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Principal Leadership During Restructuring

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School reform requires specific leadership skills. The journey to take an underperforming school to a school making adequate yearly progress is not an easy one. In this phenomenological study, the researcher focuses on the journey of one principal and his school as they work toward developing a restructuring plan. Interviews with staff members and the principal are focused on the leadership qualities of clear vision, culture, consistency, and collaboration.

Keywords: school turnaround, reform, principal leadership

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP DURING RESTRUCTURING

by

Traci A Blaize

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in
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all of those who supported me through the journey. My husband and my daughter who always encouraged and never complained. My grandparents and parents who instilled in me the belief that I could achieve anything if I put my mind to it. My friends and colleagues who provided moral support at the most needed moments. My advisors and committee members who stretched my abilities. Finally, to those who were there at the beginning and so excited for the journey, but are not here to see the end; my brother and my father.

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Principal Leadership During Restructuring

Horng and Loeb (2010) have studied organizational leadership in schools through surveys of principals and teachers and shadowing principals. Their findings indicate a shift from past leadership theories focused on the principal being in the classroom to monitor instruction to the idea that improvement stems from the principal's ability to organize systems and be strategic in their approaches. This idea moves the principal from the enforcer (constantly monitoring day to day instruction) to a partner seeking to grow teachers and provide the structure needed for quality learning and high achievement. With modern requirements for school accountability and reform, the principal plays an important role.

Improving achievement in public schools is not a new idea. Fege (2006) connects the modern school improvement initiative, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, commonly referred to as NCLB (No Child Left Behind, 2001) to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965). Each initiative is advertised as an improvement upon its predecessor. Principals need to engage their schools in a cycle of continuous improvement as our world continues to change and the knowledge base continues to expand (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Park, Hironaka, Carver, & Nordstrum, 2013). No Child Left Behind (2001) brought a new accountability for public schools through the mandated sharing of data. Prior to 2001 testing results, if shared, were reported and limited as whole school or whole district results. Sub-group information, such as results by race, special education, or English Language Learner were reported sporadically, and were not considered an important piece in the overall accountability of school systems (Lauen & Gaddis, 2012). NCLB created specific targets for all groups. Yell (2006) summarizes the goals of NCLB succinctly:

- All students will achieve high academic standards by attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year.

- Highly Qualified teachers will teach all students.
- All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English.
- All students will graduate from high school (p. 181)

In 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed by congress and signed into law by President Obama. The main focus of ARRA was to create and preserve job opportunities for Americans, however, within the bill approximately \$4,000,000 was set aside specifically for competitive grants for school improvement (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This competitive grant program became known as Race to the Top Funding (RTTTF). RTTTF funding was distributed in 46 states; each state had to submit a plan outlining comprehensive educational reforms (Callahan & Sadeghi, 2013) to receive consideration. Grants were awarded based upon a point system using six areas: state success factors, standards and assessments, data systems to support instruction, great teachers and leaders, turning around the lowest achieving schools, and a general category (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The purpose of the RTTTF was to create comprehensive changes in education; it is in addition to NCLB without making changes in NCLB requirements.

Under No Child Left Behind (2001) there was no differentiation between missing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in one category or in several categories. This meant that a school could be meeting the majority of the subcategories of race and special needs and still be considered a failing school. While the intent seemed to be to ensure equality of learning, in reality, this created only one way a school could be considered successful and dozens of ways for a school to fail.

State departments of education interpret the Federal regulations and enforce the legislation through sanctions. The levels of sanctions may be slightly different between states due to interpretation. In this research, the sanction structure developed by the Department of

Education in Wyoming will be utilized. Table 1 contains that structure.

Table 1

Summary of AYP Consequences

Year	Consequence/School Response	Title I	Non-Title I
1 Warning	Review and update school improvement plan; addressing needs of sub-groups that missed AYP	X	X
2	Everything in Year 1 plus inform parents of school choice that is available	X	
3	Everything in the first two years plus schools must offer supplemental services for students	X	
4	Everything in the first three years plus the district selects and applies a corrective action (e.g. place an expert in the school; extend learning time; institute a new curriculum; decrease school management authority; restructure the school's internal organization; replace appropriate staff	X	
4	The district selects and applies a corrective action (e.g. place an expert in the school; extend learning time; institute a new curriculum; decrease school management authority; restructure the school's internal organization; replace appropriate staff		X
5	Subject to all consequences of year four as well as review and revision of corrective actions and create a restructuring plan to be approved by the Wyoming State Board of Education	X	
5	Subject to all consequences of year four as well as review and revision of corrective actions		X
6	The district shall implement the School Restructuring Plan developed and approved in Year 5	X	
6	The district shall review, revise and expand, as appropriate, the corrective actions undertaken in previous years		X

Note. Adapted from “AYP Proficiency Target Change,” by Cindy Hill, Wyoming Department of Education Webinar, 2012.

The 2014 AYP target of 100% of students reaching proficiency in reading and math, under NCLB, brought the education world to a target that most schools could not meet. Thus, more schools were placed in high sanction levels such as planning for and implementing school restructuring (Education 34 C.F.R. §200.43, 2015). When this level of sanction was reached, the options were limited to four types of restructuring: transformation, turnaround, restart and school closure (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Transformation and turnaround involve replacing the principal. Restart involves closing the school and reopening as a charter school, and school closure means closing the school and reassigning students to higher performing schools. The removal of leadership indicates that the principal is seen as a key player in the failure or success of the school. Murphy (2009) refers to principal leadership as “a central variable” in the success of an organization.

Significance

The 2014 expectation of 100% proficiency in Reading and in Mathematics for all students in all categories proved nearly impossible for many schools to reach. AYP is determined based upon the school’s ability to meet state testing proficiency requirements, graduation rate percentages, and attendance rates. A principal must be able to work through accountability sanctions by continuously improving the instruction and achievement within the school. The sanction level structure emphasizes that the success or failure of a school is the responsibility of the principal. This study will add information to what is already known regarding leadership in turnaround schools.

Transformational Leadership

According to Horng and Loeb (2010) modern principals lead through choosing staff wisely and supporting that staff with an appropriate environment for teaching and learning. By

doing so, the principal transforms the school. This is the theory of transformational leadership. In this theory leaders are conscious of the needs of those they lead and inspire them to work to achieve their goals (Cacioppe, 1997). Transformational leaders create an environment where the “vision is clear, and everyone works to achieve it in a spirit of camaraderie” (Hauserman, Ivankova, & Stick, 2013, p. 38). Marzano and Waters (2009) site five behaviors by leadership that significantly impact achievement. Among those behaviors are, “Ensuring collaborative goal setting, establishing non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, allocating resources for the support of achievement and instruction of goals” (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 6). Transformational leadership leads to change that can be sustained after the leader has moved on (Cacioppe, 1997; Hauserman et al., 2013; Ornorato, 2013). This study is being conducted looking at the principal through the lens of transformational leadership. The focus is on the perceptions of the participants regarding the leadership qualities and roles the principal demonstrates to provide systemic change during planning for restructuring.

Clear Vision

In transformational leadership theory it is important for the principals to know the direction they want to go, and then be able to guide those that follow them along the same path (Cacioppe, 1997; Horng & Loeb, 2010). Research has emphasized this point and suggested without a clear and concise plan or focus, which is communicated to staff and stakeholders, improvement programs of any sort are destined to fail (Chenoweth, 2009; Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010; Sanzo, Sherman, & Clayton, 2011; Stein, 2012). In a case study involving several schools that were showing improvement Chenoweth (2009) found successful principals had focused on increasing student learning. Each system within the building was focused on providing the needed knowledge to students. All changes were filtered through the intent to

improve student achievement; changes were not made for the convenience of staff. (Chenoweth, 2009) In an article chronicling his experiences working in turnaround schools Stein (2012) suggested one reason for school failure is, “the school’s leadership did not communicate a clear and viable vision” (p.54). Being able to set goals, communicate goals, and lead the staff to reach those goals demonstrates one of the components of transformational leadership.

Culture

Low-achieving schools often demonstrate a culture of failure, where teachers, parents, and students may not believe they can be successful (Chenoweth, 2009; Duke, 2014). Duke and Salmonowicz (2010) emphasized that the decision to change culture can be the most significant decision that the school leader makes in the first year of school reform. In a study of the Florida Turnaround Leaders Program Duke (2014) examined the components in the theory of action for turnaround schools. One foundational caveat is knowledge of climate. A leader must realize their school does not exist in a vacuum; failing to understand the context can lead to failing initiatives that are focused on the wrong areas (Duke, 2014). Principals need specific knowledge to impact the building climate. Dodman (2014) included knowing the faculty’s strengths and weaknesses as a means to establish priorities for instruction, curriculum, and other changes that may need to occur to ultimately change the culture. The principal must rely on staff members that are knowledgeable and engaged in the process to assist in creating change in school culture (Thielman, 2012).

In turning around a failing school, a culture of high expectations is central to achievement,

Academic emphasis is the degree to which a school is driven for academic excellence: high achievable goals are stressed; the learning environment is serious; teachers believe

in the ability of all students to succeed; and teachers and student alike respect high academic achievers. (Hoy, 2012, p. 80)

The transformational leader is able to move a school with a negative culture to a culture where high achievement is expected and then attained.

Consistency

Whether looking at consistency in practice or the enforcement and procedures it was clear in the studies and articles that consistency had been lacking in failing schools (Chenoweth, 2009; Hoy, 2012; Murphy, 2009; Provost et al., 2010). Chenoweth (2009) contrasted the frustration of teachers in dysfunctional buildings where students reveled in the fact rules were inconsistently applied versus successful schools where adults enforced expectation and embraced the mandate to provide an environment conducive to learning for all students. The consistency in practice and enforcement sets the stage for the school to move forward academically.

Consistency in monitoring the educational process, providing growth when appropriate, and dismissing poor teachers were characteristics of leaders mentioned in several articles (Chenoweth, 2009; Duke & Jacobson, 2011; Reeves, 2007). The ability of the administrator to both recognize teachers with effective instructional skills and to remove those who are below expectation is of significant importance to school improvement. In essence, the transformational leader must be consistent in their mission to provide the best instruction that will lead to school improvement.

Collaboration

Weingarten (2012) identified two different ideological groups of thought on school reform: “Dictate and Dismiss and Collaborate and Develop” (pp.10-11). The first group believes that reform comes from the top and failure to achieve is a failure in teaching. The second group

believes teachers must have ownership in the reform, believe in the reform, and often spearhead the reform if it is to be successful. Along with the era of accountability, we have entered an era of collaboration in education. The idea behind collaboration or working in teams is that educators have the information they need to make decisions about teaching and learning and it provides a place for practices to be shared (Tonso, Jung, & Columbo, 2006). Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is the phrase coined in the work of DuFour et al., (2006). They emphasize merely working together is not enough, “The purpose of collaboration can only be accomplished if the professionals engaged in collaboration are focused on the right things” (p.91). A PLC, according to DuFour et al., (2006), involves utilizing student data in an organized inquiry-based approach that improves practices and results in measurable learning for students. Park et al., (2013) recognize collaboration of this type as being transformative to an organization. In fact, DuFour et al., (2006) and Park et al., (2013) recognize collaboration as a vehicle to establishing high standards, common vision, and a results oriented culture within an organization.

The opposite of collaboration is isolation. Throughout education teachers have done their job behind a closed door and taught their students the items that they felt were important. No Child Left Behind (2001) has helped open the classroom doors to collaboration. One of the roles of the teacher in the improvement process is to collaborate with their colleagues and share what works (Dufour et al., 2006). In this way, collaboration contributes to both the school as a whole and to the improvement of individual teachers. Leana (2011) in a study of New York City Public Schools found that student achievement increased more in classrooms where teachers of quality collaborated with each other.

Waldron and McLeskey (2010) studied Comprehensive School reform and determined

that distributed leadership, where principals are not making solitary decisions, is a foundational principle of collaborative school reform. In less successful schools it was noted that the principals had less interactions and were “disinterested” in collaborating with teachers (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010, p. 66). Brown, Finch, MacGregor, and Watson (2012) found in a qualitative study that teachers felt their opinions and knowledge were important to their leaders if they worked in buildings they characterized as having shared leadership. Dufour et al. (2006) recognize decisions to move forward with and monitoring collaboration may come from the top. The transformational leader recognizes the contributions all stakeholders can make and encourage collaboration on many levels.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand the lived experiences of one principal and his implementation of clear vision, culture, collaboration and consistency as he led a school through the sanction level of school restructuring. In order to address this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

- What were the principal’s and teacher’s experiences in promoting a clear vision?
- What experiences indicate a change in culture during restructuring?
- Were changes in culture viewed as positive or negative experiences?
- What was the principal’s understanding of consistency?
- What actions of the principal were seen as demonstrations of consistency by the staff?
- What experiences with collaboration did the principal provide for the staff?
- How were those collaborative experiences different than prior to restructuring?

Research Design and Methodology

Methodology

Qualitative studies seek to tell the story of an event or process as it is interpreted by the people involved (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Chesebro and Borisoff (2007) identify five items all types of qualitative research have in common:

- Natural Setting, as determined by the participant
- Researcher as participant, researcher is seen as involved
- Subject-based communication, the participants guide the conversation
- Subject intentionality, the researcher records data the way the subject intended the meaning
- Pragmatic, results have immediate utility (p. 9)

The researcher has utilized methods to address each of these five elements.

This study is a phenomenological study of a Mountain West school recently placed under the sanction of planning for restructuring under No Child Left Behind (2001). Through interviews with the principal and interviews with staff the researcher has identified characteristics and skills utilized by the principal while leading the school through the path of restructuring. The research is focused on telling the story of a particular principal's leadership during restructuring. The story is told utilizing the experiences of the principal and several staff members (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009) as he navigated the restructuring process based upon information provided by the individual and by staff members that work with him.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of a building principal and two teachers. The building principal for this study was chosen based on the sanction level of the school, tenure as principal, and his willingness to participate. The sanction level was of particular importance. The subject

had to be implementing a level of sanction involving the four types of restructuring identified by the U.S. Department of Education (2012): transformation, turnaround, restart or school closure. He is referred to by the pseudonym Joel throughout the study. Joel has served in the district for 13 years. He has served as a principal at the primary, intermediate, elementary, and middle school levels. He is currently the principal of an upper-elementary (4/5) and intermediate elementary (2/3). The upper elementary school is relatively new to the district and Joel has led the building through its three years of existence. This is Joel's first experience with restructuring. The sanction level of the school was (at the time of the interviews) year four, planning for restructuring. This means Joel and the building leadership team were in the process of developing a plan for restructuring based upon the requirements outlined in the introduction. Finally, when asked if he would participate Joel was willing to be interviewed. Permission was obtained from the superintendent to interview Joel.

The teachers interviewed were chosen based upon their participation on the school improvement team, their longevity at the school, and their willingness to participate. The first teacher interviewed, referred to by the pseudonym Dave, has been in education for 12 years, 9 in this Mountain West school district, and currently teaches in the area of fine arts. Dave has an M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction and has earned principal certification. He represented the special areas on the restructuring committee. The second teacher interviewed, referred to as Katie in this study, has been in education for 16 years, 15 of those as a classroom teacher in various elementary grade levels in this Mountain West school district. Katie has also earned a Master's degree in education and principal certification. Katie represented the fourth grade on the restructuring committee.

Site information. The site for this study is an intermediate school located in the

Mountain West. The school, referred to by the pseudonym Mountain Elementary, is considered an upper elementary servicing 4th and 5th grade. The building was built in 2011 and occupied in 2012. All statistical information and improvement plan information came from the state Department of Education and the school & district website. In order to keep the actual school from being identified those sources have not been directly cited. Mountain Elementary has not made AYP for the past four years. The 2014 state testing indicated results below the state average in all areas for grades four and five. This elementary school is one of six Title 1 schools in the district and one of three district schools that did not make AYP. According to the school's website, the following seven actions have been taken to improve:

- Targeted professional development through the Marzano Training Institute
- Parent liaisons have been hired to increase parent involvement
- More technology integration into the classroom
- Increase student engagement opportunities
- Continue after school tutoring and programs
- Aligned K-5 Reading program
- Research based Response to Intervention

The school is seated in the county seat which has a population of approximately 6,500 people. The median income is almost \$56,000. Approximately 91% of the inhabitants have at least a high school equivalent degree and approximately 16% have obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher. The crime rate is below the national average, which indicates a safe environment. The transiency rate is higher than the state average (City Data, 2015). This could indicate that the school population from one year to the next is variable. State formulas for determining AYP account for transiency by tracking students that have been with the school for a certain amount of

time. The most common occupations for men are: rail and water transportation, vehicle and mobile equipment mechanics, installers and operators, driver/sales workers and truck drivers and extraction workers. The most common occupations for women are: building/grounds cleaning and maintenance, other office and administrative support, cashiers, and book keeping/accounting (City data, 2015).

Instrument

One of the characteristics of qualitative studies, according to Creswell (2014) is that research is not comprised of surveys or questionnaires; the data is gathered by the researcher based on conversations and observations of the sample. The method chosen to gather data in this study was the semi-structured interview. Merriam (2009) defines the semi-structured interview as a combination of direct questions to gather specific information and indirect questions that allow flexibility for researcher. Specific questions were used to guide, but the conversation was allowed to go where the participants led (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Appendix A contains the conversation starter questions linked to clear vision, culture, consistency, and collaboration. The conversation starters were intended to collect specific information while still allowing the conversation to flow allowing the researcher to gather additional details regarding the subjects' observations of leadership.

Procedure

The participants in this study were interviewed via telephone at a location of their choosing, which was a natural setting for them. After identifying the sample, developing the instrument, and securing permission from the school district, approval of the researcher's doctoral committee, and the IRB interviews commenced. The interviews were digitally recorded to preserve the intentionality of the subjects. The recordings were transcribed by the researcher.

The length of the interview was entirely dependent on the number of follow up questions, the openness of the subject, and the ability of the researcher to draw out deep conversation. Joel's interview took approximately 70 minutes. Dave's interview continued for approximately 50 minutes, and Katie's interview lasted for approximately 90 minutes.

Data Analysis

The approach to data analysis in qualitative studies is different than the approach used in quantitative studies. In quantitative studies the researcher takes specific measures to save all data; in qualitative research the researcher seeks to funnel the information down into more specific themes (Creswell, 2014). The themes are often referred to as codes, which are simply words or phrases that convey meaning to the researcher allowing them to organize the data in a meaningful way (Creswell, 2014; Saldana, 2009). Approaching the data in this manner utilized what Saldana (2009) refers to as both lumping and splitting the data. Lumping allows the researcher to identify broad categories, while splitting creates more codes and segregates the data further. In this study, the researcher analyzed the transcribed interviews looking specifically at each area of study: clear vision, culture, consistency, collaboration. These categories became the broad categories for the first round of coding, or lumping. Further analysis involved narrowing down or splitting the information into actions that helped to define the experiences of the individuals interviewed. For instance, when a participant said, "We felt like we were a part of the process. We were asked for input on the schedule; he really listened to us." The item would be initially coded in the broad category of collaboration, with secondary coding of asking and listening as the actions that led to the experience of collaboration.

Memoing is the act of making notes that reflect ideas and learning that the researcher gleans as they are interviewing. These memos are then utilized in the data analysis process when

reviewing and coding interview information (Creswell, 2014). In this study the researcher noted some of the actions that seemed to be repeated by the participants. For example, during the interview with Katie she indicated excitement about the training that so many of the staff members went through, that excitement was noted in the researcher's memo as, "training was important and exciting." The memos were then combined with the transcribed interviews during the coding process.

Reliability and Trustworthiness of Data

Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) argued that the qualitative research process is often wrongly introduced as a linear process. The nature of qualitative research is often non-linear. The researcher is seen as the interpreter of the collected data and each interpretation can be unique to that researcher; thus making qualitative findings difficult to replicate. Merriam (2009) reassures us that, "The question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (p.221).

In order to avoid bias, the researcher purposefully chose a principal and staff that she was not familiar with. A verbatim transcript of each interview has been prepared. A literature review was conducted prior to the interviews. Memoing was utilized as a method to ensure the researcher maintained focus on the research questions and collected impressions once the interviews were completed. Participants were offered the opportunity to review the findings for accuracy; this is a practice known as member checking (Creswell, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

I was involved in K-12 education in the Mountain West for ten years. I have served as an elementary principal, a middle school principal, and as a Director of Special Education. As a middle school principal, I was tasked with developing a restructuring plan for my school. In

2015 I moved away from the Mountain West region, and currently serve as an elementary principal in a mid-western state.

My experiences leading a restructuring effort have created some bias toward the regulations which create the need for restructuring and the leadership it takes to perform restructuring. In order to counteract this bias, I utilized member checking and journaling to keep the observations and interviews focused on the study. This study is not the story of the restructuring I led, nor is it focused on the requirement of school restructuring. This is the story of the leadership exhibited by Joel in restructuring Mountain Elementary.

I was contacted by the Joel in the fall of 2014 with a question regarding the appropriate paperwork to use for a restructuring plan. This was my first contact with him. Our conversation centered around my experiences with planning in restructuring, and the lack of assistance and direction that had been provided by state entities. At the end of our conversation, I agreed to provide Joel with the paperwork I had developed and I asked if he would be willing to be interviewed for my research. Joel agreed to be interviewed.

Permission to interview the principal and teachers was obtained from the superintendent of schools after submitting a letter with a brief description of the proposed research. Permission for the study was also granted by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Wyoming after approval of the research project by committee.

Findings

Each teacher participating in the study was asked a series of questions. The principal was asked a similar series of questions. The questions were centered on the four themes extracted from the literature review: collaboration, clear vision, consistency, and culture. In some instances, follow-up questions were required in order to obtain more information or to clarify the

idea of the participant. While these questions were recorded in the digital recording and in the researcher's notes they were not added to Appendix A.

Research Question One

The first research question addressed the subjects' experiences in promoting a clear vision. This was addressed in the interviews by asking teachers, "What seemed to be the focus of your principal's efforts?" The principal was asked, "What do you think you focused your efforts on?"

Katie recounted that Joel gave the initial impression restructuring was just "something we had to do, we didn't have an option." She felt that the staff had the attitude, "this is what Joel tells us we have to do, so that's what we'll do." She stated Joel's role as an administrator had always been that of the decision maker. Some of this harkened back to before the building was combined to become the intermediate school; once combined, it was difficult for the staff to take ownership of scores that came from other buildings. As they worked on planning and the scope of the PLC training increased it became apparent that collaboration was the focus. Dave indicated that he felt "improving reading scores was not Joel's focus, but it became an important by-product of the collaborative efforts."

Joel felt the focus was on finding ways to improve teaching and student achievement at Mountain Elementary through changing how the teachers worked. The PLC effort forced teachers to focus on standards, pacing, and best teaching practices.

Staying with the theme of clear vision, teachers were asked, "How could you tell that this was the focus?" The principal was asked, "How did you establish that focus with your staff?" Katie felt there was a real change when Joel attended the PLC institute in Las Vegas with a group of teachers. She felt collaboration truly became Joel's focus. She felt during that trip, "he

really opened up and listened to what we had to say.” After the training, he asked for input into the schedule, which was something Katie said had not happened before. Joel participated in the collaboration meetings on a regular basis, which indicated the importance of that effort. Katie felt like Joel was willing to guide collaboration, “but he let us have our journey. He let us have some failure. He’s let us have the lead in that sense.” Dave indicated the focus was obvious because Joel was a part of the collaborations. He was there and participating in the meetings. Dave also indicated that Joel made sure everyone was well informed about the initiative.

Katie noted the change from being the decision maker to allowing the staff to be actively involved in the decision-making process with regard to the schedule. She also discussed Joel allowing the teams to have the freedom to work in the way that best suited them within the PLC framework. Dave added, Joel became more “driven” during the restructuring process. He felt being placed under the sanction of planning for restructuring “was a big wake up call for Joel, as far as we needed to change.” He also noted Joel seemed more serious when the sanction was announced; he “means business.”

Joel focused his answer on transparency. With the move to PLC each team was required to keep minutes online in a format accessible to the entire staff. This format made it easy for Joel to access the minutes and find indications of teams that might be struggling or need more attention or training. The conversations would show data was being addressed as a team. The collaboration has led to action research within the classrooms. Joel noted that presenting data requires the teacher to have some vulnerability, “egos have to be checked at the door, but the conversation really goes back to pedagogical skills. What did you do that pushed your kids over the top?” A focus through the district is on the state testing. While the collaborative teams are talking about classroom assessments, the work has been done to tie those assessments to the

state-wide assessment standards. The goal focus for the district is that 80% of students will score above the 40th percentile on the state tests. Joel kept the goal in front of the staff and the stakeholders by making sure it was posted on the website, in the building, and referred to often.

All the participants indicated the communication provided by Joel kept the focus on collaborating to improve student learning. Resources were dedicated to the goal as evidenced by the number of staff members who were able to attend training.

Research Question Two

The second research question, “What experiences indicate a change in culture during restructuring?” Participants were asked their opinions of the culture prior to restructuring, during restructuring, and after restructuring.

Dave noted that the culture was good, most people were pretty positive prior to restructuring. “If I would say anything negative about the restructuring process, I would say the climate after all this has gone down a little bit.” Dave stated that before restructuring the atmosphere was very relaxed, “maybe too positive.” Katie shared more of the history of the culture in the school and how it had changed through the tenure of several different principals. She felt with one principal the staff morale was incredibly high and students were having lots of fun, “but we weren’t as focused on academics as we should have been.” Another principal was very focused on rewarding students for behavior, so there were a lot of assemblies and celebrations. She felt Joel came to them from the primary where kids needed a lot more assistance, so he put in place structures that were more confining to the teachers. She felt teachers were in a negative frame of mind mostly due to “being spread too thin: due to the demands of teaching.” She indicated initiatives, she viewed as positive, started under other

leaders had disappeared over time, which she felt was disappointing to staff members. Katie stated, “no one was willing to go the extra mile. At 4:05 each day the parking lot was empty.”

Joel felt staff morale was an issue that needed constant attention during the restructuring. He tried to take on the role of “cheerleader and encourager” by letting them know it was okay to take risks in order to improve. “When I showed them the low scores to start the school year it took the wind out of their sails, so I really had to find a way to balance that so they weren’t exasperated.” Joel discussed that the staff realized there was a need for change, but sometimes the tendency was to look at others to change rather than changing their way of doing things. The process of creating the schedule seemed to give teachers the feeling of being involved in the change. The leadership team would roll out a draft of the schedule and come back “with red ink all over them. We’d make adjustments and we’d revisit.” The process showed mistakes can lead to conversations that can lead to success. Joel felt it was successful since the schedule once implemented did not require changes for the next year.

Entering into the PLC process gave a format to address the need for change; the collaborative group made decisions on what to change and then monitored the implementation. Monitoring did not fall solely on Joel’s shoulders. The four pillars (Dufour et al., 2006) again created guidance for the collaborative teams; the questions could be used anytime the process seemed to be getting off track. The PLC process itself was an item Joel felt needed to be in the forefront at all times. To make sure this was the case he attended meetings and helped keep the focus on student achievement and teaching rather than the mundane calendar items which had been the focus in the past. Joel acknowledged that the different grade levels are at different stages in the PLC process and he has to change his monitoring strategies to match where they are.

Research Question Three

Research question three asked, “Were the changes in culture viewed as positive or negative?” This question was meant to cause the participants to reflect on their experiences during the process.

Katie noticed a positive change the more teachers learned about and started utilizing collaboration. At first some teachers looked at the new schedule as having less planning time since two sessions a week were now collaborative meetings. Katie stated, “now we see the benefits. We’re working smarter not harder.” She also noted that as the teams are starting to see more success with student learning they are beginning to bring back more celebrations; they just make sure they have an academic focus. Another positive she sees is that teachers are really helping one another now and are willing to ask tough questions when they need to. Dave’s statements aligned with what Katie shared. He stated that “you hear conversation and teachers are excited about scores. Things are going in the right direction.” Both noted that teachers feel much more involved in the direction of the school since the PLC training and implementation came about.

Dave and Katie both characterized the changes as positive. Dave mentioned teachers seem to enjoy planning together, “we didn’t have that before they had to meet on their own time.” As a member of the specialist team, he shared the team is excited as they will also have collaboration time in the schedule for next year. He sees the lower grade levels are talking about what they see happening at the intermediate school and are asking to have the training. Katie talked about seeing the successes in the students being a great source of positive motivation for teachers. She felt being “data-driven sometimes has negative connotations” but at Mountain Elementary it is helping them build a positive, focused environment where teachers are helping

one another help all students.

Joel was very honest in stating when the process of planning for restructuring began he dreaded it. “We felt like overwhelming failures,” when the news of restructuring was announced. There was a sense of panic, but the staff was able to channel that into a focus on improvement. The success of the new schedule was a real turning point for the staff, “had that not worked I might be bagging groceries right now!” The schedule allowed teachers the time needed to implement the PLC process, and implementing the process has led to more efficient planning, better teaching, and student gains. He felt part of his job was to “turn up the heat to cause a sense of urgency, but then turn it down again by celebrating accomplishments.” Joel indicated a by-product of the process was the staff and the parents have a much better understanding of what it takes to may Adequate Yearly Progress. As the Mountain Elementary staff delved into the data they realized a category of students who were failing were their special education students. As they worked they realized those students were not included in much of the core instruction; they began to question how they could expect a student who was not experiencing grade level standards to pass a test based on grade level standards. Questioning along those lines led the staff to take ownership of all students, and to make modifications in practices that have been in place for years. Joel admitted surprise in what a positive outcome planning for restructuring had for Mountain Elementary. He had very negative feelings towards the idea of restructuring prior to beginning the process. He credits the staff with making the process a genuine improvement experience focused on the students.

While there were somewhat differing opinions regarding the culture during the restructuring process, all seemed to agree collaboration made the process more palatable, focused, and became a positive for the staff. The communication from Joel through the

collaborations was consistently focused on improving achievement by improving teaching practices.

Research Question Four

The fourth research questions focused on finding out what the principal's perception of consistency was. When asked about his understanding of consistency in leadership Joel talked about his superintendent's longevity with the district. He felt, "longevity really helps with new board member development; it helps with expectations for oncoming administration, and the understanding of existing administration." Joel mentioned that stability in leadership can bring, "a sense of calm, understanding of expectations to everyone below whatever level of leadership is there."

Joel was then asked how he felt he demonstrated consistency in leadership during the restructuring process. "I didn't jump ship or throw up the panic flag and say I can't do this." Joel stated he tried to focus on soliciting information, listening, and communicating with the staff. He really wanted to make sure that the staff understood the reasoning behind the changes as they occurred. He also felt the need to celebrate the "small victories" with the staff. Joel gave the example of a celebration of scores from a locally administered test. To celebrate he told the staff, "happy hour is on me." He attended and celebrated the success with the group. "Hard work done well feels good, and if you don't celebrate it then it's pretty easy to lose perspective." Joel felt he needed to be a participating member in the collaborations rather than telling the staff "go meet" and then reading the minutes. He stated he makes a real effort to listen more than he talks in the collaborations.

Research Question Five

The focus of this research question was the actions by the principal that demonstrated

consistency in the eyes of the staff. Dave stated, “He obviously was very, very dedicated to the PLC process. He went to a lot of training.” The focus stayed on PLC due to the multiple trainings and it was always talked about. “Every meeting, every leadership team meeting, we talked about the process and how it was going for each of the teams.” Dave also pointed to Joel’s regular attendance at the grade level collaboration meetings as indicating how focused he was on the initiative. Katie also discussed how Joel was an active member of the PLC process, but did not “take over collaboration meetings.” She felt that he really “let go” and let the staff choose the direction they needed to go within the framework of PLC. Both teachers felt that Joel put a great effort into communicating and keeping everyone on the staff informed. Dave stated, “his communication skills are top-notch. He included everybody.”

The actions of the principal identified by the teachers include dedicating resources such as time and money to the goal. His communication through various methods also conveyed a consistent message to the staff.

Research Question Six

Question six asked about the experiences the principal provided in the area of collaboration. Dave and Katie were asked, “what was your role in developing your school’s restructuring plan? Tell me about some of the activities involved in restructuring.” In this instance the same question was also asked of Joel.

Katie provided a lot of information when asked this question, however, she did not focus just on her role in the process; she discussed many past measures and the teacher’s role in general. She talked about the schedules that had been built over the years, emphasizing the schedules were made without input from the teaching teams. The teaching teams were grade level based and made up of six teachers, however, all six teachers did not have the opportunity to

meet at one time, with past schedules two teachers at a time could collaborate. At the time of Joel's arrival there were many different methods of utilizing the common time. Joel instituted a new schedule allowing for collaboration of all six grade level teammates. After the first semester of implementation, he asked all the teachers for input, according to Katie, "This was the first time that Joel has asked for the leadership team's input in the schedule." She indicated this was appreciated by the teachers and it gave them a vested interest in the improvement.

Another piece Katie discussed at length was the training provided. She talked about the many years of different initiatives from unpacking standards to common assessments, in her words, "there wasn't any rhyme or reason to it." The increase in time for teachers to collaborate was accompanied by specific training which large groups of teachers participated in. Teachers went to Las Vegas with Joel to attend Solution Tree Professional Learning Community (PLC) training, based upon the work of Richard DuFour. As follow up a Solution Tree trainer was brought in during the school year to meet with all of the grade level teacher groups to guide them in their collaborations. The training was very focused on making sure what needed to be taught was taught at a common pace and assessed appropriately. There was summer work by teachers to create pacing guides and assessments which are now available through the district's curriculum system. This focus was a little difficult for some of the veteran teachers. Katie stated there was a lot of "tears and anxiety" about the new pacing and changes in how standards were taught. She indicated the initiative has been successful for her, "It's the first time in 16 years that I can honestly say that I know that every kid in my class has learned every standard that they needed to. It was hard, but we did it."

When the question was posed to Dave, he was much more concise and stayed with his particular role. He was also very literal in his interpretation of the question. He talked about his

role being to represent the specialist teachers on the leadership team. He said the team met twice a month, but there was “almost daily feedback through emails.” The job of the leadership team, according to Dave, was to take information about the upcoming changes and their reasons to the specialist team and then bring their feedback back to the leadership team. He felt this method, “kept a good reading on the staff” and helped with implementation.

Dave stated when it came to actually writing the restructuring document the members of the leadership team took specific sections to write. Dave’s section was on “the systematic efforts the district was using to support any initiatives we put in place.” Each section was brought to the leadership team for revision and feedback and then incorporated to create the overall document for the building. According to Dave, Joel “did the meat of it.”

Joel identified his role in restructuring as, “the absolute lead for everything.” He began with a staff meeting explaining what restructuring was and “what caused us to be placed in the restructuring position to start with.” Next, he hosted a parent meeting and posted information on the school website. Approximately 20-25 parents attended the meeting. Joel went through the same presentation he did with the staff and then opened the meeting up for questions. The leadership team was there to field questions, “We were very knowledgeable about where we were at and how we had gotten there.” He felt the parents posed thoughtful questions. The leadership team was formed by representatives from every grade level, the nurse, counselor, associate principal, and three parents were also part of the team. The team met regularly and were a source of feedback from the whole staff. They worked as a team to write the actual plan which was presented to the State Board of Education by Joel. The presentation was “commended by the board and their questions simply focused on how we were able to change our schedule mid-year.” Joel stated even though their status was to plan for restructuring, once they had done

the research and created the plan they had to implement it, “it simply was the best thing to do for our students.” The main structural change was the schedule, according to Joel, “there were some grumblings when we implemented, but within three days I was hearing praise.”

By changing the schedule Joel, and the committee that worked on the schedule, provided the resource of time for collaboration. The training the staff participated in provided guidelines to make their collaborative efforts more focused and productive.

Research Question Seven

The subjects were asked, “What collaborative structures were in place before sanctions? After sanctions?” This addresses the research question of how collaborative experiences differed prior to restructuring. In Joel’s interview the questioning was along the same lines, but worded slightly differently, “What collaborative structures were in place prior to planning for restructuring? What collaborative experiences did you provide for the staff?”

Katie and Dave were united in saying there were few structures for collaboration prior to restructuring. They described a structure allowed for only two grade level teachers to collaborate at a time. According to Katie, the meetings were not focused on the students they were focused on, “what we were doing for this field trip or who was going to send this note out.” She did say with one of the former principals there were grade level meetings about once a week. The content of the meetings varied from who would make the next set of assessments to curriculum; “we’d have these heated discussions, but no decisions were made.” Katie summarized the feeling with, “focused, meaningful collaboration just wasn’t happening.”

The changes in the schedule and the training provided with the development of the restructuring plan created an atmosphere where focused collaboration was the norm. The teams “had a chance to sit down with student data and develop plans to make sure the students really

get the assistance they need,” according to Dave. Both Katie and Dave referred to the impact the training had on the staff in their ability to positively affect student learning and to work together in organized focused teams. The training was not provided in a scattershot approach, “ample training was provided to everyone” and there was follow-up with the individual teams through in-house training and collaboration.

Joel also recognized that prior to restructuring there was little collaboration. “We had a leadership team, but it wasn’t terribly active. It was more responsive than proactive.” He credited the process of restructuring with creating the drive to create more collaboration for staff. The first phase of implementing collaboration wasn’t very successful, “we’re just not natural born collaborators.” The leadership team attempted to institute the PLC process, “but without training it was hard. I had been to a PLC institute, so I knew some of the pieces, but the staff didn’t understand it all.” Joel brought in some outside resources for training. They gave an overview of what PLC was and focused on making the staff “look internally and reflectively to see what we were doing and why we were doing it.” Grant funding was then appropriated to allow ten staff members to attend the PLC Institute in Las Vegas. Joel attended the institute a second time with four more staff members. While the restructuring process brought the need for collaboration to the forefront, Joel really credits the guiding questions of the PLC with bringing improvement. “what do we want our students to know, how will we know they know it, what will we do if they already know it and what will we do if they don’t know it after we taught it (DuFour et al., 2006). Those four pillars of the PLC process has just simplified everything for us.” He is confident all the standards are being taught and teachers know where students are really at.

Summary of Findings

A clear vision was promoted by the principal through constant communication with the

staff, and through the allocation of resources focused on a specific goal. Experiences that indicated a change in culture included training in collaboration, time for collaboration, and an increase in communication between teachers and between the teachers and the principal. The changes in culture were seen as positive, but teachers noted a strict focus on improvement had led to some changes deemed negative, such as a reduction in celebrations and fewer field trips. The principal's understanding of consistency seemed to be focused on longevity of leadership. The staff recognized the consistency in communication and focus of the principal. The principal provided opportunities for collaboration in training, in the daily schedule, and in the committee created to guide the restructuring process. All three subjects agreed that this level of collaboration was very different from the processes in place prior to restructuring.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of one principal and his implementation of clear vision, culture, collaboration and consistency as he led a school through the sanction level of school restructuring. Interview questions were constructed using clear vision, culture, consistency, and collaboration, themes derived from the literature review. The interviews revealed allocation of resources and communication as experiences which helped the principal establish a clear vision, build a positive culture, act consistently, and collaborate with staff. Collaboration within the teaching ranks and with the principal was also an experience that positively impacted the culture of the building.

Allocation of Resources

The importance of allocating resources toward training the majority of the staff on the collaboration initiative at Mountain Elementary was mentioned repeatedly throughout the interviews by all participants. One of the tenets of successful change discussed by Murphy

(2009) is the dedication of resources to a few imperative goals. The journey to collaboration at Mountain Elementary began with large groups of staff going to specific training. Duke (2014) refers to knowledge and the ability of the staff to address the needs of the students as one of five components needed for school turnaround. Joel's focus on involving a variety of staff in the trainings led to everyone being well-informed about the process and the expectations. The participants in this study felt this had a significant impact on the staff accepting the move to collaboration. By sending so many people a large pool of expertise and a solid support network with distributed leadership was created for all of the teachers involved. Transformational leadership creates sustainable action that can continue if the present leader was no longer involved (Cacioppe, 1997; Hauserman et al., 2013; Ornorato, 2013). If a new principal with less knowledge of collaborative practices were to step in, the trained cadre of staff could assist in keeping the collaboration processes at Mountain Elementary intact. As DuFour et al., (2006) state, "We have stressed that leadership is essential to successful implementation of PLCs; however, leadership is not a solo act" (p. 195).

Katie provided historical information about initiatives begun by former principals and their success while that principal was present and the decline in advancing the initiatives when the principal moved on to another position. For example, she discussed a principal that was very passionate about rewarding students for demonstrating positive behavior. During that principal's tenure the celebrations for behavior and the rewards were plentiful. When the next principal came on his focus was not on student behavior, and the reward systems diminished. Shulman and Sullivan (2015) studied failed leadership in regard to professional development initiatives. In the study initiatives were identified, fully funded and implemented for a substantial amount of time in a school. After the initial year follow up on the initiative did not occur. They found, "that a

lack of vision on the part of the leader and a vague school mission statement contributed to the fragmentation of goals” (p.280). Another factor identified by Shulman and Sullivan (2015) was the ongoing commitment to the initiative by the principal. Joel continues to attend one of the two collaborative meetings at each grade level each week, so that he is in touch with how the process is working at each level. As Reeves (2007) points out, effective school change requires consistency and dedication in implementation. Guskey and Yoon (2009) also note, “Virtually all of the studies that showed positive improvements in student learning included significant amounts of structured and sustained follow-up after the main professional development activities” (p. 497).

Communication

Both teachers interviewed served on the committee that designed the restructuring plan. After the leadership meetings they carried the work back to their grade levels or teaching partners. They would carry feedback to the leadership team at the next meeting. The spiraling nature of meeting as a committee, carrying information back to their team and then reporting back to the committee kept the communication clear for all parties and kept the group focused on their goal. This method would fit with the second group identified by Weingarten (2012) believing that ownership, belief and control of reform leads to success. Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) would refer to this building of a leadership team as the “foundational phase” (p. 240) of school improvement. The distribution of leadership and increased use of data fall into the “developmental phase” (Day et al., 2016, p. 243) of school improvement leadership. In the case of Mountain Elementary the two phases were combined, which aligns with the school actually implementing their restructuring plan rather than simply creating the plan as their sanction required. This change could not have been completed successfully without the staff being very

clear on the reason for the change. “Transformational principals help staff see how they are all affected by decisions,” (Hauserman et al., 2013, p. 41). Joel felt that he tried to give the message that the staff was comprised of talented teachers that needed to work smarter not harder, and that “collectively we are going to figure out what we can do to make our student more successful.” This harkens back to Dodman (2014), who emphasized the importance of leadership recognizing the strengths and weakness of those they lead.

Interestingly Chenoweth (2009) and Duke (2014) identified a culture of failure that permeated stakeholder groups in low achieving schools. This did not ring true for Mountain Elementary. When discussing the reaction of the community to their school improvement status all participants noted a lack of concern. According to Joel, communicating what led the school to the point of restructuring, helped the staff recognize a need for change, which led to the PLC journey. Joel also stated that during the changes he worked hard to communicate with everyone and make sure “people understood we were in it together.” Transformational leaders focus on creating the appropriate environment for success through high expectations and consistent application of best practices (Chenoweth, 2009; Duke & Jacobson, 2011; Oronoto, 2013; Reeves, 2007).

Collaboration

Joel emphasized that his vision was student focused collaboration centered on the questions, which he paraphrased from DuFour et al., 2006: “what do our kids need to know; how will we know when they know it; what will we do if they already know it, and what will we do if they don’t know it after we taught it?” This aligns with the research and examples presented by Chenoweth (2009). She found that schools that were closing the gaps and achieving beyond expectations “ruthlessly organize themselves around one thing: helping students learn a great

deal” (p. 39). In the case of Mountain Elementary, the improvement plan was organized around collaboration.

Theilman (2012) identified one of the beginning steps in the turnaround of Cristo Rey School as adding professional days to “focus on ways to improve instruction,” (p. 127). Through the collaboration training the teachers at Mountain Elementary learned to work together to design and implement their grade level curriculum in a systematic manner, thus bringing them back to the focus of student achievement.

Katie noted that during the restructuring planning process Joel asked for more input from the staff members than he had in the past. This change in tactic resulted in the staff feeling buy in and “valued,” according to Katie. Oronoto’s (2013) discussion of the transformational principal listed the ability to engage followers and bring their beliefs in line with the principal’s goals. Hauserman and Stick (2013), list collaborating on decision making as evidence of “individual consideration” (p.196), one of their four tenets of transformational leadership. A study by Ibrahim, Ghavifekr, Ling, Siraj, & Azeez (2013) focused on the relationship between transformational leadership and a teacher’s commitment to their school profession and student learning. Through their quantitative analysis they found “individualized consideration” had a strong linear correlation to teacher commitment (p. 185).

On the subject of collaboration both teachers agreed that prior to the restructuring efforts there really was not a formalized system that allowed for collaboration. Duke & Jacobson (2011) referred to the importance of collaboration focused on student data, approach to curriculum and student needs in the turnaround of South Hills school. Decision making was discussed as a top-down model at Mountain Elementary prior to the restructuring effort. The principal, or in some cases district officials, were creating all the schedules and handling the curriculum decisions.

The restructuring efforts changed that to a collaborative model. Tonso et al., (2006) discussed the benefits that dedicated time for collaboration centered around curriculum and individual students could have on student achievement. As the Mountain Elementary staff went through training and refined their scheduled to focus on collaboration, their collaborative efforts became focused on knowing where students were and how to move them forward.

Implications

Transformational leaders create an environment where the team knows the direction and expectations; where they are working together towards a common goal in a way that can be sustained over time and changes in leadership (Cacioppe, 1997; Hauserman et al., 2013; Hauserman & Stick, 2013; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Ornorato, 2013). The results of this study imply a successful leader will be able to focus the allocation of resources on a narrow scope and carry that initiative on through multiple years. Ultimately, if the leader is a transformational leader the initiative would carry on successfully whether they were still in charge of that particular school or not. Another implication from this study is the ability to communicate clearly, by a variety of methods, and consistently is a necessary characteristic for a leader in the process of school improvement. The final implication from this study reveals collaboration is a skill a transformational leader must model in working with their staff. Collaboration can also have a positive influence on the culture of the school during the process of restructuring.

Limitations to the Study

This is a phenomenological exploration of the leadership of one principal based on the perceptions and experiences of that principal and two staff members (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The principal was chosen based upon the sanction level of the school and his willingness to participate. This is an exploration of the lived experiences of that particular principal, and is

not intended to be interpreted as identifying the skills needed by all principals in sanction situations.

A limitation in this study is the fact that the researcher, due to travel constraints, was not able to conduct the interviews in a face-to-face manner. Qualitative research is dependent upon observations during interviewing and the ability of the researcher to draw out the conversations. In both cases a face-to-face format might be more informative than a phone interview.

Phenomenological studies are often long-term studies. The interviews for this study were completed in a span of three months. More time with the participants may have provided additional data.

A further limitation lies in the potential bias of the researcher based on past experiences with restructuring in another school. Those bias may cause the researcher to overlook data or influence the way data is interpreted.

Suggestions for further research

The focus of this particular study was the leadership skills utilized by the principal during restructuring. Evidence of those skills was gleaned through interviews with staff and the principal. Other sources of information, such as interviews with students and parents or other stakeholders, were left untapped. This study is focused on one small elementary school. Potential topics for further research might look into possible differences in leadership strategies when faced with restructuring in a large school versus a small school or differences in strategies between male and female principals. Communication was a characteristic that bubbled out of many of the interview questions. Communication methods and styles would be possible areas of further research. This was not a long term study, it simply asked the participants to reflect upon the period of time while planning for restructuring. Another area of further study would be the

long term impact of restructuring on a school's levels of achievement and culture.

The particular journey studied was one of restructuring under NCLB. On December 10, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama. This act replaced NCLB and reauthorized the ESEA (USDOE, 2015). The ESSA was effective beginning on the date of signing. The act reduces some of the federal powers in education and requires states to develop high standards, assessments, and interventions for failing schools. As ESSA is being interpreted, it is not clear how moving those responsibilities to the state level will impact educators. The overall goal of providing a quality educational experience for all children remains the same. In order to do so building leaders and teachers will continue to look for best practices to implement. According to Provost et al. (2010) the role of the principal has expanded in scope due, in part, to school accountability.

The purpose of this research was to better understand the experiences of a principal leading his building through restructuring. The interviews with the participants solidified the idea that leadership must pay attention to maintaining a clear vision, creating a supportive culture, consistency in leadership, and providing opportunities to collaborate in order to move a school forward on a path to improvement.

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Appendix A

Interview Conversation Starters

Teachers

1. What was your role in developing your school's restructuring plan? Tell me about some of the activities involved in restructuring. (Collaboration)
2. What collaborative structures were in place before sanctions? After sanctions? (Collaboration)
3. What seemed to be the focus of your principal's efforts? (Clear Vision)
4. How could you tell that this was the focus? (Clear Vision)
5. What did he do to keep the focus on that vision? (Clear Vision & Consistency)
6. How do you think his leadership was different during restructuring? (Consistency)
7. How would you characterize your school's culture prior to the need for planning for restructuring? (Culture)
8. What experiences led you to notice a change in the culture? (Culture)
9. How would you categorize the changes and why? (Culture)

Principal

1. Tell me about the role you played in the restructuring process. What were some of the activities involved in restructuring? (Collaboration)
2. What collaborative structures were in place prior to planning for restructuring? What collaborative experiences did you provide for the staff? (Collaboration)
3. What do you think you focused your efforts on? (Clear Vision)
4. How did you establish that focus with the staff? (Clear Vision)
5. What is your understanding of consistency in leadership? What did you do to

- demonstrate that? (Consistency)
6. What areas during restructuring did you feel needed constant attention? How did you repeatedly bring those areas into focus? (Consistency)
 7. Looking back, what are some of the cultural changes you experienced during restructuring? (Culture)
 8. Overall, how would you categorize those changes and why? (Culture)