

# School Leadership Review

The national, peer-reviewed journal of the Texas Council of Professors of Educational Administration

## Winter 2019

*The Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation by Teachers and Campus Administrators in a Suburban Texas District*  
George P. Willey

*Organizational Citizenship and Teacher Evaluation: Using the T-TESS to Promote OCB and Improve Student Outcomes*  
Elisabeth M. Krimbill, Donald E. Goess, & Patricia V. Escobedo

*Community Context: Influence and Implications for School Leadership Preparation*  
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# ***The Perceptions of Teacher Evaluation by Teachers and Campus Administrators in a Suburban Texas District***

*George P. Willey*

*Taylor Independent School District*

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Texas school districts were required to implement a new teacher evaluation system during the 2016-17 school year referred to as the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS). The development of a new evaluation system began in 2013 and was voluntarily piloted by school districts during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. The system is based upon the revised Texas Teacher Standards that were finalized in 2014 that outline the following broad teaching competencies: lesson planning and pedagogy; knowledge of students and how they learn; content knowledge and expertise, learning environment; data-driven practices and professional development and other work responsibilities (Eaton, 2016). The new system was designed to foster and promote continuous improvement in teaching practice through a combination of administrative observation, teacher goal setting and professional development, as well as analysis of student growth. During the 2017-18 school years, Texas school districts were required to either pilot or fully implement the student growth component of the instrument. By the 2018-19 school year, districts were required to fully implement all aspects of the evaluation system.

The structure of T-TESS can be found in the basis for the application of clinical procedures outlined in various professional literature. Glickman (1990) outlines four steps for observations that include a preconference, observation, analysis and interpretation of the observation, post-conference, and review by both parties of the other four steps prior to repeating the process. School administrators use a three-step process of a pre-conference, observation, and concluding with a post-conference in the T-TESS cycle. Teachers must receive a minimum of one forty-five-minute observation per year by their campus administrator, but additional time spent observing teaching practice is strongly recommended to maximize the benefits of the process. Glickman (1990) suggest that the preconference is essential for both parties to become clear on what will occur during the observation. The post-conference is a venue for the supervisor to discuss findings from the observation and to mutually produce a plan for instructional improvement. This instructional improvement component mirrors the reinforcement and refinement steps that are an integral part of the T-TESS post-conference.

This study examines the perceptions of administrators and teachers related to the implementation of T-TESS in their district. The study utilizes a survey related to the perceptions of teacher evaluation to examine the perceptions of the two groups. The research examines the perceptions of the two groups on teacher evaluation serving as an accurate means of teaching performance and as being primarily focused on improving instruction.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Looney (2011) professes that well-designed evaluation systems aligned with professional improvement opportunities can improve teaching practice and subsequently increase student achievement. She advocated that educational systems must find the appropriate balance between

holding teachers accountable through evaluation and using information gained through the evaluation process for guiding professional development. Furthermore, she emphasizes that the best evaluations are the ones that challenge teacher beliefs about student learning and abilities to achieve desired outcomes.

A public policy necessity exists to evaluate teachers but the best means to do so has historically been up for much debate (Duke, 1995). Different groups such as politicians, teachers, school administrators, and local school boards have different desirable characteristics and expected outcomes from the evaluation process. Issues such as accountability, professional development, and merit pay may lead for a desire for the evaluation process to be structured in conflicting ways. Derrington and Campbell (2018) found that the challenges of design and implementing teacher evaluation exist in countries throughout the world. The authors state that these challenges are compounded for nations as evaluation systems are interconnected with standardized testing.

Hallinger, Heck, and Murphy (2014) used a meta-analysis to create a theory of action fundamental to most current evaluation systems. The authors state that most evaluation systems combine elements of both evaluation and supervision. Evaluation is typically used to make employment decisions or sometimes award merit pay while supervision is most closely associated with providing coaching and feedback. Although the technical implementation of a policy is challenging, the social dimension of a new policy is even more difficult for those involved to implement (Fullan, 2001). Need, clarity, complexity, and practicality are four dimensions that are connected to workers' accepting or rejecting a new policy. Fullan expressed that educators desire to know the rationale for new policies as well require guidance on how to implement new policies within the constructs of their work environment.

A superior teacher evaluation system has minimal effect if the teachers do not accept the intended outcomes of the process (Davis, Ellett, & Annunziata, 2002). Schmidt and Datnow (2005) state that educational reforms rarely address the emotions of educators and that their professional lives can be enhanced or negatively impacted through new educational policy. The authors explain that teachers typically process reforms through their prior experiences as well as what is logical to them based on their experiences. Therefore, leaders must persuade those who are expected to implement new policies to abandon their past and accept the new which often causes personal apprehension. From a teachers' perspective, Nias (1996) found evaluation to be deeply personal with teachers often defining their self-worth based upon the outcome of their evaluations. Thus, the process is one that results in teachers feeling insecure over the possibility of their being deemed ineffective in the performance of their teaching responsibilities.

Successful policy implementation at the campus level, including the adopted method of teacher evaluation, is based upon leadership behaviors and actions demonstrated by the campus principal (Beerens, 2000). Davis et al. (2002) describe obstacles the principal must navigate as they balance the professional development needs of individual teachers with the organizational needs of holding teachers accountable for creating effective learning environments for all students. Derrington and Campbell (2018) report that the potential consequences of evaluation can also be problematic for principals such as loss of performance pay, contract renewal, or the impact on the working relationship between the campus administration and teachers.

Kimball and Milanowski (2009) found substantial variation in the validity of teacher evaluations performed by twenty-three school leaders. The variations were found to be based upon motivation, skill, and context of the school leaders who were conducting the evaluations. They found that campus administrators had multiple interactions with teachers through such activities as establishing goals, observing instruction, discussing observations, and providing written feedback and that any one of these interactions could impact the validity of the final evaluation. A recommendation for further research into the views and intentions of campus administrators related to teacher evaluation was suggested by the authors.

### **Problem**

Principals and assistant principals play an important role in measuring teaching competency and guiding teachers to use the evaluation process as a means to guide their development and ultimately impacting student learning. Teachers roles during this process is to think about his or her pedagogy as well as to seek individualized professional growth and development. If school administrators do not create an environment in which teachers see that the primary reason for evaluation is to develop their teaching practices, then the intended purpose of the new teacher evaluation system in Texas will not be reached. Derrington and Campbell (2018) state that the complexities associated with campus administrators implementing evaluation systems necessitates a need for further study of their perceptions and experiences.

Legislators and bureaucrats often do not know how policies are perceived and evaluated by those who are expected to implement them. Schmidt and Datnow (2005) indicate that the emotions and perceptions of teachers is an important area of study to understand why some implemented policies meet their desired outcome while many fail. Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) explain how teachers' schema guides their interpretation of new policy often resulting in confusion or misinterpretation of new policies. They also contend that values and emotions impact their perceptions of new policies and lead them toward accepting policies that are aligned with their beliefs and often rejecting policies that lack alignment with the same. Jacob and Lefgren (2008) indicate that campus administrators' evaluations of teachers are often subjective and can be impacted by such things as age relationship between the administrator and teacher, likability, and gender of both parties. They also state the evaluations vary based on the sophistication of the administrator in collecting information during the observation, their first impression of the teacher, and how much they perceive that the teacher will benefit from the results of the evaluation.

### **Purpose**

This study was designed to examine the perceptions of administrators and teachers from one Texas suburban school district who were in the second year of full implementation of T-TESS. Administrators and teachers were asked to respond to survey questions related to their perceptions of the system as related through a policy implementation level (Fullan, 2001) and personal beliefs (Schmidt and Datnow, 2005). Specifically, the research addressed the following questions:

1. How do campus administrators and teachers in the suburban Texas district perceive teacher evaluation as an accurate means of teaching performance?
2. How do campus administrators and teachers in the suburban Texas district perceive teacher evaluation in improving classroom instruction?
3. How do administrators and teachers in the suburban Texas district perceive improving instruction as the primary purpose of teacher evaluation?

### **Significance**

Looney (2011) states the importance of teacher quality on student learning warrants more research on the implementation of teacher evaluation systems. Policymakers view change in teacher evaluation as a means to improve the performance of public schools. Schmidt and Datnow (2005) suggest that teachers typically support reforms that are aligned with their beliefs and resist reforms that threaten their vested interests or inherent beliefs. Derrington and Campbell (2018) describe how principals' perceptions can impede how educational policy, such as teacher evaluation, is implemented. Understanding campus administrators and teachers' perceptions related to the evaluation process will inform and assist district leadership in designing future training to better prepare campus administrators and teachers in meeting the intended outcomes of the new state-adopted teacher evaluation system.

### **Methods, Data Sources, and Analysis**

This exploratory study was designed to investigate the perceptions of campus administrators and teachers who work in a suburban Texas school district, with particular focus on the formal evaluation and appraisal process they experience as educators. Questions were designed to assess participants' perceptions of the evaluation policy (Fullan, 2001) and how teacher evaluation can improve teacher quality (Looney, 2011).

The data collection consisted of a survey delivered to all teachers (N=585) and all campus administrators (N=65) at the beginning of their first semester of the 2017-18 school year at the host suburban Texas school district. The survey gathered certain demographic data such as gender, ethnicity, and years of experience, followed by thirteen questions related to the evaluation process, and concluded with an open-ended response section where teachers and administrators could share general perceptions on the teacher evaluation process.

### **Instrumentation**

The survey utilized for this study consisted of fourteen questions in which both teachers and administrators were asked to respond on a five-point Likert scale and was piloted with a convenience sample of prospective school administrators enrolled in a principal preparation program. Feedback from the pilot group was used to make slight narrative revision to the survey questions prior to administration to the teachers and administrators in the suburban Texas district. The electronic survey was administered through email communication from the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction to the candidates on September 18, 2017. Another request was sent by the Assistant Superintendent to campus administrators and teachers on September 28, 2017. Of the 65 surveys distributed to campus administrators, 28 were

completed, for a response rate of 43.08%. Of the 585 surveys distributed to teachers, 340 were completed, for a response rate of 58.12%. Three of the fourteen survey questions that were asked to both campus administrators and teachers were used for this study. Those questions were as follows:

- 1) Teacher evaluation is an accurate assessment of teaching performance.
- 2) Improving instruction is the primary purpose of teacher evaluation.
- 3) The teacher evaluation system used in my district is improving classroom instruction.

## Data Analysis

As this is an exploratory study, simple descriptive statistics were sufficient to document the administrators' and teachers' initial perceptions of the aspects queried by the survey questions. Calculating the means and standard deviations of responses for each question provided a framework to understanding the perceptions of both groups. Emergent themes were identified though further exploration of the available data.

## Findings

The data from the survey was analyzed to determine if differences existed in the perceptions of teachers and administrators on the three questions. The means and standard deviations for the two groups were calculated for both groups on each of the three questions.

**Survey Question #1** The first survey question asked administrators and teachers, 'Teacher evaluation is an accurate assessment of teaching performance.' The mean response from administrators was 3.86 with a standard deviation of .71. The mean response from teachers was 3.24 with a standard deviation of .98. (See Table 1).

Table 1. Teacher Evaluation is an Accurate Assessment of Teaching Performance

	Mean	SD
Campus Administrators	3.86	.71
Teachers	3.24	.98

The response to this question results in a difference in the mean of .62 between the two groups as well as a larger standard deviation within the teacher responses. Such a response reflects a less favorable perception of teacher evaluation being an accurate measurement of teaching performance held by teachers as well as a larger variation of responses from within the group. These results are highlight by 20.6% of the teachers responding 'Strongly Disagree' or 'Disagree' to this question while only 3.6% of administrators responding in this manner.

**Survey Question #2.** The second survey question asked administrators and teachers, 'Improving instruction is the primary purpose of teacher evaluation.' The mean response from administrators was 4.29 with a standard deviation of .76. The mean response from teachers was 3.88 with a standard deviation of .97. (See Table 2).

Table 2. Improving Instruction is the Primary Purpose of Teacher Evaluation

	Mean	SD
Campus Administrators	4.29	.76
Teachers	3.88	.97

The response to this question results in a difference in the mean of .41 between the two groups as well as a larger standard deviation within the teacher responses. Such a response reflects a less favorable perception of improving instruction as being the primary purpose of teacher evaluation held by teachers as well as a larger variation of responses from within the group. These results are highlight by 8.8% of the teachers responding ‘Strongly Disagree’ or ‘Disagree’ to this question while only 3.6% of administrators responding in this manner.

**Survey Question #3.** The third survey question asked administrators and teachers, ‘The teacher evaluation system in my district is improving classroom instruction.’ The mean response from administrators was 4.07 with a standard deviation of .60. The mean response from teachers was 3.51 with a standard deviation of 1.01. (See Table 3).

Table 3. The Teacher Evaluation System is Improving Classroom Instruction

	Mean	SD
Campus Administrators	4.07	.60
Teachers	3.51	1.01

The response to this question results in a difference in the mean of .56 between the two groups as well as a larger standard deviation within the teacher responses. Such a response reflects a less favorable perception of the teacher evaluation system of improving classroom instruction held by teachers as well as a larger variation of responses from within the group. These results are highlight by 13.8% of the teachers responding ‘Strongly Disagree’ or ‘Disagree’ to this question while only 3.6% of administrators responding in this manner.

### Conclusions

The evaluation of teachers is a major component of the instructional leadership responsibilities of campus administrators in Texas. It is important that both administrators and teachers view the process as one that is focused on improving teaching practice which will ultimately result in improved student performance. From the results of this survey, it is apparent that administrators share a more favorable view of the teacher evaluation process as being an accurate measure of teaching performance, as being primarily focused on improving instruction, and improving classroom instruction. Furthermore, the calculation of the standard deviation on each of these questions indicates that there is a larger variation in the views of teachers than administrators on each of these questions. In the open-ended response section, one teacher commented “The evaluation in the past has been used in such a negative way, to help fire teachers, that many teachers still see it in a negative manner. In order for evaluations to be effective, I believe that the evaluation process must be used in a constructive way. The evaluation must be able to help grow not punish the teacher, and it must also take into consideration all the things teachers do for students.” Such a statement is aligned that teacher evaluation is typically viewed as a means to make employment decisions (Hallinger et al., 2014).

This view is contrasted by one administrator who commented “This instrument is a great coaching model to assist teachers with instruction and the delivery of the instructions. When a teacher is not performing at the proficient level, it is difficult to use this as an instrument for teacher in need of assistance.”

The data also represents a favorable view by both groups of the process being focused on improving instruction. The data is aligned with research which indicates that a quality evaluation system can improve teaching practice (Looney, 2011). This data is a positive indicator that the evaluation system is meeting the intended outcomes of the new policy as intended by the Texas Education Agency in the suburban district. This point is supported by one campus administrator’s comment “My teachers' attitude will be more positive as they begin to see that it is designed to improve instruction and is that it is not "once and done". Instead, there actually is an opportunity to grow through walkthroughs and feedback. That falls on quality communication and follow through from my end.”. This point is further supported by a teacher who commented “If done properly, teacher evaluation is good, and I see the benefits”.

### **Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to collect perceptions of the new state-approved evaluation system at the beginning of its second year of full implementation. Derrington and Campbell (2018) advocated for further research into the manner in which teacher evaluation is implemented at the campus level due to the expectations such as market-based principles being applied to public schools. The authors stated that in the end the effectiveness of the implementation of teacher evaluation must be reviewed within the context of the unique inter-workings that exist within individual school settings. An initial reflection on these responses yields three recommended paths for further explanation by the suburban Texas district to uncover the basis for the differences in perceptions of the evaluation system. Do teachers espouse lower perceptions on these three questions because 1) they perceive a disconnect between administrative views of effective practice; 2) there is a lack of trust between the two groups; and/or 3) teachers do not fully understand the intent of the T-TESS evaluation system? It is recommended that these questions be explored through an ad hoc committee consisting of campus administrators and teachers representing all campuses in the suburban Texas district.

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# ***Organizational Citizenship and Teacher Evaluation: Using the T-TESS to Promote OCB and Improve Student Outcomes***

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Research indicates that people demonstrate organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) by performing acts that benefit the organization without expecting to be acknowledged or rewarded for their actions. Essentially, organizational citizenship behavior refers to going beyond the requirements of one's job with the understanding that making such efforts benefits the greater good (i.e., the company or school). Collectively, these discretionary behaviors may yield enormous improvements to organizational processes and efficacy. The foundational work of Bateman and Organ (1983) referred to these desirable discretionary contributions as positive citizenship behaviors. Similarly, research examining the role of OCB in schools also demonstrates positive outcomes, including the creation of safe and effective learning environments in the classroom, (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001), commensurately higher levels of student achievement (Jurewicz, 2004), and an added emphasis on student attainment (academic press) that produces an overall positive campus climate (Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998; Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002).

Research linking academic press and high levels of OCB in schools demonstrates that OCB contributes to educational climates that promote heightened expectations for student achievement, the setting of aggressive and attainable stakeholder goals as a focal point, and the shaping of professional demeanor of the faculty toward selflessness (DiPaola, Tarter, & Hoy, 2005). To that end, Borman and Motowilo (1993) found that the extra duties performed by teachers were reflective of their high levels of OCB, and helped shape organizational and social climates in schools, which in turn supported high achievement and increased expectations for student success. Essentially, the presence of higher levels of teacher and administrator OCB directs educator expertise toward a focus on the best interests of all school stakeholders (DiPaola, Tarter, & Hoy, 2005).

Accordingly, we will argue in this paper that a path to increased OCB levels in schools may be forged via the use of the current professional teacher evaluation instrument utilized in the Texas public school system, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System, more commonly referred to as T-TESS (Texas Education Agency, 2016). We theorize that the use of the T-TESS to outline a process of formal instruction of the characteristics and implementation of OCB in schools for educators may result in a climate conducive to improved student outcomes. Specifically, Domains 1 (Planning), 3 (Learning Environment), and 4 (Professional Practices and Responsibilities) (Texas Education Agency, 2016) of the T-TESS may be leveraged as part of an overall plan incorporating OCB instruction to develop clear goals, outline the steps needed for

educators to improve pedagogical performance, and by extension, enhance school climate and organizational outcomes.

### **Review of the Literature Organizational Citizenship Behavior**

Why do some individuals voluntarily assist others in the workplace or promote organizational excellence through their behaviors with no guarantee of additional compensation, praise, or reward? Similarly, why do some employees work overtime without getting paid, volunteer for unusual or unpleasant assignments outside of their normal job responsibilities, or contribute an excessively disproportionate share of work to group projects? The answer to these questions is rooted in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), a construct whose foundations emanated from the business and psychological literature of the 1930s exploring the fair treatment of employees and the use of incentives to improve their performance (Barnard, 1938).

Presently, this complex phenomenon is materializing as an important facet of human behavior in both the business and educational fields. As a pro-social behavior that puts the needs of the organization and its stakeholders above one's own needs (Organ, 1988), people demonstrate OCB by performing acts that ultimately contribute to the collective well-being and success of the institution, and they do so as a matter of course without expecting to be acknowledged or rewarded for their actions.

Essentially, organizational citizenship behavior refers to going beyond the prescribed requirements of one's job with the understanding that such actions benefit the organization. Although singular incidents of OCB may not appear to markedly improve institutional health, when combined together, these discretionary behaviors often result in huge improvements to organizational processes and efficacy. Bateman and Organ (1983) initially referred to these desirable discretionary organizational contributions as positive citizenship behaviors. Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) then proposed that OCB is comprised of two overarching dimensions: altruism, defined as helping behaviors in the workplace, and general compliance, explained as following organizational policies regarding such things as attendance and processes, which will ultimately lead to greater collective productivity of the workforce. Subsequently, Organ (1988) defined organizational citizenship behavior as:

Individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in the aggregate prompts the effective function of the organization. By discretionary, we mean that the behavior is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, that is, the clearly specifiable terms of the person's employment contract with the organization; the behavior is rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable (p. 4).

Organ (1988) indicates that OCB contributes to collective organizational effectiveness by increasing employee flexibility in the decision-making process, thus allowing them to circumvent organizational policies and processes if they feel it is in the company's best interests. In turn, this empowerment increases job satisfaction for the worker and encourages further demonstrations of OCB by employees (Organ, 1988). Further, Organ (1988) deconstructed his original dimension of general compliance, resulting in the five-factor model of OCB described below.

1. Altruism refers to an individual's willingness to contribute to another's well-being.
2. Sportsmanship entails the intentional use of time directed toward achieving organizational goals.
3. Conscientiousness represents the mindful use of time to augment an individual's efficiency beyond normal expectations.
4. Courtesy involves aiding others via both early notification and appropriate information.
5. Civic virtue targets the promotion of organizational interests (Klotz, Bolino, Song, & Stornelli, 2018).

Organizational citizenship behaviors are usually categorized as pro-social employee contributions that enhance organizational effectiveness and extend beyond any existing formalized incentive systems (Bolino & Grant, 2016; Erturk, Yilmaz, & Ceylan, 2004; Organ & Konovsky, 1989). Professional traits such as timeliness, cleanliness, helpfulness, and conscientiousness are found to affect a person's capacity to complete assigned tasks while simultaneously contributing to his or her ability to excel in the work setting via improvement of the institutional environment (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Furthermore, Schnake (1991) depicts OCB as functional, extra-role, pro-social employee behaviors directed at individuals, or collectively toward groups, departments, or the organization as a whole. These subcategories of organizational citizenship behavior are related to organizational effectiveness (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Organ, 1997) and are acknowledged as important components of successful organizations (DiPaola & Hoy, 2005).

The foundational work of Bateman and Organ (1983) and Organ (1988) spurred subsequent OCB research focused on a variety of its facets. These included performance attributes such as extra-role behavior (Takeuchi, Bolino, & Lin, 2015; Van Dyne, Cummings, & Parks, 1995) and pro-social organizational behaviors (Brief & Motowildo, 1986; Grant & Berg, 2011; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Further, organizational spontaneity was investigated by George and Brief (1992), while contextual performance was studied by Borman and Motowildo (1993). Later, organizational citizenship researchers engaged with a variety of specialized domains such as human resource management (Bolino, Hsiung, Harvey, & LePine, 2015; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Hui, 1993) and education (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Somech & Ron, 2007). Assessed collectively, the various studies described in this section are to some degree derivatives of Organ's (1988, 1990, 1997) model of OCB, which hence is utilized as the theoretical basis for this paper.

### **OCB in the Educational Domain**

Although organizational citizenship behavior has received much attention in the private sector and management research, it is only within the last few decades that investigations of the construct in educational settings have surfaced (DiPaola & Hoy, 2005). However, as DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2001) point out, the investigation of OCB in schools remains scarce despite their belief that a greater understanding of the construct can make important contributions toward improving school and teacher efficacy (Mitchell, 2018). To that end, scholars have investigated the relationship of OCB to the effective functioning of schools (DiPaola & Hoy, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2003) and student achievement (Jurewicz, 2004). Additionally, research investigating the relationships of OCB to school climate (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991) has provided critical links toward increasing campus effectiveness. Further, the literature indicates that while the presence of isolated incidents of OCB in schools does not

necessarily equate to increased organizational effectiveness, when these behaviors are assessed collectively from various sub-groups (for example, faculty, staff, or administration), institutional effectiveness appreciates dramatically (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). The research clearly indicates that schools with high levels of organizational citizenship behavior show marked increases in organizational efficacy and efficiency.

One of the keys to improving student achievement lies in what Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) refer to as academic press. Defined as an emphasis by faculty and administration on higher expectations for student attainment, researchers have concluded that academic press sharpens focus on educational goals of both the students and the school, sets aggressive yet attainable levels for those goals, and encourages a professional stakeholder demeanor characterized by prioritizing service to others and the school above self-interest (i.e., demonstrating organizational citizenship) (DiPaola, Tarter, & Hoy, 2005).

Supporting this finding was the work of Borman and Motowildo (1993), who discovered that high levels of OCB (as reflected by the extra duties performed by teachers) directly framed organizational and social contexts in the schools and supported positive campus climates, which in turn may compel higher levels of academic press for students. Put simply, the presence of higher levels of teacher and administrator OCB is consistently found to further the best interests of all school stakeholders (DiPaola, Tarter, & Hoy, 2005). Accordingly, schools with high levels of stakeholder OCB tend to have greater morale, better attendance (of both employees and students), and higher rates of student achievement.

### **OCB and Teacher Competence**

Rooted in the management literature, the concept of competence was first described by Boyatzis (1982) as the underlying characteristics of a person that lead to increased effectiveness and superior job performance. Although a precise scholarly definition of competence remains elusive, the literature reveals a generalized consensus that the construct involves the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to perform a job at or above expectations established for the position (Sanghi, 2007). The definition and study of competencies is vital because employees who demonstrate high levels of competence in the carriage of their duties also tend to have higher levels of organizational commitment (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Mitchell, 2018).

According to Stoof, Martens, Van Merriënboer, and Bastiaens (2002), high levels of organizational commitment have been linked with both individual teacher empowerment and their commitment to the school. However, as Kasekende, Munene, Otengei, and Ntayi (2016) note, the scholarly examination of competence has traditionally been viewed through the objectivist lens. For example, an assumption is made that an organization seeks to identify a set number of competencies to meet organizational objectives, and then expects each organizational unit/employee to work toward acquiring that set. Contrarily, Stoof et al. (2002) argued that such a perspective hinders creativity in assessing employee performance and creating an effective employee professional development plan by using what is effectively a one-size fits all approach. Alternatively, Stoof et al. (2002) proposed the use of a constructivist view of competencies that allows users to define competence in the context of their individual units/work environments.

In turn, this claim of ownership of responsibility increases levels of organizational commitment, empowerment, and citizenship on the part of the employee.

## **The T-TESS**

The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) is a resilient evaluation system which allows for self-assessment and goal-setting processes that provide teachers with the opportunity to identify professional goals, determine an individual professional development plan to accomplish related goals, and monitor the progress of personal growth during the annual evaluation. Additionally, the T-TESS was designed to provide multiple opportunities for formative teacher evaluation and development via frequent and nurturing feedback loops during the course of the academic year. The state educational leaders describe the ultimate goal of the T-TESS process is to support individual teachers in the identified areas of growth and professional development associated with student needs, thus leading to improved student performance (Texas Education Agency, 2016).

The T-TESS is comprised of three segments: (1) a goal setting and professional development plan; (2) the evaluation cycle; and (3) student growth measures. It is the combination of these three areas which forms an integrated system to assist teachers in crafting their target areas for further refinement. A central component of this system is the use of self-reflection by the teacher to improve their delivery of instruction, and hence increase student academic performance.

As previously discussed, organizational citizenship behavior refers to going beyond the prescribed requirements of one's job with the knowledge that undertaking such actions benefits the organization. It is clear that as teachers refine their delivery of instruction, so too do they enhance their personal characteristics of organizational citizenship behavior by consistently holding themselves to a high standard for individual development and performance (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

Within the four domains lie sixteen dimensions (see table 1) which include specific descriptors of practices, and five performance levels (Texas Education Agency, 2016). Throughout the evaluation process, teachers participate in coaching meetings with their supervisor to assess progress on goals, discuss best practices, and analyze data.

Table 1. T-TESS Domains and Their Respective Dimensions

<p><b>Domain 1 - Planning</b></p> <p>1.1 Standards and Alignment  1.2 Data and Assessment  1.3 Knowledge of Students  1.4 Activities</p>	<p><b>Domain 2 - Instruction</b></p> <p>2.1 Achieving Expectations  2.1 Content Knowledge and Expertise  2.3 Communication  2.4 Differentiation  2.5 Monitor and Adjust</p>
<p><b>Domain 3 - Learning Environment</b></p> <p>3.1 Classroom Environment, Routines and Procedures  3.2 Managing Student Behavior  3.3 Classroom Culture</p>	<p><b>Domain 4 - Professional Practices and Responsibilities</b></p> <p>4.1 Professional Demeanor and Ethics  4.2 Goal Setting  4.3 Professional Development  4.4 School Community Involvement</p>

### Aligning the Frameworks of OCB and the T-TESS

When considering the primary function of the T-TESS as both a planning and professional development tool for teacher growth, a review of the four T-TESS domains (see figure 1) closely ties the characteristics of each of those domains with the features of OCB. For example, Domain 1.3 (Planning-Knowledge of Students) speaks to the value of the OCB component conscientiousness; when educators demonstrate knowledge of their students and utilize proven pedagogical techniques for differentiated instruction (Domain 2.4), high levels of learning, social emotional development, and achievement for all students is realized.

The components within Domain 2 specific to instruction (2.1-Achieving Expectations), and those in Domain 3 related to the learning environment (3.3-Classroom Culture) align with what is described by Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) as academic press, or the high expectations for student achievement. By setting high expectations for student success, the components in Domain 3 also address school climate, which numerous studies indicated significantly impacts and increases levels of OCB among the faculty, and by extension, student achievement (see: DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013).

Finally, when assessing Domain 4, Professional Practices and Responsibilities, there appears to be alignment with Organ's (1988) seminal definition of the construct: taking on extra-role behaviors with no expectation of acknowledgement or reward in order to benefit the organization. Teachers who exhibit a healthy professional demeanor with strong ethical values will ultimately contribute to the collective benefit of the organization, as their quest to meet personal aspirations simultaneously enhances individual levels of OCB, and leads to goal setting and attainment for the overall benefit of the school (Texas Education Agency, 2016). Table 1 demonstrates the ways in which the various components of OCB align with the Dimensions of the T-TESS.

As a professional development tool, the T-TESS holds teachers accountable for improved student outcomes. Accordingly, incorporating instruction and modeling of OCB as an objective for faculty members may increase the desire of stakeholders to positively contribute to the overall good of the organization. Thus, we posit that increased organizational citizenship behavior of the faculty may enhance school climate, and in combination with other salient school properties that also affect the school social milieu, increase student achievement. As such, the central research question driving our theory is: How can OCB be implemented and modeled in Texas public schools to improve student achievement?

Table 2. Aligning the Frameworks of OCB and T-TESS

<b>OCB Category</b>	<b>OCB Descriptor</b>	<b>T-TESS Dimension</b>	<b>T-TESS Indicator</b>
Altruism	These are behaviors directed toward service to others.	2.1: Achieving expectations	The teacher supports all learners in their pursuit of high levels of academic and social-emotional success
Conscientiousness	These are behaviors directed toward ensuring efficiency of the individual and the group.	1.3: Knowledge of students	Through knowledge of students and proven practices, the teacher ensures high levels of learning, social emotional development, and achievement for all students
Sportsmanship	These are behaviors directed at decreasing negative actions and beliefs while increasing productivity.	3.2: Managing student behavior	The teacher establishes, communicates, and maintains clear expectations for student behavior.
Courtesy	These are behaviors which facilitate constructive use of time in a proactive manner.	3.1: Classroom environment, routines, and procedures	The teacher organizes a safe, accessible, and efficient classroom
Civic Virtue	These are behaviors which place the interests of the organization before the interests of the individual	3.3: Classroom Culture	The teacher leads a mutually respectful and collaborative, actively engaged learners.

## **Leveraging the T-TESS in a Strategic Plan to Increase OCB Levels in Schools**

As defined by Carasco, Munene, Kasente, and Odada (1996), planning is a process of considering and organizing the activities required to reach a desired objective, incorporating both the creation and maintenance of the plan. Examinations of planning in the literature expose it as a dimension of operant competencies in schools (Kagaari & Munene, 2007). Further, Kasekende et al. (2016) argued that when considered as a teacher operant competency, planning enables the teacher to acquire the skills that further his or her individual empowerment.

Based on the role of education in our society, OCB in schools can clearly be documented in the area of altruism. DiPaola and Neves (2009) stated that “teachers routinely perform behaviors directed toward helping individuals, both students and colleagues, as part of their professional identity” (p. 493). Since supporting and encouraging students are the goals of every educational environment, behaviors that help students also serve to assist the school in their mission. DiPaola and Hoy (2005) stated “the distinction between helping individuals and furthering the organizational mission is blurred because, in schools, the mission is synonymous with helping people” (p. 37).

Further, teachers often describe a “sense of calling” that brought them to the field of education. This sense of “others before self” can be seen in the OCB category of Civic Virtue, which places the interests of the organization before the interests of the individual. Oplatka (2006) stated “teachers emphasized the emotional aspects of their workplace, using phrases such as: “our staff room is like family”, and “family atmosphere and warmth” (p. 409). Therefore, a school leader who values and demonstrates OCB may serve to promote a culture that encourages others to demonstrate characteristics of OCB as well (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

Principals may use the T-TESS Dimensions and Descriptors to purposefully foster teacher OCB. In order to identify and advance OCB through the use of the T-TESS, a principal must work with each teacher to make them feel like they are a valued member of the team rather than creating a feeling that they are simply being subjected to an annual appraisal in order to meet a state requirement. This can be part of the conversation during the annual goal setting meeting between the teacher and the appraiser, or part of the pre-observation conference. A working knowledge of T-TESS along with a commitment to OCB will result in more effective instruction and improved student outcomes.

As noted earlier, it is our contention that the T-TESS may be used to increase levels of teacher OCB in schools, and by extension, improve student outcomes. We argue that as a planning and professional development tool, a number of domains outlined in the T-TESS evaluation and planning instrument align with the scholarly arguments surrounding planning, empowerment, and the use of OCB as a tool for professional teacher development. Thus, they can act as a catalyst for increased student achievement in schools. In particular, we highlight Domain 1 (Planning), Domain 3 (Learning Environment, and specifically, Domain 3.3- Classroom Culture), and Domain 4 (Professional Practice and Responsibilities) (Texas Education Agency, 2016.) as opportunities to incorporate OCB into the professional development (planning and assessment) and

implementation (pedagogical best practices) responsibilities that comprise, define, and demonstrate the competent job performance of educators.

The T-TESS rubric is designed as a coaching and growth model to improve instruction, and hence result in positive learning outcomes for all students. The evaluation scale describes teacher characteristics in the following categories: improvement needed, developing, proficient, accomplished, and distinguished (Texas Education Agency, 2016). It is important to note that the descriptor “proficient” generally describes satisfactory teacher performance characteristics in all four domains.

Effective instructional planning (Domain 1) will result in improved student outcomes, and serves as the foundation for all other dimensions (Texas Education Agency, 2016). It is vital that teachers clearly identify expectations for student outcomes from each lesson. Distinguished instructional planning includes rigorous and measurable goals aligned to state content standards and objectives appropriately sequenced to provide relevant experiences and extensions. T-TESS appraisals of distinguished lesson planning emphasize student-centered actions designed to deepen understanding of the broader unit plan and course objectives. Planning within an OCB rich environment will result in differentiated activities and appropriate lessons for a diverse learning population.

OCB characteristics tie directly to all of the teacher behaviors in Domain 3: The Learning Environment. Teachers demonstrate a commitment to maintaining a mutually respectful and collaborative classroom environment to support the active engagement of all students. Similar to the dimensions of Civic Duty, Courtesy, and Altruism in OCB, a distinguished classroom in Domain 3 would emphasize student collaboration and engagement in relevant, meaningful learning activities based on their interests and abilities. Teachers in this distinguished category actively advocate for the learning needs of all students, and model professional standards to all members of the learning community.

Domain 4 (Professional Practices and Responsibilities) may be seen as a direct link to the overarching definition of organizational citizenship behavior. The distinguished professional educator will model similar traits of OCB in the course of their employment with the school. For example, they will demonstrate the OCB component of general compliance by modeling the code of ethics and standard practices developed by the State of Texas, showing professional reliability by arriving for work in a timely fashion each day, and consistently advocating for the needs of their students both on and off their campus. Further, they will set goals that benefit school stakeholders, modify practices to ensure student success, and interact with peers and administrators in a collegial and collaborative manner to advance learning and professional development of the faculty (Glanz, 2000).

### **Practical Application**

Improved student outcomes are attainable in creating a strong presence of OCB through implementation of the T-TESS. Table 3 contains some practical ideas that a school leader may implement to address the direct instruction of the dimensions of OCB and T-TESS to improve

student outcomes. These ideas may serve as a springboard for conversations in faculty meetings, team meetings, or teacher in-service trainings which focus on improving student outcomes.

Table 3. Ideas for School Leaders to Implement OCB in the T-TESS Development Plan

Objective	Leadership Action Plan
Teachers will know and understand the 5 dimensions of OCB (Altruism, Conscientiousness, Courtesy, Sportsmanship, and Civic Virtue).	Teacher In-service/ Professional Development: <a href="http://www.slideshare.net/OCB">www.slideshare.net/OCB</a> Prepared presentations available as open access on SlideShare <a href="https://youtu.be/8pBbFt9hec0">https://youtu.be/8pBbFt9hec0</a>
Teachers will know and understand the 4 domains of T- TESS (Planning, Instruction, Learning Environment, and Professional Practices & Responsibilities).	Teacher In-service/ Professional Development: <a href="http://www.teachfortexas.org">www.teachfortexas.org</a> Prepared videos and presentations available.
Teachers will identify examples of OCB in their personal and professional lives.	Faculty Meeting: Groups will be assigned a dimension of OCB and they have to create a poster of relevant quotes from famous people demonstrating that dimension. Groups will then add examples of OCB from their personal and professional lives to this poster. These posters could be displayed in a shared space on campus.

### Conclusion

The recent implementation of the T-TESS as the standard professional development tool for educators in the Texas public school system provides an opportunity to effect a dramatic change in the cultural paradigm surrounding teacher evaluation. Rather than providing a simple template which may end up as no more than a checklist of accomplishments or areas in need of improvement, the T-TESS may be used as a robust and strategic planning tool to assist administrators in guiding their faculty members toward substantial professional, pedagogical, and personal growth. Further, the instrument allows for the creation of a plan that is customizable to the unique needs of each teacher while remaining true to the core domains and their respective components upon which teacher evaluations are predicated.

The authors of this paper have posited that as a growth and development tool with such flexibility, the T-TESS may be used to create a custom plan for each teacher that draws upon constructs in the educational and business literature that have demonstrated significant contributions toward improving school climate and culture, and by extension have to led to increases in student achievement in public schools. Specifically, we argued that when incorporated into the T-TESS, the construct of Organizational Citizenship may be used as a lever to individually and collectively improve outcomes for teachers and students.

Via an examination of extant literature on OCB, educator professional development, and student success, along with our professional experiences as educational administrators, we have theorized that the T-TESS may indeed contribute to the collective growth and advancement of all school stakeholders. In an era of increased public scrutiny and demands for accountability in America's public-school system, our work adds to the existing literature, and examines the possible impact of the influence Organizational Citizenship may have on improving student success. In general, the current research represents an initial attempt toward both understanding and addressing important school concerns surrounding teacher professional development and its possible relationships with student achievement.

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# ***Community Context: Influence and Implications for School Leadership Preparation***

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## **Introduction**

Research on school leadership shows that principals can significantly impact student achievement by influencing classroom instruction, organizational conditions, community support and setting the teaching and learning conditions in schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2004). Moreover, strong principals provide a multiplier effect that enables improvement initiatives to succeed (Manna, 2015). Yet each year, as many as 22% of current principals retire or leave their schools or the profession (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) requiring districts to either promote or hire new principals to fill vacancies (School Leaders Network, 2014). One in five principals working in schools in the 2011-12 school year left their school by the 2012-13 school year (Goldring and Taie 2014). Additional research shows that one out of every two principals is not retained beyond their third year of leading a school. School leaders who are retiring, transferring schools, or pursuing new opportunities within the education sector are not being replaced by enough qualified candidates (Policy & Advocacy Center-NASSP, 2017, p. 1). As a result, many school districts across the country report principal vacancies and a serious lack of qualified applicants to replace them. In addition, the demand for employment of principals is estimated to will grow 6 percent nationwide by the year 2022 due to population increases (Policy & Advocacy Center-NASSP, 2017, p.2). This surge in demand will increase the financial burden on districts since the cost to recruit, hire, prepare, mentor, and continue training principals can cost school districts between \$36,850 and \$303,000, with typical urban school districts spending \$75,000 per principal (Policy & Advocacy Center-NASSP, 2017, p. 2).

Where will the next iteration of school leaders come from? This is a concern in light of the demographic trends in the teaching profession in New York State, in particular, where more than 50,000 active state Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) members are older than 55, according to the New York State Teachers Retirement System (NYSTRS) annual report (2016, p. 116). Within the next five years, TRS projects more than one-third of the nearly 270,000 active members could be eligible to retire as the average age of teachers in the state is 48 (NYSUT Research and Educational Services, 2017). Eleven percent of New York teachers leave their school or profession annually (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Those numbers go up for early career teachers and those working in high-poverty areas. About 55 percent cited professional frustrations, including standardized testing, administrators or too little autonomy (Carver-Thomas & Darling Hammond, 2017). Compounding the issue, since 2009–10, enrollment in teacher education programs in New York has decreased by roughly 49 percent, from more than 79,000 students to about 40,000 students in 2014–15 and an estimated 10 percent of New York teacher education graduates are leaving the state for employment elsewhere making recruitment of teachers, and therefore future school administrators, a looming crisis

(Gais, Backstrom, Malatras, & Park, 2018). Unfortunately, very little descriptive data is available regarding similar enrollment in leadership preparation programs in New York state making predictions about adequate numbers or qualified candidates nearly impossible. This is particularly difficult for high needs districts in rural and urban settings.

Although recent efforts have started to focus on the quality of principal preparation (Mendels, 2016), little attention has been paid to the challenges and experiences of principals given their community context. This is particularly concerning for rural schools which comprise more than half of all US districts, contain a third of all schools and a quarter of all students. This is important as approximately the same number of students attend rural schools as in the nation's urban areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Lavalley (2018) examined the state of America's rural schools noting that rural schools face many of the same challenges that urban schools do, but the solutions for those problems are often different for rural districts than urban districts. Three areas cited as common concerns between rural and urban districts were issues of poverty, the achievement gap and teacher recruitment and retention (Lavalley, 2018). Yet, despite the similarity of these major concerns, little attention has been paid to the needs of leadership preparation common between rural and urban settings in order to better understand opportunities for cross-boundary collaborations to strengthen the leadership pipeline in *all* communities and for *all* children. The looming crisis in the demographics of school leadership is real, and it is most acute in those settings at the extreme – in very sparsely populated, rural settings, as well as in densely populated urban environments, both areas typically characterized by concentrations of poverty and race that are not found in the more heterogeneous populations of suburban America.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide a research synthesis of substantive findings drawn from studies of K-12 educational leadership between 2013-2018 specific to the context of rural or urban settings. The goal of the research synthesis was to identify and elaborate on key trends identified by scholars who studied educational leadership to note similarities and differences facing educational leaders in these respective settings to better inform leadership preparation programs. The synthesis drew upon the relevant articles published in ten journals specializing in educational leadership.

The authors' experiences as leaders in K-12 organizations and current work in leadership preparation programs positions us to support connections between the knowledge base of effective school leadership practices and the context in which leaders of K-12 schools work. The goal of this synthesis is to continue aspects of Hallinger's (2016) exploration of a school's context to illuminate how an understanding of the context related to community, whether rural or urban, can assist in preparing school leaders to implement effective practices within their community settings. Questions that informed our review of the scholarship included the following:

1. What are the similarities and differences experienced by principals in rural and urban settings?

2. What do principals identify as needs, in order to be effective in their school setting?
3. Are there contextual features across rural and urban settings that, if explicitly addressed, will support principal dispositions through leadership preparation?

### **Theoretical Framework**

As members of leadership preparation departments, we are preparing aspiring leaders for roles in school districts spanning the rural, suburban and urban continuum of settings. Our interactions with program participants lead us to reconsider the normative standpoint and the difficulties of a “one size fits all” approach from which leadership preparation may be viewed especially in light of national and state licensure requirements. The implementation of the reform agenda and the call for transformational leadership influences our beliefs and thinking about meeting the needs of students in leadership preparation programs. Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory provides a framework for our approach. This theory underpins our exploration of approaches to prepare students for all of the settings within which they hope to lead, and it supports our understanding of how the environmental context they currently work in influences their learning. As we explore how the rural and urban context impacts the characteristics and skill acquisition required of leaders and the subsequent professional support they may require, Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory (1994) takes a constructivist orientation that further deepens and extends our analysis. His major assumption is that “the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense [of] experience is, central to making meaning and hence learning” (Mezirow, 1994, p. 222). This theory assumes that through task-oriented problem solving and communication with others, learning will occur.

Throughout the learning process specific actions will result in changes to social practices, institutions or systems (Mezirow, 1994). This has direct influence on our analysis and the implications for designing aspects of leadership preparation.

### **Methodology**

The systematic approach used in this study is modeled after the study designed by Szeto, Lee and Hallinger (2015) whereby we used a three-phase process to first identify significant literature, used document analysis to extract substantive findings from each of the articles and then coded the findings in preparation for data analysis (Bowen, 2009). Synthesis of substantive findings was accomplished by cross-article comparative mapping as suggested by Voogt, Fisser, Roblin, Tondeur, and van Braak (2013) to note the frequency of focus on context (rural or urban) and identifying key themes in the literature noting similarities and differences based on the focus of the setting (rural or urban). Findings within the most robust themes were then synthesized and reported.

### **Data Sources**

The study first identifies a body of relevant literature comprised of empirical, non-empirical and review/synthesis types of studies in a total of published research articles from ten journals using the following keywords: leadership, rural education, rural schools, urban schools, urban, urban education, challenges, successes, urban and rural schools. Additionally, the ten

journals delimited for this study were for those focused on educational leadership and leadership preparation coupled with journals whose core focus is the rural or urban context. Our search was demarcated by works published from 2013-2018 to capture the previous five years of work in the field.

We located the websites for the ten journals identified to read titles and abstracts of articles published between 2013-2018. Frequency counts of those articles that met our key word criteria were tabulated and can be found in Table 2. To assist in our collection and analysis of the data, we developed a chart in google documents so that we could summarize our information and share findings. In addition to article identification, the table included information on the study, its findings, and its implications for leadership preparation. The authors met several times to identify themes and patterns and clarify results. A summary of this chart can be found in Table 1 in Appendix A.

## **Results**

The frequency counts displayed in Table 2 in Appendix B illustrate the ebb and flow in the research community of study and dialogue of educational leadership and community contexts. Journals devoted exclusively to either the rural or urban setting do not consistently publish scholarship on the role and influence of leadership related to community year-over-year. Further, five of the 72 articles counted included both contexts in their research design, findings, and discussion. This has implications for future exploration as well as for leadership preparation considerations that will be addressed further on in this writing.

The synthesis of identified research highlights the challenges facing K-12 educational leaders in both rural and urban settings in their quest for quality education in the twenty-first century. A variety of inter-related issues emerged. Analysis of the research from this period yielded the following robust themes: the challenges facing urban and rural educational leaders are similar, yet the root cause of those challenges may be different. The leadership practices and characteristics of successful principals is similar across rural and urban contexts; however, how a leader may use and adapt the practices and characteristics are based upon the leader's understanding of and responses to the community context in which the leader is working. In an environment of acceleration, the context of the school-community partnership is more important than ever to support both the economic as well as the social and cultural initiatives of a place. Retaining and recruiting personnel for both the urban and rural context are focus areas in the literature. And, finally, the need for ongoing support and professional development for all leaders was a prominent theme in the research studies reviewed. The professional development need areas were varied and connected to instructional leadership as well as management. Issues of cultural competence surfaced as an area of focus in the research in the quest for equity and social justice. Findings indicate attention to continuous improvement for leaders in all contexts is needed. We explore these interrelated issues in rural and urban contexts by first addressing the definitions at work in the research of rural and urban school leadership.

## **Definitions of Rural and Urban**

The United States Census Bureau (2017) defines rural as any population, territory, or housing that is not in an urban area. Urban areas are defined as having populations of 50,000 or more and urban clusters have populations of 2,500-50,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Definitions of urban and rural relate to population as well as geography and so the vision of farmland and unpaved roads are sometimes surfaced as rural images. Of special note when reviewing research on the rural context Greenough and Nelson (2015) offer additional differences in defining rural settings when the United States Department of Education is consulted. The National Center for Education Statistics classifies rural schools by their distance from a town or city. Rural subtypes are created from this measurement approach that include: Rural, Fringe; Rural, Distant; and Rural, Remote (Greenough & Nelson, 2015, p. 323). Thus, the variation among schools classified as rural increases. Schools categorized as rural can vary greatly from each other based upon their remoteness, their size of student enrollment, poverty and diversity of race/ethnicity (Greenough & Nelson, 2015). Depending upon the source for definitions attributed to the rural label the research reviewed varied as to what was considered a rural context.

## **Rural Context**

**The School-Community Relationships.** Community-school relationships have been important since the inception of schooling and the focus on engaging family and the community is a priority of the School Reform Agenda. The school as the focal point for educational, social and cultural activity as well as economic activity in many communities was a theme that emerged in this literature set. Schafft (2016) argues that the rural school functions as the center of the community more so than in urban places and as such should be intimately involved in how the school is preparing qualified students to fulfill various roles and needs in the community. It is proposed that this engagement is about community development through the support of the local economy (Schafft, 2016). However, Scott & Ostler (2016) reported in their study of rural schools implementing the transformational model of school reform that leaders found implementing the reform model most challenging in the areas of ensuring high quality staff and engaging family and the community.

Despite the challenges of engagement reported, Preston and Barnes (2017) discuss findings that reveal the need for school principals to be school leaders and active community citizens in order to ensure success through the support of school resources, community involvement in their schools and student achievement (Preston & Barnes, 2017). School-community relationships are also forged as school leaders explain and enact policy mandates which may not be aligned with the community and school district's circumstances (Butler, 2014; Freie & Eppley, 2014; Preston & Barnes, 2017). McHenry-Sorber (2014) demonstrates through a conflict situation how the complexity of school-community relationships in the rural setting can be fraught with factions forming along lines of class and values. The consolidation of power within social groups in rural communities may influence school decision-making.

These research studies illustrate the necessity as well as the complexity of the school-community relationship within the boundaries of rural communities. As Butler (2014) suggests,

rural school leaders are positioned to bridge the gap between education mandates and the community's needs. In fact, Surface and Theobald (2014) argue that a strong and positive relationship between a school and its rural community may be the significant key to the survival of both the school and its community.

**Recruitment and Retention of Personnel.** The most valuable resources in any school are its people—teachers *and* leaders. Attracting highly qualified candidates for teaching positions is a significant challenge for rural leaders (Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013). “This point is especially true in the subjects/areas of technology (Cullen, Brush, Frey, Hinshaw, & Warren, 2006), high school sciences, mathematics, and French immersion (Kitchenham & Chasteauneuf, 2010), special needs (Dykes, 2009; Pietsch & Williamson, 2009), and ESL (Abbott & Rossiter, 2011; Corez-Jiminez, 2012)” (Preston et al., 2013, p. 4). Rural areas are challenged to attract and retain strong talent due to the isolation of teachers who are often the only ones within their grade level or subject area, have multiple preparations sometimes across disciplines, and are separated by long distances from towns and schools that can provide a necessary professional network (Hargreaves, Parsley & Cox, 2015). When rural principals are compared to their urban counterparts the research suggests that rural principals often have a smaller staff to lead and with that smaller staff more importance and influence is placed upon the leader-teacher relationship in discussions of teacher retention (Preston et al., 2013). As Preston et al. (2013) conclude, retention of quality teachers may be inextricably bound to the quality of the school leader and his/her relationship with staff.

Research findings also illuminate the impact of the rural setting on school leaders who are also often more isolated and responsible for functions and roles that are broader than a single leadership position. Many rural leaders may also teach or are required to fill in more frequently as a substitute in various areas of district operations including buildings and grounds and transportation (Ashton & Duncan, 2013; Beesley & Clark, 2015; Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Recruiting and retaining quality school personnel and resources is not a new phenomenon. Because of the leader's central role in the school improvement process and the number of districts in the United States experiencing shortages of candidates the strategies to support recruitment and retention are surfacing as focus areas in all settings. Discussion of strategies within the rural setting are targeted to the specific factors that rural leaders face. Recruitment in rural areas is more challenging due to small candidate pools, limited salaries, and geographic isolation coupled with a lack of resources and access to leadership networks and mentors (Versland, 2013; Wood, Finch & Mirecki, 2013). Without the specialized roles at the district and building level, rural leaders need to hone different skill sets to meet the challenges and multiple responsibilities across the spectrum of tasks they engage in daily.

At the State policy level VanTuyle and Reeves (2014) have noted the disconnect between the criteria established for leadership preparation and the needs within rural communities. These divides mirror the recruitment and retention issues noted above. Once someone is in a leadership program, having access to internship opportunities and a connection to mentor leaders with successful experience working with specific student populations can be challenging (VanTuyle & Reeves, 2014). VanTuyle and Reeves (2014) note that “the culture of some rural communities ensures that locals are retained and promoted with little regard for their effectiveness as principals in deference to being stable members of the community” (p.115).

Solutions to these challenges has led to the development of “Grow Your Own” leadership programs where local school districts partner with local universities to develop leadership candidates from within the local schools (Versland, 2013; Wood, Finch & Mirecki, 2013). Wood et al. (2013) found that these have become a prominent method for recruitment and combined with a focus on positive school culture and climate and investment in professional development and mentoring, to retain leaders in the rural setting. These approaches begin to address some of the perceived factors related to personal, environmental or institutional factors identified by Hansen (2018) in her study of principals leaving rural schools. They also highlight the development of approaches to best meet the unique needs found in the rural context. Kamrath and Brunner (2014) surfaced insights about the perceptions of rural community members when exploring the high turnover rates of leadership in the superintendency. They uncovered that the community lacked understanding of the reasons for the turnover, were disconnected from their school district, and described leadership attributes that were contradictory (Kamrath & Brunner, 2014). These studies reveal that the complexity of place and lived experience in that place has significant implications for a leaders’ work in strengthening relationships with the school and community and that this has a direct impact on the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers and leaders.

**Professional Development for Leaders.** To ensure school improvement, school leaders must have support and opportunities for continuous growth and improvement as they encounter the problems and challenges associated with place. As Klar and Brewer (2013) found in their research of three middle school principals who successfully implemented the Comprehensive School Reform model in their schools. These three principals focused on similar areas of need and utilized a similar set of leadership practices; the principals adapted those practices to suit the community contexts in which they were leading. Unique forms of professional development may be needed to suit the rural circumstance of these leaders. The impact of providing professional development was noted in a study conducted by Miller, Goddard, Kim, Jacob, Goddard and Schroeder (2016) where principals of rural schools reported that participating in the professional development increased their knowledge in identified areas. The focus for professional development in rural areas is as varied in the literature as in the myriad rural settings that leaders work. Preston et al. (2013) noted particular topics for professional development from their review including: school community partnerships, self-awareness programs, mentoring, student English as a Second Language (ESL) needs, grant writing, funding issues, professional networking to include diverse viewpoints, and strategies for attracting and retaining high quality teachers.

Communities may influence the focus on topics related to social justice in some areas of the country more so than others. Albritton, Huffman, and McClellan (2017) demonstrated the need to explore social justice issues and research in their findings within the context of both internal and external (community) resistance as important to ensuring leaders are equipped to advocate for the social-emotional and behavioral needs of all students. Their study pointed to both the professional development focus on social justice issues within in-service programs as well as pre-service leadership preparation (Albritton et al., 2017). This theme was extended to rural school superintendents in an investigation of social justice leadership conducted by Maxwell, Locke, and Scheurich (2014) who noted a variety of strategies including seeking out mentors to support social justice-oriented leadership. The findings of Bishop and McClellan

(2016) suggest that leaders' awareness and resistance to personal bias is an important focus for development in order to create socially just school cultures. In instructional leadership, Stewart and Matthews (2015) noted that the professional development needs of small school principals differed from those of medium-sized schools due in part to the fact that nearly 30% of the small school principals also served as teachers therefore reducing the time they had to collaborate with and mentor teachers. The rural context influences the content of and the venues in which professional development occur for leaders. Supporting leaders as they move through various career stages is vital to their own growth as well as the vitality and stability of the schools and districts they lead.

## **Urban Context**

**The Role of School-Community Partnership.** Most recently research has documented the significant importance of the relationship between urban schools and their local communities (Epstein, 2001; Schutz, 2006; Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2014; Wilcox, Angelis, Baker, & Lawson, 2014). Indeed, the relationship between the school and community is a complex one especially within the large bureaucratic institutions that constitute urban schools within large cities. One of the challenges is that in an urban setting you may have one school that is comprised of many communities within a condensed setting. Such as a high school which may serve more than one neighborhood, housing pattern and transportation network. Thus, establishing a relationship between a school and community has multiple overlapping systems for the leader in an urban setting to navigate.

Green (2018) focused on how urban school principals connect school reform with community improvement. In this work he examines principal leadership where school reform was linked to improving community conditions. Drawing upon the conceptual framework of the principalship as a community-wide practice (Green & Gooden, 2014; Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa, 2012; Miller, Wills, & Scanlan, 2013; Scanlan & Johnson, 2015). Green (2018) illuminates the promise of previous research in this case study showing the success of the principal's use of intentional strategies for community partnership. Connecting the school's culture to community revitalization projects was a critical component to this work. Particularly noteworthy from the Green (2018) study is how leveraging the social capital of the position of principal was key to brokering relationships with community-based organizations in the neighborhood. As a broker, the principal established strategic partnerships with a variety of organizations that yielded significant school reform initiatives, as a result.

The expectation of the school leader to address a broad range of issues outside of the educational setting is increasing. Terosky (2014) in her multi case study of eighteen NYC principals, found that principals identified executing community -based services without sufficient support or preparation as a significant hardship as services once provided by other institutions such as hospitals, public agencies, community organizations, and organized religions are increasingly becoming the responsibility of schools. Although research has shown a positive impact of community-school engagement, balancing the demands between instructional leadership and community-based management is an area of particular pressure for principals in urban settings.

**Recruitment and Retention of Personnel.** Staffing is an enormous challenge facing urban schools and attracting and retaining teachers is a complex issue. Dolph (2017) found that low salaries, working conditions and finding qualified candidates are of particular concern facing urban schools. The unique context created by the conditions of poverty contribute to this challenge. Dolph (2017) found that principals in low-socioeconomic communities in California have been asked to improve their schools despite being six times more likely to have underqualified teachers than their affluent counterparts. Shortage areas in mathematics, science and special education are well documented concerns with reports that students are twice as likely to not have certified teachers in mathematics in urban schools as non-urban schools. Other findings in the Dolph (2017) study show that urban schools have a greater percentage of students in English Language Learner programs than non-urban (14% compared to 8.5% in non-urban schools) making recruitment of teachers of English as a second Language an increasing priority (p. 366). Thus, attending to the recruitment and retention of personnel is a significant area of focus for school leaders in urban settings.

In addition to the issues related to teacher recruitment, Beesley and Clark (2015) note the considerable challenge in urban settings to also recruit and retain principals. “The dearth of U.S. principals is particularly pressing in districts perceived to have challenging working conditions, such as large populations of impoverished or minority students, low per-pupil expenditures, and below-average academic achievement” (Beesley & Clark, 2015, p. 1). Contributing factors to retention found in their study include differences in the perception of influence over curriculum and budget (Beesley & Clark, 2015). Rural principals indicated that they had greater influence over determining curriculum in their schools than did nonrural principals. However, nonrural principals indicated that they had a greater influence than nonrural ones over determining how the school budget would be spent, a finding we did not see in previous literature. Rural and nonrural principals did not differ significantly in their perceptions of overall autonomy (Beesley & Clark, 2015).

**Professional Development for Leaders.** Leadership preparation for the urban setting needs to incorporate authentic experiences in order for aspiring leaders to hone the skills required for change and cultural leadership as it relates to the implementation of reforms, organizational culture and instructional improvement (Dolph, 2017). It is not enough to know about leadership practices, there must be opportunity to apply this in community specific context (Klar & Brewer, 2013).

Based on findings from a review of literature on leadership preparation for social justice, Miller and Martin (2015) concluded that the lack of social justice preparation; either in their preparatory programs or in professional development opportunities was significantly lacking in urban principal preparation. “There is a significant disconnect between a leader’s perceived responsibility to close the achievement gap through high expectations and data-driven instruction; and their lack of awareness and inability to identify the biases, assumptions, and inequities that may be perpetuating the very gap they are attempting to close” (Miller & Martin, 2015, p. 21). Yet because the existing review of literature overwhelmingly point to the significant impact of context, it is clear that additional professional development is necessary for practicing leaders in order to effectively navigate instructional demands, work environment

challenges such as under resourced schools and under certified staff, and to leverage community resources as agents of change.

The ability to assess and restructure school resources to support inclusive programming, maximize resources and staff expertise, or develop programs that foster collaboration and culturally relevant pedagogies is essential for school leaders in any setting. There is a clear need for professional development to enhance the school leader's ability to competently assess issues of inequity in order to "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223).

### **Implications for Leadership Preparation**

While each educational leadership preparation program is unique, many contain similar elements. Most are university-based and organized around courses that prepare students for administrative licensure within a degree program. In some cases, students who already have master's degrees are able to gain licensure by taking a certain set of courses. Most programs include components of practice, such as internships or field-based learning experiences, and are commonly divided into two distinct components: instructional leadership coursework and internship (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Within the coursework, many programs emphasize case studies, problem-based learning (PBL), and hands-on learning experiences (McCarthy, 1999; Milstein & Krueger, 1997).

It is therefore critical to consider cross-boundary training for leadership candidates in program design, course content and field experiences. Possible considerations may be to course content, authentic projects, and skill building experiences to address not only the *what* of leadership change or school-community partnerships but also to explore more deeply *how* leadership change is enacted or how school-community partnerships are fostered and sustained (Green, 2018; Klar & Brewer, 2013). Providing an opportunity to more deeply understand the relationship a school has with its community in order to spur community improvement and better reflect the local context in the programming opportunities offered to students in that unique setting is also a consideration (Green, 2018; Schafft, 2016). As a result of this review and synthesis we have questions about preparing our aspiring leaders not only for the challenges when the setting is new but also for further research focused on those who remain in their roles long-term. What are the implications for continuing their professional growth and maintaining the expanded worldview necessary for programming and decision-making? Lastly, deepening self-reflection and analysis in the context of social justice research will bolster leadership and advocacy for students when there is internal or external resistance within the school, district or community (Albritton et al., 2017; Maxwell et al., 2014).

As members of leader preparation programs, how do we support navigating the variety of contexts to forge opportunities for cross-boundary work and also differentiate to meet our students needs when they may or may not have background experience in one or more of the contexts? There appears to be an untapped arena of collaboration for researchers and clinicians to problem-solve issues of mutual concern in the rural and urban context. Lessons learned and perceptions of lived experience in these respective communities might serve to inform and

provoke innovations for the benefit of students in both contexts. As we review the curriculum and the authentic tasks designed for aspiring leaders in our programs, we need to embed contextual dynamics for students to consider and problem-solve within case studies and simulations of the real-world work with which they will engage. Perhaps these intentional steps will serve to bridge both the skill and dispositional work within our preparation programs and research agendas in order to graduate leaders who are poised to achieve the leadership standards.

### **Significance**

This study illustrates the critical need for more cross boundary research to break out of the prescribed silos that have been defining research, policy and practice over the past decade. Understanding the similarities and differences experienced by school leaders in both urban and rural contexts enriches our understanding of the everyday challenges to better inform leadership preparation. The educational reform agenda, especially as it relates to leadership preparation, has almost exclusively focused on preparation for leaders in urban settings. As a result, funding and policy have likewise been earmarked to address perceived high needs specific to urban settings and research of urban leadership preparation. Our cross analysis demonstrates that high quality leadership preparation will benefit from an integrative framework that is not an either/or but rather, an also/and approach. Our research points to the need for substantially more attention at professional conferences for cross boundary panels, papers and keynote addresses as well as a need for professional journals to model cross boundary research, publication and advocacy efforts to better understand the commonality of concerns across social justice issues presented in our findings. The common ground is where the solutions need to occur. Preparing educational leaders for contextual challenges to be addressed will provide continuity and sustained leadership for all settings. Continued collaboration as allies and advocates for, and with, one another is our best hope.

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## Appendix A

Table 1. Review of Research on Rural and Urban Issues Facing K-12 Leaders 2013-2018

Author, Title	Publisher	Findings
Albritton, S., Huffman, S. and McClellan, R. <i>A study of rural high school principals' perceptions as social justice leaders</i>	Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research (2017)	The findings of this multi-site case study in rural settings demonstrated that principals' conceptions of diversity and social justice did not always include all students and more specifically LGBTQ students.
Ashton, B., & Duncan, H.E. <i>A beginning rural principal's toolkit: A guide for success</i>	The Rural Educator (2013)	This article explored the challenges and skills needed to assume a leadership role as a new principal within the rural context. It provided guidance for the creation of an entry plan built upon research studies that identified the needs and demands of rural principals.
Augustine-Shaw, D. <i>Developing leadership capacity in new rural school district leaders: The Kansas educational leadership institute</i>	The Rural Educator (2016)	This paper highlights the components of the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI) that support new superintendents in rural contexts who often have principal responsibilities. KELI offers mentoring and induction for new superintendents and principals with special consideration for the complexities of rural communities.
Bauer, S. & Silver, L. <i>The impact of job isolation on new principals' sense of efficacy, job satisfaction, burnout and persistence</i>	Journal of Educational Administration (2018)	The setting of this research is one state in the southeast. This study shows that there is a relationship between self-efficacy, burnout, job satisfaction, and intention to leave and the role of isolation as a precursor.

<p>Beesley, A.D. &amp; Clark, T.F. <i>How rural and nonrural principals differ in high plains U.S. states</i></p>	<p>Peabody Journal of Education (2015)</p>	<p>Data for this quantitative study was from the 2007-08 SASS and 2008-09 PFS. Analysis provides a snapshot of conditions of 483 rural principals in a 7-state region (ND, SD, NE, KS, WY, CO). Findings indicate no significant differences in years of experience; nonrural principals were more likely to achieve a post-master's degree; rural schools had a higher percentage of male principals, and a significantly lower percentage of minority principals than nonrural schools. Nonrural principals reported a greater number of required contract days than did rural principals. Rural principals report greater influence over curriculum in their school than their nonrural counterparts. Rural principals believe they have less autonomy than nonrural principals over their school budget. In this analysis perception of autonomy was a significant predictor of retention for principals in the rural setting.</p>
<p>Bishop, H. N. &amp; McClellan, R. L. <i>Resisting social justice: Rural school principals' perceptions of LGBTQ students</i></p>	<p>Journal of School Leadership (2016)</p>	<p>The findings from this qualitative study suggest that leaders upheld community values by exhibiting their own biases toward LGBTQ students.</p>
<p>Butler, T.A. <i>School leadership in the 21st century: Leading in the age of reform</i></p>	<p>Peabody Journal of Education (2014)</p>	<p>This paper focuses on the Common Core movement as a reflection of historical tensions in rural communities over power and privilege. The author reports that the hard work of alignment and writing curriculum is complete but the CCLS creates work for educational leaders as they devote time to public relations and educating the community and the Board of Education. The reform initiatives around accountability have greater impact on rural schools-data collection and management and teacher evaluation-which do not reflect the true needs of rural schools.</p>
<p>Corbett, M. <i>The ambivalence of community: A critical analysis of rural education's oldest trope</i></p>	<p>Peabody Journal of Education (2014)</p>	<p>The author challenges the stereotypic definitions of rural community and addresses the complexity in defining community within a rural setting-there are competing narratives. The author critiques rural imagery and suggests the need to develop conceptions of community based upon the complexity of our current conditions not historic understandings.</p>

<p>Dolph, D. <i>Challenges and opportunities for school improvement: recommendations for urban school principals</i></p>	<p>Education and Urban Society (2017)</p>	<p>This article outlines the seven common challenges facing urban educational settings, the four common school reform models implemented, and the three characteristics of strong, effective leaders in the urban setting. The three characteristics: 1. Principal as Instructional leader; 2. Principal awareness of school culture and its relationship to school success; and 3. Change leadership were explored</p>
<p>Freie, C. &amp; Eppley, K. <i>Putting Foucault to work: Understanding power in a rural school</i></p>	<p>Peabody Journal of Education (2014)</p>	<p>In this case study the power relations of a rural school and community in the midst of closure/consolidation for creation of a charter school are explored using the work of Michael Foucault. They argue that focusing on a best-practice model ignores the complexities of the context (place and politics) and that best practices should involve the broader network of disciplinary practices that consider student outcomes and the complex power environments of schools.</p>
<p>Green, T. <i>School as community, community as school: Examining principal leadership for urban school reform and community development</i></p>	<p>Education and Urban Society (2018)</p>	<p>Through semi-structured interviews coupled with a document review, the research question pursued was: What principal actions support urban high school reform along with community development? Findings suggest that the principal positioned the school to be a power broker in the community, linked the school culture to community improvement projects, and connected instruction to community circumstances.</p>
<p>Greenough, R. &amp; Nelson, S.R. <i>Recognizing the variety of rural schools</i></p>	<p>Peabody Journal of Education (2015)</p>	<p>This discussion outlines the challenges in defining rural contexts through a review of both the governmental classification systems as well as the National Center for Education Statistics. They encourage researchers to compare the demographics of schools/districts in studies to the characteristics of all schools/districts classified as rural due to the large differences among rural schools/districts.</p>

Hallinger, P. <i>Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership</i>	Educational Management Administration & Leadership (2016)	This analysis serves to explore the development of theory and findings related to adaptation of leadership practices to different school contexts. It highlights how research has either ignored or minimized the effects of context on leadership. The author encourages the field to explore new ways to learn how successful leaders respond and adapt to different contexts
Hansen, C. <i>Why rural principals leave</i>	The Rural Educator (2018)	This qualitative study examined the factors that influenced six principals leaving their rural school in Minnesota. The perceived factors were grouped into personal, institutional and environmental factors.
Johnson, J. & Howley, C. B. <i>Contemporary education policy and rural schools: A critical policy analysis</i>	Peabody Journal of Education (2015)	This paper analyzes federal policies (RTT, SIG, REAP) as deployed in rural schools. The authors view rural schools as places with differences that create challenges, strengths and opportunities that need to be considered. Their perspective is policy is formed by people with metropolitan backgrounds and a dominant group perspective. The analysis indicates these approaches are not compatible with rural contexts. Recommendations include: 1. Be frugal; 2. Organize to press for policy changes with a real purpose; 3. Avoid fads and conventional thinking.
Kamrath, B. & Brunner, C.C. <i>Blind spots: Small rural communities and high turnover in the superintendency</i>	Journal of School Leadership (2014)	Rural community perceptions of high superintendency turnover is explored. Community perceived high turnover as negative and believed the cause was financial pressures, community resistance to educational trends and bias against minorities and/or “outsiders”. Community members expressed a fait accompli approach and portrayed themselves as victims even when they were in control of some conditions related to the superintendent hiring process.

Klar, H.W. and Brewer, C. A. <i>Successful leadership in high-needs schools: An examination of core leadership practices enacted in challenging contexts</i>	Journal of Education Administration (2013)	Three middle school principals implemented the Comprehensive School Reform model successfully in their schools. All of the principals focused on setting the direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. Despite similar levels of poverty and the leaders' utilization of a similar set of leadership practices the research suggests that the principals adapted some of their practices to suit the community contexts in which they were leading.
Kruse, R. A., & Krumm, B. L. <i>Becoming a principal: Access factors for females</i>	The Rural Educator (2016)	A case study approach guided by Standpoint Theory was used to identify factors influencing access to Oklahoma's secondary school principalship for 4 female principals.
Maxwell, G. M., Locke, L.A., & Scheurich, J.J. <i>The rural social justice leader: An exploratory profile in resilience</i>	Journal of School Leadership (2014)	Exploration of 5 rural superintendents social justice leadership led to creation of a profile for the rural leader capable of strong social justice-oriented leadership
McHenry-Sorber, E. <i>The power of competing narratives: A new interpretation of rural school-community relations</i>	Peabody Journal of Education (2014)	Using a case study approach with grounded theory, this study focuses on contract negotiations in a rural town. The author argues that the conflicts between the teachers and community over the teachers' contract stemmed from already present conflicts in the community connected to class and competing values about the purpose of schooling and the work of teachers. Both narratives were connected to the larger forces found in the national conversation about educational reform. Conflicts at the macro level, played out at the micro level may lead to the destabilization of rural schools and their communities.
Miller, C. M., & Martin, B.N. <i>Principal preparedness for leading in demographically changing schools: Where is the social justice training?</i>	Educational Management Administration & Leadership (2015)	In this study school leaders talked about their principal preparation programs where they learned the strategies and approaches to achieving academic success with students from urban schools or schools that are changing demographically. However, the researchers noted that an undergirding of social justice preparation was missing from the discourse.

<p>Miller, J. M., Goddard, R.D. Kim, M., Jacob, R., Goddard, Y., &amp; Schroeder, P. <i>Can professional development improve school leadership? Results from a randomized control trial assessing the impact of McREL's Balanced Leadership Program on principals in rural Michigan</i></p>	<p>Educational Administration Quarterly (2016)</p>	<p>This multiyear, quantitative study of principals in rural Michigan showed that principals who received the PD program reported growth on most program outcomes and were more likely to report growth on broad school-level outcomes than on areas that involved working directly with teachers. Principals reported more growth in their knowledge in identified areas than in their involvement in those areas.</p>
<p>Preston, J. and Barnes, K.E.R. <i>Successful leadership in schools: Cultivating collaboration.</i></p>	<p>The Rural Educator. (2017)</p>	<p>This piece was a companion to the literature review conducted by Preston, Jakubiec, &amp; Kooymans (2013) and accessed 40 research studies. The review focused on the professional competencies and personal qualities commonly associated with successful leadership in rural schools. The authors found no research directly linking a successful rural principal to student achievement.</p>
<p>Richardson, J.W., Imig, S., &amp; Ndoye, A. <i>Developing culturally aware school leaders: Measuring the impact of an international internship using the MGUDS</i></p>	<p>Educational Administration Quarterly (2013)</p>	<p>This mixed methods study collected quantitative data via survey of both the intervention and control group and qualitative data were gathered via interview of the intervention group. The intervention group developed an appreciation for diversity over the experience and it broadened their perspectives and awareness of diversity.</p>
<p>Sanchez, J. E., Usinger, J., Thornton, B.W., &amp; Sparkman, W.E. <i>I'm paying the time for someone else's crime: Principals and core teachers at rural middle schools under chronic academic stress</i></p>	<p>The Rural Educator (2017)</p>	<p>Interviews were conducted within the context of school improvement within six Middle Schools to explore how principals and teacher leaders perceived increased academic expectations. Findings revealed that interpretations were misaligned; there was an ongoing focus on what was wrong with the school; and principals felt that they were alone in the process.</p>
<p>Schafft, K. A. <i>Rural education as rural development: Understanding the rural school–community well-being linkage in a 21st-century policy context</i></p>	<p>Peabody Journal of Education (2016)</p>	<p>This paper discusses the critical role the rural school plays in various aspects of community life. It explores research and the current policy context where trends in national policy do not account for the rural context and may, in fact, serve to separate the school from the communities in which they are embedded and intended to serve.</p>

<p>Scott, C., &amp; Ostler, N. <i>Reshaping rural schools in the Northwest Region: Lessons from federal School Improvement Grant implementation</i></p>	<p>U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest (2016)</p>	<p>The report shares the results of a nationwide survey of principals in rural settings who led schools designated as in need of improvement and used the transformation model under the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. It revealed only 5% of principals fully implementing all of the transformational strategies and 32% partially implemented the strategies. The more technical assistance received by the principal the more strategies were reported to be fully implemented. Rural principals reported the most challenge in engaging families and the community and ensuring high-quality staff.</p>
<p>Stewart, C. and Matthews, J. <i>The lone ranger in rural education: The small rural school principal and professional development</i></p>	<p>The Rural Educator (2015)</p>	<p>This study used survey research methodology to examine principal perceptions of their preparedness to meet the requirements of the new State of Utah teaching and leadership standards. The principals in the study reported knowing more about the teacher evaluation standards than they did about the educational leadership standards. Small school principals had different needs and practices than did the medium school principals. Nearly 30% of the small school principals also served as teachers therefore, reducing the time they had to mentor and collaborate with teachers.</p>
<p>Sturgis, K., Shiflett, B., &amp; Tanner, T. <i>Do leaders' experience and concentration area influence school performance?</i></p>	<p>Administrative Issues Journal (2017)</p>	<p>This quantitative study examining leaders in small, high poverty, high minority schools in urban areas of Texas. Findings indicate that having two or more years of experience at the same school had a significant impact on the academic rating of a school while the concentration area of the leader did not have a significant impact on the overall academic school rating.</p>
<p>Surface, J.L. &amp; Theobald, P. <i>The rural school leadership dilemma</i></p>	<p>Peabody Journal of Education (2014)</p>	<p>In this essay the authors explore the historical roots for stereotypes of rural school professionals. They also trace the latest research on rural school student performance. The dilemma they focus on is when should school leaders speak up in the face of rural denigration.</p>

<p>VanTuyle, V. and Reeves, A.  <i>"Forgottonia"? The status of rural schools in Illinois' principal preparation reform</i></p>	<p>NCPEA International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation (2014)</p>	<p>This study focused on rural, western Illinois. The concern explored was the reform of principal preparation and the needs of rural schools and students in the state that are not considered. The issues highlighted include: Access to programs as well as a qualifying internship site with a successful building principal, required experience with specific student populations and, the paradigm shift in new roles and responsibilities for mentor principals.</p>
<p>Versland, T. M.  <i>Principal efficacy: Implications for rural 'grow your own' leadership programs</i></p>	<p>The Rural Educator (2013)</p>	<p>The data reported in this study emerged from a larger mixed methods study on self-efficacy and “grow your own” leadership programs. Interviews were conducted with 3 principals, 3 teacher colleagues of the principals and 2 university faculty members who acted as program supervisors. The findings suggest that “grow your own” programs in rural settings may lead to a loss of self-efficacy for the leader.</p>
<p>Wood, J.N., Finch, K., &amp; Mirecki, R.M.  <i>If we can get you, how can we keep you? Problems with recruiting and retaining rural administrators</i></p>	<p>The Rural Educator (2013)</p>	<p>This survey research explored reports by Midwest superintendents of recruitment and retention strategies as well as factors influencing the loss or retention of quality administrators in rural areas.</p>

**Appendix B**  
**Table 2. Frequency of Relevant Publications in Ten Educational Leadership Journals**

Journal	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018 (July)		No. Published Articles	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	1
Education and Urban Society	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	7
Educational Administration Quarterly	<i>1</i> <sup>a</sup>	2	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	6
Educational Management Administration and Leadership	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	0	0	0	1	1	2
International Journal of Educational Management	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Journal of Educational Administration	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	2	5
The Journal of School Leadership	0	3	5	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	6	6
NCPEA International Journal of Leadership Preparation <sup>b</sup>	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	-	-	2	2
Peabody Journal of Education	0	0	5	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	0
The Rural Educator	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	8	0
<b>Totals</b>	6	8	12	5	4	5	7	4	4	5	1	3	34	38

<sup>a</sup> Numbers in italics indicate article(s) that include both rural and urban contexts.

<sup>b</sup> 2018 publication unavailable at the time of this study

# ***An Explanation of the Supervisory Model Used by Elementary Principal Supervisors in the State of Missouri***

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The most direct route to improving students' educational outcomes is by improving teacher effectiveness (Hanuschek, 2008; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Teachers' ability to forge positive relationships with students, assess students' current levels of performance, and tailor instruction to meet students' needs increases learning at a greater rate than other variables (Stronge & Tucker, 2000). As a result, principals acting as instructional leaders is an important role emphasized in the literature and centers on the ability of principals to coach teachers and increase their instructional capacity (Hvidston, McKim, & Mette, 2016). Formative supervision, when compared to summative evaluation, provides principals the better strategy to improving teachers' instructional skills (Hvidston, Range, & McKim, 2015; Mette et al., 2017).

Past school accountability demands have highlighted the need for school leadership reform, including principals acting as instructional leaders (NCLB, 2002; USDOE, 2009). Logically, this accountability trickles down to district administrators charged with supervising and evaluating principals, described as principal supervisors throughout the remainder of this paper. The purpose of this paper is to highlight behaviors utilized by elementary principal supervisors in the Springfield Public School District (SPS), located in Springfield, Missouri as they supervise and evaluate principals. Specifically, the paper is an attempt to advance the professional discussion around one important question, (1) How are principals supervised and evaluated in one district? Attempting to answer this question is an important step in operationalizing guiding principles that can be shared with principal supervisors who are charged with building principals' leadership capacity.

In the past, there have been only 20 peer-reviewed articles published between 1980 and 2010 (Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, & Leon, 2011) focused on principal evaluations. More recently the supervision and evaluation of principals has often been disregarded with limited research (Fuller, Hollingworth, & Liu, 2015; Miller, 2014). Currently, the research into principal evaluation has been directed at improving the quality of principal supervisors, standards, and evaluation systems (Derrington, & Sharratt, 2008; Goldring, Grissom, Rubin, Rodgers, & Neel, 2018; New Leaders, 2012; Honig, 2012). The discussion of current practice regarding the

supervision and evaluation of principal could be of benefit to principals, those who supervise principals, and university principal preparation programs.

### **Supervision versus Evaluation**

Many researchers describe formative supervision and summative evaluation through the lens of improving and rating teachers (Hazi & Ricinski, 2009; Ponticell & Zepeda, 2004; Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011). Whereas formative supervision is characterized through growth-oriented experiences (coaching, professional reading, action research), summative evaluation is described as an accountability measure to ensure certain behaviors are present in the classroom (assignment of scores or values) (Robbins & Alvy, 1995). The antagonistic outcomes of both processes are described in detail in which formative supervision centers on supportive, trusting feedback to improve instruction while summative evaluation results in assigning merit to teachers' abilities as a way to determine future employment (Eady & Zepeda, 2007; Zepeda, 2012). In the current context of school reform, teacher formative supervision and summative evaluation have become interlocked, so teachers and policymakers see the processes as the same (Mette et al., 2017). Compounding this perception is the fact that both teacher supervision and summative evaluation are typically performed by the same individual, namely school principals (Range et al., 2011).

Similar to those responsible for teacher supervision and evaluation, those charged with supervising and evaluating principals are asked to undertake both formative supervision and summative evaluation, attempting to connect both processes in a coherent manner (Hvidston et al., 2015). Mette et al. (2017) described this dilemma by stating, "tension is noted between the desired collaborative, trusting relationship and conflicting functions when the supervisor is also an administrator (with responsibilities such as summative evaluation, resource allocation, and employment decisions) (p. 710). A critical factor in defusing the tension generated between formative supervision and summative evaluation is the development of trust between principals and principal supervisors (Derrington & Sanders, 2011; Okasana, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012; Saltzman, 2016). In fact, Derrington and Sanders characterize trust as "the glue of day-to-day life in the supervisory partnership" (2011, p. 34). Elementary principal supervisors in SPS are charged with providing formative supervision (leadership capacity building) and summative evaluation (job retention) to all elementary principals. Elementary principal supervisors attempt to intertwine both processes so that frequent formative supervision allows principal supervisors to accurately assess principals' skills on standards and indicators.

Honig (2012) described principal supervisor formative supervision behaviors by supporting the improvement of principals' leadership capacity including modeling instructional leadership or brokering, which is "strategically bridging ...or buffering [principals] from resources and influences...to support principals' engagement in instructional leadership" (p. 755). Anderson and Turnbull (2016) highlighted the positive relationship between principals and principal supervisors by describing formative supervision as "it's not sit down and have one meeting and be evaluated with feedback for next year because it's an all-the-time conversation" (p. 36). Additionally, Saltzman (2016) argued principal supervisors who routinely visited principals were able to accurately assess the culture and climate of schools and connect principals' leadership to teaching and students' learning.

## Context for the Supervision and Evaluation of Principals in Springfield Public Schools

Springfield Public Schools (SPS) has approximately 24,000 students and 54% of the district's student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch rates. There are approximately 12,100 elementary students in SPS, and they attend 36 elementary schools, all supervised by a single principal (n=36). These elementary principals are supervised and evaluated by two elementary principal supervisors, the Executive Director of Elementary Learning and Director of Elementary Learning, offices of which are housed in the school district's central office. These two elementary principal supervisors visit principals at their schools at least one time per month throughout the school year.

### Supervisory Practices for Principal Supervisors

The supervisory practices of principal supervisors in SPS will be presented in four sections. First, the role for principal supervisors will be described along with accompanying professional standards for their performance, setting the stage for the supervision and evaluation of principals. Second, the Key Constructs of SPS Principal Supervision and Evaluation will be explained including elements regarding the application of standards and indicators. Third, principal supervisor guiding questions and data sources will be detailed. Finally, principal supervisors' practices implementing principal supervision and evaluation will be discussed within the framework of instructional leadership.

### Role of Elementary Principal Supervisors

The professional standards developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2015) were used to guide SPS elementary principal supervisors' work of supervising and evaluating principals. The CCSSO standards displayed in Table 1 serve as guidelines for elementary principal supervisors as they monitor the leadership skills of principals, connecting the central office with principals (Superville, 2016). CCSSO standards and action steps which help define the role of elementary principal supervisors are noted in Table 1.

Table 1. CCSSO Principal Supervisor Standards

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<b>Standards</b>
1. Principal supervisors dedicate their time to helping principals grow as instructional leaders.
2. Principal supervisors coach and support individual principals and engage in effective professional learning strategies to help principals grow as instructional leaders.
3. Principal supervisors use evidence of principals' effectiveness to determine necessary improvements in principals' practice to foster a positive educational environment that supports the diverse cultural and learning needs of students.
4. Principal supervisors engage principals in the formal district principal evaluation process in ways that help them grow as instructional leaders.
5. Principal supervisors advocate for and inform the coherence of organizational vision, policies and strategies to support schools and student learning.
6. Principal supervisors assist the district in ensuring the community of schools with which they engage are culturally/socially responsive and have equitable access to resources necessary for the success of each student.
7. Principal supervisors engage in their own development and continuous improvement to help principals grow as instructional leaders.

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8. Principal supervisors lead strategic change that continuously elevates the performance of schools and sustains high-quality educational programs and opportunities across the district.

The standards also highlight the need for principal supervisors to be engaged in their own professional development (Baker & Bloom, 2017). Although written in general terms, the standards outline many of the characteristics highlighted in the literature as instructional leadership behaviors, including supporting and growing teachers, planning professional learning, and monitoring student outcomes (Hvidston et al., 2016; Hvidston et al., 2015; Wallace Foundation, 2008). Additionally, the CCSSO standards focus on increasing student achievement and have a lesser emphasis on managerial principal behaviors which are unlikely to impact teacher effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2004).

### SPS Model of Principal Supervision and Evaluation

The SPS principal supervision evaluation model includes six standards and 13 indicators on which all principals are assessed and is based on the Missouri Model for Educator Evaluation, created by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MO-DESE, n.d.). Table 2 displays the key constructs of the SPS principal supervision and evaluation model.

Table 2. Key Constructs of SPS Principal Supervision and Evaluation

Principal Evaluation Standards and Indicators	Principal Evaluation Steps for Principal Supervisors
Standard 1: Vision, Mission, and Goals Indicator 1: Establish the Mission, Vision, and Goals Indicator 2: Implement the Mission, Vision, and Goals	1. Identify indicators to be assessed
Standard 2: Teaching and Learning Indicator 3: Promote Positive School Culture Indicator 4: Provide an Effective Instructional Program Indicator 5: Ensure Continuous Professional Learning	2. Determine baseline scores for indicators
Standard 3: Management of the Organizational Systems Indicator 6: Management the Organization Structure Indicator 7: Lead Personnel Indicator 8: Manage Resources	3. Develop a growth plan for indicators
Standard 4: Collaboration with Families and Stakeholders Indicator 9: Collaborate with Families and other Community Members Indicator 10: Respond to Community Interest and Needs Indicator 11: Mobilize Community Resources	4. Regularly provide feedback on indicators
Standard 5: Ethics and Integrity Indicator 12: Personal and Professional Responsibility	5. Determine a follow-up score for indicators
Standard 6: Professional Development Indicator 13: Increase Knowledge and Skills based on Best Practices	6. Complete the summative assessment
	7. Reflect and plan

As noted in Table 2, SPS principals are supervised and evaluated regarding their performance on six standards and 13 indicators. These standards range from establishing and implementing a mission and vision to increasing principals' capacity by seeking out professional development. As elementary principal supervisors visit schools to talk with principals about performance, they focus on one or two standards per visit. These standards are a vital factor for principals to understand as part of both the supervisory process and evaluation (Turnbull, Riley, & MacFarlane, 2013). Over the course of a school year, data are collected on all six standards and 13 indicators which are tallied to create principals' summative evaluation, in which principal's performance is rated as *Area of Concern*, *Growth Opportunity*, or *Meets Expectations*. Additionally, principals' holistic performance, which includes a summary of all standards and indicators, is rated as *Ineffective*, *Needs Improvement*, *Effective*, *Highly Effective*, or *Distinguished*.

In analyzing the steps followed by elementary principal supervisors noted in Table 2, all steps but two (steps five and six) are supported by the academic literature's definition of formative supervision (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014; Zepeda, 2012). Conversely, steps five and six (*determine a follow-up score for indicators and complete the summative assessment*) require elementary principal supervisors to summarize data collected during supervision to evaluate principals' performance by assigning merit to their performance, tasks most closely aligned to evaluation (Hazi & Rucinski, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Presenting the steps in sequential order, steps one through three asks principals (*identify indicators to be assessed, determine baseline scores for indicators, and develop a growth plan for indicators*), in consultation with their elementary principal supervisors, to self-select two or three growth standards and indicators, assess themselves using the evaluation rubric (Likert scaled items; 0 thru 2=Emerging, 3 thru 4=Developing, 5 thru 6 = proficient, and 7 = distinguished), and to develop a growth plan for how they plan to remediate identified weaknesses. Steps four and five (*regularly provide feedback on indicators and determine a follow-up score for indicators*) require elementary principal supervisors to collect formative data on all six leadership standards and 13 indicators to determine if principals are growing in each area. Step six (*complete the summative evaluation*) requires principals to meet with elementary principal supervisors so collected formative data can be aggregated into summative evaluations. Finally, step seven (*reflect and plan*) requires elementary principal supervisors to begin the steps again when principals and elementary principal supervisors select new growth standards and indicators for the following school year. When all steps are included, principal evaluation processes allow principals ownership in the process, align to standards, and use multiple measurements to assess competence. Similar to teacher supervision, principal supervision and evaluation is viewed as a cyclical process, one that begins and ends with reflection about growth (Range, Young, & Hvidston, 2013).

Table 3 displays questions that guide elementary principal supervisors' supervision and evaluation work as they engage in formative supervision of principals and includes data sources principal supervisors collect as they visit schools.

Table 3. Principal Supervisor Guiding Questions and Data Sources

Principal Supervisor Guiding Questions	Principal Supervisor Potential Data Sources
Do principals clearly understand all standards and indicators?	Student achievement scores
How do principal supervisors get a clear, holistic picture of principals' performances?	Teacher and patron survey results
How do principal supervisors collect objective rather than subjective data?	Professional learning meeting agendas
How do principal supervisors best connect data to each standard and indicator?	Discipline rates
How do principal supervisors ensure principals have a voice in their evaluation?	Classroom observation numbers
How can principal supervisors use the standards and indicators as reflection points for principals?	Budget expenditures
How can principal supervisors ensure the evaluation step is perceived as fair?	School/community partnerships
	Evidence of shared decision making
	Evidence of service to the district/profession
	Daily/weekly e-mails

As seen in Table 3, the primary question that guides the work of principal supervisors as they apply supervision and evaluation to principals is to ensure principals understand the standards and indicators on which they are evaluated. Additional questions focus on supervision and evaluation being perceived by principals as fair and encouraging principals' ownership of the process. The willingness for principals to receive feedback from principal supervisors is based on a trusting and respectful relationship (Oksana, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012). Finally, an important fact is that principal supervisors work to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and data should be objective rather than subjective. Data collected by principal supervisors to provide evidence of growth on the six standards and 13 indicators comes from interactions with principals and from principals' own personal accounts as to what happens in their schools. As noted in Table 3, data sources include both academic measures (*test scores, discipline rates, observation numbers*) and affect measures (*teacher and patron survey results*).

A source of tension for elementary principal supervisors is the struggle in providing principals a "situational" style of supervision and evaluation, one that shifts from directing to delegating (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Most often, elementary principal supervisors utilize a coaching style in which two-way communication results in principals taking ownership in handling situations. Another important consideration is for elementary principal supervisors to align supervisory styles to the SPS district's mission, which is creating *Engaging, Relevant, and Personal* (ERP) schools and student experiences. The supervisory stance to support principals as they implement and oversee ERP schools is to encourage principals to show more initiative around innovative ideas and to take calculated risks.

The principal supervisors in this district also engage in a reflective process with principals who are being supervised to maintain a fair supervision and evaluation process. This reflective process also extends to frequent conversations between the principal supervisors with the goal of continuously improving and supporting the principals to ultimately support teacher growth and student achievement. The focus of improving the instructional leadership of principals is the area of concern for this process.

## Theory to Practice Findings

For the purpose of this paper, additional detail is provided about how elementary principal supervisors collect formative supervision data that leads to the summative evaluation of one standard and one indicator. *Standard 2 (Teaching and Learning), Indicator 4 (Provide an Effective Instructional Program)* requires principals exercise instructional leadership to focus on the improvement of instruction and assessment practices and use systems to assess effectiveness of practice and document sustained improvement and growth of staff and students.

To begin, elementary principal supervisors ask principals to describe their instructional focus for the school year, generally centered on literacy or numeracy and based on student achievement scores. Additionally, the conversation might include the school's professional learning plan for the year; along with ways that professional learning plan might be assessed. During elementary principal supervisors' monthly site visits, they ask principals how goal attainment towards this instructional focus is progressing. Qualitative and quantitative sources of data elementary principal supervisors might use to support a principal's self-assessment of this standard and indicator could be professional learning agendas, staff feedback about trainings, and literacy or numeracy growth scores on formative assessments.

Additionally, elementary principal supervisors monitor principals' classroom visits, which are electronically recorded in the SPS district's teacher evaluation system to monitor how many classroom visits principals have conducted. Finally, if principals have concerns with the performance of a teacher, elementary principal supervisors provide support to principals and collaboratively create a plan to improve the teacher. Should the teacher's performance result in a formal Educator Improvement Plan (EIP), elementary principal supervisors assist principals in writing the plan and make note of important benchmark dates so they can follow up with principals to ensure principals are holding the teacher accountable for improvement. The act of setting goals for an underperforming teacher and holding him or her accountable would also be noted by elementary principal supervisors in the principal's summative evaluation.

## Conclusion

As the supervision and evaluation of principals is a vital component of effective and high performing schools, the supervisory process described in this article could be beneficial to other district principal supervisors. These educational leaders are engaged in a similar process of supervision and evaluation and reviewing this supervisory and evaluative process could provide relevancy while operationalizing guiding principles that could be shared among principal supervisors who are charged with building principals' leadership capacity. University principal preparation programs could also benefit from the perspective of practicing principal supervisors as universities prepare principal candidates for the rigors of the principalship and potential supervision and evaluation. Specifically, coursework could emphasize the attention given to standards, the application of instructional leadership, the process of frequent feedback, and continuous improvement.

Future research regarding the supervision and evaluation of principals could include both qualitative and quantitative data from the perspective of principals. Data points could include pre

and post evaluation data and could be examined to determine if principals are benefiting from the supervision and are actually improving their instruction leadership. Additional research opportunities could be from the perspective of principal supervisors and possibly include the efficacy of feedback and the improvement of process.

In summary, the supervision and evaluation of principals is an important school reform conversation and holds promise to increasing student achievement (Connelly & Bartoletti, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004). Additionally, the role of principal supervisors has increased in importance as they engage in formative supervision processes to collect adequate information on principals' performance and aggregate data collected to evaluate their growth on set standards and indicators (Corcoran et al., 2013). The answer to "How are principals supervised and evaluated in one district?" is similar to what teachers need. Principals benefit from frequent, timely feedback provided through formative supervision based on multiple measures of performance. As described in this paper, principal supervisors are required to apply formative supervision and summative evaluation to principals (Vitcov & Bloom, 2010), a model many school districts have adopted. The SPS model with 16 principals for each principal supervisor is in contrast to a caseload of just seven to nine principals in one district (Gill, 2013). An important consideration for principal supervisors could be reducing the number of principals to be supervised (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016; Goldring et al., 2018)). Linking supervision and evaluation into a seamless process is more effective if principal supervisors are able to provide principals ownership in their supervision and evaluation, evaluate performance based on standards and indicators, deliver feedback, develop trusting relationships, all by making frequent visits to principals' schools to further the application of principals' instructional leadership.

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# ***An Examination of Student Disengagement and Reengagement from an Alternative High School***

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In 2013, just over two-thirds of students graduated from high school in the prescribed four years. The economic and social effects of students dropping out of high school impact the dropouts, their families, and the nation (Dupéré, Dion, Leventhal, Archambault, Crosnoe, & Janosz, 2018; Princiotta & Reyna, 2009; Saddler, Tyler, Maldonado, Cleveland, & Thompson, 2011; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Effects include lower nominal wages, increased needs for social services, poorer levels of health, and a higher probability of incarceration (Babcock & Bedard, 2011; Lee-St. John et al., 2018; Levin & Rouse, 2012; Western & Pettit, 2010). Family members of dropouts can experience residual effects years after the student makes the decision to leave school (Western & Pettit, 2010; Wildeman, 2010). With forgone taxable revenue, national, state, and local governments can struggle to meet demands for social services, including the support of services that students who drop out of high school may need.

Researchers have examined behaviors of students who have dropped out of high school; however, there are limited studies from the prospective of students who reengaged by enrolling at an alternative high school and then either graduated or dropped out of the alternative school (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2015; Lessard, Butler-Kisber, Fortin, Marcotte, Potvin, & Royer, 2008). This study was conducted to provide insight into why students became disengaged from school, and whether placement at an alternative campus affected their decision to graduate or drop out.

## **Literature Review**

Dropping out of school is a process that occurs in stages (Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pagani, 2009). Systemic and campus culture factors can lead to push-out and pull-out factors that can cause students to disengage and drop out. Push-out factors can include zero tolerance policies for high absenteeism and classroom disruptions leading to the loss of classroom instruction (Zhang, Willson, Katsiyannis, Barrett, Ju, & Wu, 2010). Pull-out factors can include parenthood, homelessness, and students' need to work to help support the family (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010).

Researchers such as Bridgeland, DiIulio, and Morison (2006) and Hayes, Nelson, Tabin, Pearson, and Worthy (2002) have shown that disengagement is associated with a negative feeling toward school. Bridgeland et al. (2006) examined the experiences of students who dropped out of school in the 2000s: 47% said the classes were not interesting, 69% were not motivated or inspired to work hard, 32% had to drop out to get a job, 35% were failing, 45% said they started high school poorly prepared by their earlier schooling, and 32% said they were required to repeat a grade before dropping out.

Attendance issues may develop during students' transitions between levels of school campuses. The added demands of changes in social structure, academic rigor, and credit requirements make the transition to ninth grade difficult for some students (Felmlee, McMillan, Rodis, & Osgood, 2018; Zvoch, 2006). If a student does not feel like he or she is part of the class or school, then he or she may not feel compelled to attend (Benner & Wang, 2014; Hartman, Wilkins, Gregory, Gould, & D'Souza, 2011). Suspensions in the ninth grade also can lead to lower attendance rates and course failure in later years for some students who otherwise regularly attended and passed their courses (Balfanz & Fox, 2015).

Some students stop attending school as a result of pressure to contribute to their family's financial needs (Stearns & Glennie 2006). Becoming a parent during high school can cause students to feel pulled out of school; however, more than half of students who become parents later resume their education by enrolling in continuing education programs and earning a General Educational Development (GED) certificate (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2004).

### **Impacts of Dropping Out**

Hayes et al. (2002) and Levin and Rouse (2012) have chronicled that dropping out of high school can reduce political participation and intergenerational mobility, impact levels of health, and increase the probability of incarceration. Local, state, and federal governments lose potential higher tax revenue when students drop out, as dropouts often require increased social services.

Families of dropouts may experience residual effects long after the former student made the decision to drop out (Western & Pettit, 2010; Wildeman, 2010). The spouse and children of former dropouts who are incarcerated may experience a higher instability of family life, divorce, separation, and poverty. Although home life, family, and peer relationships carry great weight in the decision a student makes regarding school, researchers of student engagement have indicated that early identification and reengagement play an equal role in influencing a student's decision to graduate or drop out of high school (Archambault et al., 2009; Boylan & Renzulli, 2014; Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012).

### **Dropout Prevention and Reengagement**

Home life, family, and peer relationships carry great weight in the decision a student makes regarding school, however researchers of student engagement have indicated that early identification and reengagement play an equal role in influencing a student's decision to graduate or drop out of high school (Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pagani, 2009; Boylan & Renzulli, 2014; Gasper, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2012; Henry et al., 2012). Some schools and school districts have invested in early warning systems to monitor student disengagement behaviors such as (a) chronic absenteeism, (b) repeated disciplinary infractions, (c) mandated test failure, and (d) course failure (Balfanz et al., 2015; Sparks, 2013).

Alternative high schools can be a creative solution to help support over-aged and under-credited students as they earn a high school diploma or complete a GED certificate. Alternative schools were created as an option for students who did not fit well within a traditional school

setting. Aron (2006) posited that alternative schools serve students who (a) have fallen off track; (b) have gotten into trouble and need short-term recovery to return back to traditional high school; (c) are about to become parents; (d) have home situations that pull them out of school; (e) are over-aged and under-credited, but are returning to obtain the credits they need to transition into community colleges or other programs; and (f) have been retained repeatedly and are receiving special education services.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Self-determination theory served as a lens for examining how students perceived an alternative high school affected their decision making in relation to their education and future. Self-determination theory involves the study of human motivation in supporting an individual's experience of autonomy (experiencing choice and feeling like one is the initiator of his or her actions), competence (succeeding at optimally challenging tasks and being able to attain desired outcomes), and relatedness (establishing a sense of mutual respect and reliance with others) (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Skinner, 1995). According to self-determination theory, humans are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory defines intrinsic and varied extrinsic sources of motivation as engaging in an activity for the sake of the activity itself and includes a description of the respective roles and types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in cognitive and social development (Chen & Jang, 2010; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Perry, Liu, & Pabian, 2010). With encouragement, innate motivation can grow, but without purposeful encouragement, it can diminish.

Students who have disengaged from school and are willing to attend an alternative school need to see incremental successes to invest fully in their education (Knesting, 2008; Streeter, Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2011). Self-determination theory is exemplified by educators creating and promoting explicit examples of how students can gain autonomy, competence, and relatedness for their own learning, educational attainment, and earning power (Bloom & Unterman, 2014; Duerden & Gillard, 2011). Ryan and Deci (2000) found that conditions that encourage rather than undermine positive human potential may inform the design of social environments and optimize the development of human performance and well-being. Former students' perceptions in relation to the impact of the alternative school they attended were examined through the lens of self-determination theory.

### ***Research Questions***

This study was conducted to address the following research questions:

1. In what ways do graduates and dropouts perceive their alternative high school experiences affected their autonomy?
2. In what ways do graduates and dropouts perceive their alternative high school experiences affected their competence?
3. In what ways do graduates and dropouts perceive their alternative high school experiences affected their relatedness?
4. In what ways do teachers and administrators perceive that the alternative high school students' experiences affected their autonomy, competence, and relatedness?

## **Methodology**

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to explore the experiences of alternative high school graduates and dropouts with school disengagement and reengagement and to examine how the former students and their teachers and administrators perceived that an alternative high school affected the students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study was designed to explore, record, and analyze lived experiences shared by individuals (Creswell, 2007). Data were collected from persons who had experienced the phenomenon in an attempt to develop a composite description of the essence of the experience of the individuals (van Manen, 1990). Data were collected via questions that pertained to what the individuals had experienced in terms of the phenomenon and what context or situations influenced or affected each individual's experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Collection of Data**

The interview protocol for former students was created using open-ended questions generated from existing student engagement and disengagement literature and the perspective of self-determination theory. The teacher and administrator protocol was designed to help triangulate the responses of the former students. The teacher and administrator interview protocol questions were developed to address how the teachers and administrators built relationships, fostered responsibility for decision making, and offered support to the students at the alternative high school.

Peer experts within the field of dropout prevention reviewed the proposed interview questions and provided feedback. The peer experts worked within the field of student engagement and conducted research in the area of dropout prevention. Questions that the experts believed were redundant or overstated were removed. Questions that were understated were redefined. This process was repeated throughout the development of the interview protocols.

The average enrollment of the alternative campus was only 50 students; therefore, students who had been enrolled at a traditional high school in the school district and then applied to and attended the alternative high school between 1998 and 2014 were identified as possible participants. The school provided contact information for the individuals. A sample of 20 students who had dropped out and a sample of 20 students who had graduated were identified. Alternatively, a student from each group was contacted, asked to participate, and interviewed. The process was continued until data saturated. Prospective teacher and administrator participants were contacted by email. The alternative high school had a staff of 12. The counselor and campus director participated in the study, as did three teachers. All of the staff members who agreed to participate were included in the study.

A total of 15 people were interviewed: 10 student participants (five graduates and five dropouts), three teachers, and two administrators. All of the participants were from one alternative campus. Data were collected via face-to-face, audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews. Participants were interviewed at predetermined sites. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. Six of the 10 interviews with the former students were conducted at the former students' places of employment. Four of the locations were restaurants. Other

locations included offices, an automobile repair shop, apartments, and coffee shops. After the confidentiality statement was read and signed, the researcher and each participant took a few minutes to become acquainted. All but one of the former student interviews went as planned. One former student brought her toddler son to the interview, so the time it took to respond to the questions was extended. The interviews with the staff members were conducted in early fall, when new students were arriving, and new student orientation processes appeared to be fresh on the staff members' minds.

## **Treatment of Data**

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded to determine whether themes emerged and, in an attempt to uncover the essence of the phenomenological experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research requires repeated readings and step-by-step analysis of each participant's statements to highlight significant statements, quotes, and sentences. The transcripts were coded to delineate between varied responses. Miles and Huberman's (1994) steps to coding were followed. Meaning was assigned to categories during open coding, interview data were organized into categories during axial coding, and themes were extracted from the categories via lean coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The themes were used to write a textural description of the participants' experiences and to compose a structural description (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). A composite description was formed that presented the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

The interviews of the teachers and administrators were coded in the same way and were used to triangulate the data from the former students and to attest to the accuracy of the alternative campus application process, the characteristics of the instructional setting, and the impact of goal setting and advisor mentoring on student success. Questions and probes were divided into three distinct groups that aligned with the three parts of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Open coding was used to explore, compare, and sort the data.

Throughout the process, it was essential to have peer review of the data to help to ensure clarity and to prevent bias. Colleagues who worked within the field of student engagement reviewed the data and themes. Transcripts of the data were given to the participants to review for accuracy (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

## **Findings**

There were ten former student participants who ranged in age from 19 to 23. Six were male and four were female. Five of the former student participants were White, four were Hispanic, and one was Asian. The former students had exhibited disengagement behaviors (for example, poor attendance, course failure, test failure, and/or disruptive classroom behaviors) during their high school careers and later reengaged in their education by applying to and attending an alternative high school.

All of the teachers who participated in the study had been teaching high school for ten or more years. All of the staff members who worked at the alternative campus were White. The teacher participants were females, the campus counselor was a male, and the campus director

was a female. All staff members who agreed to participate in the study were interviewed. The participating campus staff members held advanced degrees and had participated in professional development related to teacher-student relationship building.

The pseudonym *Passages* was chosen for the alternative high school. Passages was established in the 1990s, with a mission to support students who were labeled at-risk for dropping out of traditional district high schools. Passages required applicants to complete a rigorous application and undergo an interview process designed for students who had lost credits due to a significant disruption of their education such as non-attendance, illness, or another life-altering situation. Students could not apply to Passages directly but could obtain a Passages application from their traditional school's counseling office. After the students and parents completed their parts of the application, it was returned to the traditional high school's counseling office for teacher recommendations, then submitted to Passages. Students were eligible to graduate from Passages after they completed all curriculum requirements and passed all mandatory tests.

Five of the former students graduated from Passages and five dropped out. At the time of the study, one of the five former students who had dropped out of Passages had earned a GED. One former student who had dropped out of Passages was taking classes to complete his high school degree and two-year undergraduate degree, one was studying to take the GED, and one was attending a charter school with the goal of completing his GED.

Five themes emerged from the data: (a) relationships rather than programs led to the success of the alternative school, (b) students blamed push-out factors at the traditional school for their disengagement, (c) students exercised autonomy in their choices of whether pull-out factors would impact their decision to graduate or drop out, (d) personalized instruction supported student learning, and (e) one-on-one advising supported students' curricular and life decisions. The first theme, relationships rather than programs led to the success of the alternative school, illustrated students' relatedness, as exemplified by self-determination theory. The former students sought to establish a sense of mutual respect and reliance with others. The second theme, students blamed push-out factors at the traditional school for their disengagement, and the third theme, students exercised autonomy in their choices of whether pull-out factors would impact their decision to graduate or drop out, characterized the segment of self-determination theory that concerns the need of an individual to experience choice and feel like the initiator of his or her actions. The fourth theme, personalized instruction supported student learning, and the fifth theme, one-on-one advising supported students' curricular and life decisions, denoted students' competence, as described in the last section of self-determination theory.

The essence of the phenomenon experienced in this study was one of resiliency. The former students who graduated from Passages and those who earned a GED after dropping out of Passages exhibited tenacity prior to attending the alternative high school. Their persistence was apparent in their willingness to maintain full-time employment while attending high school. Staff at the alternative high school offered support for both the graduates and those who dropped out.

## **Relationships Rather than Programs**

The former students could not recall a program or process at the alternative high school that contributed to their reengagement; however, they attributed the strength of the school to the relationships with the staff and other students. The former students perceived that their relationships with teachers, district staff, and fellow students were supportive and respectful. They spoke about the staff with affection.

Brothers Rick and Jim recalled that an employee, Ms. Martinez, guided them through the application and interview processes. Rick shared that Ms. Martinez told him repeatedly that she would be at his Passages interview and would check on him. “It’s more about the way they treat you...like a person, not like one of many...I can’t remember programs, but I can remember the people,” Rick said. Jim stated, “Ms. Martinez pushed for us because she knew how much we hated going to the [traditional] high school and that if we stayed there we were going to drop out, so it was the only shot we had at graduating.”

Cynthia described going to truancy court and the disappointment she felt with herself for her history of truancy and court summonses. She shared that while at truancy court, she decided to change her behavior and made the decision to attend the alternative high school. Cynthia said that her relationships with the staff and district personnel supported her throughout her time at the alternative high school. She shared that she had wanted to attend a school like Passages for years, but that she “didn’t even know that there was such a thing.”

Repeatedly, the former students spoke about the closeness of the students at the alternative high school and shared how they became a family to each other during their time at the alternative school. Albert described interactions with staff that kept him connected, even though he did not graduate. He shared,

I met Ms. Martinez in truancy court and she wouldn’t give up on me. She came here to my work to try to keep me coming ...[the campus director] was always telling my sister to get me to come back.

Tara said that the strength in the campus existed in its people. She said, “I’m still really close with some of them but if it wasn’t for going to Passages, I would never have gotten to know them. I don’t really remember programs...just...people. That’s what makes that place special, the people.” Tara’s expression of the close bond she was able to build with fellow students and staff at the alternative high school pointed to her reengagement in her education.

## **Push-out Factors**

The former students blamed push-out factors for their disengagement. They described feeling frustrated when they attempted to address issues that caused their disengagement with administrators at the traditional high school and reported feeling uncomfortable approaching counselors or administrators at their traditional campuses with outside life issues that were obstructing their educational goals. The former students described a sense of detachment from the traditional campus as a result of the treatment they experienced from office staff members,

teachers, and campus administrators, and from a lack of willingness of those individuals to meet with the students and their family members to discuss ways to reengage the students in their education.

Graduates Rick, Jim, and Tara shared that their experiences at their respective traditional high school never matched their expectations. Rick and Jim said that when they attempted to speak with the assistant principal about attendance, the assistant principal called them derogatory names like “losers who don’t value education.” The students were told that their school-related issues were their fault, and a result of not following the rules or for waiting too long to ask for help. Tara said that she never felt connected with anyone at either of the traditional high schools she attended. She believed that her home situation may have impacted her feelings. Tara stated, “I felt like I was reaching out to them, but they were either not wanting to get close to me because they thought I was going to leave or...it was just too much work.”

Some of the issues with the traditional high schools were systemic, such as zero tolerance policies that cause students to be assigned to in-school suspension after a pre-determined number of absences. Other push-out factors described by the former students included repeatedly being assigned to the disciplinary campus and sent to truancy court. The former students shared that these practices led to their course failure, which ultimately resulted in a loss of credits and being retained.

### **Autonomy in Decision Making**

The former students exercised autonomy in their choices of whether pull-out factors would impact their decision to graduate or dropout. They took on adult roles that impacted their education. Some worked 40 hours a week, became parents, and experienced difficulties navigating the educational system to self-advocate for services that could impact their education. The former students said that their parents either were carrying resentment from their own educational system interactions or were overwhelmed with language barriers, financial burdens, drug addictions, mental health issues, or divorce setbacks that hindered them from helping their children navigate the educational system.

Cynthia described how her father’s addiction forced her to work full time, which kept her from attending a traditional school. Cynthia served as the supporter of her family and started working at a fast food restaurant when she was 15. Her store manager was aware of her situation, and scheduled her to work for 40 hours a week. Cynthia shared that she was unable to pay attention in class and could not complete homework because she could not concentrate. “That’s when I just stopped going to school because it just got too hard. Going to the alternative high school made a huge difference,” she said. Scheduling at the alternative campus allowed Cynthia to work and attend school. She shared that during her junior year at Passages, she was allowed to attend school from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. so that she could work. On her days off, Cynthia attended school all day. “[Passages] even had a class [for which] I received credit for working,” she said.

Rick shared that he made up his mind that he was going to graduate from high school and that the alternative high school was the most logical place to achieve that goal. Rick said that he

and his brother went “from the high school where they ignored you and then sent you to truancy court to the alternative high school where they were way into your business.” He said that attending school was “a game I had to play if I really wanted to graduate. I needed to follow their rules, which was better than being back at my old high school, so I did.”

Jim said that he was determined to cast off negative perceptions in order to achieve his goal of graduation. He shared that Rick, his brother, committed to attending and finishing school and told Jim that he was sorry he had led him down the wrong path. Jim said, “Man, that hurt. It was my decision to skip when we were at our old school, and I didn’t want him to take that on. I decided there and then that I would take whatever [the campus director] dished out, but I was going to graduate.”

Albert did not graduate but was motivated to dispel the negative perception that he believed others had of him. He recalled an interaction with a teacher at the traditional high school during the time that he made the decision to leave the alternative high school. A high school English teacher handed out pamphlets that showed the average wage of high school graduates and high school dropouts. Albert said, “I think that’s the only thing that motivated me...I thought...even if I do drop out, I’m gonna [sic] make much more than that...I’m gonna prove them wrong.” Albert attended Passages for a year, but while there his father kicked him out. “I worked two jobs and went to school, but something had to give. It ended up having to be school. Looking back, sure it would have been great finishing back then, but I didn’t have the option,” he stated. Albert shared that he had a good job and made “way more money” than the pamphlet said he would. “You know I chose not to go back; I could have easily gone back...but they knew I was a problem child and they just singled me out,” he said.

Nina said she did not trust anyone at either school, which led to disengagement and eventual dropping out of school. She shared that teachers at her traditional school were not aware that she acted tired in class because she had worked late the night before:

They still want me to get up in front of the class to read or something and when the other kids laugh, they don’t say anything...it’s hard for us to ask for help and then they just push you and push you and nobody wants to help. I know what to say, we all do. We just say we are going back to Mexico or South America and they leave you alone.

## **Personalized Instruction**

Personalized instruction promoted a positive learning environment at Passages. The Passages teachers and administrators described advocating for student success by assisting students to find the support systems that students needed outside of the school setting and by helping students to manage systemic obstacles to support their educational growth. The former students described how their work was more individualized when teachers created projects that connected mathematics, social studies, and language arts together, which motivated them to apply classroom learning to real-world problems.

The former students described gaining ownership of their learning when they were given the responsibility of teaching what they had learned to other students in their class. Cynthia

recalled that groups were used at Passages to help students learn to work together. Tara said that she experienced cooperative learning for the first time at Passages. “There was always so much movement and interaction between us students...I really learned how to work with other people,” she said. Khalid shared that the alternative school staff members treated him like they wanted him there and that he felt like they wanted him to graduate. “They all wanted to help me. It wasn’t like my [traditional high] school,” he said.

English was not Khalid’s first language. He had attended three high schools in four years. At the second campus, he spent much of his time assigned to in-school suspension due to absences. Khalid shared that he experienced success when he was able to work one-on-one with a teacher at Passages who spent time guiding him through the coursework. Jim said that he was appreciate of how Passages students were assigned large projects and were allowed to “work in teams and all subjects at one time.” Students shared knowledge while the teacher served as a guide. “We got to find the answers ourselves and present why we thought what we thought. It wasn’t so much about right or wrong, but more about why, and we helped each other understand the why,” said Jim.

Although Trey did not graduate, he spoke about the smaller classes at Passages being helpful. Trey said that when he enrolled at Passages he was about a year and a half behind his peers, not counting a credit and a half he felt he had earned but had not received. Trey shared, “Because I was able to work on my stuff and not what they were teaching at my old school, I earned most of the credits I needed. That’s what smaller classes do for you.”

## **Advisors**

One-on-one advising at the alternative high school served as a support for the former students in their decision making in school and in their personal lives. The former students shared that the alternative school advisors helped them navigate their remaining time in high school and that the additional support received via this relationship provided an opportunity to discuss life issues such as being a parent, working 20 or more hours a week, and developing and managing goals.

Rick believed that his advisor cared for him on a personal level. He said that the advisor, “kept me on track and all, but he told you more about how things applied to life. So, if you did something stupid on the weekend, he let you know how stupid that was.” Albert described how his advisor was also his work-study teacher. After Albert dropped out of Passages, his advisor visited him at his job to encourage him to return to school. According to Albert, the advisors “get to know you on a one-on-one level...and...show more attention than they do at a normal high school.”

Tara shared that her advisor was the first person to point out that if her traditional campus had provided her with paperwork for homeless students, she might not have ended up at Passages. Tara said that the advisor suggested that she “use every experience to move forward, somehow,” and that was when she “first thought about attending college to study social work.” Cynthia recalled the helpful, at-ease relationships with her advisor and with other teachers. She

said that she could talk with them about both school and home issues. Cynthia shared what was going on at home with one teacher in particular:

She knew all the problems with my house...how the struggle was to go to school. I'm the first one to graduate from high school and I'm the first one to attend college, so I didn't know what to do, so they helped me go to...college seminars. They told me what classes to take my first semester, what I should do, what I should be looking for in college.

Cynthia's advisor relationship carried over from school to her home life. She sought guidance and reassurance from her teachers for her decisions and for the goals she was setting for herself after high school.

Jim described the relationship he and his advisor shared as collaborative. He said that his advisor treated him like an equal:

At the beginning, I really didn't want to talk, so she would just sit and wait for me to feel comfortable with her. It took a couple of weeks of us meeting almost every day, but then I realized she was for real. When I talked about going on to community college, she told me what steps I had to take. She walked me through things step by step.

The majority of former students felt that the assistance provided by Passages advisors went beyond coursework support and that the advisors helped them set and achieve goals for school, work, and life after school. The former students credited advising relationships with helping them to reengage in school. The students were helped to find their voices and learn to test relationships in a safe environment.

### **Discussion and Implications**

This study confirmed the research of Balfanz et al. (2015), who found that relationships impact students' capacity for growth. The former students found support at Passages through relationships they built with staff members and fellow students; however, it was their personal persistence that moved them forward. The teachers and administrators described how their role as educators was to support students' success by dismantling systemic obstacles within the educational sphere and by helping students find networks to support their needs outside of school. Students' feelings of connection to their school can stem from building relationships with caring adults who can offer support (Bloom & Unterman, 2014; Boylan & Renzulli, 2014; Freeman et al., 2015).

The former students credited the success of their alternative school experiences to relationships forged, not to programs or processes. The teachers and administrators believed that meeting the students where they were and guiding them in an overt way positively influenced student success. Campuses should be designed as spaces for students to work with peers and participate in small-group instruction. Doing so can lead to higher student achievement and increased graduation rates (Booyesen & Grosser, 2014; Slaten, Irby, Tate, & Rivera, 2015).

Whether they were graduates or dropouts, all of the former students described feeling disengaged or pushed-out from their traditional high school. The former students were able to pinpoint when they became disengaged from school. They described making a decision not to follow a school or home rule that took the decision to stay in school out of their hands. The former students shared that they were pulled out of school by the need to work and cited family issues or friends as contributing to their decision to graduate or drop out of school. Whether they graduated from or dropped out of the alternative school, they appeared to take ownership of most of their decisions and actions.

Disengagement behaviors such as skipping school or disrupting class can be warning signs that a student may be about to leave school. Districts must develop early warning systems for all grade levels, assist campuses in the implementation of these systems to monitor disengagement behaviors, and design interventions to support students who are in need. Students should only be removed from direct instruction for extreme situations, and there should be an appropriate instructional recovery plan for every student who is removed from the classroom.

The former students found support for their decision making at the alternative school via personalized instruction and one-on-one advising. The alternative campus staff worked to develop relationships to nurture students during their time at the school. The teachers and administrators described that even when they had a room filled of students, providing one-on-one instruction supported student learning. The teachers spoke about how fulfilling it was to see students succeed after they had faced so much adversity while at their traditional high schools.

The teacher and administrator participants attributed part of the success of the alternative campus to its small size. Prospective students were required to submit an application and participate in an interview with the director and counselor. The process helped staff regulate the number of students entering the school and ascertain whether prospective students realized that they were responsible for their actions.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The former students took on adult roles that impacted their education. They described pull-out factors that led them to seek alternative education. While attending the alternative school, adult roles caused some participants added stress that they were unable to overcome. Further research is needed to explore how to support students who take on adult roles. Although researchers such as Karcher (2008), Rhodes (2008), and Rodriguez-Planas (2012) have found that mentoring leads to a greater connectedness to culturally different peers for elementary boys and high school-aged girls, additional studies are needed to examine the relationship between mentoring and student academic outcomes and their impact on high school students.

### **Summary**

While students across the U.S. are graduating at higher rates, some students continue to drop out of high school. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore factors for school disengagement and reengagement using the lens of self-determination theory. The former students in this study exhibited resiliency. The tenacity of the former students who graduated and

those who earned a GED after dropping out of the alternative high school appeared to drive them to pursue their educational goals.

The former students perceived that relationships between staff members and students were key to the alternative high school's success. They believed that push-out factors at the traditional high school caused their disengagement, and that they exercised autonomy in their choices of whether pull-out factors would impact their decision to graduate or drop out. The former students shared that personalized instruction and peer-to-peer learning encouraged them to own their learning and taught them to respect fellow students and teachers. They perceived that one-on-one advising supported their learning and decision making outside of school.

The teachers and administrators described how deliberate planning for student success and the advisee/advisor relationship contributed to students' decisions in and out of the classroom. Although the teachers and administrators shared that they created a path for the former students to complete the necessary coursework required to graduate from high school, the staff members said that they understood that the students were ultimately responsible for following through by attending school and completing assigned work. While the former students found support at the alternative high school through the relationships, they built with staff members and fellow students, it was their own persistence that moved them toward success.

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# ***Influence of Parental Involvement on Students' Success in Title I Charter School in Texas as Perceived by Middle School Principals***

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Research has shown a positive correlation between parental involvement and student achievement (Martin, 2015). According to Batista (2009), any factors that help to increase students' achievement should be seriously considered in an effort to meet the demand for higher achievement and improve successful school systems. LaFolette (2014) argued that quality parental involvement is one of the key factors increasing student achievement and has become a vital and essential element in school improvement efforts. Harris and Goodall (2008) claimed that parental involvement is one of the most effective school improvement strategies and increases student' success at schools.

Since educators in state and federal government want to improve schools and the nation's report card, principals have a crucial responsibility to ensure their students are successful (Schubert, 2010). Yet, as students move into middle and high school parental involvement significantly decreases (Burke, 2006; Hartas, 2014). Archibald, Grabber, and Brooks-Gunn (2008) suggested that the biological and social changes young adults experience starting in their middle school years influence their academic motivation. Thus, parental involvement becomes more important during early adolescence. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) posited that parents' and educators' aims differ on parental involvement, student success, and the role of parents. In addition, Bower and Griffin (2011) indicated that educators have not clearly defined or understood the forms of parental involvement in middle school, resulting in low parental involvement and low student achievement.

The National Alliance of Public Charter School (NAPCS) (2017a) defines charter schools as schools that are open enrolled tuition-free public schools, run privately and funded by the state. Charter schools are a new concept to the public education system and operate under a performance contract or charter that lets them be innovative and flexible. The number of charter schools has reached over 6,900 nationwide, serving more than three million students in the United States during the 2016-17 school year. Charter schools serve mostly minority populations (NAPCS, 2017) and will continue to grow in Texas as well.

Schubert (2010) argued that principals are the leaders of the school setting the tone of the school culture and of daily interactions with parents and the community in a variety of ways.

Their perspectives on parental involvement set the expectation and serve as an important model for the staff and teachers. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological narrative study was to explore the influence of parental involvement on students' success in Title I charter schools in Texas as perceived by middle school principals.

### **What We Know about Parental Involvement**

Concerns about lack of parental involvement have been an issue in US schools (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010; White, 2007). Historically, educators and public officials have raised concerns about lack of parental involvement in schools (Watson, Sanders-Lawson, & McNeal, 2012). Englund, Egeland, and Collins (2008) argued that children's educational success relies on the support both parents and teachers received to develop positive interpersonal relationships with children. Barnyak and McNelly (2009) emphasized that school leaders should create a strong partnership with parents and a promising atmosphere for students' learning and parental involvement to improve school success. In addition, Schubert (2010) suggested that principals play a crucial role in effectiveness and continued partnerships with parents in school. Cox-Petersen (2011) asserted, "Partnerships are necessary to obtain high educational achievement for all students – regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, family make-up, or ethnic group" (p. 16).

Historically, school administrators and teachers have voiced concerns about parental involvement in their schools, especially as it pertains to the academic, psychological, and physiological welfare of children (Watson et al., 2012). Parental involvement and its influence on children's education have received more attention with the worldwide changes in politics, history, and the economy (Radisic, 2010). Gordon and Seashore-Louis (2009) argued that school leaders need to make more holistic and authentic efforts to address the issues in their community to increase the level of school success.

The success of the students' academic achievement correlates with the ability of principals to navigate the needs of the community. Fuligni and Fuligni (2007) argued that in addition to principals' leadership ability, another factor that influences students' success is parent involvement. Warren (2010) noted that many research studies have revealed that parental involvement increases student success. Thus, having partnerships and effective communication with families is crucial for schools. As the school climate becomes more parent-friendly (Hornby, 2000), parents become more engaged and feel comfortable becoming involved in school events. According to the US Department of Education (2011), parental involvement becomes more important in Title I schools since they generally are lower performing and of lower socio-economic status with less parental involvement and are required to create parental involvement plans and provide academic support to low-income students identified as academically behind or at risk of failing to increase student achievement.

The principal is key in creating a parent-friendly school environment (Epstein & Rodriguez-Jansorn, 2004) and implementing a leadership style that allows parents opportunities to be heard (Stelmach & Preston, 2008). Batista (2009) claimed that principals are the primary component of implementing parental involvement strategies in schools and that they must be aware of the impact of attitudes as they communicate the objective. Scanlan (2010) suggested

that strong school-home communication, principals' personal attention towards parental involvement, and the strategies they implement in their schools reduce the barriers toward parental involvement.

The role of the principal has been redefined which includes expectations for nurturing effective relationships with parents and provide a school atmosphere where parents feel valued and important (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009). Rapp and Duncan (2012) suggested that principals are the key component of students' academic success by establishing a school culture that values parental involvement.

### Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological narrative study was to explore the influence of parental involvement on students' success in Title I charter schools in Texas as perceived by middle school principals. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the most effective practices principals implement regarding parental involvement?
2. What challenges do principals encounter regarding parental involvement and how can these be overcome?

A phenomenological narrative research approach was employed to collect and analyze all participants' perceptions on parental involvement in this study, with a focus on the investigation of the common perceptions of principals. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for this study (Creswell, 2009). A sample of 10 middle school principals of Title I charter schools in Texas who had served at least one full year as a principal in his/her current school or had previously served as a principal at least one full year at another Title I charter school with grade sixth through eighth grade were interviewed. All principal names in this study are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Demographic information of participants is shown in Table 1, including school locations, grade levels served and school populations. All principals were located in urban areas of Texas from five different charter school districts.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	School Location	Grade
Mrs. Shelly	White	F	Duncanville	K-8
Mr. Manfield	Asian-Indian	M	Cedar Hill	K-12
Mr. Clear	African-American	M	South Dallas	5-6
Mr. Alan	Asian	M	Arlington	K-12
Mrs. Katy	White	F	Grand Prairie	K-8
Mr. Bill	White	M	Waco	6-12
Mr. Gilbert	White	M	Garland	7-12
Mr. Dan	White	M	Austin	6-12
Mr. Arthur	White	M	Austin	6-12
Mr. Mark	White	M	Austin	K-8

The researcher used convenience and snowball sampling in this study in addition to purposeful sampling. Creswell (2011) suggested that when the participants were willing to participate, the researcher could use convenience sampling. If convenience sampling is used, the researcher could use snowball sampling by asking participants to suggest new participants for the study. An invitation was extended first to all Title I middle school principals in Dallas Fort Worth, Texas. Principals who accepted the invitation were asked to suggest new principals until the expected number of participants had been reached. After reaching 10 participants, the researcher contacted them via an invitation letter sent by email to set the interview times and methods. Before the interview, the researcher collected consent to participate forms from each participant.

For this qualitative phenomenological study, Creswell's (2003) recommendations were used to structure the data, code the data, and represent the data. The researcher analyzed the data using the comparative method to identify themes after reading over all transcribed interviews. In each interview a "general sense of the information" (Creswell, 2009, p. 185) was considered to obtain the information. The most significant statements from each interview were recorded (Creswell, 2007) and organized into "chunks or segments" (Creswell, 2009, p. 186).

## **Discussion of Findings**

This qualitative phenomenological narrative study explored the influence of parental involvement on students' success in Title I charter schools in Texas as perceived by middle school principals. Specific findings based on this study are discussed by the research questions.

### **Research Question One**

The first question investigated effective practices and strategies principals have regarding parental involvement. Emergent themes included the following: open door policies, home visit programs, suggested activities at home, effective communication practices, parent-teacher communication routines, parent programs and activities, and involving parents in decision-making processes.

**Open door policy.** All 10 principals who participated in this study mentioned that having an open-door policy was an effective and important communication tool for principals. All charter school principals considered their parents either customers or partners or both. Therefore, they believed that being available for their customers or partners is very important to keep parents happy and satisfied and to maintain relationships at a high level.

Mr. Alan emphasized that having an open-door policy was very important to help parents get involved in school. An open-door policy meant that he was available for parents anytime they needed him, such as answering their calls and being available to meet with parents when needed.

Mr. Gilbert said that having a school-wide open-door policy provided a consensus among teachers that said, "parents come first." Mr. Clear highlighted that an open-door policy would

work as long as principals communicate it to parents. He said it would tell parents “I am approachable, do not hesitate to contact me.”

**Home visit program.** Seven of the 10 principals mentioned that they conduct home visits with their parents and students throughout the year. The other three principals acknowledged that, if they had such a program, it would increase the parental involvement.

Mr. Bill explained that the home visit creates an opportunity to provide information about upcoming events, school expectations and to get feedback from parents. Mr. Allan said that even though they had been offering different activities at the school for parents there were still parents that would not come to any of them. He said, “At this point, our home visit program helps us to reach out the other parents.” While he acknowledged that conducting home visit was not easy since it is done either after school or over the weekend, each year more of his teachers participated in the program. He emphasized that it is direct communication in an “unofficial” setting.

Mr. Gilbert stated that as a part of their communication efforts, he had been promoting a home visit program at his school. Mr. Dan said that when he started the home visit program a few years ago because only a few teachers participated. However, for the past two years teachers have received an incentive per home visit, which helped him to have more teachers participate in the program.

**Suggested activities at home.** All 10 principals in this study agreed that parents should be involved in children’s education at home. The most common parental involvement activities that were expected; asking questions about school, checking homework, discussing any issue their children had in school and closely monitoring their children’s academic and disciplinary progress by checking the student information system on their school websites.

Mr. Manfield emphasized that a great deal of parental involvement happens at home. He asks his parents to create an atmosphere conducive to studying at home, following children’s progress, giving them a place to study, and emphasizing to their children the importance.

Mrs. Shelly provided her two best parental involvement activities which could be done at home:

Asking parents to make it a priority in their head, making it a discussion in their home every day of learning, looking at their child's assignment sheet every day, asking them if they've done their homework, checking to see if they've done their homework and two, having them understand that they don't know everything as a parent.

**Effective communication practice.** One of the emergent themes in this study was effective communication practices used by charter school principals. All 10 principals in this study emphasized that communication was vital both for school and for parents. Principals in this study stated that they communicated with their parents on a regular basis using multiple tools. For example, Mr. Dan mentioned that they communicated with their parents through emails, newsletters, using a school messenger system and organizing multiple events throughout the

year. He realized that they needed to send hard copies of the newsletter or any announcements in a folder. He explained:

I noticed that not all parents use emails very often or read the news from our websites. Therefore, we discussed that we should go back to old system and use parent envelopes or a folder system. We had a folder for each student, and we printed copies of all announcements and placed them in that folder. It was sent to parents every week on Wednesday, and by Friday students must have returned the envelope to their homeroom teachers after parents signed communication log on it.

**Parent-teacher communication routines.** All the principals in this study required their teachers to contact parents either weekly or biweekly through email, newsletter or face-to face meeting. All schools had a certain number of parent teacher conferences scheduled throughout the year as well.

When principals asked to list when teachers communicate with parents, the first thing they listed was asking teachers to communicate when negative things happen in classrooms rather than positive things. For example, Mr. Shelly emphasized:

Anytime they have an issue with lack of progress or if they see a pattern that they feel like needs to be corrected I encourage them to contact the parent. Anytime there is a behavioral issue, we contact the parent.

**Parent programs and activities.** Each principal who participated in this study mentioned that they offered a variety of parent activities based on their communities' needs. Seven of the ten principals had a parent teacher organization (PTO) at their school. A few of those principals preferred to call their parent organization something different. For example, Mrs. Shelly called it PAC, Parents Achieving Community, and she made every single parent a part of this community.

**Parents in decision-making process.** Six of the ten principals who participated in this study mentioned that they had a site-based decision-making committee consisting of parents, teachers, students and community members. Mrs. Shelly said that her decision-making committee met on an as-needed basis rather than meeting regularly throughout the year. She added, "This was a very effective way to involve parents and create ownership." She believed that having parent representatives in this committee enabled her to represent her school voice appropriately in district meetings.

## **Research Question Two**

The second question investigated the challenges that middle school principals encounter on parental involvement and how they overcome these challenges. Emergent themes included the following: language barrier, parents' work schedules, not having up-to-date contact information, parents getting upset with rules and regulations, lack of knowledge on cultural awareness among teachers, parents' lack of time and family issues.

**Language barrier.** Four of the ten principals listed “language barrier” as their first challenge at their schools. For example, Mr. Arthur said that half of his parents were Hispanic with limited English and he had to have a translator in each meeting he had in school. Mr. Dan mentioned that having a high population of parents with limited or no English was another reason for low parental involvement in his school. He said that he hired bilingual secretaries in the front office to communicate with his parents.

**Parent’s work schedule.** Parent work schedules and parents working multiple jobs were another challenge mentioned by all principals who participated in this study. Mr. Dan said:

Since more than half of my students are coming from low-income families, their parents have different jobs to make money for living. Most of my parents have different jobs, multiple work places, and their schedule is not good for them to attend our meetings. We try to schedule our events on different times and dates, but it does not always help them to attend.

**Not having up-to-date contact information.** Mr. Gilbert mentioned that one of his biggest challenges was not having all teachers communicate with their parents on time. After saying that he added, “Most of the time it was because of not having the current contact information of parents.” He said:

A common problem at charter schools is parents don’t update their current contact information and we can’t reach them. When we mail the letters, they are returned by the post office because of wrong addresses. Or, when I email them, it will bounce back.

**Parents get upset with rules and regulations.** Four of the participants mentioned that parents do not understand the position of a charter school and see it as completely different from public schools, which leads them to request unreasonable things. When these requests are not fulfilled by school personnel, they get upset and keep their relationship with the school to a minimum. For example, Mr. Clear said:

I know a lot of times parents want to ask me about another student’s grades, or another student’s home life, or what did this student do to get in trouble, or my child got in trouble so what are you going to do other child? Or they ask, “Can I bring a pizza for the entire lunch room?” Even though it is good to have a parent that would provide pizza to all students, you know that we just can’t do that. Parents get upset and don’t want to understand the regulations and wants to see the law. They think that it is my rule and it is me not letting them eat outside food in school.

**Lack of knowledge on cultural awareness among teachers.** Three of the participants mentioned that there is a lack of information about cultural awareness among teachers. Mr. Mark said:

I have new and veteran teachers, but most of them have no idea about how to approach the needs of their students who come from different backgrounds. Home visit programs helped a lot to solve this problem, since they have seen the background behind some of

their students' behavioral issues when they visited them at home. I also provided training to all of my staff about cultural awareness.

**Lack of time.** Seven of the participants mentioned that parents have difficulty finding time to stop by school. Most of the parents come only to drop their children off in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon. Mr. Manfield shared:

Parents don't have time to stop by the school, schedule a meeting or even answer the call. So, I feel we should establish a system where we tell them what we are willing to do and what we expect from them and it has to be an ongoing process throughout the year.

**Family issues.** Nine of the participants stated that family issues such as being a single parent, having multiple jobs and financial concerns are common challenges that they encounter. For example, Mr. Manfield said:

I think the parental involvement has got to do a lot with their financial situation, their social situation, their family situation and their own approach and attitude towards the whole thing. So, it is a process. If you take a little bit [of a] step back and watch those school districts that [are] not doing too well on parental involvement, you will find that a lot of them have family problems. Unless a family is stable themselves, you know, how are they going to be involved in other things?

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This study investigated the influence of parental involvement on students' success in Title I charter schools in Texas as perceived by middle school principals. The number of charter schools has reached over 6,900 nationwide, serving more than three million students in the United States during the 2016-17 school year (NAPCS, 2017a). According to NAPCS (2017b), charter schools serve mostly minority populations and will continue to grow in Texas as well.

The findings from this study affirm the conclusion that all principals strongly believe parental involvement influences students' success (Harris & Goodall, 2008; LaFollette, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004; Warren, 2010). Principals believe that visibility is important in positively impacting parental involvement at the school. This visibility creates a welcoming atmosphere for parents (Epstein, 2010; Bauch & Goldring, 2000; Gibbs & Slate, 2003).

Research findings from this study suggest that these principals go above and beyond expectations to create meaningful programs and opportunities such as conducting home visits to increase parental involvement. The principals in this study emphasized that parental involvement should continue at home by asking question about school, checking homework, discussing any issue they had in school, closely monitoring their children's academic and disciplinary progress by checking the student information system on their school websites and sharing their expectations and goals with their kids (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007; Patel & Stevens, 2010).

Effective communication and using a variety of communication tools are important in decreasing miscommunication between parents and schools. The findings in this study also lead

to the conclusion that principals understood the importance of communication by implementing different strategies to create an open line of communication between parents and schools. In addition to using regular email communication or sending newsletters, most of the principals in this study utilized social media accounts like Facebook or Twitter, smart applications like Remind101, school messenger and even home visit programs (Arnold, Perry, Watson, Minatra, & Swartz, 2006).

The findings from this study revealed that language barriers, parents' work schedules, not having up-to-date contact information, parents getting upset with rules and regulations, lack of time, lack of knowledge among teachers and family issues were the most common challenges that principals encountered (Hill & Tyson, 2009; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Research findings suggest that principals implemented different strategies to overcome these problems such as hiring bilingual staff, providing translators at their meetings, having a phone system that provides translators in any language, and creating better schedules for parents by offering the events at multiple different times during the day and week (Michaela, 2006; Payne, 2006; Rapp & Duncan, 2012).

Thus, findings from this study suggest the conclusion that there is a need for principals to become familiar with their school population's needs for effective parental involvement. Educators would benefit from contacting parents earlier in the year and share their expectations and educate them about differences and similarities between charter schools and public schools. Also, there is a need for principals to have a more inclusive schedule by planning parent events on multiple different times based on parents' work schedule and provide childcare, transportation, translators and meal to increase parent involvement in school events.

Findings from this study lead to the conclusion that the principals should be more innovative and flexible to reach their parents. Schools are getting more diverse every day. School leaders, teachers and staff need training about socio-cultural context of diverse families and need to learn more about cross-cultural interaction to engage parents in schools.

The principals could increase parental involvement by being visible and available to their parents. There is a need for principals to look for up-to-date effective communication tools that implement current technology that are user friendly and social media used often by parents to keep them aware. They also use current technology and social media to reach out their parents.

There is a need to provide the best school environment not only for students but also for parents. Demand for charter schools will continue to grow across the nation. While having more charter schools, it is important to know what charter school principals are doing on their campuses to support parental involvement, which in turn means more successful charter schools.

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# ***An Examination of Adult Bullying in the K-12 Workplace: Implications for School Leaders***

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School administrators and school boards have spent considerable time and energy addressing student bullying in K-12 schools, and rightfully so; however, less attention has been directed toward the issue of workplace bullying among school personnel in K-12 schools. All states now have laws (and/or require school districts to adopt policies) to prevent and resolve verbal, physical and/or cyber bullying directed towards children in schools (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). This has served to heighten awareness of the devastating effects bullying has on children and the importance of proactively addressing it in schools. Student bullying, however, is not the only form of bullying that takes place in schools. "Bullying can occur anywhere in a school and can be perpetrated by anyone in that school. Bullies can be students or adults" (Parsons, 2005, p. 38). Discussing the differences between bullying of students in schools and workplace bullying in schools, Badzmirowski (2016) noted that "both school and workplace bullying can result in devastating consequences for targets, schools, organizations, and the perpetrators themselves" (para. 15). Whether student bullying or adult bullying, the negative impact on both the target and the workplace/learning environment can be significant for school leaders and stakeholders.

Understanding the nature and extent of adult bullying in K-12 schools is somewhat challenging as there is relatively little research directly on point, as opposed to the more general body of research on workplace bullying. As a result, this study was conducted to quantify the prevalence and characteristics of adult-on-adult bullying in the school workplace. Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are made to help school leaders provide a safe, non-threatening environment for all members of the school community.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Greenberg's (2007) theory of organizational justice has been used to advance adult bullying research in the general workplace. The term *organizational justice* broadly describes the study of people's perceptions of fairness in organizations (Greenberg & Cropanzano, 2001). More specifically, Greenberg outlined three domains of organizational justice: 1) *Distributive Justice*—The perceived fairness of the distribution of rewards and resources between parties; 2) *Procedural Justice*—The perceived fairness of the methods and procedures used as the basis for making decisions; and 3) *Interactional Justice*—The perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment accorded others in the course of communicating with them. Bies (2001) further developed the domain of interactional justice into four categories: derogatory judgments, deception, invasion of privacy, and disrespect (p. 101). Bies utilized these four categories to study the interpersonal treatment and social interaction of people within organizations, which included the issue of adult-on-adult bullying. Greenberg's theory of organizational justice and Bies' four categories of interactional justice were used to frame this study of adult-on-adult bullying in the K-12 workplace.

## Background Literature

While there is an abundance of research related to student-on-student bullying in schools, there is a gap in the literature regarding adult-on-adult bullying in the K-12 workplace. Only a limited number of such studies exist. As a result, much of the background literature reviewed herein consists of studies conducted to examine the occurrence and ramifications of adult bullying in the general workplace. For example, studies show that up to one-third of adults experience bullying in their workplace (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2009; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010), resulting in a profound effect on the target's life and career (Namie, 2014; Namie & Namie, 2009; National Education Association, 2012; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2007). The effects of workplace bullying often play out in the personal life of the target. Namie & Namie (2000), Von Bergen, Zavaletta, and Soper (2006), and the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (2008) reported physical, mental, and psychosomatic health symptoms in targets that may persist for years, and the Workplace Bullying Institute (2007) reported 45% of targets had stress-related health problems. To state that adult bullying is a significant issue in the workplace is an understatement.

### What is Adult Bullying?

There is a consensus among practitioners and academics that bullying is the repeated, persistent, nonphysical mistreatment of a person that threatens the psychological integrity, safety, and health of the target (Namie & Namie, 2009). Keashly (2010) described workplace bullying as "persistent relational aggression" (p. 18). Duffy (2009) identified a list of examples describing the phenomenon of bullying in the workplace, including spreading false information about a worker, failing to correct false information, spreading malicious gossip, discrediting a person's work performance, making personal character attacks, minimizing job-related competencies and exaggerating job-related limitations, isolating a worker physically or by not including them in communication loops required to do their jobs, or belittling them. According to Gibbs (2007), bullying behavior may also include nonverbal actions directed at the target such as crude gestures, eye rolling, and head shaking.

Adult bullying can be a nearly invisible, non-physical, sub-lethal source of workplace violence. Namie (2003) described bullying as mostly covert psychological violence. Bullying, either in the form of verbal assaults or actions taken against the target to render them unproductive and unsuccessful, implies the bully's desire to control the target. Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott (1999) identified additional factors that occur with frequency and in various combinations to describe what they call the mobbing syndrome: assaults on the dignity, integrity, credibility, and professional competence of employees; negative, humiliating, intimidating, abusive, malevolent, and controlling communication; portraying the victimized person as being at fault; engineered to discredit, confuse, intimidate, isolate, and force the person into submission; committed with the intent to force the person out (p. 41). Although all bullying is reprehensible, it is important to note that not all bullying is equal in the eyes of the law.

## **Bullying Versus Harassment**

Bullying is different from harassment. *Harassment* is legally defined as discrimination against a protected class such as race, sex, or disability (Washington State Department of Labor & Industry, 2008). All harassment is bullying, but not all bullying is harassment. Namie (2003) pointed out that bullying is not illegal, which makes it easy for society and organizations to ignore, even though it is "three times more prevalent than its better-recognized, illegal forms" (p. 2) of mistreatment. Much of what constitutes adult bullying does not reach the threshold of harassment; nevertheless, adult bullying does not have to be illegal to have a tremendously adverse impact on workplace culture.

## **Culture of the Workplace**

Several organizational studies have examined the factors that contribute to workplace bullying and abuse. For example, Duffy (2009) described how organizations sometimes perpetuate bullying through inaction or inadequate response. Duffy also observed that workplace abuse is not always aimed in one direction (i.e., top-down) but can also be multidirectional within an organization. Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracy (2012) noted that bullying manifests itself in organizations where leaders disregard or minimize the mistreatment of workers. Hodson, Roscigno, and Lopez (2006) also concluded that job insecurity and organizational practices create chaotic work environments that allow for the substitution of bullying for more civil interactions. Keashly (2010) examined the systemic nature of bullying within organizations and how an organization's structure and processes "play pivotal roles in whether and how bullying is manifested" (p. 17). Keashly (2010) observed that "the systemic nature of bullying ... has researchers and professionals calling for organizational leaders and managers to take responsibility for leading the efforts in prevention and management of workplace bullying" (p. 17). Other studies underscore the incentive employers have to confront adult bullying based on the havoc it creates within the organization.

In a study conducted to examine the adverse impact adult bullying has on workplace productivity, Waggoner (2003) concluded that bullying disrupts work patterns and the effectiveness of targets and others within an organization. Similarly, Pearson, Andersson, and Porath (2000) reported on their survey results which showed that, out of 775 responses, incivility distracted over 50% of employees at work, and those employees completed less work as a result; 28% reported they lost work time trying to avoid a bully; and 22% reported not doing their best work due to workplace incivility. Research conducted by Lutgen-Sandvik (2006) revealed the lengths to which targets will attempt to resist bullying in ways that can be disruptive to the workplace. Quitting or transferring to other departments is often the first line of resistance, followed by joining with coworkers to develop a collective voice and provide mutual advocacy. Resisters developed influential allies, filed grievances, and documented bullying incidents. Subversive disobedience, labor withdrawal, and working-to-rule provided further avenues for resistance.

Unfortunately, research also indicates that reporting adult bullying behavior up the organizational chain seldom brings the relief one might expect. One study found that when bullying behavior is reported to a bully's manager, targets received positive help in only 18% of

cases, but in 42% of reported cases, management responses actually made the situation worse, and in 40% of cases, management chose not to provide any response at all (Namie, 2003). Similarly, the same study found that when targets reported cases to their human resources department, only 17% received positive help; in 32% of cases, the situation got worse; and in 51% of the cases, HR departments did nothing (Namie, 2003). Namie, Namie, and Lutgen-Sandvik (2009) astutely reflected that, "Doing nothing is not a neutral response to when an individual asks for relief" (p. 12). Worse yet, some managers respond in a way that compounds the problem. Hout (2016) provided an example of the dilemma many targets of workplace bullying face: "You might believe that if you report the workplace bullying to management they will see that it is wrong and is undermining the productivity of the workplace. In most cases management does not thank you. Instead they attack you and join with the bully" (Learn How To section, para. 2).

Bullying not only affects the target but also negatively affects employees witnessing the workplace abuse. Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) conducted research with non-bullied employees who witnessed bullying within an organization and results showed elevated negativity, stress, decreased work satisfaction, and decreased rating of their work experiences. This research provided insight into the broader implications of workplace bullying for organizations and the impact of bullying on workgroups, thus pointing out that "bullying is not simply an interpersonal issue, but is an organizational dynamic that impacts all who are exposed" (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007, p. 855).

Employers must consider the impact of negative emotional behavior on productivity and be willing to change the rules (or in some cases enforce existing rules) to stop bullying (Namie, 2003). When employers recognize that bullies create toxic work environments, drive out talented employees, create high turnover, increase health premiums due to work-related stress, make recruitment and retention difficult, and negatively impact the employer's reputation, policy development needs to follow. Salin (2003) concluded that if organizations lack a workplace bullying policy and provide no monitoring of, or punishment for, bullying behavior, bullying becomes acceptable behavior within the organization.

## **Studies in K-12**

Even though educators have experience and training in dealing with student bullying, it was not until 2009 that the Sioux City Community School District in Iowa became the first school district in the United States to implement a comprehensive anti-bullying policy and system for teachers and staff (Namie et al., 2009). The policy (Sioux City Community Schools, 2015) defined adult bullying behavior and listed consequences for violating the policy (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010). The district developed teams to educate all employees about bullying, create a school culture intolerant of bullying among adults, and to model appropriate behavior for students. Namie et al. (2009) importantly observed that, "It is a logical step to see that the quality of interpersonal relationships among the adults is the context for student behavior or misconduct" (p. 14). In other words, if schools want to tackle the important issue of student bullying, then it behooves school leaders to ensure that adult interactions provide positive models for students to emulate.

Although there are limited studies examining adult bullying in K-12 workplaces, it would appear that adult bullying is just as prevalent in the K-12 environment as it is in the more generalized workplace in spite of the advanced training many K-12 employees have regarding the issue of student bullying. Hall's (2005) research showed that teachers in K-12 schools, even though trained in identifying student bullying, were reluctant to report adult bullying and often viewed being the target as their own fault. Like their counterparts in other helping professions such as nursing and counseling, teachers targeted by bullies were self-confident, conscientious, and skillful before the bullying started; however, teachers reported their health suffered while trying to comply with overwhelming demands and coping with the workplace abuse directed toward them (Hall, 2005). Interestingly, Hall also reported that while the bullied teachers tried to figure out what happened and how to correct the situation, they felt emotional distress and trapped by their inability to transfer easily to another school district.

One study in particular revealed the devastating consequences of adult bullying in the K-12 workplace. Gibbs (2007) interviewed teachers who had a strong commitment to and passion for teaching to determine the aftermath of workplace bullying on their teaching ability, as well as their ability to locate another position if fired or if they had left their position voluntarily. Gibbs (2007) concluded that bullying of teachers by teachers left the target with a sense of powerlessness, high levels of stress, negative impacts on job performance, and long-term emotional effects. Targets indicated a lack of administrative support after they reported the bullying, sabotage and manipulative behavior by the bully, jealousy of the target from the bully, verbal and non-verbal abuse, and the bullying teachers' desire for power and control.

Another study analyzed and described the effects bullying has on teachers when the perpetrator is the building principal (Blase & Blase, 2003a, 2003b). Blase and Blase found that bullying principals' direct and indirect behavior toward teachers caused fear, trapped and isolated teachers, damaged health and reputations, and caused problems within the school environment and in the personal life of the bullied target. Teachers who complained of mistreatment were subjected to "vicious methods to suppress, punish, and intimidate them" (Blase & Blase, 2003a, p. 75).

Many times, the adult bully in a K-12 workplace is a fellow teacher. Malahy (2015) studied the frequency, demographic factors, and possible K-12 workplace policies (or lack thereof) that inadvertently contribute to teacher-on-teacher bullying in a number of Illinois schools. Malahy's mixed methods research results showed that 18.9% of teachers surveyed indicated they had been bullied in the past six months, and 72.6% of teachers had observed teacher bullying behavior in their schools. Of all the schools examined in this study only one school district had a workplace bullying policy.

In another look at adult bullying among peers, Mazzarella's (2018) qualitative study investigated the reported experiences of adult-on-adult bullying among certified school professionals in New Jersey K-12 public schools. Interviews conducted with targets of adult bullying were analyzed to focus on how bullies bully, the psychological and career impact of bullying on the target, the support or lack of support experienced by those bullied, and the characteristics of school and school district cultures. Mazzarella found that in spite of a focus on student bullying in schools, "little attention is paid to bullying among school adults; that there

were few, if any, persons to whom the target could safely speak; and that the power of the bullies was a significant factor” (p. 171). Mazzerall’s findings reinforce the conclusions of previous studies that indicate adult bullying is a formidable issue in the K-12 workplace and is often overlooked.

Examining the impact of the bullying culture in schools, Parsons (2005) observed that, "Adult bullies often attempt to undermine and subvert the work of the most talented, creative, independent, and self-assured teachers on staff, without regard to how it is affecting the school" (p. 47). Parsons concluded that the problem of student bullying will not be resolved until school boards, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students work together to eradicate bullying at all levels. Interestingly, while Parsons emphasized that "boards of education and their designated school managers...share the responsibility for ensuring that their schools are bully-free" (p. 77), he also acknowledged that "school boards are as prone to bullying as any individual; only the methods differ" (p. 81). Such findings underscore the complexity of this issue in the K-12 workplace.

Some have looked to unions and contract language to address the issue of adult bullying in K-12 schools. For example, Hall (2005) suggested teachers approach their union representatives with complaints involving workplace abuse and bullying but recognized that not all teachers have union representation. Hall urged unions to advocate for safe workplaces and support anti-bullying legislation. The National Education Association (2012) also suggested contacting local union representatives for bullying assistance but recognized that no federal or state law offers protection against adult workplace bullying. Modeling what can be done to address this issue at the bargaining table, the Winchester Massachusetts Education Association (2013) approved contract language stating, "Inappropriate forms of communication, including but not limited to bullying, demeaning, sarcastic or unprofessional comments with/to a staff member will not be tolerated," and added that, "no administrator shall demean, bully, reprimand, or otherwise speak about a personal or professional matter regarding a staff member to another staff member or in the presence of another staff member or in any public forum" (Article 1, Sec. D). Similar contract language or local district policy would appear to be a step in the right direction as it sheds light on the issue and sets forth expectations for collegiality.

Finally, the role of school leadership in preventing workplace bullying was the focus of a study by Waggoner (2003) who found that administrators often ignored bullying behavior among adults. Further, Wagoner found that although some school districts had policies on student bullying and sexual harassment, they generally did not have policies defining adult bullying nor did they have policies providing procedures for dealing with workplace abuse. Waggoner urged school districts to address the problem of adult bullying by recognizing that bullying is not a joke but malicious behavior with consequences; that administrators set the tone for the school and how their leadership styles resolve conflict; that schools must adopt a workplace abuse policy that includes examples of unacceptable behavior and specific steps that will be taken if bullying is identified; that conflict resolution and mediation is needed to resolve reported abuse; and that every teacher has the right to be treated with dignity, the right to safe working conditions, and should not face retaliation for reporting abuse.

## Methods

This non-experimental, explanatory, quantitative study (Kleinheksel, 2018) explored the prevalence of adult bullying of professional and non-professional K-12 employees from a sample of public school districts and public school academies in all 83 counties in Michigan. Email invitations were sent from SurveyMonkey to over 2,300 professional and support staff in K-12 districts and public school academies of differing sizes in urban, suburban, and rural areas in Michigan with a response rate of 14% ( $N = 324$ ). Invitations included basic information to recruit participants to respond to a survey about workplace climate but did not reference adult bullying.

An online survey was conducted using the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), a survey tool originally developed in Norway by Stale Einarsen, group leader of the Bergen Bullying Research Group at the University of Bergen, and Bjorn Raknes. The NAQ-R was designed to measure perceived exposure to bullying at work (Bergen Bullying Research Group, 2010). Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009) evaluated the reliability and validity of the NAQ-R and concluded it comprises a "reliable and valid measure of exposure to workplace bullying" (p. 38), while Nielson, Notelaers, and Einarsen (2011) note that the NAQ-R has been validated in several studies.

The NAQ-R consists of 22 questions to which participants in this study responded after the initial explanatory paragraph: "The following behaviors are often seen as examples of negative behavior in the workplace. During the current school year, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts in your current position?" The NAQ-R provides a 5-point scale response: *never*, *infrequently* (changed from the original wording "*now and then*"), *monthly*, *weekly*, or *daily*. The words "bully" and "bullying" did not appear in the email or the consent form and did not appear in the survey until after participants responded to these 22 questions to eliminate bias in responding. After completing the NAQ-R questions, a definition of bullying at work was given to respondents, and they were then asked a series of questions designed to determine if they considered themselves targets of such bullying or witnessed adult bullying in their workplace. Additional questions collected data about adult bullying incident types, workplace climate, school district policies, and the demographics and characteristics of adult bullying targets and their bullies.

While no one definition of adult bullying exists, for the purpose of this study the working definition of bullying includes aspects of many researchers' descriptions of adult bullying (Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006; Namie & Namie, 2009; National Education Association, 2012; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2007): Adult bullying is the repeated and persistent nonphysical mistreatment of a person including verbal abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation, attempts to frustrate or wear down, humiliate, pressure, and provoke that threatens the psychological integrity, career, safety, and health of the target.

## The Findings, Discussion and Conclusions

The 324 survey participants (Table 1) represent a 14% response rate based on 2,313 receiving the emailed invitation.

Table 1. Demographics for Survey Respondents<sup>1</sup>

	# Male	# Female
<b>Position</b>		
Paraprofessional/Non-teaching staff	3	7
Student Support (Counselor, Nurse, Social Worker)	3	34
Teacher	40	226
<b>Highest Education Level Completed</b>		
High School or some college	0	8
Bachelor Degree	17	90
Graduate Degree or Doctorate	28	180
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	2	10
25-45	28	160
45+	15	109

<sup>1</sup>Excludes incomplete survey data

Respondents were asked the type or level of building in which they worked. Elementary and K-8 level compose 43.8% ( $N = 142$ ), and Middle/Jr. High and High School level compose 51.2% ( $N = 166$ ), recognizing that K-8 and Middle/Jr. High levels overlap and respondents could only indicate one choice. The remaining 4.9% ( $N = 16$ ) work in preschool, alternate school, vocational school, or central office settings.

Self-reporting by respondents of school district location indicates that 13.3% ( $N = 43$ ) work in urban districts, 26.9% ( $N = 87$ ) work in suburban districts, and the majority, 59.9% ( $N = 194$ ), work in rural school districts. School district size was broken into four categories with respondents indicating those under 500 students, 16.1% ( $N = 52$ ); under 2,000 students, 43.8% ( $N = 142$ ); 2,001-10,000 students, 38.9% ( $N = 126$ ); and over 10,000 students, 1.2% ( $N = 4$ ). A majority of respondents reported being a member of a union, 77.8% ( $N = 252$ ), and 22.2% ( $N = 72$ ) reported no affiliation with a union.

### Frequencies

Frequencies reported in this study indicate that 27.8% ( $N = 90$ ) of 324 respondents were bullied on an infrequent to daily rate during the first seven months of the 2016-2017 school year, which compares closely with adult bullying levels in the generalized workplace. K-12 schools are not exempt from adults bullying other adults in their workplace. Responses to the 22 questions of the NAQ-R (Table 2) give insight into the types of bullying most commonly experienced in K-12 schools with respondents reporting the highest level of negative acts in their workplace in the following areas: (a) being exposed to an unmanageable workload, 70.7% ( $N = 229$ ); (b) having opinions or views ignored, 66% ( $N = 214$ ); (c) feeling ignored or excluded, 65.1% ( $N = 211$ ); (d) having someone withhold information which affects their performance,

64.8% ( $N = 210$ ); and (e) believing they are given tasks with unreasonable deadlines, 56.5% ( $N = 183$ ).

Respondents reported that they were targets of the following negative acts surveyed in the NAQ-R: (a) spreading of gossip or rumors about the target, 49.4% ( $N = 160$ ); (b) being ordered to do work below level of competence, 46% ( $N = 149$ ); (c) having key responsibilities removed or replaced, 45.7% ( $N = 148$ ); (d) excessive monitoring of work, 41% ( $N = 133$ ); (e) being humiliated or ridiculed, 40.1% ( $N = 130$ ); (f) being ignored or facing hostile reaction when approaching, 39.8% ( $N = 129$ ); (g) pressured to not claim entitlements such as sick days or expenses, 38% ( $N = 123$ ); (h) insulting remarks made about the target, 36.4% ( $N = 118$ ); (i) repeated reminders of errors or mistakes, 36.1% ( $N = 117$ ); (j) being shouted at or the target of spontaneous anger, 33.6% ( $N = 109$ ); (k) persistent criticism of work or effort, 33.3% ( $N = 108$ ); and (l) allegations made against target, 26.9% ( $N = 87$ ).

A smaller number of respondents reported negative acts that included: (a) intimidating behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, or blocking their way, 20.4% ( $N = 66$ ); (b) hints or signals from others that they should quit their jobs, 20.1% ( $N = 65$ ); (c) being subjected to excessive teasing and sarcasm, 17.9% ( $N = 58$ ); (d) having practical jokes played on them by someone they do not get along with, 9.3% ( $N = 30$ ); and (e) threats of violence or abuse, 8.3% ( $N = 27$ ).

Table 2. Responses to the NAQ-R

Question	Percent	Percent
	( $N$ )	( $N$ )
	Never	Infrequently-Daily
Someone withholding information which affects your performance	35.2 (114)	64.8 (210)
Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work	59.9 (194)	40.1 (130)
Being ordered to do work below your level of competence	54.0 (175)	46.0 (149)
Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks	54.3 (176)	45.7 (148)
Spreading of gossip and rumors about you	50.6 (164)	49.4 (160)
Being ignored or excluded	34.9 (113)	65.1 (211)
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or your private life	63.6 (206)	36.4 (118)
Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger	66.4 (215)	33.6 (109)

Intimidating behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way	79.6 (258)	20.4 (66)
Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job	79.9 (259)	20.1 (65)
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes	63.9 (207)	36.1 (117)
Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach	60.2 (195)	39.8 (129)
Persistent criticism of your work or work-effort	66.7 (216)	33.3 (108)
Having your opinions or views ignored	34.0 (110)	66.0 (214)
Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with	90.7 (294)	9.3 (30)
Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines	43.5 (141)	56.5 (183)
Having allegations made against you	73.1 (237)	26.9 (87)
Excessive monitoring of your work	59.0 (191)	41.0 (133)
Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (e.g., sick leave, personal days, holiday, entitlement, travel expenses)	62.0 (201)	38.0 (123)
Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm	82.1 (266)	17.9 (58)
Being exposed to an unmanageable workload	29.3 (95)	70.7 (229)
Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse	91.7 (297)	8.3 (27)

## Findings

While the data collected in this study was unable to show any significant relationship between the target, the bully, demographic variables, and whether or not a person was targeted for bullying, the data shows comparably the prevalence of adult bullying in the K-12 work environment with the data from similar studies in the generalized workplace (Namie, 2014; Workplace Bullying Institute, 2007). In other words, adult bullying in K-12 schools is just as prevalent as it is in other professions and organizations despite the fact that educators work so tirelessly to prevent this behavior in their students. Furthermore, while the study found that 27.8% ( $N = 90$ ) of respondents were bullied in their K-12 work environments, an even larger

percentage of respondents, 41% ( $N = 133$ ), were aware that at least one other adult in their building was the target of adult-on-adult bullying.

Unlike the results of the Workplace Bullying Institute (2007) study, where 72% of the adult bullies were reported to be bosses, K-12 school personnel in this study responded that only 32.7% ( $N = 106$ ) of the bullying was from someone the respondent considered to be a boss (8% was by a supervisor, 18.8% by a building administrator, and 5.9% by a district administrator). The study revealed that 27.8% ( $N = 90$ ) of respondents indicated that the bully was a “same level colleague,” 3.7% ( $N = 12$ ) from a support person, and fully 57.4% ( $N = 186$ ) selected “other” to describe their bully, which included responses like department chair, board member, union official, student, parent, grandparent of a student, etc. It should be noted that respondents could enter more than one response to indicate the relationship between the target and their bully, and thus, totaled more than 100%.

K-12 school respondents seemed to indicate that their reported bullying was ignored less often than in generalized workplace studies, but it should be noted again that respondents could (and often did) indicate multiple responses. Only 11.1% ( $N = 36$ ) of reports were ignored, although respondents also reported that for 25% ( $N = 81$ ), the bullying did not stop, and 3.1% ( $N = 10$ ) indicated bullying increased after reporting. In only 18.2% ( $N = 59$ ) of the incidents did respondents indicate the bullying stopped or the bully was disciplined or fired. In response to another question, 65.1% ( $N = 211$ ) indicated adult bullying in their building/district has not been addressed at all.

A comparison can also be made between educational personnel bullying and student bullying research results. K-12 educational personnel have, as identified in this survey, been the target of adult-on-adult behavior at a frequency of 27.8%. In comparison to this percentage, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017) reports that from 20.8% to one-third of K-12 students are bullied by fellow students. These educational personnel who are adult targets of bullying often receive training in preventing and resolving student bullying but have not received similar training regarding adult bullying, with only 12.4% ( $N = 40$ ) of survey respondents indicating they had received some type of training to recognize, prevent, or resolve adult bullying. As these results show, in spite of being trained to recognize and resolve student bullying, a significant number of adults in K-12 schools bully others and/or neglect to prevent or resolve adult-on-adult bullying in the school workplace. With the current nationwide emphasis on requiring school districts to develop and adopt policies to report, prevent and resolve student-on-student bullying, it is notable that no such requirement or law regarding adult behavior in the K-12 workplace exists, and only 18.2% ( $N = 59$ ) of respondents reported their schools have policies regarding adult bullying.

### **Implications for School Leaders**

Superintendents, school boards, and school administrators must be proactive and engage in preventing and resolving adult bullying behavior in the K-12 workplace. If 27.8% of the students in their schools were being bullied, immediate action would be demanded, and action would be taken to help alleviate the problem. With 27.8% of the respondents to this study indicating another adult in their school is actively bullying them, and 41% reporting adult

bullying occurs in their school from the same or a different bully, there is a definite negative workplace problem in schools and/or districts that educational leaders need to address.

Employers are often reluctant to recognize, correct, or prevent workplace bullying when it falls short of illegal harassment (Namie, 2003). Targets often feel victimized a second time by the lack of organizational policies and legal statutes addressing such abuse (Meglich-Sespico, Faley, & Knapp, 2007). The results of this study demonstrate the need for improvement in the climate of the K-12 workplace. It is past time to develop workplace bullying policies and procedures. Policymakers need to look to existing policies (e.g., Winchester MEA, 2013; Healthy Workplace Bill, 2011), adopt and approve a district policy and local procedures, and enforce these policies to help prevent and resolve adult bullying. Fostering a healthy, safe workplace environment is the responsibility of employers and their representatives.

Educational leaders must not ignore adult bullying problems. As this study reveals, reporting adult bullying incidents did not resolve the problem or stop the bullying in almost 40% of incidents, and over 65% of respondents indicated their K-12 schools have never addressed adult bullying. The cry for help and protection by the target of adult bullying has been heard through these survey results. Action needs to be taken and be effective to reduce the toll adult bullying takes on the targeted person and on others in the school district. School leaders must address the stress and emotional toll on the target and the remaining staff, as well as how adult bullying affects workplace performance if bullying is allowed to continue. As one anonymous survey respondent commented, "I am considering leaving the profession because treatment like this is not right and not helpful in our main purpose of providing an education to our students." There is a cost to the students and the school when teachers leave or cannot be recruited to teach or sub in their classrooms due to persistent, unaddressed adult bullying.

Administrators, school boards, educational leaders, and all K-12 education professionals and staff must be proactive and vigilant to prevent, stop, and eliminate all bullying (whether the target is an adult or a student) by recognizing that bullying exists in the workplace, creating and enforcing anti-bullying policies, providing training for prevention of and resolving bullying, creating safe and non-retaliatory methods for targets to report bullying, mediating bullying incidents, providing avenues to a positive resolution, disciplining bullies, providing options for targets to recover from bullying, and, most importantly, providing all stakeholders a safe, non-threatening place to work and learn.

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