Leadership for School Turnarounds

by

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Leadership for School Turnarounds

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ABSTRACT

A national crisis currently exists, the urgent need to provide a high quality education and close existing achievement gaps for students living in poverty is a critical function of schooling that these students have yet to experience and must be remedied through the nation’s best hope…school leadership. This study utilized an integrative survey approach to investigate how to turnaround schools by identifying leadership practices and styles to effectively influence student achievement outcomes. Specifically, a cohort of 28 southern California turnaround schools, nine principals from this cohort, and 15 teachers from one of these participant principal’s school were included in this study. Results suggest that the effective turnaround principal is the one who can establish the characteristics of a modern effective school using transformational change through their understanding of organizational theory as they navigate the school to higher levels of performance and then require continuous improvement. Turnaround principals appear to utilize a combination of cluster leadership competencies and core leadership actions. These cluster competencies and turnaround actions together describe the what, how, and who of successful school turnarounds. As schools face failure for their students, the enduring status quo and a bleak future prevails. Therefore, effective turnaround principals may serve as a symbol of hope; possibly influencing university training programs as well as district hiring, placement, training, and evaluation protocols. The leadership context founded in cluster leadership competencies and critical leadership actions seems to be the effective tool for these turnaround leaders to date. Further research is needed to better understand this turnaround phenomenon.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Our schools are under more pressure than ever before to produce academic results. Higher levels of student achievement are expected each year. The No Child Left Behind Act (No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB], 2001) challenged our schools to become foolproof in educating every child in America. As our nation transitions to the Common Core Standards Initiative (2010), our schools next charge will be to educate our nation’s students to be global 21st century learners who are flexible problem solvers, critical thinkers, information, media, and technology users and leaders. The goal of each initiative is the same, to raise student achievement.

Educational reform has been integral throughout the history of public education in America. Providing equity and greater access to educational opportunity was first evidenced through the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which provided federal aid to local school districts, was enacted in 1965. The U.S. Department of Education was created in 1979. The federal government extended its role in educational reform when A Nation at Risk was published in 1983 as an open letter and report to the nation from the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) appointed by then President Ronald Reagan. The sense of urgency created was evident when the letter concluded, “What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments” (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983, p. 8).

NCEE’s (1983) A Nation at Risk put American educators on notice to reform the American educational system. This policy shifted the nation’s goal from one of equity to one of national excellence. To further encourage states to set high content and
performance standards, Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) was enacted during the Clinton administration to improve teaching and learning by providing a national framework for education reform with grant funding available. This national framework was established in order to identify rigorous academic standards, to measure student progress, and provide the support for students to meet the standards. Then, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), set a target that every student in the United States would meet or exceed grade level standards by the year 2014. With it, NCLB-related accountability measures imposed sanctions on districts and schools that did not make adequate annual yearly progress. In 2009, a federal stimulus law, *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, allowed schools to apply for *Race to the Top* funds to push innovative school improvement through educator quality, data systems, innovation, technology, and rigorous standards. Next, led by the National Governors Association Center, the *Common Core State Standards Initiative* may be implemented as early as 2015, not as a national reform movement, but as a voluntary state-led reform that individual states can elect to join. Common Core Standards are intended to be rigorous, preparing students for the college and work with content knowledge in addition to critical thinking skills. The reform seeks to establish consistently rigorous standards for all students regardless of where they reside. These common standards may support students in demonstrating what they know and are able to do as twenty-first century learners (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGACBP], 2009).

Throughout these reform efforts, school leaders have been challenged to lead newly reformed instructional programs at their schools. Research demonstrates that principals influence student achievement outcomes (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991;
Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Principals are faced with a continuous impetus to improve teaching and learning outcomes at their schools while serving diverse student populations (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Leithwood et al., 2004). Under NCLB, students must meet rigorous academic standards as principals strive to improve educational quality and close any existing achievement gaps at their schools. A sense of urgency to improve pervades schools. Too many students are failing. Too many schools are failing (Stuit, 2010). School turnarounds require strong educational leadership (Duke, 2006; Fullan, 2005; Meyers & Murphy, 2007).

Researchers have begun to conduct empirical studies on school turnarounds. A body of research literature is developing around several key questions. How does a principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement (Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010; Salmonowicz, 2009)? How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds (Murphy & Meyers, 2009; Orr, Berg, Shore, & Meier, 2008)? Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006)? Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a failing school (Public Impact, 2008)? Do different phases of school turnaround require different leadership approaches (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Leithwood & Strauss, 2009)? The answers to these questions should contribute new information to the body of existing research in educational leadership. Understanding how a school leader turns around a school would provide essential information for federal, state, district, and school leaders. It might positively influence
educational policy and make all schools a better place to learn, achieve and succeed for all students.

**Background for the Study**

The research on educational reform is expansive. Modern American educational reform began in 1954 with the Supreme Court’s decision to end the educational practice of separate, but equal. Numerous reform efforts have followed over the years, establishing expectations for both equity and excellence. Improving the level of student achievement for all students, while closing gaps for some, has been paramount in striving to meet these goals at school, district, state and national levels. The evolution of school improvement began with effective schools, transitioned to standards-based education, and is currently moving towards common core standards. Early research on effective schools influences school improvement plans even today. Research supports that schools that exemplify certain characteristics improve. Additionally, supports and barriers to school improvement have been identified empirically. These areas of research will be discussed to provide a substantial understanding of becoming an effective school.

The effective schools research was sparked by Coleman et al. (1966), the earliest educational research study undertaken by the federal government to study equity in schooling opportunities. The core of this body of research uncovered existing core beliefs about the function of schooling, learning, and the metrics of success. Early core beliefs professed that student academic achievement was determined primarily by socioeconomic status of the student. As time passed, core beliefs shifted from socioeconomic status as the primary determinant of academic performance to school characteristics or effects, also known as the effective schools correlates, influencing
academic achievement outcomes, although the socioeconomic level of the school still played a prominent role in perceptions about expected student academic achievement. Later, core strategies built upon empirically established learning principles played an eminent role in supporting the belief that schools in challenging circumstances could be effective for their students. Hence, the evolution of the effective schools research outlined the responsibility and control of outcomes for student learning began with family background and home environment (Coleman et al., 1966) next to school effects (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979) transitioned to core strategies (Lezotte, 1991; Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2004; Resnick, 1999) and is currently focused upon school context (Kruger, Witziers, & Sleeger, 2007; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007; National College for School Leadership [NCSL], 2007). In addition to the international perspectives on school effectiveness (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000), challenges to the body of effective schools research is reviewed also (Cuban, 1983, Purkey, & Smith, 1983).

In response to the effective schools research, programs of school improvement emerged across America. Schools attempted to improve by implementing the conditions and characteristics described by Edmonds (1979) to become more effective. The identified school effects were used as the framework for school improvement in both the United States and England for decades and continue to be used today as part of school reform initiatives. These reform initiatives began as a means to provide equity in educational opportunity (Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954) and transitioned over time to focus on educational excellence for all learners (NCEE, 1983). National
policy drove school reform initiatives and research on school improvement influenced national policy.

An extensive body of research exists on organizational change. This literature is particularly important to consider when studying school improvement. Leaders attempting to improve any school must understand and be able to implement: change theory (Fullan, 2006), culture of change (Bridges, 2009), as well as organizational learning and capacity (Elmore, 1996; Murphy & Meyers, 2009).

School leadership is another critical component in the work of improving schools and the possible relationship between effective schools, school improvement, and organizational change. The role of the principal (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Cotton, 2003; Day, 2007; Fullan, 2010; Orr et al., 2008) and conceptual models of school leadership (Hallinger, 2003, 2007; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) is vital in its influence on student achievement outcomes. Collectively, this research literature paints a vivid picture of the influence of school leadership upon improving schools.

Lastly, the research on school turnarounds is explored. Specifically, the actions of principals are examined, along with models of turnaround leadership, which lead to successful school turnarounds. Principal actions include decision-making (Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010) and their action plans. Recent research exists on turnaround leadership, particularly on characteristics and models (Johnson, 2011; Murphy, 2010). This is the entry point for my research on the possible existence on specific leadership characteristics, practices and cluster competencies of principals of successful school
turnarounds. Prior to examining the role and practice of principals, it is essential to first explore what an effective school is and how to become an effective school.

**Becoming an Effective School**

Broad research exists in the area of effective schools over the last half century. Foundational research is discussed, including the Father of Effective Schools, Ronald Edmonds who initiated research in response to the 1966 Coleman Report. This key research represents the first transition in educational equity, a shift in core beliefs about educational outcomes from the impact of family background and home environment to school characteristics. Over time, research extended these factors to include essential core strategies and implementation of standards-based education as a means to achieve equity and excellence in educating all students. In addition, critical views of contemporary researchers are presented. Even with these challenges, scholars generally agree that effective schools exist and have been described sufficiently to summarize essential components and conclusions that, together, constitute this body of effective schools research. Future research might continue to explore consistent characteristics of effective schools that prove useful in improvement of chronically failing schools. The current work of turning these schools around may depend on it.

**Family Background and Home Environment**

Key educational studies have sought to determine how schools educate children. The landmark Coleman Report established that schools had less an influence on student achievement than family background and home environment in a study of over 600,000 students enrolled at over 4,000 schools (Coleman et al., 1966). Additionally, Coleman et al. (1966) found that a gap already existed between Black and White students’
achievement levels upon entering school. This gap widened through grade 12. The Coleman Report also stated that disadvantaged Black children learned better in well-integrated classrooms (Coleman et al., 1966). The findings of this study prompted researchers to engage in replication studies and new research projects to either substantiate or refute the perspective that schools made little to no impact on educating their students.

**School Characteristics**

Whereas the Coleman Report assigned control for educational outcomes to the home, Brookover and Lezotte (1977) assigned this control to the school. They studied eight schools with consistent student performance improvement or decline (six improving and two declining). Brookover and Lezotte’s study determined that the differences between improving and declining schools centered on the faculty’s core beliefs and the impact of these beliefs on decision-making for instruction. In addition, these researchers suggested which of these identified differences in teacher beliefs (for example, who could achieve and who could not) accounted for the variation in levels of student achievement (Brookover & Lezzotte, 1977). Lastly, Brookover and Lezotte’s (1977) found that principals in the improving schools were more likely to take on the role of instructional leader. Both studies relieved educators of their professional duty to provide effective instruction to the urban poor.

A year after the Brookover and Lezotte (1977) study, Edmonds and Frederiksen (1978) published results born out of the Search for Effective Schools Project in Michigan, a quantitative study of school quality in 20 Detroit city schools that served a predominantly poor and minority population. Effective schools were defined as those
that met or exceeded the city average grade equivalent on standardized tests, whereas ineffective schools were defined as those performing at or below the city average grade equivalent. Using these criteria, eight of twenty schools (40%) were effective in teaching mathematics, nine of twenty schools (45%) were effective in teaching reading, and five of twenty schools (20%) were effective in teaching both reading and mathematics. Their findings proposed that “large differences in performance between the effective and ineffective schools could not therefore be attributed to differences in the social class and family background of pupils enrolled in the schools,” thus challenging the landmark findings of the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966, p. 58).

In 1979, Edmonds published a seminal paper that would change the landscape of education for decades. Edmonds described characteristics of effective schools that were derived from the results of the research he and Frederiksen conducted in 1978 under the Search for Effective Schools Project. Edmonds and Frederiksen (1978) and Edmonds’ (1979) stated that student achievement was independent of family background and home environment, but influenced by school effects, “tangible and indispensible characteristics of effective schools” (Edmonds, 1979, p. 22). These school effects or characteristics came to be known as the Effective Schools Correlates: Safe and Orderly Environment, High Expectations for Success, Opportunity to Learn and Time-on-Task, Instructional Leadership, Clear and Focused Mission, Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress and Positive Home-School Relations, Edmonds (1979) declared, “One of the cardinal characteristics of effective schools is that they are as eager to avoid things that don’t work as they are committed to implementing things that do” (p. 22).
At the same time that Edmonds was researching school effects in the United States, Michael Rutter and his team were completing a longitudinal three-year field study of school effects in 12 inner-city secondary schools in London, England (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979). Their research confirmed that schools with nearly the same student populations realized very different educational outcomes for almost the 1,500 students studied. In addition, school effects such as school climate, quality of instruction, school attendance, and teacher preparation were identified as important determinants of school effectiveness (Rutter et al., 1979). Rutter et al.’s (1979) research supported the belief that student achievement was associated with the characteristics of the schools rather than family background and home environment.

Brookover, Beady, Flood, & Schweitzer (1979) also conducted quantitative research on school climate and its possible relationship to school effectiveness. Brookover and his team studied 68 elementary schools in Michigan and found some schools with high poverty and minority populations achieved academically at high levels. Statistical analysis, discounted the role of family background and home environment as the only variables influencing school success or failure (Brookover et al., 1979).

The parallel research in 1979 by Edmonds, Rutter, and Brookover resulted in similar findings related to school’s ability to improve learning and achievement for students living in poverty. The identified school effects were used as the framework for school improvement in both the United States and England for decades and continue to be used today as part of school reform initiatives.

In 1991, Lezotte revisited Edmonds’ correlates to determine how schools might further school improvement efforts once the primary correlates were established. Lezotte
suggested a second generation to Edmond’s first generation correlates. Lezotte utilized current research findings at the time to raise the level of each of the original correlates to better meet the needs of diverse students in varied contexts, regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity. In doing so, he challenged schools to educate all students rigorously. Lezotte maintained that improvement be a continuous process for schools when he stated, “School improvement is an endless journey”, with the evolution of the correlates from the first generation to the second as an essential step of that process (Lezotte, 1991, p. 1).

**Early Effective Schools Programs**

Much research has been conducted in the area of local educational reform since 1978. Edmonds (1982) described school improvement programs at the district (New York City, Milwaukee, Chicago, New Haven and St. Louis), state (Missouri, Connecticut, and New Jersey), and university (Kent State and University of Michigan) levels built upon his Effective Schools Correlates, primarily within urban settings. These school, district, and university programs were representative of the Effective Schools Model to improve schools. Many differences existed between these school improvement programs. Dissimilar designs for improvement were implemented. Participant schools were either mandated or volunteered to design and implement a local school improvement program. Common characteristics of improvement programs rose out of this diverse and multi-level work. In each of these improvement programs, the school was the focus of the intervention, as well as the unit of analysis. All of the reform efforts studied presumed that all students can be educated and that schools have the ability to complete this task. Each advocated for efficient use of resources and used achievement of low-income students as the measure of effectiveness. Edmonds confirmed empirically
that schools have a significant role in educating students. This research suggested that effective schools are schools that successfully implemented the correlates. Edmonds concluded, “This intimate interaction between research and practice validates the usefulness of research on schools and classrooms and encourages an expanded agenda of educational inquiry” (p. 11).

Eubanks and Levine (1983) completed a qualitative case study of three of the earliest effective schools projects, one in Milwaukee and two in New York City. The researchers defined effective schools projects as “efforts to improve student achievement through school-level planning based on research on the conditions of schooling that affect the achievement of economically disadvantaged students” (Eubanks & Levine, 1983, p. 697). In 1979, 18 elementary and two middle schools in Milwaukee Public Schools with low performance on standardized achievement tests and high enrollment of low-income minority students participated in Project Rising to Individual Excellence (RISE). The average achievement gains after two years appeared to be positive: student achievement rose. The first New York Public Schools project, School Improvement Project (SIP), was a study of 24 elementary schools where less than 30% of students read at or above grade level. After two years of participation in SIP, the average achievement gain was 19 points for students reading at or above grade level. The second New York Public Schools project, Local School Development Project (LSDP) included thirty-eight schools, with 14 schools dropping out due to various reasons. Participating schools had less than 40% of students reading at or above grade level. After two years, an average gain of 17.4 points was documented. Eubanks and Levine drew provisional conclusions regarding the prerequisites for successful school improvement efforts: (1) significant amounts of staff
development, (2) large commitment of time from administrative and instructional support
staff, (3) solid funding base, (4) upfront planning the year prior to implementation of the
school improvement plan, (5) belief that inner-city schools can improve, (6) the
implementation of direct instruction as an instructional approach, (7) disagreement
existed about whether top-down or bottom-up approaches were more effective (Eubanks
& Levine, 1983).

Edmonds (1982) as well as Eubanks and Levine (1983) studied effective schools
models of school improvement. Their findings supported effective schools characteristics
could be used to improve student outcomes at schools. Each study reviewed local
improvement efforts at the district, state, or university level. Although the improvement
programs were built on the body of research around effective schools, the plans had
specific foci that were quite unique. Schools focused on the development of leadership
teams, leadership practices, instructional support personnel, staff development, or school
plans. In general, schools did improve (Edmonds, 1982; Eubanks & Levine, 1983).

Edmonds (1982) along with Eubanks and Levine (1983) suggested similar future research
in the areas of whether effective schools characteristics lead to instructional effectiveness,
if the characteristics could be ranked, and sustainability of continuous improvement.

In 1985, Rosenholtz developed a theoretical context to understand the evidence on
effective schools and to study inner-city schools serving students living in low
socioeconomic areas with high numbers of minority students. She was particularly
interested in studying schools that met the above criteria and who were deemed as
effective. She studied four key domains: the balance between contributions and
inducements, the importance of goals, principal behavior and staff mobilization, and
learning to teach (and to teach better). Rosenholtz proposed “Of the many resources required by schools, the most vital are the contributions-of effort, commitment, and involvement-from teachers” (p. 355). Therefore, she suggested two key opinions about teachers. First, students must progress as learners as a needed inducement to keep teaching. Second, teachers leave urban schools or exhibit chronic absenteeism when they are dissatisfied. Rosenholtz cited data that effective schools have low teacher turnover and that the school’s goals are incentives to attract and retain like-minded teachers. Further, she stated that student outcomes are explicitly linked to teacher effort.

Specifically, effective principals convey certainty that teachers can improve student performance and that students themselves are capable of learning. Goals of high student achievement are almost always at the forefront of their planning and action. They set explicit operational goals regarding students’ academic performance, which are clearly communicated to their staff members. (Rosenholtz, 1985, pp. 360-361)

These findings suggested a culture where selection, induction, monitoring, and socialization established the foundation of effective schools was teachers. This was found to be stronger when teachers intellectually shared, collaboratively planned, and worked collegially to meet expectations for student instruction and academic achievement. Also, teachers’ work at these effective schools was task focused, cooperative, and frequent (Rosenholtz, 1985). Rosenholtz credited the principal with the power to intervene and engineer this culture and collective perception of effectiveness at their schools through the successful application of change theory. Principals at effective schools conducted regular classroom observations, provided feedback, monitored implementation of
suggestions from feedback cycles, and thus, the teacher skill development resulted. (Rosenholtz, 1985). According to Rosenholtz (1985), the continuous feedback provided by the principal contributed to the teacher’s certainty that they could support improved student achievement. Lastly, principals of effective schools buffered interruptions to the instructional core. Teachers at effective schools are provided continuous opportunities to build capacity and efficacy so that they may better serve their goals for improved student achievement. Continuous improvement becomes the norm at an effective school.

Rosenholtz suggested that “effective teachers are ‘made’ rather than ‘born’” (p. 380). Rosenholtz concluded her interpretation of the evidence for effective schools by proposing that caution is necessary in generalizing to other school populations or school levels. Equally crucial was Rosenholtz’ admission that when she explained school effectiveness was that she placed the most weight on the idea of certainty and organizational goals.

**Core Strategies**

The Effective Schools Movement evolved further during the 1980s to include Standards-Based Education, which was introduced as a means to raise student achievement and hold schools accountable for achievement trends using clear, measurable standards for all students. In 1999, Resnick (1999) asserted, “Standards, tests, and accountability programs are today’s favored tools for raising overall academic achievement” (p. 1). She maintained concerns that the very measures designed to increase equity might be unsuccessful because counter-productive core beliefs about ability and aptitude continued to exist in schools.
To combat these barriers, Resnick (1999) suggested schools teach all students metacognition skills as well as ingraining these skills as habits. This cognitive training would support students in applying higher-order thinking and problem solving skills when challenged with a demanding curriculum, thus raising students’ achievement levels. Resnick claimed that by doing so “we can harness effort to create ability and build a smarter America” (p. 2). Resnick (1999) established the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh’s advancing Principles of Learning, based on cognitive research and research on learning organizations that established “effort-based schools in which academic rigor and a thinking curriculum permeate the school day for every student” (p. 3). (Principles of Learning included: Organize for Effort, Clear Expectations, Recognition of Accomplishment, Fair and Credible Evaluations, Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum, Accountable Talk, Socializing Intelligence, and Learning as Apprenticeship.) Resnick (1999) maintained that these learning principles along with characteristics of effective schools, might support all students to meet grade level standards and schools to meet accountability measures.

In 2000, Teddlie and Reynolds (Teddlie) published a book reviewing school effectiveness research. School leaders and educators utilized this handbook which included studies on school effects, processes used by effective schools, and strategies for school improvement. This resource provided information in one place on practices and strategies that would lead to the development of effective schools.

In more recent international research on improving schools in high poverty areas, Muijs et al. (2004) identified core strategies schools adopted to become more effective. Muijs et al. (2004) reviewed peer-reviewed journals and research reports after a broad
search of electronic databases on qualitative and quantitative studies that investigated clear examples of effective schools located in disadvantaged areas. Research reports were only included where evidence of valid and reliable research designs existed.

Several thematic core strategies emerged from this body of research: focusing on teaching and learning, leading instruction, creating an information-rich environment, creating a positive school culture building a learning community, providing continuous staff development, involving parents, and securing external support and resources. Together, these core strategies supported both school improvement and effective school status. According to Muijs et al., schools in challenging circumstances, such as poverty, can be effective for their student populations.

**External Pressures**

In 1985, Lezotte and Bancroft (1985) explored trends, perspectives, and premises for school improvement programs built upon the effective schools research. A growing understanding of the effective schools research and an increased demand for school improvement by the public encouraged schools to establish programs of school improvement built upon the effective schools model. The number of schools as well as districts implementing these programs was multiplying rapidly. Lezotte and Bancroft (1985) highlighted exemplary large urban research-based school improvement work designed around effective schools correlates and being led by superintendents with wide support from staff in Jackson, Mississippi; Norfolk, Virginia; and Memphis, Tennessee. Additionally, and in response to scholarly criticisms that effective schools research might not apply to smaller suburban schools across educational levels with very different demographics than in Edmond’s studies, studies in Rochester, New York; Glendale,
Arizona; and both Detroit and Berkley, Michigan suggested otherwise. These districts too reported successes and continuing progress using effective schools research in their school improvement programs. Empirical evidence was documented in each case. At the time Lezotte and Bancroft wrote this article, plans were in place for the National Institute of Education to establish two research centers to advance knowledge of effective schools at the elementary and secondary levels. By publication of their article, educational reform programs were developing in 35 states to improve schooling using the effective schools research. The work to improve schools was notable that it was focused on one school at a time led by a team of building educators using effective schools research and would require three to five years to plan and implement. In addition, five premises established the rationale and foundation for their work:

1. Primary purpose of schooling is teaching and learning,
2. Student outcomes are the basis for assessment,
3. Student outcomes represent what is important to the school,
4. Program outcomes represent both quality and equity, and
5. Effective schools are successful when quality and equity are achieved for all students (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985). Lezotte and Bancroft concluded with the suggestion that over time school improvement efforts like they described would “lend support to the belief that individual schools can and do make a difference for students, and that it is possible to improve both teaching and learning in the context of the effective ‘school’”. (Lezotte and Bancroft, 1985, p. 27).
During the 1995-1996 academic year the Center for Research in Educational Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis and the Center for Research on Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRD-SPAR) at Johns Hopkins University conducted a study on eight restructuring designs that were implemented in 34 Memphis City Schools (MCS). The eight restructuring designs are listed and briefly described in the chart below:

Schools in MCS were under considerable pressure to meet state accountability measures and improve the overall level of achievement. Ross et al. (1997) conducted the evaluation research. Ross et al. (1997) utilized surveys, interviews, and observations to triangulate their preliminary findings for the first year of their study. Across designs, common profiles of strengths and weaknesses emerged. The researchers described common strengths as “the revitalization of schools and teachers and the initiation of new school organizations and teaching strategies” and common weaknesses as “the need for more focused training, more time for teacher collaboration, and strategies for integrating curricular and learning activities with the skills assessed by state-required testing” (Ross et al., 1997, p. 123). Researchers also acknowledged that each design was unique with its own philosophy, direction, and timeline for implementation. Ross et al. suggested an impact to the speed, visibility and sustainability for school improvement under each design.

Role of Culture

Stoll and Fink (1996) suggested that school improvement may be “powerfully influenced” (p. 85) by school effectiveness research, with school culture playing a critical role in whether a school is “either getting better or getting worse” (p. 85). They proposed a model of effectiveness and improvement typology of schools along two dimensions:
effectiveness-ineffectiveness and improving-declining. Stoll and Fink classified schools along these two dimensions as ‘moving’, ‘cruising’, ‘strolling’, ‘struggling’, or ‘sinking’ (p. 85-86). ‘Moving’ schools were effective and keep developing. ‘Cruising’ schools were perceived as effective and seemed to have many of the conditions of a ‘moving’ school, but were not truly requiring higher levels of achievement or effectively preparing students for the future. These schools are often located in higher socioeconomic areas where “the pupils achieve often in spite of teaching quality” (Stoll & Fink, 1996, p. 86). ‘Strolling’ schools on the other hand were neither effective nor ineffective and were status quo. These schools were often described as average. ‘Struggling’ schools were “ineffective and they know it” (Stoll & Fink, 1996, p. 86). These schools had the will to change, but not the skill. Thus, they required external support to become effective. ‘Sinking’ schools were failing schools. These schools were located typically in low socioeconomic areas. Significant external support or school closure were possible strategies to improve the school for students. Conceptually, Stoll and Fink proposed how school culture type might influence whether the school was effective and whether it was able to improve or not.

**Scholarly Concerns and Recommendations for Further Research**

Some researchers suggested a need for further research on what constituted an effective school and the limitations of the existing body of research on effective schools. In 1982, D’Amico (1982) exposed a central concern about the divergent lists of characteristics of effective schools, indicating that each school in their efforts to be effective might develop their own recipe. D’Amico stated that without consistency in the characteristics of school effectiveness, it would be difficult to implement school
improvement plans. He admitted that effective schools had been described, but further research was needed to solidify the identification of core characteristics that generalized across schools (D’Amico, 1982).

Purkey and Smith (1983) critically reviewed the existing literature on school effectiveness and determined that “it is weak in many respects, most notably in its tendency to present narrow, often simplistic recipes for school improvement derived from non-experimental data” (p. 426). Accordingly, these researchers were self-described as skeptical, proclaimed a broader research collection of evidence for school effectiveness, and focused upon the process of how schools work and change (Purkey & Smith, 1983). They purported that study in these areas would support a deeper understanding of what makes a school effective and how to use that knowledge base to improve schools. Purkey and Smith credited the existing school effectiveness research with common sense approaches to schooling in need of integration with the research on organizational change and implementation processes.

Cuban (1983) outlined his primary concerns about the effective schools research. His first concern was that the research did not identify how to create an effective school, cautioning that the research was descriptive without adequate definitions for key terms (Cuban, 1983). Next, Cuban claimed that effectiveness was defined in this body of research solely by standardized test results and not other facets of schooling that may have been as important, such as decision-making, self-esteem, and critical thinking skills. Lastly, Cuban faulted the research for mainly focusing on elementary school settings with little applicability to secondary school settings. Cuban decried the belief that improving
test scores improved the quality of education, ending his article by stating that “such a narrow view can only disserve the children of the nation” (p. 696).

Ralph and Fennessey (1983) shared their trepidations about the effective schools research during the same time period as Cuban. Their first goal was to separate the study of effective schools from the study of school effects. To distinguish the two, the study of effective schools was to “uncover important differences among schools” whereas the study of school effects was to “investigate variables that affect achievement” as defined by Ralph and Fennessey (p. 689). Like Purkey and Smith (1983), Ralph and Fennessey (1983) reviewed case studies, outliers and essays on effective schools research, concluding that they lacked empirical evidence to support their claims and that further documentation was needed to solidify their findings about the characteristics of effective schools. According to Ralph and Fennessey, the body of effective schools research suffered from observer bias and a failure to control variables. The effective schools research laid claim to a scientific model in the absence of empirical evidence or foundational theory (Ralph & Fennessey, 1983).

Rowan, Bossert, and Dwyer (1983) identified various conceptual and methodological concerns about the reliability of findings for implementation in school improvement efforts and the validity of future research. In their analysis, Rowan et al. questioned measures of effectiveness, research designs, and global comparisons. First, measures of effectiveness were predominantly standardized test results with a narrow focus for what constituted student achievement. Next, effective schools research relied primarily on contrasted groups design, where schools deemed ‘effective’ or ‘ineffective’ were studied and whose findings suggested factors that co-varied with school
effectiveness, but did not establish any causal relationship among variables (Rowan et al., 1983). Last, Rowan et al. cautioned that research on effective schools be used by researchers and practitioners with care for programs of school improvement as the data analysis was at the school level and might not describe global characteristics of effective schools. Rowan et al. credited the research on effective schools in that it established that schools can be organized to improve student achievement. Moreover, that school effects on student achievement existed at the school level, but required further research to establish any notion of generalization beyond the individual school in order to suggest a model of school improvement.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Research over the past 45 years shifted the responsibility and control for student achievement from the home to the school (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Brookover et al., 1979; Coleman et al., 1966; Edmonds, 1979; Edmonds & Frederiksen, 1978; Lezotte, 1991; Muijs et al., 2004; Resnick, 1999; Rutter et al., 1979). Research findings have identified the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ for building and sustaining effective schools, but not the process. This body of research identifies characteristics and strategies of effective schools that all schools can implement to support effective schooling, specifically for the urban poor.

The critical views of key researchers (Cuban, 1983; D’Amico, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Ralph & Fennessey, 1983; Rowan et al., 1983) cannot be overlooked. Their challenges to identified weaknesses within the effective schools research and the adoption of effective schools research for programs of school improvement provoked consideration that these programs may be built on unfinished research. Although these
researchers acknowledged the common sense understanding revealed in the research findings of many studies and the existence of described characteristics of effective schools, they cautioned the use of this body of research as the basis of school reform until validity and reliability was better established (Cuban, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Ralph & Fennessey, 1983; Rowan et al., 1983).

General agreement among researchers exists that the Effective Schools Movement established four essential components: educability of learners, focus on outcomes, taking responsibility of students, and attention to consistency throughout the school community (Murphy, 1992). Each of these four components characterized the basis of educational reform. First, schools that were organized to sort and select students built on the prevailing beliefs of educability were faced with research findings that suggested that all students can learn. Second, schools were assessed on quality as a collective effort by focusing on student outcomes. Third, schools could no longer blame the student or their background, but instead the responsibility for students’ learning fell on the school. Fourth, effective schools were found to have a consistency in the teaching and learning process within and across schools. Murphy (1992) concluded that “the correlates were simply a means to an end for student learning. What was important were the principles that supported the correlates.” (p. 6). Linking school effectiveness to school improvement may prove to be mutually beneficial for improving educational outcomes for students.

**Statement of the Problem**

Schools need to demonstrate continuous improvement in light of high stakes accountability measures and the apparent declining faith in public education. Once an effective school is defined, the next step is to understand what leaders do to improve
schools and establish effectiveness. In the case of turnaround schools, what informs a leader’s practice to improve the academic outcomes for all students is an essential question for this study. The challenge for any leader then is how to create, sustain, and lead an effective school for all learners in any educational context. School leaders share a common imperative—to educate our nation’s students to be global 21st century learners who are flexible problem solvers, critical thinkers, information, media, and technology users and leaders.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study is to explore the impact of school principals on effective school turnarounds. The primary function of this research is to contribute knowledge that will help stakeholders to better understand how to turnaround schools by identifying leadership practices and styles to effectively influence student achievement outcomes. A national crisis currently exists, the urgent need to provide a high quality education and close existing achievement gaps for students living in poverty is a critical function of schooling that these students have yet to experience and must be remedied through the nation’s best hope…school leadership. Consequently, assumptions are presented in the following logic flow as the foundation for establishing the significance of the study in addition to the essential research questions for this study:

1. Continuous improvement should be a strategic element of every school.
2. The school principal is a critical leader in designing, implementing, and evaluating school’s continuous improvement.
3. Implied in continuous school improvement is a system and model for accountability. It is argued that accountability systems measures should be
broad enough to effectively demonstrate students’ development and achievement using both aggregated and disaggregated data. Whereas data drives an accountability and improvement plan, there is widespread debate over what, and how, metrics are used. The most widely used and critically reviewed accountability system is derived from NCLB in the form of API and AYP. Despite arguments, the metrics have either: misdirected change and improvement, and/or lack validity and reliability and/or are too high stakes and underfunded, the fact remains that NCLB is the prominent accountability system impacting the activities, evaluation, and recognition of schools through the United States. While policy makers and experts debate its virtues, the high stakes nature of NCLB standards and benchmarks have little choice but to develop program improvement plans designed to improve performance in this accountability system.

4. Therefore, school principals, especially in schools formally designated under Program Improvement, have major responsibility to lead in the design, implementation, and evaluation of their schools improvement (or reform) plan.

5. This study is designed to better inform that leadership task (effective turnaround schools).

6. An effective review and contribute to and inform school leaders about school improvement that will lead to turnaround schools should begin with an understanding of what are the characteristics and criteria for effective schools (under NCLB).
7. Effective school research does identify lists of school practices, attributes and limitations of the depth of school effectiveness research.

8. Next, a review of school improvement literature should further inform school leaders about practices, strategies and characteristics of successful (and unsuccessful) attempts to design, implement, and evaluate school improvement.

9. The relationship between school effectiveness and school improvement will be reviewed in order to consider the degree to which knowledge of effective schools informs school improvement efforts. The literature suggests blending these ‘databases’ is informative, to a point. Limitations revert back to the lack of depth in the school improvement literature and the fact that school effectiveness does not deal with a process, which limits informing leaders how to get to school effectiveness.

10. Review of organizational theory is provided on the rationale that understanding organizational learning (change) will inform leaders about concepts in the leading school improvement process.

11. In addition to organizational learning, a review of school leadership practices will further inform leaders responsible for school improvement. This review includes identifying and clustering leadership competencies that are further associated with leading school improvement efforts.

12. The final section of the literature review summarizes research on the turnaround schools. Turnaround schools seem to epitomize and extend current understanding of school effectiveness and school improvement by
incorporating the organizational learning and school leadership practices. Turnaround school research may be the hybrid of earlier school improvement research in that it more specifically informs school leaders to design, implement, and continually evaluate in reforming Program Improvement schools and turning these schools into effective ones.

13. As such, this study will add to the turnaround school literature base by further examining leadership competencies derived from organizational theory.

14. A review of effective turnaround leadership may suggest specific principal styles for initial, continuous, and sustaining improvement phases of school turnarounds. This strand of turnaround school research may better inform district leadership to assign principals with identified styles that best support improvement for different phases of school turnarounds.

15. Alternatively, a review of effective turnaround leadership may uncover specific principal styles for schools with diverse contexts in need of school turnaround. This may inform ‘matching’ school principals with a targeted style to support and possibly accelerate school improvement in schools with very different contexts.

16. Therefore, this study will add to the turnaround school literature base by further examining the possible existence of an impact on school improvement efforts due to principal style, perhaps for the current phase of the school turnaround or school context.
Research Questions

There were three primary research questions for this study, which were situated within the context of turnaround schools, schools designated under NCLB Program Improvement. The focus of the study was how school principals lead school improvement initiatives incorporating essential leadership practices and critical organizational theory. The following research questions were examined:

1. How does a principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?
   1.1. How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?
   1.2. Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?

2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a failing school?
   2.1. Do different phases of school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership approaches?
   2.2. Does the leadership context influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles?

Significance of the Study

This study will examine the possible existence of cluster leadership practices utilized in conjunction with successful implementation of organizational theory by school principals leading effective school turnarounds. Additionally, this study will explore whether specific principal styles exist for the initial, continuous, and sustaining
improvement phases of school turnarounds or for school context, especially for schools formally designated under Program Improvement.

**Description of Proposed Methodology**

The proposed research utilizes non-experimental survey design from a pragmatic worldview (Creswell, 2009). The rationale for this approach is to better understand how a principal turns around a school by obtaining statistical results from a targeted sample using one survey and then focusing on a purposeful sample from a related population using a parallel survey to explain those results more deeply. Numeric data will be collected during three distinct phases of the study beginning with an exhaustive census of widely available public data on public schools and culminating with the integration of independent survey instruments that measure both the principal’s and credentialed staff perceptions of the principal’s use of effective school turnaround leadership behaviors at specified schools. These cross-sectional instruments will provide valuable data on the principal’s organizational, learning-centered leadership practices that have been found to be correlated with student achievement.

Together, the quantitative research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation in this survey design should support the emergence of statistical and thematic patterns. This information should deepen the understanding of how principals of substantive school turnarounds transform a school that is failing into an effective school using learning-centered leadership practices derived from organizational theory.

This study will initially include a pool of 25 to 30 schools formerly identified as participants in NCLB Program Improvement that are current examples of substantive
turnaround schools. Each school will be located in California serving diverse student populations and significant numbers of low-income families.

Participants will be selected using non-probability, purposeful sampling for the purpose of studying principals who have lead substantive school turnarounds. This strategy will best support the study’s intent to discover and gain a better understanding of the nature of leadership practices derived from organizational theory to effectively turnaround a failing school.

Instruments to be utilized in this study include two surveys designed by this researcher. Parallel, independent surveys for principals and certificated staff will be developed using explicit theory about cluster leadership competencies and core leadership actions. These targeted surveys may uncover a numeric description of trends, attitudes, and perceptions for this sample from a broader population of substantive school turnaround leaders.

Procedures for data collection and analysis will include pre-determined research questions; instrument-based theory explicit questions; census, attitude, and performance data; statistical analysis and interpretation. These methods should support extensive exploration of existing public data and collected survey responses using defined procedures to make sense of this data into a cohesive whole to better understand the work of turnaround principals.

This survey design with a pragmatic worldview is the most appropriate approach to meet the goals of the study. The quantitative methods may reveal the direction for more in depth qualitative study of how turnaround principals transform their schools into learning organizations where student achievement is high for diverse students living in
poverty. The accompanying interpretations of leadership practices may lead to identification of cluster leadership practices derived from organizational theory that is critical for effective school turnaround leadership. In addition, information on principal style may describe they approach of effective learning-centered leadership practices that are more effective at different phases of the school turnaround or within various school contexts. Also, is it possible to predict the future success of a school turnaround? Regardless, survey research design may support gaining a deeper understanding of effective school turnarounds.

Limitations exist in any research. Procedures and protocols will be designed to lessen the impact of these limitations. Limitations may include missing data, unidentified factors, low participation rates on surveys, and potential researcher bias. Additional limitations may include human nature, resources, and timing of study. A final limitation is the level of expertise required for this approach to study the phenomenon of effective school leadership practices.

**Organization of Study**

The study focused on how a principal turns around a failing school through the lens of leadership practices and organizational theory is presented in five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview where the study is defined, establishes a background on effective schools, describes the proposed methodology with its limitations, and identifies the essential research questions. Chapter Two will provide a thorough review of the literature on school improvement, organizational change, leadership, and turnaround schools. Chapter Three describes the methodology for this survey research, population and sample selection processes, instruments, data collection/analysis
procedures, ethical considerations, validity issues, and the unit of analysis in the design of this study. Chapter Four presents the results and an interpretive analysis for each of the research questions explored. Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of these findings, possible impact to practitioners and scholars, and implications for further research.
CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review will attempt to explain how the research on school improvement, organizational change, school leadership and school turnarounds has influenced student outcomes over the last fifty years. The rationale for reviewing these four areas as a means of improving schools is supported in the literature. The characteristics of effective schools provided a foundational understanding for how to become an effective school and a direction for school improvement initiatives (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1991; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Next, the organizational change literature played an important role in understanding the complexities of school reform (Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 2006, 2010; Resnick & Hall, 1998). The integral role of school leadership must be considered as well (Bamburg & Andrews, 1987; Halligner & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004). Lastly, successful school turnarounds are considered to explore the impact of school improvement efforts, organizational change, and leadership practices. In this literature review, each of these crucial components will be discussed.

**School Improvement**

Broad research on school improvement spans the past five decades. Studies into school improvement evolved naturally as researchers began to describe what constituted an effective school, beginning with the concurrent foundational research by Edmonds (1979), Brookover et al. (1979) and Rutter et al. (1979) where they described characteristics of effective schools. School effectiveness emphasized evaluation, feedback, and consequences as key elements. Local and national accountability measures
typically include common standards and assessment to measure level of achievement in
comparison to others with identified expected targets.

Synonymous with school improvement is educational reform. Research on school
effectiveness is descriptive of characteristics of schools, identifying what works in
schools, yet does not provide directions for how a school can become effective.
Goldstein (1997) outlined methods in school effectiveness research to describe the
differences within and between schools. In Bezirtzoglou’s (2004) paper presented to the
European Conference on Educational Research, she stated, “Nevertheless, school
effectiveness research seeks to describe what an effective school looks like” (p. 1). This
is the turning point where research shifts to school improvement. School improvement
research identifies the necessary conditions that facilitate successful change to
effectiveness. School improvement is the vehicle for planned educational change with
the goal of improving student achievement outcomes. School improvement is the
systemic, strategic, and sustained effort to establish conditions that promote high levels of
learning for all students.

Crucial factors and key characteristics of school effectiveness appear to be linked
has attempted to find the factors of effective schools that could be introduced or changed
in education through school improvement” (p. 344). Ultimately, Stoll and Fink (1996)
best suggested the link between effective schools, school effectiveness, and school
improvement when they declared, “Work in school improvement has been pioneered as a
result of research into school effectiveness. The central objective of school improvement
lies on schools’ responsibility to change.” (p. 85). Changing practice is a process that
takes both time and commitment. Additionally, new skills must be developed and a
willingness to change is required for school improvement to occur (Stoll & Meyers,
1998). The need for school improvement was born from a long history of ineffective
schools.

Although Creemers and Reezigt (1997) suggested that inherent differences exist
between the research on school effectiveness, with its focus on developing theory and
description, and the research on school improvement, with its focus on change in practice
for improved student achievement. Furthermore, school effectiveness emphasized
schools’ accountability and educators’ responsibility for educating all students at high
levels of achievement which established the need for programs of school improvement.
Thus, school improvement programs were necessary to establish how schools might
become more effective. Frequently, the research suggests that school improvement
programs focused on the implementation of effective schools practices (Creemers &
Reezigt, 1997). Research on school effectiveness and school improvement may prove
mutually beneficial (Reynolds, Hopkins, & Stoll, 1993). Therefore, “School
effectiveness research and theory can provide insights and knowledge to be used in

Shared Focus and Common Features

A key conference report emerged in 1998 from the Tenth International Congress
for School Effectiveness and Improvement (Creemers et al., 1998). The conference
concluded with a plenary session that followed a focused discussion in groups of almost
30 conference attendees on the future of the discipline. Each discussion group was posed
the same four questions around needed areas of further research, barriers to school
improvement efforts in schools, policy development challenges, and professional organizations adequate to support identified needs (Creemers et al., 1998).

Creemers et al. (1998) captured these discussions resulted in broad summaries of intellectual development of school effectiveness and school improvement, future of these disciplines, and promoting educational change through implementation by practitioners and policy makers. They outlined substantive findings exist for school effectiveness: a range of outcome measures for school effects, educational effects at multiple levels in the educational system, important factors, variables, and characteristics identified, theoretical explanations across levels and contexts, and improved methodological approaches (Creemers et al., 1998). Additionally, these researchers suggested that research on school improvement was widening: developing models for school change and improvement, link between school effectiveness knowledge base and school improvement, progress on understanding the change process as it applies to education, cost effectiveness of improving schools, school effectiveness research as the drive for school improvement, the influence of school culture and ownership on change, and the importance of teaching and learning strategies on school improvement. Further, Creemers et al (1998) discussed the future of school effectiveness and school improvement. Key points included the need to focus on outcomes for effective schools beyond basic skills, a need to review the importance of teacher effectiveness at the classroom level, explore the dynamic between excellence and equity, consider the educational context and perspectives. Although it was established by conference participants the link between school effectiveness and school improvement, the application by school practitioners and policy development by elected officials was slow.
Programs of School Improvement

In 2000, Harris published a comparative study on two school improvement projects that demonstrated positive schooling effects, the Improving the Quality of Education for All Project (IQEA) and the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). In 1990, IQEA was established in England and Wales in over 50 schools as well as schools in Iceland, Puerto Rico, and South Africa. Cambridge and Nottingham Universities provided academic leadership and vision for IQEA. This project was designed around the core belief in the relationship between teachers’ professional growth and school improvement. Research evidence demonstrates that effective schools “harness the possibility for internal change through external pressure” (Harris, 2000, p. 1). Building capacity of teachers under these conditions promotes positive change and school improvement. School may only join the project once they achieved support from 80% or more of the staff for three semesters of involvement with an identified teacher leader cadre. Additionally, participating schools must welcome external and internal evaluation processes. The partner university provided each school with a link advisor to support staff development and capacity building through feedback cycles. IQEA essentially developed a successful school culture for change at each participating school. This structure supported school improvement, but did not dictate how the school would improve. Although, schools were provided research on effective schools and school improvement strategies while reflecting on school and teacher practices in the support network provided by the partner university.

In 1991, the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, a Canadian charitable foundation, began the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP) as a high school
improvement project. Unlike IQEA that was driven by a national reform agenda, MSIP was driven by a foundation that wanted to enhance the education of ‘at risk’ students. Second, MSIP depended on practitioner expertise to drive reform rather than university scholars. Last, MSIP solicited applications with significant funding available for school improvement projects. MSIP staff supported the school prior to the submission of the application through the end of the project with a coordinator and other support staff. These applications had to be school specific and target school improvement for ‘at risk’ students at the high school level. Like IQEA, MSIP was not prescriptive in the school’s improvement efforts. A school improvement team, in addition to annual internal and external evaluations of the project, was integral components.

Both IQEA and MSIP documented the process of change and provided examples of what improvement looked like step-by-step. Harris’ (2000) study revealed some common features of effective school improvement. Six common features were identified:

- **External agency**: a component that placed attention upon the mixture of pressure and support necessary for school improvement.
- **A focus upon specific teaching and learning goals**: a component that included student learning goals based on outcomes within the instructional cycle
- **A commitment to teacher development and professional growth**: a component that focused upon providing teachers with the training needed to meet the schools’ and students’ needs
- **Professional interchange, collaboration, and networking**: a component that supported sharing and learning from one another and to solve problems collectively
- **Devolved leadership and temporary systems**: a component that established temporary teacher leader groups to act as change agents

- **Formative and summative evaluation**: a component that established feedback loops to continuously evaluate academic progress using data to inform decisions about instruction and the overall project

In conclusion, Harris (2000) stated that both IQEA and MSIP “successfully prompted this chain reaction (urgency, energy, agency, and more energy) of improvement in the majority of their schools” (p. 5). The essential components Harris identified are empirical findings that may suggest how many schools can become effective through their school improvement efforts.

Creemers’ (2002) research on the Effective School Improvement (ESI) Project in Europe was designed to study the relationship between school effectiveness and school improvement so that schools could improve education for their students. He defined effective school improvement as “planned educational change that enhances student learning outcomes as well as the school’s capacity for managing change.” (p. 344). Further, Hoeben (1994) suggested that to evaluate effective school improvement, criterion for effectiveness and improvement were necessary. Effectiveness would explore whether the school achieved better student outcomes while improvement would study whether the school successfully managed transitioning from existing to new conditions needed to be effective. Creemers (2002) comparative analysis of empirical case study research for the ESI Project analyzed theories that might be used for effective school improvement, evaluated effective school improvement programs in European countries (Belgium, Finland, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and England), and
developed a strategy for school improvement that would support creating effective schools. The aim of the ESI Project was to develop a comprehensive, strategic strategy for school improvement model that would result in effective schools that might be appropriate for school across several European countries. This study lasted three years, 1998-2001. Stoll, Wikely, and Reezigt (2002), questioned whether it was possible for the ESI Project to develop a common model for school improvement across European countries that would be both valid and applicable across varying contexts. The researchers advised caution before generalizing findings from one context to another and posed key questions for suggested additional research.

From 1999-2003, Sun, Creemers, and de Jong (2007) conducted further case study research on the contextual influence at a national level on the ESI Project in Europe since the original study focused on the school level. After reviewing five research areas as their theoretical framework (school effectiveness, school improvement, curriculum, organizational learning and learning organizations, marketization), Sun et al. developed a theoretical model for their study that identified 10 contextual factors. Their model was designed to show the relationship between three key elements: goals, pressure, and support. They found that the national context was significant in the ESI Project, specifically applicable in the 8 countries including 31 case studies involved in the study. Sun et al. concluded “Our findings indicate that education is intensively guided and shaped at the national level. At the national level the goals-pressure-support model and the 10 factors can be used as effective strategies for ESI” (p. 115).
Mackenzie (1983) completed a meta-analysis of the existing research on school improvement and applied effective school practices. He organized the information around three dimensions: leadership, efficacy, and efficiency. Thirty-one elements were included from reviews of research. Within each dimension, Mackenzie further sorted each element as either a core element or a facilitating element. Core elements were found throughout the effective schools literature as characteristics or correlates. Facilitating elements were defined as ‘specific conditions that may make it easier to implement the core principles of effective schooling’ (Mackenzie, 1983, p. 8). As one moves down the dimensions, the level of implementation shifts from school and district to classroom. Mackenzie suggested that key factors in improving a school required more time to establish the outcomes of effective schools and their role in school improvement.

Huberman (1993) developed a conceptual model for sustained interactivity between school effectiveness and school improvement research traditions. Key to this model was the need for communication between school effectiveness and school improvement at each stage of the research and improvement projects. Huberman defined sustained interactivity as “multiple exchanges between researcher and potential users of that research at different phases of the study” (p. 4). Huberman suggested that his conceptual model might prove useful in the field of school effectiveness and school improvement. The importance of the conceptual model was that it might limit researchers from concluding their work was done after reviewing school improvement projects, and it might prevent school improvers from applying the correlates and basing their evaluation
of how successful the school improvement project was without considering other influences.

Reynolds et al. (1993) surveyed researchers and practitioners from school effectiveness and school improvement camps to discover their differences and suggested how together they could “meet the knowledge needs necessary for improving the quality of schooling” (p. 37). In addition, Reynolds et al. credited each with unique histories and approaches with recognized intellectual and practical separation. These disciplines have different conceptual, methodological, and theoretical underpinnings (Reynolds et al. 1993). Three improvement projects were described as part of this paper to highlight blended approaches relying on the knowledge bases of both school effectiveness and school improvement: Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) in England; Halton’s Effective Schools Project in Canada; and The Cardiff Change Agent Study in Wales. In each of these projects, it became evident that if the academic communities of school effectiveness and school improvement were to collaborate, then both might contribute to the academic and practical needs of the other (Reynolds et al., 1993).

Like Reynolds et al. (1993), Creemers and Reezigt (1997) proposed sustaining links for school effectiveness and school improvement that might benefit both collectively as well as each individually. They suggested that the relationship was “often troublesome” (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997, p. 396). Creemers and Reezigt advocated for a strong link between school effectiveness and school improvement in light of their intrinsic differences due to their shared goal of educational quality. A summarized list of identified intrinsic differences included missions, responsibilities and priorities. These intrinsic differences may make it difficult to link the two areas of educational research.
Creemers and Reezigt stated that school effectiveness research “should provide information on the factors which constitute effectiveness and the levels they are representing, on the student factors which influence outcomes, on multiple outcomes of schooling, and on effectiveness of various types of education” (p. 411).

Beyond those specific suggestions, the researchers concluded that the school effectiveness research was insufficient in providing a process which could be used to improve schools. In contrast, school improvement research required innovation for better schools as a practice and problem-oriented approach. Both fields exhibited challenges with “unanswered questions, unexplained findings, and unsolved problems” (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997, p. 420). Creemers and Reezigt (1997) supported a balanced link between the effective schools research knowledge base and the conceptual development evident in school improvement research. They concluded with the suggestion that “both traditions may have to leave the idea behind that there is ‘one right way’ for all schools” (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997, p. 425). They purported that it was critical for researchers in both researchers in the effective schools and school improvement areas to cooperate in order to further the field of educational science and educational practice (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997).

**Scholarly Criticisms and Suggestions for Further Research**

Barth (1986) presents a perspective that “public schools have come to be dominated and driven by a conception of educational improvement that might be called ‘list logic’” (p. 294). He suggests that effective school improvement does not lie in a list of characteristics of effective schools or any other list essentially. Barth contends that ‘list logic’ is grounded in a numerous lists from the effective schools research identifying
characteristics of effective schools, effective leaders and staff, and effective methods. Further, Barth contends that ‘list logic’ for school improvement is an ineffective approach. He suggests that the reasons for this failure are that schools do have the capacity to improve themselves, external lists may be perceived as limiting, and effective schools do not seem to rely on lists. Barth admits two reasons why ‘list logic’ is the force in school improvement. First, research-based lists are logical and defensible. Second, they have face validity in that they are prescribed ways to school improvement. Lastly, until lists for school improvement are replaced, they will continue to be used in implementing effective school improvement. Barth questioned which comes first - an effective school or a good school. Barth suggests that a list is not the answer, but that a culture is.

**Summary and Conclusions**

Research on school improvement over the past three decades evolved. Early research focused on establishing the early correlates of effective schools as a means to improve a school (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985). Ten years later, Ross and his team were evaluating the effectiveness of eight restructuring designs in 34 Memphis City Schools under considerable pressure by the state to improve student achievement and meet state accountability measures (Ross et al., 1997).

In Stoll and Fink’s (1996) study on school improvement, they emphasized the critical influence of culture on whether a school was improving or declining, a foundational component from the school effectiveness research. They defined schools as: “moving, cruising, strolling, struggling, or sinking” (Stoll & Fink, 1996, pp. 85-86). A
‘moving’ school was desirable, it meant the school was effective and exhibit continuous improvement over time.

A plenary session during the Tenth International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement revealed shared focus and common features for improving schools using school effectiveness research. Creemers et al. (1998) captured this work in broad summaries of work in both disciplines. The recommendations derived were to focus on outcomes beyond basic skills, review teacher effectiveness within the classroom, explore the relationship between equity and excellence, and consider educational contexts in relation to school improvement efforts (Creemers et al., 1998).

Programs of school improvement were described to highlight examples both in the United States and internationally. They included: IQEA in England/MSIP in Canada (Harris, 2000), and ESI in Europe (Creemers, 2002; Stoll et al., 2002; Sun et al., 2007). These examples exemplified school improvement efforts that were positive. Common to each of these school improvement programs were school effects that led to improved student achievement for many students. Each study concluded that caution should be utilized in applying the findings from their study to other contexts (Creemers, 2002; Harris, 2000).

Several researchers studied blending school effectiveness and school improvement as an approach. Mackenzie (1983) suggested that the key factors for a school took time to establish. Other researchers found that it was critical for researchers and practitioners to collaborate from both disciplines in order to improve schools and further understanding what makes a school effective (Huberman, 1993; Reynolds et al., 1993; Creemers & Reezigt, 1997).
Barth (1986) made a strong case against using lists of conditions identified from the effective schools research to improve schools. He suggested this was an ineffective approach as it may limit school improvement efforts and contended that effective schools do not rely on lists.

School improvement was set off by the correlates from the Effective Schools Movement. It evolved into school effectiveness, a broader description and definition of what makes a school effective that was beyond the correlates. Although school effectiveness relied heavily on the conditions established by Edmonds (1979) and later refined by Lezotte (1991), it grew to include substantial research-based practices reviewed by Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) outlining studies on school effects, processes used by effective schools, and strategies for school improvement.

School improvement factors and processes may be key in whether a school improves are not. External pressure to drive internal change seems to influence school improvement (Ross et al., 1997). School culture has been established for over 30 years in both effective schools and school improvement as a central factor (Edmonds, 1979; Stoll & Fink, 1996). School was shared focus and common goals provide examples of both effectiveness and improvement (Creemers et al., 1998). Most promising appears to be a blending of school effectiveness and school improvement research as mutually beneficial for student outcomes (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997; Mackenzie, 1983; Reynolds et al., 1993). Huberman’s (1993) model for sustained interactivity suggested that collaboration between and among school effectiveness and school improvement disciplines would lead to improved work in both. The contributions from both school improvement and school effectiveness research points to support for a blended approach.
Organizational Learning, Learning Organizations, and Change Theories

Extensive research on organizational change exists over the last eight decades. Social psychologist Kurt Lewin pioneered the innovative idea that change efforts should focus on groups over individuals during the 1930s. Lewin’s seminal work served as a springboard for research on the many layers of organizations and the people within them. Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978) were instrumental with their work on learning loops and theories of action and their impact upon organizational learning. Organizational learning and learning organizations were reviewed and specifically defined for the purpose of research and application (Sun, 2003). For over 40 years, researchers have devoted much additional time to the study of how organizations work, how organizations can be successful, and what leads to an organization’s failure (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Bridges, 2009; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990).

Over these years, it became evident that change is both difficult and necessary for organizational growth and survivability in today’s world. Common themes across business and education models of change theory emerged (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). In education, organizational change has focused on change processes that may result in improved performance and provide a high quality education for all students. Theoretical models may serve as a conceptual scaffold that can be used to plan for change that fits a specific situation (Bridges, 2009; Fullan, 1991; Kotter, 1996). In addition, selecting a theoretical model might either limit or expand the reformers thinking as they plan, implement, and assess change efforts at multiple levels of an organization including schools (Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 1985, 2006, 2010; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Resnick, 1987; Resnick & Hall, 1998; Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002). Both business and education
models are discussed in this section. Business models have relevance and usefulness for application in educational arenas as both are viable organizations that undergo change processes over time. Framing change is another valuable area of the core knowledge on change that may well support available change theories (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In addition, some opposing views are presented to fully represent scholarly discourse on these topics (Cuban, 1990; Longo, 1982). Foundational research on learning organizations, organizational learning, and change theory are discussed in this section of the literature review.

Defining Organizational Learning and Learning Organizations

Sun (2003) stated “organizations need to be highly adaptable and continue to improve if they want to prosper and take the lead in a fast-paced, competitive and unpredictable world” (p. 153). Some researchers use the words ‘organizational learning’, ‘learning organization’, and ‘a learning organization’ as interchangeable concepts. Sun distinguished these three terms from linguistic and conceptual perspectives to clarify their nuanced meanings by analyzing the definitions devised by influential organizational researchers.

Argyris and Shon (1978) operationalized one crucial definition of organizational learning in their foundational work. They defined organizational learning as:

Organizational learning is a process in which members of an organization detect error or anomaly and correct it by restructuring organizational theory of action, embedding the results of their inquiry in organizational maps and images. (p. 20) Essential to this definition is the idea that functional components of the organization might not yet be optimized and that both individual and collective learning are required to
facilitate correction within a theory of action. This implied systemic improvement as an approach to successful organizational learning. Simultaneously, this definition positioned organizational learning as a process.

The term ‘a learning organization’ initially emerged from Senge’s (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Organizational Learning* where he contextualized organizations with the ability to adapt continuously for an unknown future as learning organizations. He suggested that through learning, an organization might be equipped to better adapt and survive the competitive challenges of turbulent periods.

Senge (1990) defined a learning organization as:

> Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (p. 14)

Senge proposed that a learning organization required collective learning as a powerful outcome of dynamic of group learning. Alternatively, individual learning supported building capacity as an vital process. The combined synergy of the two processes enhanced learning overall for those individuals within the organization as well as the entire organization. This conceptualization suggested that a learning organization was a living organism that could transform with a climate and culture that supported a powerful learning environment (Senge, 1990).

Sun (2003) defined organizational learning as a process just as Argyris and Shon (1978) had. Sun described this process as “a collective learning and improving process aiming to build up a learning organization” (p. 160) as Senge (1990) had years earlier.
Further, Sun termed learning organizations as those that function as “living organisms with an open, powerful learning environment which inspires, facilitates, and empowers the learning of its members so as to enhance its capacity for change, adaptability, improvement, and competition” (p. 160). These conceptual definitions with their subtle linguistic and conceptual nuances were pivotal to understanding an organization’s change process over time.

Foundational Learning Theories

Foundational learning theories provided insight into how organizations learn and change over time (Lewin, 1951; Perrow, 1961; Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978).

**Lewin’s field theory.** Lewin (1951) developed his Field Theory which predicated the critical importance of individual personalities, interpersonal conflict, and situational variables. He theorized that behavior was the result of the interaction between the individual and the organizational environment. Lewin, considered the father of modern social psychology, utilized scientific methods and experimentation to study social behavior in organizations. Field Theory included three stages: unfreeze, change, and refreeze. His model suggested that organizational change requires an organization to go from an established state to a changing state to a novel state.

Lewin (1951) described each stage. In the initial unfreeze stage, the organization created the conditions for the change to occur. Central to this stage was providing the motivation for people change as the current state was no longer desirable. As people within the organization move from the unfreeze stage, the change stage began. Here, people must psychologically accept and attempt the desired change. Most within the organization experienced confusion and lower productivity during this stage (Lewin,
Crucial to this stage was the identification of new behaviors and norms, effective communication, and adoption of new cultural attitudes. Leadership was required to support people throughout the change with coaching and counseling. Refreeze was the final stage. The change was situated and people experienced stability once again and productivity returned to higher levels. Essential to this stage was the reinforcement of new behaviors through incentive systems, communication, and structures. Lewin was the first to identify the psychological aspect of change on individuals working within an organization where change was established as a process (1951). Lewin’s seminal Field Theory laid the groundwork for future study of organizations. He was integral in studying the role of the individual and groups within the organizational setting.

**Perrow’s official and operational goals.** Perrow (1961) defined goals as either “official” or “operative”. According to Perrow, official goals described the general purpose of the organization while operative goals described the outcomes achieved through the actual operation of the organization aligned with policy.

**Argyris and Schon’s learning loops and theories of action.** Argyris and Schon (1974) studied individual and organizational learning. They specifically explored the role of human reasoning and behavior as the basis for assessment and action. Moreover, Argyris and Schon asserted that people’s internal maps help them to plan, implement and evaluate their deliberate actions. In this study, the researchers’ premise was that people relied on mental maps to guide their behavior in situations using either espoused theories or theories-in-use. Argyris and Schon, developers of the notion of theories of action, described that theories-in-use are evidenced by the theory behind what a person does whereas espoused theories are evidenced by the theory behind what person says about
their actions. Both theories of action are influenced by a person’s world view and their values.

Argyris and Schon (1974) established a theory of action as instrumental in understanding both the fit and gap between the two theories of action, espoused and theory-in-use. The fit referred to the individual’s reasoning to the organization’s whereas the gap was when either the individual had an espoused theory that was different than their theory-in-use or a mismatch existed between the individual’s and organization’s theories-in-use. This was critical early work in extending the knowledge base on individual learning as well as establishing early organizational learning theories.

In 1978, Argyris and Schon further studied theories in action and identified two types of learning, single-loop learning and double-loop learning for both individuals and organizations. Single-loop learning revolved around error analysis and correction as well as adherence to governing variables. Double-loop learning relied on altering the governing variables to determine next steps to innovate creative thought. Double-loop learning involved modifying the organization’s norms, policies, and goals. Single-loop learning was defined as a cause and effect process with little to no reflection whereas double-loop learning involved reflection in the form of questioning the learning system at hand. In organizational learning, single-loop learning is following a routine plan while double-loop learning is creative decision-making that is reflective. Argyris and Schon (1978) suggested that double-loop learning is required for organizational learning to be successful in rapidly changing contexts with unforeseen futures. Further, these researchers proposed how to establish theories-in-use to support double-loop learning for the organization’s benefit.
Argyris and Schon (1978) later proposed that each individual within an organization constructs their theory-in-use for themselves and for the organization. According to Argyris and Schon, this is the link between the individual employee and the organization as a whole. Further, Argyris and Schon stated that “for organizational learning to occur, learning agents, discoveries, inventions, and evaluations must be embedded in organizational memory” (p. 19). Without this step, individuals learn, but the organization does not. Argyris and Schon (1974, 1978) have contributed to the body of literature on organizational learning with their work on learning loops and theory of action.

Change Theory

Bridges (2009), Kotter (1996), and Fullan (1991) studied the transitions that impacted and compelled people through the change process. Each focused upon the various transitions, ensuing phases, and strategies to support those impacted by change throughout these processes.

Bridges’ managing transitions business model. Bridges (2009) began his book, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, with this key proposition, “It isn’t the changes that do you in, it’s the transitions” (p. 3). Bridges focused on the human element, especially the personal impacts of change. He defined change as being situational and transition as being psychological. In addition, Bridges characterized change as a three-phase process where people internalized the new conditions that change brought. The three phases were: an ending, the ‘neutral zone’, and a new beginning. The ending was where those integral to the change must let go of old ways and the accompanying identity. A period of grieving with all its signs and stages was
present during this phase and should be expected as part of the transition. The ‘neutral
zone’ was defined as the time between the past and future of the organization, where
crucial psychological processes for the change occur. This may be a time that people feel
overloaded, anxious and polarized, but it may also be period of creativity. The new
beginning was when the transition was almost complete and the change was successfully
accepted, adopted and implemented within the organization by the majority. It was a time
of renewed consistency, a new identify, and early celebrations for the change. Bridges
evisioned effective change as starting with an ending and finishing with a beginning.
This might be contrary to the manner in which most change theorists characterize change
itself as well as a process. Bridges (2009) also contended that “unmanaged transition
makes change unmanageable” (p. 7), suggestive of the key reason for unsuccessful
organizational change efforts.

Bridges (2009) listed many strategic ways to support employees through expected
challenges of the change process, specifically through transitions. These specific
strategies relied on protection, encouragement, and structures. He implied that supporting
people through transitions was more successful when those experiencing change felt safe
and confident to take risks as they took on new practices with scaffolds in place to see
them through if it did not go as expected. Bridges proposed that considering endings and
planning for managing the impact on people was crucial in whether organizational
change was a success or a failure. Additionally, Bridges identified that management of
both change and transitions was equally important. Change management was focused on
the outcome and what it required to achieve that outcome whereas transition management
was focused on how to get people to change from what existed to what is desired for the
The ability of an organization to successfully transition depended upon their “policies, structure, roles, resources, culture, histories, and leadership” (Bridges, 2009, p. 115) and whether these were supporting or hindering the organization’s ability to manage transition. Bridges business model defined the three-phase process of change as well as strategic approaches for effective implementation from the ending, through the ‘neutral zone’, to a new beginning for an organization as it navigated the change process. The benefits of this model are a focus on the implementers and participants of the change process, recognition of the ‘neutral zone’, validating the instability of change and feelings associated around that instability, and that the change process is time intensive (Bridges, 2009).

**Kotter’s leading change business model.** Kotter (1996) described an eight-stage model for successful organizational change in his book, *Leading Change*. This business model evolved out of Kotter’s work in organizations where he observed what he identified as eight basic errors that lead to failure to make change successful. Kotter declared that the eight stages for successful change were sequential and that skipping one or more lead to failure. Kotter identified eight stages for promoting successful organizational change for leaders:

- Establishing a sense of urgency
- Creating a guiding coalition
- Developing a vision
- Communicating the change vision
- Empowering broad-based action
- Generating short-term wins
• Consolidating gains and producing more change
• Anchoring new approaches in the culture

Kotter suggested that the first four stages supported people in getting ready for the change as well as to shift from the status quo. The following three stages introduced the change to be implemented. The final stage grounded the change into everyday practice within the organization (Kotter, 1996). The benefits of using this model are that it is linear, practical, and relies on communication, support, and early successes.

**Fullan’s three-phase educational model.** Fullan (1991) identified three phases of the change process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. The initiation phase was essentially deciding and preparing for the change. Fullan identified that during this first phase, relevance, readiness, and resources must be considered prior to introducing any change initiative. These considerations facilitated adopting innovations that were appropriate to initiate as educational reform (Fullan, 1991). Additionally, this was the period that Fullan emphasized that stakeholder concerns must be addressed and resolved, prior to implementation. These processes took much time to complete, therefore, Fullan dedicated more time for the initiation phase.

Next, the implementation phase required practices for facilitating the change. In this phase, new practices, strategies, and structures were established. Fullan (1991) cautioned that critical factors (characteristics of change, internal stakeholder concerns, and external agencies) affected the implementation at varying degrees. He suggested that purpose, practicality, clarity, and complexity were essential components of the change process during this middle phase, as it defined what the change might be once fully implemented (Fullan, 1991). One of the essential elements was the ‘implementation dip’,
a phenomenon where things get worse before they improve. During this ‘implementation dip’, Fullan described the need for both support and pressure for successful implementation. With clarity of what new practices looked like, communicating about the expected timeline for full implementation, and coaching to build capacity for those implementing the change, Fullan proposed that organizations would leave the ‘implementation dip’ more rapidly and make progress towards expected outcomes earlier.

Institutionalization, the final phase, included strategies for sustaining the change. It was at this stage where the change had been implemented and habituated into the daily practice of the organization. Fullan (1991) suggested that the change initiative must continue to be a focus of the school or the change will not be sustained over time. The benefits of Fullan’s model are time to process each phase of change, concern for stakeholder input, questions, and concerns, acceptance of the ‘implementation dip’ as part of the change process, and awareness of impacts of factors that influence outcomes.

**Armenakis and Bedeian’s common themes in organizational change theory.**

Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) categorized four major themes for models of change theories designed by Fullan (1991), Kotter (1996), and Bridges (2009) and others. Each theory had characteristics that would likely support successful educational reform efforts. The four major themes included: content, context, process, and criteria.

Content was defined as the core of the change. Within this theme, factors were defined for both successful and unsuccessful change efforts as they related to organizational effectiveness. Analysis of research included the investigation of: alternative strategic orientations, organization structures, and performance-incentive systems” (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999, p. 295). Armenakis and Bedeian identified
factors that defined the organization’s “overall character, mission, and direction” (p. 295) that may underlie the possibility for long-term success.

Next, Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) described context as the internal and external organizational conditions that influence change. Internal conditions included: degree of work specificity, level of organizational flexibility, and prior change experiences. External conditions comprised: governmental regulations, technological advances, and marketplace forces.

After that, Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) clarified that process was the actual change actions. The process theme is multilevel, occurring at the environment, organization, and individual levels. The research on these processes reviews the change actions within organizations and the employee responses to such actions.

Last, Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) characterized criteria as the outcomes resulting from the change. Here they assessed change within organizations along affective and behavioral dimensions suggesting consideration of these criteria in conjunction with traditional outcomes of survival and profitability. These researchers suggested consideration when planning and implementing organizational change of individual and collective: receptivity, resistance, commitment, cynicism, and stress.

Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) stated that selected change theories influenced the approaches, language, and level of success in making change in organizations. Researchers, reformers and practitioners might benefit from Amenakis and Bedeian’s four thematic categories in selecting the appropriate model of change theory for the individual organizational situation to positively influence the outcome of any change process. Armenakis and Bedeian also recommended more research to “evaluate content,
contextual, process, and criteria issues so as to make predictions about how and why organizations change” (p. 311). They also recommended conducting longitudinal research. Additionally, further research was needed in the area of behavioral and attitudinal reactions to change by employees and how to best mitigate negative responses. Together, advances in these areas of the knowledge base may better define organizational learning for more efficient and effective change efforts.

**Framing Change**

Bolman and Deal (2008) provided four frames for thinking about change. They defined a frame as “a mental model, a set of ideas and assumptions, that you carry in your head to help you understand a particular ‘territory’” (p. 11). The four frames were structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. Each was coherent, logical and powerful by itself. Together, the four frames provided a comprehensive picture of the current status of the situation and what needed to be done next. The researchers suggested that “the quality of your judgments depends on the information that you have at hand, your mental maps, and how well you have learned to use them” (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Moreover, Bolman and Deal (2008) proposed that reframing was the ability to think of the situation in more than one way. People naturally see what they expect. A critical skill then, according to Bolman and Deal, was the ability to look at situations in two ways simultaneously. First, it was important to read the situation and ask “What is happening?” It was equally important to utilize situational analysis to answer “What is really going on here?” This cognitive work essentially described framing as the former and reframing as the latter. Bolman and Deal projected that “framing involves matching
mental maps to circumstances. Reframing requires another skill, the ability to break frames” (p. 12). In addition, they declared that frames are “both windows on a territory and tools for navigation” (p. 13).

Multiframe thinking was referred to as the ability to concurrently apply all four frames, which might deepen the overall understanding of organizations. Multiframe thinking required moving beyond a narrow, singular view of organizations to a broader, integrated view of the essential nature of organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This approach provided a liberated cognitive assessment and decision-making tool for organizations in viewing more than one way to solve a problem. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), those who mastered reframing and multiframe thinking “reported a sense of choice and power” (p. 19). Additionally, they suggested that “frames serve multiple functions. They are filters for sorting essence from trivia, maps that aid navigation, and tools for solving problems and getting things done” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 21). Bolman and Deal suggested that leaders who possessed the skills to reframe and used multiframe thinking were able to facilitate successful organizational change.

Bolman and Deal described each of the four frames with definitions, metaphors, examples, analysis and applications with a focus on organizations. The structural frame was likened to a factory and a machine. This frame was founded in research from sociology, economics, and management science. Historically, the structural frame has been one of the oldest and most common ways of thinking about organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Rules, roles, goals, and policies are the driving force of the structural frame. The organizational chart is at the heart of the organization. Challenges exist when the
structure does not match the current reality of the organization within the larger society. From the structural frame perspective, the fix when this occurs is reorganization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Bolman and Deal discussed eight dilemmas of the structural frame.

Three will be discussed that exemplify the challenges of the structural frame within an organization: role versus relationship, underuse versus overload, and goalless versus goalbound. In role versus relationship, a tension was present between the differentiated roles and the required integration of relationships to facilitate the overall functioning of the organization. Bolman and Deal described differentiation as the allocation of work while integration was described as the coordination of work. These key structural decisions grouped people into working units with the challenge of how to efficiently coordinate and define control of the work. With underuse versus overload, the dilemma was how to balance the workload for optimal production of an organization so that energy and resources were directed appropriately. Being either goalless or goalbound did not appear to support a successful organization where employees either were unaware of the organizational goals or striving towards goals that were ineffective (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The key assumption of the structural frame is to “put people in the right roles and relationships” (p. 47).

The human resources frame was defined around human needs in organizations, specifically interpersonal relationships. At the core of this frame was the nurture versus nature debate among scholars. This frame evolved from the work of psychologists. Bolman and Deal (2008) metaphorically described the human resources frame as a family. Bolman and Deal described the relationship between the person and organization as the key dynamic within this frame and focused upon teamwork: task and process
roles, norms, networks, interpersonal relations, decision-making processes, and leadership. Group effectiveness and individual satisfaction were essential within the human resources frame. The key assumption is to tailor the organization to individuals who work within it feeling good about themselves and their work (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Bolman and Deal suggested that when individual employees “find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed” (p. 137). Problems also occurred when conditions of global competition, turbulent times, and rapid change created a mismatch between individual and organizational needs (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

For the political frame, Bolman and Deal (2008) used the metaphor of the organization as a jungle where organizations were viewed as “roiling arenas hosting ongoing contests of individual and group interests” (p. 194). In this frame, the key resource was power as it provided the capacity to get things done in an organization. The political frame was rooted in the work of political scientists. Bolman and Deal identified four essential political skills: agenda setting, mapping the political terrain, networking and building coalitions, and bargaining and negotiation. Further, Bolman and Deal also espoused the importance of organizations as political agents in the larger system. In the political frame, interest groups competed for power and scarce resources using political savvy and skill. The political frame was conflict-ridden due to the diverse needs, perspectives, and cultures of these interest groups (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Coalitions formed as the need and interest arose. These coalitions were not static as members changed as their individual and collective needs and interests evolved. Additionally, power and conflict were the driving forces for decision making in the political frame.
Problems occurred when too much power was held by too few or in the wrong place as well as when power was too broadly dispersed to accomplish much (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The symbolic frame was described by Bolman and Deal (2008) as temples and carnivals with “its emphasis on culture, symbols, and spirit as keys to organizational success” (p. 16). This frame drew from social and cultural anthropological sciences research. Bolman and Deal described organizations as cultures bound by ceremonies, stories, symbols, heroes, and myths. In addition, meaning, belief, faith were the driving forces of the symbolic frame. Problems happened when ceremonies were not appropriately completed, rituals lost their strength, and symbols lost their meaning for those within the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The four frames (structural, human resources, political, and symbolic) facilitated thinking about change from diverse perspectives. Reframing involved breaking from one frame to another for a different perspective and possibly a different outcome. Multiframe thinking facilitated a broader, more integrated view that facilitated situational analysis, served as a navigational tool, and supported effective decision-making within the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This thinking can be described as both art and science. As organizations and those within them faced societal challenges and ambiguities to adapt and survive, Bolman and Deal (2008) provided a system for thinking about change with their four frames. They acknowledged that “to see the same organization as machine, family, jungle and theater requires the capacity to think in different ways at the same time about the same thing” (p. 437) requiring artistry, skill, and vision, vital skills for leaders in a complex world.
Conditions for Organizational Learning in Schools

Researchers studied conditions that supported organizational learning in schools (Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 1985, 2006, 2010; Resnick, 1987) to better understand the reform process.

Resnick’s schooling, reform, and learning organizations. Resnick (1987) declared that the “civic functions of education” (p. 19) are to promote a citizenry built on “a culture of reason, analysis, and reflection, based on certain shared knowledge” (p. 19). Eleven years later, Resnick and Hall (1998) suggested that educational reform had produced disappointing results for decades. Therefore, Resnick and Hall recommended a new core approach to reform of “effort-based learning grounded in knowledge-based constructivism-systems that allow all students to reach high standards of achievement (p. 116). This new core required significant changes to educational practice and the redevelopment of instructional expertise across schools. Resnick aligned her earlier beliefs about schooling to a standards-based educational platform where professional development for existing teachers and teachers-in-training would be implemented as part of the reform effort with significant changes to the way schools and districts function.

This new core relied upon teacher instructional expertise driven by professional development designed around learning theories from knowledge-based constructivism and effort-based learning. Resnick and Hall (1998) suggested creating learning organizations “capable of improving their performance by creating new ways of working and developing the new capabilities needed for that work (p. 108). They acknowledged the organizational context in which teachers work affected their work in classrooms and that to achieve consistent instructional expertise, teachers had to be supported with
professional development. Moreover, these researchers said that educational systems functioning as learning organizations needed to require improving practice and teaching competencies as essentially the definition of professionalism. Resnick and Hall concluded with the central tenet that “America’s children are counting on the public education system to function effectively in our complex world (p. 115). Lastly, the key to meeting this goal was to establish learning organizations to implement this new core to realize sustainable educational reform (Resnick & Hall, 1998).

Resnick and Hall (1998) pioneered the conceptualization of schools as learning organizations as a vehicle for change. They exemplified New York City Community School District #2 as a model of one such learning organization that relied on nested learning communities to improve professional teaching practice and student achievement. Resnick and Hall described a phenomenon where “schools become places where learning is the work of both students and professional educators and where continuous learning in pursuit of educational improvement is the norm” (pp. 109-110). Resnick and Hall described these nested learning communities, as part of the learning organization, and provided a collective forum for enhancing the knowledge base and instructional expertise of participants by focusing on academic goals and progress towards those goals the priority. The nested function of these learning communities relied on the interaction between various learning communities with the principal in the pivotal role for the improvement process. The school as learning organization was a powerful way to compel these nested learning communities for improved educational quality for students and to raise the professionalism of educators within the school.
Elmore’s school innovation, scale, and learning organizations. Elmore (1996) analyzed the role of school learning organizations in their adoption of innovative practices closest to the core of educational practice. He was particularly interested in large scale reform. Elmore proposed that large scale improvement had been problematic in American schools due to unsuccessful incentive structures. His argument rested on the idea that “institutional structures influence the behavior of individuals in part through incentives” (p. 9). Elmore (1996) proposed that schools as learning organizations failed to utilize incentives to drive the improvement of practice. As a result, Elmore (1996), recommended four proposals on how to address this problem of scale:

1. Develop Strong External Normative Structures of Practice by purposely forming solid professional and social normative structures for quality teaching practice;

2. Develop Organizational Structures That Intensify and Focus Intrinsic Motivation to Engage in Challenging Practice, be a collective commitment to improved teaching and learning outcomes as a norm;

3. Create Intentional Processes for Reproduction of Successes, by implementing a growth theory (incremental, cumulative, discontinuous, unbalanced, cell division, etc…) to reproduce desired practice across schools;


Elmore (1996) concluded that these proposed four basic principles supported addressing the problem of scale in reforming schools and school systems. Additionally,
he acknowledged the need for further research and application. In conclusion, Elmore stated that “the issue of getting to scale with good educational practice requires nothing less than deliberately creating and reproducing alternatives to the existing flawed institutional arrangements and incentives structures” (p. 26). In Elmore’s four proposals, he described the ideal learning organization with optimal conditions for organizational learning without terming them as such.

**Fullan’s change process, school improvement, and learning organizations.**

For decades, Michael Fullan (1985, 2006, 2010; Fullan & Miles, 1992) has provided foundational research and scholarly discourse into the change process and its impact on school improvement. In 1985, Fullan’s early work focused on using change process to successfully implement effective schools research to improve schools. As of 1992, Fullan recognized that researchers and reformers were cognizant of the need to understand the change process better in order to support educational reform. He supposed that many myths and truths existed about what worked and what did not. Fullan proposed that a new wave of reform was needed that was designed around how to successfully initiate and sustain continuous improvement (Fullan & Miles, 1992). By 2006, Fullan suggested that effective organizational change required a balance between support and pressure. Further, that to improve schools, four essential components were necessary: focus on effectiveness, readiness for change, ownership mentality, and culture of change. As recent as 2010, Fullan clarified that effective change involved the concept of motion leadership, leadership that successfully moves individuals, institutions, and systems. Fullan’s contributions to the educational change literature have been substantive as well.
as influential over time in how researchers and practitioners implemented change to promote school improvement (Fullan, 1985, 2006, 2010; Fullan & Miles, 1992).

In 1985, Fullan considered change processes at the school level that held promise for significantly improving schools and classrooms using practices from the effective schools research. He suggested that understanding change processes was a critical precondition for improving schools and that change processes had not been addressed within the effective schools literature. First, Fullan suggested that studies of schools focused on change needed to move from factors that explain change to theories of how change occurs. Fullan proposed 12 factors that influenced school improvement. Eight organizational factors described characteristics of effective schools while the remaining four process factors described the dynamics that fueled the eight organizational factors. Furthermore, that organizational and process factors were interactive. Together, these twelve factors were essential to the school improvement process (Fullan, 1985).

Additionally, Fullan outlined ten guidelines to safeguard that effective change processes be considered when attempting school improvement via either innovation or school-wide strategies. In conclusion, Fullan (1985) cautioned that school improvement applied to a “particular setting on an ongoing basis is difficult and requires leadership with both a commitment to and skills in the change process” (p. 418).

Seven years later, Fullan and Miles (1992) presented seven ways that reform fails and seven propositions that promised successful reform. Their basic preposition was that after years of ineffective reform, researchers, reformers, and practitioners had an appreciation and understanding for the importance of the critical role of the change process in reform, but did not yet understand how to use this body of knowledge to affect
change, specifically in reforming schools. Fullan and Miles characterized the problem as an “enormous overload of fragmented, uncoordinated, and ephemeral attempts at change” (p. 745). Like the reasons for failure, the seven propositions for success formed a set that must be considered relationally (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Fullan and Miles strongly suggested that reform might not be achieved until these themes were understood cognitively and implemented as actions by those who were a part of the change process.

The seven propositions for success embodied elements of effective change. The first focused on necessary conditions that support learning. The second embodied change as a journey rather than a blueprint. The next personified problems as friends. After that, change was characterized as resource dependent, requiring additional resources to adequately facilitate change. The fifth solidified that change requires power to manage it. Next, that change is a systemic process. Lastly, that change must be implemented locally. Fullan and Miles suggested that establishing and maintaining these seven propositions at the local level was substantiated by empirical, conceptual, and practical evidence in effective change efforts for the continuous improvement of schools. Fullan and Miles concluded with “being knowledgeable about the change process may be both the best defense and the best offense we have in achieving substantial education reform” (p. 752), referring to the myths and the truths of failed and successful reform efforts.

Fullan (2006) described what he deemed flawed change theories with merit, considered theories of action that were better at getting results, and explored strategies for using the existing knowledge base on change more fully. First, Fullan (2006) contended that standards-based system-wide reform approaches fail because “the strategy lacks a focus on what needs to change in instructional practice and, equally important, what it
will take to bring about these changes in classrooms across districts” (p. 5). Second, Fullan critiqued professional learning communities in that the theory of action supporting their work is not specific enough to get desired academic results. Third, Fullan criticized frameworks focused on development and retention of quality leaders, teachers and administrators, as a successful change theory. This theory was flawed since it focused on individuals. Fullan did not find any of these change theories to be unworthy, he said they were flawed because they were not complete.

Fullan (2006) proposed a theory of action that might “simultaneously focus on changing individuals and the culture or system within which they work” (p. 7). Additionally, Fullan estimated that 30% of the solution was a high quality principal while the other 70% depended upon the culture in which people worked for achieving effective school reform. Fullan identified seven core premises in the effective use of change knowledge:

1. a focus on motivation
2. capacity building
3. learning in context
4. changing context
5. a bias for reflective action
6. tri-level engagement
7. persistence and flexibility in staying the course.

Fullan concluded that using any or some of these effective change strategies piecemeal was a recipe for failure. Consequently, a theory of action for change was complete when all seven of the core premises of change were successfully implemented.
Lastly, Fullan (2006) discussed the future use of change knowledge as an effective tool for educational reform. He identified both inhibiting factors (quick fix approach, knowing-doing gap, and deep cultural change) and contributing factors (increased receptivity, clarity of what works as well as how, and shared understandings of the seven core premises). Fullan (2006) ended with the thought that “we may have the breakthrough required for change knowledge to have an enduring place in the field of education reform” (p. 14).

Fullan (2010) published *Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy*. He defined motion leadership as moving “individuals, institutions, and whole systems forward” (p. 2). Eight key elements, a dedicated chapter for each, for successful motion leadership were identified: change problems, change itself, connecting peers with purpose, capacity building trumps judgmentalism, learning is the work, transparency rules, love, trust and resistance, and leadership for all. Together, Fullan (2010) suggested that these elements established what “leaders need to know about understanding and working with change” (p. 3).

**Silins, Mulford, and Zarins’s organizational learning and school reform.**

Silins, Mulford, and Zarins (2002) conducted quantitative research in Australian high schools to study the nature of organizational learning. In addition, they studied the leadership practices and processes that fostered organizational learning during their 4-year collaborative research project, Leadership for Organizational Learning and Student Outcomes, LOLSO. Research was completed during 1997-2001 school years at 95 secondary schools. Silins et al. (2002) referred to schools as learning organizations that
evolved out of the difficulties in reforming schools. They also suggested that organizational learning was a collaborative process.

Silins et al. (2002) conducted a four-factor nested model of organizational learning during their study. The four dimensions that epitomized a school’s capacity of organizational learning in this study were:

1. *Trustworthiness and Collaborative Climate*: this measured the extent in which collaboration was the norm;
2. *Taking Initiatives and Risks*: this measured the extent to which staff were empowered to make decisions and take risks;
3. *Shared and Monitored Mission*: this measured the extent in which the culture encouraged continuous improvement;
4. *Professional Development*: this measured the extent in which staff are provided high quality training based on research.

Silins et al. (2002) characterized the nature of principal’s leadership and practices as a six-factor nested model: vision and goals, culture, structure, intellectual stimulation, individual support, and performance evaluation. The focus of their study was on school-level factors related to leadership, organizational learning, and student outcomes (Silins et al., 2002).

Silins et al. (2002) concluded several key results from their study. First, organizational learning was promoted in schools where staff collaborated for the purpose of continuous improvement in student outcomes. Second, organizational learning was more likely in schools where the goal of the staff was to build capacity which had adequate resources to develop professionally. Third, principals played a crucial role as
transformational leaders in supporting school processes to promote organizational learning. Finally, Silins et al. (2002) stated that “schools that engage in organizational learning enable staff at all levels to learn collaboratively and continuously and put these learnings to use in response to social needs and the demands of their environment” (p. 639).

**Scholarly Criticisms and Suggestions for Further Research**

Cuban (1990) espoused why reforms recur from diverse political and institutional perspectives using three examples: instructional, curricular, and governance. “Reform visions often depend on a view of the past as a series of failures that killed a golden age of schooling” (p. 3). From this quote, Cuban built evidence from reform examples and histories around teacher-centered instruction as pedagogy, standards-based curriculum as a common core of academic knowledge required of all students, and centralizing and decentralizing school governance.

Another factor addressed by Cuban (1990) was from an institutional perspective about why reforms recur. He described schools as being essentially different from nonpublic organizations as unique bureaucracies under structural pressure since they were supported by taxes and subjected to external governance policies. According to Cuban, educational reforms were driven by both political value conflicts and accelerated external institutional pressure. Cuban acknowledged the need for further research as his propositions were not yet supported with empirical evidence and remained claims until that research either confirmed or denied his claims.
Summary and Conclusions

Research over the past 80 years has evolved from learning theory for individual learning to organizational learning for collective learning of individuals within the organization. Additionally, the conceptualization of learning organizations characterizing organizations where individuals and organizations can build capacity through continuous learning to position the organization for productivity as well as long-term viability. Research had identified how organizations work, how organizations can be successful, and what leads to an organization’s failure (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Bridges, 2009; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990). Additionally, four common themes across business and education models of change theory have been identified as a tool in considering both the merit and the applicability of using specific change theories (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Conditions have been studied extensively in order to determine the best approaches to educational reform (Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 1985, 2006, 2010; Fullan & Miles, 1992, Resnick, 1987; Resnick & Hall, 1998; Silins et al., 2002). The ability to frame and reframe change was studied as an approach to navigating the change process efficiently and effectively (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Lastly, opposing views were presented on organizational learning and change processes (Cuban, 1990; Longo, 1982). Their criticisms were not to be ignored. Longo (1982) found fault in the methods used to facilitate educational reform. Cuban (1990) outlined the influences of constant pressure to reform from political value conflicts and institutional pressures. Although these researchers acknowledged the benefits of the existing research literature on learning
organizations, organizational learning, and change theory, they uncovered critical challenges for schools in affecting change now and into the future.

Research on organizational learning was founded on both learning and change theories in business as well as education. Learning organizations can and do learn when conditions are present to facilitate, support and move people through the change process for improved outcomes. Framing change was effective as a tool to successfully navigate change in multiple contexts in the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic arenas. The contributions of empirical studies on organizational learning, learning organizations, and change theory have solidified earlier research on effective schools and school improvement. Therefore, this body of knowledge may provide leaders the necessary knowledge to lead their schools, influence student achievement, and guide them through the urgent need to turnaround a school or a district.

School Leadership

School leadership makes a difference in improving learning (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Waters et al., 2003). Leadership is important in the fact that leaders are faced with the continual impetus to improve school conditions and student achievement levels while serving diverse student populations (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Leithwood et al., 2004). Moreover, capable leadership in business and education have shared much the same challenges: “to set a clear direction; to galvanize effort around ambitious goals; and to see that the right processes, resources, and conditions are in place to help people achieve those goals” (Progress of Education Reform, 2005, p. 1). Leithwood et al. (2004) posed essential empirical questions about what is less understood as they probed the role of leadership to
improve learning outcomes. Their research studied how leadership matters, how the effects of strong leadership influence student learning, and what the essential components of leadership are.

Initially, the link between school leadership and student achievement was not a focus of research, resulting in this link not being established by researchers as of the mid-1980s. The notion that principal leadership and student achievement might be empirically linked was a key turning point in its implications for improving teaching and learning in schools (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Glasman, 1984). This line of research established that effective leadership positively affects school and student outcomes. Prior to 1980, validated models did not exist for studying educational leadership. Then, Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) studied characteristics of leadership and how leadership was strategically shaped. They developed an early conceptual framework for studying instructional leadership. In essence, Bossert et al. (1982) viewed instructional leadership as the principal’s orientation towards overall instructional processes. Bossert et al. (1982) posed two critical questions about school leaders. The first questioned how principals guide school processes. The second inquired how principals became effective. Researchers also studied other aspects of educational leadership. Bamburg and Andrews (1991) studied whether instructional leadership was a function of style or behaviors that might be learned by school leaders. Leithwood et al. (2004) claimed that the knowledge base that described the effects of school leadership upon student learning was evidenced by three kinds of research: qualitative outlier case studies on school conditions, large-scale quantitative school effectiveness studies, and large-scale quantitative specific leadership practice studies. Researchers next investigated how leadership effects might
influence student achievement using complex direct and indirect models (Kruger et al., 2007; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). General agreement existed among scholars that leadership indirectly impacts student achievement through the links school leaders establish between characteristics of the school organization and the instructional climate (Bossert et al., 1982; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990).

Educational leadership has evolved conceptually and operationally in multiple ways over earlier decades (Hallinger, 1992). Two leadership models, instructional leadership and transformational leadership, were predominant approaches, and thus, will be discussed here. From the effectiveness studies of the 1980s, leadership was first established as an important condition for school effectiveness and the principal was initially termed as an instructional leader, a different role from the administrative manager during the period from the 1920s to the 1970s (Bossert et al., 1982; Brookover et al., 1979; Edmonds 1979; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Rutter et al., 1979). The body of research on early effective schools identified strong, directive principals focused on instruction as a characteristic of effective schools. Instructional leaders aimed at standardizing the practices of effective teaching while maintaining high expectations for teachers and students, and managing instruction and monitoring student progress (Marks & Printy, 203). Incidentally, early research on effective schools (Edmonds, 1979; Rutter et al., 1979) and school improvement (Edmonds, 1982) uncovered the importance of the role of school leadership; although it was not the focus of the empirical studies at the time. Researchers consistently found that effective leadership was a key factor in explaining successful change, school improvement, or school effectiveness (Hallinger, 2003). Critics and skeptics of the instructional leadership model, conveyed concerns
about whether principals had the skill and will to lead, if the principal’s role as instructional leader could perform these duties singularly, and if principals were working against inherent school structures and norms (Barth, 1986; Bossert et al., 1982; Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 2003). The educational theme of the 1980s was implementation of the effective school correlates.

By the 1990s, school leadership had transitioned from that of an instructional leader to a transformational leader, where school leaders represented change agents driving organizational learning for improved academic outcomes (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Transformational leadership focused on the identification of instructional problems, solving those problems, and collaboration with stakeholders to improve organizational performance. The larger context for this change was in the national educational reform referred to as restructuring and the changing perspective of the principal as the center of expertise, power and authority (Cuban, 1988). Critics and skeptics were concerned that transformational leaders lacked an explicit focus on curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, 1992). The prevailing educational trends of the 1990s included empowerment, shared leadership, and organizational learning.

The conceptualizations for instructional and transformational leadership exemplified distinguishing characteristics (Hallinger, 2003). Substantive similarities between the two models were more evident than the three core differences that are described next. First, the approaches for school improvement were top-down for an instructional leader while a transformational leader relied more upon a bottom-up approach. Second, instructional leadership focused more on first order changes, targeting
curricular or managing instructional conditions for improved outcomes, whereas transformational leadership sought to generate second order changes, aimed primarily at changing the structural and cultural norms of the school to improve student outcomes. Therefore, transformational leadership focused on developing the organization’s capacity to innovate over instructional leadership’s focus on management of curriculum and instruction. Third, instructional leaders relied more on managerial or transactional relationships with staff. In contrast, transformational leaders utilize a more relational approach when interacting with staff. In each conceptualization, empirical evidence existed in support of the view that school leadership, instructional or transformational, may well improve educational outcomes. Although it is important to note that each emphasized diverse views on how educational leadership might improve schooling as evidenced by the examples provided. Researchers have been challenged to establish the theoretical and practical validity of these leadership models (Halligner, 2003).

**Instructional Leadership**

From the effective schools studies, Bossert et al. (1982) studied how instructional management at the school level might affect schooling. They reviewed literature and research to consider how instructional leadership, specifically the role of the principal in managing the individual school’s instructional program. Bossert et al. claimed that research had yet to identify how certain management or leadership practices supported effective schooling. They proposed a framework for studying instructional management. Four essential domains were included: principal management behavior, school climate, instructional organization, and student learning. Bossert et al. specified that principals must exert leadership in two of the domains, instructional organization and climate, to
establish and sustain an effective school and improved student achievement. Moreover, the researchers maintained that in order for a principal to influence these domains, the principal must exert both power and authority. Principals who were effective in leading change and innovation were effective in managing their school’s instructional program (Bossert et al., 1982). Bosset et al. concluded with the notion that instructional management by the principal is complex. They further suggested that “one must consider the nature of the instructional organization, school climate, management actions, and context” (p. 54). Bossert et al. concluded that their framework was useful in exploring these concepts and their interrelationships. They established instructional leadership using the contingency approach to organizational effectiveness.

**Transformational Leadership**

Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) studied the nature and effects of transformational leadership, specifically the formation of collaborative school cultures to improve student achievement in 12 (9 elementary and 3 secondary) Canadian schools considered to be demonstrating improvement. The researchers further defined transformational leadership as the “processes engaged by typical and effective principals while solving problems with groups of teachers in their schools” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990, p. 250). Therefore, Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) were focused on leadership practices that fostered the development of collaborative school culture. Data collection was completed through teacher and principal interviews using a questionnaire that were identical instruments, except that the principal questionnaire had an additional six items. Interview narratives were returned to each school with the request that each teacher and principal report any differences of interpretation to the researchers. Data from these instruments validated
that collaborative school cultures existed at high levels in each of the schools. Each of
the schools was participating in an improvement program within a larger context than the
school that influenced the extent of the principal’s impact. Leithwood and Jantzi (1990)
concluded with two key findings:

1. Evidence suggested that school cultures can become more collaborative over
two or three years.

2. Principals may exert a significant part in restructuring school culture to
improve student achievement.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) grounded their definition of transformational
leadership in the cumulative effect of these two key findings.

Leithwood (1994) further examined transformational leadership for restructuring.
He proposed five constructs and described their relationships as forming a causal chain
with the central construct being leadership practices. The other four constructs were:

- External conditions, internal processes, psychological dispositions, and outcomes.
- External conditions were the formal training and informal socialization experiences of the
  principal. Internal processes were the principal’s innate traits and personal experiences.
- Psychological dispositions were described as mediating variables of teacher attitudes and
  behaviors and their impact upon organizational learning. Outcomes were the results of
  the transformational leader’s influence upon the school in relation to the other
  contextualized constructs already described. Leithwood (1994) found that
  “organizational learning was strongly influenced by transformational leadership” (p. 506).
- Leithwood (1994) also theorized that leader’s thinking and feelings influenced what
  they do. Leithwood (1994) concluded with several implications for transformational
leadership. First, he contended that transformational leadership is contingent. Second, expert thinking is inherent in effective leadership practices, yet is not contingent. Successful transformational leaders demonstrated highly effective problem-solving expertise. Third, successful principals, who were also transformational leaders, provided intellectual stimulation and individualized support to their school staff in contextually appropriate ways. Leithwood (1994) offered his support of the promising development of transformational leadership practices in restructuring efforts.

Silins (1994) studied the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and their relationship to organizational outcomes. Silins (1994) characterized transactional leaders as “focusing on basic needs and extrinsic rewards as a source of motivation and basis for management” (p. 273) while transformation leaders were described as facilitating a “collaborative change process that impacts on the performance of the whole organization resulting in a responsive and innovative environment” (p. 274). Data was collected via a survey administered to 679 teachers. Multiple variables were measured for transformational leadership (charisma/inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration) and transactional leadership (contingent reward and management-by-exception) using Bass’s 1985 model. The variables for school improvement outcomes were: school effects, teacher effects, program and instruction effects, and student effects. Silins described a strong positive link between transformational and transactional leadership. In addition, transformational leadership had a significant direct influence on school, teacher, program and instructional outcomes in this study, but the impact on students was indirect. Silins also indicated that “effective principals use activities of management to accomplish goals of leadership” (p. 292).
Silins established a link between transformational and transactional leadership in relation to school outcomes.

**Integrated Leadership**

Hallinger (2003) reviewed instructional and transformational leadership models and the suitability of each considering the role of external factors and local context on the school principal. He noted the historical perspectives of the principal’s role of each model and identified similarities as well as differences too. He suggested that as of early 2000 there were early signs of an integrative approach utilizing aspects of both transformational and instructional leadership. Key to this integration was the possible “synergistic power of leadership shared by individuals throughout the school organization” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 345). In addition, contingency models of leadership in the school context was also important, as leadership was viewed as “a mutual influence process, rather than as a one way process in which leaders influence others. Effective leaders respond to the changing needs of their context” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 346). Also, contingency leadership was proposed to uncover leadership, whether instructional or transformational, as a developmental process so as to integrate the two models into one to better address the realities of school context upon principals. Hallinger (2007) described the school context as being integral when studying school leadership. Further, school context “is the source of constraints, resources, and opportunities that the principal must understand and address in order to lead” (Hallinger, 2007, p. 4). In conclusion, Hallinger (2003, 2007) proposed that effective leaders respond to the changing needs of their schools, specifically the context.
Marks and Printy (2003) examined school leadership relations between principals and teachers to improve teaching and learning through active collaboration focused on instructional matters. Their study was grounded in instructional and transformational leadership approaches, using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) due to the multi-level nature of schools. This quantitative study included 24 schools (8 elementary, 8 middle, and 8 high schools) across the United States. Marks and Printy theorized that linking transformational and instructional leadership together into a single integrated model of leadership that might be developed into a theory of action for school improvement. This theory of action suggested that this “integrated leadership, then, reflects the transformational influence of the principal and the shared leadership actions of the principal and teachers” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 377). Marks and Printy hypothesized that transformational leadership is needed to improve schools, it is insufficient to establish high-quality instruction. Marks and Printy established that integrated leadership positively influenced student achievement outcomes. The results of this study suggested that strong transformational leadership by the principal invoked higher levels of commitment from teachers. Also, when teachers perceived the principal’s instructional leadership behaviors were appropriate; they were more willing to innovate. Marks & Printy claimed that their study demonstrated the effectiveness of integrated leadership, both transformational and instructional in nature, to improve student achievement. Marks and Printy espoused that with integrated leadership, schools are “organizations that learn and perform at high levels” (p. 393).
Leadership Style

Beyond conceptual models of educational leadership, research was conducted on principal style, particularly as it relates to school improvement initiatives. Research then focused on the identification of specific kinds and combinations of principal behaviors to facilitate improved student achievement.

Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) conducted a meta-analysis of available research on the role of the elementary school principal. Studies included in the meta-analysis consisted of three broad research domains: role of the principal, school innovation, and school effectiveness. They found that effective elementary principals were pro-active, especially in regard to instruction as they facilitated teacher growth. Whereas, they suggested that the typical principal was more responsive, attending to problems they encountered at their schools or to district demands. Leithwood and Montgomery studied the relationship between organizational learning, change agents, and intervention strategies. Researchers identified three potentially critical dimensions of principal behavior, goals, factors, and strategies. Leithwood and Montgomery suggested that effective principals were “concerned with promoting student cognitive growth (usually ‘basic skills’) and happiness above all else” (p. 334). Thus, effective principals’ goals were directed at influencing school-wide and classroom-based factors. Leithwood and Montgomery also found that effective principals “view the establishment of cooperative interpersonal relationships as one important strategy for influencing factors” (p. 334). In conclusion, Leithwood and Montgomery stated that effective principals set as priorities activities that align to the school’s core mission and then gained broad support for these priorities from all school community members.
Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) proposed a paradigm for research on the causal links of the principal’s role. Principal’s behavior and student learning with school-related and classroom-related factors were described as independent variables while student learning was the dependent variable as the first level of change. The second level of change was identified as the factors being the dependent variables and principals’ strategies as independent variables. Leithwood and Montgomery recommended further research on the principal’s role in school improvement using their proposed paradigm.

Hall, Rutherford, Hord, and Huling (1984) studied the role of the principal as change facilitator over a more global approach to the work of principals to improve their schools. The nuanced subtleties between leadership practices and leader style were not well documented prior to 1980 in either organizational leadership or change process domains. Hall et al. identified three change facilitator styles: initiators, managers, and responders. Initiators made decisions with input from staff to meet long-term academic improvement goals. They had strong beliefs about what constituted effective schooling working to attain their vision. Managers responded to situations while initiating to support the change effort. They utilized a collaborative style. Responders allowed others to lead in their place due to their apparent limited vision for the school. They lacked a vision for needed change at their schools with few to no long-range goals. Hall et al. analyzed the specific behaviors in leaders that exhibited these different change facilitator styles. They developed a set of descriptive dimensions to further define responders, managers, and initiator styles, which provided a framework for relating individual behaviors to overall style. They concluded that more research was needed to understand the effective change facilitator. Hall et al. proposed that their study contributed some
Evans and Teddlie (1995) examined the diverse ways that principals lead school improvement and the relationship of these change facilitator styles to school effectiveness in various educational contexts, primarily focused upon school socioeconomic status (SES). The researchers utilized Hall et al. (1984) change facilitator styles of initiators, managers, and responders for their study. Evans and Teddlie (1995) claimed confirmation of three hypotheses:

1. Effective principals demonstrated different leadership styles across effectiveness and SES in their schools.

2. Effective low SES schools typically had initiators as principals than were ineffective low SES schools.

3. Responders were typically principals of ineffective schools over effective schools.

The first finding suggested that no one leadership style is most effective across SES contexts. The second and third findings together implied that certain principal styles may be successful in specific types of schools (Evans & Teddlie, 1995). These findings suggested that principals in various contexts act differently to facilitate change to improve their schools. Evans and Teddlie (1995) also suggested that change facilitator style was a multidimensional construct ranging from initiator to manager to responder as the primary style of the principal with a secondary style evident as well, rather than a unidimensional pure style. They went further to propose that profiles of initiator/manager, manager/initiator, manager/responder, and responder/manager existed.
Evans and Teddlie (1995) found the largest profile in their research to be 43% were initiator/managers with less common profiles of 26% being managers/initiators, and 23% as responders/managers. Their results may impact the selection and matching of principals with specific change facilitator style and the characteristics of the school factors for effectiveness and SES to possibly influence school improvement initiatives in districts and at schools.

Bamburg and Andrews (1991) investigated whether differences existed between ten schools that successfully promoted student achievement and ten schools that did not, including a total of 1,605 students and 311 staff members. These twenty schools were located in an urban school district with a diverse student population. They focused their quantitative study upon two factors that based on the body of research seemed to influence student achievement, organizational goals and instructional leadership. First, they studied if differences were evident in staff perceptions of school goals in effective and ineffective schools. Second, they investigated if the teachers perceived their principals engaged in different activities as instructional leaders.

The analysis of instructional leadership items provided key insights into specific leadership behaviors for instructional leaders. Bamburg and Andrews (1991) identified four diverse principal styles: Principal as Resource Provider, Principal as Instructional Resource, Communicator, and Visible Presence. The Principal as Resource Provider provided the resources that teachers need to support teaching and learning. The Principal as Instructional Resource were knowledgeable about instruction and able to problem solve instructional concerns. The Communicator communicates clearly and effectively about instructional issues. A Visible Presence was the principal’s utilization of time to
attend to observing instruction, providing feedback and building capacity through professional development activities. These four styles provide a framework for what instructional leaders do to provide conditions a school to be high achieving for its students (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991).

Data was collected using California Achievement Test mean gain scores, school mean scores on 18 goal statements, and school mean scores on a staff questionnaire that measured staff perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader. Data analysis indicated that significant differences were found between the level of academic achievement and the school that the student attended (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991). In particular, a correlation revealed that high achieving schools utilize a goal completion approach with a higher emphasis on academics than low achieving schools. Also, specific kinds of activities were performed by principals of high achieving schools. Bamburg and Andrews (1991) concluded that “this study suggests that the goals a school emphasizes do impact academic achievement. It also indicates that the activities that principals engage in are also significantly related to the academic achievement of the students” (p. 190). Furthermore, Bamburg and Andrews suggested that the most important factor of instructional leadership was the principal’s behaviors rather than their style.

**Principal’s Influence on Student Achievement**

Research was not likely conducted on the possible link between the school principal and student achievement prior to the mid-1980s. Early research in this domain attempted to establish a link between educational leadership, specifically the principal, and student achievement (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Glasman, 1984). Once the link was
established, researchers next studied whether the influence on student achievement was direct or indirect (Heck et al., 1990). Once the research community established that the link between the principal’s influence and student achievement was indirect, research was conducted on principal leadership effects (Waters et al., 2003). Researchers also examined whether core leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2004) existed for effective principals to support high levels of student achievement at their schools as well as the possible impact of the scope of their efforts (May & Supovitz, 2011). Leadership for learning, one specific type of leadership, was studied to determine if it might be a highly effective model of leadership (Leithwood et al., 2006; National College for School Leadership, 2007). These topics are discussed next.

**Establishing a link.** In 1984, Glasman (1984) provided a historical perspective of the then existing distinct bodies of research on the school principal and student achievement from the 1950s to the early 1980s. During that period, Glasman described the empirical work as focused on the principal from two broad value stances, each with implied roles for the principal, along either educational or administrative dimensions. Concurrent work unfolded on student achievement that emphasized correlates relying on both input-output analysis and indicators of student learning on state standardized tests. This body of work attempted to establish output-input associations for school conditions that existed from the research in effective schools. Glasman’s (1984) exploratory study included 88 randomly selected school districts on the perceptions of elementary school principals in California and their use of data with teachers and its impact on student achievement and classroom practices. Glasman’s (1984) exploratory study revealed the “possible existence of three levels of strength of principals’ beliefs
associated with their use of data on student gains to improve gains” (p. 292). The three levels of strength, in order from highest to lowest strength, were:

1. The belief that sharing data with teachers had positive effects on gains in student achievement.
2. The belief that data on gains should be used as part of a teacher’s evaluation.
3. The belief that the use of data on gains in teacher evaluations had on classroom practices.

Glasman further proposed that “if the relative levels of strength in these three beliefs are true, then additional work on what differentiates more from less effective principals is in order” (p. 293). Glasman helped establish in her explorative study that a link appeared to support that principals in effective schools demonstrated leadership behaviors associated with student achievement.

Andrews and Soder (1987) conducted additional early research that suggested that the principal played a central role in ensuring academic achievement, especially for Black and low-income students. They initially studied 67 elementary and 20 secondary schools in Seattle, Washington as part of a collaborative effort between the University of Washington, College of Education and the Seattle School District to improve student achievement as measured on state standardized tests. In the end, they had quantitative data to allow reliable and valid conclusions for 33 elementary schools, 11 each identified with leaders categorized using teacher perceptions on a questionnaire as strong, average, or weak. The leader group was the independent variable whereas student achievement gain scores were the dependent variable, disaggregated for students who were White or Black as well as for students who participated in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program or
not, as a measure of socioeconomic status. Andrews and Soder identified their key finding was that normal equivalent gain scores of students attending schools with teacher identified strong leaders were significantly higher in both total reading and total mathematics than scores of students attending schools with principals who were rated by teachers as average or weak leaders. Andrews and Soder (1987) concluded that “teacher perceptions of the principal as instructional leader are critical to the reading and mathematics achievement of students, particularly among low achieving students” (p. 11). Additionally, the researchers recommended further study in the areas of principal selection, development, and evaluation (Andrews & Soder, 1987).

A causal model. Heck et al. (1990) conducted a quantitative study to test, using a causal model, how principals influence student achievement through their instructional leadership practices in 56 California schools, including 332 teachers and 56 principals. The sample represented high- and low-achieving schools at the elementary and secondary levels across the geographic regions of the state. This causal model was based on the Bossert et al. (1982) model of the principal’s instructional role. The proposed model developed by Heck et al. (1990) included a causal chain with the governance factors (internal and external political environments) would directly affect the principal’s leadership behaviors through the domains of school climate and instructional organization, which in turn would directly affect student achievement outcomes. According to the Bossert et al. (1982) model, a separate link between the instructional organization would affect school climate as well. They hypothesized that three latent variables (school governance, instructional organization, school climate) associated with principal leadership influenced student achievement outcomes. Heck et al. (1990)
discussed that their results supported the manner in which the principal lead the school influenced both the instructional organization and school climate, in turn, student achievement was influenced by these instructional leadership behaviors. Heck et al. (1990) suggested that the principal’s influence over school climate and instructional organization predicted school achievement in their causal model. Additionally, the model established the school level factors that the principal can directly manipulate and their relative effect sizes upon student achievement. Heck et al. (1990) cautioned readers to consider the ability to generalize their findings as it was an outlier study of low- and high-achieving schools across California. Heck et al. (1990) validated empirically the earlier model of Bossert et al. (1982) and concluded that principals can have an indirect effect on student achievement at their schools through their instructional leadership practices and their influence on instructional organization and school climate. Heck et al. (1990) found indirect effects for the principal’s influence on governance through the principal’s direct effects in the other two domains.

**Principal leadership effects.** Hallinger and Heck (1998) reviewed 40 empirical studies on principal leadership effects that emerged during the period from 1980-1995. They discussed diverse models (direct, mediated, and reciprocal) to study the relationship between school leadership and student achievement. Each of these models assumed a different perspective on the interaction between leadership effects and student performance outcomes. The direct-effects model suggested that leadership practices can have effects on school outcomes and can be measured as independent variables (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Glasman, 1984; Leithwood, 1994). Research using direct-effects models was not able to substantiate consistent evidence of
leadership effects on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Next, the mediated-effects model hypothesized that leaders impact learning through indirect paths through other people, events and organizational factors. Hallinger and Heck (1998) reported consistent evidence of significant relationships between principal leadership effects on school outcomes. Finally, the reciprocal-effects model attributed leadership influences to interactive processes between the leader and school features and its environment over time. This model implied that principals changed their thinking and actions as they adapted to the school in which they worked. Hallinger and Heck (1998) described this reciprocal process as dynamic and was recommended for further research. Hallinger and Heck (1998) concluded that “principals exercise a measurable, though indirect effect on school effectiveness and student achievement. While this indirect effect is relatively small, it is statistically significant” (p. 157). They suggested additional study of unit of analysis as well as the multilevel nature of schooling as the empirical advances might make it possible due to conceptual and methodological advances. Hallinger and Heck (1998) referred to essential leadership practices as purposes, people, and structures and social systems, primarily, the principal’s role in leading the school in vision, mission, and goals.

Waters et al. (2003) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis of three decades of research that examined the effects of leadership practices on student achievement. Their study included 70 empirical studies representing 2,894 schools, almost 1.1 million students, and 14,000 teachers. From their meta-analysis, they identified a balanced leadership framework including 21 leadership responsibilities that were significantly correlated to student achievement. Further, they suggested that effective leadership was a
combination of knowledge and skills that “means more that simply knowing what to do, it’s knowing when, how, and why to do it” (p. 2). Waters et al. found that the average effect size between leadership and student achievement was 0.25, a significant correlation. They also claimed that leadership can produce a negative impact on student achievement as well. In addition, each of the specific 21 leadership responsibilities was found to have an average effect size between 0.15 and 0.33 upon student achievement. Waters et al. discussed the differential impact of leadership. They concluded that two key variables where leadership will either have a positive or negative impact on achievement: the focus of change and the magnitude of change. The focus of change was defined as knowing the right things to do to improve the achievement trend. The magnitude of change was described as two levels, first order change is an extension of the past while a second order change is a break from the past. Each order produced implications for those involved in the change process. Waters et al. suggested that principals needed to recognize whether changes were first or second order and “select leadership practices and strategies that are appropriate for their initiatives” (p. 8). Waters et al. developed a tool to successfully implement the 21 leadership practices, termed “knowledge taxonomy”. Their knowledge taxonomy included four domains: experiential knowledge (knowing why it is important); declarative knowledge (knowing what to do); procedural knowledge (knowing how to do it); and contextual knowledge (knowing when to do it). The theoretical and empirical research was woven into the balanced leadership framework with 21 leadership practices in the knowledge taxonomy developed by Waters et al. in 2003. They intended to conduct factor analysis on the 21
responsibilities and to propose structural equation modeling that would likely produce a smaller number of leadership responsibilities for future use.

Witziers et al. (2003) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis using direct effect models to examine the influence of leadership effects upon student achievement. They intended to add to the scholarly debate on whether school leadership matters. In their results, Witziers et al. reported that leadership has a positive and significant effect on student achievement, even when outliers were removed from the sample, albeit a small effect size. When leadership was examined as a one-dimensional concept, results failed to establish a positive and significant relationship between leadership and student outcomes. However, investigating specific leadership behaviors (supervision and evaluation, monitoring, visibility, and defining and communicating mission) as subdimensions of educational leadership, results indicated small, yet positive and significant relationships to student outcomes, although when outliers were removed from the sample, the effects were not very robust (Witziers et al., 2003). Witziers et al. concluded that their findings substantiated the earlier empirical claims that leadership matters, although its direct influence on student achievement was small. In conclusion, Witziers et al. acknowledged that studies on school effectiveness and educational leadership had been widely criticized for their singular focus on student achievement. They suggested further research that was longitudinal in nature to study possible leadership impacts on student outcomes using the mediated effect or reciprocal effect models, possibly intervention studies using competency profiles of principals.
Core Leadership Practices

Leithwood et al. (2004) studied how leadership mattered, how the effects of strong leadership influenced student learning, and what the essential components of leadership were. They suggested that leadership was second only to teaching in school level factors for impact on student learning, with leadership playing an indirect role whereas teaching was a direct influence upon student achievement outcomes. Moreover, Leithwood et al. (2004) contended that the impact of leadership was greatest where student achievement levels were lowest. They also identified the basic components of leadership as:

1. *Setting directions* – Establish a clear plan with shared understandings for everyone including high expectations and data analysis to monitor progress and achievement. Purpose and vision were integral in setting goals and related tasks within the organization. Setting directions accounted for the largest portion of a leader’s impact.

2. *Developing people* – Provide school staff with essential support and professional development to succeed. This component contributed to capacity building and motivation for people to successfully move towards the desired organizational direction. Both the interactions with leaders and the organizational context provide substantial leadership effects in this area.

3. *Making the organization work* – Ensure that conditions in schools support teaching and learning. This component relied on the motivations and capacities of teachers and principals, individually as well as collectively. The purpose of redesigning the school culture and organization is to align the
organizational direction and capacity building to match the school improvement plan efficiently and effectively.

These three practices were considered to be the basic core of leadership, insufficient in significantly improving student learning outcomes, yet integral to the overall leadership of the school.

Next, Leithwood et al. (2004) contended that “successful leaders have mastered not only the basics, but also productive responses to the unique demands of the contexts in which they find themselves” (p. 10). Beyond that, Leithwood et al. suggested that leaders needed “large repertoires of practices and the capacity to choose from that repertoire needed” (p. 10). They ended with three conclusions about how effective leadership influenced student achievement: leaders influence indirectly, leaders prioritize who and what to monitor, leaders utilize basic and contextualized leadership practices. Leithwood et al. (2004) also recommended that further research was needed to learn more about the fundamentals of effective leadership.

Waters et al. (2003) identified 21 specific leadership practices that fit within either the three categories identified by Hallinger and Heck (1998) or Leithwood et al. (2004) for basic leadership practices.

Kruger et al. (2007), conducted a path analysis to improve their understanding of the antecedents and leadership effects as well as the principal’s leadership on intervening and outcome variables. Their purpose was to “improve our understanding of the chain of variables, which are located between the principal and the organizational and student outcomes” (p. 2). Kruger et al. (2007) utilized the model designed by Bossert et al. (1982) to conceptualize their research into the possible impact of school leadership
variables on school level factors. From this conceptualization, Kruger et al. (2007) tested a causal model using path analysis for their study. The analysis indicated four key results. First, school leaders appear to directly impact greatly school organization and, indirectly, school culture. Second, the impact of school leadership upon school culture was weak. Third, the principal’s vision had a significant impact on the behavior and strategies implemented at the school. Fourth, educational leadership was influenced by a variety of institutional and contextual factors. Kruger et al. (2007) supported an improved understanding of the paths that principals have an impact on student outcomes. The results of this study offered continued support within the scholarly community for a contingency model of leadership with further research needed on identification of pathways for the effects of school leadership that specifically influence school effectiveness and school improvement.

May and Supovitz (2011) examined the scope of principal efforts to improve student outcomes in 51 southeastern urban schools in the U.S. (30 elementary, 10 middle schools, 8 high schools, and 3 alternative schools). The researchers qualified ‘scope of principal efforts’ to mean the “extent to which principals target their instructional assistance efforts on a subset of teachers or the entire faculty” (p. 336). May and Supovitz (2011) hypothesized that principal instructional leadership took place through broad influence, focused on school-wide change or large numbers of teachers, to targeted influence, focused on improving the instructional practice of a few teachers. Data sources included principal activity logs and annual teacher surveys. Data analysis included multilevel mixed-effects modeling that allowed prediction of differences in average outcomes, but differences in the variability of outcomes (May & Supovitz,
Results revealed that principals in this study spent an average of 8% of their time on instructional leadership activities. May and Supovitz (2011) found that principals used a combination of broad and targeted instructional leadership practices. The researchers conducted a unique study as they examined the scope of principal’s work with teachers over the more common empirical study on the impact of leadership practices on student achievement. May and Supovitz found that “principals’ influence on instructional improvement is significantly related to their interactions with individual teachers” (p. 347). In conclusion, May and Supovitz suggested that the most effective instructional leaders optimized the balance between broad and targeted instructional leadership practices while appropriately identifying the teachers who were most likely to interact with the targeted instructional support provided by the principal. May and Supovitz proposed that this line of research was promising in that it might move empirical research away from principal practices to answer ‘What does a principal do?’ to study instead ‘With whom do instructional leaders work?’ May and Supovitz suggested that “how principals distribute their instructional improvement efforts has important consequences for the fate of school improvement” (p. 350).

**Leadership for Learning Leadership Type**

Almost four decades of research on educational leadership has substantiated the claim that leadership is critical to the success of schools. Moreover, that an effective principal is key in effective schools where students achieved at high levels. Research has also shown that not all leadership is equal, but that ‘leadership for learning’, a specific type of leadership, was evident in high performing schools.
Murphy et al. (2007) examined the components of leadership for learning using a three-dimensional model of productivity. The three dimensions were in-school achievement, measures of exit performance, and indices of future achievement. They found that leadership for learning, as a particular type of leadership, had certain qualities. First, Murphy et al. (2007) shared their findings that these leaders had the ability to consistently focus on the core of teaching and learning, including curriculum and assessment. Second, researchers claimed that these leaders also strategically facilitated all other dimensions of schools, such as organization, finance, personnel, work to support improved student learning. Murphy et al. (2007) developed their Learning Centered Leadership Framework to operationalize educational leadership. Key components included:

1. **Leadership Behaviors**: Four major conditions influence a leader’s behaviors. The leader’s prior experiences, the leader’s knowledge base established over time, personal characteristics that the leader, and values and beliefs that the leader holds. Leadership behaviors indirectly influence student achievement.

2. **School and Classroom Factors**: Leaders can directly influence the conditions of the school at the school and classroom levels which may indirectly influence student outcomes.

3. **School Context**: Context plays a significant role for leaders as they implement school improvement initiatives at their school.

Murphy et al. (2007) viewed outcomes from three perspectives, quality of school-wide achievement, value added as a measure of gain, and equality in the consistency of
achievement across subgroup populations. Murphy et al. (2007) described eight dimensions of leadership behavior that portrayed leadership for learning:

1. Vision for learning
2. Instructional program
3. Curricular program
4. Assessment program
5. Communities of learning
6. Resource acquisition and use
7. Organizational culture
8. Social advocacy

Murphy et al. (2007) suggested that together, these eight dimensions of leadership behavior characterized leadership for learning leaders, were the knowledge base for establishing highly productive schools.

At the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in Nottingham, UK, Leithwood and his colleagues as well as NCSL researched and published two companion reports describing the available research on successful school leadership. In Leithwood et al.’s (2006) review of the literature described their seven ‘strong claims’ about what was empirically known about successful school leadership. The seven strong claims are listed below:

1. School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.
2. Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.
3. The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices—not the practices themselves—demonstrates responsiveness to, rather than direction by, the contexts in which they work.

4. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions.

5. School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.

6. Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.

7. A small handful of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness.

Although similar to Leithwood et al. (2006) seven strong claims, NCSL (2007) uncovered research that was listed under seven headings:

1. Context matters
2. The core tasks of leaders are clear
3. Learning-centered leadership is critical
4. Distributing leadership matters
5. School leadership is hard work and rewarding
6. Leadership in schools is changing
7. Leadership development and succession planning have never been more important

NCSL (2007) concluded their report by suggesting that “leadership is more nuanced and subtle than previously portrayed” (p. 18). First, the authors suggested that
leaders needed to be skilled with the perseverance and determination to drive school improvement efforts, yet also needed to be emotionally intelligent as well. Second, the authors promoted developing future school leaders who are strategic thinkers and are adaptive to changing contexts of schools. NCSL (2006) concludes with “We know a lot about leadership today. This knowledge will be powerful in helping us adapt to tomorrow’s challenges” (p. 18).

**Summary and Conclusions**

School leadership matters (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Bossert et al., 1982; Glasman, 1984; Witziers et al., 2003). Furthermore, school leaders serve as the catalyst for school improvement initiatives (Hall et al., 1994; Leithwood et al., 2006). School leaders indirectly influence the factors that impact student achievement outcomes (Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood et al., 2004; Silins, 1994). Research suggested that principals mostly influence teaching and learning through staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions (Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood, 1990, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003). Successful school leadership is strategic and is contingent on context (Hallinger, 2003, 2007; Kruger et al., 2007). School context is built along socioeconomic, demographic, cultural, political and historical factors. National College for School Leadership (2007) summarized that “it is not only what you do as a leader, but how you do it that makes a difference in any given situation and environment” (p. 3). NCSL (2007) implied that there is not just one way to lead a school, that there may be a more effective way to lead a specific school.

The research on successful school leadership pointed to two essential components, leadership practices (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Waters et al., 2003) and
leadership styles (Evans & Teddlie, 1995; Hall et al., 1984; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). Additionally, researchers suggested that leadership for learning positively impacts student achievement outcomes (Murphy et al., 2007). Research into the scope of the principal’s influence examined both broad and targeted approaches to improving student outcomes through the principal’s work with teachers (May & Supovitz, 2011). NCSL (2007) found that “high performing and rapidly improving schools” (p. 7) are led by leaders who embodied leadership for learning qualities. School leaders perform their duties in a data-driven environment where continuous improvement is expected. The repertoire of core leadership practices was similar across successful leaders (Leithwood et al. 2006; NCSL, 2007). School leaders must build capacity of their staffs and of themselves as they adjust to ever-changing demands upon school leaders to produce students ready and able to contribute to the society. Leithwood et al. (2006) succinctly stated that “there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership” (p. 3). Further, Leithwood et al. (2006) contended that the principal may be the catalyst for releasing the potential of both the organization and the people within it.

**Turnaround Schools**

Struggling schools that are failing are not new in the educational landscape. The shift to a school turnaround model as the method to rapidly improve the outcomes for students is still relatively new. Schools in need of a turnaround typically serve students in the achievement gap who are of African American and Hispanic descent and living in poverty. Essential to any school turnaround is the concept that when successful, the school experiences dramatic improvement in student achievement very rapidly,
particularly for those students in the achievement gap. The literature on turnarounds differs from the phenomenon of good to great transformation which focuses on slower, continuous, incremental improvement. Successful turnarounds go from bad to great rapidly.

The empirical research on effective schools as well as school improvement is well established. Effective schools, school improvement initiatives, and turnaround schools share the common goal of providing a high quality education for students while improving student achievement outcomes. Although, key differences distinguish the research literature on effective schools, school improvement initiatives, and turnaround schools as discrete areas of research. Much is known about what makes a school effective, a specific list of correlates or school effects, but not necessarily how to become an effective school (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1991; Rutter et al., 1979; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). In response to this quandary, substantial research was conducted for over two decades in search of how to establish effective schools through school improvement initiatives (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985; Edmonds, 1982; Resnick, 1999; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000).

Researchers subsequently began to research organizational change (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Bridges, 2009; Fullan, 1991; Kotter, 1996), organizational learning (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 1985, 2006, 2010; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Resnick & Hall, 1998) and leadership influence (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Murphy et al., 2007; Waters et al., 2003) to better understand school improvement work.

Over the same period of time, researchers established that leadership matters (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Bossert et al., 1982).
Furthermore, school leaders serve as the catalysts (Leithwood et al., 2006) and indirectly influence the factors that impact student achievement outcomes (Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood et al., 2004). Additionally, successful school leadership is both strategic and contingent upon context (Hallinger, 2003, 2007; NCSL, 2007). Moreover, research also revealed that leadership practices (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Murphy et al., 2007; Waters et al., 2003) and leadership style (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Evans & Teddlie, 1995; Hall et al., 1984) play an important role. Lastly, the research literature described core leadership practices evident in successful school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2006; NCSL, 2007).

In this comprehensive body of empirical study, researchers explored how to drive change within an organization and who might lead that work, ultimately establishing the powerful influence of leaders to implement effective change processes to improve schools and student achievement. This body of research described the next level of school improvement, a hybrid approach relying on school effects, organizational change, leadership practices and leadership styles. This hybrid approach to school improvement was beyond earlier empirical efforts to blend the effective schools and early school improvement research into a singular approach (Creemers & Reezigt, 1997; Mackenzie, 1983; Reynolds et al., 1993; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

In this section of the literature review, the existing research on school turnarounds is discussed. This research base on both the process and outcomes of school turnaround is limited. The diverse perspectives on the feasibility of school turnarounds will be explored. Leader actions along with challenges overcome that lead to successful school turnarounds, a more recent area of empirical study, are investigated. Gaps in the
literature on school turnarounds will also be acknowledged. Turnaround leadership will be reviewed in varying contexts as well as through the phases of the turnaround journey. Leadership competencies derived from organizational theory will inform this final section of the literature review as the entry point for my research on the possible existence of specific cluster leadership competencies for principals who led successful school turnarounds as well as whether different phases of the school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership approaches.

**Perspectives on the Feasibility of School Turnarounds**

A number of researchers have questioned whether effective schools and school improvement schools should be used as models for school turnarounds (Hassel & Hassel, 2009; Murphy, 2007). A few researchers favored relying on cross-sector research in their search for adequate models for school turnarounds (Hassel & Hassel, 2009; Murphy, 2009; Murphy & Meyers, 2009). Although scarce in the empirical literature, other researchers pointed to successful school turnarounds as the models (Blankstein & Noguera, 2012).

Hassel and Hassel (2009) explored cross-sector qualitative research on successful rapid turnarounds and how to facilitate turnarounds within existing organizations. They described two camps:

The Incrementalists hold that meaningful improvement can only happen slowly, with soul-wrenching culture change leading to instructional change and eventual student success. The Clean Slate Club believes the only way to fix failing schools is to shut them down and start fresh, with entirely new rules, staff, and leadership. (Hassel & Hassel, 2009, p. 22)
Hassel and Hassel (2009) suggested that both camps have it wrong in that the slow, incremental approach were ineffective with chronically failing organizations as often as start-up ventures failed when replacing these same organizations. Hassel and Hassel (2009) supported the Incrementalist approach going as far as to suggest that “while educational researchers catch up, practitioners can use the turnaround lessons of other sectors” (p.22).

Hassel and Hassel (2009) posed two factors that lead to successful turnarounds. The first was that the turnaround leader was poised in an environment that allowed them to make decisions that move the organization forward rapidly, supported by top management to drive change, even when it caused discomfort and political upheaval. The work of any turnaround leader is typically in a complex, challenging environment, existing fiscal shortages, ingrained status quo, and collective bargaining units. The second is that the turnaround leader is the “unapologetic driver of change” (Hassel & Hassel, 2009, p. 23).

Hassel and Hassel (2009) suggested that effective turnaround leaders institute a formula of common actions that drive an organization to successful outcomes aligned to the new mission. Thus, with each success, stakeholders support further change. Hassel and Hassel refer to this process as the ‘bad-to-great formula’ identifying six consistent actions of successful turnaround leaders:

- **Focus on Early Wins** – The leader prioritizes a few goals to gain momentum with early successes to motivate staff and disempowering those against change.
• **Break Organizational Norms** – The leader breaks the rules and norms in the organization that are supporting practices contributing to the failure.

• **Push Rapid-Fire Experimentation** – The leader press trying new approaches, eliminating ineffective practices, and solidifying what works.

• **Get the Right Staff, Right the Remainder** – The leader selects from within or outside the organization key leaders and institute that change is not optional for staff.

• **Drive Decisions with Open-Air Data** – The leader uses data to analyze, make decisions, monitor, and problem solve. All staff is required to do the same.

• **Lead a Turnaround Campaign** – The leader understands that change is hard and supports the staff through a successful turnaround, relying on motivation and strategic tactics.

Hassel and Hassel (2009) concluded that turnarounds are a viable approach in education as in other sectors. They proposed that the environment must be favorable for the turnaround leader through support from above to institute the ‘bad-to-great formula’ with its six core elements. Also, the turnaround leader must be the driver of change without apology.

Smarick (2010) suggested that school turnarounds have existed as long as there have been struggling schools. He summarized that “school turnaround efforts have consistently fallen short of hopes and expectations” (Smarick, 2010, p. 21). Further, that the lowest-performing schools need be closed.

Smarick (2010) likened the challenge of turning around failing schools to “finding a cure for cancer” (p. 22) while suggesting that once persistently low-performing, the
school will remain low-performing, despite a multitude of interventions, at best resulting in marginal improvements. Additionally, Smarick cited a lack of empirical evidence for either effective interventions or how to bring about an effective turnaround. The research literature has yet to identify which specific practices facilitate turning around a failing school to produce significantly improved academic outcomes. Furthermore, that “fix-it efforts at the worst schools have consistently failed to generate significant improvement” (Smarick, 2010, p. 24). When Smarick referenced the turnarounds successful in the non-educational sector, he shared there were few, and further suggested that school turnarounds are even fewer and likely far more difficult to accomplish. Smarick concluded that “when conscientiously applied strategies fail to drastically improve America’s lowest-performing schools, we need to close them” (p. 21).

Stuit (2010) posed the question, “Are bad schools immortal?” in the Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s study on persistently low-performing schools. The focus was to investigate the successful elimination of bad schools via dramatic turnarounds or closures over a five year period, 2003-2004 through 2008-2009. Stuit concluded, “If silver-bullet solutions existed, a good many more than 1 percent of all low-performing schools in ten states would have turned around” (p. 32). Therefore, Stuit recommended school closure as a strategy over school turnaround. Substantiating this recommendation, Stuit offered that “the handful of turnaround success stories that do exist suggest that such transformations are possible but rare” (p. 14).

Blankstein and Noguera (2012) proposed that a knowledge base already exists about how to transform low-performing schools that is drawn from failing schools that have been transformed into successful schools. They suggested that these successful
turnaround schools took place in “positive learning environments that develop through internal accountability, shared vision, buy-in around clear goals and procedures, and the development of community” (Blankstein & Noguera, 2012). Further, that when failing schools garner adequate support, they become exceptional schools.

Blankstein and Noguera (2012) suggested several keys to a successful school turnaround:

- A ‘new day’ begins at the school whether it is a new principal, a new leadership, or an external partner that provides the idea things are going to change for the better.
- School status is assessed to better understand school processes and interactions negatively impacting the school’s performance.
- Establish a vision of what is possible thus eliminating the expectation of chronic failure.
- Engage and survey students about teaching and learning.
- Develop a clear and strategic plan for improving instruction.
- Facilitate that problem-solving becomes the norm.
- Establish measureable goals that are clear and can be achieved.
- Partner with parents and community organizations.
- Establish, implement, and sustain communication and collaboration within the school and outside to the community.
Blankstein and Noguera (2012) concluded that turning around failing schools, primarily serving large numbers of disadvantaged students, required responding to student needs and transforming school culture.

Duke (2012) discussed the phenomenon of school turnarounds, as an approach to improving the lowest-performing schools. As for the evolution of school turnarounds, they first appeared during the 1990s. At the time, an organization, Turnaround for Children, Inc. was established in New York City. Then, after the events of September 11, 2001, Harold Levy, Chancellor of the New York City school system joined forces with Turnaround for Children, Inc. to create a comprehensive school turnaround initiative. The last decade has been filled with federal, state, and local initiatives to initiate and sustain school turnarounds so that children of poverty receive a high quality education at the school they are required to attend (Duke, 2012). Turnaround specialist training programs began to emerge along with federal, state, and private organizations offered financial support for school turnarounds during the 2000s. Duke (2012) summarizes the limited research on effective school turnarounds in that “common practices and processes are becoming commonplace” (p. 21), suggesting that the evidence for a developed school turnaround knowledge base is growing in the empirical literature.

**Key Factors, Challenges, and Gaps**

Kowal and Hassel (2005) presented four factors influencing the outcome of school turnarounds that must be considered. The factors are described in four categories: governance, environmental, leadership, and organizational. Each plays a role in the success or failure in the school turnaround process and eventual outcome. They also identified further research needed to better understand school turnarounds.
Governance is the actual management of the turnaround process. The role of the district is essential in how schools attempting turnaround are held accountable, provided support, aligned systems and management and permitted the freedom to act. How much latitude the turnaround leader will have to make decisions and implement needed change is critical within an accelerated timeframe (Kowal & Hassel, 2005).

Environmental factors affect whether the school turnaround is successful or not, particularly challenging since most of these factors are outside of the leader’s control. Kowal and Hassel (2005) described the core environmental factor is how to engage the larger community in the school turnaround process. Another key decision is how much time to allow for improved student achievement results, an especially important decision during each of the planning, implementation, and sustaining stages. These decisions will likely influence the school turnaround.

Research points to the turnaround leader being the catalyst (Leithwood et al., 2006) and the one to indirectly influence the factors that lead to successful school turnarounds (Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood et al., 2004). Kowal and Hassel (2005) summarized leadership characteristics and actions of turnaround leaders that are evident in successful school turnarounds from earlier empirical work as leadership factors. With limited research into leadership of school turnarounds, the researchers reviewed cross-sector studies on turnarounds concluding “the potential for leader impact is large in any setting, including schools, and most certainly in school turnaround efforts” (Kowal & Hassel, 2005, p. 17).

Organizational factors include changes to the school’s design and culture (Kowal & Hassel, 2005). Successful school turnarounds embodied similar school organizational
design, mirroring characteristics earlier defined in the effective schools literature. The leader is challenged with improving the school’s culture through training and communication as the means to develop a singular shared vision and common goals. Staff development is the tool to change staff to implement effective instructional approaches for improved student learning. Kowal and Hassel (2005) suggested a school is poised for a successful turnaround when a strong leader, a favorable environment, district support, and optimal internal organizational climate are evident simultaneously, described here as their four key factors and challenges.

Kowal and Hassel (2005) also identified areas for future research on school turnarounds to close gaps in the knowledge base. They suggested rigorous study of turnaround leader competencies evidenced in the most successful turnaround leaders. Study of the differences that may exist in leaders at different phases of school turnaround is needed, especially the specific competencies of initial turnaround leaders as well as sustaining turnaround leaders. In addition, Kowal and Hassel supported further research in how to assess current staff to either select or train for the successful turnaround. Lastly, study whether successful school turnarounds share common elements. This research may provide the recipe for how to effectively turnaround a failing school.

Duke (2006) uncovered key elements and known gaps from the research literature on school turnarounds. He then identified areas for further research. Duke (2006) confirmed that educators have long searched for how to turnaround low-performing schools. Moreover, Duke proposed that “Combining experienced educators’ in-depth knowledge of particular settings with the global perspective of educational researchers probably holds the greatest promise for effecting successful school turnarounds” (p. 730).
In his review of five qualitative studies conducted between 1999 and 2004, Duke (2006) identified 11 common characteristics for successful school turnarounds. They were:

1. Students experiencing academic difficulties received prompt assistance.
2. Collaboration was expected among teachers.
3. Data was used to make instructional decisions.
4. Leadership established the tone for the school improvement process.
5. The school organizational structure was realigned to support school improvement.
6. Professional development was continuous and focused upon improvement efforts.
7. Instruction, curriculum, and assessment were aligned.
8. Ongoing assessment was instituted to measure student progress.
9. Teachers held high expectations for all students’ academic achievement.
10. School staff involved parents in their child’s progress and school improvement efforts.
11. Instructional time was scheduled to maximize teaching and learning, especially in reading and mathematics.

Although these 11 characteristics were prominent in the five studies, Duke (2006) could not conclude that implementing these 11 characteristics would assure an effective school turnaround. This was because Duke (2006) also identified and described six gaps that he considered necessary for further study. One was to understand how schools decline, which might provide a glimpse at how schools can work in reverse to improve.
Another was to study the impact of effective teamwork and ensuing collaboration. Next, a different gap was described in assessing interventions, which are effective or what combination may work best. An additional gap was the subtle midcourse corrections that were critical in response to barriers and challenges experienced, possibly not described in the research summary. Then, the question of how to sustain successful school turnarounds arose. After that, a gap may exist when unintended outcomes that are not reported and may prove to be an essential understanding or provide a less than complete overview of the turnaround process. The last gap is to gain a full understanding of how the successful turnaround principal addresses personnel issues, especially when the turnaround included the same staff as when the school was failing.

Duke (2006) suggested a need to understand why some turnarounds succeed while others fail. Furthermore, researchers must fill the gaps he identified in the knowledge base to better support school turnarounds. Until these understanding are in place, Duke (2006) proposed that the existing research will be insufficient for practitioners and scholars to turnaround failing schools and sustain those improvements over time.

Later, Rhim, Kowal, Hassel, and Hassel (2007) adapted Kowal and Hassel’s (2005) work with significant updates and a fresh analysis on school and other organizational turnarounds focused on effective strategies and turnaround leaders. Although the factors influencing turnarounds remained constant from one study to the next, the depth of evidence in the leadership was advanced. Rhim et al. (2007) suggested that the leadership dimensions, actions on the job and pre-existing capabilities, provide key understandings in how to successfully turnaround a school with more research
currently available in the leader actions over the leadership competencies (e.g. preexisting capabilities).

Rhim et al. (2007) created a list of common leadership actions and then proposed a conceptual framework “that links them in the characteristic ‘fast cycle’ of change that appears to operate in many successful turnarounds” (p. 15). This conceptual framework is a continuous cycle of four components: analysis and problem solving; driving for results; measuring and reporting; and influencing inside and outside. A brief description of each follows:

- **Analysis and Problem-Solving** – data analysis, identification of key problems, choosing of strategies to address key problems are integral during this component.

- **Driving for Results** – the leader’s unrelenting commitment and pursuit to obtaining expected results are central to this domain.

- **Measuring and Reporting** – data is measured and reported regularly and publicly during this critical component.

- **Influencing Inside and Outside** – leaders press for support from their staff and outside stakeholders for needed changes as the key component. This component, as the name implies, influences each of the other three components in the cycle and forms the framework’s core.

Rhim et al. (2007) reported two key actions that successful turnaround leaders across sectors summarily implement:
1. concentrated upon achieving a few tangible wins in year one as “a major lever to change the organization’s culture” (p. 15) that signals that change is eminent and possible and

2. implementing practices even when they deviate from norms to achieve goals as a necessary change to shift the organizational systems to move the people within it from the status quo.

Rhim et al. (2007) posed that leadership competencies within school turnarounds may prove paramount in changing failing schools into successful schools, yet the research is currently very limited in this area. Thus, they extrapolated to the education turnarounds using the robust empirical work in this area for non-educational turnarounds, and recommend the immediate need for educational research in this area. Rhim et al. suggested that “the work of turnaround leaders is a hybrid of the classic manager role (including that of traditional principal role) and start-up leader role, for sustaining turnarounds with the former and for initial turnarounds for the latter. Further, these researchers described common characteristics or competencies of successful turnaround leaders, including what leaders “do, say, think, and feel in specific organizational situations” (p. 24). Rhim et al. proposed that the two distinct strands of research, leader actions and leader capabilities, may provide an idea of the necessary competencies of successful school turnaround leaders. This research may then be used in tandem with the knowledge and skills a school turnaround leader must possess to be effective, recommended by Rhim et al. They end with a list of possible areas of future research to advance the body of literature on school turnarounds: comparative case studies and leader characteristics as one strand and evaluation of turnaround approaches.
Duke (2008) studied why schools decline as a means to prevent school failure and the consequent school turnaround. He suggests that this area of research is thin is the reluctance of schools that are declining to be studied. Duke, in his work with school leaders enrolled in the University of Virginia’s School Turnaround Specialist Program and the program’s research director, has identified potential indicators of school decline. Duke argued that “knowing the possible causes of school decline, especially an initial drop in performance, is critical for educators who want to intervene early” (p. 667). He identifies 11 probable early indicators of school decline:

1. Undifferentiated assistance for students who struggle
2. Inadequate monitoring of progress
3. Unadjusted daily schedule
4. Alignment problems
5. Ineffective staff development
6. Lost focus
7. Lack of leadership
8. Hasty hiring
9. Increased class size
10. Overreliance on untrained helpers
11. More rules and harsher punishments

Duke (2008) concluded that these indicators provide educators warning signals of which to be on alert so as to provide immediate intervention. Recognizing the early signs of decline provided the opportunity for educators to avoid school decline or failure.
Duke also admitted that this list is not exhaustive and that indicators for school decline would also be evident within the school culture.

Orr et al. (2008) concluded after a three-year collaborative inquiry process as part of the Laboratory for the Design and Redesign of Schools (LDRS) work in 28 low-performing schools in New York City that their analysis provided a useful framework for future work in the most challenging schools. Orr et al. utilized a form of participatory research to describe theories of action and “factors that enable and constrain progress of such schools” (p. 678). The researchers disclosed that the “persistent lack of progress caused us to reflect deeply on our support model’s core strategies, and more broadly, on existing assumptions about the needs and challenges of persistently low-performing schools and how best to help them to improve” (Orr et al., p. 673).

Orr et al. (2008) concluded that five key leadership and organizational themes were critical to improve persistently low-performing schools: instructional leadership integrity; distributed leadership and professional collaboration; consensus on good instruction and ways to foster continuous improvement; valuing, trusting, and having confidence in the learning capacity of students and staff; school-region-city relationship. Orr et al. concluded that low-performing schools are not blank slates. Schools are places with existing capabilities that can improve, but require new resources and strategies to build their capacity “to change ineffective instructional and organizational practices” (Orr et al., 2008, p. 690). Furthermore, providing low-performing schools with the “guidance on how to coordinate their various staff and fiscal resources for school improvement that both phase in high-priority interventions, while leveraging organizational capacity building” was essential (Orr et al., 2008, p. 691).
The School Turnaround Journey

Jackson (2000) provided one leader’s perspective on school turnaround through his eight years of participation in the Improving Quality of Education for All (IQEA) in Bedfordshire, England. IQEA was previously discussed in an earlier section of this literature review so it will not be discussed further here. Jackson shares what he and his colleagues learned from what he conceptualized as their school improvement journey. Jackson also proposed that the challenges they faced during this school improvement journey were determined by the stage of that point in time of their journey.

Several implications were evident from Jackson’s (2000) new understandings of leadership for school improvement. First, leadership is success through capacity change at the culture, structure, and knowledge levels. Second, the organization must develop shared values and beliefs. Third, leadership challenges what doesn’t support student achievement and replaces it with what works. Fourth, the organization is built upon leadership for learning and thus, leadership capacity is built in many. Fifth, professional learning at actively improving schools is re-envisioned with building more leaders to assist with improving the school. Sixth, in schools with highly developed improvement capacity, students also have input, accountability, and leadership responsibilities. Jackson provided one of the earliest examples of the school improvement journey and is included for that reason. His insights about leadership over time as a school improved provided leadership themes that may prove useful in the study of phases of school turnaround, especially in the areas of values, shared leadership, and building capacity.

Leithwood and Strauss (2008, 2009) conducted two-stage mixed-methods research on school turnarounds in a cohort of underperforming schools that had
successfully turned around in Ontario, Canada. The first stage was qualitative to develop a deeper understanding of turnaround processes. The second stage was quantitative and studied first stage findings and leadership actions that led to school improvement. Thus, the study focused on the stages of school turnaround as well as effective turnaround leadership practices. The researchers identified three conceptualized stages of school turnaround: Declining Performance, Crisis Stabilization, and Sustaining and Improving Performance. Each phase merits key discussion points. First, while a school was in the Declining Performance stage, Leithwood and Strauss (2008) described that the schools were “characterized by feelings of helplessness, denial of responsibility for the learning of all students, and resistance to external intervention” (p. 24). As the schools entered the Crisis Stabilization stage, transition was evidenced by “important shifts in both attitude and culture” (Leithwood & Strauss, 2008, p. 24), typically as the first year of the turnaround concludes. The third stage, Sustaining and Improving Performance, was in the earliest days of this study, but appeared to “demonstrate that the changes in attitudes and beliefs that had occurred during the second turnaround stage were likely to help schools make the transition to the third turnaround stage” (Leithwood & Strauss, 2008, p. 23).

Leithwood and Strauss (2008, 2009) also described four sets of successful core leadership practices that principals enacted during these three identified stages of turnaround. The four categories of core leadership practices were Direction Setting, Developing People, Redesigning the Organization, and Managing the Instructional Program. Leithwood and Strauss specified that these core leadership practices would be
As a result of their research, Leithwood and Strauss (2008, 2009) found eight key conclusions about turnaround leadership:

1. Effective leadership is required for a school turnaround.
2. Four dimensions of core leadership practices are essential.
3. Core leadership practices are enough to turn around any school.
4. As the school progresses through the turnaround stages, the core leadership practices are implemented in different ways.
5. School turnaround leadership is not distributed widely, if at all.
6. Successful school leadership was a modeled differently at the various turnaround stages.
7. Common, predictable challenges existed at the beginning of the school turnaround.
8. Turnaround leaders turn around schools by changing teacher attitudes and school culture.

Hallinger and Heck (2011) conducted a non-experimental, post-hoc, longitudinal study of a cohort of 13,391 third grade students from a random sample of 193 elementary schools in a western US state over a three year period. Achievement data for the cohort was included for the students’ third through fifth grade years. The purpose of this study was to explore improvement patterns and to determine if common patterns existed on the improvement trajectories of these elementary schools, using Jackson’s (2000) portrayal of school improvement as a metaphoric journey to explain the change process in stages.
over time. Hallinger and Heck (2011) explored whether the school improvement journey could be classified into distinct phases in order to begin to link “leadership patterns and school improvement practice to growth in learning for schools that are at different stages in their improvement journeys” (pp. 2-3).

Hallinger and Heck (2011) reported results that established that their longitudinal approach supported both school improvement processes and outcomes. Their analysis found that schools did present differing improvement trajectories over the same period of time. The improvement trajectories were characterized as:

1. Class 1 Schools – Typical, representing 84% of the total sample
2. Class 2 Schools-High Growth, representing 8% of the total sample
3. Class 3 Schools – Moderate Growth, also representing 8% of the total sample

These improvement trajectories demonstrated emergent patterns of improved learning over time. Once these classifications were established, further study was engaged to explore school conditions that might be present unique to each class and useful in determining the phase of the school improvement journey.

Hallinger and Heck (2011) concluded that schools can be classified as to where they are located on their improvement journey. Moreover, that this location (current status) is one school condition along with two other equally important school conditions, demographic context and trajectory (i.e. stable, declining, improving). Together, these three conditions constituted the school’s improvement journey. Hallinger and Heck recommended continued research with this focus to link leadership and context, location, and trajectory. This type of research may provide practical information on how to
turnaround schools that are contextually different and/or at different phases in their school improvement journeys.

**Organizational Lens**

Meyers and Murphy (2007) analyzed educational strategies for school turnarounds and synthesized the research on failing schools to “unpack the constructs of school failure and turnaround” (p. 631). They suggested that schools fail from external and internal conditions. Meyers and Murphy described external conditions that influence school failure as: urban or rural school locations, a disproportionate enrollment of minority students living in poverty, enter school at a disadvantage, and a high level of criminal activity in the local community. Meyers and Murphy identified many internal conditions: poor-quality instruction, inadequate teacher preparation programs, less experienced teaching staff, improperly credentialed, high teacher turnover, ineffective leadership, high administrative turnover, low morale, low accountability, low expectations, poor school reputation, and lack of a coherent, collaborative action plan.

Meyers and Murphy (2007) discussed three of their key insights gained from their research of the turnaround literature on both failing schools and turnaround schools:

1. *Establishment of a Clear Definition of Failing Schools*: Three factors are considered significant in identifying a school as failing. First, test score trend data are key as a school that is making progress over time or on average should not be labeled failing. Second, value-added measures are important. School achievement growth against itself demonstrates relative performance. Third, equity is an essential determination on school level measures beyond test scores.
2. **Contextual Considerations**: Turnarounds need to be empirically reviewed with a focus upon the context (external conditions (eg. student demographics), internal (eg. teacher quality), and level (federal, state, local, district and school).

3. **Non-education Turnaround Lessons**: Organizational sciences outside of education indicate two widely applied turnaround practices rarely used in educational turnarounds. The first is that the turnaround begins with a change in leadership. The second is cost and impact to efficiency is deemphasized. Meyers and Murphy (2007) concluded that empirical study of failing and turnaround schools is relatively new, requiring further research. As such, key themes have emerged. The organizational context of a school turnaround is essential to understand, as it explains the failure of the school and the viability of the turnaround (Meyers & Murphy, 2007).

In Murphy and Meyers (2009) conducted an extensive qualitative meta-analysis of turnaround literature in the non-education sector to “write the turnaround story in chronological order from the onset of initial warning signs through the final recovery or collapse” (p. 13). They had found that the research literature was limited on turning around failing schools, but that an extensive body of work existed on non-educational turnarounds. From this body of literature, Murphy and Meyers (2009) provided specific recommendations for rebuilding organizational capacity, the heart of organizational recovery, and the task of fixing failing schools. Three essential themes emerged for turning around non-educational and educational organizations: rallying and mobilizing people, growing people, and creating a positive and productive culture.
A closer look at each of these themes is informative. When rallying and mobilizing people, failing organizations required strategies for motivating people, building morale, and communicating openly. Large numbers of people within all levels of the organization are needed for the change process to be effective as the mission is reshaped. Murphy and Meyers (2009) described that “Motivation is the engine to get the necessary enthusiasm and commitment to make a difficult change” (p. 14). Morale is equally important in rallying and mobilizing people as it rebuilds hope, confidence, and justice in an organization. Communication is the tool that spreads information (the rationale, change components, timelines, and progress on goals) about the turnaround to the people within the organization. Additionally, growing people included empowering people, building teams, and developing people. Building the capacity of those within the organization is critical for successful turnarounds. Those within the organization are empowered through participation, input, ownership, efficiency, and success. When efficient teams are formed and institutionalized, they support the turnaround. Building capacity of individuals through training and development positively shapes the turnaround process. Creating a positive and productive culture is critical in initiating, implementing, and sustaining an effective organizational turnaround. Murphy and Meyers (2009) found that successfully changing organizational culture rests upon two key ideas, changing individual mindsets and developing a new orientation for the organization. This is accomplished through five inter-woven elements:

1. Entrepreneurial spirit
2. Promote change
3. Challenging the status quo
4. Commitment to excellence

5. Commitment to continuous improvement.

Murphy (2009) suggested that the literature on non-educational turnarounds provides blueprints for school turnarounds, particularly in the area of turnaround leadership. This researcher found a limited body of empirical work exists for educational turnarounds. However, he discovered a substantial body of empirical research about turning around organizations outside of education. Murphy (2009) claimed this empirical research was the “first systematic effort to mine research in the corporate, not-for-profit, and public sectors to develop insights for turning around failing schools” (p. 157). Murphy posed a grounded narrative on school turnarounds from the organizational sciences research.

Murphy (2009) included a description of the turnaround model with four periods. The initial period is one of success and stability for the organization. Period two characterizes the decline stage identifying the factors that lead to organizational crisis and push the organization into a need for a turnaround. The third period includes the response actions that attempt to stabilize the organization. The fourth and final period is the outcome, either recovery or the end of the organization.

Murphy outlined his findings as seven lessons.

- **Lesson #1: Not All Failing Schools Are Worth Saving** - The business literature includes empirical data that not all failing organizations can or should be saved. Murphy suggested that “there are no doubt times when it is neither wise policy nor in the best interests of youngsters to fight to restore what should not be saved” (Murphy, 2009, p. 162).
- **Lesson #2: Focus on Leadership** - The research on business turnaround declared three key things about leadership. The first is that it is critically important. The second is that the current leader must be replaced. The third is replacement leaders with turnaround expertise are more likely to succeed.

- **Lesson #3: Act Quickly** – Effective turnarounds in business and education required a leader who successfully created urgency for action. This is central to change leadership in general, and crucial in organizational recovery specifically.

- **Lesson #4: Diagnose Before Selecting Recovery Pathways** – Murphy uncovered the trend that most school turnaround efforts identified the problem situation and proceeded to solution strategies with little time spent diagnosing the problem. The research on business turnarounds was that a separate phase existed for diagnosis which would later effectively shape the turnaround. Without this diagnosis work, Murphy contended that “troubled organizations simply do more of the same or pursue random ‘silver-bullet’ solutions” (Murphy, 2009, p. 165).

- **Lesson #5: Emphasize Efficiency Moves First and Marshal Resources** – The business literature found that successful organizational turnarounds depend on efficiency recovery strategies over return-to-growth recovery strategies. Therefore, in school turnarounds, the need is to reduce expenditures and focus resources on targeted reform efforts, an efficiency recovery model.

- **Lesson #6: Create Hope Through Vision** – Turnaround literature provided that the people within the failing organization or school need beliefs, goals,
and values to move forward. The new vision propels the organization forward successfully with a new way of doing things.

- **Lesson #7: Focus on Core Lines of Work, Customers, and Continuous Improvement** – This means “concentrating on basic strengths and on the key issues essential to rebuilding the company” (Murphy, 2009, p. 168). Key to this focus is the backward planning and intended outcomes. In educational turnarounds the core is the instruction that drives academic performance with the customers being the students. Failing organizations, including schools, support organizational needs rather than customer needs determine their work.

Murphy (2009) concluded that the organizational recovery research provides seven macro-level lessons that can be applied to school turnarounds. However, he suggested that further research on educational organizations is needed to understand effective school turnarounds.

Later, Murphy (2010) suggested nine lessons that can support the work of turning around failing schools derived from business organizational recovery, adding two additional lessons with revisions from his earlier empirical work (Murphy, 2009; Murphy & Meyers, 2009). The lessons are listed with descriptions for the two new lessons provided:

- **Lesson #1:** Not All Failing Schools Are Worth Saving
- **Lesson #2:** Focus on Leadership
- **Lesson #3:** Act Quickly
- **Lesson #4:** Diagnose Before Selecting Remedies
- **Lesson #5:** Emphasize Efficiency First
• **Lesson #6: Centralize Operations** – “Almost all successful turnaround organizations pull power and resources to the top in the initial phases of the turnaround work” (Murphy, 2010, p. 95). The literature revealed that no evidence existed for decentralization or empowerment initiatives during a crisis that calls for a turnaround.

• **Lesson #7: Recognize the Limitation of Structural Moves** – Business and educational empirical studies posed that structural changes are not effective in themselves as a turnaround strategy.

• **Lesson #8: Focus on Core Lines of Work and Customers**

• **Lesson #9: Create Hope Through Vision**

Murphy’s (2010) nine lessons derived from the empirical research on business turnarounds provided essential lessons for successfully guiding the work for educational turnarounds.

**Leadership Lens**

Spencer and Spencer (1993) conducted a quantitative study of typical to highly successful leaders in complex organizations to better understand work competencies versus qualifications, skills, and knowledge. These researchers defined a competency as “a pattern of feeling, acting, or speaking that causes a person to be successful in a job or role” (p. 11). Spencer and Spencer identified clustered competencies for successful turnarounds. Four clusters of competence are essential for the turnaround leader. Each cluster with their accompanying competencies is described:

• Driving for Results Cluster - These support an unremitting focus on organizational outcomes.
Achievement

Initiative and Persistence

Monitoring and Directness

Planning Ahead

- Influencing the Results Cluster - These facilitate working through and with others in the organization.
  - Impact and Influence
  - Team Leadership
  - Developing Others

- Problem Solving Cluster - These allow solving and simplifying complex organizational problems.
  - Analytical Thinking
  - Conceptual Thinking

- Showing Confidence to Lead - This sustains the leader to stay focused, committed, and poised.
  - Self-Confidence

Spencer and Spencer (1993) included principals in their study of competencies for classic middle managers. Consequently, these same identified cluster competencies appear to be applicable to school turnarounds, although further study of school turnaround leader competencies is warranted for the educational sector.

Duke (2004) suggested that the only way to turn around schools is one student at a time. Further, this researcher described the turnaround principal as “a pragmatic leader who can use a variety of strategies and approaches to reverse the downward spiral of a
low-performing school” (Duke, 2004, p. 13). Duke also proposed that not all principals are equally equipped to lead schools at different levels of performance, such as opening a new school, improving a high-performing school, or turnaround a persistently low-performing school. Further, Duke (2004) recommended that turnaround principals need a ‘road map’, not a ‘recipe’, referring to the strategy of implementing a list of school characteristics to improve a school. He suggested that a ‘road map’ that tells where the principal needs to lead the school, available routes, obstacles and terrain, and the start and end points would be more useful.

In this article, Duke (2004) focused on utilizing turnaround specialist principals in persistently low-performing schools to improve student achievement. His rationale for this recommendation was based on several assumptions. First, the reasons for a schools’ low performance are complex. Second, the staff likely will believe they have already tried everything to no avail. Third, the staff’s emotions about the low performance must be addressed in order to move forward. Fourth, every school succeeds at something, even low-performing ones. Duke supported that turnaround specialist principals are best equipped to meet these challenges.

Kowal and Hassel (2005) studied what makes a successful turnaround leader through a meta-analysis of the empirical research across sectors to establish a list of major actions and supporting steps commonly cited in successful turnarounds. They listed:

**Major Actions**

- Concentrates on a few changes with big, fast payoffs
• Implements practices proven to work with previously low-performing students without seeking permission for deviations from district policies

Supporting Steps

• Communicates a positive vision of the future school results
• Collects and personally analyzes school and student performance data
• Makes an action plan based on data
• Helps staff personally see and feel the problems students face
• Gets key influencers within district and school to support major changes
• Measures and reports progress frequently and publicly
• Gathers staff team often and requires all involved in decision making to disclose and discuss their own results in open-air meetings
• Funnels more time and money into tactics that get results; halts unsuccessful tactics
• Requires all staff to change—not optional
• Silences naysayers indirectly by showing speedy progress
• Acts in relentless pursuit of goals rather than touting progress as ultimate success. (Kowal & Hassel, 2005, pp. 20-21)

In addition, Kowal and Hassel (2005) suggested that the turnaround leader role is specific and that certain competencies characterize this type of leader. They describe the role as a mix between a classic manager and a start-up leader with the operational expectations and limitations of both. Additionally, the turnaround leader is leading change in a culture of failure and attempting to do it rather quickly. For these reasons, a
turnaround leader may require specific competencies in order to be successful (Kowal & Hassel, 2005).

Kowal and Hassel (2005) described the rich cross-sector research base for competencies of successful leaders. These researchers relied heavily on the 1993 research of Spencer and Spencer (1993), who established common characteristics, or competencies, of highly successful start-up leaders and classic middle managers, to develop their recommended competencies for school turnaround leaders. Cluster competencies of start-up leaders include: Driving for Results, Solving Problems, Showing Confidence, and Influencing Others. Whereas common cluster competencies for classic middle managers include: Influencing Others, Driving for Results, Teamwork and Cooperation, and Analytical Thinking. According to Kowal and Hassel (2005), effective turnaround leaders need to balance the start-up leader’s “craving for speedy results” (p. 24) and the classic middle manager’s “desire for credibility and influence within the broader organization” (p. 24). Lastly, Kowal and Hassel (2005) recommended that effective principals also demonstrate additional competencies in Conceptual Thinking, Team Leadership, Organizational Commitment, and Communicating a Compelling Vision.

Kowal and Hassel (2005) hypothesized that “the most successful turnaround leaders in the initial phase, when speedy results are crucial, more closely resemble start-up leaders” (p. 25). Also, they hypothesized that “the most successful leaders during the sustaining phase, when all staff must permanently adopt widespread behavior changes, somewhat more resemble classic managers” (p. 25). Therefore, Kowal and Hassel concluded a need for turnaround leaders to implement established leader actions and less-
researched turnaround competencies until further research can be conducted on educational turnaround competencies during both the initial and sustaining stages.

Brinson, Kowal, and Hassel (2008) provided a conceptual framework for school turnarounds outlining the actions implemented by successful school turnaround leaders. They described the fourteen leader actions that lead to successful turnarounds derived from earlier empirical work (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Kowal & Hassel, 2005). Brinson and colleagues describe these fourteen leader actions clustered around four major leader actions:

- Initial Analysis and Problem Solving
  - Collect and Analyze Data
  - Make Action Plan Based on Data

- Driving for Results
  - Concentrate on Big, Fast Payoffs in Year One
  - Implement Practices Even if Require Deviation
  - Require All Staff to Change
  - Make Necessary Staff Replacements
  - Focus on Successful Tactics; Halt Others
  - Do Not Tout Progress as Ultimate Success

- Influencing Inside and Outside the Organization
  - Communicate a Positive Vision
  - Help Staff Personally Feel Problems
  - Gain Support of Key Influencers
  - Silence Critics with Speedy Success
• Measuring, Reporting, and Improving
  o Measure and Report Progress Frequently
  o Require all Decision Makers to Share Data and Problem Solve

Brinson and colleagues (2008) provided one conceptual framework built upon fourteen essential leader actions for school turnaround success.

Concurrently, Steiner, Hassel, & Hassel (2008) developed a guide for ten competencies for school turnaround success, complimenting related and at times overlapping identified critical turnaround leader actions. Steiner et al. (2008) suggested that together, leader actions and competencies, likely lead to an effective school turnaround, as it placed the right leader at the helm. The turnaround cycle included specific, consistent leader actions: using the momentum gained from a few early successes with large payoffs; breaking rules and norms to attain those needed early wins; and acting rapidly with new tactics that work in order to change from the status quo (Rhim et al., 2007). In addition, principals use the fourteen leader actions in different ways to achieve successful school clustered around four clusters of competence turnarounds (Brinson et al., 2008; Kowal & Hassel, 2005; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Furthermore, Steiner et al. (2008) suggested that two of the competencies may prove to be critical for school turnarounds in particular, Achievement and Impact and Influence. They proposed that without these primary competencies, the turnaround principal is “unlikely to be successful taking the actions successful turnaround leaders” (Steiner et al., 2008, p. 7). Additional critical secondary competencies may be in the areas of Monitoring and Directiveness, Team Leadership, and Self-Confidence. These primary and secondary critical competencies depend upon the remaining competencies.
Moreover, Steiner et al. (2008) indicated that turnaround leaders exhibited these competencies at different levels of proficiency. The turnaround leader may use the level of competence more frequently, at higher levels, and at the appropriate time. In each case, the successful turnaround leader uses the right competency at the right time in the right way to meet their turnaround goals (Steiner et al., 2008). These researchers suggested future research when higher numbers of school turnarounds were documented and school turnaround leaders could be compared. This type of research would provide validation, fine tuning, and customization for school turnaround competencies.

Summary and Conclusions

The empirical literature on school turnarounds is emerging as a novel area of study in the school improvement research. School turnarounds can be distinguished from general school improvement work by their very nature; dramatic, rapid improvement of student achievement for students of color living in poverty, possibly still mastering academic English.

The research on both the process and outcomes of school turnarounds remains limited. Researchers have even questioned the feasibility on school turnaround ventures (Hassel & Hassel, 2009; Smarick; 2010; Stuit; 2010). Other researchers proposed that school turnarounds were possible with the right supports (Blankstein & Noguera, 2012; Duke, 2006; Kowal & Hassel, 2005; Rhim et al., 2007). Moreover, researchers found that schools can be placed on various stages of the turnaround journey (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Jackson, 2000; Leithwood & Strauss, 2009). Further research was conducted through both the organizational lens (Meyers & Murphy, 2007; Murphy, 2010) as well as through the leadership lens (Brinson et al., 2008; Duke, 2004; Spencer &
Spencer, 1993; Steiner et al., 2008) to explore more deeply the phenomenon of school turnarounds and their leaders.
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe methodology for the study, including the research design, context and participants, instruments, procedures for data collection, process for data analysis, considerations for establishing validity, limitations and ethical considerations. The purpose for this pragmatic study is to explore the potential impact of school principals on effective school turnarounds. This study was designed to explore the following research questions:

1. How does a principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?
   
   1.1 How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?

   1.2 Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?

2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a failing school?

   2.2 Do different phases of school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership approaches?

   2.3 Does the leadership context influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles?

The primary function of this research is to contribute knowledge that may help stakeholders to better understand how to turnaround schools by identifying leadership practices, actions and styles to positively influence student achievement outcomes. A national crisis currently exists, the urgent need to provide a high quality education to all students is a critical function of schooling not yet met and must be remedied for vast
numbers of our nation’s students, especially those of color, learning English as a second language, and living in poverty (NCLB, 2001). The answers to these questions should contribute new information to the body of existing research in educational leadership.

**Research Design**

Survey design is appropriate for this study as it supports the emergence of statistical and thematic patterns of school turnaround leadership (Creswell, 2009). The rationale and purpose for use of this approach is to perhaps extend beyond a sample to a population some broad inferences for the leadership actions and styles of turnaround principals. In this design, the researcher independently collects and analyzes the data for each strand separately with the intent to capture one point in time versus a longitudinal approach. Next, procedures are used to mix the two sets of independent data, transforming the various quantitative results into one integrated data set so that further analysis may be conducted. Lastly, the merged results are summarized, interpreted, and discussed to produce a deeper understanding of the topic. The justification for this design is the advantages that survey research provides: economical and rapid data collection; identification of sample attributes that may generalize to the population at large; and data integration possibilities.

This study will address leadership for effective school turnarounds using a survey approach. This design entails independent data collection, separate analysis for each, and then merging the two data sets for interpretation and further analysis. In this study, quantitative exploratory surveys were used to account the implementation of principal practices and actions as well as to explain to what extent the turnaround principal’s
practices/actions positively influence student achievement outcomes at targeted substantive school turnarounds.

The mixing of data was from an integrative perspective. Three reasons supported mixing data in this manner:

1. Parallel surveys to collect quantitative data may support corroborated findings
2. The completeness of this approach may provide a more comprehensive account of the phenomenon
3. The credibility gained by using targeted surveys may improve the overall integrity of the findings over relying on principal self-perceptions when certificated staff perceptions might provide confirming or disconfirming perspectives for the principal’s actions and styles

The theoretical framework was explicit throughout the study (Leithwood & Strauss, 2008; Public Impact, 2008; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). This explicit theory is founded on the conceptual frameworks developed from earlier research that specified leadership practices, actions, and competencies found to exist in successful business and educational turnarounds. Therefore, the study will rely on the proposed data integration strategy “to determine if there is convergence, differences, or some combination” (Creswell, 2009, p. 213). The extensive data collection and time-intensive analysis of survey design is challenging for a doctoral level researcher and will require rapid development of competent skill from a pragmatic worldview, the quantitative methods of survey research may inform how turnaround principals transform their schools into learning organizations. The interpretations from study of leadership practices may lead to identification of cluster leadership practices derived from organizational theory. Also,
information on principal style may describe the approach of effective learning-centered leadership practices that may be more effective at various phases of the school turnaround or within various school contexts. For these reasons, survey design provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of school turnarounds (Creswell, 2009).

Survey research will be the basis for the study. Survey research is useful in the study of numeric trends, attitudes, or opinions (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive statistical analysis may provide a comprehensive picture of the numeric trends, attitudes, or opinions of those surveyed. Exploratory surveys were developed by this researcher for principals and for other certificated staff. In addition, this study may support an explanation or confirmation of existing school turnaround theory; relate variables not previously considered; or possibly identify variables to conduct further research.

In essence, this study will test explicit theory about the existence of cluster leadership practices in principals leading substantive school turnarounds. Further, the study will rely on the focused study of a few individuals to explore use of identified cluster leadership practices. This approach will support looking closely at these leadership practices derived from organizational theory and explore whether specific principal styles established around the earlier identified cluster leadership practices impact differently at various stages of the effective turnaround.

**Population and Sample**

The strategy for selecting all study participants was purposeful, non-probability sampling (Creswell, 2009) was to study principals who have lead recent substantive school turnarounds. Thus, it was an appropriate strategy to discover and better
understand the nature of leadership practices, actions, and styles. For this study, the unit of analysis was substantive turnaround school leadership practice.

**Context and Participants**

The initial stage of screening for schools was an extensive search of existing data on California public schools, including charter schools, as well as on total population of all California counties. This massive screening included all of California’s 58 counties, 1,032 districts and 10,152 public schools. The approach was to focus first on the 25 largest school districts and 15 most populated counties in California, likely to expose schools situated in densely populated urban neighborhoods that might be included in this study, and extend outward to the smaller school districts and less densely populated counties. The screening measure for each school during this stage was to identify the participation status in Program Improvement under No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) during the 2011-2012 school year, and if exited during this year or the prior two school years, to record the initial and exit years for participation in Program Improvement. This initial screening revealed 84 California public schools (74 elementary (88%), 10 middle (12%), and 0 high school (0%)) as potential schools for inclusion in this study. Of these schools, 32 (38%) were from the 25 largest California school districts and 52 (62%) were located in the 15 most populated California counties. Twenty-seven (75%) of the 32 schools hailed from the 25 largest school districts and were located in these five most populous counties, all located in southern California. The five most populated counties in California in descending order are: Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Riverside, and San Bernardino. Sixty of the 84 California public schools (71%) identified were located in these counties. The remaining 24 California schools (29%) were located in the 6th
through 15th most populated counties, all located in central or northern California of which two counties had no schools meeting study criteria for inclusion.

After the initial state-wide screening process, an additional criterion was added to limit the inclusion of schools to those located in southern California. These schools are believed to represent urban public schools in California appropriately, especially when the fact that Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) includes six of the 28 potential schools for the study is considered. LAUSD has five times the enrollment of the next largest district, San Diego Unified School District, and eight times the enrollment of the third largest district, Long Beach Unified School District. Of the remaining largest California school districts, all located in northern California, five public schools were eligible for inclusion in this study. The county populations for the southern California school districts included in the study are two million residents or greater, with the population for Los Angeles County approaching 10 million. Whereas, the county populations for the central and northern California school districts range from 1.5 million to 700,000 residents, including a range of urban, suburban, and rural communities with many being rural farming regions. Therefore, inclusion of schools solely from southern California for this study is appropriate and reflects the urban population of the state.

The final phase of screening for possible study inclusion was to review schools identified during the earlier two screening phases using NCLB (2001) federal accountability measures, Academic Performance Index (API) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for both school-wide and significant subgroups (students of color, English Learners, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty) during the 2009-2012 school years. Several schools were eliminated from possible study inclusion.
during this final phase as the schools failed to meet either 2012 AYP school-wide and/or for one or more significant subgroups, did not make 2012 API growth targets, did not have a significant subgroup of students who were Hispanic, were alternative schools, or were in reality school reorganizations given fresh starts under NCLB (2001). This final phase concluded with 28 southern California public schools (23 elementary and 5 middle schools) from an initial pool of 1,276 schools in 220 districts situated in southern California for possible inclusion in the study. Of these schools, 11 (39%) were from the 25 largest California school districts and all were located in one of the five most populated California counties, although Riverside County (4th most populated) had no eligible schools meeting study criteria.

This extensive multi-phase screening process reviewed Southern California schools in general, schools in Program Improvement (PI) in particular, and turnaround schools uniquely. It became apparent that over a thousand schools, regardless of program participation, were remarkably similar in their student populations. These schools served students of color living in poverty with many still mastering academic English. A portion of these schools also served significant numbers of students with disabilities. These students attended urban public schools situated in one of California’s five most populated counties; almost 40% were schools from the state’s 25 largest school districts.

Another key demographic feature merits attention. These schools included current and past participants in PI as well as those never in PI. To be precise, 53% of the 1,595 schools were still in PI. Only three percent of these schools were turnarounds. Comparable AYP and API trends were observed for these schools. What distinguished these schools from one another was not necessarily their demographic profile, but their
performance level using federal accountability measures, AYP and API. Schools never in PI, currently in PI, and exited PI demonstrated differentiated performance profiles, yet common trends for the 2009-2012 school years. As for student achievement outcomes at these schools, some schools improved, some declined, and some remained the same. Remarkable in light of their shared diversity and similar outcomes for schools if each specified group.

As a result of these observations from this multi-phase screening process, the logic flow for this study was extended. Southern California schools exhibited similar demographic and performance profiles for all schools, schools in PI, and turnaround schools. The available public data illustrated that schools affiliated with the abovementioned groups demonstrated various stages and levels of achievement for analogous demographic profiles. Thus, one must consider what might be influencing which schools slip into PI, and more relevant to this study, which schools exit PI.

**Schools**

Twenty-eight southern California schools formerly identified as participants in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Program Improvement serving diverse student populations and significant numbers of low-income families that are current examples of substantive turnarounds were selected for the quantitative phase of this study. Of these schools, 82% were elementary schools and 18% were middle schools.

These schools were purposefully selected to meet the following criteria:

1. The school has successfully exited Program Improvement during 2012, 2011, or 2010 under criteria outlined within federal legislation, No Child Left Behind Act (2001)
2. The school had not met Annual Yearly Progress at the school-wide and/or subgroup levels for a minimum of three consecutive years prior to the turnaround. 

3. The school was in the first, second, or third year following the school turnaround (exited NCLB Program Improvement). Thus, these schools exemplified recent substantive turnarounds. Census data was publicly available for 100% of these schools.

**Principals**

Nine principals participated in this study through voluntary completion of the Survey for Principals available online or as a print version. These principals were selected using non-probability, purposeful sampling and because they agreed to participate. Additionally, the principal was at the school during the final year in Program Improvement and was still at the school during the first, second, or third year of the turnaround. Thus, these principals represented leaders of recent substantive school turnarounds.

**Certificated Staff Members**

Fifteen teachers at one school where the principal agreed to participate were invited to participate in this study. These teachers were selected because they were teaching at the school during the final year in Program Improvement and they remained at the school during the first, second, or third year of the turnaround. Therefore, these teachers were characteristic of teachers at substantive turnarounds.
**Instruments Overview**

Quantitative data was collected from multiple data sources for analysis in this survey study (Babbie, 1990; Fink, 2009). The purpose for this extensive data collection was to develop answers to the research questions and a deeper understanding of leadership for effective school turnarounds. In this survey study, data were collected independently, analyzed independently, and merged to corroborate and further analyze the data.

All instruments were designed and developed by this student researcher as a means to collect data from schools that had experienced a recent substantive school turnaround. Specifically, instrument design was intended to capture from multiple sources a description of principal practices, actions, and styles implemented to effectively turn around a failing school. The design process for these instruments was a critical function. Selection or adaption of items for inclusion in each instrument was for the measurement of specific cluster leadership practices, including targeted competencies and actions from previous studies that require further study (Leithwood & Strauss, 2008; Public Impact, 2008; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). First, since explicit theory was the basis for this study, item inclusion was determined solely by need to measure participant thoughts, feelings, and attitudes on these explicit practices. Second, items were tightly aligned for both content and format within and across instruments. Third, item content was duplicated at least once within instrument to increase the likelihood of valid results. Fourth, response categories were varied to collect data in various ways as a means to increase validity. Fifth, items were presented similarly including the same explicit content in both strands in preparation for the merged interpretation and further analysis.
For these reasons, the instruments should measure what they were expected to measure through this student researcher’s design and development process.

Study protocols included surveys were appropriate for this study’s population and setting because certificated staff working in the educational environment are highly educated and these approaches are appropriate means for collecting data on participants’ thoughts, feelings and attitudes within this and other research designs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Surveys were distributed to targeted principals, members of the population of southern California substantive school turnarounds. Each potential participant was requested to complete the designated survey in order to gather demographic and detailed information to reveal general thoughts, feeling, and attitudes about the principal’s practices, actions, and style throughout the school turnaround process. In each of these surveys, the same response categories were utilized and included; demographic, closed-ended, rating scales, rank-ordered, frequency tabulation, and open-ended questions.

Survey for Principals

Each principal was surveyed once using an exploratory survey designed for principals (see Appendix A) by this student researcher. It was administered via a web link to an online version or a hard copy version that was provided via U.S. Mail. Scoring was completed through tabulation of all responses from the online and hard copy versions.

Survey for Other Certificated Staff

Each was surveyed once using an exploratory survey (see Appendix B) designed for this group by this student researcher. It was administered via a web link to an online
version or a hard copy version that was provided via U.S. Mail. Scoring was completed through tabulation of all responses from the online and hard copy versions.

**Study Matrix**

To provide clarity, a matrix is provided for each of the two distinct analytical phases. Data collection was completed separately for the quantitative strands. Survey protocols provided data for each of the analytical phases. First, independent analysis was conducted after data collection concluded using approach-specific procedures for each survey group. Second, once the data was merged, an integrated interpretation was completed. This interpretation provided a broader explanation for the results. Table 1 provides information on how each analytical phase attempted to answer the research questions intrinsic to this study.

**Data Collection**

For this study, data collection took place over a period of two to eight months (Figure 1). Surveys were distributed to the targeted 28 principals of southern California schools via U.S. Mail and email with the option to complete the survey either online or using a hard copy. An introduction and purpose for the study, university approval for the study (see Appendix C), and an invitation to participate through further distribution of the appropriate survey to school certificated staff in this initial mailing (see Appendix D). Respondents were assured that the identity of the school and the identities of all participants would not be disclosed within the dissertation along with information on informed consent (Appendix E). A follow-up email (see Appendix F), final email (see Appendix G) or phone contacts were conducted to this same population to prompt
Table 1

*Analytical Phases of the Study with Specific Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Independent Analysis</th>
<th>Interpretive Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does the principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a school?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Do different phases of the school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership styles?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. What contextual factors may influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data analysis was initially independent and later integrated to better understand the principal’s use of effective school turnaround leadership practices, actions, and styles as illustrated in Figure 2. The rationale for statistical analysis of numeric data collected and analyzed is to better understand the trends, comparisons, and/or relationships for various variables aligned to the study’s research questions through the use of statistics (Creswell, 2009). Using the online Atlas statistical tool, quantitative data collected from the survey responses was tested descriptively using appropriate statistical measures for this study. At the conclusion of the quantitative strand, inferential statistical analysis was
not utilized as the sample size was too small from the survey of principals and survey of school certificated staff members of recent substantive turnaround schools to be statistically valid. Thus, this survey study will present results and a discussion based upon the descriptive nature of the data collected and analyzed for this cohort of 28 southern California turnaround schools in 2012.
The initial analysis was performed for two independent data sets, the survey results for the Survey for Principals at nine of these turnaround schools to gain an understanding of the principals’ individual and collective perspectives and the Survey for Certificated Staff at one of these schools to measure the certificated staff perspective of their principal’s practices, actions, and style during the turnaround at their school. Following the separate analysis of the independent strands of this study, data was merged into one integrated data set for further interpretation. This integrated perspective provided a broader view of the principals’ espoused versus theory in action in turning around a failing school. Data was reported using text, tables, and figures to explain the results. The results were situated within published research to interpret what the data meant for practitioners and the research community. An integrated perspective illustrated how well the analysis answered research questions and informed study conclusions.

**Validity Considerations**

Validity procedures require the researcher to check the validity of the quantitative data in any research design (Creswell, 2009). Validity procedures and checks need to be established specifically. For the quantitative strand, validity and reliability were not required as the surveys were exploratory in nature. Therefore, validity measures for content, criterion, or construct were not performed. To establish valid conclusions for this study, threats to internal and external validity were reduced through the initial research design (Creswell, 2009). Internal validity threats do not apply to this study as it was not an experimental design. External validity concerns were relevant in this study due to the inclusion of survey instruments. As the sample was selected purposely with
multiple, specific criteria for inclusion in this study, conclusions cannot be generalized beyond this sample.

**Limitations of the Study**

Limitations exist in any research study. Sample size, methodological restraints, length of the study, and response rate must all be considered as possible limitations. Study procedures and protocols were designed to lessen the impact of these limitations through the utilization of statistical significance (surveys). Additional limitations may include lack of researcher expertise, low participation rates, and potential researcher bias. Some other limitations have been grouped below for ease of discussion into categories (human nature, time and resources, mobility, and timing of study).

Specific limitations may arise during surveys in light of human nature. First, people may exhibit a gap between what is espoused and what is practiced. For instance, when a participant can identify effective leadership practices, yet is unable to identify these same effective leadership behaviors in practice. A second limitation is that it may be difficult for a subordinate teacher to describe a principal supervisor negatively on a survey. Third, it is also possible that a subordinate may attempt to sabotage a supervisor during a survey. Fourth, individual self-reporting on surveys can also be problematic. Principals may be challenged to report their leadership practices either positively or negatively. Fifth, teachers may not have the knowledge base to understand and identify leadership practices or organizational theory in their principal’s daily work. These limitations grouped under human nature must be carefully considered by the researcher for validity to be established at the conclusion of the research process.
Further, time and resources can be limitations in most studies. The time allotted to complete the study may be less than ideal. Resources may influence how much time is allocated for the study. The overall amount of time available to conduct research may not be adequate to study how a principal effectively turned around a school. An additional limitation is that the principal who led the school turnaround may leave the school prior to the study’s completion. Teacher turnover may present the same challenge when exploring retroactively how the principal led the school out of Program Improvement status under NCLB. The length and/or timing of the study may also be a limitation in that several months do not encompass even an entire school year to conduct the annual timeline and ensuing process to improve a school that ultimately may take years. These limitations may influence the researcher’s analysis and interpretation of the available data when in reality it is a small unit in time for a school.

In addition, mobility rates for principals, certificated staff, and students may potentially affect this study. Population changes over time a school may present challenges during school turnaround initiatives. Changes in principal assignment might alter either the direction or the momentum of that work. Certificated staff requires time to either adjust to a new principal or assimilate certificated staff new to the school. As student populations migrate over several years of enrollment, student needs may differ thus altering the instructional process from year to year. The impact of prior effective school turnaround initiatives for either the principal and/or certificated staff may influence the level of success for the current school turnaround. Experience and expertise may influence current outcomes.
Moreover, the retroactive timing of the study presents an additional limitation. Schools were selected that represented recent substantive school turnarounds. The researcher is examining schools, principals, and other certificated staff who have already experienced an effective school turnaround. Participants are looking back retrospectively while the researcher examines and validates leadership practices and organizational theory that were and may continue to be present at the larger purposeful sample of 28 southern California schools. This retrospective account may prove challenging as it relied upon participant recall of the turnaround which may or may not include an influencing emotional component.

**Ethical Considerations**

University policies and procedures guided the research design for this study. Prior to participation, all study participants were provided a clear and full disclosure of the purpose, procedures and scope of the study. Consent forms were provided that indicated voluntary participation in a study for which the nature of the study was fully understood by each participant. A pseudonym for all participants, schools, districts, and counties was used to assure confidentiality. With these safeguards in place, participants could rest assured that the risk for participation is minimal to all participants.

**Summary**

This chapter reviewed the purpose, research questions, proposed methodology, limitations, and ethical considerations for this study. The rational and justification for use of survey design was discussed as the appropriate approach to attempt to answer the essential research questions at the core of this study. The rationale for participant selection and the use of purposeful sampling was discussed. Instrumentation was
outlined as a means to explain and explore the impact of school principals on effective school turnarounds. Data collection procedures and the process for data analysis were outlined considering validity procedures to assure validity of the quantitative results, a critical function of any study. Possible limitations and ethical considerations were also discussed. The research design for this study was carefully planned to effectively explore and develop a deeper understanding of leadership for school turnarounds. In the next chapter, a detailed summary of results and salient findings will be presented.
CHAPTER 4—RESULTS

This chapter presents results for each of the research questions explored. The challenge for any leader is how to create, sustain, and lead an effective school for all learners in any educational context. This includes schools that have been unable to meet annual performance and accountability targets for two consecutive years. Schools that break this cycle of underperformance and underachievement have been labeled as turnaround schools (Duke, 2012). The primary function of this research was to explore the impact of school principals on effective school turnarounds. Results described in this chapter will contribute a clearer understanding of how to effectively turnaround schools through the identification of leadership practices and styles that positively influences achievement outcomes.

Survey design was utilized to explore leadership for effective school turnarounds. This design entailed parallel data collection for the southern California cohort of 28 substantive school turnarounds, an online survey designed for principals of these same schools, and an online survey designed for certificated staff at one of these schools. Independent analysis was conducted for each. Participation rates included nine principals (32%) from this cohort of turnaround schools and 15 certificated staff (60%) from one of these participant principal schools who each completed the online survey designed for principals and other certificated staff respectively. Following independent analysis, these data sets were then merged for interpretation and further analysis. The integrated results were then summarized and interpreted in an attempt to produce a deeper understanding of the topic.
This chapter begins with a presentation of the 28 substantive turnaround schools representing 18 districts in southern California, constituting the study’s population. Following that, the chapter is further organized around two distinct analytical phases: independent and integrated.

Specific research questions were addressed in each of these analytical phases. The initial independent analyses were conducted in order to attempt to address these research questions:

1. How does the principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?
   1.1 How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?
   1.2 Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?

Then, an integrated analysis was utilized to explore answers to address these research questions:

2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a school?
   2.2 Do different phases of the school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership styles?
   2.3 What contextual factors may influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles?

Presentation of Cohort of 28 Substantive School Turnarounds

The cohort of schools were chosen because of their school performance, that is, they each met the criteria used to be distinguished as a turnaround school. To really
explore school leadership, one must first consider the environmental context and performance trends in which the principals lead. Therefore, it is essential to examine this cohort of schools constitution prior to delving into their leaders’ specific actions and styles.

The criteria for inclusion in this study were rigorous. Twenty-eight southern California schools formerly identified as participants in No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) Act Program Improvement (PI) serving diverse student populations and significant numbers of low-income students were selected for inclusion in this study. These schools were purposefully selected to meet the following criteria:

1. The school successfully exited PI during 2012, 2011, or 2010 under criteria outlined within federal legislation, NCLB of 2001

2. The school had not met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) at the school-wide and/or subgroup levels for a minimum of three consecutive years prior to the turnaround

3. The school was in the first, second, or third year following the school turnaround (exited NCLB Program Improvement)

Thus, these 28 schools exemplified recent substantive turnarounds.

The measures of central tendency referenced in this chapter provide a reference point for how typical each school within the population exemplified the norm. The median was utilized whenever possible in order to reduce the influence of multiple outliers that existed within this population. Pseudonyms have been utilized for all county, district, school and participant names to protect confidentiality for those who participated in this study.
Scope of the Population

This population included 23 (82%) elementary and 5 (18%) middle schools representing 18 districts from an initial pool of 1,595 schools in 204 districts situated in the five most populated southern California counties. Figure 3 depicts the substantial challenge districts and schools face when attempting to effectively turnaround a failing school. It also illustrates that a relatively few number of schools have actually realized that turnaround goal. Over half the schools are in PI, while only 2% successfully exited during 2012.

![Figure 3](image)

*Figure 3. School performance for Southern California’s five most populated counties.*

District Population Description

Population schools hailed from 18 school districts. Table 2 describes the composition and performance status of these districts. Districts were located in one of the five most populated California counties, although Steel County (4th most populated) had no eligible schools meeting study criteria. Half of these districts were from the most populated county.
Table 2

Demographic and Accountability Data for Population Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>District Grade Span</th>
<th>District Program Improvement Status</th>
<th>CA Largest District</th>
<th>District Turnaround School Cluster</th>
<th>Percent of District Schools in Program Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>K-6</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eta</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Not in PI</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kappa</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickel</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iota</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambda</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nu</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pi</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rho</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omicron</td>
<td>K-5</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin</td>
<td>Gamma</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>Tau</td>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority (72%) of these districts were unified. Also, 17% were elementary only districts. The remaining districts (11%) served students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

On average, 57% of the schools per district were in PI. As of 2012, all but a single district (5.6%) were participants in PI, 77.7% were in Year 3 while 16.7% were in Year 2. No districts were in Year 1.

Of these substantive turnaround schools, 11 (40%) were from the 25 largest California school districts, representing five districts (28%). Only 4 (22%) districts successfully turned around more than one school in 2012. Two were from the 25 largest school districts.

Districts represented a range of sizes, percentage of failing schools, and number of turnaround schools. Table 3 illustrates this rich diversity of districts in southern
California included in this study. The largest district was over one hundred times larger than the smallest district. The rate at which these districts experienced school turnarounds was diverse.

Table 3

*School Accounting and Turnaround Rate by Population District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of District Schools</th>
<th>Number of District Turnaround Schools</th>
<th>Number of District Schools in Program Improvement</th>
<th>District Turnaround Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eta</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kappa</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mu</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iota</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambda</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nu</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pi</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rho</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omicron</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamma</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tau</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Turnaround Rate was computed by dividing the number of district turnaround schools by the sum of district turnaround schools exited and schools remaining in PI, then multiplying by 100. This rate serves as one comparative measure for assessing the overall turnaround progress for each district.

Figure 4 illustrates the rate for each cohort district that successfully turned around schools between 2010 and 2012. It is important to note that districts with schools that exited PI, but reentered PI during those same years were excluded from this study’s data set and were not represented. The five largest districts experienced the slowest turnaround rates in 2012.
School Population Description

Population schools reflected the diversity of southern California, serving high percentages of students of color, living in poverty, and/or learning academic English. Many (32%) of students attended a school with more than 600 students enrolled. A veritable educational challenge exists for not just the school’s leader, but for all educators, to produce results for these students based upon historical performance and accountability trends over time across the California public school system.

Eighty-six percent of these schools served 75% or more low income students. Seventy-five percent served substantial numbers of Hispanic students at enrollment levels at or greater than 75%. Twenty-one percent served 75% or more English Learners. Figure 5 shows the median level of enrollment for these significant student subgroups for the population schools. School subgroup enrollment levels approaching 60 to 89% of southern California students represent vast numbers of underserved students. Historically, similar schools typically fail.
Half of these students were educated in a school of 401 to 600 students, shown in Figure 6. Only one middle school included in this study was of that size range, 80% were larger. Limited numbers of elementary students (18%) attended a school of 601 or more students.

School accountability measures tell more of the data story for these cohort schools. The Academic Performance Index (API) is one such measure. The trend for these 28 schools indicates that the majority spent six or less years in PI. Yet, a school exited PI after 14 consecutive years. Figure 7 depicts this trend and is indicative of how difficult turning around a school can be and the importance of urgency. Another measure is the API band for each school, shown in Figure 8. The majority of these schools have breached the 800 or higher level. This indicates a level of school performance where increasing numbers
**Figure 6.** Size range of study schools.

- 400 Students or Less: 18%
- 401 to 600 Students: 50%
- 601 to 800 Students: 18%
- 801 or More Students: 14%

**Figure 7.** Total consecutive PI years for study schools.

- 3 to 6 Years: 60%
- 7 to 10 Years: 36%
- 11 to 14 Years: 4%
of students are meeting grade level standards, although not all students are realizing that standard of performance.

Rank-order data along several measures, shown in Figure 9, reveals academic progress trends for this cohort of schools during their participation in PI, some more alike than different. This comparative view provides an opportunity to consider the rate of improvement over time for each of these schools in relation to schools that also beat the odds.

In Figure 9, each concentric band represents five ranks; the center includes the first five ranks and extends outward to the lowest ranks (25-28) for each of the targeted API growth periods and the total number of years in PI for this cohort of substantive turnaround schools. Thus, moving outward from the center, declining growth rates and longer durations in PI are indicated. From the center, each two adjacent bands represent performance in thirds.
Although the consecutive years in PI varies considerably, the pattern of growth points over the entire period versus the final three years in PI was remarkably similar. No larger than a five rank differential between these two measures was found for 43% of the schools; demonstrating a steady rate of improvement. Of the remaining schools, 29% increased their rate of improvement in the final three years in PI while an almost equal number (25%) decreased their rate of improvement during those same years. Yet, when schools in PI six years or more were considered, the number of schools whose rate of improvement slowed or remained the same was much higher (84%) than that of schools whose rate grew faster (16%). The accountability targets were increasing each year that student achievement was measured.
Individual schools present unique data that appears atypical to the cohort trends described so far. Beryl Middle is one such school whose rank for overall as well as final three year API growth rate was consistently high. This school holds the highest rank for the growth rate for the final three years in PI; and only five schools outranked their overall growth rate. Beryl Middle was in PI for seven years, one of the eleven schools (40%) in PI the longest for this cohort group. Additionally, Coral and Peridot Elementary Schools demonstrated high ranks for total and final year’s growth in PI. On the other end of the overall API performance trend are Ruby Elementary and Sapphire Middle, scoring in the lowest ranks in the cohort for both three-year and total years participation in PI. Garnet Elementary demonstrated similarly low performance trends as well.

In contrast, Aquamarine Elementary demonstrated an inconsistent ranked performance across these measures; highest rank for the overall API growth and bottom half for the growth rate for the final three years in PI. Aquamarine Elementary was in PI for the most years in this cohort. Including Aquamarine Elementary, 43% of cohort schools performed inconsistently over the entire period versus the final three years in PI.

Tanzanite Elementary was a constant middle rank performer, along with five other schools (Opal Elementary, Emerald Elementary, Zircon Middle, Morganite Middle, and Chalcedony Elementary), in this cohort for overall API growth and final three years in PI which was for a duration of six years. It is remarkable that all but one of these middle level performers was in PI for six or seven years. Zircon Middle was in PI for just four years.
These relative trends demonstrate variability between and within schools over time as well as a snapshot at this point in time. Schools that were in PI equivalent years appear to have improved at different rates over time.

Table 4 presents data that illustrates subtle nuances in the transformation of schools included in this study. The results indicate that the highest 2012 API levels are concentrated in the short-term PI participant schools. Yet, the top third of overall growth rates is evenly distributed among the three groups. The bottom third of growth rates for 2010-2012 are concentrated in schools with seven or less years in PI. Whereas, the top third of growth rates for the final three years in PI is evenly distributed.

Specific schools merit attention as well. Beryl Middle appears to be achieving beyond all other cohort schools as it was the only school to be in the top third of ranks for all measures. Olivine and Jasper Elementary Schools are also top achievers. They are in the top third of ranks for both overall and final three year in PI growth rates; demonstrating improvement momentum. Both Coral and Crystal Elementary Schools deserve mention for they too are demonstrating momentums similar to Olivine and Jasper Elementary Schools; they carry the extra challenge although of being in the bottom third of performers for 2012 API. In the bottom third for all measures and at risk of failing again are: Garnet, Ruby, and Chalcedony Elementary Schools and Morganite Middle Schools. In schools participating in PI long-term, a concentration of rising performers who appear to be on the cusp of further improvement can be identified: Malachite, Peridot, Diamond, and Aquamarine Elementary Schools. Each has demonstrated a high rank for either their overall or final three year growth rate. Two additional schools
Table 4

Comparative Ranks for Selected Performance and Accountability Measures
with Schools Sorted in Short-, Mid-, and Long-Term PI Duration Bands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank PI Duration</th>
<th>Rank 2012 API</th>
<th>Rank API % Growth 2010-2012</th>
<th>Rank Overall Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Short-Term PI (3 or 4 Years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapphire Intermediate</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivine Elementary</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turquoise Elementary</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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achieved the same standard: Opal Elementary (mid-term PI) and Jade Elementary (short-term PI).

Given that all 28 schools exited PI in 2012 and achieved the almost impossible goal of turning around a failing school, these results suggest that something other than time may be influencing these performance and accountability outcomes. One must consider if the stages of school turnaround are at work here or if perhaps the school leadership context is an influence.

Figure 10 illustrates the differing rates for improvement, 1.50 to 6.79. The mode, 2.33, was represented for schools in PI for three, six, and nine years. Elementary schools improved faster (3.60) than middle schools (3.0). The rate that QEIA funded schools improved ranged from 3.00 to 6.44. All but a single QEIA school (86%) improved faster than both the mean and median rates for schools. The super-achiever rates of 6.79 and 6.44 were for two schools in PI for the longest durations, 14 and 9 years. While other schools participating in PI for 9 years displayed API Growth rates of 2.33, 2.78, 3.22, and 3.67. The six lowest API Growth Rates were found in 83% of schools in PI for six or less years, higher than the 60% of population schools in this range. These schools achieved at very different rates regardless of duration in PI.

At first glance these schools appear to be more different than similar, as shown in Table 5. Therefore, a closer look is warranted. It is noteworthy that the schools improved at different rates throughout their participation in PI, regardless of how long they were participants. The percent growth ranged from six to ninety-five percent for these schools. The API Growth Rate was computed by dividing the total percentage
increase of API points from entering to exiting PI by the total consecutive years in PI, then multiplying by 100. It serves as a measure of the improvement rate for each school.

Both fiscal and disciplinary data for the population schools varies as well. All schools received Title 1 funds. Twenty-five percent of the schools received Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) funds. Of the 36% of population schools in PI eight or more years, 50% were funded by QEIA funds whereas 11% of schools with seven or less years in PI qualified for these same funds. Forty-six percent of the cohort enrolled classes on average with 25 or less students. Forty percent of these schools expended over $6,000 per student. The suspension rate for 75% of the population schools was lower than their district’s suspension rate, illustrated in Figure 11. Also, 80% of these schools had less than 10 suspensions per 100 students, a remarkably low rate. Almost one third of these schools had suspension rates near zero. The four highest school suspension rates were attributed to four of the five middle schools.
Table 5

Selected Composition, Funding, and Accountability Data for Population Schools

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Student achievement performance levels displayed a range within and across population schools as evidenced in Table 6. Students generally performed higher on state measures of mathematics than on English language arts. An exception was noted, where at three of the five middle schools, students actually performed higher on measures of ELA than on mathematics. Furthermore, students at two schools performed school-wide at 70% or higher in ELA, Sapphire Intermediate (71%) and Zircon Middle (81%). Nine schools (32%) performed school-wide at 70% or higher in mathematics. Yet, no school crested the 80% proficiency level school-wide. Seven percent of population schools performed below the fortieth percentile in ELA. Almost 30% of population schools performed in the 50th percentile in mathematics.

In addition, the achievement gap was greatest for English Learners in ELA at 93% of the schools, except at Tanzanite and Turquoise Elementary Schools where English Learners outperformed the school-wide performance on ELA. The achievement gap remained the largest for English Learners in mathematics as well with 89% of schools
Table 6

*California Standards Test Achievement Data for Population Schools*

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<tr>
<th>Turnaround School</th>
<th>School ELA</th>
<th>SD ELA</th>
<th>H ELA</th>
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**Mean**

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**Mode**

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posting school-wide performance trends that were lower for this subgroup, except at three schools (Tanzanite, Turquoise, and Coral Elementary Schools), where English Learners outperformed school-wide math achievement levels. Nine schools (32%) had one or more significant subgroups outperform their school-wide group in ELA while ten schools (36%) did the same in mathematics. Six schools (21%) narrowed the achievement gap in both areas.

Additionally, fourteen percent of schools, including one middle school, exhibited higher performance levels in both ELA and mathematics for students living in poverty than their school-wide cohorts. Only two schools (7%) demonstrated higher achievement levels for Hispanic students than their school’s overall performance.

Beyond that, three schools merit further discussion for their gap closing achievements. First, Morganite Middle, although below the population mean scores for ELA and mathematics, had students living in poverty both areas as well as Hispanic students in mathematics outperform school-wide levels. Next, Turquoise Elementary had two gap closing achievements for English Learners and students living in poverty in both subjects. Last, Coral Elementary closed the achievement gaps for all but English Learners in ELA. These schools are a testament that achievement gaps can be eliminated.

Achievement gaps of 10% or more between school-wide and significant subgroups were found at four schools (14%). Forty percent of population middle schools demonstrated gaps at this level in both ELA and mathematics.

The median achievement levels for population schools displayed in Figure 12 reveals a substantial gap in learning outcomes for students, with lower levels of
performance in ELA than in mathematics. Moreover, the greatest gap exists for English Learners. Almost 13% less students are realizing proficiency in English language arts than in math. Fewer than 70% demonstrated proficiency in ELA. Further, over 30% of students are not yet proficient on grade level standards in mathematics. These depressed levels of performance demonstrate that almost half of students attending these turnaround schools still strive for proficiency in ELA. The urgency for school leaders to turnaround schools with high numbers of students of color living in poverty learning academic English remains.

The achievement levels for each school in ELA and mathematics varies. Figures 13 and 14 illustrate the unequal performance in ELA and mathematics respectively for schools and their various subgroups within and across schools. Some schools have more successfully closed gaps for all students in ELA and/or mathematics while other schools have not achieved these gap closing results in one or both academic areas. Overall, these figures clearly demonstrate the varied levels as well as the low levels of achievement for these schools.

Lapis and Turquoise Elementary Schools are the only schools that crested the 60% proficiency level for both school-wide and subgroups in English language arts.
Figure 13. Percent proficient on 2012 CST English language arts for population schools.

Figure 14. Percent proficient on 2012 math CST for population schools.
Beryl Middle and Pearl Elementary may once the gap for English Learners is closed further.

Sapphire Intermediate, Tanzanite Elementary, Moonstone Elementary, and Zircon Middle appear to have the largest achievement gaps. For Sapphire and Zircon, both middle schools, and Moonstone Elementary the largest gap was between school-wide and English Learner achievement outcomes, while for Tanzanite Elementary, the largest gap was between low income students and their classmates. Chrystal and Chalcedony Elementary Schools demonstrated the overall lowest performance in English language arts.

Sapphire Intermediate and Zircon Middle demonstrated the largest achievement gaps in mathematics between school-wide and English Learners as in ELA. Tanzanite demonstrated a similar trend in mathematics as before in ELA, with an achievement gap between low income students and their classmates once again. The overall range of performance for the population schools in mathematics was narrower than for ELA.

The population overview illustrated the univariate demographic nature of these 28 recent substantive turnaround schools. This description provided a picture of the nature of these schools at one point in time and characterizes this collective of exemplary schools for children of color living in poverty and/or learning academic English. Next, a discussion of the results for the principal’s survey ensues to attempt to share the perspectives of those who led these turnarounds.

**Independent Analysis of the Principal Survey**

An exploratory survey accounted the perceived implementation of identified principal practices and actions as well as to explain to what extent the turnaround
principal positively influenced student achievement outcomes at targeted substantive school turnarounds at the elementary and middle school levels in southern California. Survey research is useful in the study of numeric trends, attitudes, or opinions (Creswell, 2009). The first research questions will be addressed for which results will be provided are:

1. How does the principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?

1.1 How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?

The exploratory survey for principals was developed by this researcher. The research design for this study was developed in order to effectively explore and develop a deeper understanding of leadership for school turnarounds.

**Descriptive Analysis for the Demographic Composition of Survey Respondents**

A brief descriptive analysis of the survey respondent principals of the 28 substantive school turnarounds follows. Nine (32%) of the 28 cohort principals completed the voluntary online survey. Two other principals currently serving at cohort schools contacted this researcher to indicate that they would not participate as they were not assigned to the school until this school year and thus lacked the site level experience to respond to the survey questions.

The demographic composition for the surveyed principals may be informative. Two thirds were principals of elementary schools, incidentally representing 26% of the population for this study. The remaining one third were middle level principals. These three participant middle school principals represented 60% of the five middle schools included in this study. The mean enrollment for respondent schools was 672 students
while the median enrollment was 652 students. In this study, 50% of schools had enrollments between 401 and 600 students. The higher mean and median indicated here was likely due to the fact that the principal of the largest school, 1,021 students, also participated in the survey strand of the study, remaining an outlier for both the population and the survey, possibly contributing to skewed data reporting.

The total years of school participation in NCLB Program Improvement (PI) was another demographic feature explored. Sixty-seven percent of schools had been in PI three to five consecutive years. Thirty-three percent were participants for six to ten consecutive years. None of the respondent principals represented schools that had participated in PI eleven or more years, of which the population included just a single school. Only one (11%) of these nine principals was at the school for the total years in PI, which for that school was a relatively short period of time, three to five years. None of these principals had led an earlier school turnaround. Moreover, when asked whether their district was instrumental in the school’s turnaround, 56% responded affirmatively whereas 44% responded negatively.

All respondents held a Master’s degree as their highest level of educational attainment. The majority of respondents were female (88%), consistent with the fact that 75% of principals of the study’s school turnarounds were led by female principals. The race/ethnicity self-designation for respondents was Black or African American, 11%, Hispanic, 33%, and White or Caucasian, 56%. Respondents were either 35-44 years old (67%) or 45-54 years old (33%).

Figure 15 illustrates the tenure of these principals at the school they successfully led a turnaround and their prior service principal at other schools. It is interesting to note
that of these respondents, all had five or less years at the turnaround school, with the mode and median both being three years each. Further, these principals had a range of zero to ten years tenure. The most common tenure was zero years which was closely followed by tenures of both nine and ten years with 78% of respondents falling into these three tenure levels.

This descriptive statistical analysis illustrates the demographic composition for the survey respondents who were also population members for this study. The typical respondent for the survey was a 35-44 year old, female principal of White or Caucasian decent who holds a master’s degree. In addition, this principal successfully led a turnaround in 2012 of an urban elementary school formerly a participant in Program Improvement for three to five years with an enrollment of approximately 650 students.
This principal served the turnaround school for three years, on average. Further, this typical principal either was in their first principal appointment or had spent considerable time, nine or ten years, as a principal at another elementary school prior to this recent substantive turnaround.

**Univariate Analysis for the Principals’ Perception of Practices and Actions**

The descriptive nature for survey responses on the principals’ perceptions of their practices and actions to effectively turnaround their school is discussed next. This discussion includes trend analysis for the principals’ experiences in driving for results; problem solving; influencing for results; showing confidence as particular competencies utilized to raise the level of student achievement. The thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the principals’ leadership competencies and actions taken to influence these achievement outcomes were considered as well. This exploratory survey was designed by this student researcher with intentional duplication of targeted principal practices and actions. Each was included in two or more survey items to possibly reduce validity concerns.

**Driving for results.** Eight items were utilized to measure each principal’s opinion about their and other’s experiences as they drove for results at their school. The initial stages of a turnaround are likely pivotal, according to research (Public Impact, 2007). Thus, three items were included to explore the earliest principal practices and actions for successfully turning around a school. Principals were asked when the first sign of early success became evident to them. The responses were varied. Forty-four percent indicated that between the seventh and twelfth month early success was evident. Twenty-two percent responded that it was not until the third year. Whereas, the remaining 33% divide equally between three responses: during the first six months; during the second
year; or unsure as to when. Nonetheless, 55% declared that the first signs of success were during the first year. Further, 67% of these principals strongly agreed with the use of early successes to gain the momentum needed for continuous school improvement. Another 22% agreed with this strategy while 11% disagreed with using early successes to build the momentum for continuous school improvement. Principals (87%) indicated that the following statement was true, “When the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was deemed as mandatory, not optional” (Public Impact, 2007).

Specific practices and actions for development of school-wide action plans and their implementation were also explored in this survey for principals of recent substantive school turnarounds. The results are shared. All principals surveyed agreed that they set the standard for work at the school and held staff accountable for adhering to that standard, 78% strongly so. More variation was evident when asked their level of agreement to this statement, “Once a goal is met, I am likely to raise the bar even higher”, two thirds strongly agreed and one third agreed. All respondents agreed that school resources were focused on where they had the most impact on critical results, but of this group 67% strongly agreed.

The frequency that site level teams met for various instructional purposes was investigated as well. Figure 16 illustrates the frequency trends for specified collaborative work at these schools. Monitoring of student progress (44%) occurred as the sole daily work. In addition, 89% of respondents reported that their teams met weekly to plan instruction for students, the highest proportion for any of these tasks. A third of the
respondents shared that common assessments were developed monthly, indicating one of the least common collaborative tasks with dedicated time for site level teams to work.

These school trends placed the highest priorities on monitoring student progress and planning instruction for students. The lowest priority based upon responses appears to be for developing common assessments to measure student progress (56%). If time spent on quarterly tasks is excluded, the percentage for each of the five identified tasks has a range of 75% to 100%. Then, the rank order from highest to lowest frequency by task is:

1. (Plan instruction for students

2. A tie between develop common assessments to measure student progress and monitor student progress
3. Analyze data to identify areas of instructional need; (4) report student progress

This prioritization may have impacted the quality of instruction in ways that improved learning experiences and outcomes for students attending these schools.

Another item that merits attention is the perception the principal had for actions they encouraged at their school. Overall, a high level of agreement existed for the self-proclaimed level of encouragement offered by principals to their staffs for targeted behaviors, illustrated in Figure 17. All respondents indicated that they encouraged doing more of what works as well as measuring results. More variation existed for the principals’ encouragement in the use of new strategies, with 89% either agreeing or strongly agreeing. The only items that yielded negative responses were for the use of new strategies and discarding failed tactics, the former had 11% disagree and the latter had 11% strongly disagree. These responses indicated a high perception of encouraging practices that supported improving student achievement outcomes.

**Problem solving.** Five items were included on the survey to explore perceived problem solving approaches principals utilized at their school to raise the level of student achievement. A majority of principals surveyed (67%) indicated that they not only developed an action plan for their school based on data that identified high priority problems, but that they used that action plan to assure that everyone knew specifically what they needed to do differently. In addition, the survey revealed that 89% of teachers collected and analyzed data whereas 78% of principals and other certificated staff did the same. Data appears to have informed planning for instruction at high levels at these schools.
As for sharing results with various stakeholders, 89% of principals stated that they publicly held their staffs accountable for those results and in addition provided public recognition to those who were achieving results. The other 11% of principals disagreed with utilizing these strategies in their schools. Principal responses about creating discomfort for those who did not make needed changes through the public sharing of results varied widely, 44.4% strongly agreed, 22.2% agreed, 22.2% disagreed, and 11.1% strongly disagreed. One third of respondents did not support the use of this strategy. Figure 18 illustrates their diverse responses, including both the response level and range.

All principals responded that they did not let a barrier stand in their way of getting something done, a clear majority (78%) strongly agreed. Principals perceived that they...
used problem solving strategies to identify, address, and report data-driven instructional needs at their schools.

**Influencing for results.** The survey included three items to investigate how and to what extent principals perceived their influence impacted results at their schools. One hundred percent of principals indicated strong agreement that early, visible wins made it harder for others to oppose change. Further, all principals believed that they gained the support of trusted staff that in turn influenced those who might oppose change, 62.5% strongly agreed and 37.5% agreed.

When surveyed how in their role as principal they had helped staff, Figure 19 shows that majority responses were positive for all seven areas with low levels of
Figure 19. Principal’s perceptions for selected positive influences.

disagreement. The range of responses demonstrating either agreement or strong agreement was 89% to 100%.

One hundred percent of principals indicated agreement or strong agreement that they had helped staff to better understand the needs of students the school serves; to become more successful in carrying out their job or career; and to see a clear picture of success and its benefits. Four of the remaining seven indicators had one principal (11%) who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with providing that type of help. These responses were related to the principal providing staff help to feel motivated to contribute their discretionary effort; to see the problems that the status quo was causing; to agree that change was needed; and to spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses and
more time working towards results. As principals influenced for results at their schools, a strong perception of using these seven strategies and supports prevailed.

**Showing confidence to lead.** Four items measured the respondents’ opinion of their showing confidence as they led an effective school turnaround. These items were selected from survey sections on driving for results (2); problem solving (1); and influencing for results (1) for this purpose. Although these survey items were used to measure independent areas of attention, they were embedded throughout the survey to measure the principal’s perceived level of showing confidence as well. They were:

A. I set the standard for work at the school and hold staff accountable for adhering to that standard.

B. Once a goal is met, I am likely to raise the bar even higher.

C. I do not let a barrier stand in the way to getting something done.

D. I gained the support of trusted staff that in turn influenced those who might oppose change.

In each of these selected survey items, the principal responded with strong agreement at a minimum level of 62.5% and as high as 78% (Figure 20). This cumulative response pattern points to a level of overall confidence for respondent principals.

**Leadership competencies and critical turnaround actions.** Ten leadership competencies and critical turnaround actions were explored in this survey for principals of recent substantive school turnarounds. Three survey items specifically targeted principal thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward principal perceived leadership competencies and critical turnaround actions during their school’s improvement initiatives.
Figure 20. Principal’s level for sharing confidence to lead.

Principals were asked to mark the actions they took to improve student achievement outcomes. This list of critical turnaround actions targeted ten leadership competencies. One hundred percent of principals indicated that they did two things: helped someone else become more successful in carrying out their job or their career and that they had accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles. The lowest response rates (78%), a three-way tie, was for these leadership competencies:

1. Influenced other people in a way that was satisfying to the principal
2. Set a standard for someone else’s work and held that person accountable
3. Led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to the principal.
Eighty-nine percent of principals indicated that they had implemented the remaining five competencies. Since the survey supported respondents checking anywhere from zero to all ten competencies, it is noteworthy that each competency received a minimum affirmation level of 78% as being a practice utilized by the principals as part of their school’s turnaround.

Principals were asked to rank their perceived level of competence and/or actions utilized for effectively turning around their school (Figure 21). Whereas 67% of principals rated Driving for Results in the top half of ranks, an equal number indicated that Showing Confidence was in the bottom half of ranks. Rank 1 was a three-way tie between Driving for Results, Influencing for Results and Showing Confidence (3 responses each). Of particular interest is the dynamic importance placed on Problem Solving. Fifty-six percent of principals (5) rated Problem Solving second, yet no principal rated it first. Responses for rank four were almost evenly distributed, but Showing Confidence had a slightly higher rating (33%). Also remarkable, the dispersion of responses was equal; nine responses for each rank were evident. One might have expected a more dominant response pattern among the ranks.

Even between the rankings for each of these individual clusters, dispersion existed. Respondents not only had differing opinions about the importance of these principal behaviors, but for the order in which to perform them (Figure 22). The lower the rating the higher the rank. Driving for Results was ranked as most important; Influencing for Results was ranked second; and Problem Solving and Showing Confidence tied for the third rank.
Figure 21. Individual principal’s rank outcomes for cluster competencies.

Figure 22. Principal’s rating averages for cluster behaviors.
When asked to identify and describe the single most important action they took to rapidly improve student achievement results, respondents listed goal setting with students; staff collaboration including identification of high risk students and data-driven instructional planning with intervention cycles; and professional development on highly effective instructional strategies. These principals relied on the power of collaboration with and for students to improve instruction in these schools with focused professional development to support that work.

**Univariate statistical summary for the principal’s survey.** In summary, this statistical analysis provided both a description of the demographic composition of the respondents and revealed trend data on the principals’ perceived practices and actions, more specifically their use of identified leadership competencies and critical actions that might support an effective school turnaround. Descriptive statistical analysis also began to address these research questions:

1. How does the principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?

1.1.1. How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?

An overall descriptive picture of the practices and actions, at least for these nine principals of recent substantive school turnarounds, began to emerge. Practices and actions were titrated in this discussion into leadership competencies and critical actions, the focus of this study.

A discussion of the Driving for Results ensued. Respondents declared a viable belief that their successes were built on early wins that were utilized to build momentum in a climate where change was not optional. Standards were set high and all were held
accountable in these schools. Resources were focused on positively impacting student achievement outcomes. Frequent, regular data collection and analysis at the classroom level was normative too. Specific behaviors were encouraged along the way, in particular doing more of what worked.

When exploring Problem Solving, principals shared the importance for developing an action plan using data to identify high priority needs that everyone understood what needed to be done differently to achieve desired results. Further, these principals indicated that they had not allowed any barrier to stand in their way as they turned the school around. Like Driving for Results, data informed instructional decision-making. Public reporting of results to stakeholder groups drove reform initiatives as well. It held staffs publicly accountable and made it harder for those who opposed change in these schools. A portion of respondents disagreed with creating discomfort using this strategy although.

Influencing for Results was also reported. Respondents shared that they relied on gaining the support of trusted staff that in turn influenced others to make needed change. Principals credited that helping their staff to better understand both the needs of students the school served and to see a clear picture of success and its benefits influenced positive impacts. Getting staff to spend more time working towards results in addition to agreeing that the status quo was unacceptable and that change was needed were not simple tasks, demonstrated by the respondents’ lack of agreement on items of this nature.

Showing Confidence was also explored. Principals perceived themselves as one to set a standard and hold everyone accountable to that standard. In addition, they perceived that they did not allow a barrier to stand in their way of getting the work done.
Following this formative univariate descriptive analysis, independent univariate analysis of the certificated staff survey was conducted to investigate the principal’s use of effective school turnaround leadership practices and actions as well as leadership competencies and critical turnaround actions to positively influence improved student outcomes at one substantive turnaround cohort school.

### Independent Analysis of Certificated Staff Survey

A different exploratory survey was utilized to measure the level of perceived implementation of principal practices and actions as well as to explain to what extent the turnaround principal positively influenced student achievement outcomes at targeted substantive school turnarounds at these elementary and middle school levels in southern California. The design of this survey was almost identical to that of the principals’ survey, with the exception that the pronoun *I* was replaced with term *the principal* on all items. This was intentional so as to measure the perceptions of certificated staff who worked alongside the principal to successfully exit PI and who were likely cognizant of the both the leadership competencies and/or critical actions the principal took during this period. The following research question will be addressed for which results will be provided here is:

1.2. Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?

The exploratory survey for certificated staff was developed by this researcher. The inclusion of an online survey for certificated staff at one of the identified recent substantive turnaround schools in this study was utilized in an attempt to validate the actual leadership actions and styles for school turnarounds in one such school.
Descriptive Analysis for School Profile

Certificated members at one of the cohort of 28 recent substantive turnaround schools were surveyed to explore beyond nine principals’ perceptions of their practices and actions in turning a failing school into an effective one. The principal of this same school had completed the principal’s survey prior to the staff’s invitation to participate in this study. Fifteen members (52%) of the school’s certificated staff voluntarily completed the survey.

Before delving into the demographic composition of survey respondents, an overview of this school is necessary. This school was representative of the 28 cohort of substantive turnaround schools on many levels. It was an elementary school, which constitutes 82% of the study population. Forty-three percent of these elementary schools were K-6 configured, like this school whose staff completed the certificated staff survey.

It hailed from Nickel County; where just over half of this study’s school turnarounds exist. This elementary school does not originate from a district with multiple turnarounds. Nor does it derive from one of California’s largest school districts. The mean percent of district schools in PI was 57%. Seventy-two percent of districts had larger numbers of schools in PI. Whereas Sigma District had 46% of its schools in PI and one turnaround school with a district turnaround rate of 9.09, the median school turnaround rate for all districts. This school was in PI for six years, the mode for the cohort schools, and demonstrated an API Growth Rate of 2.33, another modal performance indicator. The enrollment, 648 students, was larger than most cohort schools. Program participation for significant subgroups for the cohort schools and this elementary school is illustrated in Figure 23.
This elementary serves more Hispanic students and many more English Learners than the cohort on average does. The enrollment of students living in poverty is slightly below the cohort mean. Like 32% of all cohort schools, this elementary has yet to crest API 800, but has climbed to 743 in 2012. The overall level of achievement on state tests was low among population schools, as shown in Figure 24. It was one of two population schools demonstrating the lowest number of students proficient in ELA and in the bottom 25% in mathematics.

In summary, this elementary is typical of elementary schools on many levels for this population of cohort schools. Where it is not typical was in its achievement outcomes. This school has succeeded where most schools fail to successfully exit PI, although much below the level of most of the 28 schools in this cohort. It should be
noted that this school entered PI six years earlier when their API was 654. The school demonstrated a 14% increase in API points for their duration in PI. This was notable improvement in achievement outcomes for their students. One half of population schools demonstrated similar performance gains, percent API increases of up to 20%, over their time in PI. Again, even with the lower achievement level, this elementary school was fairly typical. Next, a descriptive analysis of the respondents follows.

**Descriptive Analysis of the Demographic Composition of Survey Respondents**

A profile of the demographic nature of these survey respondents may provide further insight into the nature of school turnarounds and their leaders. All respondents indicated that their current position at this school was teacher. The item allowed for each respondent to clarify their exact position in an open-ended field, which no respondents
utilized. Thus, although the school has other certificated staff as members, only teachers participated in the survey.

Respondents had been teaching at this school for an extended period of time. The range was from one to 23 years with a mean of 13 years. The mode was 13 years and a median of 12.5 years. Four respondent teachers (27%) were not at the school the entire period of PI. Thus, the majority (73%) of teachers were at the school throughout PI. In fact, most of the staff were teaching at the school before, during, and after PI. Moreover, sixty percent of these teachers held teaching assignments at other schools prior to being assigned to this school. This ranged from zero to sixteen years: the mode was zero years, the mean was five years, and the median was two years. Further, when the total number of teaching years was considered, the tenure only grew. The range was three to 26 years. Multiple modes existed: 15, 16, and 22 years. The mean and median were almost the same, 16 years and 15 years respectively. Figure 25 illustrates the nature of teacher tenure for this group in years.

Only 13% of respondents stated that they were currently members of their school leadership team. Sixty-three percent of these teachers said that their district had played an instrumental role in supporting their school’s exit from PI.

Eighty percent of survey respondents were female. The race/ethnicity self-designation for respondents was Hispanic, 73%, and White or Caucasian, 27%. Respondents represented various age ranges. The largest percentage (40%) was for 35-44 years old. Other percentages by age ranges included, in descending order: 45-54 years old, 33.3%, 55-64 years old, 20%, and 25-34 years old, 6.7%. Ninety-three percent of respondents had attained a Masters’ Degree as their highest educational degree.
Therefore, a typical teacher respondent from this elementary would be a 35-44 year old female of Hispanic descent. This teacher would hold a Masters’ Degree. Likely, they would have been on staff for eleven years and spent approximately five years teaching at another school prior to this current assignment, validating the average total tenure of 16 years. This teacher would have been a teacher at this school before, during, and after the turnaround.

This descriptive statistical analysis illustrates the demographic composition for this elementary school’s teachers who participated in the survey designed by this researcher for certificated staff. These respondents were also population members of the broader study of teachers assigned to one of the cohort of 28 substantive turnaround schools.
Univariate Analysis for the Certificated Staff's Perception of Implemented Principal Practices and Actions

Certificated staff perceptions of their principal’s practices and actions to effectively turnaround their school is discussed to provide a comprehensive description. This discussion includes trend analysis for the respondents’ experiences as the principal drove for results; problem solved; influence for results; showing confidence as approaches utilized to raise the achievement outcomes for students. The thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the principal’s leadership competencies and critical actions taken to influence those outcomes were considered as well. This exploratory survey as well as the survey for principals was designed by this student researcher with intentional duplication of targeted principal practices and actions. Each was included in two or more survey items to possibly reduce validity concerns.

Driving for results. Seven items were utilized in this section to measure each teacher’s opinion about their and other’s experiences as the principal drove for results at the surveyed school. Since research supports the importance of the initial steps to turnaround a school (Public Impact, 2007), one item in this section explored the principal’s work in this domain. Teachers were asked when the first signs of success become evident to them. Thirty-nine percent said it was during the first six months. Another 23% indicated it was either during the seven through twelfth months or that they were unsure as to when. The remaining 15% stated it was during the second year. In addition, 62% of teachers believed that the success become evident during some point during the first year, with 77% stating success came no later than the second year.
The majority of respondents (60%) believed that school resources were focused on where they would have the most impact on critical results. An additional 20% strongly agreed. Although 80% indicated that school resources were serving students well, 20% did not agree.

All respondents shared that when the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was mandatory, not optional. Additionally, 87% of teachers indicated that the principal had set the standard for work and held staff accountable for adhering to that standard; only 13% dissented to the majority opinion. Responses were quite similar in regard to the times that when a goal was met, the principal had raised the bar even higher. Again, 87% either agreed or strongly agreed, while 13% did not concur. For these two items, the percent of those who agreed was substantially higher than those who strongly agreed.

The frequency of dedicated time to complete crucial instructional tasks was investigated (Public Impact, 2007). Figure 26 informs not just the frequency, but the time allotted to promote the cycle of continuous improvement on these dedicated tasks. It is notable that the majority of these tasks are provide time on a weekly basis, only one exception is evident and it is for a tie. The tie is between weekly and monthly reporting of student progress (33%). The highest response rate was for time spent each week monitoring student progress at this school. The highest daily frequency was for planning instruction. The majority of time (86%) at this school is dedicated to meet to plan instruction and monitor student progress. If daily and weekly dedicated times for instructional tasks are excluded at the threshold of sixty percent or higher, then it
becomes apparent how infrequently this staff meets to develop common assessments to measure student progress and report student progress.

Beyond the time set aside for dedicated instructional tasks, another item explored what the principal encouraged at this school. This was also revealing. Overall, teachers responded favorably to the principal’s level of encouragement for specific strategies to improve the school rapidly. Two separate instances of two respondents displaying disagreement were evident; one was the belief that the principal had not encouraged the use of new strategies while the other was that the principal had not encouraged doing more of what worked. None strongly disagreed.

The principal was perceived to have encouraged at high levels, 60% or above strongly agreeing, in both measuring results and the use of new strategies. Although
respondents did not indicate strong agreement, they did agree that discarding failed tactics and doing more of what works were encouraged by this principal. This pattern of responses illustrates that the principal encouraged strategies known to support improving student achievement (Figure 27).

**Figure 27.** Level of principal encouragement for identified strategies.

**Problem solving.** Five items addressed the ways in which the principal utilized various problem solving approaches to raise the level of student achievement. General agreement (80%) existed amongst respondents for the development of an action plan for the school based on data that identified high priority problems. Seventy-three percent agreed that using the action plan, everyone knew specifically what they had needed to do differently.
Nearly 27% disagreed, suggesting that not everyone knew what they needed to do differently to support students achieving at higher levels.

With this school’s focus on measuring results and monitoring student progress, it might be unexpected to see who collects and analyzes data as illustrated in Figure 28. A substantial number of teachers were perceived to collect and analyze data. Administrators were not perceived, especially the principal, to collect and analyze data at this school. Even fewer members classified as other certificated staff were believed to complete this work.

![Figure 28. Percent of staff members by position who collect and analyze data.](image)

When surveyed whether the principal let a barrier stand in their way of getting something done, the staff responses were diverse: 67% agreed, 20% strongly so, while 7% each either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This response pattern appears to indicate
a variable opinion regarding the principal’s response to obstacles encountered during school improvement work.

Figure 29 displays the varying level of agreement for the principal’s public sharing of results. Teacher perceptions for the nature of public sharing of progress to stakeholder groups indicate a level of agreement that staff was held accountable (80%) and to a lesser degree that recognition was provided to those who are achieving success (66%) at this school. The majority of respondents (60%) expressed disagreement (47%) or strong disagreement (13%) that discomfort was created for those who did not make needed changes. The percentage of disagreement ranged from 20% to 60% on this one item, a level not observed on other items.

Figure 29. Principal’s public progress reporting to stakeholders.
**Influencing for results.** The survey included four items to explore how and to what extent the principal influenced for results at their school. Sixty-nine percent of respondents agreed that the principal had influenced people in a way that they found satisfying. Almost a third of the staff did not.

In addition, 53% of teachers agreed that early, visible wins made it harder for others to oppose change. Almost as many (47%) disagreed with that sentiment. When asked their level of agreement about the principal gaining the support of trusted staff who in turn influenced those who might oppose change, response patterns were dispersed: less than ten percent either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed; a third disagreed; and the majority (53%) agreed.

Another item asked respondents to mark to what extent the principal helped staff in specified ways. Figure 30 depicts the nature of these responses, both positive and negative.

Ninety-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the principal had helped them to see a clear picture of success and its benefits as well as to spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses and more time on working towards results. Moreover, 87% of respondents stated that they had become more successful in carrying out their job or career. Another high level of agreement (86%) agreed that change was needed. It is notable that the numbers who agreed for five of the outcomes were over half of the respondents and that an additional quarter of respondents strongly agreed on all seven. Also, the highest rating for each was for agreement with a range of 40–60%.

Although responses of disagree or strongly disagree were minimal for over half of the seven targeted outcomes, three were above 15%, representative of three or more of
Figure 30. Principal’s support for targeted outcomes.

the 15 respondents. These were: better understand the needs of the students the school serves (20%); feel motivated to contribute their discretionary effort (20%); and see the problems the status quo is causing (27%). Response rates at or above 20% in these areas may indicate a portion of the staff that are not in agreement with the principal’s practices and actions. Of particular interest are single respondents who contrasted with the majority response. One by strongly disagreeing that the principal had helped staff to spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses and more time on working towards results as well as another that disagreed with the help the principal provided in helping others to see a clear picture of success and its benefits.

Showing confidence to lead. Four items measured the certificated staff members’ perceptions about their principal’s showing confidence during the school turnaround.
These items were selected from survey items on driving for results (2); problem solving (1); and influencing for results (1) for this purpose. Although these survey items were used to gauge independent areas of interest, they were embedded throughout the survey to measure the principal’s perceived level of showing confidence as well. They were:

A. The principal sets the standard for work at the school and hold staff accountable for adhering to that standard.

B. Once a goal is met, the principal raises the bar even higher.

C. The principal does not let a barrier stand in the way to getting something done.

D. The principal gained the support of trusted staff who in turn influenced those who might oppose change.

In each of these four selected items to measure the principal’s level of showing confidence, the respondents indicated a level of agreement for one item at 60% and at 87% for the remaining three items as portrayed in Figure 31. This cumulative response pattern suggests the certificated staff perceived that their principal showed confidence as the school turnaround occurred.

**Leadership competencies and critical turnaround actions.** Leadership competencies and critical turnaround actions were explored in this survey for certificated staff of recent substantive school turnarounds. Three survey items specifically targeted the respondents’ thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward their principal’s demonstration of these competencies and actions during their school’s improvement initiatives.

The certificated staff at the surveyed elementary was asked to mark the actions that their principal took to improve student achievement outcomes. This list included ten
leadership competencies identified as critical turnaround actions (Public Impact, 2008).

The most frequently marked leadership competency by 79% of certificated staff was that
the principal had led a group or team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying to
the respondent. A three way tie took place when 64% of respondents indicated that their
principal had done three things:

1. Solved a problem or figured something out that involved a lot of information,
data, or steps
2. Planned ahead to accomplish something satisfying at work
3. Accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles

In contrast, the lowest response rate (36%) was a tie that the principal had set a
standard for someone else’s work and held that person accountable as well as when the
principal was confronted with a lot of information and had to figure out something
important. All other leadership competencies rendered a response rate between 43% and
50%. Respondents were able to mark as many of the ten competencies as they chose.
Therefore, it is remarkable that the response rates were not all that high for supporting the actions that their principal took that led to improved student achievement outcomes.

Certificated staff members were also asked to rank their perceived level of competence and/or actions utilized by their principal to effectively turnaround their school. The rating average was the sum of the rank points divided by the total number of responses. The ranks in descending order were: Driving for Results (1.47), Problem Solving (2.20), Influencing for Results (2.67), andShowing Confidence (3.60). The numbers listed in parenthesis are the rating averages. Both results are displayed in Figure 32.

Beyond the overall rank and rating averages, differentiated responses were evident, as shown in Figure 33. Whereas 66% of respondents ranked Driving for Results highest, 67% ranked Showing Confidence lowest. Forty percent each indicated that Problem Solving held a tie for second and third rank. Influencing for Results was the most dispersed response pattern in what was almost a three-way tie, averaging was used to capture this data trend. Overall, the percent of respondents for each rank mirrors the rating average and final ranks. Special attention should be given to the fact that zero respondents indicated that Showing Confidence ranked first or that no respondents indicated Problem Solving as rank four. It is also worth noting that very low percentages of respondents placed Showing Confidence as rank two and that just as few placed Driving for Results in ranks three and four.

When asked to identify and describe the single most important action the principal took to rapidly improve student achievement outcomes, respondents list several
Figure 32. Certificated staff members’ rating of principal competencies.

Figure 33. Principal’s rank of their level of confidence by cluster competency.
acts. The majority response (40%) was that the principal provided opportunities for instructional collaboration. They indicated that training had been provided by Marilyn Tabor on how to collaborate in the service of raising student achievement levels both school-wide and in grade level teams. Staff also indicated along these same lines that a structure existed for this work including time to analyze data to identify areas of student instructional need; plan for needed instruction; and the development of assessments to further drive instruction. Effect sizes for many common practices were brought to the staff’s attention so that efficacy could be considered.

Then, 20% of respondents indicated that the Alternative Governing Board had provided recommendations and goals for instruction that supported the principal and the above mentioned collaborative work. Another 13% indicated that the school site makeover had made the school more beautiful and safer as routines for morning arrival and afternoon dismissal were established. Students gained independence and interruptions were eliminated during morning instructional periods. The principal was credited with holding everyone in the school community accountable for learning. This principal relied on collaboration to improve instruction at this elementary school using professional development, systemic structures, in addition to improved school safety and climate.

**Univariate statistical summary for the certificated staff survey.** In summary, this statistical analysis provided a description of the demographic composition of the certificated staff respondents as well as their perception of the principal’s practices and actions. Beyond that, it also revealed trend data for the principal’s specific leadership
competencies and critical actions that might support an effective school turnaround. Descriptive statistical analysis began to address this research question:

1.2 Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?

The overall descriptive picture through the staff's perspective of the principal's practices and actions began to surface. For purposes of this discussion, practices and actions were clustered into four areas: Driving for Results, Problem Solving, Influencing for Results, and Showing Confidence.

The principal's actions while Driving for Results were discussed. A majority of respondents indicated that the successful turnaround began during the first year where resources were focused where they mattered most for student achievement. They also shared that under the newly developed action plan, change was mandatory, not optional, and that the principal held everyone accountable while continually raising the bar each time a goal was met.

The frequency of time for collaborative work was dedicated to three predominant tasks: analyzing data to determine instructional need, planning instruction, and monitoring student progress. This collaborative work was completed either daily or weekly at this elementary school. The principal encouraged specific tasks fairly evenly that would support improving student outcomes.

While exploring Problem Solving, certificated staff members identified as important the development of an action plan that everyone on staff understood and that the principal did not let obstacles stand in her way. Respondents credited teachers with the majority of the work of collecting and analyzing data to inform instructional
improvement. For the most part, certificated staff members perceived that their principal held staff publicly accountable for results and that those who were achieving results were recognized publicly as well. Much difference of opinion existed for whether the principal created discomfort for those who did not make needed changes.

Influencing for Results was also reported. A majority of respondents were satisfied with the work of the principal. Just over a simple majority indicated that visible, early wins had made it harder for others to oppose change and that the principal had gained the trust of staff to influence others. The principal, to varying degrees, was seen to have helped the staff with targeted outcomes to assist them with improving student outcomes, most notably seeing the benefits of success and spending more time on working towards results.

Showing Confidence was also explored. The principal was perceived to be confident as she held staff accountable, raised the bar even higher, and counted on trusted staff to help gain momentum for the work. This principal was not perceived to show confidence at the same level in the area of tackling obstacles as they had been perceived in other areas.

The univariate statistical analysis for the certificated staff members of this elementary school on their perceptions of their principal’s practices and actions provided insight into the leadership required to improve student outcomes and effectively turnaround a school.

Following the formative analyses of both the principal’s and certificated staff surveys, an integrated analysis of the combined data was completed next. This integrated analysis may provide further information on not just the practices and actions that
principals of substantive school turnarounds have perceived to have implemented, but
may provide evidence for the existence of cluster leadership competencies and critical
actions utilized by these same principals. Whether or not the principal effectively turns
around a failing school may be influenced by these suggested cluster leadership
competencies. This analytical phase may also uncover whether different phases of school
turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership styles.

Integrated Analysis of Merged Data from the Univariate Survey Analyses

An integrated analysis was conducted after the independent analyses of the
principal and certificated staff survey results were merged in an attempt to address the
final two research questions. These questions for which results will be provided are:

2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a
   principal is successful or not in turning around a school?

   2.1 Do different phases of the school turnaround or school contextual factors
       require different leadership styles?

   2.2 Does the leadership context influence whether a school turnaround occurs
       for schools with comparable profiles?

Central to this integrated analysis was the exploration for evidence of identified
cluster leadership competencies (Public Impact, 2008) in this cohort of 28 substantive
school turnaround principals. This phase also investigated whether specific core leader
actions and related cluster competencies (Hassel & Hassel, 2009) were present during
school turnarounds. Each alone or in combination may provide essential information for
the skills and/or predispositions necessary in an effective school turnaround leader.
Cluster Leadership Competencies

Cluster leadership competencies were explored and discussed for each of the independent survey analyses for principals and certificated staff. Four clusters of competencies were investigated: Driving for Results, Problem Solving, Influencing for Results, and Showing Confidence. A brief definition derived from the work on school turnarounds at Public Impact (2008) is provided for each. Overall, independent analysis for data collected from each survey revealed similar results when merged. These similarities were pervasive across the data with few exceptions as results were merged into one cohesive data set. Integrated results for each cluster will be provided in this section.

Driving for results cluster. The Driving for Results Cluster is founded upon the principal’s desire to produce improved student outcomes using effective task-oriented actions to drive needed change. In this cluster, achievement, initiative and persistence, monitoring and directiveness, and planning ahead are key components.

As to when the first signs of success became evident, the majority of principals (44%) reported that it occurred during the seventh and twelfth months while the majority of teachers (39%) reported that it was during the first six months. Yet, results from both surveys indicated agreement that the first year was pivotal, a time when the first signs of success were present in these schools, 62% of principals and 55% of teachers respectively.

The principals and certificated staff indicated that the most frequent collaborative work was spent planning instruction and monitoring student progress. Less than an eight percent range for the response differential existed between the two groups. In contrast,
the least frequent work per both survey results was spent developing common assessments to gauge student progress and reporting student progress. A similar response differential was found, less than seven percent between the two survey groups. Further confirmation was again found for what the principal encouraged at their school. The highest levels of encouragement were commonly perceived to be in the areas of measuring results and doing more of what worked.

General agreement was reported by principals (100%) and certificated staff (80%) regarding how funding was allocated at these schools. School resources were believed to be focused where they would have the greatest impact on critical results for students.

One hundred percent of all survey respondents verified that when the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was mandatory, not optional. A strong majority of both principals (100%) and certificated staff (87%) indicated that the principal set the standard for work at the school and held staff accountable to adhering to that standard. In addition, 100% of principals and 87% of certificated staff agreed that once a goal was met, the principal raised the bar even higher.

Results from each survey, once merged, pointed to a high level of accord. The range between response rates was less than 20% for all items.

**Problem solving cluster.** The Problem Solving Cluster is built upon the principal leading three instructional tasks:

1. Data-driven decision-making
2. Concise plans that all staff understand and follow
3. Connecting school-wide goals to classroom instruction

In this cluster, both analytical and conceptual thinking are essential skills.
Both principals (100%) and certificated staff (80%) agreed that the principal developed an action plan for the school based on data that identified high priority problems. The response rates widened when it came to using this action plan and that everyone knew specifically what they needed to do differently. One hundred percent of principals perceived this to be true, whereas only 73% of certificated staff agreed.

When asked which staff collected and analyzed data at the school, responses were quite diverse for principals and certificated staff. Both survey groups indicated at 90% or higher that teachers collected and analyzed data, with just a five percent differential between results. Seventy-eight percent of principals indicated that principals and other certificated staff collected and analyzed data at their schools. Certificated staff credited 40% of principals and 25% of other certificated staff as collecting and analyzing data at their schools. The differential substantially widened for the percent of principals (38% difference) and for other certificated staff (53% difference). Data could not be merged for assistant principals as not all respondents had an assistant principal assigned to their school.

A pattern of dissimilar results was observed as to the principal publicly sharing results with various stakeholders. Principals (89%) responded that they held staff accountable for student outcomes while a smaller portion of certificated staff (80%) shared the same perception. A 23% higher response rate was found for principals (89%) who stated that recognition was provided to those who were achieving success than certificated staff (66%) had indicated. Lower response rates were found for both groups when it came to the principal creating discomfort for those who did not make needed changes, below 70% for each and a response range of 27%. 
These results demonstrate variability in the perceived problem solving by principals to solve critical instructional problems. The range was 20% or higher for most items. Close agreement was noted for three items: teachers collect and analyze data; public accountability for results was in place; and barriers did not stand in the way of principals getting something done.

One hundred percent of principals and 87% of certificated staff responded that the principal did not let a barrier stand in his/her way to getting something done. A hallmark of effective problem solving was perceived to be evident in these principals; they persevered in spite of challenges to solve problems at their schools.

**Influencing for results cluster.** The Influencing for Results Cluster is the ability of principals to motivate and influence others at the school to achieve desired academic results. Principals lead change through others. This cluster includes: impact and influence, team leadership, and developing others.

A diverse opinion as to whether early, visible wins at the school made it harder for others to oppose change. Principals agreed 100% that this was true while only 53% of certificated staff agreed. A similar disparity was found for the principal gaining the support of trusted staff that in turn influenced those who might oppose change. Only 60% of certificated staff agreed while 100% of principals agreed. These differences more than likely demonstrate a dilemma between the principal and their staff as to the change process proceeding rapidly with little concern for the staff’s perception of the experience. During school turnarounds, principals drive for results and let no barrier stand in their way, as multiple results from the surveys for principals and other certificated staff have confirmed in this study.
In general, principal and certificated staff respondents indicated greater favorable response rates for the help principals provided their staffs; a 73% to 100% level of agreement by outcome was established. Table 7 displays these percentages by respondent group and any existing differential.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Level of Principal Support for Targeted Outcomes by Survey Group</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Helped to Attain Targeted Outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understand the needs of students the school serves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become more successful in carrying out their job or their career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See a clear picture of success and its benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel motivated to contribute their discretionary effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See the problems that the status quo is causing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree that change is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses and more time working towards results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results illustrate the varying opinions by survey respondent group as to the perceived level of principal support provided to attain targeted outcomes. In all but one instance, the principal rated their involvement at a higher level than the certificated staff.
did. Overall, the level of agreement is relatively high for principal help. The range of response differentials is spread more than 20% for the greatest gap. To see the problems that the status quo is causing may be worth further exploration. It was the lowest response rate for both survey groups and the second largest differential (16%). These perceptions and/or observations are notable. The level of agreement was high. Each is remarkable on any school campus, especially if one considers that this was perceived during a school turnaround.

**Showing confidence to lead cluster.** Showing Confidence to Lead Cluster is the visible commitment and self-assurance that the principal displays despite the affronting behaviors of others often present during a school turnaround. Self-confidence is the vital characteristic.

Four items from each survey measured perceptions about the principal showing confidence during the school turnaround. Indicator C is most representative of the competency, but the other indicators typically require demonstrating confidence to attain.

A. The principal sets the standard for work at the school and hold staff accountable for adhering to that standard.

B. Once a goal is met, the principal raises the bar even higher.

C. The principal does not let a barrier stand in the way to getting something done.

D. The principal gained the support of trusted staff who in turn influenced those who might oppose change.

The perception of the principal’s self-confidence was rated at 100% for all indicators by the principals and at lower levels for the certificated staff as shown in
Figure 34. Each of the indicators had a response differential of 13%, not a substantial gap.

Figure 34. Percent agreement by survey group for principal self-confidence.

Two additional survey items afforded an additional layer for assessing the level of Showing Confidence to Lead Cluster when integrating the results from the targeted surveys. Respondents on each survey had the opportunity to mark specific actions the principal had taken that led to improved student achievement outcomes at the school. Eighty-nine percent of principals indicated that they had address the situation when another person or people stood in their way of getting something done. Only 43% of certificated respondents reported observing the principal take this action. In addition, 64% of certificated respondents shared that the principal accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles. One hundred percent of principals marked that they had performed that action.
These results indicate a discrepancy between what the principals perceived about their showing confidence versus certificated staff perceptions. When all indicators were averaged, a rating could be devised for each of the survey groups. Principals average rating was 98.17, substantially higher than the certificated staff average rating of 71.33.

**Cluster competency rating and ranking.** For each survey, respondents were asked to rank from one to four, with one being the highest, the level of principal competence for each of the four leadership competency clusters. Results are illustrated in Figure 35.

![Figure 35. Rating and rank for cluster competencies.](image)

The sole agreement was on the Driving for Results Cluster being ranked one. In light of the tie in principal rank order, the Showing Confidence Cluster should be considered the lowest ranking level of competence for both groups. The middle ranks include the Influencing for Results Cluster and the Problem Solving Cluster, reversed order by group.
The range for certificated staff ratings was 1.47 to 3.60 while the principals’ range was much closer, 2.22 to 2.67.

**Core Leader Actions**

Specific core leader actions were studied as well. Some overlap was evident for the competencies and/or cluster competencies identified for turnaround leaders (Hassel & Hassel, 2009). A subtle nuance exists between an action and a competency. Confusion may arise because a competency is differentiated into two types: the first is a pattern of thinking and feeling while the second is patterns of action (Public Impact, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the actions separate from the competencies as specific core leader actions.

Also, schools do not function in isolation. Each school is part of a larger district with its mission, vision, and goals for student achievement, particularly for schools tasked with exiting Program Improvement. Thus, a single question was included on both surveys to capture the respondents’ perception of the district’s role in the school’s turnaround. Fifty-six percent of principals indicated that their district played an instrumental role in supporting the school’s exit from PI whereas 63% of certificated staff agreed. The perception for almost 40% or more of each survey respondent group was that the principal with the help of their staff achieved the school turnaround independent of the district.

Survey items served to measure principal practices and actions as well as leadership competencies and critical actions. Core leader actions were titrated and analyzed to inform the perceptual level for each by principals and certificated staff as illustrated in Figure 36.
Figure 36. Percent agreement for evidence of core leader actions.

With one exception, the principal rating was higher than the certificated staff rating, where there was a tie at 100% agreement that the principal had broken organizational norms. It seems that both groups generally agreed that the principal had also pushed rapid-fire experimentation as well. A larger difference existed for perceptions around principals demonstrating three core actions:

1. Leading a turnaround campaign (25% difference)
2. Driving decisions with open-air data (20% difference)
3. Focusing on a few early wins (36% difference)

Both principals and certificated staff were asked to identify the single most important action that the principal took to rapidly improve student achievement outcomes, survey respondents indicated one of three actions as being critical. These three actions were the same for principals and certificated staff:

1. Goal setting
2. Professional development

3. Staff collaboration for instructional decisions. The responses for each group were remarkably similar

As for goal setting, respondents shared that setting goals with and for students was critical. Specific school-wide and/or individual data-driven goals were developed to improve student learning as well as outcomes. Respondents also described professional development on best practices for instruction and collaboration. In addition, collaboration to identify student needs, plan instruction, and develop common assessments were discussed. Together, these actions deemed to be the most important were listed as common responses on each survey.

**Summary for Integrated Analysis**

In summary, this integrated statistical analysis provided a description of the combined cluster leadership competencies and core leadership actions utilized in cohort school turnarounds. Together, cluster leadership competencies and core leader actions may support a description of leadership for school turnarounds. Descriptive statistical analysis began to address these research questions:

2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a school?

2.1 Do different phases of the school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership styles?

2.2 Does the leadership context influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles?
Synopsis of Results

Data collection and analysis is the core of any research design. The survey approach utilized in this study provided an opportunity to explore the leadership at 28 recent, substantive school turnarounds situated in Southern California. An initial survey of available public documents provided a rich description of these schools. Then, two separate but parallel surveys were designed by this researcher for targeted audiences at these schools to explore the leadership practices and actions of these turnaround principals. The demographic profiles of targeted audiences, principals and certificated staff, were provided. A detailed description of the typical respondent for each both the principals’ and certificated staff survey was included. Independent analysis for each survey rendered results culminating in specific cluster leadership competencies as well as core leadership actions. Lastly, the results for each survey were then integrated to provide a deeper understanding of the necessary leadership for effective school turnarounds.

Overall, the results provided a collective retroactive perspective for the leadership of this cohort of effective school turnarounds. Several perceptual trends became evident during these analyses:

- The challenge to turnaround a failing school is great. Few school leaders have attained this goal over time. The study of recent substantive school turnarounds yielded a two percent success rate. Beyond that, the time to turnaround a school varies, with most turnarounds occurring during the first six years, but one took 14 years.

- Although these schools improved, the overall performance remains below state performance averages in both English language arts and mathematics, in
particular for students of color living in poverty who may still be mastering academic English. These results demonstrate that the achievement gap is closing for these 28 turnaround schools.

- The profile for the typical turnaround principal in this study was a 35-44 year old woman of White or Caucasian descent with a Masters’ degree who had attained her first school turnaround. They were assigned to the school for three years and were not present for the total years in PI, but present for the final three years of the turnaround.

- These principals credited several practices and actions:
  - early successes to build momentum where change was not optional
  - data-driven action plans where every staff understood what they must do differently to solve instructional problems were established
  - a clear picture of success for students the school served
  - no barriers were allowed to stand in their way of success was in place
  - public measures were used to hold everyone accountable

- The profile for the typical certificated staff respondent was a 35-44 year old female teacher of Hispanic descent who holds a Masters’ Degree. They had 16 years tenure and were likely at the school before, during, and after the school turnaround.

- Certificated staff credited numerous principal practices and actions:
  - the first signs of success were observed during the first year
  - change was not optional and everyone was held accountable publicly
  - data-driven action plans for instruction that everyone on staff understood
trusted staff helped gain momentum for the work
the principal did not let obstacles stand in their way of success

- The merging of the results from each independent survey analysis suggested certain cluster leadership competencies and critical leadership actions for school turnarounds. The identified clusters were: Driving for Results; Problem Solving; Influencing for Results; and Showing Confidence. Identified core leadership actions were also characterized.

- Within the Driving for Results Cluster, the first year of the turnaround was pivotal as frequent and regular planning for instruction and monitoring student progress became established norms in these schools. Results indicated that when the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was mandatory, not optional. The principal provided support for measuring results and doing more of what works.

- Within the Problem Solving Cluster, an action plan for the school based on data that identified high priority problems was designed and implemented. Essential to this plan was teachers collecting and analyzing formative and summative student achievement data. This analysis drove instruction. These principals and their staffs persevered in spite of challenges to solve problems and that everyone was held publicly accountable for student outcomes at these schools.

- Within the Influencing for Results Cluster, three practices and actions displayed a high degree of accord for all respondents: see a clear picture of success and its benefits; change was needed; and spend more time working
towards results. These principals engaged their staff in seeing an improved future for their students that was possible if they worked towards results with the principal’s assistance and encouragement.

- Within the Showing Confidence Cluster, these principals did not allow a barrier to stand in their way of attaining success. These principals faced those against them as well as any non-personnel challenges to get results, even those who did not wish to change.

- Ranking for all respondents uncovered similar trends. Driving for Results was rated as the most important work that the principal accomplished. While Showing Confidence was ranked last. This likely illustrates the nature of the visible work of leading a school turnaround that is characterized by the principals’ obvious strong desire to get results. Showing Confidence is a nuanced effort and may be less visible to school staffs when their focus is entirely upon improving student outcomes over the principals’ level of demonstrated confidence. Principal competence and confidence may need to be teased out further.

- Results indicated a high level of agreement for both the breaking of organizational norms and rapid-fire experimentation to determine what worked as core leadership actions.

- Effective school turnaround work is characterized by specific core leadership actions (Public Impact, 2007), results for this study included:
  - Identify and spotlight early wins with big payoffs to build momentum
  - Break existing organizational norms
Improve a fast instructional cycle of trying new strategies, measuring progress, discarding what does not work and doing more of what works.

Drive decision-making and goal setting with rigorous data analysis in public forums with all stakeholders.

Campaign for the turnaround through key influencers; silencing critics; and motivating others to join the work.

At varying levels, these core leadership actions were evident throughout the results for both the independent and integrated analyses. In the next chapter, a discussion of the survey results, possible impact to practitioners and scholars, and implications for further research will be presented.
CHAPTER 5—DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a thorough discussion of the results for each of the six research questions. The importance, meaning and significance of these results will be established. Salient findings linked to existing literature, implications and recommendations for implementation, along with suggestions for future research will be provided.

Core beliefs about the function of schooling, learning, and the metrics of success inform the work of school leaders. Considering current high stakes accountability measures and the apparent declining confidence in public education, schools need to demonstrate continuous improvement as well as elevated levels of student achievement, a paramount ambition when a school is failing. For this reason, the entry point and primary function for this research was to investigate the possible existence of specific leadership actions and cluster competencies of principals who had recently led an effective school turnaround. Results presented in the previous chapter contributed to a clearer understanding of how to effectively turnaround schools through the identification of specific leadership practices, actions, and styles that positively influence achievement outcomes.

This chapter will be organized around several parameters when discussing results. An interpretation of the results through the lens of published research will be presented. Recommendations will also be outlined for educators. Suggestions for additional research will be proposed. Limitations of this study will be shared. A comprehensive summary and conclusions will also be shared in closing this chapter.
As the culmination of this study, the fifth chapter is derived from the previous four chapters to guide a cohesive presentation for the introduction, literature, and methodology to the results, findings, and recommendations for practice as well as further study. Consequently, this chapter opens with an overview of the first four chapters for this research project.

**Overview of First Four Chapters**

Each of these chapters provided necessary details to build a purposeful account of this research project. The first chapter served as an overall introduction to the study including the rational, purpose, and guiding research questions. The second chapter developed a cohesive account of the scholarly literature relevant to this study. The third chapter described the pertinent methodological considerations and decisions regarding participants, instruments, procedures, and processes for the selected research design. The fourth chapter delineated the results from the multiple analytical layers in this survey design, including independent and integrated statistical examination. In each chapter, study limitations and critical viewpoints were introduced and discussed.

The opening chapter included the problem statement that initiated this study, salient theoretical perspectives to represent the existing knowledge base, and a description of the accompanying methodological approach and research perspective utilized to examine principal leadership for effective school turnarounds as the rational for study. The background on effective schools, school improvement, organizational learning, and school leadership practices was also established; which together may constitute a novel hybrid area of study driven by today’s urgent need to turn around failing schools. In a national climate of high-stakes accountability, where each principal
is tasked to drive continuous improvement through their design, implementation, and
evaluation of an action plan to either avoid being labeled a failing school or to reform an
already failing school. With this in mind, this study examined possible leadership
competencies derived from organizational theory to better inform this critical leadership
task. Additionally, this research sought whether principal styles exist that might prove
more effective for different phases of the school turnaround or in varying educational
contexts.

The second chapter provided a thorough review of the literature on school
improvement efforts, organizational change, and leadership practices to date. The vast
literature on school improvement efforts elucidated the common features of effective
schools and successful school improvement initiatives in addition to the blending of what
is understood about both. Extensive empirical research on organizational change
described foundational theory and the accompanying systemic models. The knowledge
base on leadership practices provided a comprehensive overview of conceptual models
and leadership actions that leaders might use to effectively frame change as well as
establish conditions readying others for change. This collective literature established that
the principal was a catalyst for change. Additionally, the principal was an indirect
influence in improving student achievement outcomes relying upon core leadership
practices and styles to support their school improvement efforts. In the end, researchers
outlined how to drive change within an organization and who might lead that work,
ultimately establishing the powerful influence of leaders to implement effective change
processes to improve schools and levels of student achievement.
The third chapter described the methodology for this survey research, population and sample selection processes, instruments and protocols, data collection/analysis procedures, ethical considerations, validity issues, and the unit of analysis in the design of this study. This study was designed to explore the following research questions:

1. How does a principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?
   1.1 How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?
   1.2 Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?

2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a failing school?
   2.1 Do different phases of school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership approaches?
   2.2 Does the leadership context influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles?

Survey design was utilized to explore leadership for effective school turnarounds. Descriptive statistical analysis may provide a comprehensive picture of the numeric trends, attitudes, or opinions of those surveyed. This design entailed a massive examination of available public data for identification of the southern California cohort of 28 substantive school turnarounds, an online survey designed for principals of these same schools, and an online survey designed for certificated staff at one of these schools. Independent analysis was conducted for each to attempt to answer the first three research questions. Following independent analysis, these data sets were merged for interpretation.
and further analysis to address the last three research questions. The integrated results were then summarized and interpreted in an attempt to produce a deeper understanding of the topic. Specific research questions were addressed in each of these analytical phases.

Chapter Four presented the results and an interpretive analysis for each of the research questions explored. This chapter began with a presentation of the 28 substantive turnaround schools representing 18 districts in southern California, constituting the study’s population. That is, only 28 out of 849 otherwise failing school met the school turnaround criteria. This made, and makes, these schools particularly important to study. Following that, the chapter was further organized around two distinct analytical phases: independent analysis and integrated analysis. Results and evident trends were presented to capture the data story for these turnaround schools and their leaders.

**Summary of Key Results and Assumptions Underpinning the Discussion**

Key results were outlined in the concluding section of the last chapter and are briefly reviewed here. They represent a reflective summation and crucial wonderings as the justification for the ensuing discussion. The assumptions underpinning this discussion are expressed in the following logic flow:

- Since less than two percent of Southern California schools in PI exited during 2012, school turnarounds symbolize a daunting task for any school leader. Those that did exit PI demonstrated a six year turnaround process, the mode. Although, 40% of these schools took between seven and 14 years to achieve the same result. While almost another third took just three to four years. Interestingly it was not just schools that were failing, but almost all of their districts were failing as well (94%). For these 28 turnaround schools, 94% of
their districts were in PI as well, a majority (82%) were in Year 3. These districts, on average, had 57% of their schools in PI too.

- Throughout the state of California, certain related data trends were evident during 2012. The number of California public schools in PI statewide was 4,394 with only 83 exiting that year. This represents a corresponding two percent success rate for exiting PI for the state and schools included in this study. During this same period, none of the 485 districts in PI across the state exited, leaving 61 in Year 1 (13%), 86 in Year 2 (17%), and the majority, 338 in Year 3 (70%). Another measure revealed statewide API was 809 in 2012 for K-8 schools. State targets for ELA and mathematics were set at 78.0% and 78.2% respectively for 2012. Actual performance levels in California were far lower, 58.1% of students scored proficient or advanced in ELA, whereas 59.5% were proficient or advanced in mathematics.

- Even for successful turnarounds included in this study, these schools, too, scored below the state’s minimum targets for the number of students expected to meet or exceed grade level standards. Targets were met through alternative minimum criteria, Safe Harbor calculation. Specifically, 55.9% of cohort school students scored proficient or advanced, two percent less than students across the state averaged in ELA. While, 66.4% of these same students outscored the state’s 59.5% of students scoring proficient or advanced. On average, seven percent more students attained proficiency in mathematics. The identified cohort turnaround schools outperformed the state by achieving an average API score of 816, seven points higher than the state. In the case of
the study cohort schools, 64% scored an API between 800 and 899, 32% scored lower and 4% scored higher.

- To narrow the gap for students of color living in poverty and still mastering academic English is admirable, but what can be done to change outcomes for those large numbers of students who are not yet proficient. It cannot be sufficient to improve the academic outcomes for solely a portion of these students fortunate enough to attend one of the rare turnaround schools that beat the odds.

- There is little doubt that these 28 schools became more effective and improved. Their performance distinguished themselves from the underperformance of 849 schools. These 28 schools demonstrated a fast-cycle of critical actions to turnaround through a change process dependent upon early first-year successes; high-priority data-driven goals; mandatory abandonment of the status quo for more of what worked; and no barrier was allowed to impede success. These critical actions drove the instructional cycle for all students at these schools. These principals drove for success solving critical problems they encountered along the way.

- Regular, strategic collaboration was the foundation upon which this success was built in these schools through key influencers who helped to silence critics. Specific principal practices and actions used in combination appear to have been what these leaders needed to do to effectively lead a school turnaround. The principal influenced for results and showed confidence to lead under these conditions no matter what.
• Of note, each substantive turnaround was the first for each of these principals as none of the 28 had previous experience turning around a school even with varying tenures at other failing schools; with comparable numbers of principals with no prior experience as well as those with considerable experience of nine years or more at another school. With this dichotomy, one must wonder how they succeeded where most fail to ever turnaround a school, yet these principals met this challenge at these schools.

• Also worthy of mention is the fact that these schools were not school closures reopening as fresh starts with hand-selected staffs, but were school turnarounds with the majority of certificated staffs in place before, during, and after this turnaround and with the student population constant as well. The leader appeared to be a salient variable.

• Therefore, this study focused further on the leadership at these 28 schools.

Three questions support this inquiry:

1. How does a principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?

2. How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?

3. Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?

Pending the answers to these essential questions, one must ask whether specific cluster leadership competencies and core leadership actions were present in the typical turnaround principal for this cohort.
Thus, this chapter discusses each of these vital topics as the framework for suggesting that the leadership style, competence, and purposeful actions of turnaround leaders are related to their effectiveness and consistent with previous literature. Further, that suggested turnaround leadership competencies exist in these principals that may inform whether or not a school turns around.

In so much as a type of turnaround principal can be defined through this discussion, then effective school turnarounds may be influenced by the leadership context when school profiles are comparable. Moreover, a certain leadership style may best match different phases of the school turnaround.

**Discussion and Interpretation of Results**

All school leaders face the challenge to produce academic results with higher levels of student achievement expected each year. Schools have been tasked to become foolproof in educating every student. Continuous improvement along with school turnarounds situated in accountability systems that require constant vigilance by the principal for designing, implementing, and adapting any school’s instructional plan remains a dynamic process. This dire need to continuously improve and get results in all schools, particularly for students attending a failing school, establishes the rationale for why this study matters. After careful review of the results, relevant findings became apparent for these 28 substantive school turnarounds and their leaders. They can be organized around three central themes that collectively address the research questions.

When applied to effective school turnarounds, the three themes are simply named yet the actual work could not be more complex: ‘Modern Effective Schools;
‘Transforming a Failing School’; and ‘Leadership for Learning’. These themes may lead one to believe that a decades old discussion is resurfacing. But what they really suggest is a long and deliberate evolutionary process of current research founded upon the early empirical work that set the stage for the modern day blending of effectiveness, improvement, transformation, and leadership into a single distinct area of necessary study, leadership for school turnarounds.

A discussion of each will be the basis for explaining how they distinctly overlap and their ultimate combination. The complexities of school turnaround work depend upon using organizational change theory through leadership to establish an effective school. Links to prior research will underpin the rationale and foster integrity for each. In as much, this study may add to the existing knowledge base on school turnarounds which is yet to be well established.

**Modern Effective Schools**

Crucial characteristics and necessary conditions serve as a vehicle for planned educational reform. Together, data collected throughout this study portray a common profile. These schools primarily serve students of color living in poverty and have experienced achievement gaps for decades. Schools have been pressured to improve over that same period. Therefore, school leaders have driven for results for decades with little progress on establishing and sustaining high achieving schools as the norm for these students. The promise of an effective school is still on the distant horizon for many of today’s students.

This section serves as a required precursor to the research questions in this study because the *how* is formulated in the blending of the Effective Schools Movement and
Models of School Improvement that arose together. Edmonds (1979) identified his Effective Schools Correlates. These same correlates still apply in today’s schools, commonly found embedded in school action plans for improved student outcomes, but not referenced as such. Modern effective schools are those that possess these necessary characteristics and conditions to serve diverse students so that they meet or exceed contemporary academic standards.

Evidence was found throughout both the independent and integrated analyses of this study and displayed in Table 8. Four of Edmond’s correlates are relevant to the present study. This table illustrates these correlates and how they help define what makes a school effective in this cohort of turnaround schools.

Another study result indicated a high level of agreement of survey respondents for both the breaking of organizational norms and rapid-fire experimentation to determine what worked as core leadership actions. It is of particular interest that contemporary results would mirror what Edmonds (1979) had said decades ago, “One of the cardinal characteristics of effective schools is that they are as eager to avoid things that don’t work as they are committed to implementing things that do” (p. 22). Accordingly, evidence from the current study results indicates that what made schools effective long ago still applies in today’s turnaround schools.

Further, the case for collaboration to inform a data-driven instructional cycle was a hallmark of effective schools then and now. Rosenholtz (1985) suggested a culture where teachers intellectually shared, collaboratively planned, and worked collegially to meet expectations for student instruction and academic achievement was effective. This
Table 8

Comparative Analysis of Effective Schools Correlates and Study Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edmond’s Effective Schools Correlates</th>
<th>Study Results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations for Success</td>
<td>In addition, 100% of principals and 87% of certificated staff agreed that once a goal was met, the principal raised the bar even higher. One hundred percent of principals and 87% of certificated staff responded that the principal did not let a barrier stand in his/her way to getting something done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear and Focused Mission</td>
<td>One hundred percent of all survey respondents verified that when the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was mandatory, not optional. One hundred percent of principals perceived this to be true, whereas only 73% of certificated staff agreed that when using this action plan everyone knew specifically what they needed to do differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress</td>
<td>The principals and certificated staff indicated that the most frequent collaborative work was spent planning instruction and monitoring student progress. Both survey groups indicated at 90% or higher levels that teachers collected and analyzed data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>The principals and certificated staff shared that the action plan was focused on solving high priority problems and that change was mandatory for all staff. Each principal lead their first effective school turnaround which produced improved academic outcomes for students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study’s results supports this research as illustrated by the ranking from highest to lowest frequency by collaborative task:

1. Plan instruction for students
2. Monitor student progress
3. Analyze data to identify areas of instructional need
4. Develop common assessments
5. Report student progress
It is unmistakable that survey respondents from recent school turnarounds clearly prioritized not only instruction, but the time spent on various tasks. This professional culture mattered when becoming an effective school. So important that Rosenholtz credited the principal with the power to intervene and engineer this culture and collective perception of effectiveness at their schools through the successful application of change theory. This credit transitions the discussion from what characterizes an effective school to how to become one as well as how blending the two supports not only school improvement work, but school turnarounds.

**Transforming a Failing School**

Research over the past 80 years has evolved from theory for individual learning to organizational learning as the collective learning of individuals within the organization. Edmonds (1982) as well as Eubanks and Levine (1983) studied effective schools models of school improvement. Their findings supported effective schools characteristics could be used to improve student outcomes at schools. The flavor of school reform has changed little in the decades since this early research into how to improve a school first took place. However, it is essential to note that school turnarounds are just a specific type of school improvement work. This is where subtle nuances differentiate this work. These research questions are addressed in this section:

1. How does a principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement?

   1.1 How do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds?

This section is further divided into two strands: key factors and processes for change as well as organizational learning to fully respond to these first two research questions.
Factors and processes. School improvement factors and processes may be key in whether a school improves are not. Therefore, the first research question, how does a principal turnaround a school to improve student achievement, will be addressed in this section. Table 9 includes specific data to support the importance of factors and processes during the improvement journey for an effective school turnaround. Stoll and Myers (1998) suggested that new skills must be developed and a willingness to change is required for school improvement to occur. Current study results suggest that this is still true. They show new skill development through becoming more successful in their career as well as a willingness to change on several levels. Together, these new skills and willingness to change support improved student outcomes.

Many staff shared that change was needed and developing new skills to become more successful in carrying out their job and/or career was evident. These were further supported by seeing a clear picture of success and its benefits for their students. The fact that only 81% of the staff did not feel the problems that the status quo was causing at these schools deserves consideration as it might impact making improvements. These

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Outcome</th>
<th>Respondent Average Level of Agreement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better understand the needs of students the school serves</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become more successful in carrying out their job or their career</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See a clear picture of success and its benefits</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel motivated to contribute their discretionary effort</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See the problems that the status quo is causing</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree that change is needed</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses and more time working towards results</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
same staff may not feel motivated or choose to apply new strategies in their classrooms. Well-meaning staff might find it hard to abandon of established patterns of thinking regarding their impact on student outcomes. However, 91% of these same staffs were more than willing to shift from negative behaviors to those that would get desired results. This mismatch could probably be remedied through strategic leadership and points to the need for further organizational learning. In other words, it appears that the school leaders were able to facilitate change, in part, by effectively managing a portion of staff who did not believe status quo was a problem but who chose to be positive throughout the change process. This does suggest that leadership skills and style may be a critical variable.

Imagine if a quarter of the staff did not feel status quo was a problem and if none of those staff chose to embrace the changes positively. Would the school be as likely to turnaround? Moreover, to better understand the needs of students the school serves would likely support a deeper understanding of the undeniable negative impact the status quo causes, as well as effective leadership strategies to attenuate it.

Thus, the principal establishes crucial characteristics (the what) of effective schools while simultaneously launching necessary conditions (the how) to turnaround their school. This is likely accomplished through strategic supports that help all staff to see a brighter future for the school and their students, their critical role in getting to that envisioned future, become more effective as educators, and dedicates their determined effort to improve student achievement at all costs. This encapsulates a best response to the first research question at this time.

**Organizational learning.** The body of research on organizational theory and learning are both well established. Learning has been deemed an essential component in
the change process by many. The principal is a central figure in facilitating learning for both individuals and the organization as they are primarily responsible for establishing the culture for instruction at the school, whether it is for students, staff, or community. As such, which theoretical model a leader selects to create any particular action plan might either limit or expand the reformer’s thinking as they plan, implement, and assess change efforts at multiple levels of an organization including schools (Elmore, 1996).

So, how do principals utilize their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds, the second research question, is best responded to in this section.

Fullan (2010) described his model of Motion Leadership to promote the educational change process. Motion Leadership was comprised of eight key elements that worked collectively to facilitate change in any organization. He referred to this essential model of leadership as ‘change-savvy knowledge’ that included not only what these leaders know, but what they can do. Fullan suggested that leaders who used these elements realized effective school reform through movement in a new and improved direction.

Table 10 presents a comparative view of Fullan’s Motion Leadership with results from this study. Fullan’s Motion Leadership model and study results share common themes: work through change without admonishment; collaborate for change with new purpose and skills; make accountability public; and build relationships to support the work. Fullan suggested that it was the leader who must understand and work through change to effectively move the people and the organization forward. When applied to study results, it is apparent that evidence exists for each of the eight key elements. In
Table 10

*Comparative View of Fullan’s Motion Leadership Model and Study Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fullan’s Motion Leadership</th>
<th>Study Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Problems</strong>: overcome inertia to change direction for the better</td>
<td>The principal developed an action plan for the school based on data that identified high priority problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Itself</strong>: understand the needed change and the change process to learn and improve through reflective action</td>
<td>Principals and certificated staff could see the problems that the status quo was causing and that change was needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting Peers with Purpose</strong>: purposeful peer interaction to link practice with outcomes and build collective capacity</td>
<td>The principals and certificated staff indicated that the most frequent collaborative work was spent planning instruction and monitoring student progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity Building Trumps Judgmentalism</strong>: use shared purpose and skills to get results without projecting a negative message about performance</td>
<td>When it came to the principal creating discomfort for those who did not make needed changes, response rates were below 70% for both groups. Spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses and more time working towards results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning is the Work</strong>: establish high-yield learning practices consistently and with purpose</td>
<td>The principal set the standard for work at the school and held staff accountable to adhering to that standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transparency Rules</strong>: openly share practice as well as results to build inherent accountability</td>
<td>Principals (89%) responded that they held staff accountable for student outcomes while a smaller portion of certificated staff (80%) shared the same perception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Love, Trust and Resistance</strong>: build relationships for positive movement</td>
<td>The principal and certificated staff respondents indicated favorable response rates for the help principals provided their staffs. Principals (89%) and certificated staff (66%) stated that recognition was provided to those who were achieving success. A disparity was found for the principal gaining the support of trusted staff that in turn influenced those who might oppose change. Only 60% of certificated staff agreed while 100% of principals agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership for all</strong>: Confident and humble leadership with the responsibility to develop new leaders for extended savvy change.</td>
<td>Principals (89%) and certificated staff (80%) felt motivated to contribute their discretionary efforts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
addition, this cohort of school principals utilized the elements of motion leadership to transform failing schools. These principals used their understanding of organizational learning to drive needed change.

As with Edmond’s Effective Schools Correlates, Fullan’s Motion Leadership Model further illustrates the alignment of each to the results for this study. Jointly, they support the claim that blending the *what* and the *how* of school improvement appears to apply in the case of school turnarounds.

The principal must not only navigate, but must lead their staff through the change process from a failing to an effective school to become a successful turnaround. This complex work requires a principal who knows what strategies to rely upon at what time to push change where it likely is not well received. Successful leadership of others through the monumental change process to establish a modern effective school is how turnaround principals use their understanding of organizational theory to positively influence school turnarounds.

**Leadership for Learning**

Researchers studied how leadership matters, how the effects of strong leadership influence student learning, and what the essential components of leadership are. These leaders understand and implement core leadership actions that impact positively. They exhibit leadership competencies that support decision-making and practices that lead to successful school turnarounds. In the following subsections, links are established back to the research for study results. In that way, additional research questions are addressed:

1.1 Which leadership practices do principals of effective school turnarounds exhibit?
2. Do cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a school?

2.1 Do different phases of school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership styles?

**Integrated leadership.** Hallinger (2003) proposed a model of integrated leadership that blended aspects of both transformational and instructional leadership focused on both the external factors and locals contexts that principals worked. Hallinger suggested that effective principals adapted to these contexts. During that same period, Marks and Printy (2003) found that an integrated leadership model served schools best, as the instructional leadership provided by the principal supported the necessary collaboration in providing high-quality instruction while the transformational leadership provided by this same principal improved the school culture, readying everyone for both academic learning and the change process. Thus, the integrated leader established favorable conditions for school transformation, adapting to the ever changing contexts with their steadfast focus on the instructional core.

Results of the present study, distinguish principals who assumed both the instructional and transformational roles rather effectively, thus exemplifying integrated leadership. The practices and actions that these principals established and sustained produced results. Key among this integrated leadership approach is the fact that while the principal focused on establishing a collaborative, systemic instructional cycle driven by current student data with most facets taking place either daily or weekly, the principal was using early successes to motivate the staff to work harder for results and to silence any critics. Under an integrated leadership approach, this momentum took the school to
new levels of accomplishment where public accountability only supported this work to improve educational outcomes.

**Leadership style.** Hall et al. (1984) identified three change facilitator styles in school improvement work: initiators, managers, and responders. Then, Bamburg and Andrews (1991) identified four diverse principal styles: Principal as Resource Provider, Principal as Instructional Resource, Communicator, and Visible Presence. Leadership style was gaining credibility in the research community as certain styles of leadership began to be observed in varying levels of effectiveness for improving schools.

This is a nuanced result as neither survey posed questions directly regarding this topic. Based upon available results, one can infer that these principals were of Hall et al. (1984) the initiator and manager types, a precursor to Hallinger’s (2003) integrated leadership style discussed earlier. Initiators set long-term academic improvement goals and use their strong beliefs about what constitutes effective schooling to attain goals. As managers, they respond to situations through initiating collaboration to effectively support the change effort.

Also, according to Bamburg and Andrew’s (1991) four principal types, these principals represented each of the four types for these reasons. Results indicated that a clear majority of principal and certificated staff perceived that school resources were used to support critical results; demonstrating Principal as Resource Provider. Multiple results indicated that the principal’s main work was Principal as Instructional Resource as they developed a mandatory action plan around high-priority instructional needs; established both a system and time for deliberate collaboration; and raised the bar once goals were met. Principal as Communicator was evidenced by the high degree of accord between
respondent groups for public sharing of results with both accountability and/or recognition. Other than the public sharing, no results were gathered for the principal demonstrating High Visibility; no commentary is thus provided.

**Leadership core actions.** Marzano et al. (2003) developed their balanced leadership framework including 21 leadership responsibilities they found through meta-analysis that were significantly correlated to student achievement. Further, they suggested that effective leadership was a combination of knowledge and skills that “means more than simply knowing what to do, it’s knowing when, how, and why to do it” (p. 2). Soon after, Leithwood et al. (2004) studied how leadership mattered, how the effects of strong leadership influenced student learning, and what the essential components of leadership were. Pathways for the effects of school leadership that specifically influenced school effectiveness and school improvement were developed as clusters of critical leadership actions needed to improve a school in that study.

Results indicated that these principals demonstrated various core leadership actions. A comparison of eight of Marzano’s 21 Leadership Responsibilities of the School Leader to related Study Results is provided in Table 11. The remaining 13 responsibilities did not specifically align to what was investigated in this study and are not included as a result.

These principals demonstrated more than a third of Marzano’s (2003) 21 Leadership Responsibilities for School Leaders. These results illustrate core leadership actions that likely positively influenced the school turnaround.
### Table 11

**Comparison of Selected Marzano’s Leadership Responsibilities and Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marzano’s 21 Leadership Responsibilities of the School Leader</th>
<th>Study Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Agent</strong>: challenges the status quo</td>
<td>Principals and certificated staff could see the problems that the status quo was causing and that change was needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong>: establishes strong lines of communication</td>
<td>The principals and certificated staff indicated that the most frequent collaborative work was spent planning instruction and monitoring student progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contingent Rewards</strong>: recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments</td>
<td>Principals (89%) and certificated staff (66%) stated that recognition was provided to those who were achieving success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture</strong>: fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation</td>
<td>93% or higher of both respondent groups indicated that the principal had helped them see a clear picture of the future and its benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility</strong>: adapts their leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent</td>
<td>One hundred percent of principals and 87% of certificated staff responded that the principal did not let a barrier stand in his/her way to getting something done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong>: emphasizes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention</td>
<td>One hundred percent of all survey respondents verified that when the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was mandatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas/Beliefs</strong>: communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling</td>
<td>A majority of both principals (100%) and certificated staff (87%) indicated that the principal set the standard for work and held staff accountable to adhering to that standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optimizer</strong>: inspires others and leads new and challenging innovations</td>
<td>A majority of both respondent groups agreed that the principal helped others to accomplish something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effective school leadership.** Leithwood et al. (2006) described their seven ‘strong claims’ about what was empirically known about successful school leadership. Three are highlighted in Table 12 for comparison to study results. Principals of effective school turnarounds exhibited certain leadership styles and core leadership practices as discussed throughout this section. In response to the third research question, these principals established modern effective schools using their knowledge of organizational theory through their leadership approaches, combining style...
Table 12

*A Comparative View of Leithwood’s Strong Claims and Study Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leithwood’s Strong Claims</th>
<th>Study Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.</td>
<td>Alignment of study results to Fullan’s (2010) Motion Leadership; Hallenger’s (2003) Integrated Leadership Model (2003); and Marzano’s Leadership Responsibilities (2003) discussed earlier provided evidence for this repertoire of basic leadership practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions.</td>
<td>Study results compared specifically to Fullen’s (2010) Change Itself, where staff saw the problems that the status quo was causing and agreed that change was needed; Hallenger’s (2003) integrated approach to leadership relied on both instructional and transformational principal actions; Marzano’s (2003) Culture was grounded in shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A small handful of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness.</td>
<td>This cohort of 28 principals, representing 2% of substantive school turnarounds in Southern California, succeeded where most failed. Study results support the claim that ten leadership actions influenced the school turnaround at these schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

with practice. More specifically, they exhibited strategic implementation of an initiator-type leadership style along with specific core leadership actions to drive needed change to turnaround their schools. Moreover, these turnaround principals relied upon systematic collaboration focused on solving instructional problems to provide students what they needed as well as to simultaneously build capacity of the staff for improved instruction. This explanation suggests which leadership practices that these turnaround principals utilized to effectively turnaround a failing school.

To address the research question on whether different phases of school turnaround or school contextual factors require different leadership styles, key discussion points are provided. Results indicated that these turnaround principals demonstrated an integrated leadership style. They were both instructional and transformational leaders, a blend
found most effective in the research (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003) to support effective school transformation of student academic outcomes. This suggests that the turnaround leader is a special type of integrated leader as these same study results imply that integrated leadership combined with leadership style and implemented core leadership practices fundamentally supported the school turnaround in these cases.

The broad empirical research on school leadership applied to this study’s results seemed to confirm the *what* and the *how* of school improvement and began to define just *who* would best lead this work best in schools. The next section provides a rationale and description of the substantive turnaround leader based upon study results.

**Leadership for School Turnarounds**

Current research on school turnarounds is limited. What is known is that turnaround leaders employ certain styles and act purposefully to rapidly improve instruction as well as optimize the culture for needed change. Therefore, this subsequent section addresses these research questions:

2.2 Does the leadership context influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles?

Hassel and Hassel (2009) suggested that effective turnaround leaders institute a formula of common actions that drive an organization to successful outcomes aligned to the new mission. These turnaround leaders are ‘unapologetic drivers of change’ who utilize what Hassel and Hassel termed the ‘bad-to-great formula’. Three core actions of turnaround leaders were identified as the most important turnaround actions in this formula: Focus on a Few Early Wins; Break Organizational Norms; and Push Rapid-Fire Experimentation.
Study results provided evidence for each of their identified most important turnaround actions. As for Focus on Early Wins, over half of all survey respondents declared that the turnaround was evident within the first year of the principal’s assignment to the school. Also, eighty-nine percent of principals who completed the survey indicated that they used these early successes to build momentum at their schools. In addition, eighty-seven percent of both principals and certificated staff respondents agreed that the principal had encouraged the use of new strategies, discarding failed tactics, as well as doing more of what worked. By encouraging the right work to get results, the principal demonstrated a Break from Organizational Norms and their Push for Rapid-Fire Experimentation. In these results, all three components of their ‘bad-to-great formula’ were evidenced.

Rhim et al. (2007) were the first to propose that pre-existing leader capabilities may provide an idea of the necessary competencies of successful school turnaround leaders. Leithwood and Strauss (2008, 2009) went further in suggesting that four core leadership actions grouped as competencies supported effective school turnarounds. Moreover, they were applied in different ways during different stages of the turnaround. In addition, Brinson et al. (2008) described fourteen specific leader actions clustered as four major leader competencies: Initial Analysis and Problem Solving; Driving for Results; Influencing Inside and Outside the Organization; and Measuring, Reporting, and Improving. These foundational turnaround school studies pointed to the existence and usefulness of clusters of leadership competencies and critical leadership actions that influenced whether a principal was successful or not in turning around a school.
Out of this collective research, Public Impact (2008) published identified turnaround leader competencies and actions derived from Spencer and Spencer’s (1993) *Competence at Work*. Four clusters comprised of ten competencies were labeled: Driving for Results Cluster, Problem Solving Cluster, Influencing for Results Cluster, and Showing Confidence to Lead Cluster. This study was designed with these leadership cluster competencies in four clusters in mind together with the critical core leadership actions described earlier in this section.

A principal who effectively turns around a school does so in a complex, challenging environment. Therefore, they must possess certain leadership competencies and perform critical actions to rapidly alter the achievement outcomes at a failing school. Leadership for school turnarounds is more than likely built upon a type of principal who adapts their style to the priority needs of a failing school to effect rapid improvement. This is not slow, incremental improvement work, but an urgent turnaround initiative; two entirely different processes that may require different kinds of leaders utilizing the tools of their trade.

To investigate whether these cluster leadership competencies were present in this cohort of turnaround principals; study results, critical leadership actions, and cluster competencies were compared in Table 13. Each cluster competency and critical leadership action is operationally defined.

It may be difficult to differentiate results that appear to be relevant for multiple critical leadership actions aligned to specific cluster competencies. For instance, solving instructional problems may have elements of achievement, analytical and conceptual
Table 13

**Comparison of Study Results, Cluster Competencies, and Critical Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Competency</th>
<th>Critical Leadership Actions</th>
<th>Study Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Driving for Results</strong>:</td>
<td>Achievement: set goals high to establish higher levels of performance and not allow anything to stand in the way.</td>
<td>Principals established systems and routines for teachers to collect and analyze student performance data regularly to inform next instructional moves to get results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative and Persistence: do more than is expected to accomplish a difficult task.</td>
<td>Once a goal was met, study principals were likely to raise the bar even higher. Critics were silenced by speedy success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring and Directiveness: set high expectations and hold all accountable to that level.</td>
<td>The principal developed and implemented an action plan where change was mandatory, not optional. Results were publicly shared, increasing the level of accountability for staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning Ahead: develop a plan to get results and avoid problems.</td>
<td>This action plan is based on data to identify the school’s high priority problems and tells everyone specifically what needs to be done differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analytical Thinking: break the problem apart to identify cause and effect</td>
<td>Data is collected and analyzed to identify and solve high-priority instructional problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptual Thinking: see patterns and relationships from the part to the whole</td>
<td>Principals encouraged discarding failed tactics and doing more of what works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact and Influence: act with the goal to change others</td>
<td>Principals concentrated on early successes to build momentum during the first year of the turnaround. They gained the support of key influences at the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team Leadership: facilitate strategic organizational learning through its members</td>
<td>Principals provided time for staff to collaborate using data to inform instructional planning. They helped staff to see a clear picture of success and its benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing Others: build the capacity of others for improved performance</td>
<td>Principals helped staff to better understand the needs of students the school serves; see the problems the status quo is causing; and agree that change is needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 13

(continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Competency</th>
<th>Critical Leadership Actions</th>
<th>Study Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Showing Confidence to Lead: enables staying focused, committed, and self-assured.  
_It matters because the principal must appear confident and competent through the critical early initial state of improvement._ | Self-Confidence: believe personally that the task will be completed satisfactorily | Principals required all staff to change allowing no one or any barrier to impede success. |

thinking, and self-confidence present. Leadership may require the ability to call on more than one cluster competency at a time and implement a variety of critical leadership actions enacted at the right time in the change process for a school turnaround to be successful.

Public Impact (2008) suggested that predicting the success of a turnaround leader could be determined by just five critical leadership actions. Thus, they suggested that candidates might be distinguished for school turnarounds. These critical leadership actions and relevant study results are analyzed in Table 14.

These study results in conjunction with existing research on effective school turnarounds suggest that cluster leadership competencies exist that may influence whether a principal is successful or not in turning around a failing school, the fifth research question. Survey results from the integrated principal and certificated staff surveys provided evidence for each of the competencies in all four clusters. Beyond that, a case was made in support of the claim that five critical leadership actions, representing multiple competencies, might be used as a predictor for who might effectively lead a school turnaround. This seems to suggest that turnaround principals can be distinguished from other principals before they are in turnaround situations.
Table 14.

Comparison of Critical Leadership Actions and Study Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Leadership Actions</th>
<th>Study Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievement</strong>: The drive and actions to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance despite barriers.</td>
<td>89% of principals stated that they had felt very successful or proud of something they had accomplished at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact and Influence</strong>: Acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking and actions of others.</td>
<td>78% of principals indicated that they had influenced other people in a way that was satisfying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monitoring and Directiveness</strong>: The ability to set clear expectations and to hold others accountable for performance.</td>
<td>78% of principals shared they had set a standard for someone else’s work and held that person accountable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Leadership</strong>: Assuming authoritative leadership of a group for the benefit of the organization.</td>
<td>78% of principals felt that they had led a team of people to accomplish work that was satisfying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Confidence</strong>: A personal belief in one’s ability to accomplish tasks and the actions that reflect that belief.</td>
<td>89% of principals felt that they had addressed the situation to their satisfaction when another person or people stood in their way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another research question addressed whether leadership contextual factors may influence whether a school turnaround occurs for schools with comparable profiles. This analysis must include consideration for the context of the state, the cohort of 28 substantive turnarounds, the nine principal survey respondents, and the 15 certificated staff survey respondents in order to properly address this question, central to this study. This is where turnaround leadership appears to be best defined descriptively.

It now seems evident that the context of schools labeled failing and remaining in PI was much the same as the schools that were deemed effective turnarounds as they exited PI. Their profiles were comparable across the state; in the 28 southern California turnarounds; and at the schools of study principals and the one school with certificated staff that completed a survey. Yet, they experienced different academic outcomes for their students. Although this study was not comparative in nature, the leaders of this
cohort of substantive turnarounds situated in southern California depicted similar profiles in their style and practices that can be further defined within four clusters of leadership turnaround competencies. So, one must wonder what led to the turnaround since their profiles were basically equivalent. The results suggest that the difference was found in the leadership context.

The similarities of the contexts of both failing and improving schools across the state and within the study’s cohort are displayed in Figures 37 through 39. All survey respondents hailed from these same California public K-8 schools and therefore represent successful turnaround schools. Commonalities appear to exist for failing and turnaround schools.

It is noteworthy that the numbers of schools that are either effective, failing, or turnarounds are almost equivalent (Figure 37). Statistically, this is likely significant as the sample included almost 900 schools. Once again, this data suggest the almost impossible challenge that turnaround leaders face when they enter a failing school and expect to successfully transform it as a school turnaround. Also, that once a school is failing it becomes more difficult for the leader to achieve this turnaround; demonstrated by the larger and larger numbers of school entering later years of PI over time (over 70%) as seen in Figure 37. The next logical question would be regarding the almost 40% of schools deemed effective and to determine whether they are on the brink of failing or not.

Subsequently, the similar performance trends for the state and the cohort schools are shared (Figure 38). It cannot be ignored that the state and cohort performance averages for AYP are below the annual targets for both groups; indicating that significant achievement gaps exist for students attending failing schools as well as those just exiting
Figure 37. Comparison by selected performance levels in California.

Figure 38. Comparison of performance indicators for state and cohort schools.
PI. It is interesting that students attending cohort schools, representing a substantive turnaround, scored lower than the state average for ELA yet scored higher than the state average in mathematics. This may be indicative of the influence of the larger numbers of minimum numbers of students for targeted subgroups for inclusion in this study and/or sample size. For this reason, the demographics for California turnaround schools are displayed in Figure 39. For 2012, this included five additional schools, all situated in northern California, originally excluded from this study as demographics did not meet study criteria.

When the state, California turnaround schools, and cohort schools demographics are compared, the similarities are more apparent for the turnaround schools throughout California and located in southern California. This is likely due to the differing demographic profiles for effective schools and failing/turnaround schools. Historically, schools with higher numbers of students of color living in poverty mastering academic English have experienced difficulty in meeting the needs of the student to produce
academic results comparable to students without these demographic profiles. This is further evidence that the leadership context is the difference in producing results in these schools. Since this study did not review data for either effective schools or still failing schools, it may be that the leadership context is influencing the performance levels of these schools as well. What can be said, based on results from this study, is that turnaround leaders exact results where others have failed through their cluster leadership competencies in conjunction with their implementation of core leadership actions. These turnaround principals demonstrated a balanced leadership style that supported establishing a modern effective school using savvy change tactics to produce a viable school turnaround.

Of course, salient questions remain. Can the turnaround be sustained over time? How does continuous improvement continue in these schools? Can turnaround leaders be trained, replicated, or identified? Do nuanced differences exist for the exact leadership context for the various phases of school turnaround? Does the effectiveness of leadership for all schools actually hinge on the leadership context and that leader’s predisposition and/or ability to adapt as the school contextual factors and processes change? What are the subtle differences that distinguish hard working principals who seem to be taking all the prescribed steps toward change and fall short from those that actually create a turnaround in performance? These salient questions are fodder for future research and practice.

**Implications of this Study**

Turnaround leadership is a dynamic blend of the *what*, the *how* and the *who*. Study results suggest that the effective turnaround principal is the one who can establish
the characteristics of a modern effective school using transformational change through
their understanding of organizational theory as they navigate the school to higher levels
of performance and then require further continuous improvement. Their priority is to
provide high-quality data-driven instruction built from early successes to gain momentum
and to silence critics almost immediately. These leaders rely upon influencers within the
school to help push the needed change and escape the status quo that is ingraining the
school’s failure. Nothing and no one stands in their way of getting results. These
principals show confidence in a highly critical and likely volatile public arena while
expecting success for their school. These principals are successful where almost
everyone else has already failed. Turnaround principals are the hope for today’s failing
schools. Turnaround principals likely possess differing levels of the identified ten
competencies in four key clusters. They utilize these cluster competencies in tandem
with critical leadership actions that matter. These cluster competencies and turnaround
actions together are the what, how, and who of school turnarounds. Therefore,
turnaround principals may serve as the beacons for failing schools. Other principals can
then set their course to drive effective turnaround initiatives. Districts may then be able
to inform hiring practices to best match the school’s needs with the leader best equipped
to accomplish the school’s mission, vision, and goals.

Recommendations for Practitioners

There are not enough proven turnaround principals to lead the high numbers of
failing schools in existence. The general approach to date has been to change leaders at
failing schools every so many years and hope the newest leader effects change and can
turnaround the school. By chance, that appears to have worked in 28 southern California
schools in 2012. Evidence was not found that these leaders were selected for their turnaround accomplishments as none of them had ever turned a school around before. In fact, approximately equal numbers were assigned to their first school as principal or had been a principal at another school for 9 or 10 years. These turnaround principals figured out how to turnaround a failing school for the first time, and for half of that group on their first try.

As suggested, these principals differed in their leadership context as the school profiles were found to be quite similar. They appear to have had a predisposition or ability along four specific cluster leadership competencies and they implemented critical leadership actions that positively influenced the school turnaround. When schools that fall short of reaching turnaround status are studied, will we find dramatically different leadership practices at work, or will the differences be subtle and difficult to discern. It is logical to assume underachieving schools may be able to be sorted into these two groups and implications for next steps in research and practice will evolve accordingly.

As a result it is recommended that all principals attempting a school turnaround seek to become aware, build capacity, and extend their implementation of these competencies and actions. Further, these competencies and actions may support improvement initiatives in any school and should therefore be adopted by principals in general. Although the incremental improvement may be different than urgent turnaround initiatives, they may rely on similar platforms to yield academic results. The literature does not yet exist on this topic. Districts may wish to consider establishing interview protocols around these competencies and actions to hire principals who likely will be effective. Beyond that level, the five identified critical leadership actions may predict
whether a principal would be effective in turning around a school as they are derived from multiple competencies. One more recommendation would be to consider aligning the districts professional development plan for principals as well as the evaluation system around these cluster leadership competencies and critical leadership actions. This would assist with building capacity of principals; holding them accountable for results; and discontinuing the practice of keeping a principal in place who was not able to lead the turnaround without the staff, students, and communities at failing schools enduring the endless turnover of leaders.

Universities may wish to consider founding their educational programs on the principles of these cluster leadership competencies and critical leadership actions as they recruit, educate, and graduate future school leaders, as principals or central office administrators. This may reduce the numbers of ineffective principals hired in the first place or may result in better prepared principals as they enter the profession.

Suggestions for Further Research

At this time, much further research is needed to better understand several things about leadership for school turnarounds. As mentioned earlier, several novel salient questions arose out of this research project. They are repeated here:

- Can the turnaround be sustained over time?
- Can successful future school turnarounds be predicted?
- Can turnaround leaders be trained, replicated, or identified?
- Do nuanced differences exist for the exact leadership context for the various phases of school turnaround?
• Does the effectiveness of leadership for all schools actually hinge on the leadership context and that leader’s predisposition and/or ability to adapt as the school contextual factors and processes change?

• How do principals in underachieving schools compare to the results found in this study?

The research for school turnarounds is still quite young. The answers to these questions would substantially improve the knowledge base which in turn would better inform practitioners in the practice of school turnarounds. Further research can be grouped around a few essential topics: sustainability and continuous improvement of school turnarounds; matching turnaround leaders to schools; training school turnaround leaders; and defining leadership contexts for school success. As for this researcher next investigation, beginning where this study ended would be to seek to enter five to ten of these schools and any newly identified substantive turnaround schools using the same study criteria for 2013 to conduct case study research to more deeply explore the salient findings from this study using interviews and observation. The alternative is to conduct a comparative study, including newly identified 2013 substantive turnarounds, to confirm whether the leadership context is what was different in turnaround schools and still failing schools. Either study, would utilize a mixed methods design that supported the integration of numeric and textual data to develop a deeper understanding of either described phenomenon of personal and professional interest related to school turnarounds.
Limitations of this Study

The limitations for this study are shared here. First, time was the primary limitation. The extensive data collection and analysis limited the ability of this researcher to initiate a mixed methods study. Second, it was difficult to get cohort schools to agree to participate in a planned case study strand that would have supported delving deeper into this turnaround phenomenon through direct interviews and observations to confirm whether or not the survey results were valid. Third, although response rates to the surveys were adequate, it would have been more desirable to have higher participation rates, especially to have had certificated staff from multiple cohort schools participate to provide a broader substantiated view of the turnaround principals work in these schools. Fourth, the sample size limited the ability to generalize beyond this purposely targeted population, especially through the use of inferential statistics. Fifth, while a substantial amount of data was collected relative to the leadership styles and practices of these effective principals, this was not a comparative study on leadership. Thus, it is not known whether principals in less effective schools would yield similar, subtle or dramatically different results.

Although the limitations were constrictive in reporting results, overall, for a small focused study, they did not appear to minimize the value of this study. The results provided much information about California, southern California in particular, and specifically the self-perceptions of nine principals who led recent substantive turnarounds, and the beneficial perspective on a single school’s certificated staff, that along with their principal had experienced a successful school turnaround. When few examples exist, the researcher must use the available data to their ability to learn more
about the phenomenon. This was believed to be accomplished in this study of Leadership for School Turnarounds.

**Salient Findings and Conclusions**

This study of substantive southern California school turnarounds revealed several salient finding which led to key conclusions that will be presented next. As schools face failure for their students, the enduring status quo and a bleak future prevails. Effective turnaround leaders do exist in small numbers as evidence by the two percent successful turnaround rate for both the state and this cohort. Although the data suggests that schools typically take six years to turn around, many do so in just a few years and others take significantly longer. Nonetheless, the leadership context founded in cluster leadership competencies and critical leadership actions are the effective tools for these turnaround leaders to date. Questions remain whether these turnarounds are sustainable as many earlier turnarounds have already failed again as the initial search for schools to include in this study revealed. Can this leader turnarounds another failing school since this was their first? Assuming they can lead other school turnarounds, can they increase their rate? Can the need to turnaround failing schools be abated through earlier identification and intervention?

A proactive leadership stance founded upon the knowledge base of how to turnaround a school appears promising. Sustaining and turning around schools are likely still linked to these same cluster competencies and critical leadership actions. If so, then a novel hybrid approach to school turnaround work derived from leadership context to establish and maintain modern effective schools using organizational theory may have been described. Moreover, this approach might make a difference in not just turning
around a failing school, but limiting the risk for a school failing in the first place. This would be beneficial for students across the state and possibly the nation as the transition to Common Core State Standards takes place.

**Key Findings**

A logic flow is presented to highlight key findings for this study. In it lays the justification for the interpretation of study results; implications for practitioners, district leadership, and university faculty; as well as to suggest future research on the topic.

- Even the most failing school of an enduring nature can be successfully turned around, of which students attending 98% of current failing schools still await.
- Principals can turnaround a school on their first try or even if they have been unsuccessful at prior schools. This is not to say it will be easy, just that it is possible.
- Turnaround principals exhibit cluster leadership competencies in four domains: Driving for Results, Problem Solving, Influencing for Results, and Showing Confidence to Lead. These may be predispositions or ability, not studied here, but defined in the existing research (Public Impact, 2008) as either patterns of thinking or patterns of action.
- Two of these cluster leadership competencies were particularly evident during the school turnarounds studied; Driving for Results and Problem Solving. Influencing for Results and Showing Confidence to Lead were present also, but not indicated at the same high levels.
- Cluster leadership competencies consist of ten competencies that overlap at times. These are not sufficient alone to turnaround a school. Simultaneous
execution of critical leadership actions, separate but related to these competencies, must occur. This may be a result of what research on effective school turnarounds (Public Impact, 2008) referred to as either patterns of thinking or patterns of action that this particular research did not qualify at the outset.

- Principals of effective school turnarounds share a common repertoire of basic leadership practices. They also rely on the same processes of staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions to indirectly influence student achievement outcomes. As mentioned earlier, turnaround principals display a small handful of personal traits or leadership competencies to accomplish this impossible work.

- School turnarounds are grounded in three thematic components: becoming a modern effective school (the what); transforming a failing school (the how); and leadership for learning (the who). It appears that all three must be present, as was the case, in the cohort of southern California schools included in this study.

- Leadership for school turnarounds reflects a principal who effectively turns around a school in a complex, challenging environment. Therefore, they must possess certain leadership competencies and perform critical actions to rapidly alter the achievement outcomes at a failing school.

- Five critical leadership actions (Achievement, Impact and Influence, Monitoring and Directiveness, Team Leadership, and Self-Confidence) founded upon a combination of multiple competencies may serve to predict
which principals will lead effective turnarounds. If valid, then hiring protocols can be implemented to hire the right principal for needed school turnarounds.

- The leadership context, at least for these cohort schools, appears to suggest that where similar demographic profiles exist, leadership context is the variable. This finding is likely the most crucial as it may describe the next generation of principals for effective schools through the implication of Common Core State Standards. Perhaps these turnaround principals will demonstrate not only how to turnaround a failing school but how to prevent a school failing in the first place.

This logic flow identified the most salient findings for this research project. Collectively they may lead to better schooling for all students. In the next section, conclusions will be shared.

**Essential Conclusions**

Too many schools are failing. Too many students attend schools that do not follow through on the American promise to ready them to be successful in college or career. The salient findings for this research provide some hope where desperation currently exists for the students who attend schools in desperate need of turnaround. These students cannot nor should they have to wait any longer.

There are few current examples of these principals or schools existing, at least in southern California today. Principals exist who have the predisposition and/or the ability to turn these schools around. More can be identified or trained to influence school turnarounds. Leadership context matters. Leadership for school turnarounds (the who),
although indirectly, remains the catalyst for change through their understanding of modern effective schools (the what) and organizational theory to drive the change process (the how) to transform a failing school. The turnaround leader then has the needed tool bag of clustered turnaround competencies at hand and knows how and when to implement those critical leadership actions to influence school turnarounds.
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APPENDIX A

Survey for Principals

Leadership for School Turnaround Project
School Survey for Principal

The first set of questions asks about your experience as an educator and about your school.

1. Counting this school year, how many years have you been principal at this school?

2. How many years have you been a principal at other schools?

3. What is the total number of students enrolled at this school on the first day of this school year?

4. I am currently principal of …
   a. An elementary school
   b. A middle/junior high school
   c. Other (Please specify) _______________________________________

5. In what community type is your school located?
   a. City
   b. Suburb
   c. Rural Area
6. In what year did your school exit Program Improvement?

7. How many consecutive years was this school in Program Improvement?
   a. Three to five years
   b. Six to ten years
   c. Eleven or more years

8. Were you the principal for the entire period that the school was in Program Improvement?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. The district played an instrumental role in supporting your school’s exit from Program Improvement
   a. True
   b. False

This section asks about your experiences in driving for results at your current school.

10. How frequently do site level teams meet to:
   a. Analyze data to identify areas of instructional need
   b. Plan instruction for students
   c. Develop common assessments to measure student progress
   d. Monitor student progress
   e. Report student progress

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<tr>
<th>Daily</th>
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11. When did the first sign of early success become evident to you?
   a. During the first six months
   b. Between the seventh and twelfth month
   c. During the second year
   d. During the third year
   e. Unsure as to when
12. As the principal, I use early successes to gain the momentum needed for continuous school improvement.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

13. As principal, I encourage

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The use of new strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Measuring results</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Discarding failed tactics</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Doing more of what works</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

14. I set the standard for the work at the school and hold staff accountable for adhering to that standard.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

15. When the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was mandatory, not optional.

   a. True
   b. False

16. Once a goal is met, I am likely to raise the bar even higher.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

17. School resources are focused on where they will have the most impact on critical results.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
This section explores problem solving approaches utilized at your school to raise the level of student achievement.

18. Who collects and analyzes data? Please check all that apply.

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Teachers
- Other certificated staff

19. I developed an action plan for the school based on data that identified high priority problems.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

20. Using the school’s action plan, everyone knows specifically what they need to do differently.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

21. As the principal, I publicly share results with various stakeholders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff are held accountable for those results</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort is created for those who do not make needed changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition is provided to those who are achieving success</td>
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</table>

22. I do not let a barrier stand in the way to getting something done.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree
The next section seeks your opinion about your and other people’s experiences as you influence for results at your school.

23. In my role as principal, I have helped staff to:

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<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Better understand the needs of students the school serves</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Become more successful in carrying out their job or their career</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. See a clear picture of success and its benefits</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Feel motivated to contribute their discretionary effort</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. See the problems that the status quo is causing</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Agree that change is needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses to more time working towards results</td>
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</table>

24. Early, visible wins at this school made it harder for others to oppose further change.

a. True
b. False

25. I gained the support of trusted staff that in turn influenced those who might oppose change.

a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Disagree
d. Strongly disagree
This section asks you to share your thoughts, feelings, and opinions on your overall leadership competencies and actions taken to improve student achievement outcomes at your school.

26. What actions have you, as principal, taken that has led to improved student achievement outcomes at this school? Please mark all that apply.

☐ Helped people feel successful or proud of an accomplishment at work
☐ Influenced other people in a way that was satisfying to you
☐ Set a standard for someone else’s work and held that person accountable
☐ Led a group or team of people to accomplish work that is satisfying to you
☐ Addressed the situation when another person or people stood in the way of getting something done
☐ Helped someone else become more successful in carrying out their job or their career
☐ Solved a problem or figured something out that involved a lot of information, data, or steps
☐ Confronted with a lot of information and had to figure out what was important
☐ Planned ahead to accomplish something satisfying at work
☐ Accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles

27. Please identify and describe the single most important action you took to rapidly improve student achievement results.

28. Please rank from one to four, with one being the highest ranking, your competence and/or actions for effectively turning around this school.

_____ Driving for Results
_____ Influencing for Results
_____ Problem Solving
_____ Showing Confidence

This final section asks for demographic information.

29. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male
30. Which race/ethnicity best describes you (please select only one)?
   _____ American Indian or Alaskan Native
   _____ Asian
   _____ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   _____ Black or African American
   _____ Hispanic
   _____ White or Caucasian
   _____ Other (please specify)

31. What is the highest level of educational attainment that you have completed?
   a. Bachelor’s Degree
   b. Masters’ Degree
   c. Doctoral Degree

Thank you for completing this school survey for a study to learn about your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward your leadership competencies and actions during school improvement initiatives. Your time and effort is much appreciated!

All questions for this survey are based on content from leadership competencies identified in School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success, Public Impact (2008), Competence at Work, Spencer and Spencer (1993), and leadership actions outlined in School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organization Improvement, Public Impact (2007).
APPENDIX B

Survey for Other Certificated Staff

Leadership for School Turnaround Project School Survey for Certificated Staff

Instructions for Completing the School Survey

The purpose of this study is to learn about your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards the principal’s leadership competencies and actions during school improvement initiatives. Please complete the survey either online or using the provided paper version.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lorelei Olsen, lead project researcher, at 858-735-7688, or email, loreleiolsen@gmail.com.

The first set of questions asks about your experience as an educator and about your school.

1. What is the job title for your current position?
   a. Assistant Principal
   b. Teacher
   c. Other Certificated Staff (Please specify)

2. Counting this school year, how many years have you been a member of this school’s staff?

3. How many years have you been assigned to other schools?

4. What is the total number of students enrolled at this school on the first day this school year?


5. I am an educator at …
   a. An elementary school
   b. A middle/junior high school
   c. Other (Please specify) _______________________________________

6. In what community type is your school located?
   a. City
   b. Suburb
   c. Rural Area

7. In what year did your school exit Program Improvement?

8. How many consecutive years was this school in Program Improvement?
   a. Three to five years
   b. Six to ten years
   c. Eleven or more years

9. Were you a member of the faculty for the entire period that the school was in Program Improvement?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. Are you currently a member of your school’s leadership team?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. The district played an instrumental role in supporting your school’s exit from program improvement
    a. True
    b. False

This section asks about your experiences in driving for results at your current school.

12. When the school’s action plan for improving student achievement was implemented, change was mandatory, not optional.
    a. True
    b. False
13. As a member of a site level team, how frequently do you:

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<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Analyze data to identify areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>of instructional need</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Plan instruction for students</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Develop common assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>to measure student progress</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Monitor student progress</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Report student progress</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</table>

14. When did the first sign of early success with the current principal become evident to you?

- a. During the first six months
- b. Between the seventh and twelfth month
- c. During the second year
- d. During the third year
- e. Unsure as to when

15. The principal encourages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The use of new strategies</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Measuring results</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Discarding failed tactics</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Doing more of what works</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

16. The principal sets the standard for the work at the school and holds staff accountable for adhering to that standard.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree

17. Once a goal is met, the principal is likely to raise the bar even higher.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
18. School resources are focused on where they will have the most impact on critical results.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

This section explores problem solving approaches utilized at your school to raise the level of student achievement.

19. Who collects and analyzes data? Please check all that apply.

   □ Principal
   □ Assistant Principal
   □ Teachers
   □ Other certificated staff

20. The principal developed an action plan for the school based on data that identified high priority problems.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

21. Using the school’s action plan, everyone knows specifically what they need to do differently.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

22. When the principal publicly shares results with various stakeholders:
   a. Staff are held accountable for those results
   b. Discomfort is created for those who do not make needed changes
   c. Recognition is provided to those who are achieving success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff are held accountable for those results</td>
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<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discomfort is created for those who do not make needed changes</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition is provided to those who are achieving success</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. The principal does not let a barrier stand in his/her way to getting something done.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

The next section seeks your opinions about your and other people’s experiences as the principal influences for results at your school.

24. The principal has helped staff to:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
   a. Better understand the needs of students the school serves | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
   b. Become more successful in carrying out their job or their career | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
   c. See a clear picture of success and its benefits | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
   d. Feel motivated to contribute their discretionary effort | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
   e. See the problems that the status quo is causing | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
   f. Agree that change is needed | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
   g. Spend less time on power plays, blaming, and excuses to more time working towards results | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

25. Early, visible wins at this school made it harder for others to oppose further change.

   a. True
   b. False

26. The principal gained the support of trusted staff who in turn influenced those who might oppose change.

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Disagree
   d. Strongly disagree

27. The principal influences people in a way that is satisfying to you.

   a. True
   b. False
This section asks you to share your thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the principal’s overall leadership competencies and actions taken to improve student achievement outcomes at your school.

28. What actions has your principal taken that has led to improved student achievement outcomes at this school? Please mark all that apply.

☐ Helped people feel successful or proud of an accomplishment at work
☐ Influenced other people in a way that was satisfying to you
☐ Set a standard for someone else’s work and held that person accountable
☐ Led a group or team of people to accomplish work that is satisfying to you
☐ Addressed the situation when another person or people stood in the way of getting something done
☐ Helped someone else become more successful in carrying out their job or their career
☐ Solved a problem or figured something out that involved a lot of information, data, or steps
☐ Confronted with a lot of information and had to figure out what was important
☐ Planned ahead to accomplish something satisfying at work
☐ Accomplished something satisfying at work despite one or more obstacles

29. Please identify and describe the single most important action the principal took to rapidly improve student achievement results.

30. Please rank from one to four, with one being the highest ranking, the principal’s competence and/or actions for effectively turning around this school.

_____ Driving for Results
_____ Influencing for Results
_____ Problem Solving
_____ Showing Confidence
This final section asks for demographic information.

31. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male

32. Which race/ethnicity best describes you (please select only one)?
   ______ American Indian or Alaskan Native
   ______ Asian
   ______ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   ______ Black or African American
   ______ Hispanic
   ______ White or Caucasian
   ______ Other (please specify)

33. What is the highest level of educational attainment that you have completed?
   a. Bachelor’s Degree
   b. Masters’ Degree
   c. Doctoral Degree

Thank you for completing this school survey for a study to learn about your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards the principal’s leadership competencies and actions during school improvement initiatives. Your time and effort is much appreciated!

All questions for this survey are based on content from leadership competencies identified in *School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success*, Public Impact (2008), *Competence at Work*, Spencer and Spencer (1993), and leadership actions outlined in *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organization Improvement*, Public Impact (2007).
October 18, 2012

Student Researcher: Mary Lorelei Olsen
Faculty Researcher: Dr. Purnpian
Department: Educational Leadership

Protocol Title: Leadership for School Turnarounds
Contract/grant number: N/A
IRB Number: 395088
Risk Level: No greater than minimal
Regulatory Determination: Approved per 45 CFR 46.110, Categories 5 & 7

Dear Ms. Olsen:

The referenced protocol was reviewed and approved in accordance with SDSU’s Assurance and federal requirements pertaining to human subjects protections within the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46; 21 CFR 50). This review is valid through October 18, 2013, and applies to the conditions and procedures described in your protocol. Please notify the IRB office if your status as an SDSU-affiliate changes while conducting this research study (you are no longer an SDSU faculty member, staff member or student).

Please note your expiration date: To request continued recruitment, data collection and/or data analyses, a Report of Progress must be submitted prior to the expiration date of your study. A lapse in approval requires that all research with human subjects be suspended until approval is obtained and may result in a temporary hold on funds, if your study is funded. The investigator will be out of compliance with federal regulation and university policy if human subjects continue to be involved in this project without a valid IRB approval.

The approved consent form has been uploaded to your protocol file within the viRB system, within the Supporting Documents section. This document bears the SDSU IRB’s stamp of approval. Print a copy of this stamped form to use when documenting informed consent from research participants. Changes may not be made to the consent document without prior review and approval of the IRB. You are required to keep signed copies of the consent document for three years after your project has been completed or terminated.
San Diego State University Leadership for School Turnarounds Research Project

February 8, 2013

Lorelei Olsen
San Diego State
Educational Leadership
Doctoral Student
(858) 735-7688
loreleiolsen@gmail.com

Supervising Faculty:
Dr. Ian Pumpian
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182
San Diego State, North Education 166
(619) 972-2525
ipumpian@mail.sdsu.edu

Dear School Turnaround Principal:

I am writing to ask for your critical participation in a research project I am conducting as a doctoral student. As a practicing principal myself, I understand how impossibly busy you are and the likelihood of the large number of requests you receive to complete numerous surveys for students like myself. I am asking you to complete just one more.

I know that you and your school have a powerful story to tell where there are few examples of school success like yours. After repeated years in Program Improvement, your school exited. Congratulations! I want to tell your story! I hope you will view this survey as something worthwhile, an opportunity to capture the countless hours of dedicated and effective work done by you and your staff on behalf of your students and to share what made the difference.
You are one of only 28 school principals of either an elementary or middle school located in Southern California who has been selected purposely to provide your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards leadership practices and styles utilized by school principals during effective substantive school turnarounds.

Why were you and your school selected purposely? I conducted a screening of Southern California’s 1,276 public schools to locate schools that met all four of these stringent criteria for this study: (1) had exited Program Improvement in 2012, 2011, or 2010; (2) had been in Program Improvement for a minimum of three consecutive years; (3) met all 2012 AYP targets; (4) met all 2012 API growth targets. Only 28 (2%) California schools (23 elementary and 5 middle) met all of these criteria. This level of accomplishment you and your school have achieved in changing outcomes for students is rare. If each of the 28 schools was to participate by completing the survey, the data gathered would likely provide essential information on effective leadership practices and actions for successful school turnarounds.

The purpose of the study is to better understand how principals turn around schools, exploring the possible existence of cluster leadership practices utilized in conjunction with successful implementation of organizational theory.

I plan to describe effective substantive school turnarounds, to explore how the principal impacts that turnaround, and which leadership practices and actions matter.

In gaining a better understanding of this process, I think it is important to obtain the perspective of principals and their certificated staffs who have experienced an effective school turnaround. I estimate that completing the survey will take just 30 minutes of your time. If you choose to participate and are willing to distribute the survey to your credentialed
staff, we would have an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the process from those who have been effective in improving educational outcomes for their students.

The survey can be completed by you and your certificated staff either via a web-based survey or using paper and pencil. Simple directions for completion are included on each survey.

The links for the web-based survey are:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SchoolTurnaroundPrincipal for the principal survey and https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TurnaroundCertificatedStaff for the certificated staff survey. It is not necessary to notify me of intended or actual participation as the survey portion will be anonymous.

For your convenience, should either you or any of your certificated staff complete the survey using paper and pencil, I have included a self-addressed envelope with postage for your convenience. Respondents may choose individually how to complete the survey. Data will be collected from all respondents either from the web-based survey or the paper and pencil version returned in the provided envelope.

I will also engage site visits to three to five schools for a more in depth study using qualitative measures of semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. If you are interested in participating in this portion of the study, please contact me directly at either 858-735-7688 or loreleiolsen@gmail.com to seek additional information or to express a willingness to have your school participate in this unique study of effective substantive school turnarounds. I anticipate a high level of school interest in participation in the qualitative portion of the study. Don’t miss out! I assure the highest level of confidentiality for all participants throughout the study.
I look forward to your assistance with this project that I believe will make a difference in improving student outcomes at all schools. Thank you in advance for your willingness to share you and your school’s story of success.

Sincerely,

Lorelei Olsen
Doctoral Student
San Diego State University
San Diego State University Consent to Act as a Research Subject *Leadership for School Turnarounds*

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

*Investigators:* The investigator for this study is Mary Lorelei Olsen who holds a Masters of Educational Leadership degree. The investigator is a current doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Department at San Diego State University. Dr. Ian Pumpian is supervising the research.

*Purpose of the Study:* The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of school principals on effective school turnarounds, specifically to better understand how to turnaround schools by identifying leadership practices and styles to effectively influence student achievement outcomes.

A total of 550 potential subjects are being recruited for the survey portion of this study. Of those potential subjects, 110 will be invited to participate in the concurrent qualitative portion of the study including semi-structured interviews. The eligibility criteria for inclusion of subjects in this study are the potential subject is currently employed in a public elementary or secondary school located in California that have experienced a substantive turnaround during the last three years and were formerly in Program
Improvement for a minimum of three years as defined under No Child Left Behind legislation.

Description of the Study: The proposed research is a mixed methods approach with a quantitative survey portion and a qualitative multi-case study portion. Participants in both portions of this study will be selected using non-probability, purposeful sampling for the purpose of studying principals who have led substantive school turnarounds.

Subjects from 10 to 20 California elementary and secondary schools identified as substantive turnarounds using data from the California Department of Education Standardized Testing and Reporting website will be invited to complete a survey during the quantitative portion. Concurrently, three to five of these same school certificated staffs will be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, field observations and data analysis.

Screening procedures will include a roster of certificated staff provided by the principal for the school year that the school was in the final year of turnaround and for the school years (one, two, or three) after the school exited Program Improvement for the purpose of identifying school certificated staff that were on staff during those years for inclusion in the study. A screening checklist for potential subjects will be mainlined by the investigator in a secure master file. All screening data will be destroyed once study subjects have been recruited.

The research will be conducted at the school site where the certificated staff is employed. The expected duration of the subject's participation is approximately 30 minutes to complete the survey either by hand or online. The survey is comprised of 33 items using multiple choice, rank, and short responses. For those subjects participating in a semi-
structured interview, the expected duration for participation is approximately one and a half to two hours for either the individual (administrators) or focus group (certificated staff other than administrators) interviews. The semi-structured interviews include 12 to 18 short answer and open-ended questions.

*What is Experimental in this Study:* None of the procedures used in this study are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

*Risks or Discomforts:* Some minimal risks are associated with participation in this study. Since all potential subjects are in the place of employment, the questions may raise concern on the part of either the principal or the certificated staff due to the supervisor/subordinate relationship that exists. A concern of work related negative impacts associated with participation may exist, such as reassignment, reduced opportunities, or less positive working relations with supervisor and/or peers. If you begin to feel uncomfortable, you may discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently. Precautions and safeguards are built into this study to reduce the likelihood of harm to subjects. The maintenance of subject confidentiality and privacy will be maintained throughout and after completion of this study. The investigator will stop the research and immediately consult with the research supervisor should the investigator suspect any level of harm to subjects. The study would only resume once the likelihood of harm was once again limited.

*Benefits of the Study:* This study may contribute new information to the body of existing research on educational leadership. Understanding how a school leader turns around a
school may provide essential information for federal, state, district, and school leaders. It might positively influence educational policy and make all schools a better place to learn, achieve, and succeed for all students. Subjects may experience personal satisfaction from participation in this study as they provide information on how their school experienced a substantive school turnaround. I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowed by law. Procedures will be used to protect the anonymity of survey respondents. This investigator will not know the identity of survey respondents and no coding will be utilized. For the three to five school certificated staffs participating in semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis, procedures will be utilized to protect subject confidentiality. Only personal information that is essential to the research will be recorded. A coding system will be used to protect personal information that is collected. The personally identifiable data will be stored securely at the investigator’s home in a locked office with no other’s granted access beyond those faculty supervising the research project. Coding will take place after the subject has provided informed consent. Once data has been processed, the master code will be destroyed. Audio recordings will be used for transcription purposes during semi-structured interviews. No plan exists to use these audio recordings outside the scope of this study. The investigator will use safe and secure transport of data from the research site to the storage location.

Federal regulations require that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) periodically review all approved and continuing projects that involve human subjects. To ensure that your
rights as a subject are being protected in this study, it is possible that representatives of the Institutional Review Board may come to this research site to inspect study records.

Incentives to Participate: The participant will not be paid to participate in this study.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact...Lorelei Olsen at 858-735-7688.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Division of Research Administration San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

Consent to Participate: The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Board's stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your
mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy
of this consent form. *You have also been given a copy of "The Research Participant's
Bill of Rights." You have been told that by signing this consent form you are not giving
up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)    Date

Signature of Participant    Date

Signature of Investigator     Date
APPENDIX F

Initial Recruitment Email

To: [Email]

From: "lorelialiolson@gmail.com via surveymonkey.com" <member@surveymonkey.com>

Subject: Reminder: Take the San Diego State University: Leadership for School Turnaround Project Principal Survey

Body: It is not too late to take the Leadership for School Turnaround Project: Principal Survey. Our participation goal remains 100%. The survey is simple to complete and takes less than 15 to 20 minutes on average for each participant.

Why is your participation so important to us?

As the principal of one of only 28 schools in all of southern California to have successfully exited Program Improvement during 2012 after three to fourteen years of participation, you hold the key to successful school turnaround practice!

Since each of these 28 schools has done the impossible...we want to include your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes as a principal who made a difference for all students. The purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of effective leadership competencies and actions utilized during substantive school turnarounds.

Only you can help us answer our research questions since so few principals have met the turnaround challenges effectively. Please help us learn more. Your participation is critical to our study. Your responses are completely confidential. We appreciate your support in reaching our 100% participation goal for such a small group of purposely selected principals.

Here is a link to the survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/...

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, the project study leader, Lorelei Olsen, at lorelialiolson@gmail.com or 858-735-7668, should you require any assistance or have unanswered questions about this study. Our goal remains 100% participation.

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx
APPENDIX G

Final Recruitment Email

To: [Email]

From: "loreleiolsen@gmail.com via surveymonkey.com" <member@surveymonkey.com>

Subject: Last Chance to take the San Diego State University Leadership for School Turnaround Project: Principal Survey

Body: Last Chance! This is the final opportunity to take the Leadership for School Turnaround Project: Principal Survey. Our participation goal remains 100%. We are almost there, as most of the 28 principals have completed the survey.

As a school principal, I understand the demands better than most others that you face in meeting the needs of diverse students, their families, site and district staff as well as community members. I would not ask you to give your valuable time to complete a survey that would not make a difference for student achievement across our state and possibly our nation.

Please consider completing the simple survey today that takes less than 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Your participation really matters!

Why is your participation so important to us?

As the principal of one of only 28 schools in all of southern California to have successfully exited Program Improvement during 2012 after three to fourteen years of participation, you hold the key to successful school turnaround practice!

Since each of these 28 schools has done the impossible...we want to include your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes as a principal who made a difference for all students. The purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of effective leadership competencies and actions utilized during substantive school turnarounds.

Only you can help us answer our research questions since so few principals have met the turnaround challenge effectively. Please help us learn more. Your participation is critical to our study. Your responses are completely confidential.

We appreciate your assistance in reaching our 100% participation goal for such a small group of purposely selected principals. You and your school have such an amazing story to tell. By completing the survey, we can learn from you how you lead an effective school turnaround where so many others have failed. Then, through the essential analysis of 28 stories of success, we will be able to share the specific leadership actions and/or competencies that made the difference. WILL you support us in sharing your work by completing the survey? THANK YOU in advance for your critical participation in our research project.