turnaround* school improvement models hinges on the qualifications and effectiveness of teachers. As a result, teacher professional development is a major focus of systemic school turnaround initiatives (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Bierman, & Yoon, 2001; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Through this review of relevant research literature, I will explore the ways in which principals leverage the professional development of teachers as a mechanism for raising student achievement. I will explore the characteristics of the professional development programs implemented to produce and sustain desirable student outcomes.

Though an accumulation of evidence in this research area has improved our understanding of the ways in which principals leverage instructional leadership approaches in elementary and middle schools, there remains a gap in the literature pertaining to how turnaround principals might leverage the professional development of teachers to impact student learning in struggling high schools. While improving the performance of any school is difficult, it is particularly challenging to implement improvement initiatives and succeed in school turnaround in high schools (Duke &

Jacobson, 2011). Elementary schools are typically more sensitive than secondary schools to leadership influence. Positive leader effects or leader efficacy are often muted in large, secondary schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). In addition to having larger student bodies and faculties than most elementary and middle schools, high schools tend to be highly balkanized by curriculum, with multiple, separate departments tasked with carrying out similar, yet sufficiently different, tasks. In a high school setting, a larger critical mass of teachers is needed to move a school improvement initiative forward and the right principal is needed to pull the faculty together (Kutash, Nico, Gorin, Rahmatullah, & Tallant, 2010).

Research Questions

Such heavy reliance on the principal as a single change agent in the context of a struggling high school invites the research questions that guide this study: 1) How do principals operationalize their role as turnaround leaders? 2) How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional development of teachers within their turnaround practice? and 3) What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals implement?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study is not to develop a grand theory for turnaround leadership, but rather to use known constructs to describe the leadership behaviors that precipitate sustainable school reform. The research questions are addressed through a parsimonious hybridization of two broader frameworks that have been established in education leadership literature, transformational and instructional leadership practices,

and the impact of this hybridization on student achievement in a high school turnaround context. In the most challenging school contexts, effective transformational leadership practices include: 1) setting directions; 2) developing people; 3) redesigning the organization; and 4) managing the instructional program (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005).

Instructional leadership has been characterized as a directive and top-down approach to school leadership (Hallinger, 2003). It emphasizes the principal's coordination and control of instruction. In practice, the instructional leadership model features the principal as the director and orchestrator of improvements in the school.

In terms of achieving leadership effects through first-order vs. second-order changes in schools, instructional leadership targets first-order variables in the change process. The principal seeks to influence conditions that directly impact the quality of instruction delivered to students in classrooms, such as setting school-wide goals, direct supervision of teaching, and coordination of the curriculum (Cuban, 1998).

In contrast, transformational leadership seeks to generate second-order effects. Transformational leadership increases the capacity of others in the school to produce first-order effects on learning by creating a climate in which teachers engage in continuous learning and routinely share their learning with others. These are second-order changes in the sense that the principal creates conditions under which teachers are committed and self-motivated to work toward the improvement of the school without specific direction from above (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). The outcomes of interest in terms of restructuring schools are teacher effects (i.e. changes in behavior, adoption of new programs, teaching techniques). The principal's efforts become apparent in the

school conditions that produce changes in teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction rather than in promoting specific instructional practices.

Taken together, the framework for this study arises from the aforementioned research questions and is informed by relevant research literature in five areas presented in this literature review: 1) principals' impact on student achievement; 2) professional development as part of instructional leadership; 3) characteristics of effective professional development; 4) the impact of professional development on teachers' knowledge, skills, and disposition; and 5) the impact of professional development on teacher practice. These areas of exploration are meant to capture a thread of influence that runs from the principal through the professional development of teachers to student outcomes.

Principals' Leadership Behaviors and Student Achievement

In the context of the turnaround leadership models many school districts have adopted, the principal is looked to as the primary catalyst for school improvement. This notion is rooted in literature that suggests principal leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student learning, accounting for about a quarter of total school effects. Principals contribute to student learning indirectly, through their influence on teachers or other features of the school, like the mission and vision, or how the school itself is structured (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rowan, Dwyer, & Bossert, 1982; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). However, less is known about how

school leaders go about transforming failing schools into successful ones, especially in a high school context.

As we explore the role of principal leadership in reforming struggling high schools, it is worth noting that the indispensability of turnaround principals to the task of raising student achievement in failing schools has not always been a settled issue in research and scholarship. There are countervailing perspectives on the impact of principals on student learning. Early research in the field suggested that principals' instructional leadership had little to no direct effects on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, 2004; van de Grift, 1990; Witziers, Bosker, & Krug, 2003). However, more robust conceptualizations of principal leadership suggest the effects of principal leadership are most likely to occur indirectly through principals' efforts to influence those who come into direct contact with students in the instructional setting, namely teachers (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996).

However, Marzano et al. (2005) found that leadership has a substantial impact on student outcomes, one twelve times greater than the effect found by Witziers et al. (2003). Quality principal leadership contributes to raising student achievement by as much as 10 percentile points on state adopted, norm-referenced tests. Expressed as a correlation, the average effect size of leadership on student achievement is estimated to be .25, with some studies reporting an effect size as high as .50, which translates into a one-half standard deviation difference in demonstrated leadership ability correlating with a 19 percentile point increase in student achievement. Important to this dissertation study, among the 21 key areas of responsibility for effective school leadership culled from an analysis of 70

research studies, providing teachers with the materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs figured prominently (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2005).

An explanation for the wide range of research findings in this area suggests that the logic used to link education leadership with student outcomes is flawed. Traditional theories of leadership are grounded in value positions about leader-follower relationships and about how to accomplish important generic tasks like setting and achieving goals and promoting organizational learning (Robinson et al., 2008). Leadership theories are not typically grounded in the details of effective teaching and learning, which might explain why leadership appears to make little difference. Robinson et al. believe that this logic should be reversed, so that theories of educational leadership are the outcome and not the starting point of research on the relationship between leadership and achievement. What would emerge is a backward mapping process that identifies the conditions leaders need to develop so that teachers can make a larger, positive difference in student learning.

We have long understood that as a resource provider, the principal takes action to marshal professional development of personnel and human resources within the building, district, and community to achieve the school's mission and goals, with the principal acting as a broker (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Eberts & Stone, 1986). When a principal employs practices that support teacher learning, teachers thrive, as they are challenged to grow (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, & Ylimaki, 2007). Schools that make a difference in students' learning are led by principals who make a significant and measureable contribution to the effectiveness of staff and in the learning

of students (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Far from being unwanted bit players in the educational drama, principals command the leading role in ensuring academic achievement, especially in schools educating a high number of minority and/or poor students (Andrews & Soder, 1987). More specifically, the actions of principals and teacher leaders set the tone for the school improvement process (Duke, 2006).

To help us understand what principals do in this regard, Griffith (2004) summarized that principal transformational leadership behaviors fall into three components: 1) inspiration or charisma; 2) individualized consideration; and 3) intellectual stimulation. In an earlier framework, Pitner (1988) conceptualized a method for studying administrator effects on student achievement through five models: 1) direct effects, 2) antecedent effects, 3) reciprocal effects, 4) mediated effects, and 5) moderated effects. This model demonstrates and Hallinger (1998) later concluded that although it is theoretically possible that principals do exert some direct effect on students' learning, the linkages between principal leadership and students are inextricably tied to the actions of others, namely teachers. The current consensus is that principals exercise a measureable, though indirect, effect on school effectiveness and student achievement (Coelli & Green, 2012; Dhuey & Smith, 2014).

In response to the effect of unitary, transformational principal behaviors on student achievement, Marks and Printy (2003) suggest that transformational leadership is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for instructional leadership. When transformational and shared instructional leadership coexist in an integrated form of leadership, the influence on school performance, measured by quality of pedagogy and

achievement of students, is substantial. As they conceptualize it, instructional leadership replaces a hierarchical and procedural notion with a model of shared leadership. The principal and teachers share responsibility for staff development. The successful turnaround principal employs instructional leadership practices within the context of transformational leadership approaches. Is this hybrid approach to leadership part of their success?

Instructional Leadership and Student Achievement

The most important work done in schools is learning and that learning is guided by instruction. Our understanding of the effects of instructional leadership practice is informed by a large body of research conducted mainly in elementary and middle schools (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This literature supports the assumption that principals have both direct and indirect effects on teaching and student achievement, particularly in their structuring of teachers' working conditions to include the frequency and type of professional development they make available and support. Principals play an important role in allocating time for teachers to meet and providing increased opportunities for job-embedded professional development (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

One aspect of transformational education leadership requires school leaders who understand that the level of student learning is impacted positively by instructional leadership built on quality professional development of teachers. This perspective is aligned with the capacity-building or developing people component of the conceptual framework that drives this study, and asserts that principals influence teachers to strive

toward improving student learning by implementing professional development programs that provide teachers intellectual stimulation and support specific to individual teachers' needs in developing knowledge, skills, and disposition toward teaching (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). In practice, is the professional development of teachers an essential component of instructional leadership, especially in a high school turnaround context?

Professional Development as Part of Instructional Leadership

The highest purpose of an education organization is to build human capital as a process and an output. Much of the energy in the process of education is expended in finding ways to improve the instructional practice of teachers for the purpose of raising student achievement and identifying the agents, principals or teachers, best suited to lead this effort. The preponderance of evidence indicates that principals contribute to school effectiveness and student achievement indirectly through actions they take to influence what happens in classrooms (Hallinger, 2003). What is less clear is if educational leaders, especially in challenging contexts, impact student learning by supporting teachers' professional development as a mechanism for sustainable school improvement. Education leadership research is increasingly focused on the role school leaders play in improving of teaching and learning, and on the relationship between leadership and student outcomes (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). School leadership characterized by a focus on instructional improvement, among other factors, fosters an environment where teachers work together and constructively engage each other around issues of teaching and learning (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010).

The framework for this study relies on one aspect of Leithwood and Riehl's (2005) conceptualization of effective leadership in challenging school contexts: developing people as a part of instructional leadership. In the U.S. literature, strong instructional leaders' expert knowledge of curriculum and instructional practices served as the pedagogical lighthouse for once struggling schools that experienced improvement in students' learning. Such principals recognized that if teachers were expected to deliver higher quality instruction, they needed opportunities to build the intellectual and experiential capacity to do so. To promote professional development and provide individual and collective support for staff, these principals displayed creative, flexible thinking, using whatever fiscal and/or material resources available. They invested personal time and resources in developing their staff, having the pedagogical knowledge and skills to develop their teachers themselves or they sought externally developed programs that could do the same (Hallinger, 2003; Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Dysdale, 2007).

Leadership is critical to the development and maintenance of effective schools. Principals with strong leadership skills are able to get teachers to develop a collaborative effort to overcome difficulties encountered in improving student achievement. In schools with high collective teacher efficacy, principals are instructional leaders who seek creative ways to improve instruction. Strong instructional leadership increases teachers' instructional efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Is the professional development of teachers the mechanism by which this occurs, especially in turnaround situations? If so, what are the characteristics of such professional development?

Characteristics of Professional Development

Fullan's (2006) work on sustaining improvement in organizations informs part of the cognitive frame for this review. Building capacity in teachers, in this case through professional development, is an effective leadership behavior of successful turnaround principals. Efforts to improve student achievement can succeed only by building the capacity of teachers to improve their instructional practice. To build such capacity, teachers need opportunities to engage in professional development that: 1) is grounded in research and clinical knowledge of teaching and learning; 2) is aligned with a school's curriculum and assessments; 3) facilitates teachers' collaboration both within and across schools; 4) uses existing teacher expertise to plan activities and cultivate teacher leaders; and 5) includes mechanisms for garnering principal support (Weiss & Pasley, 2006). More specifically, to promote the kind of teacher learning that leads to improvement in teaching, professional development should concentrate on instruction and student outcomes in teachers' specific schools; provide opportunities for collegial inquiry, help, and feedback, and connect teachers to external expertise while also respecting teachers' discretion and creativity (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000)

Despite a body of literature describing "best practices" in professional development, relatively little systematic research has been conducted on the effects of professional development on improvements in teaching or on student outcomes. Existing research suggests professional development that focuses on subject-matter content and how children learn may be an especially important element in changing teaching practice (Yoon et al., 2007). For example, average mathematics achievement was higher in

schools where teachers had participated in extensive professional development focusing on teaching specific mathematics content, compared to the achievement in schools where teachers had not (Cohen & Hill, 2000). Participation in professional development focusing on *general* pedagogy, however, was not related to gains in student achievement. In capacity-building professional development programs, time is provided to ensure that teachers meet to discuss teaching and are able to observe each other's teaching. Teaching performance is monitored and individual assessments are made (Harris, 2002; Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, & Giles, 2006). Compared to more general professional development, professional development that focuses on specific content and how students learn that content has larger, positive effects on student achievement outcomes, especially achievement in conceptual understanding (Kennedy, 1998).

Supovitz and Turner (2000) offer a compelling theoretical model for evaluating the relationship between professional development and student achievement. This model suggests that high quality professional development will produce superior teaching in classrooms which will, in turn, translate into higher levels of student achievement. They summarize that high quality professional development must: 1) immerse teachers in inquiry, questioning, and experimentation and therefore model inquiry forms of teaching; 2) be both intensive and sustained; 3) engage teachers in concrete learning tasks and be based on teachers' experiences with students' focus on subject-matter knowledge and deepen teachers' content skills; and 4) be grounded in a common set of professional development standards and show teachers how to connect their work to specific standards for student performance. In practice, highly intensive (160 hours), inquiry-based

professional development changed teachers' attitudes toward school reform, their preparation to use reform-based practices, and their use of inquiry-based teaching practices (Supovitz, Mayer, & Kahle, 2000).

Peer coaching is a strategy to increase the transfer of professional development by having teachers do sustained work on what they have learned in professional development (Showers & Joyce, 1996). This strategy involves teachers observing each other teaching, giving each other feedback on the fidelity or quality of implementation of newly acquired knowledge or skill. This type of peer influence was a positive and significant predictor of teachers' change in instruction. Higher levels of instructional conversation, interaction around teaching and learning, and advice networks among peer teachers were associated with increases in the amount of change in instructional practice (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). So then, what is the intermediate goal of the professional development of teachers as part of instructional leadership?

Professional Development and Teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Disposition

Professional development lies at the heart of nearly every educational effort to improve student achievement. There is an intimate relationship between professional development programs in which teachers receive training on a continuing basis to support instruction and sustained school improvement (Duke, 2006; Supovitz & Turner, 2000). The most immediate target of professional development is professional learning, that is, changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills, and approaches to instruction that form practicing teachers' repertoire. Professional development affects student achievement through three steps: 1) professional development enhances teacher knowledge and skills;

2) better knowledge and skills improve classroom teaching; and 3) improved teaching raises student achievement. If one link is weak or missing, better student learning cannot be expected (Weiss & Pasley, 2006).

Effective professional development focuses on improving teachers' procedural knowledge, which is the basis of skilled practice. Teachers best acquire this type of knowledge through repeated cycles of: 1) developing a knowledge structure to guide one's mental or physical activity; 2) engaging in that activity guided by the knowledge structure; 3) obtaining feedback about the adequacy of one's actions; and 4) refining the guiding knowledge structure. School improvement initiatives aimed at increasing teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction as a mechanism for raising student achievement need to provide opportunities for repeated iterations of this cycle (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). This type of professional development has the greatest impact on teacher practice.

Individual teacher competence is the foundation for improved classroom practice, but to improve achievement of all students in a school in a sustainable way, from one academic year to the next, teachers must exercise their individual knowledge, skills, and dispositions in an integrated way to advance the collective work of the school under a set of unique conditions (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000). In this study I explore the ways in which turnaround high school principals might leverage this type of collective instructional capacity, the result of a coherent professional program, to realize gains in student learning in the unique condition of school turnaround. How are instructional leadership and teacher practice connected?

Changes in Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Impact Teacher Practice

School leadership has an important influence on the likelihood that teachers will change their classroom practices. The power of leadership for increasing student learning is determined by the specific classroom practices leaders stimulate, encourage, and promote (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The efficacy beliefs of teachers powerfully predict choice of task, effort, persistence, and ultimately level of success achieved as measured by student learning (Bandura, 2001). Teachers who believe they can positively impact student learning are more resilient in challenging situations and handle setbacks more readily. They are less likely to be critical of students' errors, and they derive greater satisfaction from teaching than their peers who have a more limited sense of control over their work. As principals seek to implement instructional reforms designed to increase student learning within challenging contexts, they should recognize that teachers' sense of efficacy on the part of teachers may impact their willingness and preparedness to adopt such reforms, including those that ask them to share practices with colleagues (Ross & Gray, 2006; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

Classroom instruction is the nexus or focal point about which all school improvement reforms revolve, as instruction is the most direct link to student achievement. We know much about how the systematic components of principal-teacher relations, teacher-teacher relations, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher knowledge, skills and beliefs. We know much less about how these components contribute systemically to teacher practice and student achievement (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

Holding schools more accountable for student learning only works if there are people in schools with knowledge, skill and judgment to respond appropriately to the pressure to improve. The relationship between teacher attitudes and teacher practice is critical to educational outcomes. Schools are social organizations made up of teachers who collectively impact students in their building. The collective teacher efficacy of a school is an organizational factor that emerges as a potentially influential component of student achievement (Bandura, 1993). The principal, as head of the organization, shapes this factor.

Teachers make a substantial difference in the achievement of students. As such, the most important work of school leaders is in recruiting, developing, and sustaining excellent teachers in teaching—in short, being the leaders of teaching and learning (Robinson et al., 2008). A persuasive body of research has linked teachers' efficacy beliefs to student achievement (Kurt, Duyar, & Calik, 2012). The relationship between principal transformational leadership and teacher efficacy has become central to understanding the connection between teacher efficacy and student achievement. What is most promising about this line of research is that teachers' efficacy capacity is not set in stone and that teacher effects on student learning are real.

There are substantial differences among teachers in the ability to produce achievement gains in students (Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004). The difference in achievement gains between having a 25th percentile teacher (a not so effective teacher) and a 75th percentile teacher (an effective teacher) is over one third of a standard deviation (0.35) in reading and almost half a standard deviation (0.48) in math. The

difference in achievement gains between having a 50th percentile teacher (an average teacher) and a 90th percentile teacher (a very effective teacher) is about one third of a standard deviation (0.33) in reading and somewhat smaller than half a standard deviation (0.46) in math. More recently, Strong, Ward, and Thomas (2011) found that the differences in student achievement in mathematics and reading for effective teachers and less effective teachers were more than 30 percentile points. These effects are large enough to have policy significance and suggest that interventions to improve the effectiveness of teachers might be promising strategies for improving student achievement.

Specifically applied to struggling schools in need of reform, this line of research offers a compelling way forward. It suggests teacher effects are larger than school effects. The focus of transformational leadership models is to improve student achievement by changing the school itself (i.e. whole school reform). If teacher effects are larger than school effects, then approaches focusing on teacher effects as a larger source of variation in student achievement, like the professional development of teachers as part of instructional leadership, may be more promising than purely transformational leadership approaches. In struggling schools, it matters more which teacher a student receives than it does in a high-performing school. More important, the larger variance in teacher effectiveness in struggling schools suggests that interventions to turn less effective teachers into more effective ones are even more promising in struggling schools than in high-performing ones.

Summary

This review of education leadership and professional development research literature has explored and demonstrated the viability of turnaround principals' use of the professional development of teachers as a mechanism for successful school reform, as measured by student achievement. What is clear is that the effects of leadership on student learning is not unitary, but is mediated through the work of others, namely teachers. That is, principals impact student achievement by exercising leadership behaviors, drawing from both transformational and instructional leadership models, that build teachers' capacity to produce higher quality instruction. This capacity is best created through professional development that is sustained, intensive, and content-focused. More specifically, this type of professional development changes teachers' knowledge, skills, and beliefs about their teaching, which changes their practice. That change improves student learning.

What remains to be discovered is with what frequency and to what depth successful turnaround principals implement this type of professional development and point to it as the defining variable in their success. In the next chapter, I will outline the research methods I have chosen to explore that topic and to answer the guiding questions for this study: 1) How do principals operationalize their role as turnaround leaders? 2) How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional development of teachers within their turnaround leadership practice? 3) What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals implement?

Chapter Three

Turnaround leadership is the leadership construct school districts are turning to increasingly as they struggle to meet the challenge of improving student achievement in failing high schools. In this model, the principal is seen as the orchestrator of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers bring to this difficult task. The direct effects teachers have on student learning are well established in the literature. What is less clear is the theory of action turnaround principals use to leverage the work of teachers in bringing about sustainable school improvement and the extent to which leveraging the work of teachers is part of their conception and implementation of turnaround leadership in struggling high schools. A collective case study approach was employed in this study to gaining a better understanding of this school leadership phenomenon.

Research Design

Using the cognitive frame described in chapter 2, I explored through multiple case studies of effective high school principals my assertion that turnaround principals exercise school leadership practices that increases teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction as a mechanism for improving student learning and raising student achievement. I chose a case study research design because it provides for an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, in this case each principal and school under analysis, based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2005). As applied to this study, *bounded*

means that each case is separated out for research in terms of time—the period before, during, and after a turnaround principal’s tenure. The collective case study approach allows for each school to be written up into a context-situated case study and then a cross case analysis is carried out to look for patterns across cases (Glesne, 2006). Interview data was collected from principals *purposefully selected* for their demonstrated expertise (Maxwell, 2005). An analysis of interview data was conducted to reveal which, if any, of the principals interviewed sought to increase teachers’ capacity to deliver higher quality instruction through professional development resulting in sustained improvement in student learning and higher student achievement. Additionally, interview data were analyzed for key characteristics of the professional development programs principals implemented. A map of my approach to this study is provided in Appendix A.

My rationale for employing a case study research design for this study is grounded in the belief that the turnaround leadership concept exists in reality, but can only be described relatively. That is to say, the concept exists, a priori, but is best understood contextually. This situates my study between Hammersley’s (1992) notion of naïve realism and relativism. A collective case study approach captures through *subtle realism* the nuances of what might be regarded as a positivist solution (turnaround principals) to a socio-culturally constructed problem (failing high schools). I sought to uncover why, how, and to what extent successful turnaround principals use professional development. This required a research design that allowed me to tease out these details in each context. A collective case study approach was ideal for achieving this.

I assert that successful turnaround principals approach the work of school reform primarily through instructional and transformational leadership skills honed by years of experience, and that these principals leverage the professional development of teachers to reform struggling high schools. Interview data from principals and teachers was analyzed to determine: 1) How principals operationalize their role as turnaround leaders; 2) How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional development of teachers within their turnaround leadership practice; and 3) What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals implement? These three questions form the basis of this study and are addressed using a collective case study methodology.

Method

Participants

For the purposes of this study, a *turnaround principal* is a school leader who was appointed by a school district to an at-risk or chronically under-performing school as part of a state turnaround program under NCLB. *Successful* turnaround principals were selected from principals recognized as such in established education research literature. Three of the principals included in this study were referred to me directly via e-mail by prominent authors of the aforementioned literature on successful turnaround schools. I discovered the fourth principal in literature suggested to me by a member of my dissertation committee. The turnaround leadership work of the fifth principal included in this study was featured in press accounts I discovered in the process of contacting another potential principal participant. The study includes principals from urban and suburban

school districts in different regions of the country. A cross-section of principal types (age, gender, level of administrative experience) was selected to help strengthen the validity of interview data collected.

Recognizing that there are several proxies that can be used to measure school effectiveness such as attendance, students' academic self-efficacy, participation, and engagement (Fishman, Marx, Best, & Tal, 2003; Silins & Mulford, 2004), participants for this study were selected on the basis of differences in reading and math pass rates on standardized test scores of students in the high schools to which the principals were appointed from three points in time: the year prior to the turnaround principal's appointment, the years during the turnaround principal's tenure, and the year after the principal's departure if the principal is no longer serving at the school where the turnaround occurred. This approach gauges the impact of the turnaround principals' leadership practice.

I was most interested in discovering patterns of leadership behaviors among the turnaround principals. However, in the interest of triangulating principal interview response data, secondary participants (teachers, instructional coaches, reading specialists) were interviewed who experienced the turnaround principal's leadership in each case. At the end of each principal interview, I asked the principal for names of staff members who might be interested in being interviewed about the principal's leadership as part of this study.

Setting

The setting or context for each case study is as important as the principal

appointed to operate within it. Each context for each case was determined by the principal purposefully selected to participate in the study. The school to which each principal was appointed was analyzed in terms of math and reading pass rates the school year prior to the principal's appointment, during the principal's tenure, and one year after the principal's tenure if the principal is no longer at the school. Both internal and external challenges each school faced during the principal's tenure are presented to allow for the fullest possible understanding of the context in which each principal worked to realize a turnaround. Though some high schools have been through the turnaround process multiple times, improving for a short period only to return to a failing status soon after, only high schools that have been through the process once or are going through the process for the first time were included in this study.

Data Collection Procedures

In accordance with Human Subjects Review Board guidelines, informed consent was obtained from each participant before any data were collected (Appendix D contains a copy of the Human Subjects Review Board approval). Each participant sat for an audio-taped, semi-structured interview that lasted one hour or less. An interview protocol (Appendices B and C) was used to conduct each interview. The protocol was designed to bring a more robust, yet nuanced, contextual understanding (Greene, 2007) related to how principals conceptualized their roles, leveraged professional development of teachers in that role, and the characteristics of the professional development plans they implemented. Each participant was asked the same questions, but not necessarily in the same order. In an effort to establish the type of rapport useful between researchers and participants, I

maintained as near to natural conversational norms as possible, took few notes, so as not be mistaken for taking dictation, but engaged in a dialogue of discovery during each interview (Glesne, 2006). I interviewed each secondary participant (a teacher) individually using questions related to research questions two and three from the same interview protocol (Appendix C). Again, I asked each teacher the same questions, but not necessarily in the same order, especially in instances where a response naturally led to a question other than the next one listed on the protocol. I maintained as near to natural conversational norms as possible and took few notes. In an attempt to mitigate any influence on participants' interview responses, I did not identify myself as a school principal. In all correspondence with study participants and before each interview I referred to myself as a doctoral student.

Data Analysis

Once interviews had been completed, participants' responses were transcribed from audio recordings. Notes taken during each interview, summaries of my observations, interpretations and questions I had after each interview were used to illuminate, but not alter, transcripts of each interview. These notes, along with submitting written transcripts for participant review, helped to ensure data accuracy.

To begin to identify similarities and distinctions between categories and to discover patterns in the data, I compared and contrast interview responses through the inductive analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997) process of: 1) clearly identifying data segments; 2) naming data categories; and 3) grouping each data segment into a topical category. Initially, data segments were identified according to their relevance to

the three research questions guiding this study: 1) How do principals conceptualize their role as turnaround leaders? 2) How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional development of teachers within their conceptualization of turnaround school leadership? and 3) What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals implement?

Using *NVivo*, I conducted further data analysis to identify possible themes that might emerge from data segments and allow for generalization to a theory of leadership operationalized by the turnaround principals across the collection of case studies.

Principal and teacher responses were coded into one of eleven nodes: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, professional development, professional development (access); professional development (capacity); professional development (process); professional development (beliefs); professional development (knowledge); professional development (practice); and professional development (continuity). Each time a principal or teacher mentioned a particular leadership practice or professional development program characteristic, a *coding reference* was placed in one of the above listed nodes. To strengthen the validity of the themes that emerged, I triangulated the interview data in each case study. Coding references were used to quantify leadership behaviors and characteristics of leadership programs.

Limitations

This study may be limited in its generalizability to all turnaround principals seeking to reform any struggling high school due to the limited number of principals interviewed for the study and the purposeful selection of those principals. Though I

attempted to draw participants for this study from a pool of principals recognized for their demonstrated ability to realize sustained improvement in student learning in at least one struggling high school, I am aware that there are emic considerations (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997) that might influence participants and me. My role as a former teacher of English for Speakers of other languages, a high school assistant principal, and middle school principal has given me an inside view of terms, actions, and explanations that are distinctive to teacher development, school leadership, and school reform. Similarly, participants, by virtue of their purposeful selection for participation in the study based on expert advice, are most likely aware of the aspects of education leadership associated with improving student learning and may allow their professional knowledge to shade their responses to interview questions about what they actually did in their role as turnaround principals.

To help mitigate these factors and to ensure the integrity of the data used in this study, I designed a semi-structured interview protocol that encourages participants to describe, in detail, their leadership practice in their respective turnaround contexts. Further, principals' interview response data were compared to interview data from secondary sources. Possible inconsistencies in participants' understanding of the terms used in the interview protocol were minimized through multiple opportunities for principals to elaborate on their responses within the interview protocol.

Conclusion

Sustainable school reform requires insightful school leadership. Part of that insight is the recognition that the most important work done in schools is learning, not

leading, and that the most effective way to impact learning is to improve instruction. Principals who leverage coherent professional development as a mechanism for increasing teachers' capacity to deliver better instruction create a culture of learning and continuous improvement in a school that outlives their tenure and puts once failing schools on a path to excellence.

This collective case study seeks to add to our understanding of the extent to which the aforementioned is true and, if so, to identify the characteristics of the professional development programs that produce desired outcomes in student learning. This deeper understanding could serve to guide the preparation of principals about to engage in turnaround efforts, as well as offer ways in which all principals might increase the power of their academic programs, by improving teachers' capacity (knowledge, skills, and beliefs) to deliver higher quality instruction.

Chapter Four

This study explored the degree to which high school turnaround principals leveraged the professional development of teachers to achieve sustainable school improvement and identified the characteristics of the professional development plans they employed. The study was driven by three research questions: 1) How do principals operationalize their role as turnaround leaders? 2) How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional development of teachers within their conceptualization of turnaround leadership? and 3) What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals implement? Five high school turnaround principals, noted in the literature or the press for their success in this type of school leadership, were interviewed using a structured interview protocol (Appendix B). The protocol was organized around the three main research questions with sub-questions designed to narrow participants' responses to specific areas of leadership practice. To minimize threats to the validity of the interview data collected from principals, teachers who served under these principals during the turnaround period for which each principal is recognized were also interviewed in four of the five cases presented. Numerous attempts to interview teachers who served with the fifth principal included in this study were unsuccessful. However, interview data from that principal is

included in this chapter, as I believe it furthers our understanding of turnaround leadership.

The structured interview protocol used to interview teachers (Appendix C) was similar to the one used to interview principals. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. To strengthen the validity of the interview data, a transcript of each interview was sent to the participant who provided the interview. Participants were asked to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy and were given the opportunity to edit their responses.

The findings from each set of interviews are presented here as five case studies. Information on location, student enrollment, and demographics is presented to give context to each turnaround environment. Further context for each case emerged from interviews and is woven into the *context* section of each case. School improvement is measured by reading and math pass rates on standardized tests administered before, during, and after the tenure of the turnaround principal studied in each case.

As applied in the conceptual framework for this study, *instructional leadership* encompasses: 1) establishing student achievement goals and expectations; 2) using resources effectively; 3) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and 4) promoting and participating in teacher learning and professional development. *Transformational leadership* encompasses: 1) building school vision and establishing school goals; 2) redesigning the organization; and 3) developing people. The intersection of these two models lies at promoting teacher learning (instructional leadership) and developing people (transformational leadership). This intersection,

professional development, forms the basis of the hybrid approach to leadership that drives sustainable school improvement.

Case One

Context

High School A is located in an urban school district in the southwest region of the United States. During the tenure of Principal A, the school enrolled between 800 and 900 students in grades 9 through 12. At that time, the student body was 67% Latino – of whom one out of three was an English Language Learner, 29% African American, 2% White, 0.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% Native American. Daily attendance averaged 85%, while the state average was 95%. Eighty percent of students were eligible for free or reduced price meals. The school was the most impoverished school in the district. The district superintendent had drawn up plans to shutter the school due to its chronically low performance on state assessments and other measures of school effectiveness. The dropout rate was high (24.7%), the graduation rate low (54.12%). Rates of pregnancy and drug use were also high. There had been racial tension between African American and Hispanic students on campus in recent years.

The school had been also plagued by frequent principal turnover. Between 1997 and 2007, five principals entered and left. In an effort to save the school the year prior to Principal A's arrival, the school district had spent millions of dollars on a nationally renowned school turnaround program in which the school had been broken into sub-schools or learning communities, and students selected a career pathway unique to each sub-school. A company was contracted to manage the implementation of the program.

Although it had failed to produce any positive results in student achievement, Principal A anticipated facing political challenges if she sought to terminate the program.

She inherited an administrative staff of three assistant principals and a director of student services, all of whom were in their first or second year as administrators. The front office staff was unstable. Many on the staff had been working in the office for a number of years, but in different capacities than at the start of Principal A's tenure. Many had been forced to serve in their positions when there was no one left to do the job. The mobility rate among the faculty was high; 60% had less than three years of teaching experience, and 75% had less than 5 years of experience. Twenty-one percent had come to High School A with no prior teaching experience.

Principal A, herself, had never been a principal. She had taught for many years in the district and had served as an assistant principal. She subsequently interviewed sixteen times for a principalship. Finding no success, she had begun applying for principalships in a neighboring district when the superintendent of her district became aware she was trying to leave the district. He informed her that he had one school open and that the school was low-performing and in its last year before being shut down because of it. He invited her to interview for the principalship of the school. She did so successfully and was appointed principal. She had no idea what a turnaround principal was at the time.

Student Performance Data

Principal A became principal of High School A in 2008 and remained so in 2013. Presented below is student performance on standardized test data for the period before

the time she was principal through 2014. Data from one year prior to Principal A's tenure are presented to add context to the situation she faced upon assuming the principalship.

As illustrated in Figure 2, at the end of Principal A's first year as principal (2008-2009), the reading pass rate decreased 3.1% and the math pass rate increased 3.1% over the previous year. However, in her second year, reading and math pass rates increased 17.5% and 15.0% respectively. In her third year, the reading pass rates increased a modest 8.1%, while the pass rate in math increased a dramatic 63.2%. In years four through six, reading pass rates fell from the levels reached during Year 3 and Year 4 of Principal A's tenure, but have remained almost exactly where they were prior to that time. The math pass rate, which more than doubled during her tenure, remain at the highest level attained to date (73%).

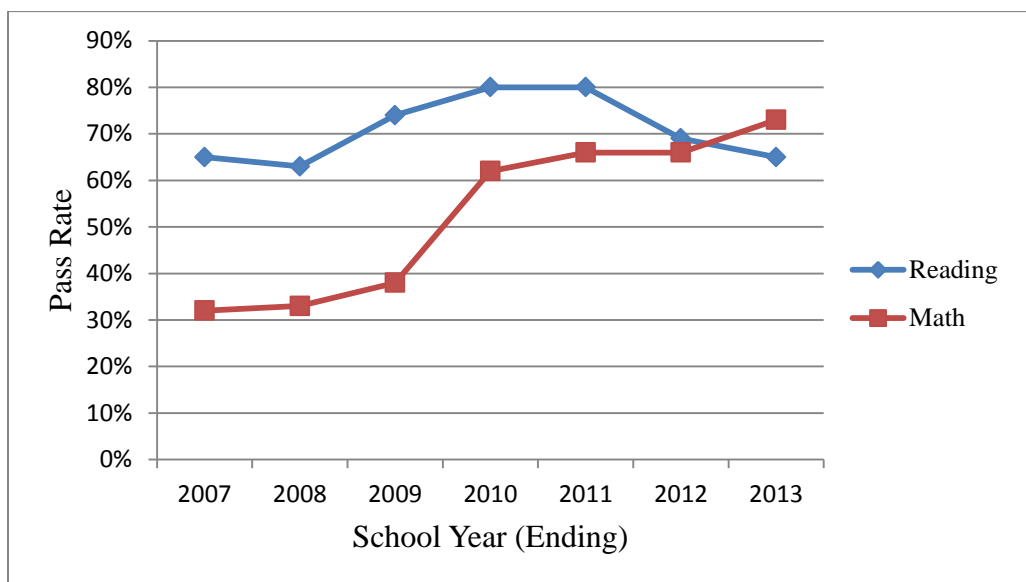


Figure 2. Student pass rates on standardized math and reading tests one year prior to, during, and one after Principal A's tenure.

Principal A's Theory of Action

At the time of her appointment as principal, Principal A had a sense of what would be required of her in the process of turning around High School A. She anticipated having to be a politician, nurse, doctor, custodian, and an expert in curriculum, assessment and coaching. To begin the work, she immersed herself in professional development courses on building literacy. She wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how best to develop teachers' knowledge and skills around how students develop language—especially reading and writing. She attended training at the University of Pittsburgh and in California under WestEd. She studied the work of Elmore and Darling-Hammond.

Once Principal A got to the school, she assessed the faculty's instructional capacity and found:

They had no clue. I often talk about the dinosaur unit or the castle unit in elementary school as being what we teach because it's fun. I don't think there was any guidance for instruction. They were following what they thought to be curriculum that was appropriate for the students, but were not assessing them and they were not measuring growth or anything like that. They were just day-to-day, no structure, no guidance.

With that, she decided to focus on instruction, specifically lesson planning and data analysis, first among the other concerns threatening the school's transformation. One of the first things she did was to create a master schedule that provided teachers 180 minutes

of protected time a week to meet in curricular learning teams. She deployed school administrators to lead and monitor the work of these teams, specifically in the areas of backward design and how to respond to student performance data, not just look at it. To her, “Popping broken bones back into place hurts, but if you see in your data that this is not working, then you adjust quick and you move.” In subsequent years, Principal A appointed teachers to lead the work of these learning teams. She built the capacity of this group of teachers to lead the professional learning of their respective teams through a series of professional learning retreats designed to increase their knowledge and skills related to focusing the work of curricular teams on improving instructional practice.

Role of Teachers’ Professional Development

Principal A made the professional development of teachers’ knowledge, skills, and beliefs an essential part of her turnaround approach. She sought to strengthen teachers’ knowledge around formative and summative data analysis, their skills around instructional strategies they could use in response to student performance data, and their beliefs about their ability to improve student learning. At first, she used professional development resources outside the school to begin to build teachers’ capacity to improve instruction. As capacity within the staff increased, professional development became more teacher-directed and teacher-delivered. Principal A hired substitutes to allow teachers who had become experts through professional learning on particular teaching strategies to work with their faculty colleagues on mastering and implementing those strategies.

As evidence that the professional development of teachers figured prominently in Principal A's initial theory of action, discussion of the professional development of teachers produced 73.0% of the coding references contained in the interview data collected from the principal. As used in this study, a coding reference is each time the principal mentions or refers to a particular leadership practice in response to any question during the interview. An example of a *professional development* related coding reference would be:

I almost feel like I'm starting from scratch again and again. I get to a certain level of professional development with the faculty and then I ask myself, "How am I going to differentiate their professional development?" because there are those who are ready to implement the new strategy and those who are not. That means I have to put two sessions together now every time, one for those who know and one for those who don't know.

Transformational leadership practices accounted for only 16.7% of the coding references, with other instructional leadership practices (establishing student achievement goals and expectations, using resources effectively, and ensuring curriculum alignment) accounting for 10.3% of the references. This suggests Principal A spent some time attending to transformational changes she perceived were harming the instructional program, such as changing the school's master schedule to allow common planning time for curricular learning teams, but spent more time during the initial phase of her tenure developing teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction. Within her description of the type of professional development plan she implemented to achieve that goal,

Principal A talked most about the process of designing, delivering, and monitoring the program. She devoted the second largest amount of time to describing the specific capacities she sought to increase through her professional development plan, with an equal number of references devoted to teacher beliefs and practices.

Professional Development Program Description

Outcomes sought. At the beginning of her tenure, there was little to no trust among the faculty, which inhibited their willingness to take risks in reflecting on their practice to discover individual and collective areas for improvement. Principal A had as one objective in her professional development plan that teachers would, "...get a bit of gator skin....," that would allow teachers to provide each other constructive criticism around their instructional focus for the year.

She also sought to develop teacher leadership around professional development. She assigned teachers as professional learning community leads. Each course has a lead and each lead is part of the school's leadership team. The aim of this approach is that each leader will be familiar with student performance data, lead teachers in analyzing it, and in implementing instructional adjustments in response to those data.

Access. Teachers accessed the professional development program Principal A employed primarily through protected time built into the master schedule. Teachers met in curricular learning teams, as part of a curriculum-wide Professional Learning Community model, 180 minutes per week to analyze student data, plan interventions, learn and share new instructional strategies, and to discuss the effectiveness of those strategies.

Principal A also built representative teams comprised of teachers from each core content area to attend professional development opportunities away from school.

Members of these teams received this training with the understanding that they would conduct turnaround training for their respective teams and monitor the implementation of newly acquired learning strategies.

Principal A's attempts at professional development of teachers through collaborative learning visits conducted through critical friends groups were less successful because teachers felt they were required to formulate questions about colleagues' practice that would not hurt feelings and had to be completely professional. She found it frustrating that teachers had difficulty with the concept that part of professional learning in this context relied on their ability to give constructive criticism around a question or area of focus:

And so if our focus is writing to learn and we're coming in to see that, then let's—yeah, we're going to be nice, but we're going to want to talk about how it is we can improve, and then they also participate in real time and we're pushing them to demonstrate their lesson plans to their colleagues.

Process. During the first year of her tenure, Principal A identified areas of teacher practice she wanted to improve. She then developed a professional development plan by semester and presented it to teachers at the beginning of each semester. The district provided experts in the areas where she wanted to build capacity (e.g., data analysis, backward lesson design, high-yield instructional strategies) who came to the school to deliver training. As teachers gained knowledge in these areas, administrators monitored

the work of curricular learning teams for evidence of implementation. As teacher leaders became experts in areas identified for teacher growth they became the presenters, which resulted in less reliance on outside resources to develop new teachers who joined the faculty each year.

Once the professional development plan was fully implemented, Principal A introduced the concept of learning walks as a layer of professional accountability around teachers' implementation of newly acquired knowledge and skills. These learning walks were also designed to build trust and to strengthen the culture of collaboration among teachers. To increase the collective capacity of the faculty, Principal A saw the need to differentiate professional development by teacher. Teachers who had been on the faculty since the beginning of the turnaround efforts received development in more advanced strategies and on how to lead adult learning, while teachers new to the faculty were developed using the plan Principal A implemented at the beginning of her tenure.

Capacity built. Principal A indicated that professional development that increased teachers' capacity to analyze and respond to data made the largest difference in teacher knowledge. Professional development on backward design in lesson planning had the largest impact on teachers' practice. Capacity built in these two areas had the greatest impact on student performance in math and reading.

Several attempts to speak with teachers who served at High School A during Principal A's tenure were unsuccessful. The validity of claims made by Principal A regarding capacity built could not be corroborated and is recognized as a limitation in this portion of the study. However, sustained gains in student pass rates, especially math, may

indicate improved instructional capacity on the part of teachers resulting from the professional development program implemented by Principal A.

Continuity. According to Principal A, the professional development program she implemented is still in use at High School A. Curricular learning teams still meet 180 minutes a week. The focus of each meeting is formative and summative student assessment and the general question, "What data is driving our meeting?" Teams examine student work samples to help answer this question. These work samples also help teams identify current trends in student performance across a subject area, specifically two areas of strength and two areas of weakness in each section of students. Teachers use this information to shape instruction from unit to unit. To ensure this happens, teachers bring their lesson plans to team meetings to make adjustments to them in real time. Once teams have made instructional adjustments, their attention turns to designing formative and summative assessments that encompass the learning objectives for each unit. In addition, learning walks are now part of the school's reflective practice.

Coherence. Interview data indicate the professional development program Principal A implemented was differentiated first by collaborative team, which suggests it was content-specific, and then by teacher. Teachers also engaged in analyzing student data, planning interventions, and sharing new instructional strategies—the type of active learning adults need as part of a coherent professional development program. Teachers also participated in learning walks and critical friends groups as part of their professional development, but their strategies proved less successful and were soon abandoned. In terms of the third criteria for coherence, the data indicate that Principal A's professional

development plan was imbedded in teachers' work, was iterative, and thus carried out over an extended period.

In summary, Principal A conducted a professional development needs assessment soon after assuming the principalship by observing teachers' instructional practice. She used her assessment to secure the external resources needed to address the immediate professional needs of the faculty with an ultimate goal of building internal capacity around the deficiencies hampering teachers' ability to improve the quality of instruction delivered to students. As teachers became more proficient in the areas addressed in the professional development plan, teacher leaders emerged who could assist colleagues as they continued to develop targeted knowledge and skills. These teacher leaders became the internal sources Principal A came to rely on as she later differentiated the professional development plan to ensure new faculty members had the benefit of the collective learning the faculty had experienced prior to their arrival and that veteran faculty members received the support they needed to implement target learning strategies with fidelity. The impact of this approach was sustained improvements in student achievement, most notably in math.

Case Two

Context

High School B is located in an urban school district on the eastern seaboard of the United States. During Principal B's tenure, the school enrolled between 1,100 and 1,200 students in grades 9 through 12. At the time, the student body was 45% White, 44% African American, 6.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.1% Hispanic, and 0.2% Native

American. Forty-nine percent of students were eligible for free or reduced price meals. One-third lived in public housing. The school had an 18% dropout rate and a 68% on-time graduation rate.

Academically, students were tracked into courses. Not many minorities were enrolled in AP courses. Principal B estimated that when he arrived around 100 students were enrolled in Algebra and around 150 in geometry, foundational courses. The rest of the students were enrolled in advanced math courses, i.e., trigonometry, pre-calculus, and AP Statistics. This enrollment disparity resulted in a 90% pass rate in Algebra II and a 60% pass rate in Algebra I and geometry. The same types of students kept failing the same foundational courses.

Principal B became principal of High School B in March 2008. He had been an assistant principal at the largest high school in the state for two years prior to that. According to him, he was the youngest high school principal in the state when he assumed the principalship of High School B. He followed a principal who had been beloved, but ultimately removed from the principalship due to the school's low academic performance after 30 years of service at the school as a teacher, assistant principal, associate principal, and finally principal. There was little transition between the two principals. Principal B inherited two assistant principals, who had been loyal to the previous principal, but was able to hire an assistant principal to round out his administrative team.

Principal B characterized 40% of the faculty he inherited as "horrible." They possessed low efficacy and were socially and emotionally detached from the school.

Many had been at the school for many years, but had never had their instructional practices challenged. The school had recently received an influx of refugees from Darfur who lived at a relocation center nearby. Gang activity and drug use were present in the school. The principal estimated 4,500 discipline referrals were generated his first year as principal, with 80% of the referrals for 20% of the students.

Student Performance Data

Principal B was principal of High School B from 2008 to 2013. Presented below is student performance on standardized tests data for the period before, during, and after which he was principal. Data from two years prior to Principal B's tenure are presented to add context to the situation Principal B faced upon assuming the principalship. Data from the year following Principal B's tenure are presented to give context to the sustainability of the improvements in student achievement realized, as measured by standardized test pass rates.

As illustrated in Figure 3, at the end of Principal B's first year as principal (2008-2009), English and math pass rates increased 7.1% and 1.3 % respectively. In his second year, the English pass rate decreased by 4.4% and the math pass rate increased by 3.7% over the previous year. In his third year, there was no change in the English pass rate, while the pass rate in math increased by 3.4%. In year four, the English pass rate rose only 2.2% from the year prior, while the pass rate in math fell a dramatic 22.6%. In year 5, the pass rates fell in both English and math by another 7.6% and 3.1% respectively. In the two years following Principal B's tenure, the English pass rate remained where Principal B had found it in 2008, but the pass rate in math never fully recovered to where

it had been even before his principalship. State math learning standards changed in 2009, which could account for some of the dip in the pass rate High School B experienced in 2012.

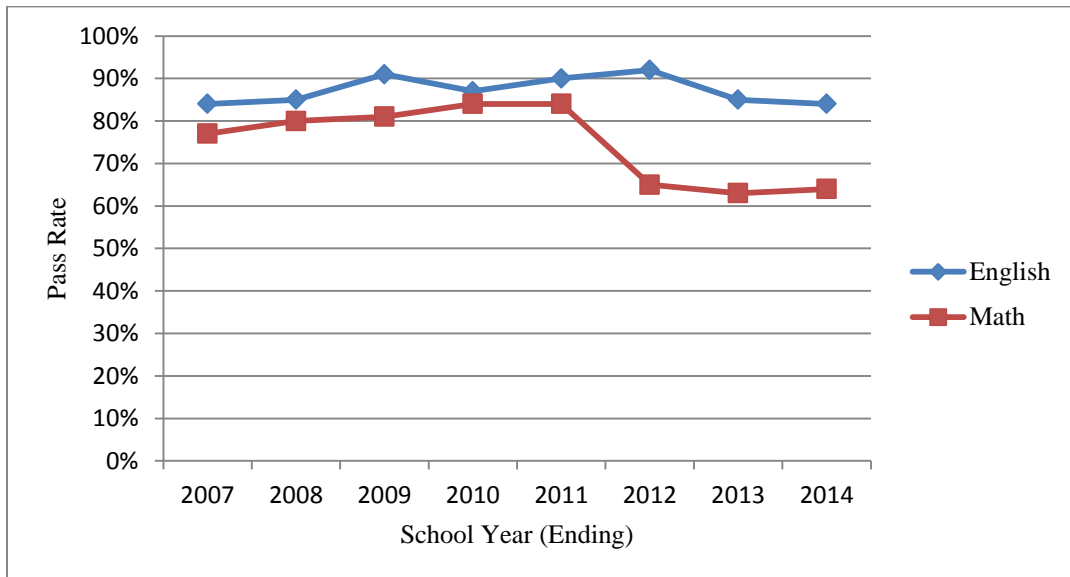


Figure 3. Student pass rates on standardized math and reading tests one year prior to, during, and one after Principal B’s tenure.

Principal B's Theory of Action

Being appointed to High School B in March and not actually assuming the principalship until July 1 allowed Principal B time to observe the school for four months in an effort to discover the specific issues he would face as principal. During that time, he wondered most about how he might get people to invest in the change process and how to explain that process thoroughly enough to create a sense of urgency within the faculty:

Very quickly we assessed some of the issues and tried to diagnose as much of the disease as well as some of the symptoms of the disease that we could. It was a real benefit to being appointed in March because I was able to spend several days a week observing the school...if forced me into a position of observation. We had two significant issues that emerged: The first was student matters and the second was personnel matters.

Principal B decided to approach the challenge of turning around school B from a *transformational* perspective first. He made restructuring the school his initial priority. He instituted a discipline structure where student discipline was tracked by content area. Under this structure, for example, if an assistant principal supervised the English department, every discipline referral written by an English teacher went to that administrator. The number of frivolous referrals decreased 30%, which freed administrators to spend less time on that aspect of school management and more time on instructional leadership.

Principal B put in place a system for tracking student data. He grouped students by grade level cohorts to monitor on-time graduation rates. He ranked teachers by the number of failing grades they issued, their personal attendance, the attendance of their students to their classes, and the number of discipline referrals they submitted. Teachers who scored more than a standard deviation from the mean were put on an improvement plan. In the first year, 42% of the faculty needed improvement. Principal B experienced a turnover rate of 33% his first year, 20% the second year, and around 9% in each subsequent year of his tenure.

To engage students in the turnaround process, he met with the entire student body in the auditorium, with no teachers present, to ask them what kind of school they wanted to attend. Did they want to go to a school where they did not feel safe, where guns, gangs, and drugs were part of the culture? After the meeting, he pulled together two groups of students to make decisions about the culture of the school. One group of students he called the leadership team, the other the management team. The leadership team consisted of sports team captains, club presidents, and class officers. The management team consisted of top discipline offenders. Principal B brought the two groups together at regular breakfast meetings. To his surprise, the groups reached consensus on an array of issues related to improving the school's culture.

To curb the high rate of suspensions, Principal B instituted a policy that required parents to accompany students back to school from a suspension for a conference with the teacher who initiated the discipline referral, the student's counselor, administrator, and sometimes a representative from a community agency depending on the circumstances surrounding the suspension. If a parent did not accompany a returning student, Principal B would send a police cruiser to get the parent. He also moved the in-school suspension room from the large, wrestling mat storage room to a smaller room closer to the counseling suite. Counselors were required to meet with any student on their caseload assigned to in-school suspension.

Principal B also added celebrating students to the culture of the school. Instead of naming a single student-of-the-month for the school, one was named for each grade level. Later, four students-of-the-month were named per grade level. He instituted awards for

the arts, academics, and for student athletes. To instill a sense of pride in the school, he hung banners throughout the school to convey an intentionally simple message—come to school prepared and on time, be responsible for your actions, and focus on academic excellence.

Principal B changed programs to match the new emphasis on academics. The school offered more advanced academics classes, doubled the enrollment in those classes, and tripled the participation of minority students in them. When Principal B became principal, 15 students were enrolled in AP Calculus BC. At the end of his tenure, 60 students were enrolled in that course. He accomplished this by reducing five academic tracks to two. Citing grade weighting disparities that automatically disadvantaged students taking courses in the lower tracks and the absurdity of the number of tracks offered, he eliminated the advanced, general, and basic tracks. The effect of this placed 60% of the student population in honors and advanced placement courses.

Role of Teachers' Professional Development

Principal B devoted much of his first year as principal to transformational leadership practices, with an emphasis on restructuring the organization to support the instructional reforms he sought to bring to the school. In his second year, he focused only minimally on building the capacity of the faculty to deliver higher quality instruction through professional development, primarily in the areas of student engagement and teacher beliefs.

As evidence the professional development of teachers did not figure prominently in the turnaround principal's initial theory of action, discussion of the professional

development of teachers produced only 26.8% of the coding references contained in the interview data collected from the principal, with other instructional leadership practices accounting for 5.6% of the references. By comparison, transformational leadership practices accounted for 67.6% of the coding references. Interview data from a Social Studies teacher and an English teacher familiar with Principal B' leadership included no references to the principal's instructional leadership practices. They talked most (8 coding references) about outcomes around student engagement and increased teacher efficacy as a result of improved structures Principal B put in place. This suggests although Principal B fully intended to impact instruction as part of his initial theory of action, he actually spent much more time on transformational leadership practices. He summed up his approach this way:

I'm going to ruin your day, okay. And I had the same misconception too when I took control of a sinking ship, the Titanic, punctured with many holes from the iceberg. We made that sucker float not based on instructional pieces that we put in place, okay, but really from two things and then the instructional piece. The first thing was putting in concrete structures that make sense and that we adhere to with fidelity; adhering to things with fidelity matters. Having good structures matters. The second thing, and this I would say is probably more meaningful, how do people feel about being in the organization? If they are a teacher and they feel they are making a difference, they're going to be better if they have that sense of efficacy.

This might also offer some insight on why comparatively modest initial gains in student pass rates were not sustained after Principal B's departure from the school. Within his description of the type of professional development plan he implemented, Principal B talked most about the process of designing, delivering, and monitoring the program:

So I took responsibility as a principal to design what would be covered with professional development and how it would be aligned. We made professional development really a daily occurrence because we wanted to tie everything together in a nice neat bow, okay? We did a book study; we spent a month going through the book...and then we spent the rest of the year implementing the book.

He devoted equal time to describing the specific capacities he sought to increase through his professional development plan, with an equal number of references devoted to teacher knowledge, beliefs, and practice (3 responses each). Teachers acknowledge the professional development plan Principal B implemented focused their professional learning: "He, I think definitely, intensified what we were doing during professional development and kind of streamlined what we were focusing on." However, when Principal B was asked about what he saw in terms of changed teacher behaviors or practices as a result of his professional development program he replied, "Not a whole lot."

Professional Development Program Description

Outcomes sought. Principal B most wanted to change teachers' beliefs through strengthening their knowledge and skills. He wanted to change the prevailing paradigm he found at the school of blaming students for poor performance to one where teachers

asked themselves, "If students did not learn, did any teaching really occur?" He wanted to increase teachers' sense of efficacy, to help them see themselves as essential to the school's transformation. He believed that first convincing teachers that they *could* make a difference energized them to *want* to make a difference and created a hunger for teaching strategies that would help them do so. His goal was to impact teachers' practice, but he had to change their disposition first.

Access. Teachers at High School B accessed professional development primarily through curricular common planning groups. Protected time was built into the master schedule for these groups to meet weekly. According to teacher interview data, Principal B also used general faculty meetings to engage teachers in professional learning. New teacher orientation sessions were used to expose teachers new to the school to the professional learning topics the rest of the faculty had been exploring. Teachers were also allowed time to observe colleagues implementing recently acquired instructional strategies and teachers who had become experienced in and found success with particular strategies were given time to present their practices. Although Principal B brought in outside resources to work with teachers on differentiation, he and his assistant principals provided most of this training during workshop breakout sessions.

Process. Principal B first identified the areas in which he wanted to build capacity through professional development. As principal, he took the responsibility to design what would be covered in professional development sessions throughout the year and how the topics were aligned to the outcomes he sought. He selected *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids* (McTighe, 2006)

as a text the entire faculty would read. He then spent the first month of the school year leading the faculty through the book by curricular team. The teams then spent the remainder of the school year implementing specific strategies from the book. Team discussions and faculty meeting presentations were conducted through the lens of that text.

Capacity built. In the first year, Principal B was able to build specific capacity around data analysis, differentiation, and backward design he felt had a positive impact on instruction. Teachers experienced in using data to inform instruction led data dialogues for their teams. Others experienced in lesson design assisted colleagues, through facilitated planning sessions, in designing lessons that aligned content with instruction and assessment. Teachers also gained knowledge around infusing lessons with explicit opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills.

The professional development program Principal B implemented increased teachers' sense of efficacy through improving their knowledge and skills around student engagement. Teachers felt better about being a part of the school, felt they were making a difference, which improved their practice. When asked to describe the largest impact Principal B had on the school, one teacher remarked:

I would say the sense of community, not only in the high school, but in the community and the city. The school was regarded as a positive place, which hadn't happened in a long time, and it was a place where the students finally felt safe, and people were happy to be here, students and teachers.

Continuity. The capacity-building professional development Principal B brought to high school B is still evident in teacher practice there. During curricular team planning time, teachers use backward design to plan lessons and to ensure assessments are aligned with instruction. Department chairs observe instruction to ensure targeted learning strategies are being implemented with fidelity. Improvements in graduation rates and more diverse enrollment in advanced courses have created an ongoing sense of pride and accomplishment in the faculty, and a belief in their collective ability to have a positive impact on the school's power to fulfill whatever mission or vision it sets for itself.

Coherence. Interview data indicate the limited professional development program Principal B implemented was only differentiated by teacher and was not content-specific, but focused on student engagement (pedagogy) and teacher beliefs. There was no evidence that teachers engaged in analyzing student data, planning interventions, sharing new instructional strategies, or any other type of active learning adults need as part of a coherent professional development program. In terms of the third criteria for coherence, the data indicate that Principal B's professional development plan was not imbedded in teachers' work, was not iterative, and thus carried out over an extended period. Principal B relied heavily on a centralized, top-down approach to delivering any professional development the faculty at high school B received during his tenure.

In summary, Principal B's approach to leadership produced significant results in measures of school effectiveness other than student achievement. The modest student achievement gains realized during his tenure were not sustained. Failure to implement a coherent professional development plan may have been a contributing factor.

Case Three

Context

High School C is located in a suburban school district on the eastern seaboard of the United States. During Principal C's tenure, the school had an enrollment of between 500 and 600 students in grades 9 through 12. The student body was 51.9% white, 23.9% Hispanic, 16.4% African American, 7.7% Asian, and 0.5% Native American. Twenty percent of the students were English language learners.

When Principal C became principal, the school was not fully accredited by the state. It had not met annual measurable objectives in math, reading, science, or social studies. The community did not have any expectation that a large number of the school's graduates would pursue post-secondary education. It was rare for anyone other than a few students at the top of each graduating class to attend college.

Prior to assuming the principalship of High School C, Principal C had served six years as an assistant principal of a high school of about 1,500 students. He was asked by the district superintendent to consider leading High School C. A short time later, he toured the school and was impressed by the new building that housed the school and decided to assume the principalship.

Student Performance Data

Principal C was principal from 2001 to 2006. Presented below is student performance on standardized test data in reading and math for the period before, during, and after which he was principal. Data from one year prior to Principal C's tenure are presented to add context to the situation Principal C faced upon assuming the

principalship. Data from the two years following Principal C's tenure are presented to give context to the sustainability of the improvements in student achievement realized, as measured by standardized test pass rates.

As illustrated in Figure 4, at the end of Principal C's first year as principal (2001-2002), the reading pass rate was unchanged from the previous year (87%), but the math pass rate increased 40.0%. In his second year, the reading pass rate rose 14.9% and the math pass rate fell 1.0% from the previous year. In his third year, the reading pass rate fell 4.0%, while the pass rate in math rose by 3.3%. In year four, the reading pass rate rose 4.2% from the year prior, while the math pass rate decreased 3.2%. In year five, the pass rate in reading fell 6.0%, while the math pass rate rose 1.1%.

In the year following Principal C's tenure, the reading pass rate fell 6.4% and the math rate by 3.3%. In the second year following his tenure, the reading pass rate rose 4.3% and the math pass rate rose 5.6% over the previous year. The year Principal C left the principalship, the reading pass rate was 8.0% higher than where it had been at the beginning of his tenure. The math pass rate was 40.0% higher than where it had been at the beginning of his tenure.

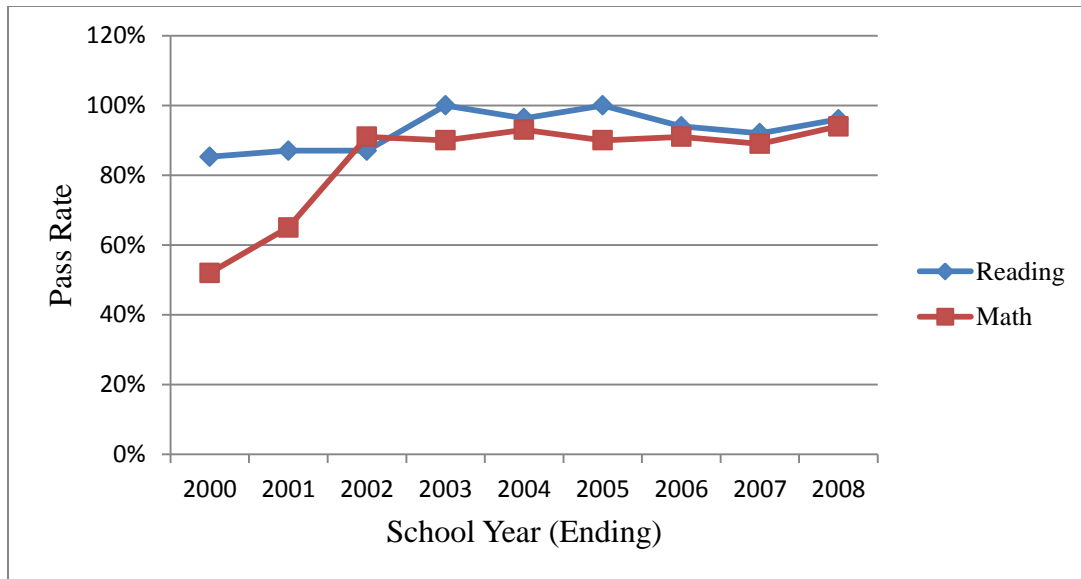


Figure 4. Student pass rates on standardized math and reading tests one year prior to, during, and one after Principal C's tenure.

Principal C's Theory of Action

Principal C began the work of turning around High School C in a newly constructed building. Teacher morale was not an issue. The staff of about 50 teachers was comprised mostly of relatively new teachers described as hardworking. From this position, Principal C was able to start almost immediately on empowering teachers to improve instruction through professional development. He describes getting back to basics, getting the culture of the school focused on teaching and learning, as his immediate objective:

We had to focus on getting back to the basics, getting the culture of the high school focused on teaching and learning. And how did I know that? Well, it didn't take long. As you walk around, as you talk to teachers, which I did...I

invited them to come in over the summer and talk about—I asked them actually. I sent them a letter. I asked them to think of three things that are working really well in the high school and three things that maybe weren't or challenges.

Principal C moved quickly on both transformational and instructional leadership issues. For example, where standard practice had been for teachers to allow students to pack up minutes before the bell would ring to signal the end of class and mass at the classroom door in anticipation of the bell, Principal C introduced the expectation of bell-to-bell instruction and provided teachers professional development on instructional strategies they could use to make that level of student engagement and maximization of instructional time a reality in their classrooms.

The year prior to Principal C's arrival, the school had moved to a block schedule in an attempt to increase student learning. However, teachers had received little professional development on how to leverage the extra time to improve instruction. Principal C found many teachers attempting to lecture for entire 92-minute class periods. He sought almost immediately to remedy this instructional deficiency by forming professional development cohorts of selected teachers who would receive specific training on higher-yield instructional techniques and bringing that training back to their colleagues.

Role of Teachers' Professional Development

Principal C saw strengthening teachers' instructional practice as the key to improving student learning and raising achievement. He leveraged district-mandated

professional development opportunities and instituted more teacher-directed, organic opportunities to accomplish this through processes that imbedded professional development in the daily work of teachers. The capacity he was able to build, especially related to differentiated instruction, has become part of the school's instructional approach to engaging what remains a diverse student population.

However, interview data indicate that the professional development of teachers figured only slightly higher than transformational leadership practices in Principal C's theory of action. Discussion of the professional development of teachers produced 57.1% of the coding references contained in the interview data collected from the principal and 54.5% of references contained in the data collected from a math teacher and Social Studies teacher familiar with Principal C's leadership. An example of a professional development reference:

We have a fairly well-defined differentiation initiative for example. We are now in our fifth year of differentiation and we have adopted a train-the-trainer model. We have cohorts in which teachers are trained in how to coach teachers....

Transformational leadership practices accounted for 42.9% of the coding references from the principal, with no references made by teachers to the principal's other instructional leadership practices. Coding references to transformational leadership *practices* accounted for 45.5% of references found in teacher interview data. This suggests Principal C devoted almost equal attention to transformational changes he

perceived were undermining the instructional program, i.e., changing the school's culture of not maximizing instructional time, as he did to developing teachers' capacity to do so.

Within his description of the type of professional development plan he implemented to impact instruction, Principal C talked most about how teachers accessed professional development and how he believes improvements in professional development led to sustained gains in student learning after his tenure. He devoted equal time to describing the specific capacities he sought to increase through his professional development plan—teacher knowledge, beliefs, and skills. Teacher coding references support these areas of emphasis. Within their description of the type of professional development plan Principal C implemented, teachers mentioned access most often (5 coding references). Continuity, or the continuance of the plan after Principal C's tenure, was referenced second most often (4 coding references). This might explain the continued high level of student performance, especially in math, after Principal C's tenure.

Professional Development Program Description

Outcomes sought. When he arrive at High School C, Principal C noticed the demographics of the school were changing and that teachers lacked the knowledge, skill, and possibly beliefs to engage the students in a way that would positively impact their learning. He wanted teachers to reflect on: 1) whether they believed all students can learn, 2) whether all students learn in the same way; and 3) whether the heavy use of worksheets constitutes sound instructional practice in a classroom with 30 students from countries all over the world. In response, Principal C sought to increase teachers' capacity

to deliver more highly differentiated and culturally competent instruction in an effort to engage students in rigorous, relevant learning. He sought to increase teachers' ability to personalize instruction in a way that addressed the needs of each student.

Access. To begin, Principal C leveraged the relatively extensive professional development opportunity the school district conducts the entire week before school opens to bring in national experts to conduct faculty sessions on cultural competence and differentiated instruction. Teachers accessed ongoing professional development in these two areas during four professional development days built into the school year, after school workshops, faculty meetings, and paid workdays during the summer. Once cohorts of faculty members had become expert in differentiated instructional approaches through a train-the-trainer model, they were enlisted to train their colleagues on those strategies.

Process. Principal C first assessed the professional development needs of the faculty. He then identified the pockets of time he could leverage to bring them the professional learning they needed. He trained cohorts of teachers to serve as implementers and subsequent monitors of targeted instructional strategies and cultural competence initiatives. He instituted learning walks to broaden teachers' perspectives on what colleagues' instructional practices looked like and to build a culture of collaboration around professional development.

Capacity built. The faculty at High School C developed a common language and a common set of practices around differentiation. The faculty came to see the schools' diversity as a strength and a compelling reason to collaborate on building literacy, and to build better relationships with students across the curriculum. One teacher noted:

Well personally, someone who had limited teaching experience coming here to professional development has been very important. Now we have professional development within the system, but the school system also encourages us to go elsewhere. That has been very important, just finding out new ways of doing things.

Continuity. Though High School C has moved away from the emphasis Principal C placed on professional development during his tenure, many of the protocols he put in place have been embraced by the school division where High School C is located. Teachers at the high school still value learning new teaching strategies, comparing their own practices to those of others, and reflecting on whether they are meeting the needs of students. In terms of continuity, another teacher noted:

I was actually one of the first people to go train in Fred Jones training, and I was the person in other people's classrooms to see if they were putting some of the things we talked about in in-service. The differentiation, we had a cohort that was trained as the original people that went through the training, and again, those are the people now who disseminate the information, take it out to the rest of the staff to observe in the classroom.

Coherence. Interview data indicate the professional development program Principal C implemented was faculty-wide, and not highly differentiated. It was also not designed to increase teachers' content knowledge, as Principal C's stated objective for the professional development plan he implemented was to increase teachers' capacity to deliver more effective lessons through differentiation (pedagogy) and cultural

competence (engagement). There was no evidence teachers engaged in analyzing student data, planning interventions, or sharing new instructional strategies—the type of active learning adults need as part of a coherent professional development program. However, interview data indicate teachers participated in learning walks to observe each other’s practice. Providing feedback on observations, which would have indicated some level of coherence, was not mentioned by any of the three participants in this case. In terms of the third criteria for coherence, the data indicate that Principal C’s professional development plan was not imbedded in teachers’ work, but mostly front-loaded at the beginning of each school year and followed up with faculty-wide professional development sessions presented on designated days spaced throughout the school year. Though technically iterative and carried out over an extended period, it is doubtful this type of implementation would contribute to the coherence of the professional development plan.

In summary, Principal C first repurposed existing district-level professional development opportunities to bring teachers learning he felt they needed to change their beliefs around their ability to differentiate curricula to meet the needs of every student as the school’s demographics changed. His conjecture that positive changes in this area would increase teachers’ willingness to engage in professional development to strengthen their instructional knowledge and skills proved true. He then leveraged existing internal resources, teacher leaders, to coordinate organic professional learning opportunities embedded in their work. The impact of this approach was sustained improvement in student achievement in math and reading.

Case Four

Context

High School D is located in an urban school district on the west coast of the United States. During the tenure of Principal D, the school had an enrollment of between 950 and 1,000 students, up from between 600 and 650 students two years prior to her arrival. The student body was 73.8% white, 21.4% Hispanic, 2.2% African American, and 2.0% Asian. The school held Title I designation.

The demographics of the neighborhood around the school had recently shifted from being largely middle class and racially homogeneous to being mostly poor and more racially and culturally diverse. The school had experienced a gang problem just prior to Principal D's appointment. The school maintained an open campus policy, where students were free to leave and return to campus anytime during the school day, which resulted in students' bringing drugs onto the campus or returning to the school under the influence of them after lunch. With the gang problem largely under control, though there were still remnants of it when Principal D arrived, the school district was looking to improve the school's academic performance. The district leadership gave Principal D wide latitude to implement reforms needed to raise student achievement, increase the graduation rate, and improve students' readiness for college and careers, but gave her few financial resources to accomplish those goals. The school building was old and in disrepair. The faculty was fractured. Teachers were content not collaborating and preferred teaching in isolation.

Principal D had begun her career in the school division as a high school substitute teacher. She was later hired as an English teacher and taught for seven years. Her

ultimate goal at the time was to become a school counselor. She earned a graduate degree in counseling and returned to the school where she had previously taught to serve as a school counselor for three years. She later earned an administrative endorsement and became an assistant principal at High School D, where she later became principal.

Student Performance Data

Principal D was principal of High School D from 2003 to 2010. Presented below is student performance on standardized test data for the period before, during, and after which she was principal. Data from one year prior to Principal D's tenure are presented to add context to the situation Principal D faced upon assuming the principalship. Data from two years following Principal D's tenure are presented to give context to the sustainability of the improvements in student achievement that occurred, as measured by pass rates on standardized tests in English and math.

As illustrated in Figure 5, at the end of Principal D's first year as principal, the English pass rate rose 2.7% from the previous year, but the math pass rate decreased 9.2%. In her second year, the English pass rate rose 6.7% and the math pass rate rose 19.2% from the previous year. In her third year, the English pass rate rose 18.8%, while the pass rate in math rose by another 19.5%. In year four, the English pass rate fell 13.7% from the year prior and the math pass rate decreased 14.2%. In year five, the English pass rate rose 2.4%, while the math pass fell another 2.5%.

In the last year after Principal D's tenure, the English pass rate was rose 1.1% and the math pass rate rose 6.6%. The reading pass rate was 20.6% higher than it had been at the beginning of her tenure. The math pass rate was 10.1% higher than it had been. In the

first year following her tenure, the English pass rate remained unchanged from the previous year (88%) and the math pass rate fell 9.9%. The second year following her tenure, the English pass rate rose 2.3% and the math pass rate rose 17.4% over the previous year's rate.

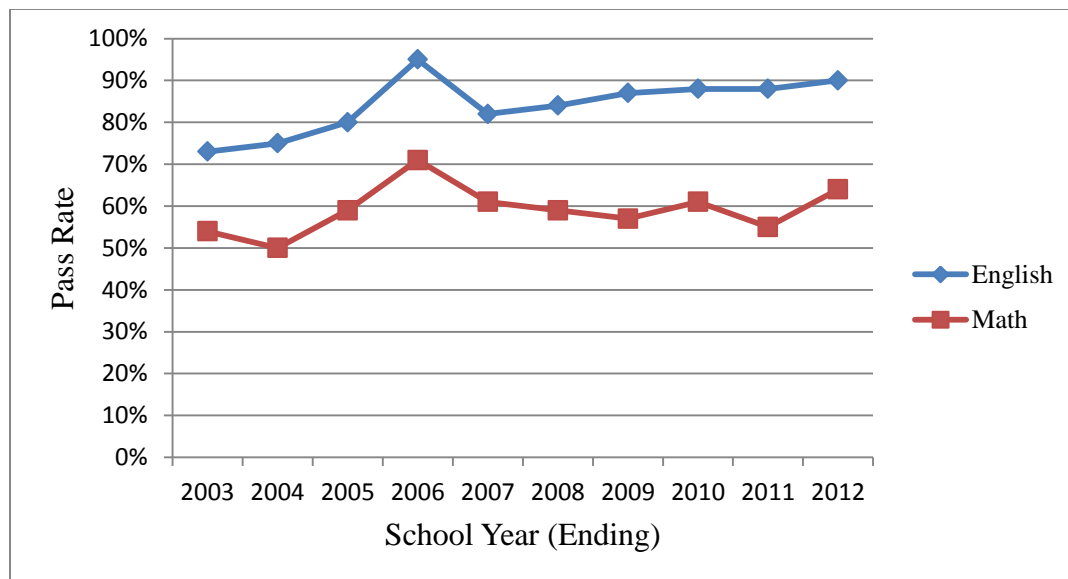


Figure 5. Student pass rates on standardized math and reading tests one year prior to, during, and one after Principal D's tenure.

Principal D's Theory of Action

Principal D began her tenure relying mostly on transformational and instructional leadership practices. She restructured the school in a way she thought was essential to changing the school's culture. She closed the campus at lunch time. She changed the way staff meetings were conducted. Meetings had been mostly used to disseminate information and to provide the faculty a forum for asking questions or criticizing the

administration. She created a faculty senate to hear and resolve those types of concerns from the faculty and dedicated faculty meeting time to conducting professional development.

Instructionally, Principal D implemented the requirement that teachers post learning standards and objectives at the beginning of each lesson, and walked the building each day to ensure teachers were meeting this requirement. She would often observe classes unannounced and give teachers written feedback on their lessons. In an effort to break down walls of isolation and to build trust among teachers, Principal D made it mandatory that teachers observe the instruction of three colleagues a year in a non-evaluative, collegial capacity:

Prior to my taking on the principalship, we were dealing with master schedule issues, making sure everybody had a class, and only contemplating closing the campus to make sure safety wasn't an issue. In my first year as principal, we were able to say, 'Okay, now instructionally, I think we're ready to move forward with the learning walks and the instructional piece, the higher-order thinking skills, but all the while developing the leadership team and the teacher leaders to make sure that they are trained and understand what a teacher leader does.

Once these reforms were in place, Principal D implemented a professional development plan, first around the state standards, and later on effective instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and ways to leverage technology to increase student engagement. Although she had discovered through conversations and

observations with teachers the areas in which she wanted to increase teachers' capacity, she was intentional about listening to teachers regarding the professional development they felt they needed most:

I got very familiar with my staff and not only as individuals, as to how they ran their classrooms and through the observation process and everything, but also as departments. I asked them to work together to come to decisions and I wasn't going to just listen to one person's view or one person's recommendation on what we should do. It really had to be a consensus of the department.

Teacher interview data corroborated this approach—"Mostly, she listened to us..."

Role of Teachers' Professional Development

Principal D regarded teacher investment in professional development as central to her ability to improve student learning and increase achievement at High School D. She sought to get that investment by supporting teachers in increasing their capacity to deliver higher quality instruction by partnering with them in identifying and providing the professional development they felt they needed. She believed that as teachers experienced students' doing better on assessments and caring more about what they are learning, teachers' sense of efficacy would increase, which would create intrinsic motivation to engage in reflective practice and ongoing professional development. The school would celebrate students' success as a professional learning organization.

Interview data also indicate that the professional development of teachers figured significantly in Principal D's theory of action. Discussion of the professional

development of teachers produced 66.7% of the coding references contained in the interview data collected from the principal and 75.0% of references contained in the data collected from a math teacher and a science teacher familiar with Principal D's leadership. Transformational leadership practices accounted for 33.3% of the coding references from the principal, with no references made to other instructional leadership practices. Teacher coding references to transformational leadership practices accounted for 25.0% of references. Taken together, these data suggest Principal D devoted more attention to leveraging the professional development of teachers to strengthen the school's instructional program than she did to improving student performance through transformational leadership practices.

Within her description of the type of professional development plan she implemented, Principal D talked most about how teachers accessed the program she implemented had on teacher practice. She referenced the capacity her professional development program was able to create second most often.

Professional Development Program Description

Outcomes sought. Principal D recognized early in her principalship that what she needed to do most was to change the instructional culture of the school from being teacher-centered to student-centered. She wanted to create an environment where teachers who possessed particular expertise were free to collaborate with peers and where teachers who were looking for innovative teaching strategies had those needs acknowledged and met. She wanted teachers to expand students' opportunities to engage

in critical thinking and to trust students as participants in their own learning. Principal D recognized and wanted to change:

...the feeling that our staff felt. 'Well, we're just kind of good enough.' And that wasn't good enough for our superintendent at that time and so she made it very clear that we needed to see student achievement continue to grow. And they really gave me a lot of support. Well, they gave me the freedom to do what I thought we needed to do as far as developing staff and using our professional development time to have teachers collaborate.

Teacher interview data confirmed the faculty was, "...a very diverse group of people that are working together as a team, and didn't have team mentality...she [Principal D] was dealing with a fractured staff. We were isolated in our classrooms."

Access. In the beginning, Principal D sent cohorts of teacher leaders to various professional development workshops outside the school district. Her plan was that they would return to the school to share their new knowledge and skills with colleagues at full faculty or faculty senate meetings. She soon discovered that these informal sharing sessions were not thorough enough to give teachers sufficient information or confidence to try the strategies in their classrooms. However, teachers would continue to discuss targeted instructional strategies during staff development days throughout the school year. Teachers met one Wednesday afternoon a month to discuss implementation of strategies into daily lesson plans without any expectation for them to do so. In the second year, Principal D held departments accountable for actual implementation of targeted strategies, which exposed which departments were responding to her professional

learning plan well and which ones needed additional support. Professional development experts from the district office were brought in to assist teachers in these departments. Principal D also provided substitute teachers so teachers could visit neighboring high schools to see content-specific instructional strategies in practice and to generate their own ideas on how they might implement those strategies in their classrooms.

Process. Once Principal D had determined the areas of instruction in which teachers needed additional capacity and had shared her findings with them, she turned the school's professional development plan over to them to implement. Teachers elected to use the seven dedicated professional development days provided by the district to engage in professional learning. District-level experts led some sessions and teacher leaders led others. Teachers were encouraged to come away from each session thinking of ways they could apply what they just learned in their daily classroom practice. They also came away with a commitment to implement the new strategy in the next week, and the expectation that Principal D would be looking for evidence of the strategy during her informal observations. If a teacher needed more information or support to implement a strategy effectively, the teacher was expected to let Principal D know. For example, when the school adopted a summary writing strategy across the curriculum to help improve students' writing skills, Principal D discovered that many non-English content teachers were uncomfortable teaching or grading writing. In response, she enlisted the English department to provide staff development on what good writing looks like and ways to guide students in producing it. She later divided the English department into expert

groups and dispatched them to other departments to develop teachers' capacity around topic sentences and how to construct good paragraphs.

Principal D felt the professional development plan she implemented was most effective once she understood what teachers felt they needed most and was able to use the expertise of the faculty to provide it. She felt the learning was more meaningful for teachers and that knowledge and skills had a better chance of actually being implemented to impact instruction than professional development conducted by outside experts. As a result, she tasked departments with coming up with faculty-wide professional development on effective instructional strategies on a yearly rotating basis. One year the math department shared their methods for teaching different math concepts with the faculty. The next year, the technology department led the faculty through the process for building websites. Principal D found this approach to professional development had the unintended consequence of producing powerful, organic dialogue between teachers from different content areas. Soon teachers formed informal sharing networks that increased trust among colleagues and built a culture of collaboration around instruction that had a positive impact on student learning.

Capacity built. Principal D was able to foster through professional development a climate in which teachers came together around a common understanding of content-specific standards and learned from each other effective ways of supporting students' mastery of those standards. The faculty came to embrace the belief that they were a learning community and not just there to help students pass a test. They saw it as their mission to help students understand problems and to collaborate with others to solve

them. Teachers wanted to produce students capable of improving their community and prepared for a bright future:

It [professional development] had a lot of impact. I think it's one of the reasons why –I mean and I don't mean to brag but we are the best high school in [the district]. And our scores prove it and the behavior of our students proves it because we teach the standards. I think that's one of the biggest things is that the push that [Principal D] made for us to really pay attention. What is it that you're teaching? And that professional development of what are the standards and how do we teach them and using the resources from each other and it had a huge impact on us.

More specifically tied to the outcomes Principal D sought in implementing the professional development program she did, teacher interview data confirmed:

...the largest impact [Principal D] had was making the transformation from our school that was mostly teacher-directed, that the goals of the teacher—and what I mean by that is not teacher-influenced, but more like you know like a teacher—a teacher runs a classroom and they do what they want, and does not always serve the student. So it moves the climate, the culture that served the teacher, that the adults were fine, but were the students fine? And it transformed it into a team so that you now have teams working together towards a common goal and the focus was always on the student.

Continuity. The use of professional development as a mechanism for improving student achievement meant an evolution of learning and adapting for teachers. At the

outset of her principalship, Principal D dealt with issues related to the master schedule, making sure every student had a schedule, closing the campus to increase security, and other organizational management concerns. With those issues settled, she was able to focus on instructional delivery and to move forward with learning walks and promoting higher-order thinking skills.

While increasing the capacity of the faculty, she also developed the ability of the leadership team to support teacher leaders as they took on the responsibility of sharing their expertise with colleagues. It was important that once teacher leaders asked for support in the way of additional training, protected time to work with departments, or additional materials the administration was able to deliver. That level of support fostered trusting professional relationships among and the faculty and between teachers and administrators. Those relationships have continued.

Coherence. Interview data indicate the professional development program Principal D implemented was differentiated by curricular departments, which suggests it was content-specific. Teachers also engaged in sharing new instructional strategies and cross-curricular collaboration—the type of active learning adults need as part of a coherent professional development program. In terms of the third criteria for coherence, the data indicate that Principal D’s professional development plan was sufficiently imbedded in teachers’ work, was iterative, and thus carried out over an extended period.

In summary, Principal D leveraged existing district-level professional development opportunities to bring teachers learning he felt they needed to change their beliefs around their own efficacy. She then recognized that positive changes in this area

increased teachers' willingness to engage in professional development to strengthen their instructional knowledge and skills and provided teachers the resources they said they need in order to improve their practice. As a result, teachers became more reflective about their work and willing to collaborate with colleagues across the curriculum to strengthen the quality of instruction across the school. The impact of this capacity-building approach to professional learning was dramatic increases in student achievement in math and reading followed by sustained improvement in these two content areas.

Case Five

Context

High School E is located in an urban school district in the southern region of the United States. During Principal E's tenure, the school had an enrollment of between 1,200 and 1,300 students. The student body was 57.1% African American, 34.1% Hispanic, 5.7% white, and 2.6% Asian/Pacific Islander. Sixty-nine percent of students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The school's mobility rate was 30.7%

The school had not met annual measurable objectives for three years and would be put on sanctions if it failed to do so in Principal E's first year as principal. Prior to her arrival, the school had been led by three different principals in three years. Two of them had been removed in the middle of the school year. The faculty, half novice teachers and half veteran teachers, was distrustful of the administration and largely unwilling to take on any initiatives to raise student achievement. The novice teachers were using high-yield instructional strategies to engage students. Veteran teachers were doing less so and relied on more traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods. There was no professional

development being conducted. Teachers were trying to keep students in class and teach as best they could. The faculty felt under siege.

Prior to assuming the principalship of High School E, Principal E had been a teacher at High School E years ago. She left to teach at another high school in the district. After earning her administrative endorsement, she went on to become a principal at both middle schools in the same pyramid as High School E. One of the middle schools she led had been one of the lowest performing schools in the district prior to her arrival. She was credited with turning around student performance there and, consequently, was offered the opportunity to do the same at High School E.

Student Performance Data

Principal E was principal from 2010 to 2013. Presented below is student performance on standardized test data for the period before, during, and after which she was principal. Data from the year prior to Principal's E's tenure are presented to add context to the situation Principal E faced upon assuming the principalship. Data from the year following Principal E's tenure are presented to give context to the sustainability of the improvements in student achievement that occurred, as measured by pass rates on standardized tests. Principal E's short tenure, relative to that of the principals discussed in cases 1 through 4 and the fact that no high school standardized tests were administered by the state in the second year of her tenure are acknowledged limitations on the validity of any implications drawn from any changes in pass rates realized during her tenure.

As illustrated in Figure 6, at the end of Principal E's first year as principal (2010-2011), reading and math pass rates increased 1.3% and 15.6 % respectively. In her third

year, the reading pass rate fell 24% from its previous level, however the math pass rate rose by 28.8% over the previous level. When Principal E left the principalship the reading pass rate was 24% lower than when she began her tenure. However, the pass rate in math was 48.9% higher than it had been at the same time. In the year following Principal E's tenure, the reading pass rate fell 28.3 %, while the math rate fell 6.0%. State standards of learning math and reading were changed in 2011-2012, the second year of Principal E's tenure. School districts usually experience declines in student pass rates on end-of-course exams aligned with new standards. This may have been a factor in this case.

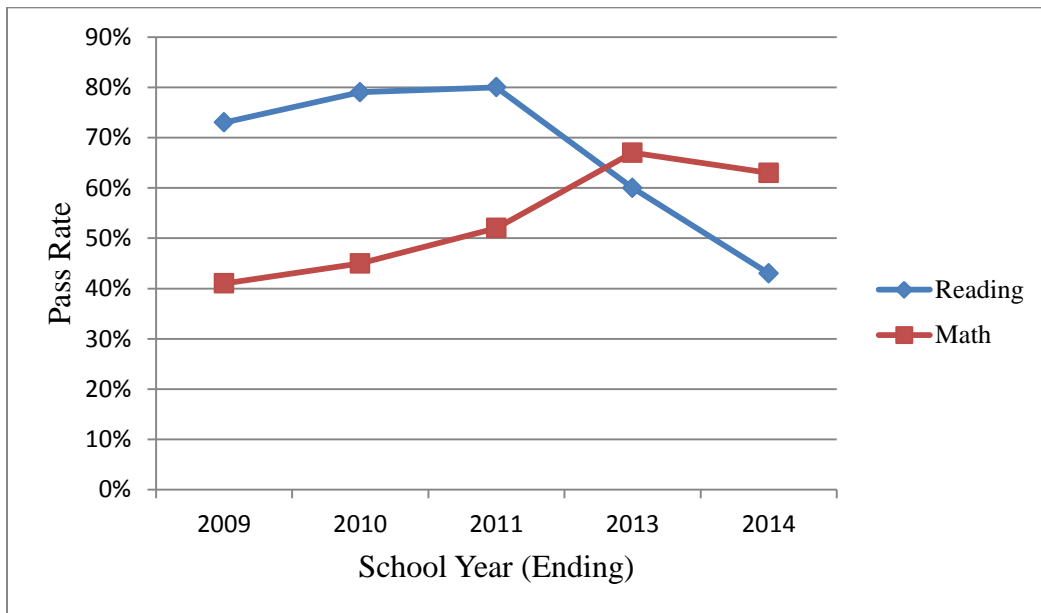


Figure 6. Student pass rates on standardized math and reading tests one year prior to, during, and one after Principal E's tenure.

Principal E's Theory of Action

Before Principal E assumed the principalship, the district superintendent took her on a tour of the school. Principal E's initial reaction was that the school did not look and feel like a good learning environment. She felt the bars on the windows made the school look like a prison, so she had them removed. There was no furniture on the patio for students to use during lunch, so she purchased some. The campus was strewn with trash because there were no trashcans available to students, so she had some placed where students tended to congregate. Principal E saw these first-order, transformational leadership actions as essential to paving the way for the second-order changes she wanted to bring to the school.

Principal E developed a clear vision for the school and articulated it to faculty and the surrounding community. That vision included more autonomy for teachers along with the expectation that teacher practice would change in a way that increased student learning. She wrote grants to secure resources she needed to increase the faculty's capacity to deliver higher quality instruction through professional development. She communicated a sense of urgency about the work that needed to be done, but was careful to build trust with the faculty and the community as she went about it. Though she had been urged by the assistant superintendent to dismiss as many teachers as she needed to, and was even given the names of teachers to target, she chose not to. She spent a year getting to know the staff and their areas for growth.

Role of Teachers' Professional Development

One of the major instructional leadership actions Principal E took was to change the school's instructional day to a block schedule. This action generated the first faculty professional development opportunity of her tenure—how teachers could maximize 90-minutes of instructional time. Principal E sent cohorts of teacher leaders to workshops on multiple learning strategies teachers could use keep students engaged for longer periods. These teachers then returned to the school to share their new knowledge with colleagues by content area. Teachers who had been reluctant to change were compelled to by the new bell schedule. By leveraging the train-the-trainer model, Principal E was able to provide opportunities for teacher leaders to empower their colleagues through organic, job-embedded professional learning.

Interview data indicate that Principal E devoted equal attention to transformational leadership practices and the professional development of teachers in her approach to turning around High School E. Discussion of the transformational leadership actions produced 44.1% of the coding references contained in the interview data collected from the principal. Professional development produced 47.1% of coding references, with instructional leadership accounting for 8.8% of references. Data collected from a math teacher and a social studies teacher familiar with Principal E's leadership support the minor emphasis given to other instructional leadership practices during Principal D's tenure. Teachers made no reference to the principal's instructional leadership practices. This suggests Principal E devoted equal attention to transformational leadership and leveraging the professional development of teachers to strengthen the instructional

program and relatively little attention to improving student performance through other instructional leadership practices.

Within her description of the type of professional development plan she implemented, Principal E talked most about increasing teachers' knowledge and how teachers accessed professional development. Teachers also pointed to knowledge and access as equally prominent features of the professional development program they experienced under Principal E's leadership. However, they saw the impact the program had on teacher practice as minimal, which might explain falling pass rates, especially in reading, at High School E after Principal E's tenure.

Professional Development Program Description

Outcomes sought. Principal E identified three major areas of growth for the faculty: 1) making connections with students from diverse backgrounds; 2) using technology to increase student engagement; and 3) using data to drive instruction. There was little to no teacher capacity around these approaches when she assumed the principalship. She was convinced that improving teacher practices in these areas would raise student achievement and bring about another change she wanted to affect—a shift in teachers' belief that they could impact the school's ability to raise student achievement, keep the school off sanctions, and garner community support for the work they were doing.

Access. The faculty primarily accessed the professional development program Principal E implemented through the train-the-trainer model. In other instances, consultants with national reputations or district-level personnel would visit the school to

conduct training. The faculty also engaged in book talks, learning walks, and classroom swaps as forms of department level professional development during the school day and occasionally on Saturdays.

Process. In her first year as Principal, Principal E created an instructional leadership team comprised of 12 people—four administrators, teacher leaders from the four core subjects, one elective teacher, two counselors, and a community liaison. This team helped her prioritize three instructional growth areas, create a yearly professional development plan, and identify resources needed to execute that plan.

Before the start of each school year, this group went on a retreat to plan the professional development for the coming year. The school's assessment coach accompanied the team to provide student performance data from the previous year and to help the team identify potential areas for growth by department. Once those areas had been identified, the team brainstormed possible professional development approaches to them. If resources outside the school were needed (funding, consultants, district-level specialists) action plans for securing them were put into place.

Capacity built. As a result of the professional development plan Principal E put in place, teachers felt better equipped to make connections with students through knowledge and strategies on positive behavior approaches. Their awareness of these strategies began with a faculty-wide book study initiated by Principal E, followed by formal training conducted by the book's author. Subsequent mini-workshops and peer-sharing sessions helped make the positive behavior initiative part of the school's culture.

To encourage the use of technology in instruction, Principal E provided each teacher a tablet computer. She enlisted the help of the district's technology office in securing an expert in instructional technology to train teachers on how to use personal electronic devices to increase student engagement. After that initial training, teachers engaged in department-level sharing of applications and learning activities they found effective.

Though the school does not operate on a professional learning community model, which emphasizes data dialogues designed to inform instruction, Principal E's shift in her second year to requiring departments to focus on responding specifically to state-level standardized test data, created the need for more professional development on how to accomplish that. She made that part of the plan she implemented in her third year as principal.

Continuity. Principal E brought consistency to what had been a chaotic learning environment. During her three-year tenure, she was able to restore trust between teachers and the administration, and to strengthen teachers' confidence in their ability to change the trajectory of the school. Most notably, she formalized the professional development program in a way that allowed teachers to focus on improving in two or three staff-identified areas at a time. She used available outside resources to get teachers the professional learning they needed, but also empowered teacher leaders to share their expertise with peers.

High School E is now led by one of Principal E's former assistant principals. The new principal still checks in with Principal E from time to time. The practice of taking

the instructional leadership team on a retreat before the start of each school year to look at student performance data to identify areas for instructional growth for the coming school year and the types of professional learning needed to address those areas continues.

Coherence. Interview data indicate the professional development program Principal E implemented was first delivered in a faculty-wide approach (book study), but later differentiated by curricular department, which made it content-specific. Teachers also engaged in analyzing student data, planning interventions, and sharing new instructional strategies, especially around using technology to increase student engagement—the type of active learning adults need as part of a coherent professional development program. Teachers also participated in learning walks and classroom swaps. In terms of the third criteria for coherence, the data indicate that Principal D’s professional development plan was imbedded in teachers’ work, was iterative, and thus carried out over an extended period.

In summary, Principal E’s approach to professional development was largely organic and differentiated. She formed a committee made up of teachers and administrator to help her identify instructional growth areas for the faculty. She then turned to each curricular department to determine what resources teachers within each department needed to improve the collective quality of instruction of their department. She also empowered teachers within each departments to hold each other accountable for the fidelity of implementation of target teaching and learning strategies and for their

outcomes. The impact of this approach over Principal E's relatively brief tenure was dramatic and sustained improvement in math achievement.

Conclusion

The interview data from principals and teachers presented in this chapter provide clear insight on the theory of action turnaround principals in this study used to approach the school improvement challenge met in each of the five individual cases. In Case 1, the principal leveraged professional development to improve teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction more heavily than instructional or transformational leadership approaches. In Case 2, the principal leveraged transformational leadership approaches most heavily. The professional development of teachers to deliver higher quality instruction did not figure prominently. In Case 3, the principal leveraged transformational and instructional leadership practices in a hybrid approach more heavily than the professional development of teachers to drive instructional improvements. In Case 4, the principal employed a more phased approach to school improvement, beginning with transformational reforms, followed by instructional leadership, and finally an emphasis on the professional development of teachers. In Case 5, the principal began her relatively short tenure relying on transformational leadership approaches, then pivoted to leveraging the professional development of teachers as a mechanism for reforming High School E. Instructional leadership practices did not figure prominently in her theory of action.

In each case, except case 2, interview data indicate the principal in that case implemented a coherent professional development plan. That is to say, the professional

development teachers in each case experienced 1) focused on teachers' content knowledge and how students learn content; 2) employed in-depth active learning strategies such as analyzing student data, looking at student work, getting and giving each other feedback on instruction; and 3) took place over an extended period of time.

It is less clear what a cross-case analysis of the data might reveal. In Chapter 5, I will reaffirm why it is important to the field that we gain a better understanding of the dynamics of turnaround leadership, discuss key leadership practices the data indicate successful turnaround principals employed across contexts, and implications for principals in the midst of turning around a struggling school, endeavoring to do so someday, or simply interested in how it might be done. Implications for future research on school leadership will also be presented

Chapter Five

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the leadership approaches successful high school turnaround principals operationalized in the schools to which they were appointed. Significant education research literature exists concerning the effective leadership practices used to raise student achievement in elementary schools, but a gap exists in the literature on effective leadership approaches for raising student achievement in struggling high schools (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). By examining the theories of action the high school principals included in this study brought to their respective turnaround contexts, the study sought to address the following questions: 1) How do principals operationalize their role as turnaround leaders? 2) How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional development of teachers within their conceptualization of turnaround leadership? and 3) What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful principals implement?

Guided by these questions, the previous chapter presented the interview data collected from each of the five principals and standardized math and reading tests pass rates realized during their tenures reveals implications for effective turnaround leadership practice. Four broad implications for turnaround leadership practice, as described in the conceptual framework that bounds this study, were quantified in the data by coding references and were discussed in this chapter: 1) context; 2) the role of transformational

leadership; 3) the role of instructional leadership; and 4) the characteristics of professional development programs principals employed to develop teachers. The findings from each of the five cases included in this study. Highlighting the school leadership approaches each principal operationalized and the characteristics of the professional development plan each principal implemented.

In this chapter, a cross-case analysis is presented to further glean lessons from these cases related to turnaround leadership and the role of professional development in turnaround leaders' practice. A cross-case analysis reveals common themes that emerge from the study. These themes are further distilled into implications for turnaround leadership practice and future research.

Principals in Their Roles as Turnaround Leaders

Each principal in this study brought a unique perspective to the role of turnaround principal. That perspective shaped the initial theory of action and subsequent leadership behaviors operationalized in each case. A summary of each principal's approach and changes in student achievement realized during the principal's tenure are discussed in this section.

Principal A. Principal A was an unlikely turnaround principal, who brought a loose conception of what a turnaround is and her role in raising student achievement in a struggling high school. As such, she sought to learn as much about the school she had been appointed to as possible, as quickly as possible. She soon recognized that certain organizational changes needed to be made in order to direct the school's focus on teaching and learning. She made those changes first.

Simultaneously, she moved to confront forces in the community surrounding the school that sought to undermine her legitimacy as principal and questioned her ability to improve the school. She met with members of the school community to hear their concerns, shared her vision for the school compellingly, and enlisted the help of community leaders in changing the perception of the school. After initial meetings, she kept community leaders informed on improvements to the school and continued to invite them into the school as partners.

Principal A also delved into what teachers needed in order to improve their instruction by spending a considerable amount of time observing instruction. Once she had determined that literacy should be a focus across the curriculum, she sought to become more knowledgeable about the subject herself by attending conferences and workshops on literacy, and reading widely on it. Only when she felt confident she could lead the faculty's learning in this area did she make professional development in this area a priority.

The final part of her theory of action involved identifying teacher leaders who could deliver the professional development she sought to leverage to increase teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction. Once identified, Principal A sent these teachers to training and used them in a train-the-trainer model to bring targeted strategies back to collaborative teams. Principal A also empowered these teacher leaders to give individual teachers timely, meaningful feedback on how well or poorly they were implementing targeted instructional strategies and served as coaches where teams were struggling. This organic approach to school improvement was a hallmark of her theory of

action. She leveraged a linear application of first transformational then instructional leadership approaches to increase student learning at High School A. With a focus on literacy, the school posted gains in reading, but posted more dramatic gains in math during her tenure. The gains in math have been sustained over the last seven years.

Principal B. Principal B brought a slightly different theory of action to his role as turnaround leader at High School B. He was appointed to succeed a long-time principal who was beloved by the faculty and the community, but was removed from the principalship by the district superintendent due to the school's falling standardized test scores. Principal B was appointed before the end of the school year, which gave him a chance to see the school in action before actually assuming the principalship—which ordinarily would be an advantage when coming into a turnaround situation. However, the timing of Principal B's appointment fostered resentment on the part of the outgoing principal, as evidenced by his reluctance to offer any transitional insight into the school's challenges to the new principal. The lack of a relationship between the two made it necessary for Principal B to rely on his own observations when formulating his theory of action.

A key component of that initial theory was to change the school's culture (how the school operated) and climate (how the school felt) simultaneously. He did so by dismantling some of the organizational structures he found—the most experienced teachers getting the nicest classrooms even if they taught only part of the day and had a small number of students—that were undermining the instructional program. He reorganized the student discipline referral system away from being assigned to assistant

principals by alphabet to being assigned by content area to enable them to track teachers who were referring students most often in the subject areas they supervised. An excessive number of referrals from a teacher might indicate that teacher was not connecting with students and probably not delivering effective instruction. At the same time, he sought to convince teachers the school could be turned around and that they were essential to that effort.

Principal B enlisted students in changing the school's climate. The climate he inherited was one of division, where two schools existed in one building. The one school catered to a small number of wealthy, college-bound students who were exclusively enrolled in advanced academics courses taught by the most experienced teachers. Students in the other school were relegated to remedial or basic courses tiered into so many levels it was hard to make sense of the rationale used to determine how students were assigned to them. Students knew teachers assigned to these courses had lower expectations for them and often responded in ways that met those expectations. Principal B sought to bring the two schools together by addressing the image of the school with the entire student body and subsequently hosting small meetings in which students could talk to each other about the kind of school they wanted and their role in creating it. To accomplish these, he primarily leveraged transformational leadership practices in bringing reform to High School B. The school posted only modest gains in math and reading during Principal B's tenure. Those gains were not sustained after his tenure. However, gains in other measures of school effectiveness outside the framework of this study were realized during his principalship.

Principal C. Principal C's initial theory of action differed from that of the other principals examined in this study because the school to which he was appointed had a smaller enrollment than the schools in the other cases and was housed in a new building. He was able to focus on improving the school's instructional program almost immediately. He began by listening to teachers, getting their input on what they needed to be more effective. With this information, he put together a professional development plan that addressed the learning teachers said they needed. He secured district and school-level resources to deliver that learning. He then empowered teacher leaders to coach colleagues on targeted instructional strategies, monitor implementation of those strategies and their effects on student learning, and to give teachers feedback on their instructional practice. He primarily leveraged his role as an instructional leader to improve student learning at High School C. High School C was the only school included in this study to post dramatic gains in math and reading.

Principal D. Principal D also brought a unique theory of action to her turnaround situation. She had served as an assistant principal in the school she was ultimately appointed to lead and had been a part of the transformational changes the previous principal had made. In terms of climate and culture, the school was headed in the right direction when she took over, but had not experienced the gains in student achievement the district had expected. Principal D recognized that what the school was lacking was the belief among the faculty that they could improve student learning and knowledge of strong instructional practices needed to do so. With that in mind, Principal D went about getting the faculty the type of professional learning they needed. As an instructional

leader, she established the school as a professional learning community by focusing on the work of collaborative teams. She made sure team leaders had the skills necessary to use data to influence instruction. Once that had been accomplished, she established local expert groups made up of teachers who had received specific training in instructional strategies proven to promote critical thinking and strategies that promoted writing across the curriculum. Principal D posted the most dramatic gains in reading of any of the five principals in the study.

Principal E. Principal E brought a strong conception of her role as a high school turnaround principal primarily from experience she had gained as a middle school turnaround principal. She knew transformational changes were important early in a turnaround context and that such changes needed to be followed up quickly by, if not made simultaneously with, measures designed to improve the school's instructional program. She made improvements to the appearance and functionality of the building to ensure it best supported the level of teaching and learning she wished to bring to High School E. Content not to make any drastic changes in personnel, she identified teacher leaders among the faculty who were willing to learn new instructional strategies and bring that learning back to their colleagues. She also empowered these teacher leaders to identify future professional learning needs and goals in an effort to garner further faculty investment in raising student achievement through expanding their collective capacity to deliver higher quality instruction. During her tenure, High School E posted dramatic gains in math, which were sustained after her tenure despite a change in state learning standards.

In summary, Principal A first applied transformational leadership approaches followed, almost linearly, by instructional leadership strategies, to include a significant professional development component. Principle B employed a purely transformational approach, with almost no consideration for professional development as a mechanism for improving student learning. Principal C did not face the same transformational challenges as the other four principals in the study and was able to bring a largely instructional leadership approach to his assignment. Principal D quickly gained control of the transformational concerns she faced and was able to devote most of her principalship to developing her faculty's capacity to deliver higher quality instruction by focusing on differentiated professional learning by curricular teams. Principal E was able to apply almost equal parts transformational and instructional leadership in her turnaround approach, to include a notably collaborative approach to formulating and implementing her professional development plan. What emerges across the five leadership approaches is that transformational leadership creates the space for instructional practices, especially coherent professional development, to take hold in a turnaround situation and produce desired outcomes in student achievement.

Professional Development

Each principal in this study brought a unique perspective on the professional development of teachers as a mechanism for bringing about sustained improvement in student learning and increased in student achievement. That perspective shaped the role of professional development in the principal's initial theory of action and subsequent leadership behaviors. A summary of each principal's approach to professional

development and the characteristics of the professional development each principal implemented are discussed in this section.

Principal A. Principal A leveraged professional development extensively in the theory of action she applied to her turnaround context. She identified the areas for growth for the faculty's instructional practice, studied the areas herself, and brought district and school resources to the task of changing teachers' beliefs about students' ability to learn, their knowledge around the importance of curriculum alignment and unpacking standards, and skills needed to deliver engaging lessons. It was clear from her interview responses that she recognized the value of developing teams of teachers, rather than teachers individually, as the way to sustainable school improvement and provided considerable time for the teams to work in the school's schedule. Of the principals included in this study, she talked the most about professional development of collaborative teams as a mechanism for raising student achievement, an indication of how central this was to her approach to improving High School A.

Principal B. By contrast, Principal B spoke of professional development more as an afterthought to the sweeping transformational changes he brought to High School B. He introduced the concept of differentiated professional development for individual teachers based on their level of experience or facility implementing target instructional strategies. Professional development was conducted in a top down, building-wide format, usually in the form of a text everyone read or a faculty session led by the principal himself. Little consideration was given to what teachers felt they needed to be more effective as content area teams. Though Principal B made the second highest number of

references to professional development of the principals included in this study, his references were mostly abstract, an indication that he recognized the need for professional development as part of a sustainable school improvement approach, but played a relatively minor role in the leadership practice he brought to High School B.

Principal C. Principal C began his tenure in a new school building. Unlike Principal B, he had the benefit of a having a solid transitional period with his predecessor. Once he was able to make small organizational changes that put student learning at the center of the school's collective focus and changed the school climate in a way that supported the instructional changes he observed needed to be made, he was able to exercise instructional leadership rather early in his tenure and made the professional development of High School C's faculty central to his approach. In addition to taking advantage of the five or six days of professional development the district traditionally provided teachers at the beginning of each school year, he employed a train-the-trainer model to equip cohorts of teachers with specific instructional strategies, i.e. differentiation or engaging English language learners, in an effort to embed that training in collaborative team meetings and individual teachers' instructional delivery. He was careful to focus the school's attention on one area of professional practice at a time and to avoid what he described as a "favor of the month" approach. He believed improving teachers' ability to personalize the education of every student, through professional learning that improved their pedagogy, sharpened their content-related skills, and strengthened their sense of efficacy was essential to his success in raising student achievement at High School C.

Principal D. As an assistant principal, Principal D had been a part of designing and witnessed ineffectual professional development at High School D. She admits it was much like “fishing,” where teachers would be given training at the beginning of the school year on an instructional intervention, encouraged to try it on students, and asked later by an administrator “Did we catch everybody this year?” If teachers reported that they did not “catch” everybody, there was a scramble to determine the next great intervention to try. Once Principal D had completed a few transformational changes like reconfiguring the school’s master schedule and closing the campus to ensure safety, she made it a leadership priority to complete the evolution of the professional development at High School D from unfocused, centrally selected approaches to teacher-directed, professional learning embedded in teachers’ daily instructional practice. She involved the leadership team and teacher leaders in this effort, making sure everyone understood their role and secured for them the learning they needed to implement higher order thinking strategies and learning walks. She staked the success of her principalship on this distribution of professional talent and expertise to realize the gains in student achievement the district had appointed her to produce.

Principal E. Similarly, Principal E reimagined the professional development program she inherited at High School E only after attending to transformational issues related to the building and staff perceptions of unstable organizational leadership. She was the fifth principal appointed to the school in six years. No coherent professional plan existed when she arrived and the staff was resistant to any overtures she made to establishing one for lack of trust that she would be around to implement it. Against that

backdrop, Principal E moved during the first year of her principalship to build teachers' sense of efficacy by providing professional learning around collecting and understanding student performance data and accountability. She observed that teachers felt under siege because they did not fully understand how they could leverage data to inform instruction and raise student achievement. To accomplish this, she selected a team of teachers to travel to national conferences and attend workshops conducted by district-level specialists to gain expertise on how to utilize data to address students' needs, and then deployed this team to work with curricular departments to develop that capacity in teachers across the curriculum. In the process, this team discovered their colleagues also needed development around understanding, unpacking, and prioritizing learning standards. Principal E again secured district resources to get these instructional leaders professional learning needed to impact teachers' instructional practice in this area. Fostering this system of distributed responsibility for effective professional development programing and delivery dominated her work during the second and third year of her tenure. This model continued at least a year after her departure.

Professional Development Program Characteristics

Each leader examined in this study brought similar theories of action to the role of turnaround principal. Their approaches varied according to contextual differences and their level of leadership experience. Each recognized the need for a coherent professional development plan as part of their long or short-term vision for school improvement, but in reality operationalized those plans differently. As a result, the characteristics of the professional program each principal implemented varied according to the outcome the

principal sought, how teachers accessed professional development, the process through which professional development occurred, the capacity among the faculty the professional development created, and the sustainability of the professional development delivery model after the principal's tenure.

Principal A. Principal A sought to create an authentic professional learning community in which teachers felt comfortable holding each other accountable for student progress and leveraged the master schedule to create the time and space for teachers to do that. In the beginning, she relied on district-level resources to provide expertise in key areas of instructional practice. As teachers became more skilled, professional development was embedded into their work and accomplished through collaborative team meetings, learning visits, and critical friends groups. As new teachers joined the faculty during the turnaround process, Principal A took the initiative to differentiate professional development to ensure new teachers began developing the same knowledge and skills base as the rest of the faculty. The professional development program she implemented increased teachers' capacity to analyze and respond to student performance data, the main work of a high-functioning professional learning community. Principal A remains principal of High School A and believes the coherence of the professional learning program she implemented has contributed to the faculty's success in raising student achievement.

Principal B. Principal B sought to change teachers' beliefs about their ability to improve student outcomes by giving them the instructional knowledge and skills to do so. Curricular common planning time was built into the master schedule, but teachers rarely

used this time for formalized professional development. The primary vehicles for any training the faculty received were faculty-wide meetings and breakout sessions in which the principal or assistant principal delivered the training, usually around a text containing strategies the principal wanted teachers to implement. Teachers engaged in learning walks periodically, but no formal system of focused observation and teacher-to-teacher feedback was ever developed. Any capacity for improved instructional practice Principal B's professional development program produced did not translate into increased student achievement, as pass rates in math and English only moved slightly during his tenure and gains were not sustained after his departure.

However, the professional development program he brought to High School B resulted in better student engagement and teachers' increased sense of efficacy. That change in teachers' belief that their students could achieve at higher levels changed the culture of the school, which is what he sought. Presently, the pass rate in English remains where it had been when Principal B assumed the principalship. The pass rate in math has not recovered to where it had been at the same time after a slight increase during his tenure and a sharp decline after his departure. Interview data indicate the top-down approach to professional development he implemented is still in place. Perhaps a more coherent professional development plan would have improved instruction in a way that would have moved pass rates, especially in math, in the right direction.

Principal C. Like Principal B, Principal C also wanted to change the culture of the high school he was appointed to and he saw improving teachers' beliefs about students, knowledge of students' learning styles, and instructional skills through

professional development as a mechanism for doing so. Principal C recognized the demographics of the school's student body were rapidly changing and would soon overwhelm the faculty's collective ability to address the instructional needs of students. He took advantage of the professional development days the school district front loaded into the beginning of each school year before students return to bring in nationally recognized experts on culturally competent teaching and differentiated instruction to raise teachers' awareness of these approaches and to begin building efficacy around the new realities of their work. Later, he employed a train-the-trainer model to equip cohorts of teacher leaders to deliver more detailed learning in these two areas to their colleagues at the collaborative team level. In the end, teachers had developed a common understanding, language, and set of practices around differentiated instruction. Their new way of looking at students from diverse backgrounds and professional confidence they could make a positive difference in their academic achievement resulted in stronger relationships between teachers and students. High School C maintained many of the professional development protocols Principal C put in place. Pass rates in math and reading remained high two years after his tenure.

Principal D. Principal D faced a slightly different professional development challenge. Where Principal C's faculty was united by their dysfunction, Principal D determined her faculty was largely ineffective because of their level of isolation from one another. She sought to bring them together to share ideas and instructional practices, especially around critical thinking and student-centered classrooms. After unsuccessful, initial attempts to break down these silos through faculty-wide professional development

initiatives, Principal D settled on department-level approaches differentiated by departments' demonstrated ability to implement protocols designed to get teachers into each other's classrooms or even to other schools to observe the implementation of targeted strategies. She held departments accountable for their own success or failure, but empowered individual teachers to let her know personally the next level or type of professional learning they needed to become more effective. Principal D's coherent approach to professional development produced among the faculty a sense of collective ability to improve student learning through collaboration. More important, positive relationships among teachers in the same department, between departments, and between the faculty and administration have continued beyond Principal D's tenure.

Principal E. Principal E faced a faculty demoralized by leadership instability, bewildered by attempts to connect student achievement data and their instructional practice, and resigned to the possibility of the school being placed on sanctions due to poor student achievement. She sought to restore their commitment to the school's mission and to garner their support for her vision for the school by improving their knowledge and practice through professional development. Once she had determined what teachers needed most through observations and conversations with teachers, she used every opportunity to get it to them. She used district resources to bring consultants to the school. She also sent teacher leaders to conferences and workshops to gain knowledge and skills they would deliver to their colleagues in a train-the-trainer model. More organically, teachers engaged in book talks, learning walks, and classroom swaps to access professional learning opportunities. During Principal E's three-year tenure,

these opportunities increased teachers' capacity to understand and respond to assessment data, use technology to increase student engagement, and deploy positive behavior approaches to strengthen relationships with students. In a fortunate turn of events for the school, an assistant principal who served under leadership at High School E replaced her as principal and has maintained the coherent professional development processes she implemented during her tenure.

Cross-Case Analysis

A cross-case analysis of the interview data collected from each of the five principals reveals implications for effective turnaround leadership practice. Coding references were used to quantify instances where principals and teachers who participated in the study referenced a particular leadership practice in response to an interview question about that practice or at any point in the interview. Three broad implications for turnaround leadership practice, as described in the conceptual framework that bounds this study, are drawn from coding references and are discussed in this chapter: context, the role of transformational and leadership, and the characteristics of professional development programs principals employed to develop teachers.

Context Matters

The context in which each principal exercised turnaround leadership emerged from the data as a key element in determining the theory of action each principal developed. Though contexts were different in each case in terms of facilities, disposition of the faculty, and community support etc., they had student bodies with similar demographics who were failing to meet annual measurable objectives for student

achievement in similar ways. In each case, the school building and all it represents as a space for teaching and learning served as both a physical and psychological basis from which principals began the work of improving each school's instructional program. Principals believed if they could improve the building, improve the faculty, and mobilize the community around their turnaround efforts they could increase student learning.

The building. The condition and appearance of the school building impacts a school's climate in multiple ways. It conveys to students and teachers how important the mutual work they do is to the community. That sense of purpose and worth shapes the mission and vision of the school—the articulation of which is a central role of the principal in a transformational leadership model. The building should facilitate order and safety at the same time as it encourages openness and hope. Iron bars should not cover the exterior windows. Landscaping should be attractive. Access to and egress from the building should be controlled, but also welcoming in a way that encourages students to stay at school and discourages external threats from entering. Common areas for students should be plentiful and inviting. The interior of the building should remind students of their role in transforming the school. Hanging banners containing the school's mantra, displaying evidence of student work on walls, and updating display cases with current students' athletic or artistic accomplishments can serve to enlist students in improving school climate.

The configuration of the building should be organized in a way that supports the school's mission. For example, one principal's goal was to decrease the number of students failing 9th grade, so he co-located typical 9th grade courses like Algebra I,

English 9, and Biology on one floor and in one section of the building. Doing so facilitated cross-curricular collaboration on content and student needs, and as a practical matter, made students found in other parts of the building during instructional time easily recognizable for the purpose of steering them back to class. Turnaround principals leveraged the building to transform the organization.

The faculty. In the turnaround contexts examined in this study, principals were not free to dismiss the faculty they found and hire a new one, as is allowed by turnaround leadership models implemented in some districts. In fact, in one case examined in this study, the district superintendent gave the principal a list of teachers to target for removal, but the principal ignored it. The school in this case, along with those in two other cases, experienced dramatic and sustainable gains in math pass rates. The principals in these three schools: 1) began by gaining the trust of the faculty by acknowledging their experience at the school and listening to their concerns; 2) evaluated the specific strengths and weakness of each teacher in terms of knowledge, skills, and beliefs; 3) classified teachers into three categories—potential teacher leaders, teachers who want to improve, but need support, and teachers who would willfully oppose change and impeded progress; and 4) secured resources (time, training, and technology) teachers needed in the short term to improve their instructional practice.

All but one of the principals examined in this study regarded teachers as the elusive intervention they most needed to mobilize to improve student learning. These four principals spoke about the importance of building a trusting relationship with their faculties early in their tenure as a key element of their theory of action. The principal in

the one case in the study that saw gains in both math and reading described meeting with individual teachers, even before he assumed the principalship, to listen to their concerns, to garner ideas for improving the school, and to ask what they needed in the way of professional learning opportunities. Teachers in two of the three cases that experienced significant gains in math also specifically remarked how the principals of those two schools came to their positions listening, as opposed to acting, when it came to leveraging teachers in improving instruction.

The principals in this study also began their tenures by being ultimate observers of established organizational and instructional practices they inherited. They took the time, some longer than others, to assess the aspects of the organization that needed to be addressed, decided the order in which to address them, and identified personnel that could assist them in doing so. Most notably, in the area of instruction, principals spent a considerable amount of time in classrooms, not only observing teachers, but also talking to students. They met with collaborative or curricular teams, team leaders, and the administrators who supervised them to determine how best to support teams in improving their collective work. Based on these observations and conversations, principals also identified teachers who expressed or demonstrated an unwillingness to embrace measures designed to improve their instructional effectiveness.

Although principals regarded themselves as change agents, they operationalized that agency by sometimes directing, but at some point in their tenure mostly facilitating members of the organization getting the resources they said they needed in order to improve, and subsequently monitoring the application and

effectiveness of those tools. For example, in the case that saw the most dramatic gains in math, one of the principal's first acts was to create a master schedule that allowed teachers to meet in collaborative learning teams 180 minutes per week in response to teachers' requests for more time and her observation that they needed more time in order to improve the quality of their collective work around unpacking standards and responding to data. When teachers in this school needed guidance on how to implement interactive notebooks across the curriculum, the principal secured district resources to bring the training to the school for a day and for substitute teachers for the entire faculty that allowed for faculty-wide professional development that day.

The community. Turning around a struggling school does not occur in a vacuum. All five of the principals in this study described the impact of the community on their leadership practices. It was important for each principal to: 1) build a sense of urgency around the work to be done; 2) convince the community that it could be done, and that the principal was capable of leading the effort to get it done; and 3) enlist community support in accomplishing the work. In two of the three cases that posted significant gains in math, the principals met extensively with community leaders who were skeptical of their motives and leadership ability. Once these two principals had established a sense of permanence in the community, that they were committed to staying at the school for longer than just a few months, and demonstrated their commitment to improving the school, the community supported their efforts. In the case that saw only modest gains in reading and math, but significant gains in other school success metrics (attendance, graduation rates, student engagement) the principal was able to mobilize community

resources to hold parents accountable for student attendance and to get the wrap-around services (counseling, housing, part-time employment) students needed to stay in school.

Role of Transformational and Instructional Leadership

The conceptual framework used in this study assumed transformational and instructional leadership practices might be applied in near equal measure as turnaround principals operationalized their theories of action. However, the data indicated otherwise. Transformational leadership practices, mainly articulating a new mission and vision for the school and redesigning the organization, dominated the initial approach principals brought to their turnaround contexts, but declined in influence over the course of their tenures in all schools but one. Although principals considered developing people, where transformational and instructional leadership intersect, early in their tenures and recognized it as essential to sustainable improvement, it initially received less attention than organizational considerations such as student attendance, staffing, and securing additional instructional resources (i.e. technology) for the school. To be clear, across cases, principals worried most about and took immediate steps to change school *climate*, the way a schools feels to an outsider, through first order changes, such as physical improvements to the building, tightening security, and revamping discipline procedures. In cases where principals were able to change school climate quickly, efforts to impact school *culture*—the way a school conducts the business of teaching and learning, specifically instruction, soon followed and the professional development of teachers was leveraged to do so.

Though the principals in the study understood the practice of instructional leadership, as they had all gained significant experience with this model as teachers, assistant principals, and in one case as a principal of other schools, it did not figure prominently in the initial theories of action they brought to their turnaround efforts. Across cases, it appears principals did not engaged in leadership practices that had establishing and monitoring progress on student achievement goals, ensuring curriculum alignment, and observing and giving feedback to individual teachers at their center. In fact, in cases C and D the principals made no mention of instructional leadership practices during their interviews nor did teachers interviewed in each case. The instructional leadership practices mentioned were limited to setting numeric student achievement goals, protecting instructional time by limiting routine interruptions to the school day, and giving individual teachers feedback on instruction from observations.

The limited application of standard instructional leadership practices suggests turnaround principals sought ways to improve collaborative teams instead of one teacher at a time. The time they invested in instructional leadership was spent evaluating the work of teams and getting teams the resources, specifically coherent professional development, they need to improve their collective capacity to deliver higher quality instruction. The implications of this approach for high schools, the focus of this study, are particularly relevant since high schools are most commonly organized into collaborative teams by content area. The data suggest the most effective way to improve a high school is team-by-team, not teacher-by-teacher.

Coherence of Professional Development Programs

If the aforementioned is true, what remains is to examine the level of coherence of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals in this study implemented to achieve their desired outcome of raising student achievement by improving instruction. The data across cases indicate professional development programs that produced the most dramatic gains in student learning were: 1) differentiated by curricular departments or teams and focused on content; 2) embedded in teachers' work and delivered by teacher leaders in a train-the-trainer model; and 3) implemented and monitored by teachers over an extended period of time.

The professional development programs principals implemented were also differentiated by what teachers indicated directly or through their practice they needed in order to improve. In three of the cases, including the case that saw dramatic gains in both reading and math, principals determined that teachers who had been at a struggling school for a number of years often needed professional development (i.e. *Response to Intervention, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, Working with English Language Learners*) that would impact their belief that student learning could be improved and that they, teachers, had a role in it. In one case, teachers reported that once teachers at their school had this belief restored they were eager to engage in whatever professional development they need to gain the content knowledge and skills they needed to change their practice in a way that would increase their capacity to impact student learning.

In two cases, principals noted that novice teachers often lacked the pedagogical knowledge they needed to meet the needs of all students. Since these teachers were new

to the school and had not been exposed to what the rest of the faculty had read or strategies they had been implementing, principals recognized that need and provided that support as part of their professional development plan. In one of the two cases, the principal took the controversial step of stratifying teachers based on performance and differentiating their professional development accordingly. For example, when the faculty read *Integrating Differentiated Instruction & Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids* (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006), the principal used a performance metric to determine which teachers needed a review of the concepts in the book as validation of their current practice and which teachers, by virtue of their complete unawareness of the concepts in the book, almost needed to have the book read to them.

Professional development plans across the three schools that posted the most dramatic gains in math ensured teachers had access to professional development opportunities primarily through a train-the-trainer model where teacher leaders would get trained in a specific strategy, (i.e. backward design lesson planning, conducting data dialogues, unpacking curriculum learning standards) and return to the school to deliver training on that strategy to collaborative teams. The three principals pointed to the benefit of enlisting teacher leaders in their efforts to raise the level of instructional quality across the curriculum and the boost in effectiveness realized from colleagues learning from colleagues. Teacher leaders were also able to assist the administration in each school with monitoring the level of implementation of targeted strategies and their effect on student learning. This model was used in the three cases that posted dramatic gains in

math, the school that posted dramatic gains in reading, and the school that posted dramatic gains in both. In three of these schools, the train-the-trainer model remains the primary mode by which professional development is delivered to collaborative teams and gains in math pass rates have been sustained after the principals' tenures.

Though led or coordinated by the principal, a school's instructional program is executed by teachers. It follows then that improvement to an instructional program should be designed, implemented, and monitored by teachers. In the three cases that posted dramatic gains in math, and the school that posted the most dramatic gains in reading, this occurred. In two of these cases, teachers held each other accountable in collaborative teams for assessing the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies on student learning. In two of the five cases, teachers engaged in collaborative learning walks/visits to observe each other implementing targeted strategies and offered each other constructive feedback. This element of coherence gave the programs the embedded relevance adult learners need in order to value a professional learning experience. That is to say, the programs principals implemented were effective because they were sufficiently teacher-centered, inductive.

Summary

As principals across the five cases included in this study operationalized their roles as turnaround leaders, certain general observations can be drawn from their individual experiences. The school building should reflect the principal's vision for the school in form and function. The lifeblood of the school's ability to accomplish the mission is the faculty. Principals should take care to affirm teachers' role in the

turnaround process to build trust needed to create the emotional space in which the difficult work of increasing their capacity to deliver higher quality instruction occur. As turnaround principals attend to these internal factors, they must also be attuned to forces in the community that can buttress or undermine any turnaround efforts and engage them.

However, the data also indicate that beyond the immediate culture and climate changes that accompany the initial work of a turnaround leader lay the levers needed to affect sustainable improvements in student learning and achievement. A theme that emerges from across the cases is that the development of teachers' knowledge, skills, and beliefs through a coherent professional development program figured prominently in the theories of action of the principals whose schools saw the most dramatic gains sustained beyond the principal's tenure. Though it is difficult to isolate the professional development of teachers from other leadership actions taken by the principals in this study, the data seem to support the assertion in the study's conceptual framework that a hybridized application of transformational and instructional leadership practices, with an intentional program for increasing teachers' capacity to deliver higher quality instruction at the center, is a sound approach for realizing sustainable improvement in student learning and raising student achievement.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to examine the work of successful turnaround principals to discover and analyze the theories of action they brought to their leadership roles. However, the findings taken from the interview data collected in this study are not generalizable beyond contexts presented in this study for the following reasons:

1) Principals (and teachers) who participated in this study were purposefully selected based on the principals' personal designation in education research literature as "successful" turnaround principals. In the literature, these principals' success is based on student pass rates of standardized tests, particularly in math and reading or, in one case, on other measures of school effectiveness such as graduation rates, attendance, level of student engagement etc.

2) Data collected from one principal could not be compared with interview data from teachers familiar with her leadership despite numerous attempts to contact them. The principal is still sitting and remains their supervisor, which might explain their reticence to discuss her leadership despite initial indications they would be willing to do so.

3) Interview data were only coded by me. Admittedly, this threat to the validity of findings extracted from the data could have been mitigated by having the data coded by multiple coders for comparison.

4) The reliance on coding references to determine the extent to which a particular leadership behavior was prominent in a principal's theory of action or to determine the likely characteristics of the professional development program implemented by a principal should be seen as a transparent attempt to analyze the data and not as an attempt to assign absolute weights to participants' responses.

Implications

The implications for this study are pertinent as school districts across the United States spend billions of dollars as part of the federal *Race to the Top* school improvement

initiative designed to raise student achievement in 5,000 of the nation's poorest performing public schools struggling to educate over 2.5 million students. The school reform initiative's heavy reliance on the "hero principal" as turnaround model is at odds with the conceptual framework and data collected this study. If a reform initiative led by a principal is to be successful, that principal should employ a leadership approach that is a hybrid between transformational leadership (what one might assume a turnaround principal is supposed to bring) and instructional leadership (which is essential to sustaining improvement). Principals should also be prepared to operationalize what lies at the intersection of these two leadership models—developing people, in this case teachers—through a coherent professional development program.

More specifically, the findings in this study suggest what turnaround high school principals should consider before assuming the role (assess the context, if possible), once in the role (affirm teachers while assessing their instructional capacity), and as soon as possible in one's tenure (secure the resources needed to deliver and monitor a coherent professional development program).

This study examined the work of turnaround principals in order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics associated with improving struggling high schools, to inform the public policy meant to rescue them, and to inform the work of principals appointed to do so. However, improvement was only measured by pass rates on standardized tests in math and reading. Other metrics to measure school effectiveness such as student attendance, graduation rates, level of student engagement, level of parent involvement, and student enrollment (number and diversity) in advanced academic

courses were not considered in this study. A subsequent study might examine the effectiveness turnaround principals' leadership practices as measure by these metrics and others.

The role of cultural competence in improving instructional effectiveness was not fully explored in this study. There is a sense that in struggling high schools a persistent disconnect born of racial, cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences exists between students and teachers. These differences limit teachers' ability to connect with students, which contributes to students' reluctance to apply themselves to academic pursuits. This lack of mutual engagement in the primary work of schools, teaching and learning, results in feelings of low efficacy on both sides. A subsequent study might examine turnaround principals' recognition of and approaches to bridging this gap and the impact of those approaches on student learning.

Finally, each of the five principals examined in this study mentioned the influence the community in which the schools to which they were appointed are located had on their work. It is clear that in addition to being transformational and instructional leaders who leverage the professional development of teachers as a mechanism for sustainable school improvement, successful turnaround principals must also mobilize the community around their efforts to turn once struggling schools into sources of community pride. A subsequent study might explore how specific leadership approaches a principal might use to accomplish this.

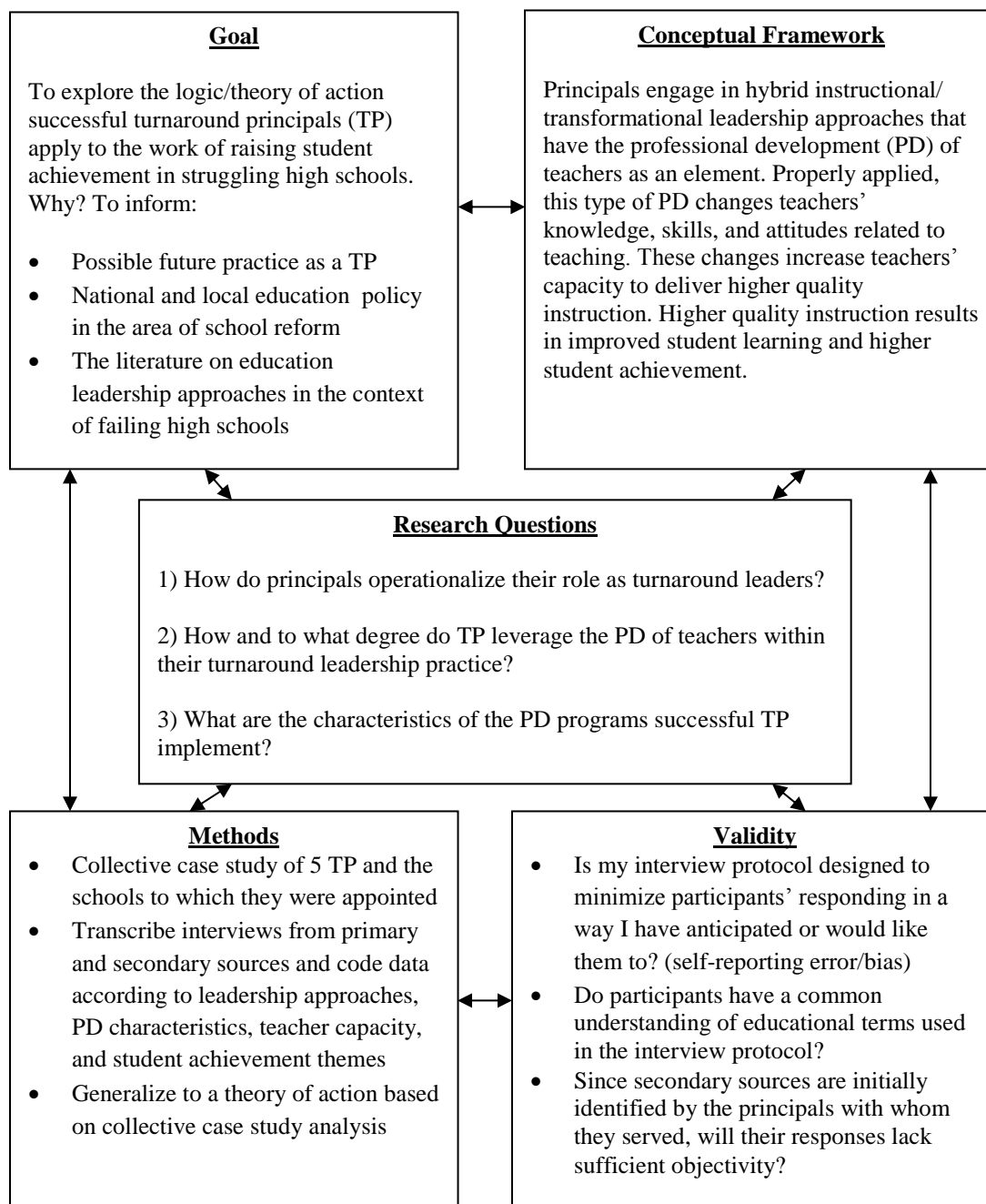
Conclusion of Study

The work of sustained school improvement is challenging and complex in any context. The approach a leader should take, the leader's initial theory of action, is shaped by that context. The right steps in this regard will create the space in which other necessary improvements, such as increasing the collective capacity of the faculty to deliver higher quality instruction, can be realized. How to accomplish this and what levers to activate to do so is the question. The findings in this study support the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 1 that suggests a hybridized application of instructional and transformational leadership practices, with a coherent professional development program at the core, offers a blueprint for expanding and supporting the capacity of a school to improve student learning and increase student achievement.

Conducting this study has informed my leadership as a middle school principal. It has increased my understanding of the centrality of collective teacher quality in improving instruction and raising student achievement. Schools are best improved team by team, not teacher by teacher. I am more aware than ever that presiding over a professional development program that is not content-specific, does not involve active learning, and that is job-embedded and iterative over a period of time is inherently ineffective and potentially undermines to the school's ability to accomplish its mission and due to resentment on the part of teachers born of incompetent leadership. This serves as a powerful lesson for all current and aspiring school leaders, but especially those endeavoring to change the trajectory of struggling schools and brighten the future of the students in them.

Appendix A

Research Map



Appendix B

Semi-structured Interview Questions (Principals)

Research Question 1: How do principals operationalize their role as turnaround leaders?

1. How did you come to be recognized as a successful turnaround principal?
(Tell me something about your background.)

2. What is your conception of your role as a turnaround principal? (Vision)

Transformational? Instructional? Both? (Hybrid)

3. When you accepted the position at _____ High School, what did you understand the challenges to be?

Context (building condition, security, staff morale, faculty's instructional capacity)

District Priorities (Time allotted for turnaround, definition of *turnaround*, sustainability plan)

Resources available (Public/Private/Combination, constraints, autonomy)

4. Given the challenges mentioned above, how did you approach change?

Research Question 2: How and to what degree do turnaround principals leverage the professional development of teachers within their conceptualization of turnaround school leadership?

5. Prior to accepting the position at _____ High School, what had been your experience with PD within the context of a school?

6. Did you use the PD as a lever for change at _____ High School. If so, what were you trying to accomplish?

What about the teachers you encountered at _____ High school needed to be changed (developed)?

Research Question 3: What are the characteristics of the professional development programs successful turnaround principals implement?

7. Describe the PD program you implemented:

Content (Curriculum/Pedagogy/Efficacy/Cultural Competence)

Process

Who conducted it?

How did teachers access it (voluntary/mandatory/by curriculum area)?

Embedded or stand alone?

Continuous or “one-off”?

How were outcomes assessed?

Use of time (Scheduling)

Outcomes sought (knowledge/skill/disposition)

Behaviors impacted (engagement/differentiation/assessment)

Capacity built (instructional/cultural competence)

8. If you were to give advice to a principal tasked with turning around a struggling school, what would it be?

Appendix C

Semi-structured Interview Questions (Teachers)

1. How did you come to teach _____ at _____?
(Tell me something about your background.)
2. When _____ arrived at _____, what were some of the challenges he/she faced?

Context (building condition, security, staff morale, faculty's instructional capacity)

District Priorities (Time allotted for turnaround, definition of *turnaround*, sustainability plan)

Resources available (Public/Private/Combination, constraints, autonomy)

3. Given the challenges mentioned above, how did he/she approach change at _____?
4. Prior to _____ arrival at _____ what had been your experience with professional development at _____?
5. Did he/she use PD as a lever for change at _____ If so, what do you think he/she was trying to accomplish?
6. At the beginning of and during _____ tenure at _____, what about the teachers there would you say needed to be developed most?
7. Describe the PD program _____ implemented:

Content (Curriculum/Pedagogy/Efficacy/Cultural Competence)

Process

Who conducted it?

How did teachers access it (voluntary/mandatory/by curriculum area)?

Embedded or stand alone?

Continuous or "one-off?"

How were outcomes assessed?

Use of time (scheduling)

Outcomes sought (knowledge/skill/disposition)

Behaviors impacted (engagement/differentiation/assessment)

Capacity built (instructional/cultural competence)

8. If you had to describe the largest impact _____ had on _____, what would it be?

Appendix D

Human Subjects Review Board Approval Letter



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance
Research Hall
4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-4121; Fax: 703-993-9590

TO: Scott Bauer, College of Education and Human Development

FROM: Aurali Dade
Assistant Vice President, Research Compliance 

PROTOCOL NO.: 8527

PROPOSAL NO.: N/A

TITLE: The Role of Teacher Professional Development in Turnaround Principals' Approach to Raising Student Achievement

DATE: January 29, 2013

Cc: Anthony Terrell

Under George Mason University (GMU) procedures, this project was determined to be exempt by the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA) since it falls under DHHS Exempt Category 2, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

A copy of the final approved consent document is attached. Please use this stamped copy for your research.

You may proceed with data collection. **Please note that all modifications in your protocol must be submitted to the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance for review and approval prior to implementation.** Any unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others, including problems regarding data confidentiality must be reported to the GMU ORIA.

GMU is bound by the ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research contained in The Belmont Report. Even though your data collection procedures are exempt from review by the GMU IRB, GMU expects you to conduct your research according to the professional standards in your discipline and the ethical guidelines mandated by federal regulations.

Thank you for cooperating with the University by submitting this protocol for review. Please call me at 703-993-5381 if you have any questions.

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Biography

Anthony S. Terrell earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from The Citadel Military College of South Carolina, in Charleston, South Carolina in 1989. He earned a Master of Education in Secondary Education, with an emphasis in teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages from The George Washington University in 1998. Anthony is currently principal of Rocky Run Middle School, a Fairfax County Public School, in Chantilly, Virginia. His research interests include turnaround leadership, the role of cultural competence in effective school leadership, and the relationship between teachers' cultural competence and student learning.