

PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP EFFECT ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'  
LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this applied study was to further understand the problem of poor literacy achievement among high school students and to design interventions for school leaders to impact and improve high school students' literacy. Fifteen Florida secondary principals' self-perceived instructional leadership behaviors were scored using the three dimensions of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The independent variables were the principal's instructional behaviors, and the dependent variable was sophomore students' Florida Standards Assessment English Language Arts school level scores for the 2016–2017 school year. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted using four open-ended questions to gather further information about instructional leadership behaviors that contributed to students' literacy achievement. The study is grounded in the research of Bandura's social cognitive theory. The survey, demographic, and student achievement data were analyzed through the use of Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. Interviews were transcribed resulting in six common themes to all participants. Results revealed no significant relationship between the instructional leadership behaviors of Florida high principals and student reading achievement levels.

*Keywords:* adolescent literacy, instructional leadership, Just Read, Florida!, principal turnover, Read to Succeed Act, secondary literacy strategies, self-efficacy

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### **Dedication**

To my dad and mom, Henry and Janet Pinkney, thank you! A mother's love never ends no matter how far apart we are. Dad, although you are no longer present in human form, your love and support of me never died. I know the both of you are proud to be my parents.

To my children Michelle and Jeremiah, I love you! As your mother, my love for you both will NEVER end. I pray that my doctoral work will continue to inspire you to value education and to become the very best at whatever you choose.

To all my other family members and friends, thank you for your support and encouragement throughout my doctoral work.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Blind Carbon Copy (BCC)

Defining the School Mission (DSM)

End-of-Course Examination (EOCE)

End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP)

English Language Arts (ELA)

English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)

Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)

Florida Standard Assessments (FSA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Managing the Instructional Program (MIP)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)

Reading Achievement Scores (RAS)

School Learning Climate (SLC)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

This study was conducted to determine which principal behaviors should be promoted to improve student literacy. Data in regards to Florida principals' gender, age, race/ethnicity, years of experience as a teacher and as a principal were analyzed. Although the researcher is interested in the South Carolina's reading initiative implemented in 2014, Florida's reading initiative was implemented in 2001 and the substantial amount of data that have been collected can provide guidance for South Carolina schools. This chapter will include data from South Carolina schools in an attempt to provide insight for South Carolina school leaders as they implement Act 284, Read to Succeed, a literacy initiative. This chapter provides the (a) background, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose statement, (d) significance of the study, (e) research question, and (f) definitions for this study.

### **Background**

Approximately 70% of South Carolina's 2019 high school graduating class entered high school not able to read at a proficient level (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015c). With the passing of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), federal legislators expect all students in America to be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers. The ESSA places emphasis on advancing students' literacy achievement. Substandard adolescent literacy achievement is considered a national concern that impacts high school graduation rates and is a barrier to postsecondary education and workplace success. Literacy, according to Hoffer (2016), "is the stepping-stone to school success and a prerequisite to high school graduation, which paves the way to healthy living" (p. 4). As school leaders, high school principals are expected to

influence student literacy achievement through knowledge of teaching and learning, support and development of effective teachers, and implement organizational practices that promote academic rigor and excellence. Principals' instructional leadership behaviors promoting instructional and curriculum improvement have been linked to higher student learning outcomes (Valentine & Prater, 2011).

The role of the school principal has changed from that of an administrative manager who focused on functions, tasks, and behaviors that lead to the effective operation of a school to a school leader who concentrates on the managerial functions but also dedicates a great deal of time and attention to organization and coordination of a structured learning environment (Valentine & Prater, 2011). In this concentration, school principals are expected to perform the role of instructional leader. As an instructional leader, principals are expected to coordinate learning environments by hiring, supporting, developing, and retaining effective teachers who have a direct impact on student learning and academic success (Garza, 2018). In addition, as instructional leaders, principals are expected to have a thorough understanding of how to recognize and support effective teaching and learning.

During the 1980s, a shift in education began to occur which led to a focus on state and federal accountability of student academic achievement (Rousmaniere, 2013). As many public schools began to decline, which is represented by American children's poor performance on standardized tests and the social anxiety about youth both inside and outside schools, emerging educational policies gave families the option of school choice (Rousmaniere, 2013). School choice gave public education competition through the options of school vouchers, tuition tax credit, charter schools, and public-school open enrollment policies. School choice also led to increased demands placed on school principals for school improvement. Educational reform

movements and high-stakes testing forced principals to increase student achievement levels by providing competitive options for students through innovative school improvement plans (Rousmaniere, 2013).

Many of the school reform initiatives forced principals into managerial roles. These roles were needed to ensure an effective implementation of initiatives but provided little time for principals to act as leaders (Kowalski, 2010). Eventually, the changing demographics, politics, and economics of schooling led to the role of principals as instructional leaders who would move schools toward improving students' academic outcomes (Bendikson, Robinson, & Hattie, 2012; Mestry, 2013; Rousmaniere, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011). A strong correlation exists between instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement outcomes (Bendikson et al., 2012; Mestry, 2013; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2014; Valentine & Prater, 2011). In an interview with eight primary and secondary school principals, Mestry (2013) surveyed principals' self-perception of their instructional leadership behaviors and found that principals who placed importance on instructional matters were managing and leading schools effectively and attaining high student achievement.

Principals must be engaged in teaching and learning activities that encourage best practices in the classroom, leading to positive learning outcomes. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) compared the effects of instructional and transformational leadership behaviors on student learning. The researchers conducted a meta-analysis to find the links between leadership and student outcomes; after investigating several studies, Robinson et al. found that instructional leadership behaviors have an effect on student learning outcomes and that principals should engage in instructional leadership behaviors. In fact, research indicates that instructional leadership differs from other leadership styles in that it is for educational settings only and is

therefore complex and affected by many situational factors and conditions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Since the implementation of federal and state college readiness and accountability standards, more attention is given to secondary principals in an attempt to help all high school students be college and career ready (Yavuz, 2016). Many factors contribute to the success of evidence-based practices that are implemented in a school setting. Some examples include staff buy-in, technical support, data-based decision making, a shared vision of outcomes, and contextual relevance (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Dahir and Stone (2012) suggested that school leaders have a very significant role in designing and delivering academic services that help raise student achievement levels, reduce high school dropout rates, increase student academic performance, and lower enrollment in college remediation courses (Mestry, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Whether in a direct or an indirect role, the effective principal manages the school environment and provides guidance and support to teachers to improve the quality of instruction and achievement for all students (Bendikson et al., 2012). According to Strickland-Cohen, McIntosh, and Homer (2014), school principals

play a key role in creating a school culture in which staff members share common values and work together to achieve common goals, provide clear staff expectations, ensure accountability by routinely asking staff to report on outcome data, and creatively allocate limited resources to help ensure that personnel have access to necessary supports. (p. 20)

Principals influence the school culture, the quality of instruction, and students' academic achievement.

Although principals play a significant role in the academic achievement of students, the demands placed on principals have been linked to principal turnover (Goodwin, 2013; School

Leaders Network, 2014; Strickland-Cohen et al., 2014). In a high school setting, the average principal will not see his or her first freshman class graduate (Fuller, 2012). According to Béteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2012), principal turnover rates range from 15% to 20% each year. The researchers found that principal turnover is especially frequent in schools that serve majority low-income, minority, and low-achieving students. Research has proven that the impact of principal turnover has led to three important findings in regards to student achievement: First, principal turnover leads to teacher turnover, and according to Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013), teacher turnover has a significant and negative effect on student achievement. Second, principal turnover has a direct negative effect on student as well as school-level achievement. Finally, research suggests that “regular principal turnover can lead to teachers not investing in any change efforts” and teachers learn to wait the principal out (Fuller, 2012). This results in a decrease in student achievement or school improvement efforts.

A significant amount of research is available for reading instruction in the early grades. The reading focus of teachers in early grades relates to phonological awareness, decoding, and fluency skills. There is an assumption that reading instruction is completed when a child leaves third grade and that a successful reader will do well in future content area courses (Snow & Moje, 2010). High school teachers assume students who enter secondary classrooms have the skills needed to be independent, efficient readers; yet many high school students have difficulty engaging with content area texts (Hoffer, 2016; Malin, 2010; Nitzkin, Katzir, & Shulking, 2014; Soper & Marquis-Cox, 2012). The implications for secondary students who struggle with reading content area texts range from failing the course, to peer ridicule, to social isolation, to misbehavior in the classroom, to truancy, and even to dropping out of high school (Watson, Gable, Gear, & Hughes, 2012). Therefore, schools must address the emotional and motivational

needs of adolescents (Hougen, 2014). Adolescents with a history of academic failure and frustration often develop feelings of hopelessness and lack confidence in their abilities to succeed in an academic environment.

In addition to the lack of academic achievement in school, struggling readers experience lifelong repercussions (Saletta, 2018). Struggling readers often dropout of high school, and experience difficulty acquiring and keeping a job and being in worse health (Hougen, 2014; Lal, 2015; McFarland, Stark, & Cui, 2016; Saletta, 2018). According to the Washington Literacy Council, more than 770 million people around the world and 32 million adults in the United States cannot read or write. Illiteracy costs the global economy an estimated \$1.9 trillion annually and as of 2015, illiteracy costs the United States an estimated \$362 billion a year (Lal, 2015; World Literacy Foundation, 2015). For the individual struggling reader, the impacts of illiteracy include an income earning of 30%–40% less than their literate peers. Since they lack the literacy skills needed to succeed in vocational education and training, the ability to improve their earning potential is low, making it difficult to avoid poverty (Lal, 2015). In addition to earning potential, illiteracy results in poor household and personal health and nutrition. This leads to an increase in health issues and can lead to workplace absenteeism, permanent disability, or death (Lal, 2015; World Literacy Foundation, 2015).

High school teachers are inclined to segregate themselves by department and to leave the instruction of reading to teachers who specialize in English language arts or reading (Nitzkin et al., 2014; Witte, Beemer, & Arjona, 2010). However, high demands of literacy achievement among secondary students have placed more attention on the need for purposeful secondary student reading instruction by teachers in every discipline (Harmon, Hedrick, Wood, & Vintinner, 2011; Hoffer, 2016; Soper & Marquis-Cox, 2012). In addition to supporting student

reading achievement, secondary teachers must ensure that students gain significant content knowledge despite reading difficulties (Hougen, 2014). Adolescents who receive carefully planned literacy instruction are significantly more likely to graduate from high school and attend college compared to those who do not receive such attention (Witte et al., 2010). Teachers must know how to present literacy instruction that promotes literacy in specific content areas (Hoffer, 2016). Principals are seen as the school leaders who can initiate change by raising the level of expectations for teachers and enabling teachers to improve reading achievement of students regardless of the teachers' discipline.

According to the 2015 results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests, 12th-grade students scored an average of 287 on the NAEP 0–500 reading scale. The average score in 2013 was 288, which is not significantly different; however, the average score on the earliest assessment in 1992 was 292, which is significantly different (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015c). Overall results from the 2015 administration of the NAEP of South Carolina eighth-grade public school students revealed an average reading score of 260. Although this average score was not significantly different from the 2013 score (261), it was lower than the average score for public school students in the nation (264). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the NAEP reading achievement level for proficiency was 281 (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015c). The percentage of South Carolina students who performed at or above the NAEP proficient level was 28% in 2015 and 29% in 2013. Therefore, approximately 70% of South Carolina's 2019 high school graduating class entered high school not able to read at a proficient level.

According to the *South Carolina State Reading Plan* (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015), South Carolina students face four major literacy challenges that affect their reading achievement:

Challenge 1: Low student achievement in reading and writing

Challenge 2: Literacy achievement gaps among demographic groups

Challenge 3: Summer reading achievement loss

Challenge 4: Limited number of exemplary literacy classrooms

The *Plan* requires each school to implement a plan that provides practical guidance for classroom teachers to face the literacy challenges that impact student reading achievement (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). South Carolina secondary principals, in the role of instructional leaders, are expected to lead learning by encouraging best practices in teaching. The goal of the *Plan* is to close the achievement gap.

The *Plan* requires that all teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to assess and address students' reading problems effectively. In addition, the *Plan* requires increased reading expertise and literacy leadership of principals and assistant principals through professional development. The South Carolina Literacy Competencies for Administrators require actions that demand high standards of academic excellence. Principals are expected to set high expectations for learner success and be knowledgeable about theoretical and evidence-based foundations of reading and writing processes and instruction (Mestry, 2013; South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). What principals do to improve student learning outcomes is a high indication of what principals believe about their ability to improve student outcomes (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

What principals believe about their ability to improve student learning outcomes is what Bandura describes as principals' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Principal efficacy is grounded in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy refers to the level in which principals believe that they can lead impending instructional improvement in their schools and hence is expected to strongly influence the energy and persistence with which principals pursue the improvement efforts (Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, & Goddard, 2015). Principals with a strong awareness of self have been found to be committed to school improvement goals; in addition, they are more flexible and more willing to modify any strategies based on the evidence (Bandura 1977, Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). When confronted with problems, principals with a strong sense of self-efficacy do not interpret the inability to solve the problems as failure. They adjust their personal expectations to match conditions, remain confident and calm, and keep their sense of humor, even in tough situations (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, 2007).

Literacy achievement among secondary students has declined and the impact is seen in the workforce and in the post-secondary classroom. Instructional leadership behaviors of secondary school principals may be the guidance needed by high school teachers to have a positive impact on student learning outcomes.

### **Problem Statement**

Principals make decisions about policies and programs that set the condition for what happens in classrooms between students and teachers. According to Cawn, Ikemoto, Grossman, and West (2016), principals are the backbone to successful implementation of school level improvement initiatives. Researchers Valentine and Prater (2011) conducted a study to examine the impact of instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership on student achievement.

The findings from their study answered the question, “Can principal leadership enhance student achievement?” (Valentine & Prater, 2011). The researchers found that it is important for high school principals to be competent in instructional and curriculum leadership to include the knowledge about teaching and learning theory. Valentine and Prater (2011) also found that instructional leaders who give “attention to coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress” (p. 22) are more successful. In a study by Mestry (2013), the researcher found that “very few principals had a conceptual understanding of what instructional leadership means” (p. 121). However, Mestry (2013) found that those principals who placed importance on instructional matters were attaining high student achievement outcomes. Valentine and Prater (2011), in agreement with Mestry (2013), concluded that principals should become familiar with teaching and learning theory to encourage best practices in their schools. The principal’s primary role is to facilitate instruction in an effort to increase the academic achievement of all students. Researcher Ediger (2014) found that it is essential for school principals to possess an understanding of curriculum and instruction and that leaders must become self-efficacious in these areas.

The problem of reading failure among secondary students has been called a national health problem and has become a popular focus of study (Nitzkin et al., 2014). In addition, literacy disparity along racial lines has made literacy a social justice issue. Secondary principals must lead their schools in implementing a more challenging curriculum, more sophisticated instruction, and more intensive instructional supports (Cawn et al., 2016). Much research has been conducted with regard to instructional leadership behaviors and student learning outcomes (Bartlett, 2008; Bendikson et al., 2012; Carson, 2013; Chappellear & Price, 2012; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Jackson, 2018; McCray, 2014;

O'Donnell & White, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008; Shatzer et al., 2014; Turner, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011). However, very little research is conducted at the secondary level. The problem is the gap in understanding which principal behaviors at the secondary school level should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement. In this multimethod research design, the researcher searched for identifying principal behaviors that promoted literacy achievement by analyzing quantitative relationships between the variables and qualitative trends that emerged from principals' lived experiences.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this applied study was to further understand the problem of poor literacy achievement among Florida high school students and to design a proposal for school leaders to impact and improve high school students' literacy achievement. A multimethod design was used consisting of both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The first approach surveyed Florida high school principals using the PIMRS. The second approach utilized structured interviews with Florida high school principals.

### **Significance of the Study**

In June 2014, South Carolina Legislature implemented Read to Succeed in order to improve reading achievement in South Carolina public schools. School districts were required to have reading plans beginning in the 2015–2016 school year followed by individual school plans implemented during the 2016–2017 school year. Individual school reading plans should align with the district, and district reading plans should align with the state reading plan. Individual school reading plans must “provide practical guidance for classroom teachers . . . that can be related to the critical reading and writing needs of students in the school” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015, p. 10). Read to Succeed requires increased reading expertise

and literacy leadership of principals. South Carolina high school principals are expected to lead learning by focusing on curriculum and instructional practices in literacy.

High school principals' duties and responsibilities are broad and demanding. Time spent on tasks must be efficient and effective. Previous research about principal instructional leadership behaviors and student learning outcomes is numerous and has indicated that principals, as instructional leaders, have a significant effect on student academic achievement (Bartlett, 2008; Bendikson et al., 2012; Carson, 2013; Chappellear & Price, 2012; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; McCray, 2014; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008; Shatzer et al., 2014; Turner, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011). This study contributes to the current literature in two ways. First, by exploring Florida high school principals' instructional leadership behaviors through its summarized lessons learned, this study may provide insight to South Carolina school leaders as they implement Read to Succeed (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Second, this study adds to existing knowledge about which principal instructional leadership behaviors are essential to higher student reading achievement outcomes.

### **Research Questions**

Five principals were interviewed to allow the researcher to make meaning of the research beyond the quantitative results of the PIMRS.

**Central Question:** What principal behaviors should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement?

**Sub-question 1:** As an instructional leader what characteristics have you seen in exemplary literacy classrooms?

**Sub-question 2:** What are some examples of ways you have established and communicated high expectations for all staff related to student literacy achievement?

**Sub-question 3:** What support (research-based strategies or programs) did the district provide to support your school's literacy program? How effective was it/were they?

**Sub-question 4:** How was/were the program(s) implemented and monitored?

### **Definitions**

1. *Adolescent* – Approximate ages 11 to 14. Development is driven by psychological needs to achieve competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Adolescents seek opportunities to master and demonstrate new skills, to make independent decisions and control their own behavior, and to form good social relationships with peers and adults outside of the family (Eccles, 1999).
2. *Florida Standards Assessments (FSA)* – Florida schoolteachers teach according to Florida education standards, and students' knowledge of the standards is assessed through the statewide FSA assessments. Performance on the assessments provides information to all concerned regarding how well students are learning the Florida Standards (FLDOE, 2016a).
3. *Florida Standards Assessment English Language Arts (FSA ELA)* Used when referring to the reading and writing assessments.
4. *Fluency* – The ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression to encourage comprehension (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2007).
5. *Instructional leadership* – Actions taken by principals to promote academic achievement in students (Bendikson et al., 2012; Mestry, 2013).

6. *Just Read Florida!* – An executive order signed by the governor of Florida September 7, 2001. A comprehensive and coordinated reading initiative with the unequivocal goal of every child being able to read at or above grade level by the year 2012 (FLDOE, 2016a).
7. *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)* – Created by Hallinger in 1982, the PIMRS is the first research-based instrument for assessing principal instructional leadership.
8. *Reading achievement* – Expectations of student performance in relation to a range of text types and text difficulty and in response to a variety of assessment questions intended to elicit different cognitive processes and reading behaviors (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).
9. *Reading comprehension* – The process of extracting and constructing meaning from words once they have been identified. Reading comprehension varies depending on the text to be read (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).
10. *Read to Succeed* – Act 284 signed by the governor of South Carolina June 2014. Act 284 was created to address literacy performance within South Carolina schools and put in place a comprehensive system to ensure South Carolina students graduate on time with the literacy skills they need to be successful in college, careers, and citizenship (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015).
11. *Self-efficacy* – The belief of individuals about themselves regarding whether they can master a particular task or not (Bandura, 1977).
12. *Tenure* – Research shows it takes approximately five years to put a teaching staff in place as well as fully implement policies and practices that will positively impact the school's performance (Seashore-Louis, Wahlstrom, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010).

13. *Principal turnover* – The number of occurrences in which a school changed principals during the school year (Bruggink, 2001).

### **Summary**

Principals make decisions about policies and programs that set the condition for what happens in classrooms between students and teachers. Substandard reading achievement among adolescents is considered a national concern and has an impact on high school graduates' postsecondary education and workplace success. Principals' engagement in teaching and learning can have a significant impact on the academic achievement of students. This study offers insight regarding the relationship between school principals' instructional leadership behavior and reading achievement scores.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

The purpose of this applied study is to further understand the problem of poor literacy achievement among Florida high school students and to design interventions for school leaders to impact and improve high school students' literacy. This chapter begins by reviewing the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory (SCT) that undergirds this study. Following the theoretical framework, a review of empirical literature regarding the role of the school principal, the role efficacy plays in principal aspirations and actions that lead to successful school outcomes, and the impact principal turnover has on student achievement. The conceptual framework of Hallinger and Wang's Instructional Leadership Model is included to provide the background to the model used in the study (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). An examination of literacy legislation in education and issues surrounding adolescent literacy is discussed in terms of secondary principals' reading expertise and literacy leadership. The chapter concludes with a summary of literacy-related research connecting the literature review to the research variables.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Social Cognitive Theory

Known as the father of cognitive theory, Bandura and his work have influenced education, communication, health science, and psychotherapy (Bandura, 2006). Prior to social cognitive theory, Bandura published a book in 1977 entitled *Social Learning Theory* that focused on how behavior is developed. Social learning theory (SLT) is based on the idea that learning occurs from human observations within the environment. Through Bandura's famous Bobo doll human aggression studies, Bandura demonstrated how a child is directly influenced by what is observed from the adults in the environment in which he lives. The studies placed value on how

behavior is shaped through modeling, observation, and imitation of environmental factors not simply through genetic factors. Thus, SLT theorizes that people learn from each other by observation, imitation, and modeling. By observing others' behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes, new ideas emerge based what was perceived. If the response to the performance of the new behavior is perceived as favorable, it becomes the template for imitation (Bandura, 1977). To be effective, a person of influence must perform the modeled behavior, and the performance must garner a reward. If the response to the behavior is viewed as a reward (positive reinforcement), the behavior is strengthened, and the behavior will more likely continue (Bandura, 2006).

Bandura and other behavioral theorists recognized that learning through observation, imitation, and modeling does not lead to a change in behavior without the integration of cognition, which is summarized as the accumulation of information that is acquired through learning, experience, and the senses (Bandura, 2006). SLT started in the 1960s and has been called the link between behavioral and cognitive learning theory due to the belief that a change in thinking must occur for a change in behavior to occur. According to LaMorte (2016), "Social cognitive theory considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior." The theory also takes into consideration an individual's past experiences because the past experiences factor into whether and why a person will engage in a specific behavior (LaMorte, 2016).

Bandura (1977) found that cognitive processes play a prominent role in acquiring and retaining new patterns of behavior. He summarized the effect learning from consequences has on one's cognition; beneficial outcomes are repeated while punishable outcomes are avoided. Bandura (1977) also considered the effect motivation has on the activation and persistence of the behavior. When consequences result in beneficial outcomes, the behavior is stored in the psyche

until needed. When needed, the cognition recalls the favorable outcome, and the likelihood of performing and continuing the behavior is heightened. Negative outcomes are stored in the psyche as well and create the opposite effect in the likelihood of continuing the new behavior. In 1986 Bandura published another book in which he renamed social learning theory as social cognitive theory (SCT) due to his belief in the importance cognition plays in encoding and performing behaviors that lead to learning.

Bandura's social cognitive theory provides the framework for the study and aids in understanding how the interaction between principals and the environment are influenced by principal beliefs and cognitive competencies. What principals think, believe, and feel about their ability to lead learning will affect the strength of instructional leadership engagement (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Bandura believes principals' motivation will be stronger if they *believe* they can make an impact on student achievement.

## **Related Literature**

### **The Role of the School Principal**

School principals make decisions about the day-to-day operations of schools (Kowalski, 2010; Miller, 2013). The role of the school principal is complex and can vary by principals' individual differences, role differences, and institutional differences (Hallinger, 2005; Kowalski, 2010; Mestry, 2013; Miller, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Principals with the same title may have different demands and expectations because each principal possess different needs, aspirations, knowledge, dispositions, skills, and experiences (Kowalski, 2010; Shatzer et al., 2014). Institutional differences of the school community (political, economic, or demographic) often dictate how a principal's role is differentiated (Valentine & Prater, 2011). These differences dictate how one principal's response to a state or federal educational policy may be

very different from another principal's response.

School principal roles have been characterized as management, leadership, or administration (Kowalski, 2010). In the *ideal* role of principal as manager, the principal is responsible for protecting resources, enforcing policy, and supervising employees. As a manager, the principal focuses on functions, tasks, or behaviors and makes decisions about how things should be done (Valentine & Prater, 2011). However, in the *real* role of principal as manager, the principal is often viewed as authoritative and more task-oriented than people-oriented. Although a manager has an association with authoritarian and narcissistic behavior, the need for the ideal role of the principal as a manager is indisputable (Kowalski, 2010; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

A principal seen as a leader, which has a positive connotation, is characterized as courageous, insightful, caring, and collaborative (Kowalski, 2010). Principals as leaders focus on what needs to be done to improve schools and are expected to make decisions about school improvement (Kowalski, 2010). The role of leadership in school effectiveness is pivotal in terms of enabling teachers to improve student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Principals as leaders focus on ensuring a culture within the school that supports continual professional learning of teachers and individual professional growth of teachers (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). Habegger (2008) studied principals at three high-performing schools of low socioeconomic status and found that it was the deliberate decision of the principals to create a positive school culture that promotes learning and engagement for students and adults. Principal leaders recognize the heart of student reading growth is a positive school culture (Habegger, 2008).

Finally, a principal as an administrator performs comprehensive roles that encompass both management and leadership behaviors (Kowalski, 2010). It is best if the principal

transitions between leader and manager appropriately; however, the challenge for a principal is acquiring the insight and the time to do both effectively (Kowalski, 2010). The ideal principal is one who does right when leading and one who does right when managing. The principal as an administrator creates a vision of what a school should look like in the future, plans goals to achieve the vision, and organizes people, materials, and other resources together to attain the goals (Kowalski, 2010). School principals must be willing to operate within roles to effectively operate a school and have a positive impact on student reading achievement (Hallinger, 2005).

### **Principal Leadership and Self-Efficacy**

Effective school leadership is essential to successful implementation of any school improvement initiative (Cawn et al., 2016). As key agents at the school level, principals are defined in terms of student academic achievement and success as measured by high-stakes assessment results. Without the self-perceived ability of school principals to lead efforts to raise student reading achievement, schools cannot succeed (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). What principals believe about their personal capabilities drives their ability to accomplish goals more than their actual ability to do so.

Self-efficacy is defined as the belief or judgment one has in his or her capabilities to organize and execute a particular task and “the effect this perception has on the on-going and future conduct of the activity” (Bandura, 1977, p. 586). Self-efficacy has its origins in Bandura’s SCT (Bandura, 1977; Jacob et al., 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Principal self-efficacy beliefs are related to several aspects of principal leadership and can “result in better leadership practices and an improved instructional climate in the school” (Jacob et al., 2015, p. 317). Bandura (1977) emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy on behavioral change and addressed the more prominent role efficacy has on behavior change than the response-outcome

expectancies. Bandura (1977) believed self-efficacy controls human performance through cognition, motivation, mood, and physical health. For example, principals with high self-efficacy have lower stress levels because of the ability to make mood adjustments and perform in ways that make a stressful situation less threatening. Principals form positive thoughts about their ability to overcome threatening situations or they may connect with family and friends who will provide support by sharing their belief in the principals' ability to successfully carryout a difficult task.

Efficacy expectations have a level of magnitude: how important is the task, how cumbersome it is to complete, and the depth of one's ability to master the task. In 2015 Congress enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The law made significant changes to the federal accountability requirements, which include systems that measure academic achievement, student growth, graduation rates, and progress in achieving English proficiency. According to Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), a principal with a strong sense of self-efficacy is needed to facilitate group goal attainment that leads to favorable student outcomes. Bandura believed a principal's motivation will be stronger if the principal *believes* he or she can make an impact on student achievement. Therefore, it can be assumed that a principal with a strong sense of self-efficacy will be more motivated to implement strategies to meet federal accountability requirements. Principals' self-efficacy is of great importance to managing schools and favorable anticipated student outcomes (Frederici & Skaalvik, 2012).

Principals with little motivation have a weak sense of self-efficacy and will more than likely avoid a challenge; if, after attempting a task, the task becomes too difficult, they may become inattentive to the task, give up, or settle for mediocre results (Bandura, 1997;

Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). When faced with failure, principals with weak self-efficacy are more likely to blame others or avoid modifications of what did not work; they may even avoid finding more appropriate strategies (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Whatever expectation principals predict in terms of student academic achievement, failure or success, level of effort or persistence put forth, it is a byproduct of self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

There are four sources of efficacy expectation: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. When a principal has experienced repeated personal success, the repeated performance accomplishments lead to an increase in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Neil, 2015). When a principal has experienced success in leading a school toward meeting federal or state accountability requirements, that principal has more confidence in his or her ability to lead similar tasks in the future. Opposite is the principal who has experienced failure in meeting federal or state accountability requirements. For the principal who does not have experience in leading a school in obtaining academic achievement, the ability to visualize himself or herself as being able to can come through vicarious experiences. Vicarious experiences occur through observing or learning of others' successful actions or experiences. Neil (2015) contends that when principals observe a peer successfully complete a task, principals may feel more confident in their ability to also successfully complete a similar task.

Principals benefit from the interpersonal support of the superintendent, the staff, teachers, and parents. The level of efficacy is increased when others express belief in the principal's ability to do well. Verbal persuasion comes through feedback, a common form of receiving verbal persuasion. In 2011 the Delaware Department of Education had an alternative

certification program for aspiring principals. After completing the program, participants served as principals in low SES schools for three years and newly promoted principals were assigned a coach for two years. According to Tekleselassie and Villareal (2011), providing principals with ongoing coaching can increase competence and self-efficacy as well as reduce the likelihood that the principal will leave.

Finally, principals' physiological and affective state, whether they feel stressed or whether they are in a good mood, impacts their efficacy level. Although stress can be viewed as positive or negative, it is important that a principal knows his or her body in terms of any physiological changes to determine how to interpret and respond to stressful situations. A positive mood fosters higher levels of self-efficacy whereas a negative mood produces lower levels of self-efficacy (Wright & Mischel, 1982).

Citing the work of Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), Jacob et al. (2015) stated that "principal self-efficacy has been shown to be positively related to a variety of aspects of principal leadership, including setting directions, developing people, managing the instructional program, and classroom conditions" (p. 317). Frederici and Skaalvik (2012) stated that "given the responsibility of school principals for students' education and well-being at school, it is therefore important that school principals develop high levels of competency as well as self-efficacy" (p. 312). Principals with high self-efficacy perceive changing the line of work (implementation of new legislation) as an opportunity and as a challenge to a greater extent than principals with lower self-efficacy (Frederici & Skaalvik, 2012). It is with high levels of self-efficacy that a principal might develop better instructional leadership practices and an improved instructional climate in the school (Frederici & Skaalvik, 2012; Jacob et al., 2015).

## **Principal Turnover and Student Achievement**

In an analysis of 43 studies conducted between 1980 and 1995, Hallinger and Heck (1998) concluded that principals have an indirect effect on student achievement. More recently, using data from 97 secondary schools, Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens, and Sleegers (2012) found that “school leader behavior affected student outcomes both indirectly and directly” (p. 720). Whether direct or indirect, principal leadership plays a significant role in student achievement and school improvement (Bartlett, 2008; Bendikson et al., 2012; Bruggencate et al., 2012; Carson, 2013; Chappellear & Price, 2012; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Levin & Bradley, 2019; McCray, 2014; O’Donnell & White, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008; Shatzer et al., 2014; Turner, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Principal turnover, defined as a principal vacating a school and being replaced either voluntarily or involuntarily, is a growing concern nationwide that has been found to have a negative impact on student achievement (Béteille et al., 2012; Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Miller, 2013; Min Sun, 2016).

DeAngelis and White (2011) suggested that principals who vacate their positions may not perceive themselves to be best-suited for the position. When principals, who are central to school improvement, vacate the position, Levin and Bradley (2019) found that teacher turnover increases as well. This association has a significantly negative, direct impact on student achievement; however, low student achievement does not indicate whether principal turnover is leading to or being caused by these outcomes (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Boyce and Bowers (2016) studied the influence of principal tenure on student achievement and found that student achievement increases over time; thus, the longer a principal stays, the more significant the ability to have an impact on school improvement.

According to Levin and Bradley (2019), principal turnover is a serious issue across the country. The relationship between principal turnover and student achievement is “harmful to the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and Black students” (Ronfeldt et al, 2013, p. 30). Béteille et al. (2012) conducted a study and found that principal turnover rates were highest in schools that served a high concentration of poor and low achieving students. The researchers studied Miami-Dade County Public Schools and summarized data that resulted in 26% of principals in high poverty schools (top quartile of students receiving subsidized lunches) leave each year compared to 17% of principals in low poverty schools (bottom quartile). In addition, the data showed that 30% of principals in schools with a high number of low achieving students leave each year compared to only 15% of principals in schools with a low number of low achieving students (Béteille et al., 2012).

As of 2016–2017, the national average tenure of principals in schools was four years, and only 11% of principals remained at their school for 10 years or more (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Miller (2013) found that “about 20 percent of public-school principals in the United States leave their positions each year and that most schools are led by principals with fewer than ten years of tenure” (p. 71). Poor academic achievement is consistent with principal turnover; however, Miller (2013) believes interpretation of the findings should be handled with caution due to the cause of the principal turnover. In addition, little research is done with consideration to the decrease in student achievement before a new principal takes office (Miller, 2013). Like Miller, researchers Kearney, Valdez, and Garcia (2012) studied the impact of principal turnover on student achievement and likewise found that principal turnover negatively impacts student achievement. Kearney at al. compared the length of principal leadership on student achievement scores and found that the “longer a principal serves as leader of a campus, the better the student

test scores on that campus are likely to be” (p. 30). However, Kearney et al. recognized that principal tenure is not the only fact that impacts student achievement; it is interconnected with teacher experience, student attendance, and socioeconomic status as well.

### **Instructional Leadership Model**

In 1971 Weber, a contributor to the determinants of school achievement, studied four inner-city schools in which the reading achievement scores for poor children were successful based on national norms. A common thread that was found in all four schools was strong leadership; in addition, all four schools had high expectations for students. The effects of Weber’s research and other researchers launched the “effective schools movement” (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Weber, 1971). In the 1970s, effective schools were identified as schools found in large and small communities that overcame challenges and achieved positive student outcomes (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). According to Glenn and McLean (1981), an “effective school was defined as one in which at least 40 percent of the student population was black; gains were demonstrated in student achievement; and minority students did not experience negative desegregation effects” (p. 1). To be an effective school did not mean that all students would be at identical levels of mastery, but that students between social classes would be at an equal percentage of its highest and lowest level of mastery. The middle class established the standard of proportionate mastery to judge all other levels of mastery (Edmonds, 1982).

Despite serving students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, student learning outcomes within the effective schools exceeded schools in the same or other comparative schools (Edmonds, 1979). Researchers (Edmonds, 1982; Glenn & McLean, 1981) identified features, processes, and conditions that explained the high student performance levels. Common in

effective schools were the interdependent correlates of the following:

- The leadership of the principal notable for substantial attention to the quality of instruction.
- A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus.
- An orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning.
- Teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery.
- The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation.

Glenn and McLean (1981) conducted a study to identify schools that efficiently taught economically disadvantaged Black children and to provide a description of these schools to be used as models for quality urban schools in the United States. Glenn and McLean found that effective schools appeared to have explicit, clearly outlined goals and objectives. The principals and staff members of the schools studied actually said that they wanted to raise student achievement. Observed in effective schools, planning was important and principals shared planning and decision making with the teaching staff as a part of the school day. Also observed was the importance of scheduling, which gave teachers time for in-service and on-the-job training.

During the 1980s the effective schools movement, as well as a report issued by then Secretary of Education Terrence Bell, launched the concept of instructional leadership to the forefront of how principals should lead schools (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Kellough & Hill, 2014). The decline of American education placed the “nation at risk.” Effective schools research yielded factors that explained why some schools outperformed other schools (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). A similar finding throughout the research was the instructional role of

principals in the effective schools (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Researchers Blase and Blase (1999) defined instructional leadership as a combination of several tasks, such as supervision of classroom instruction, professional development, and curriculum development. Leithwood (1994) defined instructional leadership as a series of behaviors that would have an effect on classroom instruction directly through actions such as supervising, coaching, developing staff, modeling, and any other actions that would influence teachers' thinking and practice. By the 1980s, instructional leadership became the educational standard for school principals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Both Blase and Blase (1999) and Leithwood (1994) believed that as instructional leaders, principals were expected to encourage and support the teaching staff rather than direct them; principals were expected to emphasize high expectations by strongly emphasizing effective performance.

There were skeptics who believed that the high expectations for principals to perform in the role of instructional leaders in addition to other school improvement expectations created feelings of inadequacy for many school principals (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Skeptics also believed principals would have a difficult time finding time for sustained focus on curriculum and instruction matters. Principals are involved in day-to-day matters such as hiring and firing of staff, teacher transfers, allocating budgets, adoption of textbooks, student outcomes, and unplanned interruptions and distractions which leave very little time for instructional matters. Other skeptics felt that the lack of a framework under which instructional leaders could operate created a problem for many school principals. Principals lacked a framework to measure how instructional leadership effect impacts student achievement.

In the early 1980s, Hallinger and Murphy sought to give substance to the variable instructional leadership by outlining a model that considers types of principal activity, functions

employed by the principal, and organizational processes principals take to promote growth in student learning (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger 2013; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Mestry, 2013; Robinson et al., 2008). In 1982, Hallinger and Murphy examined the instructional management behaviors of 10 elementary school principals and used the data to assist in the development of the instrument known as the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale to access principal instructional leadership behaviors (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Three dimensions make up the framework for the instructional leadership model: Defines the School Mission, Manages the Instructional Program, and Develops a Positive School Learning Climate, and the dimensions include 10 instructional leadership functions (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Mestry, 2013; Shatzer et al., 2014). The functions, like the dimensions, were designed from relevant research of instructional leadership practices, of principal roles, and close work with principals and superintendents. Defining the school's mission is the critical role principals play to ensure that schools have clear and measurable goals for the purpose of school improvement. Two functions, Framing the School's Goals and Communicating the School's Goals, are included in the first dimension of the model. In a study of school leadership, Cawn et al. (2016) interviewed exemplary school principals to identify the following: (1) What do principals need to know and do to effectively lead to higher standards? (2) What factors enable or hinder principals in leading to higher standards? Cawn et al. found six common instructional leadership practices between the 22 principals interviewed. One key practice that was shared between the principals is setting a vision not only for the school as a whole but also a vision for the quality and rigor of the school's instructional programming.

Principals should communicate a mission and vision that is learning focused and both

should be clearly communicated throughout the school community on a regular basis (Cawn et al., 2016; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Mestry, 2013; Shatzer et al., 2014). As the starting point to creating a learner-centered school, the mission should inspire faculty and staff to contribute efforts toward student academic achievement and continued dialogue to be sure everyone is on board (Cawn et al., 2016; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Mission, according to Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996), reflects the degree that teachers will share in student learning goals and determines how decisions are made and how resources are allocated. “Effective leaders understand that modeling desired behavior encourages individual and organizational improvement” (Hitt & Tucker, 2016, p. 547). Defining and “articulating a learning-focused vision . . . creates a platform for all other leadership strategies and actions” (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 15). When teachers experience the power of embracing goals, the alignment of objectives with a shared vision, and see a leader who embraces change and leads by example, the vision comes to life (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

The second dimension, Managing the Instructional Program, involves three functions: Coordinating the Curriculum, Supervising and Evaluating Instruction, and Monitoring Student Progress. Principal activities of this dimension include informal classroom observations, greater interaction with curricular alignment and assessment issues, and interpretive test analysis (Hallinger, 2013). In an interview with several students, Gentilucci and Muto (2007) discovered that students believed that when principals visited the classroom it “signaled to them that learning, teaching and classroom behavior were valued” (p. 230). In addition, students reported that principals who regularly visited classrooms and interacted with the learning environment helped improve learning (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). According to May and Supovitz (2011) principal instructional leadership practices such as observing classes and maintaining visibility

have been found to “significantly predicted variables of instructional climate and instructional organization and that they were positively and significantly related to student achievement” (p. 334). Principals who placed importance on managing instructional programs were principals who were leading and managing schools effectively and attaining high student achievement (Mestry, 2013).

Managing the instructional program requires principals to have an expertise of teaching and learning, yet one of the barriers to instructional leadership is the expertise needed to lead learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Hallinger, Wang, & Chen, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014). Instruction is the primary role of teachers; however, “principals must be engaged in stimulating, supervising, and monitoring teaching and learning in schools” (Hallinger, 2005, p. 6; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Hitt and Tucker (2016) examined the commonalities and differences among school leadership frameworks of activities that increase student achievement and found that principals increase creditability by learning alongside faculty. The researchers reported that when teachers need assistance themselves they are more likely to seek assistance and intervention from principals who not only can be seen as a source of knowledge and assistance but seen as active participants in learning opportunities (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Principals, according to Robinson et al. (2008), who promote and participate in teacher learning and development, are found in high performing schools. Similar to researchers Hitt and Tucker, Robinson et al. found that teachers are more likely to see principals as accessible and more knowledgeable about instructional matters if they participate in both formal and informal learning opportunities.

The third dimension, Developing the School Learning Climate Program includes five of the ten instructional leadership functions: Protecting Instructional Time, Providing Incentives for

Teachers, Providing Incentives for Learning, Promoting Professional Development, and Maintaining High Visibility. The third dimension incorporates principal transactional leadership behaviors, which are identified as disciplinary powers and incentives that motivate a faculty and staff to perform at their best. These leadership behaviors are framed to help “teachers to do their job more efficiently and effectively” (Hallinger & Wang, 2015, p. 33). Improving student learning outcomes occur through the school climate; thus, school principals need to make school climate a priority in school improvement efforts (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). School climate, according to Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014), is a “construct comprised of impressions of accepted norms of behavior as related to teacher professionalism, academic press, and community engagement” (p. 72). Principals of successful schools have high standards and expectations, protect instructional time, and foster a culture that rewards continuous learning and improvement (Nogay & Beebe, 2008). Principals who focus on developing the learning climate consider the beliefs, values, and daily interactions between the school community: school personnel, parents, and students (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2014).

In an effort to improve student learning outcomes, school principals must ensure that their staff is qualified to develop the literacy skills of the children in their charge. Principals must seek out teachers who plan instruction according to the needs of each student due to the varying and unique challenges of struggling readers (Hougen, 2014). Principal responsibility involves arranging for consistent, high-level professional development for teachers, focusing the district’s literacy goals, and seeing that they are carried out through the school’s literacy goals (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011, p. 14). According to Hougen (2014), when teachers receive suitable training and support, they learn and apply the necessary components of reading instruction, and their students achieve greater success.

Valentine and Prater (2011) examined the relationships between principal managerial, instructional, and transformational leadership in 131 public high schools. Data were collected from principals and teachers of Missouri schools using adaptations of Valentine and Bowman's (1988) Audit of Principal Effectiveness and Jantzi and Leithwood's (1996) Principal Leadership Questionnaire (PLQ). Using student achievement test results from Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), Missouri's high-stakes, performance-based assessment system, the researchers sought to determine (a) if a relationship exists between demographic variables of the principal and the factors of managerial, instructional, and transformational leadership, (b) if there are differences in student achievement when the high schools are grouped by principal leadership factor, and (c) if there are relationships between selected school demographic characteristics, principal demographic characteristics, and principal leadership factor scores with student achievement as measured by the MAP. The findings indicated that leadership behaviors of principals do influence student achievement; however, no single set of leadership behaviors can be effective without the inclusion of the others (Valentine & Prater, 2011). In addition, the researchers found that principal leadership with regard to student achievement is also influenced by demographic components within the school and community. Although Valentine and Prater (2011) did not isolate one of the three styles of leadership (managerial, instructional, and transformational) as having more influence on student achievement than the other, the researchers' findings did conclude the importance of instructional and curriculum leadership. The researchers suggested that principals must have "core knowledge of best instructional and curricular practices" (Valentine & Prater, 2011, p. 22) if positive student outcomes are expected.

Shatzer et al. (2014) compared the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement in 37 public elementary schools. A total of 560 teachers rated their

principals' leadership style according to the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (transformational leadership), and the PIMRS (instructional leadership) and student achievement variables (*CRT-raw* and *CRT-progress*) were measured by a criterion-referenced test. Comparing leadership theories, the researchers conducted sequential regression to examine whether either leadership theory would predict student achievement after controlling for school context and principal demographics. Shatzer et al. found that instructional leadership accounted for more variance in raw student achievement scores and slightly more variance in student achievement progress scores than transformational leadership. However, neither instructional nor transformational leadership predicted a statistically significant amount of variance in measures of student achievement without controlling for school context and principal demographics. In addition, the researchers used a multiple regression analysis to investigate which specific leadership practices within each theory best predicted student achievement. The results of Shatzer et al. (2014) study found that very few instructional leadership dimensions significantly predicted student achievement scores. The only significant dimensions of instructional leadership to predict student achievement were monitoring student progress and providing incentives for learning. However, the results suggested the use of instructional leadership practices over transformational leadership practices.

Hallinger and Heck (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of research literature conducted between 1980 and 1995. The researchers found a significant finding that school principals who engage in instructional leadership behaviors experience more student success (Shatzer et al., 2014). The meta-analysis result was a  $d = 0.25$  effect size for the two variables, instructional leadership behaviors and student learning outcomes. The greater the principal involvement in instructional leadership, the more likely students will experience academic success.

*The Race to the Top* Fund led to significant changes in the American education system: improved principal and teacher accountability, improved teacher effectiveness, higher standards and implementation of policies and structures that align with the goal of college and career readiness, and the adoption of new strategies to help struggling schools. States that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans in place to fast-track future reforms are rewarded financially (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Signed on December 10, 2015, the ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The goal of the law remains to improve educational equity for all students, especially students from lower-income families who were assigned to schools who received less state and local property tax funding (ESSA, 2015). The Act shifted responsibility for education policy to the states along three requirements: annual testing, accountability, and school improvement (ESSA, 2015).

The role of the school principal is complex and demanding; however, principals who focus on instructional leadership behaviors have experienced strong student outcomes (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Mestry, 2013; Robinson et al., 2008; Shatzer et al., 2014). According to Valentine and Prater (2011), “Effective principals know about and understand teaching and learning theory, and they are knowledgeable about the latest educational trends” (p. 22). In the era of principal accountability for student learning outcomes, a renewed focus has been placed on principals to perform as instructional leaders (Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Hallinger and Wang (2015) advised that there is “no theoretical basis to suggest that the behaviors or actions of principals *directly influence the school-wide achievement of students*” (p. 136). Instead, the effect of instructional leadership behaviors on student learning outcomes should operate through the organization of the school, such as school level or school size, school

and principal demographics, and the practices of teachers (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; McCray, 2014; Turner, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

### **Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale**

The original form of the PIMRS was developed in 1982 in “direct response to the need for research instruments that could contribute to a program of research on how leadership impacts learning” (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger, 2013, p. 44). Interest in the survey remains consistently strong (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). The PIMRS includes a principal self-assessment form, a teacher form, and a supervisor form. Although there are two discrete purposes for the instrument (part of principal evaluation and professional development), PIMRS is popular in measuring instructional leadership behaviors of principals and has been used in over 375 research studies since its conception (Boberg, 2013; Brown & Chai, 2012; Chappellear & Price, 2012; du Plessis, 2013; P. Hallinger, personal communication, December 23, 2016; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; O’Donnell & White, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008).

To help develop the dimensions of the instructional leadership role of principals, Hallinger and Wang (2015) worked with administrators from school districts who were involved in research-based methodologies of school improvement. After conducting interviews with superintendents and principals, three dimensions of instructional leadership (Defining the School’s Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate) and ten subscales that represent job functions expected of instructional leaders were formed (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; see Figure 1). The scale items (originally 89; now 50) were generated by (1) reviewing literature on instructionally effective schools, (2) soliciting opinions from experts such as a superintendent about critical job related functions, (3) deducing from the “expert opinion” list, (4) rewriting job-related behaviors

into behavioral statements, and (5) adjusting the statements grammatically to fit the stem/response category (Hallinger, 2013). The rater of the instrument assesses how frequently interaction occurs with the assessed behavior or practice associated with the particular instructional leadership function (Hallinger, 2012).

[Figure 1 removed for copyright; refer to Hallinger et al., 2013, p. 275, Figure 1, for an outline of the PIMRS Framework.]

The scales of measurement for the instrument are a five-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 = “Almost Never” to 5 = “Almost Always.” The PIMRS can be used to provide a principal instructional leadership profile on three analytical levels: whole score, three dimensions, and ten functions. When using the instrument for research purposes, measuring the “three dimensions generally provide sufficient discrimination in facets of the principal’s role” (Hallinger & Wang, 2015, p. 52). Calculating the mean for the items within each subscale (dimension or function) derives the subscale score and is the most commonly used method to analyze PIMRS data (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). The score of each dimension represents the self-perception of the principal’s performance within the leadership dimension. A high score on a subscale indicates active instructional leadership in the area, but the score does not measure the quality or effectiveness of the principal’s instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2013; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Hallinger (2013) does not “suggest that users score the instrument as a single instructional leadership score” (p. 24) because that would distort the profile of a principal’s performance. According to Hallinger (2013) and Hallinger and Murphy (1985), quality of instructional leadership can be determined using observations and interviews and consideration must be given for factors such as school level and size, faculty age and experience, student background and levels of achievement. The researcher chose to use the instrument as suggested

by the developer and interpretation focused on mean performance as well as variability of performance within the principals on the three dimensions: Defining the School's Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) recognized that principals who score high scores across the subscales are engaged in instructional leadership behaviors and are associated with effective schools.

Hallinger originally validated the reliability of the PIMRS using the internal consistency of the instrument, which is the “degree to which items that have been group together conceptually correlate with each other” (Hallinger, 2013, p. 27). Each of the ten subscales has a Cronbach *alpha* test of internal consistency greater than .80 (Hallinger, 1983; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). The size of the *alpha* coefficients for the subscales ranged from a low of .78 to a high of .90. Table 1 outlines the original reliability scales. In 2013, Hallinger et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 43 independent studies which used the PIMRS. The researchers found that the reliability estimates for the three dimensions continued to reflect a high standard of reliability: .88 for Defines the School Mission, .91 for Manages the Instructional Program, and .93 for Develops a Positive School Learning Climate.

Table 1

*Reliability Estimates* (Hallinger, 1983)

Subscale	Reliability*	Sample Size
Frame Goals	.89	77
Communicate Goals	.89	70
Supervision/Evaluation	.90	61
Curricular Coordination	.90	53
Monitors Student Progress	.90	52
Protects Instructional Time	.84	70

Visibility	.81	69
Incentives for Teachers	.78	70
Professional Development	.86	58
Academic Standards	.83	76
Incentives for Learning	.87	61

\* Reliability estimates are Cronbach *Alpha* coefficients (Hallinger, 1983).

In regards to the validity of the PIMRS, content validity was used to consider the degree to which the content of the PIMRS matched each of the instrument subscales. Hallinger recruited four school administrators who were considered subject matter experts to evaluate 93 items and assign each item to one of 11 categories in which they felt it belonged. If the administrators could not assign an item to any of the 11 categories, it was left unassigned (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Item assignment had to receive at least an 80% level of agreement to be included in the PIMRS. A superintendent reviewed the remaining 81 and reduced the items to 71 items being assigned to the 11 categories with 100% level of agreement by the school administrators (Table 2).

Table 2

*Content Validity Agreement Among Judges* (Hallinger & Wang, 2015)

Subscale	No. of Items	Avg. Agreement (%)
Frame Goals	6	91
Communicate Goals	6	96
Supervision/Evaluation	11	80
Curricular Coordination	7	80
Monitor Progress	8	88
Protects Time	5	85
Visibility	5	80
Incentives for Teachers	4	100
Professional Development	10	80

Academic Standards	5	95
Incentives for Learning	4	94
Total items	71	

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### **Florida Standards Assessment English Language Arts**

Educators in Florida public schools design curriculum and instruction according to the Florida standards and instructional delivery is differentiated based on student needs. High school students are assessed on their knowledge of the standards through statewide assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and end-of-course subjects (Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, Biology 1, U.S. History, or Civics). Student performance on the assessments provides important information to parents, teachers, policymakers, and the general public regarding how well Florida students are learning the standards. In addition, student achievement data are used to improve instruction. Administrators and teachers use assessment data to help determine improvements in instructional strategies (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011).

The Florida Standards Assessment for English Language Arts (FSA ELA) is comprised of a reading and writing test. The reading test is administered to students enrolled in Grades 3–10; however, only students in Grades 4–10 participate in the ELA writing assessment. The FSA ELA tests are administered over two days. Students are administered the writing test in one 120-minute session and the reading test in two 90-minute sessions. A sophomore student who is repeating the FSA ELA may use up to half the length of a typical school day, if needed, to complete the writing and reading tests. The writing test consists of one context-based constructed-response item in which students are asked to read a variety of texts and respond to a prompt. Students are provided a writing-planning sheet to plan the graded response. The reading test has approximately 60–64 items that include 30% literacy. Students receive an

overall score for both the reading and for writing tests. The FSA ELA Student Report is a one-page color report that provides information to students and parents about resources for students as well as students' scale score, performance level, and reporting category scores. The FSA ELA achievement score is derived from a combination of the reading and writing scores.

The Spring 2015 administration of the FSA ELA provided the baseline used to establish the achievement level cut scores for each grade. The Florida State Board of Education adopted the achievement level cut scores January 2016. The five performance levels (Level 1: Inadequate, Level 2: Below Satisfactory, Level 3: Satisfactory, Level 4: Proficient, Level 5: Mastery) are indicated on each student's individual student report. Table 3 provides information regarding Grade 10 student performance at each achievement level and the score range for achievement levels. The score includes performance on the writing and reading tests.

Table 3

*FSA ELA Achievement Levels and Grade 10 Scale Scores (FLDOE, 2016a)*

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Inadequate	Below Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Proficient	Mastery
Highly likely to need substantial support for the next grade	Likely to need substantial support for the next grade	May need additional support for the next grade	Likely to excel in the next grade	Highly likely to excel in the next grade
284–333	334–349	<b>350–361</b>	362–377	378–412

Students who entered Grade 9 in 2014–2015 and beyond must pass the Grade 10 FSA ELA by earning a 350 (Level 3) or higher in order to graduate with a standard high school diploma. Students who do not receive a passing score can retake the Grade 10 FSA ELA each time the test is administered until they achieve a passing score. Students have up to five

opportunities prior to their on-time graduation schedule. If desired, students who do not pass may continue their high school education for needed additional instruction.

The Florida high school grading system focuses the school grading formula on student success measures in four achievement components, four learning gains components, graduation rate, middle school acceleration, and college and career acceleration success. Each of these components are worth up to 100 points in the overall calculation. Schools are graded: A = 62% of points or greater, B = 54% to 61% of points, C = 41% to 53% of points, D = 32% to 40% of points, F = 31% of points or less. To determine whether a school meets ELA achievement (100 points), each school uses the following formula:

Numerator      Students in the denominator who score a Level 3 or above on the FSA ELA assessment.

Denominator      Students in Grade 10 and who are enrolled as of the first day of the writing section of the FSA ELA and earn a valid FSA ELA score (students who met the Grade 10 graduation requirement prior to the Spring FSA ELA testing window are not included; FLDOE, 2016b).

Table 4 outlines the grades of the districts used in the research.

Table 4

*2017 District Grades of Sample Districts (FLDOE, 2016a)*

School	A	B	C	D	E	F
Grade	B	B	B	B	C	C

**Just Read, Florida!**

Launched in 2001, Just Read, Florida! is a reading initiative that prioritizes reading in Florida public schools and extends to parents, community groups, and volunteer organizations

that support Florida public schools. Just Read, Florida! is based on the latest reading research that places emphasis on phonemic awareness (knowing that words are made up of sounds), phonics (the link between sounds and letters), vocabulary (what words mean and how to say them), fluency (the ability to read words accurately and quickly), and comprehension (the ability to understand what you read). To emphasize a commitment to literacy, Florida has established the Just Read Florida! Office, which employs six full-time staff members who focus on literacy within the Florida Department of Education. The staff creates and administers professional development options for teachers, administrators, and reading coaches, works with postsecondary teacher preparation programs, and develops instructional materials related to reading. In addition, the staff provides oversight to Florida Center for Reading Research, and reviews and approves district reading plans before receipt of state reading funds (South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, 2012). Florida legislature funds reading instruction, literacy coaches and instructional supports through the K–12 Comprehensive Research-Based Reading Plan and offers professional development through webinars, online trainings, regional and district face-to-face trainings.

Since the implementation of Just Read, Florida!, 45 school districts, 583 schools, 14,000 educators, and over 320,000 students have been impacted and funding has been provided for professional development, teacher materials, reading coaches, and classroom library improvement (FLDOE, 2016a). Florida's reading assessments from 1988 to 2011 were the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and the FCAT 2.0 (FLDOE, 2011). FCAT consisted of criterion-referenced assessments in mathematics, reading, science, and writing, which measured student progress toward meeting Florida's Sunshine State Standards benchmarks. A score of three or above is needed to determine if a student is reading "on grade

level or above.” Data released from the FLDOE indicates that over a 10-year period (2001–2011), the percentage of students scoring a three or above on the FCAT steadily increased from 47% to 62% (FLDOE, 2011, p. 4).

In a summary of Florida’s 2004–2005 *Reading First* schools, researchers identified seven common traits that were observed in successful schools: strong leadership, positive belief and teacher dedication, data utilization and analysis, effective scheduling, professional development, scientifically-based intervention programs, and parent involvement (Crawford & Torgesen, n.d.). Strong school leadership was characterized by extensive knowledge of children, reading programs, data, schedules, and teachers’ needs. In an interview with teachers at the successful schools, one of the teachers stated, “Our leader not only has a mission for our school which is what we want to do, but she has a vision of how we are going to do it,” and a principal explained, “This is no longer a desk job. We are their instructional leaders” (Crawford & Torgesen, n.d., p. 3).

In a write up of lessons learned, Florida indicated that students in Grades 6–12 require a persistent focus on content area comprehension that requires teachers to incorporate strategies that create meaning and understanding with texts. Thousands of teachers have attended Just Read, Florida! reading academies, coach academies, statewide and regional conferences, and face-to-face professional development to learn the latest in scientifically-based reading research. Over 2,000 reading coaches were initially provided for in K–12 Florida schools by federal and state grants.

### **South Carolina Read to Succeed Act**

Considered a national health problem, not only does poor reading achievement have an impact on high school graduation rates but also it impacts the quality of life for high school

graduates (Harmon et al., 2011; Nitzkin et al., 2014; Witte et al., 2010). The average income for a high school dropout in 2015 was \$27,000 compared with \$36,800 for a high school graduate (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). The 2015 high school graduation rate in the United States was the highest rate to date at 83% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The 2015 graduates took the eighth-grade NAEP reading achievement assessment during the 2010–2011 school year. That year only 34% of Grade 8 students performed at or above the reading proficiency level. Low literacy skills put students behind, and the impact has a snowball effect. Lower than desirable literacy levels impact students' ability to achieve a college education, and their career opportunities are restricted (Harmon et al., 2011; Nitzkin et al., 2014).

In 2011 the South Carolina General Assembly initiated a literacy panel that addressed the widespread issue of illiteracy among South Carolina youth. The panel was tasked to consider factors in the state's public schools that impede literacy progress: physical health, language development, and quality of instruction. Using Florida as a model, the panel submitted recommendations to the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee that became the background for Act 284, Read to Succeed, and the *South Carolina State Reading Plan* (South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, 2012).

In June 2014, the South Carolina General Assembly passed the Read to Succeed (Act 284), as an endeavor to close the state's achievement gap and increase opportunities for all South Carolina graduates (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017). The General Assembly found that reading proficiency is a fundamental life skill vital for the educational and economic success of South Carolina citizens and the state; therefore, the goal of the act is to ensure that all students graduate with reading and writing skills needed to be successful in college, careers, and citizenship (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017). Read to Succeed requires the

South Carolina Department of Education to develop, implement, evaluate, and continuously refine the state's reading plan. Table 5 outlines how the components of South Carolina legislation mirror those of Florida:

Table 5

*Reading Legislation Goals*

Read to Succeed	Just Read Florida!
1. State, district, and school reading plans	1. State, district, and school reading plans
2. Focus on third-grade progression	2. Focus on third-grade retention
3. Summer reading camps	3. Summer reading camps
4. Provision of reading interventions	4. Provision of reading interventions
5. Requirements for in-service educator endorsements	5. K–12 reading endorsement for teachers
6. Early learning and literacy development	6. Early intervention
7. Teacher preparation	7. Literacy incorporated in teacher preparation programs
8. Reading coaches	8. Literacy coaches

South Carolina's comprehensive reading plan should provide a strategic approach toward reading proficiency for all public school students from prekindergarten through graduation. In order to improve literacy skills, South Carolina students must be given instruction that enables them to learn to read, comprehend, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively across all disciplines (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015).

To meet federal accountability requirements, students in South Carolina public schools take an End-of-Course Examination (EOCE) in the gateway courses of mathematics, English/language arts, and science by the third year of high school. The End-of-Course

Examination Program (EOCEP) encourages instruction in the specific academic standards for the courses, encourages student achievement, and documents the level of students' mastery of the academic standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017). EOCEP scores count 20% in the calculation of students' final grade in gateway courses. Table 6 is a display of English/language arts assessment scores of South Carolina high school students for the last five years. Each year scores, although not highly significant, continue to rise. The test items on the English assessment support the South Carolina Academic Standards for English.

Table 6

*SC High School Students English End-of-Course Exam Data*

Year	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students Tested	56,315	58,578	58,414	59,931	58,645
Mean Score	78.4	79.4	79.8	71.4	74.4
Failure Rate	23.0	25.2	21.4	23.2	19.2

The ESSA (2015) requires each state to establish long-term goals and measurements of interim progress for graduation rates for all students and for each subgroup of students that are based on four-year graduation rates. South Carolina provides progress on how schools and districts are performing through annual report cards. Report cards include graduation rate – the percentage of students who complete high school “on time” and get a diploma in four years as well as the percent of all students meeting state college and career readiness assessment benchmarks and average scores by subgroups. Table 7 represents the dropout rate for South Carolina students enrolled in public schools Grades 9 through 12. The state dropout rate declined from 2.6% during the 2014–2015 academic year to 2.3% during the 2015–2016

academic year. Data for the 2015–2016 academic year were collected from The South Carolina 45-Day Average Membership file collected in October of the 2016–2017 academic year.

Table 7

*SC High School Dropout Rate 2013–2017* (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018)

Year	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017
Student Enrollment	211,480	216,818	220,260	223,011	223,647
Dropouts	5,537	5,640	5,644	5,162	5,351
Dropout Rate	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.3	2.4

South Carolina college readiness indicator is measured using the ACT and End of Course Tests; Career readiness is indicated using WorkKeys. South Carolina has established the ACT benchmark score as follows: English 18, Math 22, Reading 22, and Science 23 and End of Course Tests (Algebra 1, Intermediate Algebra, Biology 1, English 1, and U.S. History and the Constitution) score of 70. To meet WorkKeys benchmark goals students must score at least the Platinum, Gold, or Silver level.

ESSA also requires an improvement of student academic achievement in reading and writing. The law requires states to develop comprehensive literacy instruction plans that ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies for students from early grades through Grade 12. Both Florida and South Carolina have developed plans and ensure that districts and schools meet the requirement as well. There is a need for principals to be leaders of learning by shaping a vision of literacy achievement for all students. Researchers Bendikson et al. (2012), Hitt and Tucker (2016), and Shatzer et al. (2014) state that school principals play a pivotal role in creating environments that promote student achievement. In addition, Valentine and Prater (2011) have

provided evidence that principal instructional leadership behaviors promote instructional and curriculum improvements that have been proven to improve student academic achievement.

High demands of literacy achievement among secondary students have placed more attention on the need for purposeful secondary student reading instruction (Harmon et al., 2011; Seok & DaCosta, 2014; Soper & Marquis-Cox, 2012). Adolescents who receive carefully planned literacy instruction are more significantly likely to graduate from high school and attend college compared to those who do not receive such attention (Witte et al., 2010). In order to ensure South Carolina graduates have the necessary literacy skills to be college and career ready, secondary school principals must be knowledgeable about adolescent literacy development and the nature of effective literacy instruction. School principals need to inspire high standards and confidence that the mission can be achieved to allow for the integration and implementation of an effective literacy plan.

### **Adolescent Stage of Development and Motivation**

German psychologist Erikson proposed the eight stages of psychosocial development (Miller, 2011). The stages involve the psychological and social needs of people. Based on this theory, students “who do not master the skills required in new settings are likely to develop . . . a sense of inferiority” (Eccles, 1999, p. 32). When elementary school students do not see themselves as capable in their academic setting, they are more likely to experience frustration and incompetence, which may development into a negative attitude toward school (Eccles, 1999; Sarroub & Pernicek, 2016). Students who experience learning difficulties in elementary school are at risk for future academic, as well as behavior, difficulties. In order to influence students’ self-confidence through their adolescent years, children need opportunities to develop successful experiences both in and outside of school.

There are eight stages of psychosocial development, and the stage that includes students in high school is the fifth stage. In this stage adolescents are searching for a sense of self and trying to define their values, beliefs, and goals. During the adolescent stage, children have an increased ability to “think abstractly, consider the hypothetical as well as the real, consider multiple dimensions of a problem at the same time, and reflect on themselves and complicated problems” (Eccles, 1999, p. 38). Adolescents have an increase in higher-order cognitive abilities to “accomplish more complicated and elaborate tasks” (Eccles, 1999, p. 38).

Motivated students see the benefits of reading and believe that any effort made will be based on their belief about the benefits of reading over their effort to be successful readers (Harmon et al., 2011). According to Merga (2015b), motivation is a key issue behind adolescents’ involvement in reading. Researcher Francois (2015) spent a year interviewing students and teachers and observing school spaces in a New York City public school to be able to describe what reading looked like in that secondary school. Francois also administered a student survey on reading motivation and a standardized reading assessment. The researcher found that reading motivation is as much intrinsic as it is contextual. Schools have an influence on students’ motivation to read and “can shape students’ motivation to read . . . in ways that have positive effects on their reading identity, efficacy in reading, and ability to read well” (Francois, 2015, p. 68). Motivation makes reading more enjoyable and has a positive impact on comprehension (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Teachers can increase students’ motivation by incorporating reading strategies into instruction and by providing a nurturing, supportive reading environment (Moje, 2006).

## **Stages of Reading Development**

Children who enter preschool or kindergarten with low oral language skills and limited print awareness become struggling readers if adequate instruction and engaged practice are not provided (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). If struggling readers fail to receive effective instructional intervention during middle and high school, they ultimately fail to develop the proficiency in reading and comprehension needed to read disciplinary texts in content area courses (Crawford & Torgesen, n.d.; Nitzkin et al., 2014; Witte et al., 2010).

According to Paige and Magpuri-Lavell (2014), the “importance of learning to read is to access the knowledge found in texts” (p. 86). Engagement with text is needed to decode, then comprehend complex material, and make inferences about the text (Malin, 2010; Nitzkin et al., 2014). These skills are usually obtained by Grade 4 (Nitzkin et al., 2014; South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). Fourth-grade students are expected to “retrieve phonological, syntactic, and orthographic information, draw on vocabulary and background knowledge; remember what is read; and have a purpose for reading” (Nitzkin et al., 2014, p. 27). Teachers assume students who enter secondary schools have the skillset needed to be independent, efficient readers (Nitzkin et al., 2014; Soper & Marquis-Cox, 2012). However, “many high school students have difficulty engaging with texts for a variety of reasons” (Malin, 2010, p. 121). Adolescent literacy refers to reading instruction for students in Grades 6–12 (Hougen, 2014). Adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders and those who fail to gain rapid and accurate decoding skills rarely catch up; they experience higher levels of frustrations and anxiety and lack the motivation needed to participate in reading activities (Dudley, 2005; Sarroub & Pernicek, 2016). Poor reading skills lead to struggles far beyond high school. As adults, struggling readers earn lower incomes and experience interpersonal problems and unemployment

at higher rates than their reading peers (Dudley, 2005, Nitzkin et al., 2014). Therefore, schools must choose evidence-based research strategies that will result in great gains in student reading achievement.

### **Instructional Reading Strategies**

Reading proficiency in adolescents requires the ability to identify words on the page with accuracy and fluency. In order to do so adolescents must have a knowledge base and the ability to think to understand words, sentences, and paragraphs. In addition, adolescents must be motivated and engaged to use the skills needed to understand the text.

Throughout literacy development phases, elementary through high school grades, reading tasks and assignments grow increasingly longer, diverse, and complex (FLDOE, n.d.-b; Snow & Moje, 2010). Fisher and Frey (2015) describe the literacy development phase of the middle and high school years as disciplinary literacy. In this phase, emphasis is placed on the content areas of science, mathematics, literature, history, and the arts. Disciplinary literacy dominates the middle and high school years which, when considering the number of different subject adolescent learners experience each day, may be overwhelming to an adolescent learner (Fisher & Frey, 2015; FLDOE, n.d.-b). Discipline-specific literacy is defined as “ways in which members of a field write, speak, explain, and discuss their ideas with one another” (Fisher & Frey, 2015, p. 54). In fact, to ensure all students are prepared for college and careers, the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts include guidelines for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects to help students develop academic literacy (Hougen, 2014). Although the literacy standards are meant to supplement, not replace, content standards in these areas, they promote the literacy skills and concepts that are required for

college, career, and life. According to Lent (2016), “this model weaves literacy into the basic fabric of content, satisfying the intent of the standards and the goals of teachers” (p. 6).

The National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000) identified five effective instructional reading strategies: phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. Emphasis on these strategies is found in elementary school instruction and provides little support for the methods of building adolescent reading and writing skills in the classroom (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; National Institute for Literacy, 2007). The National Institute for Literacy (2007) summarized research-based instructional practices that can improve adolescents’ academic reading and writing skills. Using the five components from the National Reading Panel, the Institute outlined suggestions for secondary teachers to help adolescent readers achieve advanced levels of literacy. It is important to note that in order for the strategies to be used successfully, the reader must know something about the content (Lent, 2016; National Council of Teachers of English, 2011).

**Phonemic awareness.** Phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken words are made up of individual phonemes or units of sound (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). Students who understand phonemes understand that there are three phonemes in bat, /b/, /a/, and /t/. Adolescents with strong phonemic skills are aware that a new word can be made out of *weather* by removing and replacing the first consonant sound with another consonant sound like in the word *feather* (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

When students have poor phonemic awareness skills, they are typically unsuccessful readers. Without an awareness of the sounds that make words, the introduction of new words causes difficulty in reaching new levels of reading literacy. These new levels are typically found in many secondary content area texts. The lack of phonemic awareness skills prevents many

struggling readers from building content area vocabulary, which influences their ability to comprehend the content (National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

Secondary schools must be prepared to incorporate instructional strategies that develop decoding skills. According to Barnes (2015), word decoding exerts a significant direct effect on reading comprehension especially for those with reading difficulties. Barnes (2015) noted that simply focusing on improving adolescents decoding skills is “unlikely to yield strong positive effects on reading comprehension unless reading comprehension is also an explicit focus of intervention for these struggling readers” (p. 7).

**Phonics.** According to the National Institute for Literacy (2007), “Phonics is the understanding of the relationship between the letters in written words and the sounds of these words when spoken” (p. 4). When students learn phonics, they acquire literacy skills with more speed and accuracy. When students have weak phonics skills, they are more likely to rely on context cues. In order for phonics instruction to be successful, struggling students must have a phonemic awareness. Teachers must understand phonics in order to provide effective instruction to struggling students. The knowledge of common syllable patterns and structural analysis improves students’ ability to read, spell, and learn the meaning of multisyllabic words.

**Oral reading fluency.** Fluency is defined as the ability to read written words quickly, accurately, and with proper expression (National Institute for Literacy, 2007; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2007). Fluency combines word recognition and comprehension, and while reading, the reader is able to make meaning of what is read. Thus, when students are fluent readers, they are able to focus on the content versus focusing on decoding each written word in the text (National Institute for Literacy, 2007; Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). Good readers learn to decode words by examining every letter, plotting the letter to its sound, and

combining the sounds together to deliver the word (Hougen, 2014). The ability to decode is easier with practice. Dysfluent readers are often those who either cannot recognize the word (decode) or cannot comprehend (make meaning of the text; Hougen, 2014). Dysfluent readers spend more time focusing on decoding rather than on content and “if the speed and accuracy of decoding words are hindered, comprehension of words is compromised” (National Institute for Literacy, 2007, p. 12). Students who lack the ability to read fluently experience consequences, “including (a) a reduction in vocabulary growth and background knowledge; (b) fewer opportunities to develop and practice reading comprehension strategies and schema for understanding certain genres; and (c) less reading practice” (Dudley, 2005, p. 16).

Paige and Magpuri-Lavell (2014) outlined three characteristics of reading fluency: word identification accuracy, pacing, and prosody. When students are able to read written text without stumbling over pronouncing words, word identification is high. High word identification means the reader has “phonics knowledge to correctly match letter blends to sounds of language to pronounce words” (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014, p. 84). Decoding is a critical component of fluency, and the inability to decode text affects students’ overall reading achievement (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Ehri (1995) suggested readers look closely at the word, think about the sound each letter makes, then use the skill of phoneme blending to ultimately pronounce the word. Walczyk and Griffith-Ross (2007) suggested readers compensate when the text challenges reading comprehension skills. Compensations can be accomplished “as long as they are motivated to understand and free to compensate” (Walczky & Griffith-Ross, 2007, p. 563).

When readers are able to retrieve a word from long-term memory without breaking an adequate reading pace or without frequent pauses, that is a good indicator of a fluent reader (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). In order to determine how fast a student should be able to read,

identification of the level at which a student can accurately read a passage with fluency has to be made. A student must be able to read with 96%–100% accuracy. Thus, a student’s accuracy is determined by the percentage of words read correctly (Dudley, 2005). One way to increase pacing is by providing students with multiple exposures to various types of words (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014). Secondary students have more complex text due to exposure to multiple disciplines. Secondary students can see and hear a variety of text structures, vocabulary, and subject matter and through this exposure increase the number of words into long-term memory (Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Wexler, Vaughn, Edmonds, & Reutebuch, 2008).

The final characteristic of reading fluency is the ability to read with expression (*prosody*). Prosody occurs when readers use pitch, stress, and timing to provide clues that increase comprehension while reading aloud. Secondary students who read with prosody increase the ability to comprehend what is read. When teachers provide students the opportunity to read aloud, students learn more words, improve the ability to read with prosody, and in turn increase their fluency level (Walczek & Griffith-Ross, 2007).

To increase fluency, dysfluent students need guided support through frequent and regular practice (Hougen, 2014; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Walczek & Griffith-Ross, 2007). Students can engage in practice through guided oral reading and partner reading. Both of these strategies reduce the level of shame often felt by adolescent readers when asked to read aloud for the class (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). In addition, students should witness the demonstration of fluent reading. This provides a standard for students to achieve. Fluency is necessary for reading achievement because it builds on the foundation of oral language skills, phonemic awareness, and efficiency decoding skills; fluency reflects what students comprehend (Pikulski

& Chard, 2005). In addition, as adolescents become fluent readers, they are able to engage in higher-level text.

**Vocabulary.** Vocabulary knowledge is more than comprehending the meaning of words read; vocabulary is words used in speech and print to communicate (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). Adolescent learners are expected to learn disciplinary vocabulary to read textbooks and use this vocabulary to communicate ideas in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Barnes, 2015). Vocabulary words are building blocks of connected text, and if a secondary student enters high school with very limited blocks, it will be difficult to make meaning out of content area texts (Hennings, 2000; Lent, 2016). Secondary texts have higher levels of specialized vocabulary that is more technical and abstract; therefore, a great degree of comprehension is necessary (Barnes, 2015; National Institute for Literacy, 2007; Nitzkin et al., 2014).

According to the National Institute for Literacy (2007), “Vocabulary knowledge is important to reading because the oral and written use of words promotes comprehension and communication” (p. 14). There are three primary types of vocabulary: *oral* refers to words students use in speaking, *aural* refers to the collection needed by students to understand when listening to others speak, and *print* refers to words used in reading and writing. In order to improve the vocabulary skills of struggling students, two skills are important: word identification and word analysis (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). Word identification is the ability to decipher a word out of a group of letters, whereas word analysis is the process involved in understanding the letters, sounds, roots, prefixes, and suffixes that make up words.

According to the National Institute for Literacy (2007), the “major goal of vocabulary instruction is to facilitate students’ ability to comprehend text” (p. 15). Lent (2016) suggested several tools to improve vocabulary within the disciplines:

1. Give students plenty of opportunities to use new vocabulary in relevant conversations.
2. Allow students to use drawings, skits, songs, cartoons, and personal connections to know new vocabulary.
3. Consider the amount of new words per unit/topic/week.
4. Allow students to collaborate with a graphic organizer and share with a gallery walk.
5. Allow students plenty of opportunities to talk with their peers about the meaning of words read.
6. Encourage students to create their own vocabulary list and periodically ask them to share new words.

There is no simple way to teach vocabulary. Knowledge of most common prefixes, suffixes, and base words and knowledge of word structure including understanding of common affixes and roots empower students to spell and read with greater proficiency (Hougen, 2014). Repetition, prior knowledge, and time will help familiarize adolescents with new vocabulary and help students use words appropriately within various disciplines (Lent, 2016; National Institute for Literacy, 2007).

**Comprehension strategies.** According to Barnes (2015), gaps exist in the knowledge of the development of comprehension skills in adolescent students particularly because of the types of texts middle and high school students use to read, understand, and learn course material. Expository texts, typically found in secondary courses, are categorized as cause/effect,

problem/solution, comparison/contrast, chronological order or sequence, concept idea with examples, and proposition with support (National Institute for Literacy, 2007). Reading comprehension is defined as the process of constructing meaning from words once they have been identified or to gain meaning from texts (Hougen, 2014; National Institute for Literacy, 2007). During the process of reading, readers are making meaning and integrating new information with old information. Depending on the text and the reader's prior knowledge of the content, style, or syntactic structures of the text, difficulty with comprehension can occur (Barnes, 2015; National Institute of Literacy, 2007; Nitzkin et al., 2014).

Adolescents must be actively engaged with the text to improve comprehension. Readers with strong comprehension skills typically establish a purpose for reading the text, while reading, draw on prior knowledge or experiences that help make meaning of the text, and analyze how the writer of the text presented their ideas (Barnes, 2015; Horne, 2014; National Institute of Literacy, 2007). To build comprehension skills, teachers should use graphic organizers, summarizing, building background knowledge, self-questioning, comprehension monitoring, and guided practice sheets (Horne, 2014; Hougen, 2014). Nitzkin et al. (2014) examined the relationship between reading comprehension and subskills such as vocabulary, rate, fluency, and accuracy. The researchers found that vocabulary had the strongest correlation to reading comprehension (Barnes, 2015; Nitzkin et al., 2014).

### **Other Reading Strategies**

**Recreational reading.** Merga (2015b) cited several studies that found that “regular recreational book reading is intrinsically linked to positive literacy outcomes” (p. 198). Merga and Moon (2016) defined recreational reading as “independent reading” or “reading for pleasure” as the “reading of books by choice, in contrast to reading assigned by a teacher” (p.

122). Recreational reading stimulates the part of the brain known for comprehension, fosters the development of vocabulary, word recognition, and understanding of syntax, and readers are more likely to read above age level (Merga, 2015b; Merga & Moon, 2016). In addition, implementing independent reading in secondary schools means struggling students have more time to develop the ability to think critically, and reluctant readers have more time to fall in love with the written word (Benning, 2014; Sanden, 2012). However, high schools generally do not provide support of recreational book reading like elementary schools because it could be assumed that most students have mastered the skill of independent reading by high school (Merga, 2015a).

Middle school teacher Benning (2014) used a survey to determine literary purchases for her classroom. The result was “real reading is taking place,” and her students would “drag their friends to . . . get one of Ms. Benning’s books” (Benning, 2014, p. 632). Sanden (2012) conducted a yearlong qualitative study exploring how teachers understand and implement independent reading programs in their classrooms. Successful independent reading programs provide a regularly scheduled amount of time each day, allow students to read materials of their own choosing, do not include follow-up assessments or journal requirements, and are modeled by teachers reading as students read (Benning, 2014; Sanden, 2012, 2014). To provide multiple sources of data, Sanden (2012) collected data through two interviews from eight highly effective teachers; in addition, data were collected through student interviews and classroom observations. Sanden (2012) reached three major conclusions in regards to how highly effective teachers practice independent reading programs: teachers or adults support student independent reading, teachers focus on students’ reading growth, and teachers are committed to student-centered practices.

Sanden (2012) found that when using recreational reading strategies, students were convinced that motivation and encouragement from teachers or other adults in the school contributed to their participation in classroom independent reading. Sanden's (2012) study addressed a gap between theory and practice in independent reading and concluded that a better understanding by teachers of the way to perceive and use independent reading "might contribute to greater awareness of its true potential in reading classrooms" (Sanden, 2012, p. 230).

Merga (2015a) explored the manner in which English teachers might contribute to adolescent students' attitudes toward recreational book reading. Teachers are influential social agents, and Merga found that

1. High school teachers could be more supporting and encouraging of recreational reading. Adolescents benefit from the modeled behavior, and the positive encouragement makes students want to read more.
2. Teachers are role models, and students tend to view favorably teachers who project enthusiasm toward reading.
3. Teachers who are aware of their students' reading interests and preferences in order to make recommendations are seen in positive regard.
4. Students valued reading for pleasure rather than reading for testing.

**Social influences.** Both Florida and South Carolina reading plans extend to community groups and volunteer organizations that support public schools (FLDOE, 2016a; South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). Read to Succeed (2014–2015) requires school districts to "create family-school-community partnerships that focus on increasing the volume of reading, in school and at home, during the year and in the community over the summer" (p. 20). Merga and Moon (2016) suggested that schools "encourage parents to embrace their potential as positive

social influences to foster increased . . . reading in their children, by . . . encouraging parents to [be] key literacy supporters in their children's lives beyond the early years of reading skill acquisition" (p. 122). In a study of adolescent access to books in the home, Merga (2015b) found that students who have access to books in the home have a more positive attitude toward and are more frequently involved in reading.

Children become more independent during the adolescence stage; during this stage adolescents need people who will connect, communicate, and have a genuine interest in them (Eccles, 1999; Sarroub & Pernicek, 2016). Adolescents' approach to reading can be influenced by the attitudes and values of the social groups with which they interact (Merga & Moon, 2016). According to Merga and Moon (2016), the "act of identifying as a 'reader' may be a product of exposure to positive modeling and valuing by influential social agents such as parents, teachers, friends and the peer group" (p. 125). Using a mixed-methods study, researchers Merga and Moon used two data collection instruments (a survey and semi-structured interviews) to determine the influence of parents, English teachers, peer groups, and friends on adolescents' independent reading. Merga and Moon found that social influences "can have a positive effect on adolescents' attitude toward and engagement in . . . reading . . . [and that] student recipients of this positive influence . . . may choose to read more books as a result [and] will experience benefits for literacy outcomes" (p. 138).

Merga and Moon (2016) found that of all relationships considered, the perceived peer group attitude had little significance ( $p = .063$ ) on adolescent independent reading. Although peer influence is generally found to increase during adolescent years, in comparing peers and friends, most important to students' engagement in independent reading were the attitudes and values toward reading of those whom the adolescents in the study considered friends (Merga,

2014; Merga & Moon, 2016). Specifically, Merga (2014) found that the “perceived attitude of friends appeared to have a moderate, positive influence on boys, and a weak, positive influence on girls. Thus, girls appeared less susceptible to friend influence than boys, though both genders appeared to be influenced by their friends’ attitudes toward reading books” (p. 479).

### **Summary**

According to the Florida Department of Education (n.d.-c), “60 million U.S. citizens read below eighth-grade reading level. About 85% of the juveniles appearing in juvenile court are functionally illiterate, and about 75% of the unemployed adults are illiterate” (p. 15). Improving the reading skills of secondary students can be difficult. Secondary students need literacy skills that will make them college and career ready. When teachers and school principals are provided with sufficient support and knowledge to address student literacy needs, literacy achievement can be achieved. In a literacy-focused school, the principal leader must build and nurture a positive reading culture. Literacy skills will increase graduates’ ability to effectively use resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems technology, and the three foundation skills: basic, thinking, and personal. This study adds to the limited base of research that currently exists on secondary principals’ instructional leadership behaviors effect on adolescent literacy achievement scores. It is evident that the role of the school principal is demanding and complex; however, principal self-efficacy has an impact on a principal’s ability to operate in instructional leadership behaviors. Principals with the ability to do so will have a strong effect on student outcome.

The purpose of this applied study is to further understand the problem of poor literacy achievement among high school students and to design interventions for school leaders to impact and improve high school students’ literacy. Perceptions of self are a viable means of data

assessment that will assist principals in determining which specific instructional behaviors have the greatest effect (Nogay & Beebe, 2008). This literature review is an attempt to close the gap in literature regarding the effect of instructional leadership on students' literacy outcomes.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this applied study was to further understand the problem of poor literacy achievement among high school students and to design a proposal for school leaders to impact and improve high school students' literacy achievement. This relationship was examined through the use of archival student data and principal self-reported instructional leadership behaviors identified using the PIMRS. In addition, five principals were interviewed, allowing the researcher to make meaning of the research questions beyond the scope of the PIMRS. The interviews allowed the researcher to focus on possible policy level factors that have an impact on instructional leadership decisions that principals make. Student academic achievement was determined based on the school mean score on the FSA ELA reading assessment. This chapter describes the research design selected for the study, along with a research-based rationale for the design. The research questions are reiterated, followed by a description of the setting, study participants, the researcher's role in the study, procedures for the study, and data collection procedures. The chapter concludes with the proposed data analysis procedures for the hypotheses.

### **Design**

A multimethod research design was used for this applied study because the quantitative and qualitative data collection are independent of one another. The multimethod design was most appropriate for this study because the design allowed the researcher to gather multiple forms of data, review all of the data, and make sense of the data by organizing them into categories that cut across the data sources (Creswell, 2013). The first phase of the study used quantitative research methodology to examine the self-perceived instructional leadership

behaviors of Florida high school principals using the three dimensions of the PIMRS and to determine the degree of the relationship between school mean reading achievement scores.

According to Jameel, Shaheen, and Majid (2018), qualitative research seeks to answer the “why” and “how” of phenomena as opposed to the “what” and “how much.” The researcher attempted to investigate the relationship of instructional leadership and student reading achievement scores.

In the second phase qualitative research methodology was used to generate the narratives of principals’ experiences and perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using open-ended questions facilitated by the researcher to gather information about instructional leadership behaviors that contributed to their students’ literacy achievement. The development of effective questions was of great importance in order to direct the discussion and to draw rich information from the principal participants (Ferrari, 2018). Although the questions were designed before the interview, new questions that arose during the interview were then included in the interview, which yielded results that strengthen the study (Ferrari, 2018; Jameel et al., 2018). The results of this study may offer useful implications in regards to principal instructional leadership behaviors and reading achievement in secondary schools and may contribute to the literature on secondary principals’ leadership effect on student reading achievement (Ferrari, 2018).

In the third phase archival data were collected from Florida public PK–12 Education Portal.

### **Research Questions**

Five principals were interviewed to allow the researcher to make meaning of the research beyond the quantitative results of the PIMRS.

**Central Question:** What principal behaviors should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement?

**Sub-question 1:** As an instructional leader what characteristics have you seen in exemplary literacy classrooms?

**Sub-question 2:** What are some examples of ways you have established and communicated high expectations for all staff related to student literacy achievement?

**Sub-question 3:** What support (research-based strategies or programs) did the district provide to support your school's literacy program? How effective was it/were they?

**Sub-question 4:** How was/were the program(s) implemented and monitored?

### **Setting**

Florida had 75 Pre-K to 12 public school districts that served 2,817,076 students during the 2016–2017 school year. Of the 2,817,076 students in Florida public schools, 1,636,648 (58.1%) participated in the federal free-and-reduced lunch program and 294,128 (10.4%) students participated in the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. In addition, approximately 377,407 (13.4%) students received services through Exceptional Student Education programs. According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), during the 2016–2017 school year there were 612 public senior high schools in Florida. Florida public high schools are very diverse; of the 847,913 public high school students, over 61% of the students who attend Florida's public high schools are racial minorities (see Table 8).

There were 382 public senior high schools (Primary Service Type K–12 General Education) within the six participating Florida districts. Of those schools, 215 were 9–12, senior high schools, and 95 had an economically disadvantaged rate at or above the state average (58.1%) and were cleared by their respective districts to participate. The participants for the

study were drawn from a convenience sample of high schools from six districts in Florida during the spring semester of the 2017–2018 school year. The districts and schools are restricted to those that had a socioeconomically disadvantaged population rate at or above the state average (58.1%) during the 2016–2017 school year. School socioeconomically disadvantaged population rate is represented by the percentage of enrolled students who are eligible for either free or reduced lunch. Silvernail, Sloan, Paul, Johnson, and Stump (2014) studied the relationships between school level poverty and student academic performance. The researchers found that as the poverty rate increases in a school, student academic achievement levels decline (Silvernail et al., 2014). Although the level of poverty in a school is a predictor of average student performance, other factors such as school climate, years of teaching experience of the school staff, leadership, and education levels of teachers play a role in influencing student academic achievement (Dell'Angelo, 2016; Silvernail et al., 2014; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

This limiting of the sample is due to the historic performance of students from low SES families and the fact that "on average, kids from wealthy families do significantly better than kids from poor families" (Willingham, 2012, p. 33). The evidence from the study provides data for future research about the relationship between principal instructional leadership effect on student achievement and student socioeconomic status.

Table 8

*Race and Gender Makeup of Florida High School Students (FLDOE, 2016a)*

	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	Two or More Races	Amer Indian	Pacific Islander	Female	Male
Student <i>n</i>	23,470	189,858	340,475	264,434	25,264	3,352	1,060	417,439	430,474
%	2.8	22.4	40.2	31.2	3.0	0.4	0.1	49.8	50.2

## Participants

Fifteen principals participated in the quantitative portion of the study, and five of the 15 principals were interviewed for the qualitative portion of the study. From participating principals, demographic information was collected regarding their gender, age, race, level of education, number of years as a teacher, number of years as a principal, and number of years at the current school. To add internal validity, a parameter restricted the number of years the principal was in his or her position (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). A principal must have been the administrator of the high school for the previous three academic years from the date of the survey since the assumption is made that the school's effectiveness was due in part to the leadership practices of the current principal. All 15 participants were principals of regular and charter senior high schools. The mean age range for principals was 50–59 years old; 75% were male and 25% were female, and 26% had a doctoral degree. Principals taught either 1–5 or 12–17 years prior to becoming a principal and the majority had been in a principal position an average of 9–14 years. The majority of principals were in their position at their current schools 3–8 years. The demographic make-up of Florida public high school principals who participated in this study is included in Table 9.

Student data for this study were comprised of the 2016–2017 district FSA ELA mean scale scores of high school students in Grade 10. There were 197,881 sophomore students who took the FSA ELA during the 2016–2017 school year. The total number of students who scored level three or above was 99,070 (50.1%). The high schools involved in the study participated in their statewide assessments independent of this study (Shatzer et al., 2014). The 2016–2017 FSA ELA mean scale score of the six districts was 347 (Below Satisfactory). The total number of students between the six districts who took the assessment was 80,194.

Table 9

*Demographic Information of Participating Florida Principals (N=15)*

Variable	n	Percent
Gender		
Female	5	25.0
Male	10	75.0
Age		
25 – 29	0	0.0
30 – 39	0	0.0
40 – 49	5	33.3
50 – 59	7	46.7
60 – >	3	20.0
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian	0	0.0
Black	2	13.3
Caucasian	9	60.0
Latino	4	26.7
Other	0	0.0
Level of Education		
Masters	4	26.7
Masters +30	6	40.0
Specialist	1	6.6
Doctoral	4	26.7
Years as a Teacher		
1 – 5	5	33.3
6 – 11	4	26.7
12 – 17	5	33.3
18 – 22	0	0.0
23 – >	1	6.6
Years as a Principal		
3 – 8	6	40.0
9 – 14	8	53.3
15 – 20	1	6.6
21 – 25	0	0.0
Years At Current School		
3 – 8	11	73.3
9 – 14	4	26.7
15 – 20	0	0.0
21 – >	0	0.0

Table 10 is the demographic profile of the sample districts. During the 2016–2017 school year there were 87,670 sophomore students at the six solicited school districts. Table 11 is the demographic profile of the sophomore students who scored level three and above on the FLA ELA assessment within the six solicited school districts.

Table 10

*Demographic Profile of Sample Districts (FLDOE, 2016a)*

	District A	District B	District C	District D	District E	District F
# Of Students	271,828	357,311	214,402	192,729	46,407	43,040
Gender						
Male	51.5%	51.2%	51.3%	51.4%	51.3%	51.7%
Female	48.5%	48.8%	48.7%	48.6%	48.7%	48.3%
Ethnicity						
White	21.3%	7.1%	34.1%	31.6%	34.6%	50.8%
Hispanic	32.9%	70.1%	36.2%	33.3%	49.8%	21.8%
Black	39.1%	21.1%	21.2%	28.3%	11.5%	20.1%
2 + Races	2.6%	0.6%	4.3%	2.8%	2.0%	5.0%
Asian	3.6%	1.1%	3.8%	3.0%	1.3%	1.6%
Amer Indian	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%
Pac Islander	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
% Disabled	12.8%	9.9%	14.1%	15.5%	12.7%	14.9%
% Eng. Lang Learners	12.7%	21.5%	12.7%	12.7%	15.2%	6.5%
% Econ Disadvantaged	61.9%	70.8%	58.6%	59.2%	59.6%	65.1%
% District Graduation Rate	78.7%	80.4%	79.1%	82.3%	86.7%	81.8%

Table 11

*2016–17 Spring 2017 FSA ELA Grade 10 District Results (Level 3 and above)*

	District A		District B		District C		District D		District E		District F	
Mean Scale Score	349		347		346		348		351		345	
# of Students Tested	18,666		25,837		15,225		14,003		3,408		3,055	
# Scored Level 3 and Above	9,860		12,883		7,204		7,109		1,891		1,314	
% Level 3 and Above	52.8		49.9		47.3		50.8		55.5		43.0	
Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>										
White	2,850	70.3	1,403	71.9	3,409	64.2	3,298	71.2	923	71.2	766	49.7
Hispanic	3,469	55.1	9,410	51.6	2,138	37.9	2,064	44.6	684	44.2	271	39.3
Black	2,607	37.5	1,745	33.8	861	28.4	1,199	31.9	166	42.6	155	25.8
2 or More Races	340	62.5	69	62.7	311	54.9	189	59.6	49	71.0	73	52.5
Asian	536	78.6	230	75.4	438	76.7	300	71.8	45	90.0	34	73.9
American Indian	35	62.5	7	53.8	24	49.0	33	21.4	22	51.2	11	47.8
Pacific Islander	11	47.8	8	57.1	16	50.0	10	58.8	**	**.*	**	**.*
Not Reported	12	20.0	11	22.4	7	25.9	16	21.1	**	**.*	3	21.4
Level 3 and Above												
Disabled	19.6		21.1		13.5		20.6		20.6		7.1	
English Language Learners	10.6		6.3		4.6		3.8		6.3		3.6	
Economically Disadvantaged	42.0		44.3		32.1		36.7		43.5		34.8	

\*\* Data are suppressed

The principals who were interviewed have been leading schools for three to 15 years. Each has taught and served as an assistant principal prior to becoming a principal. Two are White, two Latino, and one African American. Four of the principals are male, and one is female. One of the principals has a doctorate degree in educational leadership and one has completed all but the dissertation toward his doctoral degree. Table 12 outlines demographic information about each of the high school principals interviewed.

Table 12

*2019 Demographic Information About Interviewed Principals*

	North Kings High	Numbers High	Genesis High	South Kings High	Deuteronomy High
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Age	40–49	60+	50–59	50–59	50–59
Race/Ethnicity	White	White	Black	Latino	Latino
Level of Education	Masters +30	Masters +30	Doctoral	Educational Spcl	Masters +30
Years as a Teacher	1–5	1–5	23–27	6–11	1
Years as a Principal	3–8	9–14	9–14	9–14	3
Years at Current School	3–8	3–8	9–14	3–8	3

**The Researcher's Role**

The role of the researcher in any study is important. The first phase of the study utilized quantitative methodology. When a researcher uses the quantitative method, the researcher should be removed from the variables studied. I used a questionnaire that participants were able to retrieve through SurveyMonkey. This allowed anonymity and eliminated potential researcher

bias, interference, or distortion in survey administration, data collection, and data analysis. The second phase of the study involved the use of the qualitative method. In this phase I played a more participatory role and interacted with the principals during each interview. According to Gall et al. (2007), observers often include their feelings and experiences in interpreting observations. Therefore, it is important to record the observation with descriptive, reflective, detailed, and concrete details.

My role as a high school administrator and former middle and high school, school counselor could have potentially influenced my work with this research study. I have witnessed the challenges administrators face in leading learning within a school. The magnitude of managerial responsibilities often places instructional leadership at the bottom of the list of things to do, or if it is accomplished, it is done so with very little veracity. My responsibilities as an administrator included student discipline, attendance, grades, and student passage rate. While these responsibilities are an indirect part of instructional leadership, I desired to take a more direct role in curriculum and instruction issues. New literacy legislation included an expectation of reading expertise and literacy leadership of principals and assistant principals. These experiences motivated me into pursuing this research study: I was interested in the topic of the impact of instructional leadership and reading achievement in high schools and wanted to know how and why certain principals are more effective as instructional leaders on the secondary level. It was important that I stay mindful of my role and responsibilities as the researcher; otherwise, my interest in the topic could have caused ethical issues.

### **Procedures**

Permission to conduct research was granted by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The formal IRB approval is provided in Appendix A. Permission to

conduct research within the six Florida school districts was requested via email (see sample, Appendix B).

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

### **Survey**

After receiving approval to conduct research from each district (see sample, Appendix D), principals of the schools were sent a blind copy (BCC) email with the subject line “Doctoral Research: Principal Instructional Leadership Effect on Student Reading Achievement” requesting their participation, explaining the purpose, and providing a link to the PIMRS (see sample, Appendix E). Using BCC helped maintain confidentiality and influence response rate. Gall et al. (2007) suggested that a “cover letter” accompany the instrument to influence the return rate because a return rate as low as 20% would make it impossible to “generalize from the sample’s data to the population that it is intended to represent” (p. 237). Therefore, the email included information typically found in the cover letter: the purpose, importance, assurance of confidentiality, completion time, and directions detailing completion of the PIMRS (Gall et al., 2007). Principals indicated consent to participate in the study by typing their name in a designated textbox after entering the online survey. As needed, follow-up emails were sent to non-respondents to maximize participation (Gall et al., 2007; see sample, Appendix F). The survey link remained active for 12 days from each date of solicitation. Information was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet to track principals solicited, surveys returned, and was used to determine the return rate (Gall et al., 2007).

Permission to use the PIMRS was obtained from Hallinger, the instrument developer (Appendix G). Principals self-reported their instructional leadership performance during the 2017–2018 school year using PIMRS via SurveyMonkey®. Hallinger (personal communication,

July 24, 2016) suggested the use of an online survey method because it is the most appropriate method for quick availability of the data files to report descriptive and statistical analysis and download results. To gather the demographic data (gender, age, race/ethnicity, level of education, years of experience as a teacher and principal, and tenure at current school), coding of principals' responses in SurveyMonkey® are seen in Table 13. Based on previous research, the survey should take no more than 25 minutes to complete (Carson, 2013). As requested by Hallinger (personal communication, January 14, 2017), a copy of the demographic questions included with the PIMRS, a copy of the data set, and a soft file copy of the completed study for use in further instrument development will be sent to instrument publisher.

Table 13

*Coding of Principal Demographic Information*

Characteristics	Code
Gender	
Female	1
Male	2
Age	
25 – 29	1
30 – 39	2
40 – 49	3
50 – 59	4
60 –	5
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian	1
Black	2
Caucasian	3
Latino	4
Other	5
Education Level	
Masters	1
Masters + 30	2
Specialist	3
Doctoral	4
Years as a Teacher	
1 – 5	1
6 – 11	2

12 – 17	3
18 – 22	4
23 – 27	5
Years as a Principal	
3 – 8	1
9 – 14	2
15 – 19	3
20 – 25	4
26 – 31	5
Principal Tenure	
3 – 8	1
9 – 14	2
15 – 19	3
20 – 25	4
26 – 31	5

School level FSA ELA scores were matched against correlating principals' data using a predetermined school identifier. All electronic data were stored on a password-protected computer and will be destroyed after three years.

The quantitative data in this study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. According to Gall et al. (2007), descriptive statistics are appropriate because they summarize the data using measures of central tendency to include mean, median, mode, deviance from the mean, variance, percentage, and frequency counts; therefore, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 21 for Macintosh was used to create the mean scores, standard deviations, and confidence intervals of the three dimensions of the PIMRS. The PIMRS score from the principal respondents of each school was automatically aggregated by SurveyMonkey® and exported to an Excel spreadsheet.

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used as a measure of the linear correlations between the variables. The data from principal data were analyzed using SPSS. Correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationships between the instructional leadership dimensions and school reading achievement scores. Pearson's product-moment correlations

were run to examine the null hypotheses at an alpha level of .05 (Gall et al., 2007). The Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the significance of behaviors of the three PIMRS instructional leadership dimensions of principals—Defining the School Mission (DSM), Managing the Instructional Program (MIP), and Developing the School Learning Climate Program (SLC) —and the school reading achievement scores (Gall et al., 2007).

Since three Pearson product-moment correlations were run, a Bonferroni correction was necessary. Warner (2013) stated that a Bonferroni correction is needed to limit the risk of a Type I error when multiple tests are run. Since three *t* tests were conducted, the Bonferroni correction for the alpha level was calculated to be  $0.05/3 = .01667$  which rounds to .02 (Warner, 2013). For each correlation, the null hypothesis will be rejected at  $p < .02$  instead of the usual  $p < .05$ .

Data screening consisted of a visual inspection of the spreadsheet, looking for incomplete data. Three participants of the original 18 did not complete the form, so those were excluded from the analysis. Next, scatterplots between the variables in each correlation were plotted to check for extreme outliers. One outlier was present in each data set but was determined not to be an extreme outlier in each case, so all data were retained. These same scatterplots were also used to check the assumption of linearity and the assumption of bivariate normal distribution. Both assumptions are tenable. These scatterplots can be seen in Chapter Four (Figures 3 and 4).

Descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were calculated for principal age and years of experience as a teacher and as a principal, in addition to both variables, and is included in the results section of Chapter Four. This information provided an overview of principal respondents that made up the study sample. From the Pearson's Product-moment analysis, the following is reported in Chapter Four: number (*N*), degree of freedom (*df*),

correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) and the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ), significance level ( $p$ ), the effect size and power.

## **Interviews**

After receiving IRB approval to continue the study, the principals who originally participated in the study were solicited via email to participate in an interview. Interviews have guided much of early theory in education and mental health settings, and interviews continue to be a preferred option for unexplored and underexplored social phenomena (Hays & Singh, 2012). Interviews allowed the researcher to make meaning of the research questions beyond the span of the PIMRS. A semi-structured interview was used with an interview protocol to guide the interview experience. Voluntary participants were asked to reply to the researcher with a date and time for the interview and to return a signed copy of the consent form to the researcher. Interviews were conducted via Facetime video or audio. Responses to the interview questions were transcribed by the researcher for careful data analysis.

The researcher wanted to gain insight into several aspects of instructional leadership that the PIMRS was not able to answer, given its limited scope as an instrument that measures perceptions of principals' instructional leadership in quantitative results only (Millar, 2014). The questions were generated with the aid of a school level research-based reading plan reflection tool. The reflection tool was designed to help school reading leadership teams develop and implement research-based reading instruction that nurtures a school's reading culture, leads the learning, and uses data to lead and guide decisions about reading instruction (FLDOE, 2008). The interview questions were intended to focus on decisions that principals make and behaviors they display that have an impact on instructional leadership, as well as if there is any district level support received in regards to the literacy achievement of the students in their building.

Self-efficacy reflects the confidence an individual has in his or her ability to accomplish behaviors necessary to produce specific performance achievements (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, principals with high self-efficacy might develop better instructional leadership practices and an improved instructional climate in schools (Frederici & Skaalvik, 2012). Principals make decisions about the day-to-day operations of schools, and effective principal leadership is essential to successful implementation of any school improvement initiative (Cawn et al., 2016; Miller, 2013). Interested in the lived experiences of principals, the central research question asked, What principal behaviors should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement? This question was answered through an explanation of four sub-questions.

1. As an instructional leader what characteristics have you seen in exemplary literacy classrooms?

Instruction is the primary role of teachers; however, "principals must be engaged in stimulating, supervising, and monitoring teaching and learning in schools" (Hallinger, 2005; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). School leaders must act to ensure effective reading instruction is implemented. Systematic and explicit initial instruction, delivery of differentiated instruction delivered either individually or in small groups, valid assessments, and intensive interventions results in quality literacy classrooms.

2. What are some examples of ways you have established and communicated high expectations for all staff related to student literacy achievement?

Principals of successful schools have high standards and expectations, protect instructional time, and foster a culture that rewards continuous learning and improvement (Nogay & Beebe, 2008). High expectations for all staff are seen in the

school improvement plan, written brief statements, guiding principles, literacy classroom walkthroughs, and interviews with teachers.

3. What support (research-based strategies or programs) did the district provide to support your school's literacy program? How effective was it/were they?

According to Hougen (2014), when teachers receive suitable training and support, they learn and apply the necessary components of reading instruction, and their students achieve greater success. A principal's level of self-efficacy increases from the support of the superintendent. This support can be shown by allowing principals to make school level decisions about literacy programs and strategies, hiring of staff, and providing ongoing feedback.

4. How was/were the program(s) implemented and monitored?

According to Hallinger (2013), careful implementation and continuous monitoring of student performance results must be used to determine the effectiveness of any new instructional program.

According to Creswell (2013), data analysis consists of preparing and organizing data for evaluation, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in a discussion. Using a semi-structured list of questions, the verbatim transcripts of interview recordings were subjected to bracketing by the researcher because of personal experience with school leadership and interest in secondary student literacy achievement. The researcher summarized notes immediately after data collection then placed the data into small categories of information to label the data with a code (Creswell, 2013). The codes led to texts or themes of common ideas secondary principals face in regards to instructional leadership and student literacy achievement.

During this phase of data analysis, the researcher took notes and highlighted patterns to table record frequency of themes. All transcripts were stored on a password-protected computer (Creswell, 2013). Any printed data as well as all electronic files will be destroyed after three years.

### **Archival Data**

The researcher gathered data regarding Florida senior high schools' student enrollment, student demographics, graduation rate, economic disadvantage rate, and FSA ELA mean scores through the Florida public PK-20 Education Information Portal. The researcher exported data that included all active schools, and then removed all other districts except the six included in this study. All elementary, middle, alternative and combination schools were removed (also eliminating service types: alternative, SPED, and career and technology), leaving 9–12 regular, charter, and conversion charter senior high schools. Between the six districts, 95 out of 215 senior high schools were at or above Florida's public schools' economically disadvantage rate of 58.1% (2016–2017). Full descriptive statistics for the participating high schools can be found in Appendix C. The data list is secured on the researcher's password-protected hard drive.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The first ethical consideration was that the participants shared personal information via interviews and demographic survey responses. To protect their identity, the participants and sites were given pseudonyms. In addition, to protect the transcripts and ensure confidentiality, they were limited to myself and any external auditors and peer reviewers. The transcripts were stored on a password-protected computer.

The second ethical consideration was the potential for conflicts of interest. As a human instrument and someone who has an interest in the phenomenon under study, I was mindful not

to insert my limited but strong personal opinion on educational leadership. I partook in memoing to limit any potential conflicts of interest throughout the data collection process.

### **Summary**

In summary, the multimethod research design was used for this applied study and provided an opportunity to examine self-perceived instructional leadership behaviors. Analysis of survey data and interview results added to the literature regarding high school principal instructional effect on student reading achievement. This section described the research design, setting, population and sample, data collection and analysis procedures, and the role of the researcher for this study. Data about principal instructional leadership behaviors were gathered through self-reported responses to the 50-item PIMRS Likert-style survey, while data about principals' lived experiences of leading school literacy achievement were gathered through four survey questions. For this study, voluntarily participants were limited to principals who had been the principal in their current school for a term of three years or longer. The researcher maintained an objective role in analyzing survey data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this multimethod research study was to further understand the problem of poor literacy achievement among high school students and to design possible solutions for school leaders to impact and improve high school students' literacy scores. This study was guided by one central research question and four sub-questions to describe the lived experiences of secondary school principals' role as literacy instructional leaders. Participants completed demographic surveys, completed the PIMRS, and participated in semi-structured interviews. The relevant themes of their shared experiences, as they relate to the sub-research questions, are presented as follows.

### **Participants**

#### **Survey Participants**

Of the 95 principals who were asked to complete a survey, 15 responded to the request. The mean and standard deviation obtained for principal age and principals' years of experience as a teacher as well as a principal can be found in Table 9. Of the 15 responses, 46.7% of principals were between 50–59 years of age. Only 53.3% of the principals who responded have been serving in the role of principal between 9–14 years.

#### **Interview Participants**

The interview participants in this study were all high school principals from Florida public schools. Each had been a principal of their respective school for at least three years and each had some experience in the classroom setting. Participants were given pseudonyms and are described in the following sections.

### **Genesis High School Principal**

Genesis High School principal is a 50–59 years old Black male who has a doctoral degree in educational leadership. Genesis High principal taught 23–27 years prior to becoming a principal and has been the principal of his current school 9–14 years. Genesis High has been the only school he has served as principal. For the past four years Genesis High School’s FSA ELA scores have ranged between 334–339.

### **Numbers High School Principal**

Numbers High School principal is a 50–59 years old Hispanic male who has a master’s degree plus 30 credit hours. Numbers High principal taught one year prior to becoming a principal and has been the principal of his current school three years. For the past four years Numbers High School’s FSA ELA scores have ranged between 338–340.

### **Deuteronomy High School Principal**

Deuteronomy High School principal is a 50–59 years old Hispanic male who has a master’s degree plus 30 credit hours. He is currently working on his doctoral degree in educational leadership. Deuteronomy High principal taught one year prior to becoming a principal and has been the principal of his current school three years. He was previously selected as secondary principal of the year for his district. For the past four years Deuteronomy High school’s FSA ELA scores have ranged between 332–333.

### **North Kings High School Principal**

North Kings High School principal is a 40–49 years old White male who has a master’s degree plus 30 credit hours. North Kings High School principal taught 1–5 years prior to becoming a principal and has been the principal of his current school 3–8 years. North Kings

High School has been his first and only principalship. For the past four years North Kings High school's FSA ELA scores have ranged between 345–347.

### **South Kings High School Principal**

South Kings High School principal is a 50–59 years old Latino female who has an educational specialist degree in educational leadership. She taught 6–11 years prior to becoming a principal and has 9–14 years' experience as a principal. South Kings principal has been the principal of her current school 3–8 years. For the past four years South Kings High school's FSA ELA scores have ranged between 340–341.

## **Results**

The quantitative analysis of principal results of PIMRS led to the development of four interview questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals in order to find themes related to their instructional leadership experiences that contributed to student literacy achievement.

### **Sub-question 1**

Sub-question 1 for this study asked, “As an instructional leader what characteristics have you seen in exemplary literacy classrooms?” Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals from Florida high schools in order to find themes related to their experiences as literacy school leaders. The themes uncovered in the qualitative analysis were supervising and evaluating instruction and coordinating the curriculum.

**Supervising and evaluating instruction.** Leaders have the task of developing others in an attempt to improve student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). One of the three subscales that falls under the umbrella of domain two, MIP, is supervising and evaluating instruction. Using the student reading achievement scores and principal scores from domain two (MIP), the

researcher did not find a significant relationship between the variables. A Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the relationship between Florida high school ELA scores and *managing the instructional programs* subscale of the PIMRS survey. The data were first screened for missing data points. Three participants provided incomplete responses and were dropped from the data set. Then, a scatterplot was run to check the assumption of bivariate outliers, linearity, and bivariate distribution. All were found to be tenable. See Figure 2.

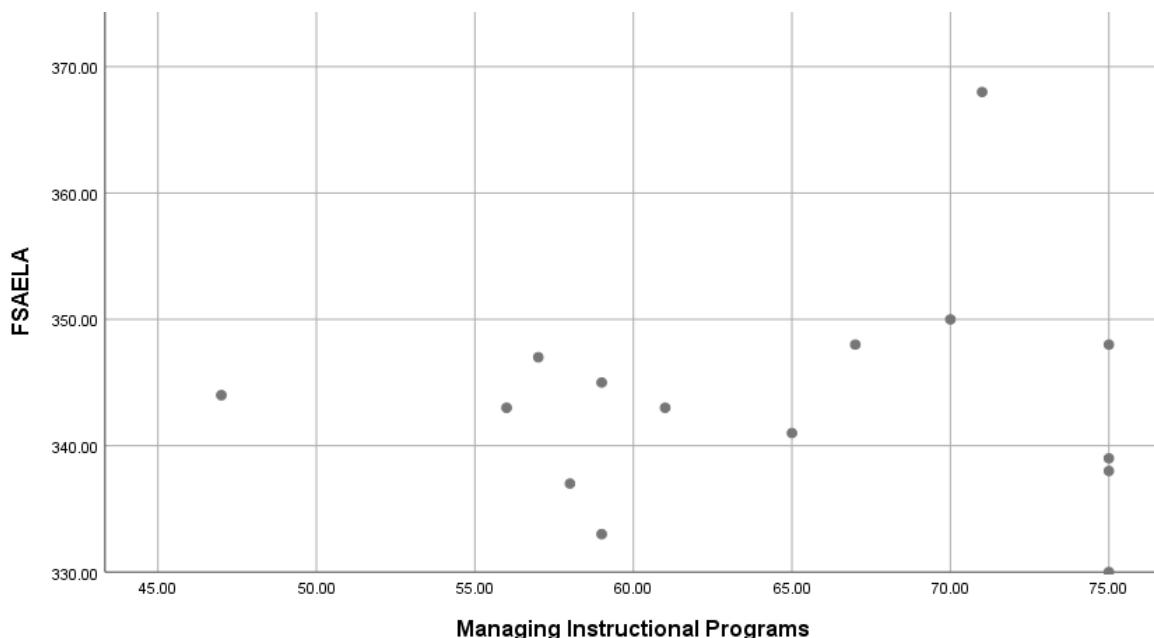


Figure 2. Simple Scatterplot of FSAELA by Managing Instructional Programs

There was not a significant correlation between FLA ELA scores and *managing the instructional programs*,  $r(15) = .063, p = .824$ . A very small, positive correlation was found with less than 1% of the variation in FLA ELA scores explained by the *managing the instructional programs* subscale score. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

A common theme emerged under Sub-question 1: supervising and evaluation instruction. All of the principals interviewed visited classrooms daily. All utilized walkthroughs as a means of ensuring that teachers were incorporating reading instructional strategies in their lesson plans.

Principals reported that they felt teachers were well aware of expectations during these visits. The strategies most identified in exceptional teacher classrooms were read-alouds, question and answer either via written worksheets or discussions, and high-level thinking using content area vocabulary. The principal of Numbers High did not expect the strategies used to identify students who struggle but did expect the use of strategies designed to meet the needs of all students. The principal of Deuteronomy High stated that he only expects reading instruction to occur in English courses. In his opinion, content area teachers have no responsibility in reading instruction. The principal does, however, look for an essential question and print rich environment in all classrooms while conducting walkthroughs. All the principals interviewed stated that formal and informal classroom observations dictated their schedule.

The principals of North Kings and South Kings High mentioned intentional time they scheduled for teachers after walkthroughs. Although the principal of South Kings found it challenging to schedule the time, she recognized the benefits in doing so. She shared, “The time spent is well spent. . . It gives me an opportunity to recognize great teaching and to offer help when needed.” She also pointed out that “it helped that I was a teacher prior to becoming an administrator. I believe that builds credibility.”

**Coordinating the curriculum.** The principal of Numbers High, in an effort to improve US History scores, provided common planning periods for all English III and US History teachers. According to the principal, both US History and English III scores have improved. The FSA ELA sophomore student scores remain consistent and below the mean score of 350. He shared, “Although we celebrate our US History scores we recognize that our other scores need improvement.” This specific instructional behavior, focusing grade level and content area teams, helped ensure improved student performance.

Genesis High School principal has been the principal of Genesis High for 14 years. He shared that he is a big proponent of developing and monitoring the curricular programs at Genesis High. “We have two magnet programs on our campus and this gives us the opportunity to, in a sense, track our students in smaller learner communities.” He talked about the role of the magnet program coordinators, who are responsible for management of the resources and the administration of the magnet program, and how they are a bridge for students, teachers, and parents in helping the student achieve program completion. He shared that the majority of the program completers enter four-year colleges and universities.

Deuteronomy High principal utilized common planning periods within content areas for discussion on curriculum coordination. Within this common planning time he expected discussion of specific content goals that needed improvement and the strategies that would be used to support improvement.

### **Sub-question 2**

Sub-question 2 for this study asked, “What are some examples of ways you have established and communicated high expectations for all staff related to student literacy achievement?” A Pearson’s product-moment correlation was run to assess the relationship between Florida high school ELA scores and *defining the school’s mission* subscale of the PIMRS survey. The data were first screened for missing data points. Three participants provided incomplete responses and were dropped from the data set. Then, a scatterplot was run to check the assumption of bivariate outliers, linearity, and bivariate distribution. All were found to be tenable. See Figure 3.

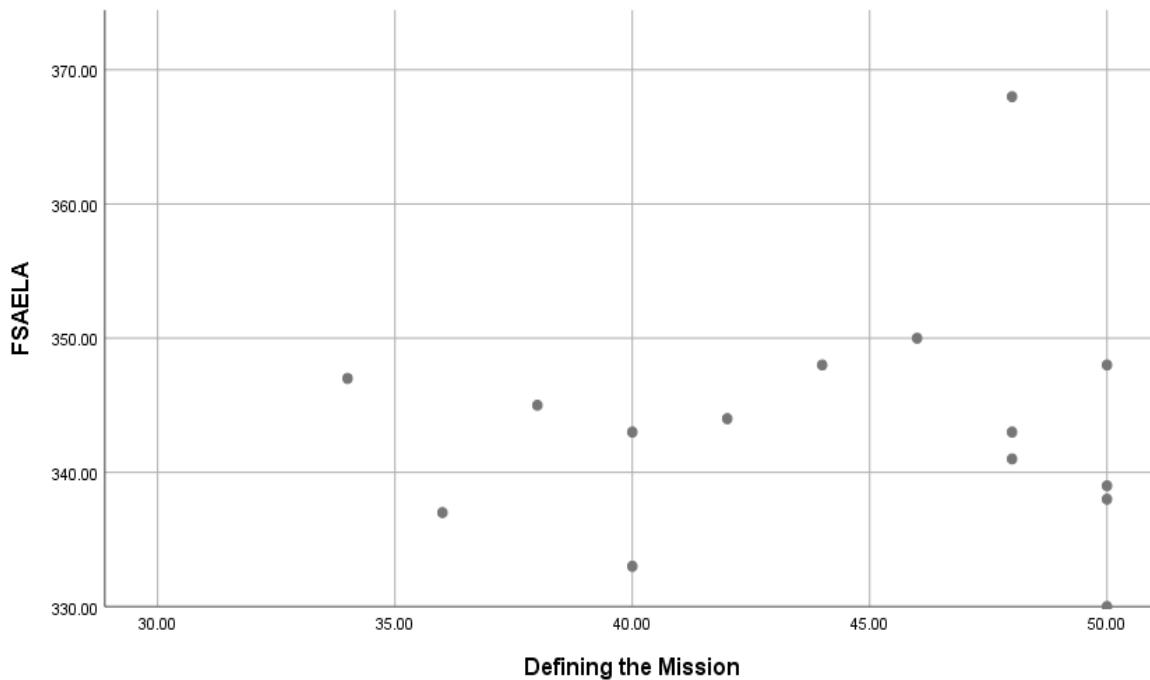


Figure 3. Simple scatterplot of FSAELA by Defining the Mission.

There was not a significant correlation between FLA ELA scores and *defining the schools' mission* score,  $r(15) = .052, p = .854$ . A very small, positive correlation was found with less than 1% of the variation in FLA ELA scores explained by the *defining the schools' mission* score. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This dimension concerns the principal's role in determining the purpose of the school and focuses on how the principal works with the staff to ensure the goals of the school are focused on the academic progress of students (Hallinger, 2005). The themes uncovered as a result of the interviews were establishing and communicating high expectations and managing the school schedule.

**Establishing and communicating high expectations.** All principals interviewed agreed that they determine how the school will focus its resources towards specific goals and that they should inspire their faculty and staff toward the achievement of those goals. Goals provide a sense of clarity and common purpose (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The principal of Genesis High School recognized the needs his students had for reading assistance. He stated that he often

mentions the districts reading goals during his school's professional development sessions to reiterate where he expects the faculty to focus. Posted in each classroom, not just English classrooms, is a reminder that "all students will become literate, independent, lifelong learners with skills needed to excel and be successful in college or career." Numbers High School principal does not necessarily discuss literacy achievement during faculty or departmental meetings but "student literacy achievement is an expected goal." His high expectation for literacy achievement is seen in his support of the literacy coach who conducts professional development on various reading strategies and his quarterly inspection of reading achievement data from the intensive reading course teacher. He expects to see students' formal and informal progress monitoring assessment data of the student enrolled in the course. Numbers High principal stated "her (the literacy coach) role is vital to the success of our teachers which in turn is the success of our students. I expect to see the strategies implemented soon after her sessions when I am doing my walkthroughs." His walkthrough observation forms include a section which allows observers to indicate whether a strategy was observed and to make a comment or suggestion.

**Managing the school schedule.** All schools established reading intervention time for both fluent and dysfluent students. Numbers High School principal affirmed the importance of reading intervention time. He specifically pointed out that students enrolled in any type of support service (physical therapy, ESOL services, counseling, etc.) are scheduled around the intensive reading course. The principals of Deuteronomy High, North Kings High, and Numbers High stated that they provided common planning for teachers by content or department. Administrative staff members were assigned as support to a content area and were required to attend content area department meetings. Teachers were expected to draw from the results of

school-wide testing data to make curricular decisions. Although content area teachers had a common planning period to improve content area academic achievement, these three principals left the teaching or improvement of reading to teachers of English language arts courses.

### **Sub-question 3**

Sub-question 3 for this study asked, “What support (research-based strategies or programs) did the district provide to support your school’s literacy program? How effective was it/were they?” Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals from Florida high schools in order to find themes related to their experiences as literacy school leaders. The theme uncovered in the qualitative analysis was ongoing district support.

**Ongoing district support.** A chief benefit to a principal or school is the support of the district superintendent. The idea of the superintendent recognizing or honoring a request for assistance can increase a principal’s self-efficacy. When Just Read, Florida! was implemented, the statute provided for scientifically-researched and evidence-based reading instructional and intervention programs for districts and schools. In addition, the statutes provided for the training of reading coaches.

Principals of North Kings and Genesis High Schools, who had the lowest of FSA ELA sophomore reading achievement scores of principals interviewed, stated that they utilized a teacher allocation to employ a reading coach. The principal of Genesis High shared his desire for district funding for the reading coach which would allow him to hire another English teacher and reduce class size for sophomore level English classes or add an additional intensive reading class to his school schedule. The principal of Deuteronomy High desired district funding for the position of the reading coach.

The five principals interviewed all had an intensive reading course for students who scored at Level 1 and, although not required to use the intensive reading course for students who score at Level 2, all utilized the course for those students as well. The principal of Deuteronomy High did not track progress in his intensive reading course but planned to the following school year. This was an unexpected behavior of an instructional leader.

#### **Sub-question 4**

Sub-question 4 for this study asked, “How was/were the program(s) implemented and monitored?” Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals from Florida high schools in order to find themes related to their experiences as literacy school leaders. The theme uncovered in the qualitative analysis was managing resources.

**Managing resources.** According to Hitt and Tucker (2016), leaders see assessments as crucial to the measurement of student progress as well as the development of data from which to make program adjustments. During my interview with the principal of Deuteronomy High School, he avoided conversations about student assessment scores, specifically the monitoring of student achievement in his intensive reading classes. He was aware that school-wide students' scores on the FSA ELA were below the mean; however, he readily admitted he did not follow the data. The principal of Numbers High School adjusted the school's master schedule for US History and English III courses because he knew the scores on students FSA US History assessment needed to be improved. Teachers of US History and English III courses shared a common planning period which allowed them to align standards and design instructional strategies that improved student achievement.

The principal of North Kings High conducted a parent event where student test scores were discussed. He shared his focus, not to discuss the deficiencies but a means of soliciting

parent use of readily available resources. He explained, “Our district, through our state, provides an abundance of resources for students and families and we want them to use them.” He discussed how his media specialist or librarian has “book authors in our building on a regular [basis].” Many of his teachers design assessments like the practice state assessment. This, he believed, allows students to be familiar with the test design. He also mentioned that his teachers meet weekly to discuss reading strategies that work.

At Numbers High, the reading coach reached out to parents to discuss available parent resources. She attended department meetings with content area teachers to provide support, and favorable results were seen in walkthrough write ups as well as classroom formative and summative assessment scores. All principals stated that the reading coach provided professional development to the staff.

Principals use student achievement data to determine curriculum programs and measure teacher, student, and school progress. Data should come from a variety of sources and should be shared with the school community as a means to collaborate and improve student achievement. In a study by Smith (2012), the researcher found that principal behaviors that had the biggest impact on student achievement were those that kept an acute focus on student achievement data. The principal of Genesis High closely monitored student data to make curriculum program decisions.

### **Discussion**

Principals are vital to student success. According to Mestry (2013), principals ensure that instructional quality is the chief priority of the school. Their actions play a major role in cultivating a positive school climate and building successful student outcomes. Instructional leadership is defined as actions principals take, or delegate to others, to promote academic

growth in students. When principals behave as instructional leaders, they have knowledge and experience with effective teaching and set high expectations for learner success.

As school leaders, principals are expected to influence student literacy achievement through knowledge of teaching and learning, support and development of effective teachers, and implementation of organizational practices that promote academic rigor and excellence. Principals' instructional leadership behaviors promoting instructional and curriculum improvement have been linked to higher student learning outcomes (Valentine & Prater, 2011). There is a research gap in understanding which principal behaviors at the secondary school level should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement, specifically on the FSA ELA. In this multimethod research design the researcher attempted to look for identifying principal behaviors that promote literacy achievement by analyzing quantitative relationships between the variables and qualitative trends that emerged from principals' lived experiences.

### **Social Cognitive Theory and Principal Self-Efficacy**

Bandura's social cognitive theory provided the framework for this study and aided in understanding how principal beliefs determine how well they will lead learning. According to Crawford and Torgesen (n.d.), common among principals of schools with strong intervention outcomes are those with a belief about their ability to lead learning. Principal efficacy is developed through performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. After interviews with the five principals, it was clear that they are highly accomplished administrators in their districts. One has achieved the title of principal of the year, another has completed his doctoral degree, while another is currently enrolled in doctoral studies and will begin writing his dissertation soon. One of the principals interviewed was selected to

lead his school over 14 years ago, and after being evaluated by the superintendent, the board unanimously renewed his contract for another year.

Prior teaching experience or experience in education makes a principal well prepared to take the responsibility of being an instructional leader (White-Smith, 2012). Although principals have various resources to meet the needs of their teachers, they themselves must feel competent in leading professional development. After careful review of Deuteronomy High principal's transcript, it is not surprising that he has the fewest of years in education as well as the least amount of time in the classroom. His responses were more canned and his lack of knowledge of his school's data was unexpected of an instructional leader. Although he failed to utilize data as a necessary strategy to improve student reading achievement, he readily admitted his failure and stated that he would do so the following school year. His confidence in his ability to utilize this strategy speaks volumes about his self-efficacy level; he believes he can lead learning.

### **Instructional Leadership and Reading Achievement**

Most principals have strong intentions to improve teaching and learning in their school (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). The instructional leadership model was conceptualized as actions or strategies that principals use with the goal of producing positive learning outcomes for students (Hallinger, 2011). One of the four dimensions is managing the instructional program. When considering principal leadership behaviors that lead to student reading achievement, all five of the principals who were interviewed considered supervising and evaluating instruction a major influence in their ability to impact student reading achievement. This correlated with the findings of Gentilucci and Muto (2007) who found that students' learning improved when principals visited their classrooms. In addition, schools where principals maintained high classroom visibility attained high student mastery (May & Supovitz, 2011; Mistry, 2013).

High school teachers are inclined to segregate themselves by department and to leave the instruction of reading to teachers who specialize in English language arts or reading (Nitzkin et al., 2014; Witte et al., 2010). However, high demands of literacy achievement among secondary students have placed more attention on the need for purposeful secondary student reading instruction by teachers in every discipline (Harmon et al., 2011; Hoffer, 2016; Soper & Marquis-Cox, 2012). When asked about exemplary classrooms on their campuses, all principals were able to identify elements of exemplary classrooms because they were witnessed through walkthrough observations. Principals utilized a professional development opportunity to explain the purpose of classroom observations as well as layout the dimensions of instructions they expected to see. Three of the principals interviewed had a prepared schedule of visits and all teachers knew to expect a visit at least once a week by one member of the instructional team. They believed they were actively and directly involved with reading instructional matters. However, the individual interviews revealed the lack of consistency in principal responses to the importance of using walkthrough observation as a means of teacher development rather than teacher evaluation. Teachers cannot meet the needs of their students if they are not made aware of their own needs for professional development and support. Within the PIMRS framework is teacher development. Principals must communicate information about teacher instructional strengths and weaknesses and work with teachers to become better teachers (Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Adolescents who receive carefully planned literacy instruction are significantly more likely to graduate from high school and attend college compared with those who do not receive such attention (Witte et al., 2010). Teachers must know how to present literacy instruction that promotes literacy in specific content areas (Hoffer, 2016). Principals are seen as the school

leaders who can initiate change by raising the level of expectations for teachers and enabling teachers to improve reading achievement of students regardless of the teacher's discipline.

### **Principal Turnover and Student Achievement**

Principal tenure, according to Levin and Bradley (2019), has been linked to teacher retention, school progress, and student achievement. The 15 principal participants have been the principal of their school at least three years and the majority had over 10 years of experience as a principal. Petty (2018) conducted a study to determine the strength of the relationship between principal longevity in New Jersey public schools and students' scores on The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessment in both English language arts and mathematics. Petty found that principal longevity was not a significant predictor of students' academic success. All five principals interviewed in this study have been principals at least three years. During their tenure student reading achievement scores stayed steady but never achieved the mean score of 350. Principal tenure or principal turnover alone does not determine student reading achievement.

### **Reading Strategies**

The most unexpected response in regard to instructional strategies came from the principal of Deuteronomy High. Principals lead learning by creating norms and routines that ensure quality teaching and learning (Bendikson et al., 2012). The second dimension of the PIMRS, managing the instructional program, includes the monitoring student progress. This function requires that the principal be committed to the school's improvement and heavily involved in the school's instructional program (Hallinger, 2011). Effective schools know how to use standardized and criterion-referenced testing to diagnosis the instructional program and

student strengths and weaknesses. In addition, school-wide testing results should be used to make changes to the school's instructional program and teacher assignments.

The principal of Deuteronomy High shared that he did not track the data of students enrolled in the intensive reading course, but that was something he had planned to do the next year. Although the placement of students in the course was consistent with the state's requirements, he did not collect and analyze interim measures to determine program or instructional strengths and weaknesses. When asked how the students enrolled in the course performed on their next FSA ELA assessment, again, he was unaware. Contrary to Deuteronomy High School principal, Numbers High School principal provided his teachers with test results as soon as scores were released. He said he shared the results in various settings and worked alongside the faculty and staff to disaggregate the data; it was through those meetings that he decided to pair the planning periods of US History and English III teachers. Schools that track data are able to make informed program curriculum decisions (Cawn et al., 2016).

Principals use student achievement data to determine curriculum programs and measure teacher, student, and school progress. Data should come from a variety of sources and should be shared with the school community as a means to collaborate and find means to improve student achievement.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a description of the research results depicting the principal behaviors influencing student literacy achievement. A multimethod research design was used to collect principal instructional leadership behaviors that fostered the culture of high literacy achievement in secondary schools. The results were revealed as they addressed the overarching

research question of which principal behaviors should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement. The study examined the leadership behaviors of five secondary school principals to determine which principal behaviors should be promoted to improve student literacy. During the first phase of the study the researcher, using a Pearson's product-moment correlation, examined the relationship between Florida high ELA scores and 15 principals' self-perceived instructional leadership behaviors measured by the three dimensions of the PIMRS. No relationships were indicated between FLA ELA scores and any of the three dimensions (*defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and developing the school learning climate*). Through interviews, five principals shared their lived experiences, which led to the identification of six common themes that shed further light on which principal behaviors improve student literacy.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Overview

The purpose of this multimethod research study was to further understand the problem of poor literacy achievement among high school students and to design possible solutions for school leaders to impact and improve high school students' literacy scores. This relationship was examined through the use of archival student data based on the school mean score on the FSA ELA reading assessment and principal self-reported instructional leadership behaviors identified using the PIMRS. In addition, five principals were interviewed, allowing the researcher to make meaning of the research questions beyond the scope of the PIMRS. The interviews allowed the researcher to focus on possible policy-level factors that have an impact on instructional leadership decisions that principals make. This chapter begins by revisiting the gap found in identifying principal behaviors that promote literacy achievement among secondary students. A proposed solution and resources and funds needed to generate the solution are then described. Next, identification of the various roles and responsibilities needed to lead and implement the solution, a timeline, and an explanation of both positive and negative implications of the solution are described. The chapter concludes by evaluating the plan and summarizing the study.

### Restatement of the Problem

Reading failure among secondary students has been called a national health problem and has become a popular focus of study (Nitzkin et al., 2014). Principals are the backbone to successful implementation of school level improvement initiatives and are needed to lead schools in implementing more challenging curriculum, more sophisticated instruction, and more intensive instructional supports (Cawn et al., 2016). Much research has been conducted with

regard to instructional leadership behaviors and student learning outcomes (Bartlett, 2008; Bendikson et al., 2012; Carson, 2013; Chappellear & Price, 2012; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Jackson, 2018; McCray, 2014; O'Donnell & White, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008; Shatzer et al., 2014; Turner, 2013; Valentine & Prater, 2011). This research was conducted at the secondary level and attempted to address the gap in understanding which principal behaviors at the secondary school level should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement. In this multimethod research design the researcher found the following common instructional leadership behaviors among secondary school leaders: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, establishing and communicating high expectations, managing the school schedule, ongoing district support, and managing school resources.

### **Proposed Solution to the Central Question**

Substandard adolescent literacy achievement is considered a national concern that impacts high school graduation rates and is a barrier to postsecondary education and workplace success. As school leaders, high school principals are expected to influence student literacy achievement through knowledge of teaching and learning, support and development of effective teachers, and implementation of organizational practices that promote academic rigor and excellence. The results of this research study built upon previous research, which indicated that principals who give “attention to coordinating the curriculum and monitoring student progress” (Valentine & Prater, 2011, p. 22) are more successful. This research supported previous findings that it is important for high school principals to be competent in instructional and curriculum leadership matters (Mistry, 2013; Robinson et al., 2008; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

The central research question for this study asked, “What principal behaviors should be promoted to improve student literacy achievement?” The researcher examined the correlational relationship between Florida high school principals’ instructional leadership behaviors and students’ reading achievement level on the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) English Language Arts (ELA) Reading. High school principals’ instructional leadership scores, assessed through the three dimensions of PIMRS (Defining the School’s Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate) were the predictor variables. Data were first screened for missing and incomplete entries. Of the 18 surveys, three were incomplete and were not included in the analysis. Next, descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for each of the three domains of the PIMRS and the Florida Standards Assessment English Language Arts Reading scores of the high schools where the principals worked.

Three Pearson product-moment correlations were used to evaluate whether a significant correlation exists in each of the PIMRS leadership domains between the group of principals who participated in the study and their student reading achievement scores. The PIMRS was designed to assess principal instructional leadership behaviors. Domain one, defining the school’s mission (DSM), included 10 questions in two subscales: subscale one (frame the school’s goals) and subscale two (communicate the school’s goals). Possible scores in domain one ranged from 10 to 50. Principal scores for the domain ranged from 34 to 50. Domain two, managing the instructional program (MIP), included 15 questions in three subscales: subscale three (supervise & evaluate instruction), subscale four (coordinate the curriculum) and subscale five (monitor student progress). Possible scores in domain two ranged from 15 to 75. Principal scores for the domain ranged from 47 to 75. Domain three, promoting a positive school learning

climate (SLC), included 25 questions in five subscales: subscale six (protect instructional time), subscale seven (maintain high visibility), subscale eight (provide incentives for teachers), subscale nine (promote professional development), and subscale ten (provide incentives for learning). Possible scores in this domain ranged from 25 to 125. Principal scores for domain three ranged from 77 to 125.

Possible Grade 10 English Language Arts scale scores ranged from 284 to 412. School scale scores ranged from 330 to 368. Means and standard deviations for the dependent variable (reading scale score) and the independent variables (total scores of the three domains of the PIMRS) are included in Table 14.

Table 14

*Descriptive Statistics for All Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade RAS	343.6000	8.82205	15
Domain			
DSM	44.2667	5.54806	15
MIP	64.6667	8.73962	15
SLC	104.3333	14.30618	15

Principals can enhance student achievement. Table 15 displays the results of the correlational analysis of all the principal respondents by presenting the correlation coefficient and statistical significance of each applicable relationship. Correlation coefficients were computed among the three dimensions of the PIMRS. Using the Bonferroni correction to control for Type I error across the six correlations, a *p* value of less than .02 was required for significance (Warner, 2013). The results of the correlation analysis presented show that none of the correlations were statistically significant.

Table 15

*Pearson Correlation of Principals' PIMRS Scores and 10th Grade RAS (N = 15)*

	DSM	MIP	SLC
DSM	1.000	.777	.596
MIP	.777	1.000	.896
SLC	.596	.896	1.000
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade RAS	.052	.063	-.086

\* $p < .02$

While effective leadership cannot guarantee successful education reform, research shows that skillful instructional leadership is necessary (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013).

Florida's ultimate goal is that every student read at or above grade level and the State of Florida has taken many actions to improve reading proficiency. Florida has allocated funds for:

- Research-based reading instruction.
- The provision of highly qualified reading coaches.
- Professional development for teachers in scientifically based reading instruction, including strategies to teach reading in content areas.
- The provision of intensive interventions for middle and high school students reading below grade level.
- The provision of supplemental instructional materials that are grounded in scientifically-based reading research.

According to Hallinger (2012), four barriers have been identified that restrict school principals from exercising strong instructional leadership: lack of expertise in curriculum and instruction, professional norms, system expectations, and role diversity. The proposed solution

exposes an area of instructional leadership that is challenging for Florida principals; however, Florida's literacy legislation facilitates principal implementation.

### **Data-Driven Instructional Leadership**

According to Deming and Figlio (2016), accountability systems were implemented as a way to monitor and assess a school's effectiveness in ensuring all students were educated to the standards identified by state and national government initiatives. To improve learner effectiveness and teacher performance, principals are encouraged to exercise data literacy.

According to the South Carolina Department of Education (2017), "Data literacy is the ability to gather, interpret, and use multiple data sources to improve student learning." It is recommended that Florida secondary schools' literacy program decisions be a result of collecting, interpreting, and using various forms of literacy data to lead literacy programs.

According to Strickland-Cohen et al. (2014) school principals define the school culture when they ensure accountability by routinely asking staff to report on outcome data. One form of data is found through monitoring and assessing teacher knowledge and use of literacy instructional strategies. It is difficult for principals to schedule uninterrupted blocks of time for conferencing with teachers (Hallinger, 2012). However, in the role of instructional leaders, principals must communicate strengths and weaknesses to help teachers improve. No longer can principals be detached from the responsibility of using data to support instruction because whether directly or indirectly, principals can help teachers improve classroom instruction through specific feedback after an instructional observation. Feedback must be relevant, use real-time data, and be based on interpreted observed behaviors.

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in a specific situation or to accomplish a specific task. The principals interviewed conducted

classroom walkthroughs as required by district expectations. However, in order for Florida high school principals to impact literacy instruction, there must be a belief in the ability to collect, interpret, and use data more than a means of compliance. Principals must be engaged in teaching and learning activities that encourage best practices in the classroom that lead to positive learning outcomes. Principals influence the school culture, the quality of instruction, and students' academic achievement. Therefore, principal leadership in data collection, analysis, and interpretation plays a role in how teachers use data.

Florida employs highly qualified reading coaches to assist principals in improving student reading achievement. One of the roles of the reading coach is to assist teachers in implementing instructional strategies that meet the needs of individual student groups. Researchers Marsh, McCombs, and Martorell (2010) conducted a qualitative case study of three middle schools within two randomly selected Florida school districts that used coaches to support teacher professional development. The researchers visited each school three times and during those visits conducted interviews with the reading coach, school principal, and teachers involved in the study. In addition, the researchers observed one period of instruction of each teacher, shadowed the reading coach, and conducted focus groups with content area teachers. Marsh et al. (2010) found that 62% of coaches supported the need for teachers to interpret data to inform instruction.

To close a literacy achievement gap requires more of a broad, simultaneous, and complex framework (Han, 2018). As a result of poor training, principals may not fully understand the intricacies of student growth measures and may in turn misconstrue and inappropriately apply student growth data when making decisions (Clauser, Keller, & McDermott, 2016). When Florida high school students were enrolled in intensive interventions for reading remediation,

provision should have been made for tracking of individual student progress over time, making projections regarding subsequent scores on the FSA ELA, and measuring the course teacher and program impact (Wiess & May, 2012). The practical use of growth data is highly recommended as a means of improving student literacy achievement.

### **Resources Needed**

Florida's ultimate goal is that every student read at or above grade level. In order to do so Florida has provided secondary schools with allocated funds to support a reading coach, an intensive reading course, and reading programs that support students who struggle with literacy achievement. The resources are available to lead a data-driven plan to improve Florida's secondary schools' literacy program. The researcher is not requesting additional resources; however, the researcher is recommending state policymakers and district leaders create the conditions and ensure the capacity needed for principals to be data literate.

### **Funds Needed**

Like resources, Florida has provided funds to support Florida schools' literacy plans. Analysis of the successful use of current funds needs to occur prior to requesting additional funds; therefore, the researcher is not requesting additional funds. Within Florida's Department of Education is the Office of Accountability and Policy Research. The Office is responsible for accountability processes, public reporting of accountability outcomes, aggregate reporting of information to districts and to the federal government, and responding to information requests from various state and government offices (FLDOE, n.d.-a). Within the Office of Accountability and Policy Research is the Bureau of Accountability Reporting. This Bureau administers program reports that provide accountability information for Florida's PK-20 education system. The core focus of the Bureau's programs is calculating and reporting school and district grades

and describing instructional personnel and administrators' impact on student learning growth (FLDOE, n.d.-a).

Florida's student literacy achievement is central. Data are powerful tools that lead to insight and improvements and must be used to ensure that students' individual literacy achievement needs are met. Principal data literacy helps principals know what is and what is not working in their schools. In addition, principal data literacy helps principals ensure that the resources used in their schools support teaching and improve student literacy achievement. Since the Bureau's core focus is on describing instructional personnel and administrators' impact on student learning growth, staff within the Bureau are the experts who can train district leadership and school principals. No funding is needed; the researcher recommends data literacy training for district and school principals be added to the Bureau's responsibilities.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The findings from the current research study reveal several responsibilities for principals, teachers, and reading coaches. These are discussed in the following section, along with recommendations for each group.

#### **The Role of Principal**

The role of school principals is broad and deep. Teachers assume that principals have the instructional capacity to lead learning because teachers assume principals were once teachers. However, many principals were not selected based on their expertise in curriculum and instruction; therefore, many lack instructional leadership potential. Instead, many principals were selected based on managerial efficiency and political stability (Hallinger, 2012). In order to impact literacy achievement in Florida public high schools, principals must be well versed in literacy instructional practices for all students. Further, Florida principals must create a culture

that operates through ongoing collection, tracking, and use of multiple forms of data to make instructional decisions for literacy achievement (Cawn et al., 2016). Principals must be well versed in literacy instruction and data literacy to be able to translate this expertise so that others will benefit (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011).

According to Morrison (2008/2009), data literacy is the ability to gather, interpret, and use multiple sources of data effectively to improve student learning. Data literacy requires expert knowledge. Principals must be trained properly in the collection, analysis, interpretation, and use of data to make informed decisions. Data literate principals ensure that data use is ongoing and seek to establish a data-driven mindset that is part of the day-to-day practice of the school culture.

### **The Role of Teachers**

Teachers must plan as teams to promote and improve adolescent literacy. In order to help with literacy achievement in Florida public high schools, it is recommended that teachers collect and analyze interim measures of all students' literacy achievement data and be more solution oriented (Cawn et al., 2016). Further, with the data, teachers should design and implement research-based instructional strategies constructed for individual student needs. Therefore, the researcher recommends training to support teacher data literacy. Either through state or district level support, data literate teachers will be able to use data as a strategy for improving student literacy achievement in their classrooms.

### **The Role of Reading Coach**

The reading coach must be committed to the vision and spread enthusiasm for a successful literacy program. In order to help with literacy achievement in Florida public high schools, it is recommended that the literacy coach design data-driven professional development

opportunities for teachers. The role of the reading coach should include the upkeep of tracking sheets where teachers and school leaders can enter and review multiple forms of data (Cawn et al., 2016). In addition, the reading coach should conduct data meetings with school leaders to discuss individual student progress. The literacy coach should lead in the development of a common school-wide language around literacy instruction which can improve quality of conversations about literacy instruction.

### **Timeline**

Our nation's political, economic, and social decisions are affected by American children's literacy achievement (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011). Schools leaders must operate as instructional leaders who continually monitor and assess student and program literacy goals. In order to improve literacy achievement for all students, Florida secondary principals must create a school culture that is based on planning and collaborating with fidelity. Principals must base school literacy goals on accurate data that is evaluated continually. The timeline outlines how Florida principals can implement the proposed solution in a school year. These actions, however, should be continual each year.

#### **Plan – Weeks 1 – 4**

- Create a literacy improve team –include school leadership team, reading coach, and teacher representation from all content areas
- Establish a team mission and vision to guide the team
- Gather data – demographics of students and teachers; FSA ELA results – school wide, individual student, and teacher; survey students, parents, and teachers
- Determine school literacy goal – based on data

### Implement – Weeks 5 – 10

- Promote school literacy goal to the entire school community
- Conduct professional development – reading coach: how to monitor and review data and literacy instructional strategies – ongoing
- Develop interdisciplinary curricular team

### Evaluate – Weeks 11 – 30

- Assess instructional strategies and assessments, adjust as needed
- Assess lesson plans – ensure inclusion of various literacy strategies
- Conduct formative assessments – ongoing
- Collaborate within and between disciplines – monitor instructional and assessment results
- Conduct observations and on-time follow-up with teachers – ongoing
- Conduct FSA ELA assessment

### Improve – Weeks 31–36

- Analyze results of FSA ELA assessment
- Measure against school literacy program goal
- Reflect on this year's successes and failures
- Project goals for improvement for the next school year

### **Solution Implications**

The purpose of this section is to provide a clear explanation of both positive and negative implications of the solution. In addition, the benefits and pitfalls of the resources, funds, roles and responsibilities, and timeline, will be examined and explained. The section closes with implication recommendations for principals and teachers.

## **Benefits and Pitfalls**

Just Read, Florida! was launched with the goal of every student being able to read at or above grade level. Florida Department of Education established the Just Read, Florida! Office which includes a staff who creates and administers professional development options for teachers, administrators, and reading coaches, works with postsecondary teacher preparation programs, and develops instructional materials related to reading. In addition, Florida legislature continues to fund reading instruction, literacy coaches, and instructional supports through the K–12 Comprehensive Research-Based Reading Plan and offers professional development through webinars, online trainings, regional and district face-to-face trainings benefitting Florida schools.

Funding for reading instruction includes intensive reading interventions for students in kindergarten through Grade 12 who have been identified as having a reading deficiency or who are reading below grade level (FLDOE, 2016a). All of the schools interviewed have a reading intensive course for students who fit this description; however, none of the principals interviewed tracked the reading growth of students enrolled in the course. Principals stated that students enrolled in the course are enrolled for an entire school year due to the nature of high school credits, but neither interim assessment data nor achievement growth data are collected. Students enrolled are the ideal population to use to help Florida principals evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of these curricula programs within their school (Clauser et al., 2016).

This study reveals the need for data literacy among principal leadership. Data literacy will enable principals to locate, collect, analyze, integrate, and communicate information about staff and program resources. Principals benefit from the collection of data because it builds a

school-capacity profile revealing existing resources to support literacy that have either not been used or were underused as well as other school capacities such as inconsistent use of classroom writing rubrics, library resources, and high-level strategies for high-achieving students.

Principals must perform in the role of instructional leaders, managers, and administrators to improve student achievement; often principals detach themselves from the responsibility of engaging with data to gain a better understanding about their students and program resources.

The pitfall to the solution regarding resources, funds, roles and responsibilities, and timeline is the additional long hours for those who devote themselves to managing and monitoring the instructional program. The resources and funds have been provided. Therefore, identification of pitfalls is difficult without the data to prove whether what has been provided through Florida legislation actually works. The time invested by principals would require sacrifice; however, studies on successful school leadership encourage principal capacity to use data (Marishane, 2015). Bandura theorized that change occurs when three reciprocal influences are in place: personal, environmental, and behavioral (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 2012). Personal factors (self-efficacy) would be expected to influence the effective use of data and environmental factors (district level support) would be expected to influence principal instructional leadership behaviors (Bandura, 1986).

### **Implications for Principals**

Recognizing that reading achievement skills are necessary for college and career success, it would be helpful if principals operate in the role of instructional leaders to influence student reading achievement. As instructional leaders, principals work relentlessly to improve student achievement by focusing on the quality of teaching and learning and using data to inform instruction and professional development for teachers in their schools (Garza, 2018). Although

this study cannot provide a sound basis for the practice of principal use of data to reach student literacy goals, this study would suggest that principals' use of data would help to monitor and access performance of literacy resources in an attempt to help student reach literacy achievement goals.

Effective principals must accept responsibility for establishing a schoolwide vision of high expectations and a commitment to the reading success of all students. As an instructional leader, principals are responsible for managing the instructional program. Principal behaviors in this role include performing classroom walkthroughs and formal classroom observations. Walkthroughs, as well as formal classroom observations, provide principals with the opportunity to signify to teachers and staff that strong instructional practice is a high priority. As instructional leaders, it is not enough to conduct informal and formal observations as all the principals interviewed did. Principals must establish high instructional standards and provide teachers and staff the necessary tools to achieve these standards. Principals must take teacher evaluations seriously and use them as an opportunity to improve teacher practice. Furthermore, teachers welcome the support of and the assistance and interventions from principals who are a source of knowledge and from principals who care about the quality of work in their building (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008). Providing effective feedback after an observation is a key component to ensuring quality teaching and learning. Feedback after an observation should focus on what is working and what is not working, an opportunity for teachers to share their perspective, and if necessary, build an improvement plan that is supported and tangible.

Principals must support teachers by gathering quality data to improve teaching and learning. Data should drive the improvement of instruction (Marishane, 2015). It is not enough that principals acknowledge the importance of data by their performance of administrative

practices, but that it should be the driving force behind instructional practices and their instructional practices should take the lead role. Schoolwide instruction must be data-driven, mission-focused, and student-centered in order to improve reading instruction and student reading achievement. Clear accountability systems must be in place to ensure student reading achievement continues to improve. Accountability to student achievement means holding teachers and other staff accountable for quality instruction. In addition, the use of research-based programs and practices should be evident in schools seeking to improve student reading achievement. Data can provide the energy needed to make sound decisions, make work purposeful, and impact change for the benefit of Florida's secondary school students' reading achievement.

### **Implications for Teachers**

Principals have the second largest impact on student outcomes; the first is classroom instruction. Without a doubt, principals must have knowledge of teaching and learning in their building. In addition, principals must have the ability to formatively assess teaching and learning through direct and indirect involvement with teachers and by empowering teacher growth and learning (Flach, n.d.; Wyatt, 2017). The goal of teacher evaluation systems (informal and formal observations) is to improve the quality of teaching and learning through clarifying teacher expectations and helping teachers meet the expectations through feedback and support. Florida has high expectations for teachers and has made provisions in the statute for assisting teachers who need access to provide innovative, creative, and effective strategies to help children learn to read proficiently (FLDOE, 2016a). The principals interviewed for this study conducted walkthrough observations but found it difficult to find the time to provide meaningful feedback to teachers in regard to literacy strategies in the classroom. Many of the principals did not

evaluate teachers on literacy instruction other than the English teachers, and none of the principals saw significant gains in reading achievement scores. Florida high school principals, in order to prepare students for college and career readiness, need to define and articulate a vision that raises the expectation for literacy instruction to occur in all instructional areas.

Some teachers may view data accountability as punitive, or consequential. They may feel that student performance on standardized assessments may be used to describe their effectiveness as an educator and the results will be used to determine their job assignment or teacher pay (Dennis, 2017). Data can move teachers from the comfort of routines and reveal a clear need for change. However, the appropriate use of data can create a shared vision of literacy achievement. With encouragement and a supportive school environment that provides a structure for collaboration of the implementation of new literacy instructional strategies, data can be a powerful source.

### **Evaluation Plan**

This study provided valuable information to school principals who function in the role of instructional leaders. The primary task of instructional leadership is to create a school culture for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. By monitoring teachers' instructional practices and keeping track of teachers' professional development needs and purposeful management and use of data to guide instruction, principals can be intentional about how to best improve secondary students' reading achievement (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). In view of the results of this multimethod research study, the researcher presented one recommendation: a shift in emphasis of the managerial and administrative tasks of running a school to the instructional leadership tasks of improving a school. The demands of Florida's schools to improve student reading achievement create the use of instructional leadership

behaviors that are data driven in the leading of teaching and learning in schools. The use of artifacts, anything that can provide evidence of learning and experiences, should be a means of assessing the effectiveness of the solution to the problem.

According to Halverson, Griggs, Prichett, and Thomas (2005), “Artifacts play a key role in understanding how professional community is developed in schools” (p. 7). Artifacts can provide a conduit for researchers and practitioners to access the exclusive framework of Florida principals’ practices of improving student reading achievement (Halverson et al., 2005). Florida legislation provided for reading coaches in schools. Principals cannot improve student literacy skills in isolation; therefore, the utilization of distributed leadership must be used to help improve student literacy skills in schools. Distributed leadership allows principals to delegate and share tasks to support the school literacy goals. Reading specialists must play a key role in reading achievement in schools and would be ideal candidates to delegate the collection, monitoring, and maintenance of artifacts.

In order to evaluate how student achievement is improving, artifacts might involve running records that include information tracking student progress over time and imbedding formative feedback from district-provided reading programs and classroom assessments. The data should be made available to teachers who can share the results with students so that they are aware of their individual progress and needs. To evaluate the success of teaching and learning in the classroom, artifacts might involve the running records of a teacher’s formal and informal observations, professional development needs and attendance, and the effective implementation of feedback structures. Time for data discussions, individually, between disciplines, and among faculty, helps develop a strong professional community around literacy achievement and instruction.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Reading failure among secondary students has been called a national health problem. To encourage schools and districts to take reading proficiency seriously, Florida enacted legislation in 2001 that requires student reading achievement before graduation. This study was delimited to Florida secondary school principals who exercise leadership under Florida's Just Read, Florida! legislation.

This study had several limitations. First, an obvious limitation of the study's findings is the limited sample of principals who chose to respond to both the online survey and the interview. The researcher attempted to counter the effects of nonresponse bias by giving principals several opportunities to participate. It would be valuable to hear the voices of additional principals. Second, this study utilized self-reported survey data, which tend to be subjective and possibly overrated. Third, in data collection, during the interviews, the researcher did not always ask follow-up questions. The interviews were conducted during the summer months and many of the principals expressed their willingness to participate but did so with clear time restraints.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher attempted to add to the research linking principal leadership behaviors and student reading achievement, particularly in the context of substandard reading achievement in Florida schools. An aim was to also provide a profile of instructional leadership behaviors of Florida high school principals and to examine the reading achievement for Florida students. While this study validates the widely held belief that principals apply a small but significant influence on the achievement of students, it also outlines an incentive for research and practice in

Florida high schools. The following are recommendations for future research based on the findings of this research study:

1. A case study could be conducted with a principal whose FSA ELA scores have increased for three consecutive years to explore the impact the principal's instructional leadership behavior had on sustained results.
2. A quantitative study could be conducted among schools with high and low FSA ELA scores to determine if there is a difference in principal instructional leadership behaviors. This will allow the researcher to study a larger sample in multiple school districts.
3. South Carolina's Read to Succeed initiative has been enacted since 2014. A quantitative study could be conducted among South Carolina secondary school principals to determine their instructional leadership effect on secondary students' reading achievement scores.

### **Summary**

This study utilized an instructional leadership model, archival data, and principals lived experiences to examine the impact principal leadership behaviors had on student reading achievement. Accountability can help Florida secondary school principals improve reading achievement among secondary school students. The most important take-away is the use of data to drive instructional decisions. Florida secondary school principals must demonstrate efficiency at using data to improve instruction and, ultimately, student reading achievement.

Teacher professional development opportunities, as a whole or individually, should be based on data-driven needs. In addition, student use or continued use of instructional resources or programs must be based on an accountability system that ascertains whether or not students are making significant academic achievement gains. It is important to note that the

accountability system should allow Florida principals to make meaning of the data through the lens of the school climate and professional environment. In addition, students must be taught to assume accountability for their education.

Although a single multimethod research study cannot provide a sound basis for the practice of instructional leadership, the researcher can conclude from this study that collection, analysis, and interpretation of literacy program data would help Florida secondary schools monitor, assess, and possibly improve schools' literacy program performance.

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**Institutional Review Board Approval**



May 29, 2018

Kimberly Kelly

IRB Approval 3153.052918: Principal Instructional Leadership Effect on High School Students' Literacy Achievement

Dear Kimberly Kelly,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**The Graduate School**



**APPENDIX B:**

**Email Invitation to School District (Sample)**

From: Kelly, Kimberly J [REDACTED] &  
Subject: Permission To Conduct Graduate Research  
Date: December 1, 2017 at 12:56 PM  
To: [REDACTED]



Dear [REDACTED]

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Principal Instructional Leadership Effect On High School Students' Literacy Achievement and the purpose of my research is to examine a potential relationship between principal self-perceived instructional leadership behaviors and student reading achievement.

I am writing to request your permission to contact high school principals in your district to invite them to participate in my research study. Participants will be asked to complete the 20-minute, Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) survey using SurveyMonkey™. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

For education research, district permission will need to be on approved letterhead with your signature. Attached is a letter of support from my chair and a permission letter template for your convenience. Please let me know if you choose to grant permission by responding to my email. [REDACTED]

Thank you for considering my request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Kimberly Kelly  
Ed.D. Candidate  
Liberty University  
Lynchburg, VA  
[REDACTED]

**APPENDIX C:**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Participating Schools**

School	District	SES	Enrollment	Mean Score	Percentage > Level 3
Genesis High	Reuben	85.7	534	338	34
Exodus High	Simeon	65.8	205	368	91
Leviticus High	Simeon	81.4	491	341	41
Numbers High	Simeon	83.2	709	339	36
Deuteronomy High	Simeon	88.5	465	333	23
Joshua High	Levi	58.9	632	348	51
Judges High	Levi	64.1	454	343	41
Ruth High	Levi	67.7	361	350	55
East Samuel High	Judah	71	529	344	45
West Samuel High	Judah	67.9	528	348	53
North Kings High	Reuben	62.8	678	347	50
South Kings High	Simeon	79	619	341	42
E. Chronicles High	Reuben	85.1	401	330	15
W. Chronicles High	Levi	59.8	410	350	50
Ezra High	Levi	73.4	399	337	28
Nehemiah High	Reuben	72.2	590	345	45
Esther High	Reuben	73.9	389	343	39

## APPENDIX D:

### Consent Letter from School District (Sample)

[Redacted]  
December 19, 2017

Re: Research Request 5C3C01

Dear Ms. Kelly:

The above referenced request has been approved by the [Redacted] Research and Data Committee. It is now your obligation to conduct the study as outlined in the proposal and the Collier County School District Guidelines for Conducting Research.

Your approval is also subject to the following guidelines as designated by the committee:

- (a) Information is collected anonymously, and no personally identifiable information is obtained from or reported on any individual student, person, group, or organization.  
If your research involves the collection of data from students, you must provide details of your study, (survey questions to be asked, etc.) and get signed permission from their parents/guardians.
- (b) If the district is to be identified in any manner in the final report of an approved study, prior permission must be secured.
- (c) The cooperating organization or individual will furnish a copy of the final results to the district.
- (d) All personnel involved (staff, teachers, administrators, etc.) know it is voluntary to participate and identity information is kept confidential.
- (e) Research conducted on accepted proposals must be actively underway within one (1) year of the date of acceptance. Researchers must request an extension for approved research proposals that are not initiated and actively underway by this time.
- (f) Approval means the researcher may collect data as specified in the original proposal.  
This notification is not approval to provide data, promise of services, nor is it permission to use district data. Should the researcher pursue data beyond the parameters of the research proposal, all access to district resources will be denied to the researcher and any organization he/she presently represents.
- (g) Approval does not include any services from the district including access to district databases (unless it is public information available through the district's public information office.)
- (h) Personnel from the Department of Accountability and Data Management will not provide research services.
- (i) The researcher must notify the committee about any changes made to the original proposal.  
The committee reserves the right to rescind its approval if the modifications do not satisfy any of the conditions detailed above.

Please contact the Office of Accountability and Data Management should you have any questions.

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

## APPENDIX E:

### Principal Solicitation Email (Sample)

**Thursday, May 31, 2018 at 9:17:55 PM Eastern Daylight Time**

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**Subject:** Doctoral Research - Principal Instructional Leadership Effect On Student Reading Achievement  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 29, 2018 at 5:09:54 PM Eastern Daylight Time  
**From:** Kelly, Kimberly J  
**BCC:** [REDACTED]  
**Attachments:** Kelly\_3153StampedConsent.pdf, CCPS Approval.pdf

Dear Principal Participant,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine a potential relationship between principal self-perceived instructional leadership behaviors and student reading achievement and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

High school principal participants must meet the following criteria:

- assigned to their current school at least three years,
- assigned to a school with a socioeconomic rate (SES) of 58.1% or higher,
- and are 18 years of age or older and willing to participate.

Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential. If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following thing:

1. Complete the PIMRS as you would any normal survey. Your participation should take no more than 25 minutes.

A consent document as well as your District's approval document are provided as attachments to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. In addition, it is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link, and you may type in your name to indicate that you have read the consent information and are willing to participate in the survey.

The survey link below will be available for completion until midnight on June 10, 2018.

[REDACTED]

Thank you once again for your participation, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincere regards,

Kimberly Kelly, Ed.D. Candidate  
Liberty University

## APPENDIX F:

### **Principal Solicitation Email – Subsequent Request (Sample)**

**Tuesday, June 12, 2018 at 3:43:36 PM Eastern Daylight Time**

**Subject:** Your Help Is Needed: Doctoral Research - Principal Instructional Leadership Effect On Student Reading Achievement

**Date:** Monday, June 11, 2018 at 10:13:16 AM Eastern Daylight Time

**From:** Kelly, Kimberly J

**BCC:** [REDACTED]

**Attachments:** Kelly\_3153StampedConsent.pdf, CCPS Approval.pdf

Dear Principal Participant,

I really need your help. As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine a potential relationship between principal self-perceived instructional leadership behaviors and student reading achievement and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

High school principal participants must meet the following criteria:

- assigned to their current school at least three years,
- assigned to a school with a socioeconomic rate (SES) of 58.1% or higher,
- and are 18 years of age or older and willing to participate.

Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential. If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following thing:

1. Complete the PIMRS as you would any normal survey. Your participation should take no more than 25 minutes. According to the survey results analysis, the average time typically spent was seven minutes.

A consent document as well as your District's approval document are provided as attachments to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. In addition, it is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link, and you may type in your name to indicate that you have read the consent information and are willing to participate in the survey.

The survey link below will be available for completion until midnight on June 23, 2018.

[REDACTED]

Thank you once again for your participation, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincere regards,

Kimberly Kelly, Ed.D. Candidate  
Liberty University

**APPENDIX G:**  
**Permission to Use Letter**

Dr. Philip Hallinger  
199/43 Sukhumvit Soi 8  
Bangkok, 10110, Thailand



January 15, 2017

Kimberly Kelly

As copyright holder and publisher, you have my permission as publisher to use the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS)* in your research study. In using the scale, you may make unlimited copies of any of the three forms of the PIMRS.

Please note the following conditions of use:

1. This authorization extends only to the use of the PIMRS for research purposes, not for general school district use of the instrument for evaluation or staff development purposes.
2. This is a single-use purchase for the author's graduate research, thereby requiring purchase of additional rights for use in any future research.
3. *The user agrees to send a soft copy (pdf) of the completed study to the publisher upon completion of the research.*
4. *The user agrees to send a soft copy of the data set and coding instructions to the publisher upon completion of the research in order to enable further instrument development.*
5. The user has permission to make minor adaptations to scale as necessary for the research.
6. If the instrument is translated, the user will supply a copy of the translated version.

Please be advised that a separate *permission to publish* letter, usually required by universities, will be sent after the publisher receives a soft copy of the completed study.

Sincerely,



Professor Philip Hallinger

**APPENDIX H:**  
**Personal Communication**

From: Philip Hallinger <hallinger@gmail.com>  
Subject: Re: Use of PIMRS  
Date: July 24, 2016 at 2:18:24 AM EDT

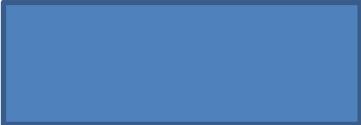
Hi

I'd suggest that you set up a site on survey monkey. Then you send a link to SM to respondents. They do the survey online - you include some identifiers. You get a ready to use datafile.

Many users have done this.

PH

Philip Hallinger



Sent from my iphone somewhere in SE Asia -- pls forgive the typos

On Jul 24, 2016, at 1:16 PM, Kelly, Kimberly Jwrote:

Professor Hallinger,

Thank you for your reply. Can the instrument be administered via email or must copies be made?

Thank you.

Kimberly Kelly  
Ed.D. Candidate

On Jul 13, 2016, at 10:51 PM, Philip wrote:

Dear Kimberly

Thank you for your interest in using the PIMRS in your research. Choice of a validated instrument is an important step in your doctoral journey. To date it has been used successfully to collect data in over 375 studies.

The PIMRS is available to graduate student researchers for a reduced user fee of \$125. For the

fee I will send you:

permission to make copies of the instrument for your study,

master copies of all 4 forms of the instrument,

a user manual and

access to related support materials including:

all relevant journal articles about the PIMRS,

related articles I have written about instructional leadership,

a complete list of more than 375 PIMRS studies

most of the master, doctoral and published studies that have used the PIMRS

*I also require that registered users supply me with a copy of their data set and a soft file copy of their completed study for use in further instrument development.*

*Please also note that the user is required to include ALL questions including demographic questions (i.e., gender, years of experience, school level) included in the PIMRS unless otherwise waived by the publisher.*

For full and up-to-date information on the PIMRS and its use as a research and evaluation tool, please my latest book, Assessing Principal Instructional Leadership with the PIMRS. The book contains useful information for researchers on the scale including its development, use, validity and reliability. The book also details how to use the short form and plan research with the instrument. For more info, go to: <http://www.springer.com/cn/book/9783319155326>.

***Please inform me by email. I will make the materials available to you immediately by an internet link.***

I will follow up later with an email granting you permission to make copies of the instrument for your research once the check/transfer is received. Then I will send you a final letter granting you permission to reproduce the scale as an appendix in your dissertation once the data set and soft file copy of your completed study have been received.

Thanks for your interest and best regards.

Prof. Hallinger



## APPENDIX I:

### Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional  
Review Board has approved  
this document for use from  
5/29/2018 to 5/28/2020  
Protocol # 3153.052918

#### CONSENT FORM

Principal Instructional Leadership Effect on High School Students' Literacy Achievement  
 Kimberly Kelly  
 Liberty University  
 School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study to further understand the relationship between high school principals' instructional leadership behaviors and school reading achievement scores and to formulate a solution to address poor literacy achievement among high school students. You were selected as a possible participant because you meet the following criteria:

- Serve as a secondary principal in a Florida high school.
- Have been a principal at your current school for at least three years.
- Are assigned to a school with a socio-economic status (SES) rating of at least 58.1% or higher.
- Are 18 years of age or older.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by Kimberly Kelly, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to further understand the relationship between high school principals' instructional leadership behaviors and school reading achievement scores and to formulate a solution to address poor literacy achievement among high school students.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a recorded interview session where you will be asked seven demographic questions and four questions related to your experiences as an instructional leader and student reading achievement. This should take 45-60 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in a recorded focus group discussion regarding these same topics. This should take 45-60 minutes to complete.
3. Once an interview is completed, it will be transcribed. When the transcribed interview is ready, it will be given back to you to review for accuracy. You will have an opportunity to make any corrections needed and approve the final transcript before it is used in the data analysis. This procedure may take between one to two hours.

**Risks and Benefits of Participation:** The risks of participation in this study are minimal and no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, a benefit to society is an increased understanding of the effect that secondary school leaders' instructional leadership behaviors may have on secondary students' literacy achievement.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 5/29/2018 to 5/28/2020 Protocol # 3153.052918

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Pseudonyms will be used to protect identities. All demographic information gathered will be used only for the purpose of analysis related to this study and will not be used to identify individual respondents.
- Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer, and only I will have access to the records. Data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your institution. Your willingness to participate and your responses to the interview questions will not be used to evaluate your performance as a principal in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Kimberly Kelly. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Michelle J. Barthlow, at [mjbarthlow@liberty.edu](mailto:mjbarthlow@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

Date

**APPENDIX J:**  
**Principal Interview Protocol**

Principal Instructional Leadership and Literacy Achievement Interview Protocol  
 Kimberly Kelly, Principal Investigator

Part I: Gathering of the following demographic information:

Gender	Female = 1	Male = 2			
Age	25 – 29 = 1	30 – 39 = 2	40 – 49 = 3	50 – 59 = 4	60 - > = 5
Race/Ethnicity	Asian = 1	Black = 2	Caucasian = 3	Latino = 4	Other = 5
Education Level	Masters = 1	Masters +30 = 2	Specialist = 3	Doctoral = 4	
Years as a Teacher	1 – 5 = 1	6 – 11 = 2	12 – 17 = 3	18 – 22 = 4	23 – 27 = 5
Years as a Principal	3 – 8 = 1	9 – 14 = 2	15 – 19 = 3	20 – 25 = 4	26 – 31 = 5
Principal Tenure	3 – 8 = 1	9 – 14 = 2	15 – 19 = 3	20 – 25 = 4	26 – 31 = 5

Part II:

Please consider principal behaviors that are used to improve student literacy achievement as you answer and elaborate on these questions.

**Sub-question 1:** As an instructional leader, what characteristics have you seen in exemplary literacy classrooms?

**Sub-question 2:** What are some examples of ways you have established and communicated high expectations for all staff related to student literacy achievement?

**Sub-question 3:** What support (research-based strategies or programs) did the district provide to support your school's literacy program? How effective was it/were they?

**Sub-question 4:** How was/were the program(s) implemented and monitored?

**APPENDIX K:**  
**Sample Interview Transcript**

Principal Instructional Leadership and Literacy Achievement Interview Questions  
 Kimberly Kelly, Principal Investigator

**Interviewer:** Principal XX thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I really appreciate it.

**Principal:** No problem. I am getting my doctorate as well. I am in a doctoral program. I will be doing the same thing too so I know what it's like.

**Interviewer:** Wonderful. I really appreciate it. The first part is gathering some demographic data. I know you answered these when you responded to the survey, however, for the interview questions...

**Principal:** Sure, no problem.

**Interviewer:** (reads table below, highlighting principal response.)

Part I: Gathering of the following demographic information:

Gender	Female = 1	<b>Male = 2</b>			
Age	25 – 29 = 1	30 – 39 = 2	40 – 49 = 3	<b>50 – 59 = 4</b>	60 - > = 5
Race/Ethnicity	Asian = 1	Black = 2	Caucasian = 3	<b>Latino = 4</b>	Other = 5
Education Level	Masters = 1	<b>Masters +30 = 2</b>	Specialist = 3	Doctoral = 4	
Years as a Teacher	<b>1 – 5 = 1</b>	6 – 11 = 2	12 – 17 = 3	18 – 22 = 4	23 – 27 = 5
Years as a Principal*	<b>3 – 8 = 1</b>	9 – 14 = 2	15 – 19 = 3	20 – 25 = 4	26 – 31 = 5
Principal Tenure	<b>3 – 8 = 1</b>	9 – 14 = 2	15 – 19 = 3	20 – 25 = 4	26 – 31 = 5

\***Principal:** How long have I been a principal at this school?

**Interviewer:** No, how long have you been a principal your entire career?

**Principal:** Well, they're both the same (laughs). This is my first and only principalship.

**Interviewer:** Laughs. Okay, thank you.

## Part 2: Interview Questions

**Interviewer:** Okay, we will now go to the questions. There are only four questions. Please consider principal behaviors, the things you do, that are used to improve student literacy achievement as you answer and elaborate on these questions.

### **Sub-question 1:**

**Interviewer:** As an instructional leader, what characteristics have you seen in exemplary literacy classrooms?

**Principal:** Well for me, it is seen in lesson planning. There are certain things that I expect to see included in, er, each teacher's lesson plan. I do a lot of walkthroughs and I look for rigor in lesson plans.

We also give our English teachers a common planning period to allow planning of all anticipated activities.

A, a teacher's essential question should increase in rigor; should have increased rigor.

I also look for a print rich environment.

Umm, I expect a lot of interaction among student to student and between student and teacher (teacher to student).

**Interviewer:** What is a print rich environment?

**Principal:** Oh, students should have access to novels, books; it is a literacy environment.

Student work should be displayed on wall. Work that shows progress and work should match, of course, standards...it should match.

### **Sub-question 2:**

**Interviewer:** What are some examples of ways you have established and communicated high expectations for all staff related to student literacy achievement?

**Principal:** By incorporating common planning. I am not sure if you know about our school. It is a school that has high needs. Students are more or less one or two years behind in literacy achievement when they enter. 80% of our students are low performing. So, during that common planning time, teachers have the ability to map-out activities; how and when all activities take place.

**Interviewer:** Do that take advantage of that opportunity? Do you see a difference in instruction and student academic success?

**Principal:** I make sure that the time is well spent engaging in collaborative activities. Whew, our teachers appreciate the opportunity they have been given, well, yes, yes. Is there a difference?...our students are doing a lot better, more quality work.

**Interviewer:** More quality work? What do you see, how do you evaluate that?

**Principal:** I see it in the exhibits and often teachers share during collaboration, student successes.

### **Sub-question 3:**

**Interviewer:** Sub-question three - What support (research-based strategies or programs) did the district provide to support your school's literacy program? How effective was it/were they?

**Principal:** A lot of cost has been shifted to the school. I have two literacy coaches- one who focuses on reading while the other focuses on language arts. One comes from my teacher allocations...I see the need for her in our building and our teachers use her.

**Interviewer:** How involved are they in professional development? What specifically are they doing to impact student literacy achievement?

**Principal:** They meet with teachers to provide strategies for success. They were credible teachers, open minded, and were successful themselves in literacy achievement. I hired them because they come with a reputation of being good teachers which helps during the suggested implementation of strategies. They have used them.

**Sub-question 4:**

**Interviewer:** Mr. “Principal”, the final question, how was/were the program(s) implemented and monitored? Doesn’t the legislation provide for a reading program? Can you explain how it is monitored?

**Principal:** It is not monitored. They will be. That’s something we plan to do next year.

Students are tracked throughout the year.

**Interviewer:** Do you keep track of students entering and exiting the program?

**Principal:** Students enter at the start of the school year (Read180 and ReadingPlus) and because we are a high school, they stay the entire year. Maybe next year we can look at student engagement and time spent to see if there are gains. You know, to see if there is a correlation.

**Interviewer:** That would be good. It will allow you to see if the program is working. So, do you look at before and after FSA ELA test scores of those who completed the program?

**Principal:** That’s something good. We can do that next year.

**Notes:** This principal is working on his doctoral degree.

Didn’t use assessment results as a means of tracking progress of students enrolled in intensive reading course.

Theoretical framework – Bandura. Self-efficacy – felt he had little district support.

He has expectations on ELA teachers not on other core area teachers.