SUPERINTENDENT PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNING-WALKS: A STUDY OF THE PERSPECTIVES OF TWELVE PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN WASHINGTON STATE REGARDING THE PRESENCE OF PRINCIPALS IN THE CLASSROOM

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Education

MAY 2009

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the guidance provided by faculty members from Washington State University. Guidance for the dissertation from committee members Eric Anctil, Paul Goldman and Jim Howard was greatly appreciated. In addition, faculty members from the superintendent cohort program, including Dennis Ray, Nancy Kyle, Gay Selby, and Don Cox were instrumental in providing guidance during my journey to complete the doctoral degree. Gail Furman, faculty leader of the doctoral cohort on the Pullman campus, provided support for the conceptualization of the dissertation and the review of literature.

Peter Ansingh, superintendent of the West Valley School District (West Valley—Yakima), encouraged me to continue my formal education while I worked as Assistant Superintendent for the West Valley School District.

My wife, Charity, provided support throughout my doctoral studies. Charity and I traveled together across the state of Washington, from cohort classes in Spokane to Vancouver to Pullman to Issaquah to the summit of Snoqualmie Pass. It has been quite a journey, both literally and figuratively, to complete the doctoral degree!

I acknowledge my parents, grandparents, and extended family, who shared a love of learning with me throughout my formative years and continue to influence me

to this day. My children have helped me to grow and to see the world, again, through the eyes of a child.

My father, Roger Dallas Finch, assisted me with revising and editing this dissertation. His questions and suggestions helped to strengthen the internal logic and coherence of this report. I am grateful for his assistance and support.

My grandfather, Dallas Finch, provided guidance to maintain balance in life and enjoy every day that we have. He provided a life-long example, both as a teacher and a learner, to enjoy the process of learning, enjoy family, and enjoy life.

I am indebted to the superintendents who participated in this study. They willingly gave their time to provide the qualitative data that comprise the heart and soul of this study. They were all interested in contributing to the body of knowledge that can be used to further our understanding of effective schools and instructional leadership. I am truly grateful, not just for their willingness to participate in the study, but for their dedication to the students of Washington State. While the results of the study were reported anonymously, all of the superintendents share in the success of this dissertation.

Throughout my doctoral studies, I have learned the importance of seeing the world through different conceptual frameworks. The importance of life-long learning is to continue to learn different ways of seeing the world. For this revelation, I acknowledge the totality of my doctoral study experience that was provided by Washington State University.

SUPERINTENDENT PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNING-WALKS:

A STUDY OF THE PERSPECTIVES OF TWELVE PUBLIC SCHOOL

SUPERINTENDENTS IN WASHINGTON STATE REGARDING

THE PRESENCE OF PRINCIPALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Abstract

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May 2009

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No Child Left Behind has increased the demand for evidence of student achievement in America's public schools. As a result, the importance of the role of superintendent as instructional leader has increased. Some superintendents have responded to this demand by mandating that principals increase their presence in classrooms; yet, research on superintendent perspectives regarding this practice is lacking.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of twelve superintendents in Washington State who have mandated that principals in their district must spend a portion of each day in classrooms. This qualitative study examined what the superintendents hoped to accomplish through the mandate and it

explored the superintendents' beliefs about the structures and systems that they put into place to support the principals' implementation of this practice; in addition, the study analyzed the superintendents' perspectives in relation to various theories of leadership, change, and accountability in complex systems.

The study found that superintendents hoped that the implementation of learning-walks would positively impact the instructional core. The adoption of a common instructional model was a prerequisite to effective implementation of learning-walks. With a common instructional model, instructional practices could be compared to a standard for quality.

In districts where learning-walks had been implemented the longest, teachers joined administrators in learning-walks. Superintendents reported that this practice supported the development of a culture of continuous improvement.

Various learning-walk practices were discovered, including principal learning-walks, superintendent-principal learning-walks, administrative team learning-walks, and teacher learning-walks.

Some superintendents required principals to complete logs or forms to document follow-through. Others used face-to-face accountability, emphasizing that learning-walks were a means to an end.

Superintendents implemented various structures and systems to support principals in their work to improve the instructional core. Frequently noted were the use of consultants, instructional coaches, and time for teachers to collaborate.

Learning-walks provided opportunities for internal accountability, team learning, and the development of a shared vision for high quality instruction. Superintendents saw their role as developing principals' knowledge and skills, managing the pressure on staff, creating a culture of continuous improvement, and providing moral leadership to keep the focus on student learning.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated

to all students in our public schools.

In students we find the past, present, and future.

We must never lose our focus.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the United States federal government reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Diverse interests came together to form legislation that would direct the course of education in the United States for the next decade. A famous photo from the event that was staged for the signing of the law includes President George W. Bush, Senator Ted Kennedy from Massachusetts, and a young African-American boy (see Appendix A). The symbols from this photo are important reminders of the historic nature of the law—a law that has become known as "No Child Left Behind." Two icons for the partisan camps of modern American politics, the "conservative" President and the "liberal" Senator, joined together to celebrate legislation that would promise that no child—no matter what socio-economic status or ethnic background, as represented by the young African-American boy—would be "left behind" by America's public schools.

No Child Left Behind contained many provisions that addressed a number of concerns and political agendas from across the nation, including concerns about highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals, school choice for students in "failing" or "persistently dangerous" schools, the opportunity for private school staff to join public school staff in federally funded staff development activities, and even technology education. But the provision with, by far, the greatest impact on public

schools across the United States was the mandate that *all* students must meet state standards in reading and math by the year 2014.

Fielding, Kerr, and Rosier (2004) explain that the standards movement of the 1990's coalesced into a bipartisan mandate that America's public schools must improve. In accordance with No Child Left Behind, schools were required to test students annually in reading and math. Each state established a uniform bar of achievement that provided an expectation of improvement so that, eventually, all students would be expected to meet the state standards. Student achievement data were disaggregated for student socio-economic status and ethnicity. If a school did not meet adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years in comparison to the state uniform bar, the school faced government sanctions and public scrutiny. School districts, also, were required to meet adequate yearly progress. Districts which did not meet the expectations of the state uniform bar faced sanctions and scrutiny as well. This external accountability system has resulted in great pressure on school leaders to produce results.

Research Problem

With the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as No Child Left Behind, the federal government's external system of accountability for public schools has increased the demand for evidence of student achievement in America's schools. As a result, the importance of the role of the superintendent as an instructional leader for the school system has increased. Some

superintendents in Washington State have responded to this demand by mandating that principals increase their presence in classrooms (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2003); yet, research on superintendent perspectives regarding this practice is lacking.

While research on specific practices that *superintendents* undertake to facilitate instructional leadership is quite limited (Castagnola, 2005; Elmore & Burney, 1997, 1998; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Resnick & Glennan, 2002; Schomburg, 2006), a greater amount of research has explored the practices that *principals* undertake to facilitate instructional leadership. One such instructional leadership practice by principals is visibility in classrooms (Abrutyn, 2006; Biddle & Saha, 2006; Bushman, 2006; Cunningham, 2004; Davidson-Taylor, 2002; Lee, 2003; Leithwood, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, Powell & Napoliello, 2005; Skretta & Fisher, 2002; *Strategies*, 2000, 2001; VonVillas, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Whitaker, 1997). Many superintendents have responded to the research on principal instructional leadership by encouraging principals to increase the amount of time that they spend in classrooms. Some superintendents have even mandated that principals spend a portion of each day in classrooms (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2003). Yet, research on superintendent perspectives regarding this practice is lacking.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of twelve superintendents in Washington State who have mandated that principals in their district must spend a portion of each day in classrooms. This qualitative study examined what the superintendents hoped to accomplish through the mandate and it explored the superintendents' beliefs about the structures and systems that they put into place to support the principals' implementation of this practice; in addition, the study analyzed the superintendents' perspectives on principal presence in classrooms in relation to various theories of leadership, change, and accountability in complex systems.

The researcher selected qualitative methodology in order to explore the superintendents' perspectives. By issuing a mandate to the principals, the superintendents were using their positional power to require the principals to undertake a specific practice. The researcher was interested to learn what the superintendents hoped to accomplish by issuing this mandate. What did the superintendents expect the outcome of this practice to be? What did the superintendents hope to see as a result of the principals engaging in this practice?

To ensure follow-through, superintendents implemented various structures and systems in their district. What were the superintendents' perspectives in regards to these structures and systems? Did they perceive that some structures and systems were more effective than others?

The issuance of a mandate by a superintendent does not, by itself, mean that the practice will be followed by school personnel. Human relations are an important consideration whenever a directive is issued in any organization. The researcher was interested in learning the superintendents' perspectives regarding the acceptance and follow-through by the principals or, perhaps, the resistance of the principals to the mandate that the principals must spend a certain portion of each day in the classroom. In addition, this mandate might have ramifications for the teaching staff. The researcher was interested to learn about the superintendents' perspectives about the reception of this practice by teachers throughout the district. Were teachers receptive to an increased principal presence in the classroom? Were teachers resistant to this practice? Was there a difference between buildings in the district? Was there a difference between elementary teachers and secondary teachers?

The answers to these questions would provide greater insight into the superintendent perspectives on this activity which they consider to be an instructional leadership practice.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in its ability to further our understanding of the instructional leadership practice that is known as learning-walk, walk-through, drop-in, and other such terms. As this practice appears to be one of the latest trends in education administration, a deeper understanding of the ways in which this practice

has been implemented in numerous districts will inform other school leaders as they consider adopting the practice or even mandating its implementation.

Delimitations and Limitations

One delimitation of the study was the regional scope that was used for the selection of participants. Participants were selected from superintendents in Washington State. While participants were selected to provide superintendent perspectives from different sizes of districts, different regions of the state, and different genders of the participants, only superintendents from Washington State were considered for participation in the study.

An additional delimitation was that data were collected only from the superintendents who participated in the study. Additional participants from the school districts were not selected to triangulate the data.

The main limitation of the study is the subjective nature of the responses that superintendents provided. The researcher addressed this issue by providing assurance to the participants that all information would remain confidential and responses would be reported in the dissertation using pseudonyms. The interview process was conducted as a dialogue between the researcher and the participant. Participants were provided time to think and give thoughtful responses. A member check was completed to ensure that transcriptions were done accurately. Nevertheless, the nature of this type of qualitative research—interviews with participants—provides the opportunity for socially desirable responses which may limit the results of the study.

Overview of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the research topic and an overview of the study. Chapter 2 provides the review of literature which includes a historical perspective of educational leadership and an exploration of the conceptual frameworks for school improvement and systems accountability that were used to analyze the data collected in the study. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the research methodology and procedures that were used to undertake the study, including participant selection, qualitative research methods, and interview procedures that were used to collect data for the study. Chapter 4 provides the data which were collected through the interviews with the twelve superintendents who participated in the study. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results and recommendations for future areas of study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Instructional Leadership

Elmore (2004) writes, "Instructional leadership is the equivalent of the holy grail in educational administration" (p. 48). Elmore proposes that American schools have been "loosely coupled" and the role of the school administrator, in the past, has been to "buffer" the classroom teacher from outside influences. With the federal mandate of No Child Left Behind that all students must meet learning standards, classrooms can no longer be buffered from outside influences. The role of the principal has changed. With the increase in external accountability, the demand for instructional leadership has increased.

While standards for student learning were developed at both the national and state levels during the 1990's, the development of standards for teachers and school leaders progressed during this time as well. The standards for school leaders, developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, were published by the Council of Chief State School Officers (*Standards for School Leaders, 1996*). In Washington State, the standards for certification of school superintendents were codified with language that directly set the expectation that the school superintendent should positively impact student learning by improving classroom instruction. The law lists four areas for superintendent standards: "strategic leadership, instructional

leadership, organizational leadership, and political/community leadership" (*Approval Standard*, 2006). The specific standards for instructional leadership are:

> The knowledge, skills, and attributes to design with others appropriate curricula and instructional programs which implement the state learning goals and essential academic learning requirements, to develop learner centered school cultures, to assess outcomes, to provide student personnel services, and to plan with faculty professional development activities aimed at improving instruction. (*Approval standard*, 2006)

Research, however, is lacking regarding the actual practices that superintendents undertake to be instructional leaders.

While many articles are theoretical in nature, the bulk of the research regarding the actual instructional leadership practices that a superintendent can implement has centered on the work of Anthony Alvarado and Elaine Fink when they served as superintendents of District #2 in New York City (D'Amico, Harwell, Stein & van den Heuvel, 2001; Elmore, 2004; Elmore & Burney, 1997, 1998; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Resnick & Glennan, 2002; Resnick & Harwell, 1998).

Even the small amount of additional research that has been done to explore superintendent instructional leadership practices is lacking on the specific actions that a superintendent could or should undertake. For example, a study by Peterson (2002) focused on perceptions of principals and school board members of the superintendent as instructional leader. But Peterson's finding that a superintendent creates a shared vision for the district really does not explain how a superintendent does this. The

actual instructional leadership practices that a superintendent undertakes to do the work of instructional leadership are not clearly explained or understood.

In comparison, a great deal of research has focused on the actions of school principals. Water, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of research on school principals and found that, over a 30 year period, there were over 5,000 studies of the principalship. They narrowed their meta-analysis to focus on 70 studies which met their criteria for "design, controls, data analysis, and rigor" (p. 2). The authors found:

> We have concluded there are two primary variables that determine whether or not leadership will have a positive or a negative impact on achievement. The first is the focus of change—that is, whether leaders properly identify and focus on improving the school and classroom practices that are most likely to have a positive impact on student achievement in their school. The second variable is whether leaders properly understand the magnitude or "order" of change they are leading and adjust their leadership practices accordingly. (p. 5)

In a subsequent publication, the authors identified 21 leadership responsibilities that have a positive impact on student achievement. These responsibilities include monitoring and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and, visibility (Marzano et al., 2005). Increasing the principal's visibility in classrooms is a leadership practice which has generated much interest (Abrutyn, 2006; Biddle & Saha, 2006; Bushman, 2006; Davidson-Taylor, 2002; Lee, 2003; Leithwood, 2005;

Powell & Napoliello, 2005; Skretta & Fisher, 2002; *Strategies*, 2000, 2001; VonVillas, 2004; Whitaker, 1997). While some case studies demonstrate convincing evidence that principal visibility has a positive effect on teacher performance (*Strategies*, 2000, 2001), other examples from the literature are merely assertions by the author without any research to support the statement. One example is VonVillas (2004) who writes, "Only when administrators require a change in how teachers approach instruction and actively promote it through visibility and feedback will one's students' success rate improve" (p. 53). VonVillas provides no research to support the statement. Other authors provide their personal experience with the implementation of increased principal presence in the classroom. Abrutyn (2006) writes:

> We have discovered that the walk-through process leads to many positive outcomes that effective schools strive to achieve. These include authentic use of data, a culture of collegiality among staff, reflective discussions about teacher practice, a focus on student achievement, significant and ongoing staff development, a focus on standards, increased student engagement in the learning process, and a strong desire among staff to find out what works in the classroom. (p. 57)

Many superintendents have responded to the research on principal instructional leadership by encouraging principals to increase the amount of time that they spend in classrooms. Some superintendents have even mandated that principals spend a

portion of each day in classrooms (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2003). Yet, research on superintendent perspectives regarding this practice is lacking.

Historical Perspective

In 1894, John Dewey and Harriet Alice Chipman Dewey, began a "Laboratory School" at the University of Chicago. They were there only a short time, 1894-1904, but their work would have a profound effect. The Progressive Movement in education was based on Dewey's theories about effective teaching pedagogy; theories that were developed at the Laboratory School. These theories held great promise for improvements in education and many of the concepts that Dewey promoted have been incorporated into modern constructivist learning theory. Yet, pedagogical practices based on Dewey's theories of learning were not universally adopted (Cuban, 1993). During this same time, the early 1900's, the "scientific management" ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor were applied to school systems. Taylor was an expert from the business world who emphasized efficiency, both individual worker efficiency and organizational efficiency (Hoy & Miskel, 1987). Elmore (2004) explains that the management structure that was established for American public schools emphasized administrative expertise, not pedagogical expertise. He explains that it was:

> …a form of organization based on locally centralized school bureaucracy, governed by elected boards, with relatively low-status (mostly female) teachers working in relative isolation from each other under the supervision of

> (mostly male) administrators, whose expertise was thought to lie mainly in their mastery of administrative rather than pedagogical skills. (p. 45)

These administrators were more apt to adopt scientific management for school systems than the more nebulous concepts for change that were presented by the Progressives. Elmore explains the results:

> The by-products of this institutional form have been, among other things: relatively weak professionalization among teachers, since teaching was thought not to require expertise on a level with other "real" professions and conditions of work were not conducive to the formation of strong professional associations among teachers; a relatively elaborate system of administrative overhead at the district and school level, thought to be necessary for adequate supervision of the relatively low-skill teacher force; and relatively large schools, thought to be logical extension of the principles of scientific management requiring economies of scale to produce efficiencies. (p. 46)

Scientific management was not the only connection from the business world for school administrators. The work of William Edwards Deming in the rebuilding of post-war Japan became well-known as "Total Quality Management" (TQM). The principles of TQM began to be applied to schools in the last half of the 1900's as school administrators searched for ways to improve American schools (Lezotte, 1992; Schmoker & Wilson, 1993).

One body of research that contributed to the knowledge base for school change and reform was the work of Lezotte, Edmonds, and Brookover from Michigan

State University (Lezotte, 1997). During the 1960's and 1970's, these researchers studied "effective schools" and identified "correlates of effective schools." The correlates were a safe and orderly environment, a climate of high expectations for success, instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn and student time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, and positive home-school relations. By 1979, Edmonds (1979) was able to say:

> We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all students whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do that. Whether we do it or not will finally come to depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't done it so far. (p. 24)

The call for reform in the late 1900's was punctuated by *A Nation at Risk*, a government report that published the findings of President Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). The famous words from the report prompted an emphasis on improving America's schools: "Our Nation is at risk….If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" (p. 5). The reaction to the report was to build political support for school reform. Rather than focus on the certain formative aspects of education, such as a student's self-concept or self-esteem, the reform movement focused on establishing academic standards for student learning (Finch & Alawiye, 1996). During the 1990's, states enacted school reform measures which included identifying student learning standards, codifying the standards, and measuring the standards through standardized

tests. In Washington State, the reform efforts were enacted by ESHB 1209 in 1993. The results in Washington State were state standards called the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and state assessments called the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).

As the external accountability measures became law, school administrators began to search for strategies to improve student learning. Lezotte (1997) proposes that administrators must identify a "high-yield" strategy to provide the greatest impact on student learning. Lezotte explains, "…a high-yield strategy is defined as a concept or principle, supported by research or case literature, that will, when successfully applied in a real school setting, result in significant improvement in assessed student achievement" (p. 18). No Child Left Behind provides high levels of accountability for all of the public schools in the United States. As a result, public school leaders across the country have increased the intensity of their search for high-yield strategies to increase student learning.

One strategy that has emerged has been the practice of requiring principals to spend a portion of their day in the classroom. This practice has been given various names, including learning-walks, walk-throughs, drop-ins, and leadership-walks. This practice has been proposed as a high-yield strategy by practitioners, such as Anthony Alvarado and Elaine Fink, who worked together at both New York City's District #2 and the San Diego Unified School District. The practice has also been promoted by researchers from academia such as Lauren Resnick from the University of Pittsburgh and Richard Elmore from Harvard.

While authors have written articles providing their opinions about the value of learning-walks, research on the practice is quite scarce. One study by Keesor (2005) did analyze the results of the practice of an assistant principal who increased visibility in the classroom. But Keesor analyzed the results in terms of a decrease in student discipline problems, not an increase in student learning.[1]

The results of school improvement efforts by Alvarado and Fink in both District #2 (Elmore, 2004)[2] and San Diego were impressive (Magee, 2002).[3] But research into the actual practice and implementation of learning-walks is lacking.

Conceptual Frameworks for School Improvement and Accountability

This study will use various conceptual frameworks to analyze the information that was collected through the interviews with the superintendents and the collection of documents. While the following authors will not be used exclusively, the concepts that they present are valuable and will benefit from further discussion. Each author provides information regarding leadership, change, and accountability that can be used to analyze the perspectives of the superintendents.

Fouts

Fouts (2003) presents a theoretical concept of change in school systems. He uses terms that others have used but he defines the terms in a slightly different way, resulting in a new conceptual framework. Fouts uses the terms “first order change” and “second order change”. The terms were used by Cuban (1990) to discuss change

in schools, although conceptually Cuban built on the work of Romberg and Price (1983) who discussed changes that they called "ameliorative reforms" and "radical reforms". Cuban uses the terms first order change and second order change to describe change in a way that is similar to Romberg and Price, different than Fouts. Cuban describes first order changes as things that school leaders do to make existing structures more efficient. He describes second order change as radical departures from the existing status quo. Water, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) also use the terms first order change and second order change; they use the terms in a similar way to Cuban.

In contrast, Fouts cites Ellis and Fouts (1994) as the genesis of his thoughts. Ellis and Fouts used the terms bureaucratic/centralized reform and authentic/fundamental reform to distinguish between two types of change in school systems. This is similar to Fullan's distinction between restructuring (changing school structures) and reculturing (changing the beliefs and behavior of school staff) (Fullan, 2007, p. 25). Goodman (1995) refers to the phenomenon in schools where there is the appearance of change without any real substantive change. She discusses this in the appropriately named article, "Change Without Difference." Others have written books about the topic, such as Popkewitz, Tabachnick, and Wehlage (1982) who wrote *The Myth of Educational Reform* and Payne (2008) who wrote *So Much Reform, So Little Change*. This is the direction that Fouts takes with his definition of first order change and second order change.

In his discussion of school reform in Washington State, Fouts (2003) identifies first order change as structural changes and second order change as substantive changes. Unlike Cuban, Fouts uses the term first order change to explain changes that could appear to be quite radical. Like Goodman and others, Fouts explores the phenomenon that there is often the appearance of change in schools, with staff enacting structural changes that are called "restructuring" or "reform", but the pedagogical core remains status quo. Fouts gives the example of smaller class sizes and block schedules. Even if a school restructures and implements one of these new initiatives, the teachers could actually teach exactly the same way they did with large classes and a traditional bell schedule. The second order change—which might be facilitated by the new structure—will only take place if the teachers change their instructional practice with fidelity to the purpose for the structural change. The change to lower class size and longer blocks of time for a class period provides the opportunity for teachers to differentiate instruction and build relationships with students—the structural changes provide the conditions for the changes in instructional practice—but the second order change will only occur if teachers are committed to making the change occur.

In relation to the study of superintendent perspectives on increasing principal presence in classrooms, the researcher interviewed superintendents who have mandated a first order change in their district. The superintendents expected the principals to spend a portion of each day in the classroom. What was the second

order change that the superintendents hoped to accomplish by mandating this first order change?

Bolman and Deal

Bolman and Deal (2003) do not write exclusively about education. While Deal does hold the position of Professor of Education at the Rossier School at the University of Southern California, Bolman holds the Marion Bloch Chair in Leadership at the Block School of Business at the University of Missouri—Kansas. In their book, *Reframing Organizations*, they provide four ways of looking at organizations and the people and their actions within the organization. The four frames are the structural frame, the human resource frame, the political frame, and the symbolic frame. The structural frame looks at the organization with a mechanistic view, such as cause-effect relationships. The human resource frame looks at the organization through the human element of interactions between people, personal needs, and group dynamics. The political frame looks at power relations and sources of power within the organization. The symbolic frame looks at the meaning that people ascribe to actions and the meaning that people gain from their work.

In the analysis of the data from this study, the researcher investigated the different dimensions of leadership in relation to the superintendent perspectives. What were the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic implications and meanings that resulted from superintendents mandating that principals must spend a portion of their day in classrooms?

Senge

In his groundbreaking book on systems thinking, *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge (1990) presented a conceptual framework of how five "disciplines" interact to affect the operations of any social system. Senge explains, "To me, a discipline is a participative methodology based on underlying theory offering concrete practices that can develop capacity and help in achieving practical results" (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000, p. 560).

In *Schools That Learn*, Senge and his colleagues applied the fifth discipline conceptual framework to classrooms, schools, and school districts (Senge et al., 2000). The authors demonstrate how the disciplines overlap and interact within a school's organizational structure. The five disciplines are: 1) personal mastery, knowing oneself and working for continuous self-improvement; 2) mental models, the understanding of both one's own and other's mental constructs of knowledge, multiple intelligences, and emotion; 3) shared vision, communication within the organization to develop a common mission or aspiration; 4) team learning, processes that develop understanding within the individuals of the organization and facilitate an overall increase in understanding and improvement across the organization; and, the fifth discipline, 5) systems thinking, developing ways to analyze, critique, and improve processes, such as cause and effect relationships, within complex organizations.

How did the superintendents structure improvement processes to improve the principals' personal mastery of instructional leadership, develop mental models for

how to work with teachers to improve instruction, develop principals' shared vision with other school staff for what effective instruction looks like, develop team learning so that all members of the administrative team develop the knowledge and skills that they need to positively impact the instructional core, and, develop systems thinking by staff members to improve internal accountability within and among schools in the district?

Heifetz

Heifetz (1994) proposes a conceptual framework in relation to the type of work that is needed to solve problems. The framework is not exclusive to education and can be used in relation to an individual trying to solve a problem or a group of people, an organization, that is trying to solve a problem. He identifies two types of challenges, technical challenges and adaptive challenges. For a technical challenge, the problem is clearly defined and there is a clear solution that can be applied to the situation. In this case, the clear solution is called a technical solution. For an adaptive challenge, the problem is not clearly defined. It will take learning, individual learning and/or group learning, for the problem to become more clearly defined. In addition, it may take creativity—individual and/or group learning—to develop a solution to the problem. In this case, the solution is called an adaptive solution.

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) develop the conceptual framework further by investigating the role of the leader within an organization. They propose that leaders must manage the pressure on the organization. If there is not enough pressure, the

people within the organization may become complacent and the organization may not function as effectively as it could potentially function. On the other hand, the leader must be careful not too put too much pressure on the people within the organization. If the leader applies too much pressure, the people within the organization may revolt and rebel against the leader. If this were to happen, the organization will not be operating as effectively as it could otherwise be.

Heifetz and Linsky warn leaders to be careful not to impose a technical solution on a problem that is actually an adaptive challenge. The authors explain the contradiction that leaders often "rise to the top" because they have expertise and they are good "problem-solvers". Nevertheless, it is likely that the most difficult challenges that an organization will face are the adaptive problems which require adaptive solutions. The people who have the problem must own the problem and own the solution. The leader must turn the work back to those who need to own the problem. The framework of technical solutions and adaptive solutions is valuable to consider when analyzing superintendent perspectives. Are there lessons learned that superintendents can share with the researcher regarding acceptance or resistance of the mandate for principals to increase their presence in classrooms?

Elmore

Unlike many of the authors that were previously discussed, Elmore writes exclusively about education. He covers a wide range of topics within education, exploring the current state of education and the results of education reform. Elmore

(2004) proposes a conceptual framework to explain how accountability functions in schools and school systems. He explains that accountability can be viewed as a construct that includes both external accountability and internal accountability. External accountability is imposed by the state or federal government through student achievement tests or other measures. Internal accountability is the alignment of three factors: collective expectations, personal integrity, and accountability, which is the process whereby individuals hold each other accountable for following-through with the collective expectations. This corporate accountability can be realized through accountability to a supervisor and/or accountability to a colleague. Elmore proposes that, in the past, before state and federal external accountability structures were in place, most schools did not have strong internal accountability structures. With the imposition of external accountability, school administrators have begun to implement internal accountability structures and processes to improve the quality of instruction throughout the school system. In the past, high quality instruction might have occurred in some classrooms but there was not a common expectation for the same degree of high quality instruction in all classrooms. With the imposition of external accountability, schools have begun to develop ways to institute internal accountability. Elmore (2004) writes:

> Internal accountability systems influence behavior because they reflect an alignment within the school of personal responsibility and collective expectations, regardless of the external policy. This alignment of expectations

> and responsibility is also accompanied by some sense that there will be consequences if expectations are not met. (p. 191)

Elmore proposes that internal accountability structures and systems are not aligned in most school systems. He writes, "Schools systems are also characterized by weak internal accountability" (Elmore, 2003b, p. 13).

In addition to the accountability framework, Elmore has worked with colleagues at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Harvard Business School to develop a framework for understanding organizational coherence. The framework was developed through a project called the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP). The framework is called the PELP Coherence Framework. Childress, Elmore, Grossman and Johnson (2007) explain, "Organizational coherence means that the various parts of a school district are designed so that they work in sync with one another to achieve district goals" (p. 2). At the center of the PELP Coherence Framework is the instructional core which includes the teacher, the student, and the content that is to be learned. The authors explain that these components of the instructional core are interdependent. The instructional core is the interaction of "teachers' knowledge and skill, students' engagement in their own learning, and academically challenging content" (p. 3). Surrounding the instructional core is a "strategy" that the district leadership has identified as a high yield strategy for improving student achievement. The authors explain a strategy as, "the set of actions a district deliberately undertakes to strengthen the instructional core with the objective of increasing student learning and performance districtwide" (p. 3). The

PELP Coherence Framework includes five interdependent factors that must be "in-synch" to support the maximum effect for the implementation of the strategy. The five factors are structures, systems, resources, stakeholders, and culture. All of the factors are included within the context or, as it is labeled in the framework, the "environment" within which the school and district operates.

In relation to superintendent perspectives on principal visibility in classrooms, the researcher examined the thinking of the superintendents about accountability structures and systems, and the various factors that are a part of the PELP Coherence Framework. What was the superintendent's strategy for impacting the instructional core? How did mandating that principals spend time in the classroom on a daily basis support that strategy? What was the impact of this practice on the structures, systems, resources, stakeholders, and culture of the schools and the district?

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of superintendents in regards to a specific practice that they had implemented in their school district, namely, a mandate that the principals in the district must spend a certain portion of each day in the classroom. Rubin and Rubin (2005) provide an explanation of the various forms of qualitative interviews that can be used to study different types of phenomenon. Interviews can range from a "narrowly focused scope" to a "broadly focused scope". In addition, interviews can range from a focus on "meanings and frameworks" to a focus on "events and processes" (p. 5). The scope of this study was narrowly focused on the topic of learning-walks. This practice is becoming widely adopted by superintendents as a tool for instructional leadership. In the Spring of 2006, the researcher conducted a phone survey of 14 superintendents in Central Washington State. Thirteen of the superintendents, nearly all of those surveyed, reported that they were implementing some type of learning-walk model in their district. A practice with such wide adoption, with such a scarcity of research, was an invitation for investigation.

The focus for this study is what Rubin and Rubin (2005) would call "meanings and frameworks". The researcher was interested in gaining an understanding of what the superintendents hoped to achieve through this mandate (i.e.

what meaning do the superintendents place on the learning-walks). In addition, the researcher was interested in learning the superintendents' beliefs about the structures and systems that they put into place to support the principals' implementation and follow-through.

In order to learn about superintendents' perspectives, the researcher selected qualitative research as the methodology for study. The researcher conducted a phone survey of 112 superintendents in Washington State to determine—yes or no—did the superintendent mandate that principals in their school district must spend a certain portion of their day in the classroom. If the superintendent answered "yes," the researcher asked the superintendent what amount of time it was each day that the superintendent required of the principals to be in the classroom.

Research Design

For this study, twelve superintendents from Washington State were interviewed to gain information regarding the perspective of superintendents who had mandated that the principals in the district must spend a portion of their day in the classroom. In addition, documents from the superintendents' districts were collected. The documents were related to the superintendents' efforts to implement the practice and hold principals accountable for follow-through. Documents included learning-walk feedback forms, principal logs, memos from the superintendents to the principals, and agendas from leadership team meetings.

Criteria for Selection of Superintendents

The purpose of the study was to explore the perspectives of superintendents who have mandated that the principals in the district must spend a certain portion of each day in the classroom. The researcher considered including superintendents who were implementing the practice of learning-walks but not mandating the practice on a daily basis. In addition, the researcher considered including superintendents who did not use learning-walks as a strategy for instructional leadership. However, the purpose of the study was to investigate and explore—compare and contrast—the perspectives of superintendents who have imposed a first-order change on the principals in the district. The study investigated the perspective of superintendents who have imposed a "technical" solution as a method for instructional leadership. The researcher explored the perspective of superintendents in regards to the expectation that principals must spend a portion of their day in the classroom.

In order to provide a broad perspective on this subject, the researcher selected superintendents from a wide variety of contexts. A total of twelve superintendents were interviewed. Six participants were from the eastern portion of Washington State and six were selected from the western portion of the state; the Cascade Mountains were considered the line of demarcation between east and west. From each part of the state, east and west, two superintendents were from small, rural school districts, two were from medium-sized districts, and two were from large, urban school districts. The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association classifications were used to determine the size of a school district. Districts that had one 2A high school were

considered a small district, districts that had one 3A high school were considered a medium-sized district, and school districts that had one or more 4A high schools were considered a large district. U.S. Census definitions for rural and urban were used. By using these selection criteria, superintendents from a wide variety of contexts were included in the study.

Selection Procedures

A phone interview with every superintendent from Washington State public school districts with 2A high schools, 3A high schools, and 4A high schools (N = 112) was conducted during the Fall of 2006. The superintendents were asked if they required the principals in their district to spend a portion of each day in the classroom. If the superintendent answered in the affirmative, the researcher asked the superintendent how long the principals were required to be in the classroom each day.

About one-third of the superintendents, 37 superintendents, said that they required principals to visit classrooms on a daily basis. A little less than one-third of the superintendents, 32 superintendents, said that they strongly encouraged principals to visit classrooms each day but that it was not a requirement in their district. And a little more than one-third of the superintendents, 43 superintendents, said that learning-walks were not a focus in their district.

Of the 37 superintendents who responded in the affirmative, that they required principals to be in the classroom each day, the researcher selected 12 superintendents to participate in the study. The researcher purposefully chose the superintendents

based on the selection criteria to ensure a diversity of participants. The superintendents who were selected came from a variety of contexts, such as urban and rural districts, and large, medium, and small districts. In addition, the researcher selected superintendents who represented diversity in gender. Six potential participants were identified from Eastern Washington and six were identified from Western Washington. The researcher contacted the 12 superintendents to determine if they would like to participate in the study. All 12 superintendents who were initially selected and contacted said that they were willing to participate in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Qualitative data were collected by interviewing the superintendents who agreed to participate in the study. The researcher used the suggestion by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) regarding the methods of the qualitative researcher. The authors write, "Qualitative researchers believe that reading the same question to each subject assures nothing about the response. They believe that each subject needs to be approached somewhat differently" (p. 100). As a result of this approach, the researcher entered the interview with topics of inquiry and the researcher was open to experiencing a free-flowing exchange of ideas about the topic of study (see Appendix B). Bogdan and Biklen state, "For some, the process of doing qualitative research can be characterized as a dialogue or interplay between researchers and their subjects" (p. 7). The researcher focused on drawing forth the perspectives of superintendents regarding

their work with principals and their expectation that principals will spend a portion of each day in the classroom.

Document Collection

Documents were collected from the superintendents. The researcher asked the superintendents to share any information that they might have regarding their perspectives on the implementation of the increased presence of principals in the classrooms of their school district. Superintendents shared documents such as a form that was used by principals to report to their superintendent that they completed the learning-walks each day. Other documents included memos written by the superintendent, logs of principals' time spent in the classroom, and minutes from instructional leadership team meetings.

Analysis Techniques

Verbatim transcripts were made of the interviews. The data in the transcripts were coded and analyzed. The researcher identified themes that were common within each interview and in comparison between the interviews. Glaser (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 67) outlined the steps of the constant comparative method which include constant analysis of the data and the search for recurrent themes. As themes were identified, the data were analyzed to discover sub-themes and areas of consistency and contrast.

Context

The following table (Table 1) illustrates the variety of contexts from which the superintendents operated. Some were from large districts with a large number of principals while others were from much smaller districts. The large districts ranged from approximately 11,000 students to 15,000 students. The medium districts ranged from approximately 4,000 students to 6,000 students. The small districts ranged from approximately 3,000 students to 4,000 students.

Superintendents who participated in the study were from a wide range of geographic areas in Washington State. Some were from rural, agricultural areas from Eastern Washington while others were from the urban areas of Western Washington. Some were from rural areas in Western Washington while others were from the urban areas of Eastern Washington. The common thread was that all of the superintendents required the principals in their district to be in classrooms on a daily basis.

The superintendents differed in the amount of time that they required principals to spend in the classroom each day. Some superintendents reported that they expected principals to be in the classroom daily, without any certain amount of time specified. Others had a specific daily expectation. One superintendent specified one hour a day while another specified one and a half hours a day. The most that was specified was from one superintendent who said that he expected each principal in the district to be in classrooms three hours a day.

Table 1

Superintendents Who Participated in the Study

Superintendent[a]	Gender	Region[b]	Size[c]	Principals[d]	District[e]	Career[f]
Dr. Anthony Andrews	M	Western	Large	≤ 40	≤ 5	≤ 10
Dr. Barbara Benson	F	Western	Large	≤ 40	≤ 5	≤ 5
Dr. Charlie Cline	M	Western	Medium	≤ 20	≤ 10	≤ 10
Dr. Dorothy Dell	F	Western	Medium	≤ 20	≤ 10	≤ 10
Dr. Ed Edison	M	Western	Small	≤ 10	≤ 10	≤ 15
Dr. Frances Frye	F	Western	Small	≤ 10	≤ 5	≤ 5
Mr. Otis Oliva	M	Eastern	Large	≤ 40	≤ 10	≤ 10
Dr. Pam Pauliss	F	Eastern	Large	≤ 40	≤ 5	≤ 5
Dr. Quentin Quay	M	Eastern	Medium	≤ 20	≤ 20	≤ 30
Dr. Ray Rogers	M	Eastern	Medium	≤ 20	≤ 10	≤ 25
Mr. Steven Spahn	M	Eastern	Small	≤ 10	≤ 5	≤ 10
Mr. Tom Tingman	M	Eastern	Small	≤ 10	≤ 5	≤ 10

[a]Pseudonyms were used for all superintendents.

[b]All superintendents were from Washington State. The Cascade Mountains were the line of demarcation between Eastern Washington and Western Washington.

[c]WIAA classifications were used to classify the size of the school district.

[d]Total number of principals and assistant principals in the district.

[e]Number of years that the superintendent had served in the position of superintendent in their current district at the time of the interview.

[f]Total number of years that the superintendent had served as a superintendent in their career at the time of the interview.

The researcher purposely omitted detailed descriptions of the individual superintendents' background experience and the context for their school districts. The researcher promised to maintain the participants' anonymity. Detailed descriptions of individuals' experience, traits, and context might have provided identifying information. Due to the highly political nature of the superintendents' position and the candor of the participants' comments, the researcher chose to provide general information about the context of the school districts and the experience of the superintendents but not specific individual information that would have risked a breach of confidentiality.

Researcher's Role

The researcher's role was to collect data through interviews and document collection. The researcher transcribed the interviews to a verbatim transcript. The researcher identified themes and analyzed the data using various conceptual frameworks regarding leadership, change, and accountability in complex systems.

Validity

Creswell (2003) outlines techniques and principles to use to increase the validity or trustworthiness of qualitative research. These include, "member checking, rich descriptions, thought-provoking questions, accurate transcriptions, self-reflective on researcher bias, present discrepant information, peer debriefing, and external auditor" (p. 196). The researcher used all of the techniques listed to increase the validity of the study.

Even though an affirmative response to the member check letter was not requested by the researcher (see Appendix C), more than one superintendent contacted the researcher to affirm that the transcript of the interview was accurate. During these follow-up conversations, participants expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to reflect on the practice in which they were engaged.

One aspect that the qualitative researcher acknowledges is that the researcher is a person who is a part of the research. The questions that the researcher chooses to ask and the questions that one chooses not to ask are all subjective decisions. The researcher approached each interview with the intention to allow the interviews to take their own course; the researcher was open to discovery.

The "self as researcher" is acknowledged by the researcher. The researcher has undertaken a self-inventory of the different "subjective selves" that the researcher brings to the study. The researcher is a white, male who has ambitions to be a school superintendent in the future. The researcher works as an assistant superintendent in a school district in Washington State where the superintendent has mandated that principals must spend a portion of their day in the classroom. The researcher has worked collegially with superintendents across the state through the superintendents' professional organization, the Washington Association of School Administrators, and through the regional Educational Service District (ESD105). Through these organizations, the researcher has participated in numerous workshops that have focused on increasing the principal's presence in the classroom, including workshops that were led by Anthony Alvarado, former superintendent from District #2 in New

York and San Diego, as well as Richard Elmore from Harvard who has written extensively on instructional leadership. All of these factors may have influenced participants to say things to the researcher that they thought they should have said as a superintendent to a colleague. Analysis of transcripts indicated that the participants were thoughtful in their comments and did not withhold information. In more than one interview, information of a confidential nature was disclosed. This would indicate that the superintendents felt open to discussing their thoughts and sharing their ideas.

Ethics

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Washington State University. All participants were provided with the information contained on the informed consent form and the researcher preceded each interview with a discussion of the form (see Appendix D). Participants were required to provide their consent before they were interviewed. Participants were informed that they could choose to end their participation and withdraw from the study at any time.

Data collected by the researcher were confidential. Transcripts of the interviews and the data were stored on a password protected computer; hard copy information was stored in a secured personal office at the researcher's home. Participants' identification was protected; the researcher used pseudonyms when the data were presented in the dissertation. In compliance with the guidelines of the

Institutional Review Board, all data will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

Participants had the opportunity to benefit from the study. The interview process provided the superintendents with the opportunity to be reflective about their practice. Heifetz and Laurie (1997) explain that, often times, leaders are so consumed with the daily operations of the organization that they do not take the time to go "up on the balcony" to gain a better perspective of the happenings within the organization. Participants may have enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on their practice and share their perspectives. In addition, participants may have enjoyed the opportunity to speak in confidence with a researcher, who was perceived as a colleague, regarding the challenges that are faced by a superintendent.

One superintendent reported that he benefited from taking the time to reflect on what his administrative team had accomplished in his district. Dr. Edison said:

> It was great to visit about it, Peter. I really appreciate it. Because it just helped me to think about it and focus on it a little bit. You know, one of the things we do is, we get so busy, and so focused, and we just work, and work, and work, and we forget to kind of step back like we did here in this conversation, and go, "Wow, we've come a long way." And I think I want to be sure and celebrate that tomorrow with the administrative team—that we're doing some pretty cool stuff. I sometimes forget to tell them that.

Delimitations and Limitations

A delimitation to the study was the decision to interview only twelve superintendents. In addition, the study was delimited by the decision to select participants from a certain geographic region, namely Washington State. Perhaps more rich data could have been discovered if superintendents from other states or even other countries had been included in the study. Perhaps more rich data could have been discovered by including a larger number of participants.

Another delimitation to the study was the fact that there was no triangulation of data. Only one person from each district was interviewed. Perhaps the study could have been strengthened by including additional participants from the school districts, such as principals and teachers, to gain a better understanding of the perspectives of these individuals and to check the factual statements that were given by the superintendents who participated in the study. However, even with additional participants from the school district, responses might have been colored by social desirability. District personnel, especially school principals who are directly responsible to the superintendent, may be inclined to provide responses to questions that portray the district, themselves, and their supervisor in a positive light which would, in turn, effect the results of the study.

The main limitation of the study is that subjective considerations may have limited the superintendents from sharing their true perspectives with the researcher. To address this issue of the social desirability of responses, the researcher monitored the participants' non-verbal communications to assess whether the superintendents

were fully disclosing their perspectives. The researcher listened intently to the answers that were provided and the researcher worked to gain the confidence of the participants by providing the superintendents with verbal and non-verbal assurances that information would remain confidential. The researcher accurately reported the responses of the participants. The issue of social desirability of responses is a major consideration in qualitative research (Williams & Heikes, 1993). In general, the superintendents appeared to be quite forthcoming with the challenges they faced in their attempts to have principals increase visibility in the classroom. One example is a superintendent who said, "So, my principals probably aren't in the classroom an hour and half a day. Probably nowhere near that." A socially desirable response might have been to show the researcher that the superintendent had all the answers and everything was working just the way they wanted it to work. The superintendents who participated in this study did not portray this attitude. In general, they were forthcoming with their challenges and their need to model life-long learning. Superintendent Spahn exemplified this attitude when he said:

> You need to take people with, "Everybody's learning. And even the superintendent doesn't know everything. Especially the superintendent doesn't know everything! And we're going learn with you."

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Improve Quality of Instruction

Most of the superintendents indicated that their goal for having principals in the classroom each day was to improve the quality of instruction by the classroom teacher. Dr. Quay said, "If they spend their time focused on getting teachers to improve their practice, then that's how we're going to impact the student learning." Mr. Spahn said, "That's what it's all about. That's our goal." He then pointed to a district poster on the wall in his office and quoted the statement on the poster, "'Superior instruction in every classroom every day.'" He added, "That's the first thing I put up."

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of research studies and identified nine instructional strategies that had "a strong effect on student achievement" (p. 7). Through their review of educational research, the authors found that individual teacher practices have a great effect on student learning. They write, "…individual teachers can have a profound influence on student learning even in schools that are relatively ineffective" (p. 3).

Elmore (2004) also links student learning to quality instruction. He writes, "Clearly, getting more students to learn at higher levels has to entail some change in

both the way students are taught and in the proportion of teachers who are teaching in ways that cause students to master higher-level skills and knowledge" (p. 14).

The majority of superintendents in this study said that they mandated principals to be in the classroom so that the entire school system would be focused on the instructional core.

Dr. Dell said that the reason she required principals to be in classrooms each day was, specifically, to focus on instruction. She said, "The principal's not just saying, 'How's your family?' You know. 'How's the bulletin board?' But they're there to look at instruction…. That's what we're all about."

Elmore (2004) proposes that superintendents, when undertaking large scale improvement, must focus on improving instruction—what he calls the instructional core. He identifies "…a need to change the core of schooling in ways that result in most students receiving engaging instruction in challenging academic content" (p. 14). Establishing this goal was a key element for the superintendents who participated in the study. The mandate to principals was a way for the superintendents to keep the focus of the principals and teachers on the instructional core. Elmore ties this practice to instructional leadership. He writes, "The skills and knowledge that matter in leadership, under this definition, are those that can be connected to, or lead directly to, the improvement of instruction and student performance" (p. 58).

Dr. Quay explained his perspective regarding the importance of the instructional core. He said, "Since we've started this business, I've understood that

part of it, [student achievement], is attributable to instructional material, part of it is attributed to assessment and the way that you assess kids, but, then, the bread-and-butter is the instructional practice in the classroom."

The focus on the instructional core is related to the hedgehog concept discussed by Collins (2001) in the book *Good to Great*. Collins explains a Greek parable that contrasts the hedgehog and the fox. The fox has many different strategies; the hedgehog has one strategy. Collins proposes that to be great, an organization must focus on the one strategy that will produce the greatest results. The superintendents in this study believed that a focus on instruction was the one strategy that would produce the greatest improvement in student learning.

In the interview with Mr. Spahn, the researcher asked the superintendent about the statement that the superintendent had quoted from the poster. The researcher asked, "Has there been any resistance to 'Our goal is superior instruction in every classroom every day'?" The superintendent responded, "No. How could you argue with that? It's inarguable!" Mr. Spahn continued, "What are you going to say? 'No! We don't want to be good teachers!'?" By focusing on instructional improvement, the superintendent had created a goal for district staff—a goal that the superintendent felt was "inarguable." Mr. Spahn shared his perspective about the importance of high quality instruction in a school system with state assessments and federal accountability. He said:

> The external accountability has gotten us to the point where, "How can you change the system?" Well, the biggest leverage is the…what?...the interaction

> between teacher and student. The instructional practice in some classes is *so poor*! It's just unbelievable horrible! Ten years ago that wouldn't have mattered.

This superintendent viewed a focus on instruction as, what Lezotte (1997) would call, a "high yield strategy." Senge (1990) calls this the "principle of leverage." Senge writes, "The bottom line of systems thinking is leverage—seeing where actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements" (p. 114). Mr. Spahn's perspective was that a focus on instruction would have the greatest leverage to impact student learning.

The researcher had approached the study with the expectation that superintendents would view the practice of learning-walks as a high yield strategy. In fact, superintendents in the study explained that they viewed the improvement of the quality of instruction as the high yield strategy. The practice of learning-walks supported that overall strategy.

Dr. Benson explained that, in a short period of time, the practice of learning-walks changed the focus for her administrative team, helping them to focus on the overall strategy of instructional improvement in classrooms. Dr. Benson had just completed her first year as superintendent. It was her perspective that, even in a large district, she was able to make an immediate impact by requiring principals to be in the classroom on a daily basis. As a result of the learning-walks, the conversations among administrators began to change. She said that the foundation for each administrative meeting was the question, "What does good instruction look

like?" She said, "The conversation is much more around student learning, rather than adult issues. And that, I would say, I saw as early as February." It was her perspective that, within the first year of her tenure, she was able to change the focus of the administrative team from operational issues in the building to the quality of instruction in the classroom. She viewed the improvement of instruction as the strategy that would get more students to achieve higher levels of learning. The learning-walks were a practice that supported the overall strategy to improve teaching and learning.

Common Instructional Model

Without the use of a common instructional model, learning-walks cannot be effective. Dr. Edison explained, "This [a common instructional model] needed to come first, I thought, before we started the walk-throughs, because, how do you really know what you're looking for and wanting to do, if you haven't got the foundation for what we all agree is good instruction?" Superintendents described a variety of instructional models that had been adopted. A few superintendents in the study reported that they had not identified an instructional model for the district but that this was something that they planned to do in the future.

Variety of Instructional Models

Superintendents cited a variety of instructional models. Some districts used one model while other districts used multiple models to frame conversations about teaching and learning. Some districts used frameworks that had been developed by

educational researchers while others led a process in the district to have staff identify important elements of instruction that would be used as the district framework for instructional improvement.

Dr. Quay, a superintendent from Eastern Washington, emphasized that having an instructional model for the district provided a focus for the learning-walks. He explained, "We've tied it to our own pedagogy that we've kind of adopted, this *Art and Science of Teaching*." He pointed to the blue book on his desk, Simpson's (2005) *The Art and Science of Professional Teaching: A Developmental Model for Demonstrating Positive Impact on Student Learning.* Dr. Quay explained:

> So, I think we've tried to make it more useful and pertinent to what we believe is actually good teaching. And, so, it's not just this lower-level, "Is the teacher wandering around the room?", those kinds of things. And it's really focused on, "Can the student identify the learning target?", and, "Are they demonstrating that?", and so on.

With the use of Simpson's instructional framework, a pedagogical foundation had been established in the district. This is in line with Elmore's analysis of instructional leadership. Elmore (2003a) writes: "Successful leaders have an explicit theory of what good instructional practice looks like." Elmore continues:

> These leaders understand that improving school performance requires transforming a fundamentally weak instructional core, and the culture that surrounds it, into a strong, explicit body of knowledge about powerful

> teaching and learning that is accessible to those who are willing to learn it. (p. 9)

In the study, there were superintendents who shared their district's instructional frameworks with the researcher, while there were others who said they were in the processing of working with staff to identify a framework but they had not completed the process. The use of an instructional framework appeared to be a practice that supported a focus on instruction and assisted the principals as they implemented the learning-walk process.

Dr. Frye, a superintendent in Western Washington, reported that the administrators and teachers in her district use their instructional model to help guide their conversations about instruction. She said that the instructional model was based on the work of Marilyn Simpson who had assisted with the development of the resource that they used, a resource guide titled, *Washington State Professional Development IN ACTION: Linking Professional Development to Personalizing Student Learning* (Bergeson, 2006). The *IN ACTION* guide has the same teaching standards and rubrics that are found in Simpson's *The Art and Science of Professional Teaching* (Simpson, 2005) which Dr. Quay had cited as the instructional model that was used in his district. Dr. Frye said she was knowledgeable of the *IN ACTION* guide but she had not seen Simpson's companion text. It was interesting for the researcher to see two districts—one in Western Washington, one in Eastern Washington—using two different texts to arrive at the same content for their instructional model.

Dr. Frye explained that while there are 21 components to the instructional model, the focus in her district was Component #1. She explained, "So, Elements 1a, 1b, and 1c is where we started." She said that she had worked with the leadership of the teacher's union to put the elements from Component #1 into the evaluation criteria for teacher evaluation. Simpson (2005) describes Component #1 as:

> Students engage in challenging curriculum. There is evidence that all students: (1a) know the learning targets and what is required to meet them; (1b) know the progression of learning to reach the learning targets; (1c) know how to access additional support when needed to reach the targets. (p. 14)

Dr. Frye explained how the use of the instructional model in the district had led to a change in the teacher evaluation criteria.

Mr. Oliva, the superintendent of a large district in Eastern Washington, explained that the staff in his district used Baker's STAR protocol as the foundation for discussions about teaching and learning. The STAR protocol was developed as an observation protocol based on four elements of effective teaching/learning processes which are commonly referred to as the four R's, namely rigor, reflection, relevance, and relationships. The acronym used by Baker is: "S" for skills (rigor), "T" for thinking (reflection), "A" for application (relevance), and "R" for relationships. Baker (2006a, 2006b, 2006c) developed three versions of the protocol for school staff to frame conversations about teaching and learning. Mr. Oliva explained that the administrators and teachers in the district had engaged in professional development to discuss the aspects of the STAR protocol and answer questions, he said, such as,

"What does powerful teaching look like? What are the basic elements? What does rigor look like? How is the teacher addressing that?" Mr. Oliva explained that the principals used this framework as they visited classrooms.

Dr. Dell, a superintendent in Western Washington, said that the educators in her district also used the STAR protocol as their instructional model. She explained that the first year that they worked with the STAR protocol, they used all four elements of the protocol: rigor, reflection, relevance, and relationships. After a year of trying to focus on the four areas during the learning-walks, the administrative team decided to narrow their focus. She said:

> We thought, "This may be too much. Let's look at two." And we thought, "Let's start with the last, relationships, and see 'Are kids engaged when we go into classrooms?'" That's hard to argue with. You know. As a teacher, you don't want to say, "I don't care about that." Of course you do. [Laughs]. You know. The kids, "Are they engaged with you?", was one thing we all looked at. And then we looked, secondly, very simply, at, "Was it clear what the lesson plan was? Did you say it? Was it posted? If I went to kids and I said, 'What are you kids working on and why?', they could tell you." You know. I mean, there are ways to measure that. And, again, that's hard for teachers to say, "I don't care about that." If they're very simple things—just two things we look for. This year we are continuing that but kind of pushing up the ante.

Dr. Dell explained that it was important to narrow the focus so that teachers and administrators could learn the protocol and learn what the evidence of student

learning would be to demonstrate that students were being successful in the specific area of focus.

In a different district, the superintendent shared that numerous instructional models were being used, including the use of the STAR protocol at the high school. Dr. Edison explained that staff used a variety of instructional models in his district. All staff had been provided professional development about *Classroom Instruction that Works* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). In addition, the high school staff had investigated the STAR protocol and wanted to use it in their work to improve instructional practice at the high school. Dr. Edison explained that when the high school staff expressed interest in using the STAR protocol, he was excited that the staff was motivated to engage in the process and he did not want to dampen their enthusiasm. Rather than try to convince the high school staff to use the framework that the rest of the district was using as a foundation, he allowed the high school staff to use the STAR protocol as their foundation. He explained, "When we do our walk-throughs, we're using the various strategies of Marzano's book to look at focal points…and when we're doing our high school walk-throughs, we use the STAR protocol."

In addition to Marzano's work and the STAR protocol, administrators in Dr. Edison's district also used an observation protocol based on the work of Downey and Frase (1999) when they visited classrooms. The protocol had various "look-for's" for the principal to review.

As the interview progressed, Dr. Edison explained that prior to using Marzano's work, the STAR protocol, and the Downey and Frase protocol as their foundation for conversations about instruction in the district, he had led district staff through a process to change the teacher evaluation tool so that it was focused on effective instructional practices. He said that staff members in the district had investigated various instructional models. The instructional model, *Pathwise*, by Danielson (2001) was well-received by the staff. Danielson (2007) updated the information about this instructional framework in the book titled *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. Dr. Edison said that the Pathwise framework was adopted for use in the district and elements of the framework were used for the criteria for teacher evaluations.

It was Dr. Edison's perspective that choosing an instructional model was an important antecedent to work that would follow-up on the implementation of the instructional practices. That work included establishing school wide and district wide expectations for instructional practices and the systematic implementation of learning-walks to monitor the quality and fidelity of the implementation of the instructional practices. Before all of the structures and systems were put into place, Dr. Edison believed that the district needed to establish an instructional model that would serve as the foundation for dialogue about the instructional core. He explained:

> That's a huge piece of the puzzle. Huge. In fact, you don't have it together until you've got that going. You know. You've got to have something that's common ground for everybody. And that's why I was so adamant about

> getting a tool in place…. This had to happen first. And, then, that's why the walk-throughs were the natural follow-up to that. Now, we've got this [the Pathwise framework], let's learn how to use it, and let's learn how to see it, and know it when you see it in the classroom.

Dr. Edison shared that there were numerous instructional models that were used by staff in his district. He believed it was important to support the staff when they found a model that they embraced.

In a different district, Dr. Rogers found that the use of a variety of models had led to incoherence in his district. He explained that as a result of the work of the administrative staff which had searched for best practices in various content areas, he found that there were numerous protocols and instructional models that were being used as the foundation for learning-walks. Many of the protocols were content based, such as one type for observing a math lesson and another for observing a science lesson. While he was impressed with the work of his administrative team, Dr. Rogers said that he realized that there were simply too many protocols being used in the district. The administrators did not have the capacity to build expertise with any one protocol as a team because of the large number of protocols that were being used. He explained, "As this became a little bit more diffuse, we finally realized we had, like, seven content protocols." He explained that in order to build coherence with his administrative team, he was planning to have them focus solely on building their expertise with the math protocol in the coming year. He said, "Now we're going to

start math, again, and hold it tight, again. So we clearly know what the principal is looking for, they're documenting it well, etc."

In a different district, Dr. Benson was faced with a similar situation. In her large district, she saw that a wide variety of protocols were being used by principals in different schools across the district. She explained that she thought it was important for district staff to work with representatives from the teacher's union to create one protocol that could be offered to principals and teachers as a tool to support dialogue about student learning. However, she did not want to mandate its use. If a principal was using a protocol that was working for their school, she supported the continued use of the protocol. Nevertheless, she wanted to have administrative staff and teaching staff work together to develop a protocol that would be available for principals to use as they implemented learning-walks. She said that she had helped guide the process so that the leadership team that was working on developing the protocol would base their work on the principles of effective instruction of DuFour and others (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002, 2007).

She explained:

> The form is not finalized but the four basic questions in professional learning communities: What do we want students to know? How do we know when they've learned it? What happens when they don't learn it—what's the intervention? And, then, what do you do to celebrate that learning? [4] So, that

> form—that protocol form—is becoming [our district's], through our own professional learning community work.

Dr. Cline and Mr. Tingman were two superintendents who said that they did not have an agreed upon instructional model in their district but both superintendents said that they thought that this was an important process that needed to take place in the future. Dr. Cline said that, through the work that the administrators and teachers in his district had done to focus on the instructional core, he had "come to the realization that if we don't have a model—instructional model—then we're not going to develop the consistency and support for one another throughout the district the way we could and should." He explained simply, "We need to pick one."

Mr. Tingman explained that there was not a common instructional model in his district, either, but he believed that the administrators and teacher-leaders in his district were ready to come together to identify a model that would be used by everyone in the district to frame their discussions about teaching and learning. He thought that the staff had arrived at this point because of the principal learning-walks. He explained that after a year of implementing learning-walks, teachers and principals had commented that there was a need for a district adopted instructional model. He said:

> The plan at this point is they want to develop a process where they will all meet, along with about ten highly qualified teachers, [and] engage in the program of staff development around: "What is good teaching? What does it look like?"

This superintendent was developing a plan to engage stakeholders—both principals and teacher-leaders—in the process to identify an instructional model which would be the foundation for developing a shared vision for quality instruction.

Adopting an Instructional Model

Many superintendents in the study emphasized that they had included many stakeholders in the process of adopting an instructional model for the district. The primary stakeholders were administrative staff, teacher union representatives, and teacher-leaders. In some districts, superintendents used experts from outside of the district to assist the district staff in developing the district's instructional model.

Dr. Pauliss was the superintendent of a large school district in Eastern Washington. Of the superintendents who were interviewed, the practice of learning-walks had been implemented the longest amount of time in her district. Staff had developed an instructional model which focused on four main elements of effective teaching/learning processes: purpose, engagement, rigor, and results. A grant from the Gates Foundation enabled the district to send a leadership team to a two week institute at Harvard during the summer of 2001. The leadership team included district office administrators, principals, teachers, and the president of the teacher's union. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) emphasize the importance of involving stakeholders to lead the school improvement process, "to increase ownership of the vision and focus" (p. 30). Dr. Pauliss explained the process that occurred at the Harvard summer institute:

> We were really impressed with what we were reading and hearing about what Tony Alvarado and Elaine Fink were doing in District 2 when they were in New York City…so we were kind of intrigued by that because we had read quite a bit of Dick Elmore's work. Elmore is a Washington boy from Wenatchee and now he's back at Harvard. He just has a real, clear, understandable sense. And so we were reading a lot about that.

Dr. Pauliss explained that the leadership team of stakeholders had the following dialogue:

> OK. If they can do that in District 2 in New York City, why can't we do something like that in [our district]? What keeps us from doing a similar thing? Because they're getting very dramatically different results. So, we can't just tinker anymore with the deck chairs in [our district] and hope we're going to get different performance results. We've got to do some real conscious things. Instead of saying, "Everybody work harder and more hours each day." Because we've pretty much maxed that out.

She said that the team that went to Harvard decided, "OK. We're going to take the giant leap to do something very consciously different than the way the system had been operating." The team worked directly with Elmore during the institute. She said they decided, "OK. We're going to go for it." She explained:

> We thought we've got to own it and we've got to build it, here, within the [district] climate. Otherwise it's just another professional development [where] you go to a conference and you sporadically do things a little

> differently. So, it was real, conscious: "Here's how we're going to touch all parts of this system."

She explained that an important part of the improvement process was to identify an instructional model that district staff could use to frame discussions about teaching and learning. She said it was important to have continuity so that the team learning could continue to go deeper into the understanding of the factors that the leadership had identified as the high-yield strategies for improved student learning. She explained, "The key for us, very honestly, is not deviating from that focus in five years of instructional leadership, and anchoring around that common vocabulary of purpose, engagement, rigor, and results." She explained that the instructional model was used in all aspects of discussions about student learning. It was used in reflective conversations with teachers and administrators to debrief learning-walks. But it was also used in conversations about the selection of instructional materials and planning interventions for struggling learners. She explained:

> It's just really working on that focus and then having the discussions, then, with teachers. I can have them with teachers in my building, with my site council, with my department chairs—whatever they're called in each of the buildings—about the rigor of the math instruction. How do we get kids more engaged in math learning? How do we define our purposes more clearly so our kids understand where we're headed with the math? What are the results I'm getting?

Dr. Pauliss explained, "That's probably, looking back over the last five years, what I've learned the most. You have to focus on what it is you want it to be. Otherwise, you just kind of become everything to everybody." As a result of the work of the leadership team that attended the Harvard institute, staff had identified four essential elements of effective instruction—purpose, engagement, rigor, and results—and they used this instructional model to build coherence across the district.

Some superintendents shared that they had adopted an instructional model from the work of a researcher. Others shared a process where staff had developed the district's instructional model based on the work of multiple researchers. Many superintendents reported that they involved various stakeholders to assist with the adoption of the district's instructional model. Some superintendents reported that this was a process that they planned to do in the future. All of the superintendents in this study reported that a common instructional model was needed. The common instructional model would be used to frame conversations about teaching and learning and provide a foundation for instructional improvement efforts.

Learning-walk Models

Results from the study revealed that learning-walks had multiple purposes and there were different models for different purposes.

Principal Learning-walks

Superintendents shared their expectations for the principal's participation in learning-walks. Many superintendents made a distinction between classroom visits

where the purpose was teacher evaluation and the classroom visits that they called learning-walks.

Dr. Quay said that he expected principals to participate in learning-walks for one hour a day. He explained that he expected principals to spend at least 15 minutes in a classroom during the learning-walk. He said, "I'm very much more satisfied with what we're doing than some of the other models that I've seen." He explained:

> The others are literally drop-ins. In other words, the idea is that the principal can drop-in for five minutes and ascertain, make some determination, about the quality of instruction and, I've just, I've struggled with that in terms of, "How is that possible?" Certainly the principal can get into more classrooms. But in terms of really going deep and effecting instruction, I don't know how they can do that in five minutes.

Dr. Quay explained that administrators in the district had worked together in a collaborative process to develop a form that was used during the learning-walk to record their observations. The form had indicators with check boxes and space for prose. In addition, there was an area for general comments. Dr. Quay said that after the principal learning-walk, the principal would provide the teacher with a copy of the completed form and send a copy to the superintendent's office.

As the interview progressed, it was interesting to note that Dr. Quay was flexible with the amount of time that he actually expected principals to spend in the classroom. He said that he had told the principals that if they were conferencing with teachers about teaching and learning, the principals could "count" that time as

learning-walk time. During the interview, it was apparent that Dr. Quay was in the process of reflecting on the way that learning-walks were implemented in his district and he was considering revising his expectation. He said, "One of the things I've wrestled with…is whether to increase the rigor." The superintendent continued, "I see a lot of grade level meetings and things that are more procedural in nature, not necessarily real focused on instruction." He concluded, "I'm to the point where I'm going to insist that the hour be in the classroom and not with all these other meetings going on."

A different superintendent, Mr. Oliva, said that he expected principals to be in the classroom at least three hours each day. This district used the STAR protocol which Mr. Oliva said he liked because it provided a narrow focus for the learning-walk. Unlike the formal observation process that had many criteria for evaluation, the STAR protocol had four elements that principals could use to analyze the teaching/learning process. Mr. Oliva explained:

> What I ask the principals to do is go in looking for one particular item that day. You know what I'm saying? And look at that. So you don't have to come back out and critique a whole bunch of things. If you're going in there looking for rigor, go in there and look for two or three examples of rigor.

By using the STAR protocol, principals were able to narrow the focus for the principal learning-walks.

In Dr. Dell's district, principals also used the STAR protocol for the principal learning-walks. Dr. Dell explained that the emphasis of the STAR protocol was to

analyze student learning as opposed to a focus on teacher deficiencies. She explained, "I think that's kind of brilliant. Because it's not looking at you, as a teacher; it's looking at them, as the students." By focusing on student learning, she thought the teachers were not as defensive as they would have been if the focus of the learning-walks was on the actions of the teacher in the classroom. Dr. Dell said that in her district, the purpose of the learning-walk process was to provide teachers with data—evidence of student learning—that the teachers could use to reflect on their instructional practice.

Another superintendent, Dr. Rogers, said that he expected principals to be in classrooms two hours a day. However, much like Dr. Quay reported, Dr. Rogers said if a principal said they were engaged in a conversation with a teacher about their instructional practice, he allowed the principal to "count" the time as principal learning-walk time. Interestingly, much like Dr. Quay, Dr. Rogers said that he was reconsidering his guidelines. He said, "I'm going to tighten it up a little bit for next year. We've got a little bit away from all the two hours are spent in walk-throughs."

Superintendents differed in the amount of time that they thought that principals should spend in each classroom when participating in the principal learning-walks. Dr. Quay had expressed doubt about the effectiveness of a five minute visit to a teacher's classroom but Mr. Spahn provided multiple examples of how a five minute learning-walk had been used effectively in his district. He explained that at an elementary school in his district, the staff had established common expectations for the physical arrangement of classrooms. A five minute

learning-walk had been used to assess whether all staff had followed-through with the expectations that had been established. He explained:

> What are some expectations that we would expect would be in every room if we were teaching *Investigations* well?" You know. "Would all the manipulatives be out and available for kids to see in every room? Would you have a certain set of student made posters or information about *Investigations* in every, single classroom?" And then from there, they said, "Oh, yeah, this could be our common expectations." And then implement it. *Then*, five minutes in every room, you'd be able to see.

Mr. Spahn gave additional examples of how a short principal learning-walk could be effective. He said:

> So, when you want to get a vision of strengths or trends, of things you've been working on, purpose on the board, whatever it is, you could do it in five minutes. So, it all depends…on what you're looking for. Five minutes, ten minutes, thirty minutes.

Mr. Spahn emphasized that the principal learning-walks were one part of the system for instructional improvement. He was flexible with the requirement to spend time in classrooms each day. He said, "I don't care if you're actually sitting in a teacher's classroom observing, but if you're meeting with a teacher, meeting with a group of teachers about what you saw, that counts, too." He believed that principal learning-walks would be ineffective unless they were coupled with other support structures. Mr. Spain explained:

> Unless it's coupled with the work that's going on with staff developers and coaches and a whole cycle of work—planning professional development—it's a waste of time. So, my principals probably aren't in an hour and a half a day, probably nowhere near that. But they are working with people like this and then working with certain teachers they need to work with.

He continued, "I bet you the kinds of conversations that they're having with the staff developers, coaches, and other teachers, is *more* than an hour and a half a day. But are they in classrooms observing? No. Because there's a purpose for that."

In a different district, the superintendent had an expectation for both the amount of time that principals should be in the classroom each day and the minimum number of classrooms that they should visit each day. Dr. Cline said he expected principals to visit at least three classrooms every day and he expected the principal's learning-walk in each classroom to be at least ten minutes long. He said:

> I think it's an artificial standard that we've set in order to drive ourselves into classrooms so that we're more in tune with what's happening. We're able to talk about it. We keep our skills fresh. We're able to help one another grow. It's one piece. I would never suggest that walk-throughs are "The Thing" that makes a difference for student achievement. I think it's multiple things, resting on a trust base, a knowledge base, a belief base, which we continue to work on.

Some superintendents said that they did not have a specific amount of time that they expected principals to be in classrooms each day. Dr. Edison said that his

expectation was simply that principals would participate in learning-walks on a daily basis. Dr. Edison explained the process that he expected principals to follow when they were participating in their principal learning-walks. He said:

> The model is that when you finish a walk-through—the idea is that you don't interrupt the teacher because you'd be interrupting a lot of classes all the time. So, walk-throughs are supposed to be…transparent. Walk in, the teacher doesn't acknowledge you, the kids are so used to you coming and going, you don't interrupt what's going on.

Additionally, Dr. Edison expected that the principal and the teacher would debrief sometime after the principal's learning-walk. He said:

> And that's the intent of the walk-through. So, it's just visiting. It's encouraging conversation. You know. Asking these reflective questions and asking the teacher to reflect. If the principal is seeing things they want to follow-up on, they sure can. And, you know, they can make it a point to stop in the teacher's classroom after school, and say, "Hey, thanks. I enjoyed your class today. I was wondering about this." You know. That kind of thing. But it's all done in the spirit of learning together.

Dr. Edison explained that the principals had received professional development from the same consultant over time to learn how to use the learning-walk protocol developed by Downey and Frase (1999). He pointed to the protocol and explained, "This is the structure of the walk-through. This is what [our consultant] has worked

with us on." He described the entire process that was expected during the principal learning-walks:

> When you walk in the classroom, the first thing you do is you look to see who is on task. And, so, that's a quick first look. It's just a quick mental note of who is on task at that time. Then, the second thing you do is we look at the curriculum decisions. And for me, at the District Office, I'm not as knowledgeable and that's why the walk-throughs are so helpful. For me to be more aware. But this is an expectation of the principals because they should know that Mrs. Smith is doing History, and that this is tied to this EALR [Essential Academic Learning Requirement] or what have you.

He continued his explanation of the protocol that was used by the principals:

> And the third thing is instructional decisions. And, again, the principals are more aware than I would be. But you try to see what they are doing. Is it a test? Is it a lecture? Is it worksheets? You know. What's going on in the classroom? And why? Why are we making that particular instructional decision at that time?

He continued with his explanation of the final two components of the district's protocol:

> And, then, the next thing, if you have time, is called, "Walking the Walls." That means you look around and just see what's going on. And what you hope for is that the teachers are displaying the students' current work. And perhaps what you see on the walls is related to what's going on in the

classroom. And, then, the last part is safety decisions. Just, you know, is there an extension cord running across the floor? So you just check that out.

Dr. Edison expected principals to use the protocol during the principal learning-walks. While he did not have a specific expectation for the amount of time that the principals were to participate in learning-walks each day, he did have an expectation for the process, and he expected principals to be in classrooms every day using the protocol.

A superintendent from a different district, Dr. Pauliss, explained that she expected principals to be in classrooms either two hours a day or ten hours a week. She said it was called the "Two-Ten" in her district. Principals were required to submit documentation of the Two-Ten to their supervisor—a report with narrative. In addition, principals were required to share their reports with their principal colleagues in weekly debriefing meetings.

Dr. Pauliss explained that, over time, district practice had evolved to the point where it was recommended that principals should spend at least 40 minutes in each classroom during the principal learning-walks. She said, "Our bias is you don't *see* if you just do a five [or] ten minute walk-through kind of thing. You've got to see several facets of the lesson." She explained that the district practice had started with a suggestion of a 15 minute observation but, over the five years that the district had been implementing learning-walks, the expectation had evolved to a recommendation of at least 40 minutes for each classroom visit.

Dr. Pauliss said that it was her expectation that principals would follow-up every learning-walk with a debriefing session with the teacher. She said the administrative team had agreed to the following: "We have a discussion with the teacher after every single lesson and that's part of their instructional time. That you don't just walk through a classroom and never have a follow-up discussion with a teacher." She emphasized, "The key to improving instruction is having the discussion about it."

Dr. Benson did not want to mandate the use of a specific protocol if she and the principal felt that the principal's current practice was working effectively. She explained that administrative staff and teaching staff were working to develop a learning-walk protocol that would be offered to principals as a tool that they could use during the principal learning-walks. She explained that many principals in her district were already implementing a learning-walk process that was working for them. She explained that there was one principal in the district who used a very simple protocol but, according to Dr. Benson, it was very effective. She explained, "She has a pre-printed little card. It's almost like an index card." She continued:

> It's like a notepad and she just tears it off. And, so, it's the date, the time, the teacher, and it says, "It was really neat to see…", and then she fills in three words or sentences. It's a very simple protocol that simply praises something—targets something that's positive instructionally. And then she has a blank line, for, "Let's talk about…" You know. Some kind of question.

Dr. Benson explained that she wanted to provide the principals the flexibility to continue with a practice if both she and the principal felt the practice was working effectively. She said:

> You want to reinforce what's happening that's right, instructionally, and for somebody to notice that, it's pretty important to a professional. It's important to me as a superintendent. For somebody to notice that I have done something that really impacts somebody's thinking—I'd love to find out. You know, people don't think that superintendents need to hear that. But anybody needs to hear that kind of thing. And so the more we can do as leaders to provide that to our teachers, the better. But it can't be cumbersome. And it can't be fake. It was to be real. So that's why I don't think we'll get real strict with a protocol.

Dr. Benson was more concerned with the effectiveness of the principal's practice than the implementation of a district mandate.

While the superintendents in this study had a variety of expectations for the principal learning-walks, all of the superintendents expected principals to be in classrooms on a daily basis.

Superintendent-principal Learning-walks

While the focus of this study was superintendent perspectives on their expectation for principals to participate in daily learning-walks, it was discovered through the qualitative nature of the study that superintendents had implemented

additional models of learning-walks. Nearly every superintendent mentioned the practice where the superintendent and the building principal would participate, together, in learning-walks at the principal's school.

Dr. Edison explained a typical follow-up to a superintendent-principal learning-walk. He said:

> When we walk out of the classroom, into the hall, the principal and I will talk about what we saw in the classroom. And then we'll review these questions [on the protocol] and try to guess what the teachers might tell us about these students. And, then, through that dialogue with the principal, that gives him or her some ideas. Or gets their thoughts a little clear when they go back to visit with that teacher about what they saw.

Even in large districts, superintendents, such as Dr. Andrews and Dr. Benson in Western Washington and Dr. Pauliss in Eastern Washington, mentioned that they participated in learning-walks with individual principals on a weekly basis. Dr. Pauliss explained a system in her district where each principal was matched with an administrator from the district office. Each district office administrator would visit a school each week to participate in a learning-walk with their principal at the principal's school.

Dr. Frye explained that when she and a principal would visit a classroom together, they would focus on the first component of the district's instructional model: students know the learning target. Dr. Frye would model how to question students to identify whether they knew the learning target. It is interesting to note that the

questioning strategies that she modeled were, in themselves, an effective way to engage students in metacognition, an activity which was identified by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999) as an effective learning strategy. She said:

> I'm going to quietly go in and randomly select three students. I'm going to say, "What is the learning target you're doing?" Just quietly. "What is your learning target today?" And then, what the student tells me, I write it down. "And why is this learning important for you? And how are you demonstrating your learning?"

Dr. Frye explained that she wanted the principals to view the learning-walk as a way to collect data on the system-wide implementation of the district's instructional model. During the superintendent-principal learning-walks, she modeled for the principals how to collect that data and she encouraged principals to develop ways to share the data with teachers.

Administrative Team Learning-walks

Nearly all of the superintendents described a model of learning-walks where a team of administrators would come together and participate in learning-walks at a school in the district.

Dr. Quay explained that, in his district, each month a different principal would host all of the principals and district office administrators. The administrative team would break into small groups, observe classrooms, and debrief. Dr. Pauliss and Dr. Andrews explained a similar model in their districts. In addition, Dr. Pauliss

described a virtual learning-walk process. She explained that principals and other administrators regularly observed video-taped lessons of teachers and classrooms. She explained that when they first began to observe video-taped lessons, there was only one camera in the classroom. As the team developed their understanding of effective teaching/learning processes, the administrators requested that a second camera be placed in the classroom to focus on students. The results were shown on a split screen so the administrators could see the teacher's actions and the students' responses.

Teacher Learning-walks

Superintendents who had been implementing learning-walks the longest explained that, eventually, teachers joined the administrators in visits to classrooms. Both Dr. Pauliss and Dr. Cline explained that teachers began to participate in learning-walks after the administrators had been implementing learning-walks for three years. Dr. Pauliss explained that the practice in her district had evolved to the point that every teacher participated in teacher learning-walks as a part of their Professional Learning Community (PLC). Teachers, in their PLC teams, analyzed student performance data and observed each other's instructional practices to learn how to improve student learning.

Intended Outcomes

Intended outcomes of the learning-walks ranged from a superintendent's desire for principals to gain a greater sense of what was happening in classrooms on a

daily basis to a superintendent's desire for the principals in the district to lead a change in the culture of the school and the district—a change from a culture of isolation and the maintenance of status quo to a culture of collaboration and leadership for continuous improvement.

Monitor Instruction

One purpose of the principal learning-walks was for the principal to know more clearly the quality of instruction that was occurring in classrooms. In this sense, the purpose of the learning-walk was to provide principals with a clear and accurate picture of what was actually happening in the classrooms in their school. Dr. Edison emphasized that it was important for principals to know what the current reality was in their school. He pointed out that it was his perspective that prior to the implementation of learning-walks, there were principals in his district who were not aware that certain teachers in their school were having problems in the classroom. Dr. Edison explained:

> If there's a problem with a teacher, you [the principal] should be one of the first to know about it. And if you're in the classrooms all the time, chances are you would. Now it's always possible that, you know, you walk in, and the teacher looks great and you leave. But, by and large, you're going to get a sense day in and day out of how your teachers are doing. But if you're only in the classrooms twice a year, you're not. And so, by being in the classrooms as regularly as we are now in the district, we're not going to see the kinds of

> things that were cropping up. We're going to get at them sooner and address them sooner.

In a different interview, Mr. Olivia, expressed a similar perspective when he said, "The only way we can really ascertain whether the instruction that we're putting in place is taking place with fidelity, as it's required, is by being in the classroom."

Understand Challenges Faced by Teachers

While some superintendents explained the purpose of the learning-walks in great detail and they shared protocols that were used for the daily observations, there were other superintendents who viewed the practice in a more generic sense. In this approach, the learning-walks were more aligned with a management practice explained by Peters and Waterman (1982) in their book, *In Search of Excellence*. Peters and Waterman explained that Hewlett and Packard had a practice called MBWA which has been explained as "Management By Walking Around" or "Management By Wandering Around." The purpose of MBWA is for upper management to have a sense of what the work experience is like for all individuals in the organization.

In this study of superintendent perspectives on learning-walks, Dr. Benson's explanation for the purpose of learning-walks in her district most closely matched the MBWA practice. She explained that by being in the classrooms, principals would know what was happening and they would be able to do a better job of knowing what the needs were for the teachers and students. She provided an analogy

of her own practice as superintendent where she rode on the school bus to understand the experience of the bus drivers. She said:

> The very first day of school I showed up at the bus garage with coffee and doughnuts at 5 a.m. for the bus drivers to thank them for what they do and wish them a good year. I've ridden the bus in the morning and in the afternoons on different bus runs and, at each stop, go back and talk with the kids and talk with the drivers. But my goal was to make sure that I understood some of the challenges they face on a regular basis in order to support them. If principals don't understand what teachers are facing in their classroom—and you can really only do it by living it—they're not going to be able to support them at the level that will be effective for student achievement.

She continued with her explanation, making the distinction between this awareness by the principal and the teacher evaluation process.

> Really the purpose is not to evaluate what they're doing, but to understand their work. And so transferring that to teachers and classrooms…it is to understand what they're facing so collectively we can contribute to solutions. There's different people who might have different ideas that no one has thought of before. It really is an important part of understanding what we're facing. And if my staff at the district office aren't part of that as well, you lose touch pretty quickly. We have 79 languages in [our district]. So, we can't be having conversations about bilingual education. That's not gonna happen. We have 79 languages. And, so, what impact does that have on a teacher with

> 30 kids and there's seven languages among those 30 kids? How are you going to address the English language learning issues? My staff better understand that that's what the teachers are facing.

This view of the purpose of learning-walks is similar to the view expressed by Baker, Gratama, and Peterson (2007) who write, "Teachers need to know that administrators understand the conditions and challenges of the work teachers are doing" (p. 50).

System Check

Many superintendents made a distinction between evaluation observations and learning-walks. Dr. Frye explained this as a distinction between focusing on the instructional practice of an individual teacher, which she called evaluation, and focusing on the instructional practice of all the teachers in the school and the district, which she called a system check. Dr. Frye explained:

> When I expect my principals to go into classrooms, I expect them to go for two, distinct, different purposes. One purpose is to conduct evaluations…So, I'm doing drop-ins, in addition to the requirements of two, thirty minute observations followed by a post conference. So, that element of going into classrooms is strictly related to evaluation. Now I have another expectation for my principals, and that is that they go through their classrooms to conduct a system check on how well the entire system is beginning to adapt to the goals that we have set for our school. So, the goal that we have set this year is…we're asking the teachers to really focus on structuring the learning for

> understanding. The students have to know the learning target. They know the progression of learning to reach that target. And how to access additional resources. So, those are the three things that all the schools are working on. All the teachers are working on. So, how could I know how well the whole system is doing? If I'm in a big school I may never see the whole picture. So, the principal, the associate principal, themselves, are required to do a system check. That's when we do learning-walks.

Dr. Frye expected principals to be in classrooms for individual teacher evaluation purposes for more than the minimum amount of time required by law. But she also expected principals to visit classrooms to accomplish what she called a system check to assess whether teachers were following-through with the expectation for effective instructional practice. Dr. Frye shared her perception of the results:

> We are beginning to see now that the more time that principals spend in the classrooms, the more they can expect. Last year, we saw that the more they went in, the more that they saw that the kids were knowing the learning targets. And sometimes…the principal would go in and the *kid* would say [to the teacher], "You know what? I think you forgot to tell us the learning target." 'Cause they knew! You know! Yeah, yeah. So then the teachers started putting the learning targets up on the board so it was clearly posted. So, a big shift in the whole system towards, "Do kids know what's the object of this lesson today?" I do think it helps having that system-wide focus and having everybody on the same page and the same language.

In a study of instructional leadership, McBride (2001) noted that through classroom visits, a school administrator could "assess if the staff development programs, the curriculum alignment programs, the assessment programs and the academic goals of the district are first and foremost on the individual teacher's agenda" (p. 129). In the interview with Dr. Frye, she made it clear that she viewed the teacher evaluation and the system check as two distinct purposes for classroom visits. While both were related to the goal of improved instruction, it was apparent that she believed the system check had been lacking in the past. She believed that if principals visited classrooms on a daily basis, they would have a greater opportunity to positively impact the instructional core because they would have a greater sense of the overall quality of the instructional practice in the school.

In a different district, the superintendent explained that one of the purposes of administrative team learning-walks was to conduct a system check. Dr. Andrews called these "Big Walks". He explained:

> We do Big Walks at the end of the [calendar] year…to find out community practice. Is the whole herd moving roughly west? So, is there evidence of our professional development and are we actually doing the work? Trying it on and taking it on?…and it's pretty apparent when we go in who's been doing it regularly in their routines with the kids, and, then, who hasn't been doing it and they just did it, today, for the first time. You know, they asked the kids to "turn and talk" and the kids don't know who their partner is. They don't know. And even that's fine. Because for some people they push the coach.

> You know? "They're going to be here on Thursday. It's Tuesday. Can you come help me?" You know. So, for the first time, they've asked for help and it moves the work ahead a little bit.

In this district, the administrative team learning-walks were focused on the instructional practice of teachers. These learning-walks provided administrators with information about follow-through on the professional development that had been provided to teachers.

A contrasting practice approach was discovered in an interview with a different superintendent. Dr. Cline explained his perspective that principal learning-walks were used to conduct the system check in his district while administrative team learning-walks were for team learning.

Dr. Cline expected principals, in their individual principal learning-walks, to assess the teacher follow-through with professional development and curriculum pacing. He explained that in his district, it was a practice to ask students about their learning during the learning-walk. The system check was done by checking on the learning targets and checking on the curriculum pacing. He said:

> It provides us an opportunity to know the extent to which the learning targets are clear and the students know they're clear. And whether they're aligned with the standards that we're working on. Anywhere you go in the school, you ought to be able to compare what they're doing with the instructional calendar for the school year that the grade level team has developed.

Dr. Cline explained that teams of teachers had developed pacing calendars and common assessments. Through the principal learning-walks, principals checked the teachers' adherence to these district expectations. He explained:

> If you're all teaching different things in the Algebra class, and you're all using different assessments, how can you possibly compare what's working well with kids and replicate it? How can you learn from that? You can't. Which is why we're getting rid of all that variation because you can't have that variation and get kids to common targets. It's just not—it won't happen. That's like trying to build widgets on eleven different assembly lines that have different machines going. You're not going to get the same level of performance from kids. I mean I hate comparing what we do to assembly lines but the reality is that if we're going to get kids to consistent progress, and you discover that there are more successful ways of doing it, then we aren't very good practitioners if we aren't implementing those practices that can be demonstrated to have a better effect. In fact, in medicine, we call that malpractice.

In a different interview, Dr. Edison expressed a similar expectation for the principal learning-walks. He said in his district there was an expectation for common instructional practice and curriculum pacing. The role of the principal was to conduct a system check in daily learning-walks. He explained:

> That's the reason the walk-throughs are so important because now we can go in and say, "OK. This is a math class. We know *what* is supposed to be going

> and we've got our schedule now. So we know *when* it's supposed to be going on. So, if you're not doing it, you know, I'm sure you've got a good reason why you're not. You know, tell us about that. Because we're all on the same page now."

Team Learning and Shared Vision

All of the superintendents in the study expected principals to participate in learning-walks on a daily basis. Most superintendents in the study had implemented additional learning-walk practices, including superintendent-principal learning-walks and administrative team learning-walks. Some of the purposes for these joint learning-walks were to provide the opportunity for team learning and the development of a shared vision. The shared vision was a vision for high quality instruction and a vision for effective instructional leadership practices. Many superintendents emphasized that it was important to model a commitment to life-long learning. Mr. Spahn said, "You've got to learn to do what you expect them to do!" Senge et al. (2000) write, "At its core, team learning is a discipline of practices designed, over time, to get the people of a team thinking and acting together" (p. 73). By requiring principals, district office administrators, and other school leaders, including the superintendent, to participate in the administrative team learning-walks, the superintendents hoped that the administrators and other staff would create a shared vision of what quality instruction looks like. Senge et al. (2000) write, "In building shared vision, a group of people build a sense of commitment together" (p. 72). Mr.

Spahn explained that although the task was challenging, he continued to emphasize that everyone in the school district needed to work together to improve the quality of instruction that was taking place each day in every classroom. Mr. Spahn said, "You've got to go in with the point of view that, 'We're all in it together.'" He continued, "And I say it all the time, 'We are where we are. We just have to move up from here.'"

Often, superintendents made a sharp distinction between principal observation of classrooms for the purpose of evaluation and the various practices of learning-walks as implemented in the district. Dr. Pauliss explained:

> We consciously decided we would talk about, "This issue is: our instructional leadership, building capacity in our classrooms, and, it's about everybody's learning." So, we call them learning-walks to keep it not visually or verbally associated with evaluations.

She continued:

> We know kids' performance and achievement happens because of quality, quality instruction. And so, this is about each and all of our learning, about what does it take from each one of our roles to support your instruction, to have the discussions about instruction that cause every one of us to become better at our craft.

Dr. Pauliss emphasized that it was important to create a shared vision of quality instruction and the role of the principal. She explained:

> We've pretty much been in education—all of us—we've been managers and we've done this stuff. We've made sure we've had the right schedules, and the buses come and go, and the discipline, and all of that. But our real focus, starting with the '02 school year—'02-'03—was that we still have to manage the operations of our buildings, but our real role, and our primary role, is to be the Instructional Leader. And everyone one of us went through Master's and Doctoral Programs that talked about it philosophically and conceptually. So, "What does it look like?" was kind of our questions to them [the principals and other administrators] at the Leadership Team retreat. "What does Instructional Leadership look like? What does quality instruction look like?" So, that's the journey we embarked on. Instruction has got to be tangible to us. It's not just the curriculum you use. Because you can really do a poor job with the "best practice" materials. So, the curriculum supports the instructional practice. So, "What does skilled instructional practice look like?" And that was our over-arching purpose, if you will, "What does quality instruction look like?"

Dr. Pauliss said that the practice of administrative team learning-walks helped the administrators to develop a shared vision of what quality instruction looked like. She was concerned that teachers would misunderstand the purpose of the learning-walks. She wanted to keep the team learning separate from the teacher evaluation process. A different superintendent, Dr. Cline, had the same concern. He said:

> We worked very hard to leave evaluation on the sideline, in terms of the work that we were doing with teachers and professional development with walk-throughs. I didn't and don't want walk-throughs and the team learning activities connected with evaluations.

Dr. Pauliss gave a specific example of the team learning that had occurred as a result of the administrative team learning-walks. She said during administrative team learning-walks, the administrators had focused on one aspect of the district's instructional model. She said the administrators asked, "What does purpose look like?" They went with a partner to classrooms and focused on observing that aspect of the district's instructional model. By keeping the focus on one aspect of the instructional model, the administrators could dialogue about what they had observed and they could deepen their understanding of that one aspect of teaching and learning.

While the purpose of the administrative team learning-walks in her district was team learning, Dr. Pauliss believed it was still important for teachers to receive feedback from the administrators who participated in the administrative team learning-walks. She said:

> Every single teacher gets a handwritten comment about what we saw, what we learned about purpose, engagement, rigor, and results in that classroom. So, from a teacher's perspective, I get some acknowledgement of my work but I get it in a conscious way about my instruction. I just don't get the, "Thanks for letting me come into your classroom," or, "Great lesson." I get some

> feedback about my instruction. So, again, you've got the common thread throughout the district.

Dr. Edison shared his perspective that the administrative team learning-walks had a positive impact on the principals' skills. Principals had developed a common vision for effective instructional practice and were able to communicate this vision with teachers. Dr. Edison said, "The quality of teacher evaluations has improved. The actual documents that the principals are using; the way they're writing about teachers; I think they're giving valuable feedback to teachers."

Dr. Cline shared his observation that since the administrative team had begun to participate in learning-walks, the focus of the administrative team had changed. He said, "It's helping us have conversations that we couldn't have if we weren't doing them." Dr. Pauliss expressed a similar perspective. She said that the implementation of learning-walks had led to a shared vision in her district. She said:

> We have a common language around instruction that we didn't have in '01, or 2000, or that last century! [In the past] we just talked about instruction. Now, we talk about the purpose, the engagement, the rigor, and the results of instruction.

Dr. Andrews explained that administrative team learning-walks, which he called "District Walks", were used for team learning. The principal of the host school would prepare the visiting administrative team with information about what the focus for their school was for the school year. Administrators would visit classrooms with the purpose of looking for examples of the instructional focus and preparing to

debrief about their observations. Dr. Andrews explained that in a recent administrative team learning-walk, the principal had prepared the administrators to focus on "Accountable Talk." He explained:

> A lot of the buildings have picked, for this year, Accountable Talk. We want to see…student-to-student conversation, ideas worth sharing, staying on text, on message, building on each others' ideas—some of that kind of stuff. So, we would do that [prepare for the learning-walk] and then we would go visit two or three classrooms. We would come back and we'd talk about it. We'd go visit two or three classrooms. We'd come back and talk about it. And then at the end of the day, we would [say]…"So, what do we know about Accountable Talk after watching five or six of our best teachers?"

Dr. Andrews made a distinction between the administrative team learning-walks that were a system check and the administrative team learning-walks that were focused on developing team learning and shared vision. He said, "District Walks…they help us calibrate what we see in the classrooms so that we're learning, kind of, a common language. And we see the same good things, the same bad things, in the classroom."

Dr. Andrews referred to constructivist learning theory and said that the importance of the common experience for the administrators during the administrative team learning-walks and during the debrief session was to "reify" knowledge so that all of the participants had a common understanding. He explained:

> So, from the Vygotsky's standpoint, I remember. I mean, I've never read Vygotsky and anything I've learned about him is through osmosis, but, all

> learning is social and it's constructivist. So, that's the part that most of us remember but it's not all of what he talked about it. So, one of the other parts about it was reification, in that, somebody has to capture meaning. And then the third part that he talks about is that you don't puddle your knowledge. You don't do everything constructively. You do bring in outside expertise. So, that's what I'm now trying to figure out. How do I teach people to do what—how do I say this? What do you need to know and be able to do when you don't know what you need to do? I think we're right on the cusp of creating this huge learning engine. So, I mean, *The Leadership Engine* [Tichy & Cohen, 2002] is a good book and, then, *The Leadership Cycle* [*The Cycle of Leadership*] is another book by Tichy [2002] that conveys that concept that once you learned how to learn, then the world is your oyster.

In the interview, Dr. Andrews gave an example about how the group learning process could happen through a book study. He then explained the process that he envisioned for the administrative team learning-walks. The book study is a bit easier to envision since it is a more traditional type of group learning. But Dr. Andrews had a similar vision for the administrative team learning-walk process. He explained:

> So, "What do we know together?" You could read a book. Everybody's going ga-ga over *Comprehension through Conversation* right now [Nichols, 2006]. So, it's kind of like, "OK. So everybody's read it. So, now, what do you know? And how would we gather it up, and how would we chart it? And do we put it in an instructional memo? How do we reify the [knowledge].

> We've read the book; that's the outside expert. We've talked about it; that's the social constructivism. And then, whose job is it to reify it, to capture it, to gather it up?"

Dr. Andrews explained his vision for the team learning process. He said:

> How are you learning from the practitioners? So, I mean it's—one of the catch phrases is, "Making practice public", and we tend to take it as an evaluative thing. And that, you know, I need to wear my whatever on my sleeve, and I just need to toughen up, and, you know, give feedback. And, you know, if I give them the right feedback, they'll be the good teacher. And then it's kind of like, "Noooooo, not so much." For me, it's more like game film, and it's kind of like, you can learn from good game—I mean—you can learn from any game film. Whether it was good practice or bad practice, it's just game film. It's just, "So what did we notice? What's working with the kid? What did the teacher do? What did the kid do?" And we're unpacking elements of success in some form. So, it might be a rubric, it might be a chart, it might be an instructional memo, but we're trying to make meaning out of what we saw. Because what we do is, we do the walks, and we make some meaning, but it's ethereal. It's just—it was in the moment.

Dr. Andrews explained that, through the dialogue after the administrative team learning-walk, the important team learning can occur. He said:

> What have I learned about Accountable Talk? Can I pull that out? Can I summarize what I think I know about it? And then, can I get other people who

> have been doing this work together, can we summarize it? So we want to learn about Accountable Talk. We go and do the walk-through together, and we take our notes, and then we gather it up, and say, "Wow. OK. So what did we learn? We really liked what Peter was doing. You know, he really had good questions. Oh, so good questions—that's part of Accountable Talk. Oh. OK." And then, "Well, you know, in Anthony's classroom the kids were actually carrying on the conversation themselves. You know, the teacher wasn't, you know, directing traffic. The kids—so, let's see. How did that happen anyway?" And maybe we figure it out. Or maybe we say, "Well, let's go find out from Anthony. What did he do to make that happen?" So, I mean, it's almost a little action research, but it's not that formal level.

Dr. Andrews explained that he expected administrators to learn about instructional expertise by observing the teaching/learning process in the classrooms in the district. He explained:

> Which was my speech on Day One, which is, there's a lot of expertise here, and our goal was to figure that expertise out, so that every teacher has general expertise and something special that they are contributing to the rest of our smartness.

Learning-walks were a way for administrators to learn about instructional expertise by observing it, having dialogue about it, and reifying the team learning about it.

Many superintendents in the study emphasized that it was important for the principals to understand that the superintendent and other district office

administrators did not have all the answers and that they, the principals and district office administrators, were going to all learn together—to improve their knowledge and skills about how to positively impact the instructional core.

Dr. Edison shared his perspective that the principals in his district appreciated the fact that he was focused on improving their ability to be an instructional leader and he approached the topic with the attitude that they were all going to learn the knowledge and skills together. He said:

> We've got a great bunch of principals. I didn't have to convince them that it was important to be instructional leaders. They know that. I mean, they appreciated that we were scheduling it, that we were going to do it, and that the District Office staff were going to be with them as colleagues—to look, and talk, and learn together. Really focused. That we're learning together what it means to be an Instructional Leader.

Dr. Edison continued:

> That's truly our goal here. 'Cause let's face it. When I started out, I was not an instructional leader at this. I was a manager at school. 'Cause that's just the way it was! And I thought I was a good classroom teacher but I didn't think about my teaching like we do today. You know, we really focus on thinking about what we're doing and trying to meet the needs of kids much better today than we used to.

The implementation of learning-walks provided the opportunity for team learning and developing a shared vision for instructional leadership.

Corporate Accountability

According to Elmore's conceptual framework for internal accountability, school staff must have common expectations for instructional practice. If common expectations are established, then school staff can be held accountable for follow-through. Many superintendents in the study expressed their perspective that a purpose of learning-walks was to provide a process for principals to hold teachers accountable for following-through with effective practices. While Elmore explains that teachers can be held accountable for common expectations by their colleagues as well as their supervisor, the majority of superintendents in this study had not implemented practices where teachers were holding each other accountable for common expectations. The majority of superintendents in the study expected the principal to accomplish this through the learning-walk process. Mr. Oliva expressed this idea when he said:

> It does put some pressure on the teachers. That's the purpose of this visiting, too. Is to let teachers know that, you know, "Guess what? Your principal may pop in at any time and the expectation is that you're moving along with the pacing charts. So the principal knows where you ought to be. And he ought to know whether you're on target or not."

Dr. Cline said that learning-walks provide principals with a wealth of information about the instructional practice in the classrooms in their school. He explained:

> It keeps folks in touch with what's happening in classrooms. It provides them visibility. It helps them develop direct observations for teachers for in-depth

> formal and informal observations. It provides them samples of the extent to which the written, taught, and tested curriculum are in alignment. It helps them narrow the extent to which folks are on target with the instructional calendars. It provides them opportunities to provide positive feedback for staff. It provides them additional opportunities to inquire of students the extent to which they know what their learning targets are, whether they are achieving them, and the extent to which they can self monitor their achievement levels. It provides opportunities for them to work with teachers with one another in support of the professional development program. It provides us an opportunity to bring material back for the growth and development of principals. It gives them a chance to provide support for teachers with respect to the environment in which students are operating and the teachers are improving their professional practice.

Dr. Cline said that by participating in learning-walks, principals in his district discovered that teachers were not adhering to the district pacing calendar. He said, "We're changing our benchmark practices this year as a result of that. People weren't doing it. They weren't getting it done on time." In this case, the common expectations for instructional practices were adjusted because the pacing calendar was not a realistic expectation.

Many superintendents shared their own experiences as participants in learning-walks. Dr. Rogers said that in his learning-walks with principals, he had seen a wide variety of instructional skill by the teachers in his district. He said, "It's

really fun. I've been in so many rooms where I can tell the teachers who have got the training. And I can tell they're trying things because they got the training." He continued, "There's some high end stuff going on." Dr. Rogers explained that by being in classrooms, he was able to see different levels of implementation of the instructional practices that had been provided in the teachers' professional development program. He continued:

> But I could also take you into [the classroom of] the one who does it just like when I was in high school! Turns his back. He does it all on the board. He does the work. He answers all the questions. He gives the question; he answers the question. The kids are just sitting there. Ohhhhhh. There's no engagement!

Dr. Rogers explained that he expected principals to address the varying levels of instructional practice and make a difference at their school by holding teachers accountable for implementing the instructional practices that were taught to the teachers in their professional development program.

Dr. Rogers explained that he was particularly troubled by his observations at the secondary level where he had observed that a teacher had provided high quality instruction to certain classes during the day but the same teacher had not provided that same quality of instruction to other classes during the same day. He explained:

The hurdle I've really had to overcome this year is, 'Guys, there aren't breaks. You don't get a break from instructional practice. You're doing good instructional

practice all the time.'" He continued, "It's back to the TESA stuff [Teacher Expectation – Student Achievement]." He said:

> When I go into Honors and A.P. [Advanced Placement] and Advanced Humanities in the middle school, instruction is top drawer for the top end kids. I follow the same teacher into a remedial eighth grade class; instruction was absolutely miserable. She winged it.

He concluded, "And so one of the attitudes that we've gotta overcome, still, is that every kid gets every lesson all the time. And are we there yet? We're not there yet."

It is interesting to note that in Shannon and Bylsma's meta-analysis of research on the achievement gap, the authors identified numerous factors that are related to the observation that Dr. Rogers had in his district regarding the varying degree of quality in classroom instruction. Shannon and Bylsma (2002) recommend a number of actions to address the achievement gap between white students and students of color and the achievement gap between students from high-income backgrounds and students from low-income backgrounds. The recommendations are: change teacher attitudes and beliefs, provide access to rigorous curriculum, rethink instructional approaches, build professional learning communities, use data in decision making, and promote family and community outreach. Dr. Rogers expected principals to confront the conditions in the classroom that would lead to chronic under-achievement by students, conditions such as teacher attitudes and beliefs, the rigor of curriculum, and the instructional approach. He expected principals to hold

teachers accountable for high quality instruction; he expected high quality instruction "all the time."

Dr. Rogers explained that he was working with the principals to develop a system to monitor teacher follow-through on the instructional practices that they had been taught through the district's professional development program. He explained:

> So I said to the principals…"How are you going to tell your staff? Because you just told me that you believe these two areas that you're working on—student engagement and student talk—have increased significantly and you're seeing it almost every time…and you're not keeping logs of it? You're not keeping logs of the two major goals?" Now they're keeping logs on every teacher.

Dr. Rogers was leading the improvement process through his dialogue with principals about their instructional leadership practices.

Mr. Tingman was also working to develop common expectations for instructional practice in his district. He explained that he was looking forward to the time when the common expectations for instructional practice were established so that principals would be able to hold teachers accountable for follow-through. He explained:

> Once we get the common expectations established, her job [the principal's job] is gonna be to hold people accountable for those. And I was going back to Glasser's model of saying, "Here's what we agreed to do. Here's what you're doing. They're not aligned. Why aren't they aligned?"

Mr. Tingman explained a conversation that he had recently had with a new principal. The principal had told Mr. Tingman that she was planning to share individual classroom test scores with all teachers in a staff meeting to start the school year. He said:

> I talked about that a little bit and I said, "You know. Is your on-the-ground observation supporting it? These scores. Or, what are the other variables that could cause some teachers to score rather high and some teachers to score rather low. And is that a conversation that you have with your entire staff or is that a conversation you have with the individual teacher after you've been in the classroom 180 times?"

He explained that if principals are in classrooms throughout the school year, they will have more credibility when talking with teachers about student learning outcomes. They will have a better sense of the actual instructional practice that is occurring in each classroom in the school. With this information, they will be able to hold teachers accountable for their practice.

In a different district, accountability was considered for the teacher's instructional practice and the teacher's adherence to an established pacing calendar for the curriculum scope and sequence. Dr. Edison explained:

> This year in math, we had a ten day calendar that we're expecting all teachers to use when they're teaching math. And, so, that'll be part of our walk-through this year. We'll try to determine where in the ten day calendar they are, by observing the scene and what they're doing with their lesson. And

> then if they can't tell us. You know. If they go, "Ten days? What's up with that?" You know! Ah ha!

Solutions to Problems of Practice

Dr. Andrews explained a type of administrative team learning-walk that included only three administrators. A principal would host two other principals from the district. Dr. Andrews said these learning-walks were called "Triad Walks" in his district. The purpose of the Triad Walk was to provide a structure where principals could observe teaching and learning at the host school and then give suggestions to the host principal on a specific problem of practice. Dr. Andrews explained:

> A Triad Walk is just three principals visiting each other's building. It might be, "I've got three reluctant teachers so we're going to visit a half-a-dozen teachers today, but, buried in there are three of them that I want to talk something about. So, did a smokescreen for the staff so they don't know what I'm doing. But then we go talk. We don't care about three of them. But three of them, we're going to talk about. And we're going to say, 'You know, what are we going to do with Anthony?' So we might spend an hour and say, 'Well, what if you did this?' 'Well, we did this with one in [another district].'"

The superintendent explained how the principals could give suggestions to each other on a specific problem of practice. By visiting classrooms and seeing the quality of instruction that was occurring, principals would have a better picture of the

challenges that their colleagues were facing as the instructional leader in their school. In their debrief session, the principals could make suggestions on how to work effectively with teachers to improve the quality of instruction.

Positive Impact on Instructional Practice

Through the implementation of learning-walks, superintendents expected principals to make a positive impact on the instructional practice in the district. Many superintendents emphasized, however, that the learning-walks were just one part of an overall systemic approach to instructional improvement. While many superintendents shared that there had been significant improvements in their district in student achievement as measured by external state assessments, they were cautious to attribute these gains solely to the implementation of learning-walks. Superintendents emphasized that the school system must work as a coherent, functioning system. Learning-walks were one part of this system. By having principals participate in learning-walks, the superintendents expected the principals to make a positive impact on the instructional practice in classrooms.

Mr. Spahn referred to the Change Leadership Group from the University of Washington. He explained that the research group highlighted areas that school leaders could impact that would lead to improvement, namely, "culture, conditions, and competencies…within the context." He said, "I think the walk-throughs help set some of the conditions." Mr. Spahn emphasized repeatedly that the practice of learning-walks must be coupled with other structures and practices. "If the principal

is doing this in isolation and has no one to help him with the teachers, it's futile," he said. Mr. Spahn identified numerous additional structures that were in place in his district, such as instructional coaches for teachers and release time for teacher collaboration.

Mr. Spahn's idea that the learning-walks are a way that a superintendent could create conditions which would provide the opportunity for the improvement of the instructional core is related to a construct that Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) have provided to analyze complex organizations. The authors propose that the leaders of complex organizations should realize that they will not be able to direct people to do exactly what is needed for improved performance. Improvement of human performance is not a mechanist process. The leader must take a humanistic approach to the improvement process. Marion and Uhl-Bien propose that leadership in a complex organization "should be viewed as creating conditions that enable the interactions through which the behaviors and direction of organizational systems emerge" (p. 406). They conclude:

> Leaders provide control by influencing organizational behavior through managing networks and interactions. They do not delude themselves with the notion that they can determine or direct exactly what will happen within the organization. (p. 406)

Mr. Spahn was cognizant of this idea of leadership by emphasizing that the learning-walks would not be effective if they were implemented in isolation.

Another superintendent, Dr. Benson, explained her vision for how principals could positively impact instructional practice through the learning-walks. Principals could identify the best practices that were occurring in the classrooms and ensure that these best practices were shared across the school and across the district. She said:

> It's very apparent to me. If our job is student achievement—and it is, our job is student success—what does that mean for what the work is? It doesn't mean kicking kids out of school. It means a safe, supportive learning environment. So you have to do the discipline side, supported with instructional strategies to engage students. And the diversity of that engagement is huge! None of us knows how to reach every single student. Collectively we know. But single-handedly? Nobody can do that. Including me! I'd say especially me! But, you know, if you have the opportunities for professionals to develop their craft, just like doctors and surgeons, somebody has faced that issue and saw what either didn't work, so you don't go there, or, "Hey, this worked. This is what we did. We didn't make as much progress but try this." You know, there's no other way to do this. It's too big.

By having principals participate in daily learning-walks, this superintendent believed that the best practices occurring in classrooms would be identified by principals and the principals would share these best practices across the school and across the district. As a result of the principal learning-walks, the superintendent expected principals to make a positive impact on instructional practice.

Develop Culture of Continuous Improvement

Many superintendents expressed the perspective that it was only when they made the learning-walks a requirement that they began to see a change of culture in the schools and the district.

Dr. Edison explained, "Certainly, the conversations have changed in our administrative team meetings. That's for sure. We're focusing more on instruction." Once principals were required to be in classrooms, their focus shifted from management issues to student learning. Dr. Edison explained:

> We're talking more about what we see in the classrooms. We're much more focused in our district by meeting on instructional practices. We're doing Book Reads, now, as an administrative team. We definitely have a focus. Definitely. As a result of saying, "We're doing this," and then tying the book studies and all those other things into it.

Dr. Cline expressed a similar perspective about how learning-walks had provided a "medium for discussions" about the instructional core. The practice of learning-walks kept everyone's focus on instructional improvement. He said, "Walk-throughs kind of ties together, or is a roundhouse, for a variety of other pieces of what we're doing. And provides us the medium for discussions that we couldn't otherwise have."

Dr. Pauliss emphasized that the district administration had worked closely with representatives from the teacher's union to ensure that the learning-walk practice would be successfully implemented. One of the keys to successful implementation was to emphasize a change in culture. She said that the traditional perspective of

teachers was that if an administrator was in the classroom, the administrator was there to evaluate the teaching/learning process, and, more specifically, to evaluate the teacher's performance. She explained that the purpose of the learning-walk process in her district was for both the teacher and the administrator to learn about effective instructional practices. She said, "So, the learning is going both ways. And the discussions are really the power of the instructional leadership parts. The conversations you have with teachers." Because she wanted to change the culture of the school district, Dr. Pauliss emphasized that it was important to her that the debrief conferences would be called "reflective conferences". She said, "We didn't call them 'pre-conferences' and 'post-conferences' because that's tied way too directly to evaluations." She explained that the purpose of the principal learning-walk and the reflective conference was to provide an opportunity for the principal and the teacher to dialogue about the instructional core. She explained that in the reflective conference, the goal of the principal should be: "to get that teacher to think out loud about their lesson and why they did what they did or how they did it, around the discussion points of purpose, engagement, rigor, and results." It was her perspective that this process had a positive effect on the quality of instruction in the district. She said:

> Really, you can see follow-up lessons that that teacher does are far more powerful and stronger lessons because they had to think out loud about, "Well, why did you do that? I noticed that you did this. Why were you doing that?"

It was this superintendent's goal to change the culture of the district surrounding the presence of a principal in the classroom. She wanted principals to facilitate teacher self-reflection. She wanted teachers to view the principal as a resource for assisting with the self-reflective process. Part of this change of culture was the intentional way that learning-walks were implemented in her district. Dr. Pauliss said, "We had to be very intentional that this is *not* part of evaluation." She explained, "With each principal the first year, we had them talk with their staff about what we were doing. That this was about *our* learning. And the key word there is *learning* walks." She explained that the culture of schools in the past had been that the principal would only visit a classroom to conduct a teacher's evaluation. She said that was the only reason, in the past, that a principal would visit a classroom.[5] She explained:

> Because when you talk to a teacher about, "May we come in, as administrators, come in and observe your instruction?" The tendency [for the teacher] is, "Well, you administrators only come in my classroom twice a year for evaluations. So what am I doing wrong?" You know. All of that kind of mindset. History and all of that. So we, very consciously, were trying to change that dynamic.

She explained the evolution that occurred in her district. She said, "So that very first year, we only went into classrooms where the teacher said, 'Sure, come on in.'" In the second year, more teachers began to volunteer to have administrators visit their classroom. The administrative team had built trust with the teaching staff that the team did, indeed, want to visit classrooms where teachers were demonstrating

exemplary instructional practices so the administrative team could learn what quality instruction looked like. Dr. Pauliss continued with her narrative:

> By the second year…you had teachers saying, "Well, how come you didn't come into my classroom?" So, in a really fun way, and a strong way, it evolved to people wanting you to come into their classrooms. Because they were saying, "Excuse me. Why *didn't* you come into my classroom today?" That kind of thing.

She explained that by the third year, teacher-leaders had begun to participate in administrative professional development meetings and teachers began to participate in learning-walks. She said, "That has been a huge issue—a positive huge issue of expanding the leadership, the instructional leadership capacity." She explained that in the fifth year of implementation of learning-walks, all teachers were participating in learning-walks at their school and some teams of teachers from different schools had visited other schools to participate in learning-walks. All of these efforts led to a culture of continuous improvement. She gave an example of a team of sixth grade teachers from a middle school who visited elementary fifth grade classrooms and another example where a team of high school math teachers visited middle school math classrooms. She explained that prior to the implementation of the teacher learning-walks, there had been very minimal dialogue among teachers across grade levels. She said, "Quite honestly, our high school teachers in math, they knew they [the middle school teachers] were teaching math in sixth grade but they'd never had a conversation with those teachers." She explained that the classroom visits created a

platform for conversations about math instruction. It was the perspective of Dr. Pauliss that by including teachers in learning-walks, the district had increased its capacity for instructional leadership.

Brochu et al. (2004) explain that involving teachers in learning-walks is an important way to support a teacher's learning as the teacher attempts to improve instructional practice. The authors explain that the learning-walk, itself, is a valuable part of the teacher's professional development, "because it provides a unique opportunity for teachers to integrate professional development with actual classroom teaching" (p. 18). Fullan (2008) explains that effective organizations have leadership by individuals throughout the organization and a culture that supports collaboration, dialogue, and a commitment to continuous improvement. He writes, "…no individual leader is indispensable, but leaders from all corners of the organization continue to move the organization forward because the culture—actions embedded in the norms, competencies, and practices of the organization—ensures it" (p. 126).

In Dr. Dell's district, teachers had also begun to participate in teacher learning-walks. Dr. Dell shared her perspective that their participation in learning-walks had produced a change in the culture in all of the schools in her district. She said that the learning-walks provided information for teachers to review and consider during their collaboration time. She explained:

> Every Wednesday, we have an early-release for teaming and teachers will often get together and talk about, "The principal and I talked about this." So that can get pushed out in a different way. I think everybody wants to do a

> good job. And having people say, "Yeah, I need help with that, too." Or, "Here's how I fixed that." There's a collegial learning that's been so absent in education. I think it's so powerful in every other industry but ours. And it's nice to see people acting like grown-ups. You know. Professionals.

She explained that the learning-walk process, coupled with the early-release time, had led to a culture of collaboration. She supported this process. It was her perspective that the definition of what it meant to be a teacher had changed as a result of external accountability and she realized that some teachers might choose to leave the profession instead of engage in the continuous improvement process. She said:

> I think a lot of people went into public education because it was safe. You know. You always had a job. You had your summers off. You had good insurance and health coverage. And, you know, to have people change, it's hard. You know. I mean the rules have changed on a lot of our senior teachers. That's not what they signed up for and now we're doing all this No Child Left Behind stuff. So, I think, you know, to take people: "Yeah, we're going to learn together. You know, it's not like *you're* a remedial. But everybody's learning. And even the superintendent doesn't know everything. Especially the superintendent doesn't know everything! And we're going to learn with you." This has people go, "Oh." A little less spotlight on you as a remedial human being. And people want it as their job. And sometimes people say, "I'm tired. I'm out of here." You know. "That's OK. That's your choice."

Dr. Dell explained that, as the superintendent, she modeled a commitment to continuous improvement. She supported efforts to build that type of culture in her district and realized that some teachers struggled with the changing paradigm of what it meant to be a teacher. In Dr. Dell's district, teachers were expected to work for continuous improvement of their instructional practice.

Dr. Benson explained that she expected every staff member in the district to contribute to the improvement of student learning. This was a paradigm shift for many of the staff. She had just completed her first year as superintendent in the district and she reflected on her experience. She said:

> I have some people absolutely thrilled and feel like it's the right direction, the right thing, we've needed it for a very long time. And I have other people who are very against it and don't feel that they can contribute. And it's not their area of expertise, "therefore." So, it's a "waste" of their time. And I've had to have the hard conversations that, "I understand and we're going to have to agree to disagree." But if they truly do not have the ability to contribute to student achievement, then they need to find another district.

Dr. Benson explained that she was committed to building a culture of continuous improvement with the focus on improving the instructional core. She said that the only way to build trust in the district was to be consistent in the focus on instruction. She said, "There's a lack of trust. That has to be built and the only way that's going to be built is to do this: we will write up every single week our positive perceptions of what we've experienced."

Mr. Tingman shared that, while he had been with his district for a number of years, he had just completed the first year of implementing the mandate to principals that they visit classrooms on a daily basis. He said that even in a short time, it was his perspective that the principal learning-walks, and his own visits to classrooms, had made a positive impact on school culture. He explained that many of the elementary principals had already been participating in learning-walks prior to the mandate but he had seen a marked change at the high school. He said, "I think it's had a significant change in the culture, at least at the high school, that the principal is in the classrooms more." He explained that if principals made learning-walks a priority, it would have a positive impact on the culture of the school. He said, "It's just a matter of priorities. I know that it changes the way teachers feel when they see the educational leader being directly connected to the teaching." He explained that he saw this as a reason for the superintendent and other district office administrators to participate in learning-walks. He said, "I get criticized because I'm not in classrooms enough. My goal has been to be in a building every day and I haven't been able to accomplish that." Mr. Tingman believed that the learning-walk process would contribute to a school culture that would be focused on teaching and learning.

Dr. Frye described a practice in her district that facilitated a focus on student learning. She said that the principal and the teacher would collect evidence of student learning from a lesson that the principal had observed and then they would debrief together and compare the evidence that they had both collected. She explained:

> [The principals] they're actually collecting the evidence themselves, and then they ask the teachers to prepare for the post-conference by bringing evidence. And then together they collaboratively throw it together. They'll go, "OK. What do we see here now?" And they actually do an evidence sharing activity.

Dr. Frye explained that the principals and teachers had participated together in professional development about how to collect student evidence that demonstrated student understanding of the learning target, the progression of learning needed to reach the target, and the resources that students could use to help them reach the target—elements from the district's instructional framework (Bergeson, 2006). As a result, the principals and teachers, working together, were building a culture of collaboration focused on student learning.

Dr. Andrews explained that one way to build a culture of continuous improvement was for the superintendent to model the learning process. He said that he often shared with others that he didn't have all the answers and he was willing to get out of his "comfort zone" and try to learn new skills. He explained:

> I didn't have nearly the push-back here…that I did in [my previous district]. And I don't know why that was. I think some of it was that I modeled the work myself. And, so, I was willing to put myself out there as a lead—not a lead-learner—but a lead risk-taker. In terms of, you know, "I'm willing to stand up here and look like a fool. I'll tell you what I think I know about reading. Now, let's go try it out." We've been very careful…to say that it's

> not evaluative. So, we just said it again and again. And at the same time, we've been careful to qualify that to say that it's not evaluative at this point in time…but for right now…I can't hold you accountable for something that you haven't been trained for. So, it's kind of: "It's about our learning. It's about 'How well have we provided the training?'", and that kind of thing.

Dr. Andrews emphasized the importance of building a supportive and collaborative environment where learning and risk-taking were modeled by leaders, including himself, the superintendent. This is aligned with the elements that were identified by Abbott, Baker, and Stroh (2004) in their study of effective school districts in Washington State, elements such as a collaborative organizational environment and a focus on adult learning.

Dr. Andrews explained that it was a challenge to get staff to work for improvement when it was their perception that they were already getting good results. He said that he continued to encourage staff to work for continuous improvement and expand their focus to address the needs of struggling students. He explained that he planned to add this focus to the learning-walk process. In the next school year, he said he was going to expect principals to prompt teachers to think about struggling students by having the principals ask the teachers questions, such as: "What's your strategy? How could you bring them into the conversation? What can you do with one or two of your kids to build a relationship—try to figure them out. Add one or two skills to what you do." Dr. Andrews thought that by using the learning-walk process to focus on the needs of struggling students, the principals would be able to

facilitate improvements in student learning. He felt this was the next step for continuous improvement in his school district, especially for staff members who were satisfied with the results they were currently getting.

Dr. Rogers had a similar challenge in his district. Staff in the low performing schools had a greater sense of urgency and, as a result of their work, they had seen the most gains in student learning. He said:

> I don't see much resistance to it at all. In fact, the hardest two buildings were the two elementary schools who were doing fine. They said, "Why do we need to do school improvement? Our scores are fine." Well, I said, "OK, 64% is good enough? So, 36% of the kids not making it is good enough? You don't think you need to figure out how to get the 36% doing it?"

Dr. Rogers explained that it was his goal to have the whole organization, from the school board to the staff in each classroom, to work for continuous improvement with the focus on student learning. He said that the board had instituted a committee of concerned citizens that vetted any political matters that might distract the board from the focus on student learning. By the time the political issue had passed through the citizen's committee, the issue was ready for board resolution. As a result, the board was able to focus on creating policies that codified expectations for the student learning improvement process and procedures to monitor the policies that they created. He explained that the board had created policies for each of the four areas that were identified in the report *Characteristics of Improved School Districts: Themes from Research* (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004). He explained that he had formed

a district team that included stakeholders from every school—teachers and administrators from every school—who monitored the continuous improvement process and progress in each of the four areas. The district team collected data and made periodic reports to the school board. By keeping the board's focus on the four areas—effective leadership, quality teaching and learning, support for system wide improvement, and clear/collaborative relationships—the superintendent was able to support a culture of continuous improvement that was focused on the instructional core. It is interesting to note that the board practices in this district were aligned with practices identified by Abbott, Baker, and Smith (2007) as board practices that were found in effective school districts, namely sustaining a vision for the district, serving the role of policy development, and monitoring the progress of policy implementation.

As a result of the improvement efforts in his district, it was the perspective of Dr. Rogers that teachers were beginning to work collaboratively to improve instruction. He explained:

> There are more common instructional practices going on. Now I hesitate to call them PLC's [Professional Learning Communities], but I'll call them grade-level groups or PLC's or whatever you want to call them. Our goal is to have teachers in work-groups start looking at data. To then, themselves, to inform their instruction. And that's happening. Now, is it happening enough? It's not happening enough.

Dr. Rogers believed it was a combination of structures and systems, working together, that produced a change in the culture in the district. Resources had been used to provide team planning time every day for teachers at the middle school. Elementary teachers had been provided team planning time as well. Principals were implementing learning-walks and following-up consistently with teachers to discuss the teacher's instructional practice. It was the perspective of Dr. Rogers that the culture of the district was changing, from the school board to the classroom. Dr. Rogers said:

> I think the environment and climate for learning is really clear. It's really clear. And we've just gotta keep going. Teachers are doing better. Teachers are doing better than they used to do. And, you know, our test scores continue to go up.

It was the perspective of Dr. Rogers this change in culture had resulted in improved student achievement on state assessments. Abbott, Baker, and Stroh (2004) describe this change in culture as moving "from compliance to commitment."

Much like other superintendents in the study, Dr. Cline emphasized the importance of having all of the structures and systems working together to support a positive school and district culture where staff worked collaboratively to improve their skill. He explained that the learning-walks and release time for collaboration, early release time for elementary staff and late start release time for secondary staff, were important structures, and the process, or system, for sharing best practices was crucial for improving instructional practice and student learning. He said that his goal

was to create an environment and a culture where teachers felt comfortable sharing their successful practices as well as sharing their challenges. Dr. Cline explained:

> One of our major objectives has to be understanding what people are doing that's working well given the differential needs that students present us. And if we don't do that sharing through the walk-through process—if we don't learn that—you don't have teachers observing that and decreasing their level of anxiety about observing and being observed, we're not going to create learning communities where people are good at, and comfortable, sharing and helping each other, teaching one another and learning from one another. It won't happen.

Dr. Cline's perspective was that the learning-walk process helped to decrease teacher isolation and increase collaboration focused on sharing best practices.

Dr. Edison was encouraged to see that, in his district, teachers were beginning to express interest in visiting each other's classrooms to observe the teaching/learning process. He explained that he hoped to see this desire develop from the "bottom-up." He did not want to impose a "top-down" mandate to the teaching staff. He explained:

> If a building has a couple of teachers that want to, we just celebrate that, and say, "Yeah! Oh yeah, we'll get you a sub. Let's go!" Then go do it. We really encourage it that way, hoping that it's more of a grassroots thing. Hopefully…we'll see teachers on their own saying, "Hey, you know, I'd like to visit your classroom. You're doing that stuff? That sounds great. You know. Can I come take a look?" And hopefully we'll just keep moving down

> that continuum. I think that's a better way to go than for a superintendent over a principal to say, "Hey. Next year. We're all going to do this." I don't think so. I think we'll have to let it evolve but it will.

Dr. Edison explained that if a large number of teachers wanted to observe classrooms, it would impact decisions about the allocation of resources because it was his opinion that it would take time and money to implement teacher learning-walks. He concluded, "But, you know, if this is truly our priority, and if we really believe the classroom is where it all happens, you know, we should find the resources to make it work."

Elmore (2004) proposes that "...large scale improvement requires deference to and respect for expertise" (p. 70). Superintendents in the study often acknowledged that some teachers had more expertise in the area of instruction than the administrative staff. Mr. Spahn indicated that he was beginning to trust teacher expertise in the area of identifying areas of need for instructional improvement. In this case, it was not the expertise of the teacher's instructional skill that he was beginning to respect but their expertise in identifying problems of practice and areas of improvement. He said:

> The more you drive that work to the teacher level, the better you're going to be. I'm learning that. You know, the more the teachers, within parameters, can identify work that they need to work on, instructionally, in their own classrooms, or across the grade level, the better you'll be. You know, when

> you begin to say, "Well, we want this in, and this in, and this in," teachers are saying, "Oh, we don't really need that."

Mr. Spahn appeared to be grappling with a decision of how to use the teacher expertise, "within parameters", and maintain forward momentum for instructional improvement. It is unusual for a superintendent to formally and explicitly defer to teachers. Yet, it is clear, according to Elmore, that large scale improvement will only take place if the "islands of excellence" in a school building and a school district are linked with all other staff to share expertise and support high quality instruction in every classroom. In fact, Elmore (2008) proposes that, "knowledge and skill in accountability structures are collective goods, not private goods" (p. 60). In a public school system, the knowledge and skills that are needed to teach a greater number of students to achieve learning standards must be shared across classroom boundaries, across school boundaries, even across district boundaries. Elmore writes:

> The knowledge itself doesn't reside in the individuals, it resides in the relationships among individuals engaged in the practice. What a teacher or principal "knows" has no value, except insofar as it can be used to create or enhance knowledge and skill in others. One teacher's success working through a particular problem of practice has immediate value for her and her students, but it does not produce value for the school in which she teaches without intentional action on the part of her colleagues. One school's success has immediate value for the students, practitioners and parents in that school, but its public value is limited by its position as one unit in a system, and

> therefore its public value is limited to its direct beneficiaries. In order for an accountability system to produce performance as a public good, it has to be accompanied by a system of social relationships that take knowledge out of the private domain and make it public—within classrooms among schools, among schools, and among systems of schools within a larger polity. (p. 60)

While all of the superintendents in this study required the principals in their district to participate in learning-walks, some of the superintendents reported that the practice had expanded to include teachers. Teachers participated in learning-walks, observing classrooms and analyzing instructional practice. The superintendents shared their perspective that the practice of principal learning-walks and teacher learning-walks helped to keep the focus on instructional improvement and helped to build a culture of continuous improvement. By expanding the practice of learning-walks to include teachers, the district was able to build capacity in the district at a greater rate than if only the principals were participating in the practice. Abbot, Baker, and Pavese (2008) surveyed teachers in Washington State to determine their level of interest in improving the instructional core. They found:

> Teachers indicated that they want to focus on instruction and collaborate with colleagues, that the reform efforts have not yet provided this, and they state loudly and clearly that the most important thing to provide them in their future are skills and time related to collaborating with colleagues to improve their instruction and to align it with state standards. (p. 16)

It was the perspective of many of the superintendents in this study that principal learning-walks and teacher-learning walks helped to develop a culture in the school and the district that provided a focus and support for instructional improvement. Most of the superintendents reported that it was their perspective that in order to implement the learning-walk process effectively, staff needed professional development about the process and they needed to develop their skills and knowledge, specifically skills for discussion and reflection, and knowledge of high quality instruction. In addition, most of the superintendents emphasized that additional support structures, such as additional time for teacher collaboration, were required to implement the process effectively.

Elmore (2004) writes about a principle that he calls the "reciprocity of accountability." His definition is: "For every increment of performance I require of you, I have a responsibility to provide you with the additional capacity to produce that performance" (p. 89). Mr. Spahn addressed this concept when he said, "With push comes support. So when you push them, you better have something to support them." Elmore explains:

> If the formal authority of my role requires that I hold you accountable for some action or outcome, then I have an equal and complementary responsibility to assure that you have the capacity to do what I am asking you to do. (p. 67)

Mr. Spahn put this concept into concrete terms. He explained his perspective:

> If I just had principals going in and meeting with [the teachers] and saying "By God, you've got to change this. I saw it." And I didn't have any coaches that would work with them, and I didn't have half-day releases where they could look at the materials and do those things, I think you're going to—I think you'll get sliced and diced.

Mr. Spahn described that, in his district, he had implemented additional structures, such as release time for collaboration, and he had provided additional resources, such as instructional coaches, to support the implementation of the learning-walks. The learning-walks were a means to an end. The primary goal was to improve the instructional core.

Superintendents indicated that it was difficult for teachers to accept or understand that a purpose of an administrative team learning-walk was not necessarily to focus on an individual teacher's performance but was part of a larger, systemic learning experience for the learning-walk participants. Mr. Spahn explained:

> I think it's really fun. And teachers, I think, after they get over the initial shock, they like it—as long as you give them feedback. That's the number one thing. [Mimics a teacher voice]. "We didn't get any feedback. We didn't even get a card. We don't know why you're in there." [Returns to normal voice]. And for me, it's always, "It wasn't for you! It was for us!" [Laughs]. "We were there to do some stuff!" [Laughs]. You know! "We were there to—I was there to learn! I'm not there to—you know. Don't worry! It wasn't about you; it was about me!"

For many of the superintendents in the study, their perception was that, often times, teachers were apprehensive about having principals and other administrators observe their classrooms. Superintendents talked about the fun that they, themselves, had as a superintendent visiting classrooms. Dr. Cline explained, "I just don't feel like I've devoted enough time to it. You know, most folks would say that I spend more time in classrooms than most any superintendent they know. I don't feel like I'm there enough." When asked what he felt he gained from participating in learning-walks, he said:

> I think that there's a belief and understanding that I care what's going on in the classrooms. That I have a sense of what's happening across the district. That I believe and support our teachers and what they're doing. And that I care about kids. And that I'm not in a place that is totally removed from what's happening, you know, at the street level. But I generally feel better after spending time in classrooms with kids and teachers. Usually, when things aren't going well, returning to that setting, and working with folks, and learning about what they're doing, and getting a sense of how we're progressing and then sharing that in conversation with our leadership, it generally make me feel better. I always feel better after being in schools. That's why we get into the work.

It was this superintendent's perspective that his visit to classrooms was rejuvenating for him. How the teachers perceived his visits could only be known if the teachers in his district had been interviewed regarding their perspective.

Through the implementation of a variety of learning-walk models, superintendents in the study worked to build a culture of continuous improvement in their district. While the purpose of the study was to explore superintendent perspectives regarding a mandate to principals to spend a certain portion of each day in the classroom, through the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher discovered a variety of learning-walk models. All of the learning-walk practices were used to create a culture of continuous improvement. In particular, the practice of having teachers participate in learning-walks appeared to increase the capacity of staff to dialogue about teaching and learning.

Structures and Systems for Principal Accountability

The superintendents in the study used a variety of methods to hold principals accountable for following-through with the expectation that they visit classrooms on a daily basis. Some superintendents were flexible with the requirement; these superintendents viewed their mandate more as a requirement to focus on instruction each day rather than a specific requirement to be in classrooms. These superintendents felt that if a principal was engaged in an instructional leadership process, such as talking with a teacher about teaching and learning, then the principal could count that time as learning-walk time. While some superintendents required principals to submit logs, forms, or reports to the superintendent, other superintendents did not require any documentation. Some superintendents relied

solely on face-to-face accountability while other superintendents used a combination of both reports and face-to-face accountability.

Logs, Forms, and Reports

Dr. Rogers said that he required principals to submit their learning-walk forms and a log that demonstrated that they were following-through with his expectation to be engaged with the instructional core on a daily basis. He said, "There's a walk-through form. We collect that data. We now are requiring walk-through logs from the coaches and from the principals."

Mr. Tingman said that he required principals to turn-in a log of their time to document that they were visiting classrooms. He said that, in his district, he did not call the practice learning-walks or walk-throughs or any such name. He said:

> We don't have a formal name for it. It's simply required. When I evaluate them, one of the things that they have to submit to me is a log that shows that they are spending an average of an hour a day in the classrooms observing teachers. And it doesn't have to be formal. It just has to show that they're not sitting behind their desks.

Mr. Oliva required the principals to send a monthly report to the district office. He said, "We don't ask them for a whole bunch of information. We ask them for the name of the teacher, the level that they were observing, and give me a one-liner what you were looking for or what you observed." He explained that there was not a system in the district for face-to-face accountability for the principals to review

their observations from the learning-walks. They simply turned-in the report to the district office.

Dr. Edison explained that he visited schools every week and reviewed with principals the data they were collecting from their learning-walks. In addition, he had the principals send reports to the district office which he then, in turn, included in his monthly report to the school board. He explained:

> Principals give me a monthly report of their walk-through experiences. And if I don't get one, I call and say, "Where's your monthly report?" So they know it. That this is an expectation. And then I share that with the board. Because it's part of my goals with the board to have principals in the classrooms and our district office staff in the classrooms as well.

He explained that it was his perspective that principals had increased their follow-through after he had instituted a system where they had to report to him and the reports were shared with the school board. He said:

> As we keep up on the research…I've seen many times where it says, "That which is evaluated gets done." And as much as I encouraged people to do walk-throughs and be in classrooms, I know how hard it is. So, I just concluded that it had to be monitored in order to make it happen.

Dr. Edison explained that he had made the practice of learning-walks a goal for the principals and the district office staff, including himself. As such, he wanted to report progress on the achievement of this goal to the board of directors. He explained:

> It's the accountabilities. I wanted the board to know that we're really focusing on instruction. Of course, what the board sees is our test scores. And I wanted the board to know that there's a whole lot more than that going on. We're all working towards improving test scores. That's the end. But what I wanted them to be aware of, and appreciate, was, all the work going on trying to get us there. So, I just felt it was important for them to see the reports from the principals. And to recognize the amount of time principals are now spending in classrooms. And that I'm holding them accountable. And that the district office staff—we're all doing these walk-throughs together. So, to me, it [the report to the board] serves several purposes. Number One: it lets the board have greater knowledge and understanding of what we're doing in schools. Number Two: it shows them that I take the accountability seriously and I'm holding the administrators accountable for this very important work.

Dr. Edison explained that in their reports, the principals provided a brief description of each learning-walk. He pulled a report from his files for an example, pointed to it, and said:

> The date, the instruction, what was going on, the amount of time they were there, the conversations that they had, and some comments. So, it looks like that. The board just appreciates that. They don't need all the detail. You know. What they need to know, is, that we're really focused on teaching and learning.

Dr. Edison explained that he not only communicated about learning-walks to the board, he also communicated with all district staff. He said, "I write about it in my monthly correspondence to staff. I write about the walk-throughs, and what we're trying to do, and reinforce that we're all learning together and that kind of thing."

Dr. Edison used face-to-face accountability on a weekly basis to discuss the observations that principals were having. He used the principal reports to demonstrate to the board of directors that principals were following-through with the instructional leadership practice.

Face-to-face accountability

Dr. Frye said that she asked the principals to keep a log of their time but she did not require the principals to turn-in their log to her. She met with the principals, individually, on a monthly basis to review their progress. She said that she had worked with the principals to develop a rubric for instructional leadership which included the expectation that, at the exemplary level, principals would be engaged in instructional leadership for eight to ten hours a week. She said that none of the principals reported that they were at the exemplary level. Much like other superintendents in this study, Dr. Frye said that principals could "count" the time that they spent with teachers conferencing about instruction. She explained:

> And this eight to ten hours, all of this time, includes time that you spend with teachers doing post-conferences or time you're in a team meeting. I let them count a lot of things as being with teachers. It's not just in classrooms but

> anything that's going to improve the instructional program. So, eight to ten hours could mean I'm in a classroom or it could mean that I'm with all the fourth grade teachers helping them look at math work. That counts as well. They [the principals] wrote the rubric pretty broadly.

While she required the principals to keep a log of their time, the actual accountability was in a personal monthly meeting.

A different superintendent increased the rigor of accountability by holding weekly meetings with all of the principals and district office administrators. Dr. Dell had implemented a meeting schedule that required principals to follow-through with her expectation. She said that they met every Monday afternoon. In addition, she and other district office administrators regularly visited schools to participate in learning-walks with the principals. She explained:

> We would like the principals in the classroom daily. But we haven't said it has to be 15 minutes point 2 ["15.2 minutes"]. And it's, you know, the day of choir, and you're in class for [only] 25 minutes. We say, "We don't care." We're not sticklers about that. We figure that we can help "call the question" by being in their building, saying, "I'm here today for the walk-throughs." That should remind you. And I think my [district office] staff, they understand. "This is a bad day." OK. You know. We can handle that. If every day's a bad day, that's different. And that's not been the case. You know, it's lonely for the teachers and principals. They like having people come in, talk with them, and do the work they care about together. And the

> accountability is, you know, we meet on Monday afternoons. We'll say, "How are things going?" And people—because I guess they feel safe—will say, "I've had a bad week. I haven't gotten out once. But I'm going to change that." So, we come back next week. "This week was better." I mean, "Do they love to whine?" [Laughs]. I think everybody is working very hard and doing the very best that they can. And I'd much rather have somebody say to me, "I screwed up; I need help," than lie.

Unlike districts where principals were required to turn-in logs for documentation, the superintendent in this district had implemented a structure that required face-to-face accountability on a weekly basis. The principals had to look the superintendent in the eye each week and report their progress on whether they were following the superintendent's expectation that they should be in the classroom on a daily basis. It was the superintendent's perspective that the principals were working very hard. She also communicated that she valued truthfulness. She would rather have the principal tell her the truth—that the principal did not follow-through with the expectation that week—than to have the principal lie to her. By meeting on a weekly basis, the superintendent could ask the question, "Where you able to get into classrooms this week? What did you see?" And she expected an honest answer.

Dr. Dell demonstrated a humanistic approach to accountability. She understood that it was difficult for some principals to follow-through with her expectation to be in the classroom every day. She acknowledged this with the principals and she was flexible but she would not accept constant excuses.

One way to ensure face-to-face accountability was for the superintendent to visit the school and participate in learning-walks with the principal. Even in large districts, superintendents such as Dr. Andrews, Dr. Benson, and Dr. Pauliss said that they visited schools on a weekly basis. Dr. Pauliss said, "I don't think size makes a difference on what you undertake but it's just the systems that you have to have in place within that framework." Dr. Benson said that she participated in learning-walks with principals twice a week and she expected her district office staff to be in classrooms frequently as well to assist with the face-to-face accountability.

Dr. Benson explained that her presence at the schools was quite a change from her predecessor and it had taken her district office staff some time to adjust to her being out of the district office so frequently. Neuman and Pelchat (2001) explained that the superintendents they had interviewed who visited schools often had received a similar reception by their administrative staff. Dr. Benson explained, "I am committed to being in the schools, in the classrooms, and it drives the [district office] staff crazy because I'm not accessible in my office." She said that she worked with the staff to help them realize that she was accessible by cell phone. She devised a system where the district office staff could call her cell phone and, if it was an emergency, a special code would flash on her phone and she would know that she needed to interrupt her classroom observation with the principal and answer the phone call. She explained that with such a large number of schools in the district—almost 30 schools—she had worked with the other district office administrators to devise a

matrix so that every school would have frequent visits by the district office administration.

Dr. Benson said that prior to her tenure in the district, principals had been using a wide variety of instructional models and observation protocols. Some principals did not visit classrooms on a frequent basis. She said that when she came to the district, she worked immediately with the administrative team to establish a commitment to participate in learning-walks. She said, "We chose not to set a number of hours per day or a number of hours per week." She continued, "But the commitment, the operating principle, is, that there's an agreement that it's very important and that they will spend time in the classroom every day." She recognized the need for principals to embrace the purpose for participating in the learning-walks. She said, "When principals see that it's valuable, they do more."

Prior to her tenure, Dr. Benson said, "I wouldn't say it was a systems approach. There was a lot of it going on." She continued, "But it wasn't going on in every school. There wasn't the communication about what was effective or learning from each other—those kinds of things." She summarized, "So, the system lacked the support for the communication for principals to be a professional learning community." Dr. Benson felt that she was developing a systems approach to instructional leadership by providing structure to administrative meetings where principals shared best practices. She said she her goal was to get principals to change their focus from observing teachers to a focus on student learning. She said she wanted principals to observe, "What students are learning and what they're doing.

What they're engaged in." She said, "The hardest thing is moving away from observing the adult instead of observing the student." By visiting schools twice a week, and by having her district office administrative staff engage in school visits as well, Dr. Benson was providing the opportunity for face-to-face accountability to observe principals engaging in the practice of learning-walks with the focus on student engagement and student learning. In fact, Dr. Benson did not require principals to document their time in classrooms. She said, "I leave it to their professionalism. I depend that they're going to do what's asked of them. Lots of times I know just from talking with them or seeing them." She said she knew that some principals were following-through more consistently than others and she had addressed cases, individually, where she knew that principals were not following-through with her expectation.

Another superintendent of a large district, Dr. Andrews, said that he, too, visited schools frequently. He said that in a typical week, he and the other district administrators visited classrooms with principals three days a week. It was his perspective that, as a result of these visits, as a result of this face-to-face accountability, he was able to assess whether principals were following-through with the expectation to visit classrooms and engage teachers in conversations about teaching and learning. He said, "Well, because we do the walks, and, I mean, it's readily apparent whether they've been doing the work with their teachers in the building. There are some principals that aren't here anymore." Dr. Andrews did not require the principals to document their time with a log or a learning-walk form. It

was his perspective that he and his district office administrative staff, through face-to-face interactions with the principals, could assess whether principals were following-through with the expectation.

In a different district, Mr. Spahn, had created a system where the principals were held accountable through a weekly face-to-face meeting with their building leadership team. The purpose of the meeting was for the leadership team—the principal, assistant principals, and instructional coaches—to review the instructional improvement process and identify needs for the upcoming week.

Mr. Spahn did not want the principals to submit a log of their time; he required them to submit the minutes of the weekly leadership team meeting. Mr. Spahn said, "I don't have the principal do logs. No. No." He pointed to the minutes of a weekly meeting that had been forwarded to the superintendent's office and said, "This is the accountability." Mr. Spahn explained his rationale for structuring an accountability system where the principals were accountable to their leadership team. He said:

> They need to sit down every week to make a plan of what the work's going to be. If you don't, how do you know who you're working with or what you're going to do next? So, it was just, flat-out, like a no-brainer!

Elmore (2004) proposes "norms of good practice" which contribute to internal accountability. He writes:

> Certain types of structures are more likely than others to intensify and focus norms of good practice: organizations in which face-to-face relationships

> dominate impersonal, bureaucratic ones; organizations in which people routinely interact around common problems of practice; and organizations that focus on the results of their work for students, rather than on the working conditions of professionals. (p. 32)

For Mr. Spahn, face-to-face accountability on a weekly basis did not mean a face-to-face meeting with the superintendent each week. Mr. Spahn wanted the principals to be held directly accountable by their own building leadership team for follow-through of instructional leadership. The principals were held accountable by the superintendent, indirectly, by the requirement to submit the minutes of the weekly leadership team meeting to the superintendent's office.

A different superintendent, Dr. Cline, did require principals to keep a log of their classroom visits but he coupled this practice with face-to-face accountability where the principal was required to meet directly with the superintendent. Dr. Cline shared his perspective that the principal log was a low level form of accountability. He said a much higher level form of accountability was the face-to-face meetings that he had with principals when he visited their school. He said, "One of our practices [of the district office administration] is to join them in walk-throughs." He said that when he visited schools every Wednesday and conversed with principals about teaching and learning, he was able to tell if the principals were following-through with the learning-walk expectation. He said that there was a time when one of the principals was not following-through with the expectation. Dr. Cline said that he told the principal, "You haven't done this. I don't want to have this meeting with you

again and you haven't done it. We don't have anything to talk about." He explained that it was the dialogue about teaching and learning that was important. The learning-walk was a means to an end. The classroom observations provided a platform for discussion about the instructional core. He explained:

> You don't have to be doing the greatest or producing the greatest results on the team. You have to start practicing. We have to have conversations about your journey. What are you doing about it? What kind of conversations did you have with your teachers as a result? What kind of support are you providing as a result of what you're observing? What have you learned as a result of walking through multiple classrooms? What are you acting on as a result of that?

Dr. Cline explained that he wanted to get to the point where students and teachers were so familiar with seeing administrators in classrooms that they did not stop the teaching/learning process when an administrator entered the classroom. He explained, "Most folks would say that I spend more time in classrooms than most any superintendent they know." He continued, "Often times people don't even pay any attention to me when I walk into classrooms. They won't break stride. I'm perfectly fine with that. I think that's a good thing. I'd just as soon they not pay attention to me."

Dr. Rogers, said that he, too, visited classrooms frequently. He said, "I've done many walk-throughs with them into the math classrooms. We do a lot of walk-throughs. I mean, we walk-through all the time. We're walkin' through classrooms

all the time." By visiting schools, Dr. Rogers was holding principals accountable through face-to-face accountability.

Dr. Rogers explained that while he required principals to keep a log of their learning-walks, he realized the most effective means for accountability was the face-to-face meetings that he had with principals when he visited their school. It was not the log, per se, that led to accountability. It was the conversations that he had with the principal about the principal's instructional leadership. Dr. Rogers explained that when he and the assistant superintendent visited the schools, they would ask the principals to show them the log that the principal was using to document that the teachers were following-through with the implementation of the instructional practice that had been taught to the teachers in the teachers' professional development sessions. Dr. Rogers explained:

> That's good for us because we go in and say, "Show us Teacher B. Well, show us a couple more teachers. Well, how come you haven't seen Teacher B and you've seen these guys seven times? And you haven't been to this one yet? Is there something? Does this one scare you? Why are you leaving this one alone?

Dr. Rogers said that he realized that much of the documentation that had required in the past had not been important. He wanted to narrow the focus of the principals on the most important work—the improvement of the instructional core. He said that he had redesigned the principal's evaluation criteria to narrow the focus of the principal's evaluation. He said that the previous principal evaluation form had

included 32 indicators. Principals had been required to bring a portfolio of evidence to document the 32 indicators. Dr. Rogers said that he worked with the principals to narrow the focus. He said, "I went to them in October and said, 'This is too many. You guys are just piling up crap to bring in here and show me.'" He explained that he worked with the principals to narrow the criteria to seven elements. He said, "One is the walk-through process." Another was the instructional improvement process. His practice was to meet with each principal individually four times a year to review their progress towards meeting the performance goals in each of the seven criteria. He said that as a result of the narrowed focus, he was monitoring the learning-walk process and the instructional improvement process much more frequently than he had in the past. Dr. Rogers said that he and the district's assistant superintendent visited schools every week to monitor principals' follow-through in both the learning-walk process and the instructional improvement process. Through these weekly visits, he was able to gain a much better perspective about the principals' practice than if he had only visited with the principals for the four meetings per year that were scheduled to review the overall performance of each principal.

Structures and Systems to Support Implementation

Superintendents learned about the practice of learning-walks from various sources. A common perspective from the superintendents was that it was important for principals to value the practice and to work to improve their knowledge and skills—their knowledge of effective instruction and their skills to impact teachers'

instructional practice and, as a result, student learning. Superintendents indicated that this was a change in the role of the principal. In the past, principals had been expected to be organizational managers. Superintendents understood that they were asking the principals to change their role, to become an instructional leader. The work of a manager is to maintain the status quo. The work of a leader is to improve the results. By implementing various structures and systems, the superintendents worked to support the knowledge, skills, and efficacy of the principals.

Develop Commitment to Instructional Leadership

Superintendents believed that an essential component of an effective school was an effective principal. Research suggests that the quality of the principal's leadership does impact the quality of the school (Chenoweth, 2007, p. 222; Cotton, 1999, p. 37; Fouts, 2003, p. 38; Fouts, Abbott, & Baker, 2002, p. 15; Leader & Stern, 2008, p. 187; Lezotte & McKee, 2002, p. 17; Lezotte & McKee, 2006, p. 110; Marzano et al., 2005, p. 32; Scheerens & Bosker as cited in Marzano, 2003, p. 17; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 43). Dr. Cline stated, "The principal is the lynchpin, the key element, to having a high performing building. If you don't have a high performing principal—well-skilled, dedicated, community-involved leader—you aren't going to have a successful, high performing school."

Superintendents in the study expected principals to be instructional leaders. They understood that this was a change from the past. Many superintendents in the study reflected on their own experience when they had served as a principal and how

what they were asking their principals to do, now, was much different than what they had been asked to do when they, themselves, had served as a principal. Mr. Olivia explained:

> You know, I've been in this business a long, long time. And I was a principal in [another district]. At that time, we were just more of a facilities manager. You know? We didn't have a whole bunch of discussions on curriculum. As long as the building was clean, and few complaints, and teachers were relatively happy—because we weren't pushing the hell out of them. You know, we would get those tests, the national tests, and those reports would come at the beginning of the year. We couldn't even understand them! You know what I'm saying? I got up and put them away…you were protecting your people.

Mr. Oliva explained that with education reform, the role of the principal has changed. He said, "It's a big difference. And you know what? Principals are still having a difficult time with that. They really are. Their reaction is not much different than that 26 year veteran teacher. Because you're asking them to do things that they just aren't used to doing." Mr. Oliva expected the principals in his district to develop a commitment to the role of instructional leader.

Elmore (2004) explains that, in the past, schools were "loosely coupled" and the role of the principal was to "buffer" the classroom from outside influences. The superintendents in this study expected the principals in their district to do just the opposite. These superintendents expected their principals to be knowledgeable about

the classroom instructional practices in their school with the goal of sharing effective practices across the school and across the district.

Mr. Spahn was quite candid in his analysis of this change in the role of the principal. He said:

> As long as the teacher could teach whatever they wanted to teach whenever they wanted to teach it and grade however they wanted to grade it, *no one cared!* As long as you weren't failing too many people and you weren't giving "F's" or you weren't giving a bunch of discipline…that's all we cared about. But now, where you've got to get a certain skill set to them, man, the teaching's gotta be good or you won't!

Elmore (2004) proposes that in a standards-based system where high achievement for all students is expected, the role of the principal must change. Elmore writes:

> The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result. (p. 59)

In the past, principals were expected to use their positional power to buffer the classrooms. The superintendents in this study expected principals to change their role and use their positional power to positively impact instructional practice and improve

the instructional core in each classroom. The superintendents wanted principals to be committed to instructional leadership.

Dr. Edison said that, when he was a principal, he had known that the instructional core was the most important aspect of the school system but it wasn't until he became a superintendent that he realized he needed to take action, to provide leadership, to make it a focus for all of the school administrators. He said, "I always wanted to make a difference in the classroom but, I guess, it wasn't until I got to the district level where I could see it better, and realize how very, very important it is and the decision to make it happen."

A different superintendent, Dr. Pauliss, said that, over time, as the district leadership kept a sustained focus on the instructional core and the expectation that principals would impact instruction, it was her perspective that the principals and other school staff had accepted the principals in this role. She said:

> Now it's easier to say. Nobody can disagree with—it's like the American flag and apple pie and motherhood, you know? Nobody disagrees that instructional leadership *should* be what we're doing. And that's what it is about.

Dr. Pauliss explained that the success that the district had in recent years with improvements in student learning provided support for continuing the practices that the administrators had been implementing. She emphasized that she used multiple measures of student progress to assess the impact of the instructional leadership practices that were implemented in the district. The measures included state

assessments as well as local assessments. The success on all of these indicators provided support for continued leadership practices. She said:

> It gets easier as we get stronger results in each building each year. It's like, "OK. It is working." And we kind of have this mantra, and it just sort of evolved, but, "Quality instruction isn't everything, it's the only thing." And nobody disagrees with that. We still have the football games and we still have the successes out in the athletic fields and the soccer fields, etc., etc. But it is about the instruction. And it is about getting kids to graduation requirements. And they aren't going to get there, if we aren't—if we don't know what their skills are, and how we catch them up, and how we push them forward in real, rigorous ways. But it gets easier establishing that this is what we're about administratively, our instructional leadership, when we're getting stronger results. And it's, like, it is working. It is working. And you can look over time, because, like I say, we're really data driven, and you can look over time, not just on the WASL [Washington Assessment of Student Learning], but on our MAP [Measures of Academic Progress] testing, and our focus on our third grade reading goal, you know, you can look—it isn't the only thing that has made a difference—but we look now, and say, "If we weren't doing what we're doing administratively in terms of this focus, and this kind, unrelenting push on instructional leadership, would we be where we are? Because look where we were eight, nine years ago." And everybody clearly says, "No, we wouldn't."

Some superintendents saw a need to provide additional support to principals, such as additional administrative personnel at the school, so the principals could implement learning-walks. But the majority of superintendents in the study believed that if principals simply made it a priority, the principals could follow-through with daily learning-walks. Dr. Pauliss said that she saw no need to provide additional administrative personnel so that principals could follow-through with learning-walks. She said, "It was just prioritizing your time."

Mr. Tingman explained that as the principals in his district began to become more experienced with implementing learning-walks, principals began to understand that every student discipline case did not need to be viewed as an immediate crisis. He said the principals began to realize that a student who was sent to the office for discipline could sit in the office and wait for the principal to finish a learning-walk. He said that the principals who balanced their work effectively were able to say, "You know, this child can sit here. I'm going to go down [to a classroom] and he'll still be here when I get back."

Dr. Dell said that she felt that the schools in her district were reasonably staffed and that having the principals increase their visibility in classrooms was simply a matter of them making the focus on instruction a priority. Dr. Cline had a similar perspective. He said that he expected principals to be committed to participating in learning-walks and working to improve the instructional core. He said, "So, part of what it is, is, that culture of commitment, and the culture of

investment, and the culture of belief around the value of that work and try to contain the rest of it."

Superintendents explained that principals had various strategies to ensure that they participated in learning-walks each day. Dr. Pauliss said that different principals had different systems. She said, "Some of them are just like clock work. Office staff knows that [a specific principal] is going to be in classrooms from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., every day, barring a fire."

Dr. Frye explained that some of the principals in her district had attended a workshop to learn a strategy called "breakthrough coaching" (Pancoast, 2007). At the workshop they learned how to schedule their time, consistently each week, so that they could spend a whole day out of their office and spend the entire day in classrooms. She said, "I would say there's no consistent thing out there. Some of them—just as they can. Some, they'll schedule it…you know, like breakthrough coaching does."

Mr. Tingman said that he worked with the principals to help them understand that their focus on the classroom instruction was the most important thing that they could do and that they could leave other things to finish the next day. He said:

> One of the things I firmly believe is that principals should leave one or two things undone every day. They work way too many hours. They work way too hard. And a lot of the stuff they're doing has very little value in terms of instructional improvement of the school.

Mr. Tingman worked with the principals in his district to help them understand that it was his expectation that they spend their time on activities that would lead to instructional improvement.

Dr. Andrews said that he expected principals to be in classrooms on a daily basis but he did not have a specific amount of time that he required the principals to report or log. He preferred to work with the principals so they would realize the value of learning-walks and they would be committed to implementing the practice. This is related to Fout's conceptual model of first order change and second order change. Dr. Andrews explained that he had learned from his experience as an administrator in a different district, prior to his current position. He said, "In [my previous district], we said two hours a day in the classroom. And then they came back and said, 'What do you want me to do in the classroom for two hours?'"

Dr. Andrews explained that rather than implementing a requirement of a certain amount of time in the classroom each day or a certain number of visits to different classrooms each day, he and the other district office administrators were working with the principals with the goal of having the principals embrace the role of instructional leader. He wanted principals to learn the importance of engaging teachers in dialogue about instructional practices. He wanted the principals to be motivated to participate in learning-walks because they saw the value in doing so—not because it was a requirement or expectation.

A different superintendent, Mr. Oliva, provided insight to the balance that is needed when leading an improvement effort. He said, "Well, I think these

movements start out with the premise that change is not going to occur by accident. And then you have to also go along with the premise that you can't dictate improvement." Unlike some districts, where principals had been participating in learning-walks prior to the superintendent's tenure, Mr. Oliva said that the practice of learning-walks was a new practice for almost all of the principals in his large district. He said that for many principals, it was only after they began to implement the practice that they saw the value of the learning-walks. He said that, over time, he had observed a change in the principals' attitudes. He said, "The principals are saying it's a value to them."

Mr. Tingman had a similar perspective. He said that initially most of the principals in his district were apprehensive about the mandate to participate in learning-walks on a daily basis. They were skeptical that they were going to be able to meet his expectation. Mr. Tingman said:

> They didn't feel that they were going to have the time. But, then, after they got into it, they started to say, "We're glad we're doing this. This is working for us." Even the principal who was most resistant…said, "You know, I'm glad I'm in the classrooms. I'm seeing things that I wouldn't see if I wasn't."

DuFour (2007) explains that a school leader can be effective by requiring staff to engage in a new practice. He proposes that it is often in doing the new practice that the staff member sees the value. DuFour writes:

> Effective leaders must recognize that school improvement cannot wait for everyone in the organization to have a favorable attitude toward the proposed

> change. There is abundant evidence in the fields of psychology, organizational development and education that changes in attitudes follow rather than precede changes in behavior. When work is designed to require people to act in new ways, the possibility of new experiences are created for them. If those new experiences are positive, they can lead to new attitudes and assumptions over time. (p. 40)

Reeves (2006) expresses the similar concept when he writes, "…behavior precedes belief. In other words, the cycle of organizational improvement is not 'vision, buy-in, and action' but rather 'vision, action, buy-in, and more action.' The buy-in does not occur until employees first see the results of their actions" (p. 96).

Dr. Edison shared that it was his expectation that every principal should visit every classroom in their school at least once a week. To ensure that principals followed-through with the learning-walks, Dr. Edison said he believed that the principals needed to be held accountable to the superintendent. He wanted the principals to embrace the role of instructional leader but he found that they did not follow-through consistently with the implementation of learning-walks until he began to hold them accountable. He explained:

> Even as a principal, I knew what a challenge it is. It's so hard to get into the classroom. So, unless you really make it a priority, and really schedule it, it doesn't happen. That's just a fact. So we always encouraged walk-throughs, but, really formalizing it, and tracking it, and monitoring it started two years ago.

Superintendents in the study expected principals in their district to change from being an organizational manager to being an instructional leader. One way to do this was to become more knowledgeable of classroom instructional practices by visiting classrooms on a daily basis. While the classroom visit was a first step, other actions would be needed to impact actual instructional practice. Nevertheless, the mere presence of the principal in the classroom provides teachers, other school staff, parents/guardians, and community members with a symbolic statement about the priorities of the leader of the school. And, the expectation by the superintendent for the principals' use of their time provides the school community with a symbolic statement about the priorities of the leader for the entire school district. Dr. Dell explained this when she said:

> What is important? Where do you spend your time? It tells them they really care about this because the principal is there. And in our district, it's not just the principals. I and our central office team walk with the principals. They know everybody cares about this. Because they're spending time in my classroom. You know, I've had teachers say to me, "I've taught for 25 years. I've never had a superintendent in my classroom." That's sad. I mean, that's sad that nobody cares enough to see you do what you do for your lifetime calling. So, I think there's a lot of messages there.

Superintendents in this study had mandated that principals spend a portion of each day in the classroom. This mandate can be viewed as a first order change. It was apparent in each interview that the superintendents expected principals to

embrace the practice as a tool for instructional leadership. The superintendents provided opportunities for professional development so the principals would learn about the practice and so the principals could implement the practice more effectively. Some superintendents had more specific expectations than others regarding the amount of time or the number of classrooms that they expected the principals to visit each day. But all of the superintendents expected the principals to eventually move from mere compliance to the mandate to a commitment to engage in the practice and embrace the role of instructional leader for the school.

Provide Additional Resources

While most of the superintendents expressed the opinion that the schools were reasonably staffed and that the principals would be able to meet the superintendent's expectation for the implementation of learning-walks if the principals reprioritized their time, there was one superintendent who explained that he had worked with his high school principal to address the principal's concerns about the management of the school. Dr. Edison said he worked with the high school principal to analyze the principal's work load and, after doing so, he did provide the principal with additional staff at the high school to assist with operational duties. The principal had requested additional personnel, a Dean of Students, to assist with operational concerns, such as student discipline. Dr. Edison explained:

> Early on in the conversation, it was that they didn't have enough support. And, so, I added support to the high school—a Dean of Students. And it has

> helped them. And the whole intention of that was I would provide the Dean of Students and you guarantee me that all three of your administrators would be in your classrooms, you know, with a schedule that we've been discussing. And, so, it's worked. It's worked. And that's been very good.

When asked if he was seeing the high school administrators in the classroom more as a result of adding the Dean of Student, Dr. Edison answered, "Oh, my goodness sakes. Very definitely!"

Samuels (2008) reports a project where grant funds have been used to provide a "School Administration Manager" to selected schools in order to free the principal's time to focus on instruction. The results of the project indicate that as a result of the additional administrative support, principals were able to increase the amount of time they spent each day on instructional leadership activities.

Mr. Spahn and Dr. Andrews emphasized that the practice of learning-walks must be supported with additional systems and structures to support the improvement of instruction. These superintendents had provided additional resources to the principals to support instructional improvement.

Mr. Spahn used funds from different funding sources to provide instructional coaches—teachers who were released from teaching students to work with other teachers to improve instructional practice. Mr. Spahn explained, "We hired four staff developers this year. We have two that work in three elementary buildings. And one that works at the middle school. And one that works at the high school. Four full-time positions I put in this year." He explained that the instructional coaches were

hired using the state allocation of Student Achievement Funds which were the result of a state initiative (I-728). Mr. Spahn continued, "We have Reading First coaches at the elementaries…and then we have ELL coaches which are coaches that work with teachers on how to work with ELL students in the classroom and they're full-time coaches, too." Reading First and programs to support English Language Learners (ELL), such as bilingual and migrant programs, are special programs funded through state and federal funds. Mr. Spahn explained how he was able to reallocate the resources from special funding sources to provide additional instructional coaches.

Mr. Spahn expected principals to use the instructional coaches to improve the quality of instruction in their school. Mr. Spahn expected principals to participate in principal learning-walks and identify individual professional development needs for teachers. The principals were expected to use the instructional coaches as a resource to provide professional development and meet the individual needs of teachers. Mr. Spahn emphasized that the practice of having principals spend a portion of their day in the classroom was just one structure that the district had implemented to improve instruction. He explained:

> I don't think principals will do the work if you don't provide the support necessary for them to be able to, one, make the change in the classroom. For them just to go in or make a note or actually meet with a teacher afterwards and say, "This is what I want you to change," or "This is something you might want to do," isn't going to happen because, one, they can't get back to the

> teacher; two, there's no support for the teacher to *make* the change, so, it's just like a dead-end.

Mr. Spahn explained that in weekly leadership team meetings, he expected principals to discuss with their building leadership team how the structures and systems needed to be used to address the needs of teachers to improve their instructional practice. The structures and systems included professional development for the leadership team, instructional coaches for teachers, a principal coach for the principals, and a half-day of early release of students on a weekly basis to provide time for staff to collaborate and participate in professional development.

Mr. Spahn wanted all of the structures to work together to provide support for staff to improve instructional practices. He explained this process, using the term "coaching cycle." He said that he had learned about this concept at Harvard from the presenter Lucy West (2003). The coaching cycle involved structures working together as a system: the learning-walks, the instructional coaches, the weekly meeting of the building leadership team, and the weekly early release time for collaboration and professional development. Mr. Spahn explained:

> As the principal, you go in and observe. You bring them out and debrief with them. What went well in the lesson? What did you think didn't go so well in the lesson? You decide what it is…what skill you want them to work on specifically. You tell them. Or they identify it themselves. You say, "OK. In the next three weeks, I'm going to have [the instructional coach] come in,

> work with you on this, and I'll be back in three weeks. And I'm going to look for your progress."

Mr. Spahn expected the building leadership team to oversee the process, analyzing and assessing the needs, the progress, and the problems of practice. He expected the principal to lead the meeting. He gave an example of what he expected. He said:

> [The principal] says, "I went in with John last week. I said he's going to work on this. [Instructional coach], I want you to work with him for the next three weeks. Mark here: 'John. Working on Read Aloud and pacing and [the instructional coach] is going to work with him for three weeks.'"

The superintendent provided additional resources to the schools; he expected the principal to use the resources to improve instruction. He expected principals to lead the process. This system was similar to the system that Elmore (2004) found when he studied the work of Anthony Alvarado and Elaine Fink when they were in District #2 in New York City. Elmore explains:

> The District #2 story is a complex one, as are, I suspect, the stories of all improving school districts. The main themes of the story are continuity of focus on the core instruction, first in literacy and then in mathematics; heavy investments in highly targeted professional development for teachers and principals in the fundamentals of strong classroom instruction; strong and explicit accountability by principals and teachers for the quality of practice and the level of student performance, backed by direct oversight of classroom practice by principals and district personnel; and a normative climate in which

> adults take responsibility for their own, their colleagues', and their students' learning. At all levels of the system, isolation is seen as the enemy of improvement, so most management and professional development activities are specifically designed to connect teachers, principals, professional developers, and district administrators with each other and with outside experts around specific problems of practice. (p. 78)

Throughout the interview, Mr. Spahn frequently reflected on the practices in his district and indicated that he was working for continuous improvement of the systems that were in place. He talked about his future plans. To improve the coaching cycle, he said the he planned to allocate additional resources to provide release time for teachers during the school day so they could visit other teachers' classrooms and participate in learning-walks. He believed that this would support the professional development of teachers as they worked to incorporate new instructional skills.

Dr. Andrews explained that he, too, had provided additional resources to support the principals in their role as instructional leader. He shared his perspective that, while he viewed the additional resources as supports to assist the principals in their work, he thought that there might be some principals who did not share his view. He explained:

> We give them building visitation money. So, they've got about $5,000 per building to use substitutes to free up teachers to come watch each other teach and/or plan. We buy them a lot of books [for professional development]. We provide these consultant days. I haven't heard the push back that I did in [my

> previous district]. And, you know, I would identify all of these things and say that they're supports. And they'd say, "Well, having the coach here is no support. That's an expectation. You know. There's somebody breathing down my neck that I've got to do something with." Yeah. What's one of our sayings? "Gentle, gentle pressure, or support, relentlessly applied." Kind of like the technology thing. You know. "When can I come over and show you how to use the new software? Would two or three o-clock be better?" That's questionable whether that's a support or an expectation.

Superintendents in the study provided examples of additional resources that were allocated to support the instructional improvement efforts. As Dr. Andrews stated, whether principals viewed these additional resources as supportive was not clear. What was clear was that many superintendents believed that the practice of learning-walks was just one piece of the instructional improvement puzzle. Many structures and processes were needed to work together as a functioning system to support the improvement of the instructional core.

Implement School-wide Discipline Systems

Dr. Benson explained that the support she was providing to a large number of the principals was to help them develop and implement a positive, school-wide discipline plan.

She explained that it was important for every school to have a school-wide, positive intervention and behavior support discipline plan so that student discipline

would not consume the principal's time. It was her perspective that the majority of principals in the district had strong instructional leadership skills but that many were not able to fulfill their potential as an instructional leader because they were having to spend too much time each day on student discipline. She explained:

> We're very focused on support for the professional development for school-wide discipline practice—the positive approach rather than the negative approach. And trying to help on the management side in professional development, more so than we are with the instructional leadership side, because I happen to have a group of principals who are very strong in understanding what good instruction looks like. Doesn't mean they're all where they need to be. It means they're stronger in that area. So we're focused a little more on the dynamics of management and how do you decrease your time in management so you can increase your time in the classroom.

She explained that through her visitations of schools and classrooms and through her conversations with the principals, she was able to determine which schools had positive, school-wide approaches to discipline and which schools needed to develop and implement a more effective plan. She said that in conversations with some of the principals in her district, she would hear comments such as, "So much of my time is spent on the parents and suspensions and discipline." She explained to the researcher, "When you hear those kinds of comments, and then others, 'Yeah, me, too,' you can target pretty quickly who doesn't have discipline—school-wide systems."

She explained that her approach was to use the expertise that was on her administrative team. She matched a principal who had an established and effective plan with a principal who needed to improve their school-wide plan. She said that if the current plan was, "Send them to the office. That's the solution for misbehavior," then she knew that the principal needed assistance to learn how to work with staff to develop a more effective, positive, school-wide discipline plan. She explained that her strongest principals were principals with the skills for the instructional leadership work and the skills to work with staff to implement a positive, school-wide discipline plan. Because student discipline was managed effectively, these principals had more time to devote to instructional leadership.

Knuth and Banks (2006) note that it is important for aspiring principals to understand that operational issues for the school must be managed effectively or the principal will not have the opportunity to impact instruction. If the principal does not effectively address the management side of the job or the principal focuses so much on instructional leadership that the principal neglects the proper functioning of the school system, the principal risks losing the principalship. Through their research, the authors identified three scenarios that were common for principals losing their job: the principal focused on instructional leadership to the detriment of the school's operations, the principal had an ethical lapse, or the principal did not effectively manage special interest groups or politically charged issues. In regards to the operations of the schools, they warned of a "repeated scenario" that they had discovered:

> [The] scenario involves neophyte principals who leave their preparation programs to begin their new careers, determined to be instructional leaders (Standard 2). They dutifully convene school improvement teams and concentrate their time and energies on curricular and instructional issues. Often, however, they are the last to know that their principalships are in trouble because of chaos and dysfunction resulting from their neglect of basic management issues (Standard 3).[6] (p. 6)

The authors conclude that all of the principal standards are essential for principal success. While instructional leadership may be viewed as the primary goal, all of the principal standards are essential.

As Dr. Benson explained, in her district, principals who had implemented effective school-wide discipline plans based on the principles of positive interventions and behavior supports were able to spend less time on student discipline and more time on instructional leadership. Principals who had implemented effective systems to address the operational issues in the school were able to devote more time to instructional leadership.

Time for Team Learning and Developing Shared Vision

To increase the knowledge and skills of principals, every superintendent in the study shared how administrative meetings with principals were structured to focus on the instructional core. A variety of meeting structures were reported. Mr. Oliva reported that the principals met every other month to learn about the STAR protocol.

Dr. Dell shared that she met every week on Monday afternoon to have principals share what they had learned by participating in learning-walks. Dr. Benson, the superintendent of a large urban district, said that she met every other Tuesday from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon with all of the principals in the district for a total of eight hours each month. She said that one hour was devoted to operational issues and the other seven hours each month were devoted to the principals' learning. She viewed the meeting time as a professional learning community for the principals. She said, "So that's a huge structural change and a huge expectation because, of course, they have to be out of their building because they're at the district office with me. And I am running those meetings." She explained, "I'm doing the professional learning community discussions and groupings and facilitating that learning."

Dr. Andrews reported a similar structure. He said, "That's the first thing I did when I got here, was to say, 'Will you give me two days a month for professional development?' They were more than willing to do that." He explained that during his tenure with the district, the principals had asked for more professional development time. He explained, "In fact, they asked for more time with their colleagues to talk about and process this kind of work."

It was the perspective of Dr. Andrews that the superintendent needed to model life-long learning and a commitment to continuous improvement. He said, "Oh, what's my little saying? 'Lead learner lead.'"

In addition to regular meeting time during the school year for team learning, many of the superintendents in the study structured time in the summer for team

learning. Superintendents and their staff even attended summer institutes across the country. Of the twelve superintendents in the study, six had participated in a summer institute at Harvard. Dr. Pauliss and Dr. Cline's districts had both received grants from the Gates Foundation which supported their participation. Dr. Cline explained that, as a result of the grant funding, he was able to bring all of the principals and district office administrators to a summer institute at Harvard. He said, "Our entire administrative team has been there. One of the things that I wanted to do is create a foundation and common experience for the entire team." Dr. Cline said that, as a result of their participation in the institute, the principals said that they wanted to implement the practice of learning-walks in their district. Dr. Cline said, "Folks came away with an expectation of what we desired to have as a common practice and a standard."

Another superintendent, Mr. Spahn, explained that he had established partnerships with outside expertise which included both the staff at Harvard and staff from the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington to support the team learning of his administrative team and to develop a shared vision. Mr. Spahn explained:

> The whole thing with Harvard, Peter, was trying to get everybody a common experience. It wasn't necessary to…the content was there because, you know, they talk about instruction, they talk about closing the achievement gap, they talk about how important it is that you get to the instructional core, but we needed to get a baseline experience for everybody to begin to have the same

> conversations about instruction and the kinds of things that go along to improve it. And we didn't have that yet.

Mr. Spahn explained that as a result of the Harvard institute, his administrative team had developed a focus on instructional improvement.

Dr. Rogers explained that he was planning to improve his administrative team's focus in the upcoming school year by focusing only on instructional issues when he met with the principals as a team. It was his opinion that operational issues could be solved as they arose. He explained:

> Our principal's meetings, that all we're gonna do [focus on instruction]. That's all we're gonna do. All this operational stuff, I'm gonna say, "Guys, you've got operational issues? You just call me on the phone or drop in here for ten minutes. But our meetings, scheduled, around this work—you can't miss it."

Dr. Pauliss explained that in her district, there was regular time scheduled for administrative team learning-walks and quarterly institutes where administrators and other school leaders were provided with intensive professional development.

She described one structure for administrative team learning-walks that she called small group learning-walks; the purpose was team learning. She explained that the elementary principals met with the district office administrators at a different elementary school every Wednesday morning. The secondary principals met with the district office administrators at a different secondary school every Thursday morning. The secondary learning-walks would alternate between middle schools and high

schools; one week the team would meet at a middle school; the next week the team would meet at a high school.

In addition to the weekly meetings, principals and district office administrators met four times a year in half-day institutes that were organized by the district office administrators. Dr. Pauliss explained that the team learning at the institutes progressed over time to provide a deeper understanding of the district's instructional model. She said, "We really got deeper and deeper into the layers of the onion, peeling it back." She explained:

> You can put words to "purpose" but what does it look like in the classroom? How can I observe "purpose"? Oh, I can hear somebody saying, "The purpose of our lesson today, children, it da-dat-da-dat." But that isn't all there is to purpose.

The importance of students knowing the purpose of the lesson is highlighted in numerous instructional models.[7] Nevertheless, Dr. Pauliss explained that it took two years of the administrators team learning time, focusing on the purpose of the lesson, before they began to consider student responses to the teacher's instruction. She explained that the administrators began to focus not only on whether the teacher stated the purpose to the lesson but also on the student learning—they focused on whether students understood the purpose. She explained that the administrators began to question students about their learning during learning-walks and the administrators requested a split-screen view of video-taped lessons during the team learning time so they could observe students' responses to the teacher's instructions.

She said, "Once we got to that point, where we saw the split-screen, administrators' learning really kind of took off. Because you're trying to make instruction look tangible." Dr. Pauliss explained that it was a two year process for the administrators in the district to shift from focusing their attention on the teacher's teaching to focusing on the student's learning.

Dr. Edison organized a variety of experiences for the administrative team during their team learning time to build a shared vision for effective instruction. This included book studies, professional development with a consultant, and administrative team learning-walks. He reflected on the team learning by his administrative team:

> I think our book studies, you know, learning about Marzano and the STAR protocol, I think that's helping us, as administrators, recognize and know what quality instruction is. So, I think, definitely, we're all learning. We're getting better and better at that. At looking and knowing what we're looking for and identifying it.

Supovitz (2006) proposes that using common vocabulary is essential for team learning. He writes, "Developing a common vocabulary to discuss current and desired practice is a large reform step in itself because it creates a foundation for problem-solving" (p. 184).

Dr. Andrews explained that during the time for team learning for his administrative team, he focused on developing a common language about instruction. He said:

> It comes back to the Vygotsky triangle, in terms of, "Well, let's go get the outside expertise. Let's find out from our consultants or coaches. But, then, let's learn from each other in the social kind of thing—whether it's a book study, discussion, or walk—and, then, let's reify it. Let's try to capture it and give meaning to it. Because it's, now, not just words. We're developing our own little code language in our building or in our district. And we've got a lot of code language that, then, means—shorthand—that we can communicate more quickly with one another, where we are, and where we want to go."

Dr. Andrews explained that a model for instruction in his district was "purpose, instructional approach, and results." Just as a teacher was expected to plan a lesson for students with those three factors in mind, he planned the professional development for principals during their team learning time with those factors in mind. He made sure to have a clear purpose for the professional development, deliver effective instruction, and assess the results of the learning experience by monitoring if principals were following-through and applying the new knowledge and skills.

Any instructional model could be used in a similar manner. For example, Simpson's work with learning targets (Simpson, 2005) could be used in the design of the principal's professional development program. What are the learning targets for the principals' professional development? What is the progression of learning that principals need to know in order to reach the learning target? What are the resources that principals can use to achieve their learning target?

As superintendents led improvement efforts, they said that they learned a great deal about the improvement process. Dr. Pauliss explained, "What we have learned in five years: that it takes a whole lot longer to learn. Because the more we learn, the more we learn we didn't know." Often the most difficult part of the improvement process is learning what needs to be done next. One of the difficulties that all superintendents faced was the prevailing culture about teaching—a culture that is contrary to the development of "professional practice." Elmore (2003b) explains:

> We subscribe to a peculiar view of professionalism: that professionalism equals autonomy in practice. So when I come to your classroom and say, "Why are you teaching in this way?" it is viewed as a violation of your autonomy and professionalism. Consider what would happen if you were on an airplane and the pilot came on the intercom as you were starting your descent and said, "I've always wanted to try this without the flaps." Or if your surgeon said to you in your pre-surgical conference, "You know, I'd really like to do this the way I originally learned how to do it in 1978." Would you be a willing participant? People get sued for doing that in the "real" professions, where the absence of a strong technical core of knowledge and discourse about what effective practice is carries a very high price. (p. 12)

Each of the superintendents in this study shared how they were working with the principals in their district to develop a "strong technical core of knowledge and discourse about what effective practice is." Team learning takes time. The discourse of the administrative team in each district was focused on both the effective practice

of teachers and the effective practice of principals. Every superintendent scheduled time, some on a weekly basis, for principals to work together with the district office administrators with the goal of developing a shared vision for high quality instruction.

Sustain Partnerships with Outside Experts

Many superintendents in the study reported that they brought consultants to the district to assist with the principals' professional development. Dr. Benson explained that she was willing to do whatever it would take to support the principals' learning. She expected principals to lead the instructional improvement process. She said:

> My expectation for the principals in the leadership of that is very, very high. But it doesn't come without support. I'll show them how to do it. I'll do it with them. I'll send them to training. We'll bring training in. You know, it's not that I expect them to already know how to do this.

It appeared that many of the superintendents brought consultants into the district because the superintendent wanted to participate in the learning process with the other administrators. Many of the superintendents spoke of administrative institutes that were organized in the district so that the principals and district office administrators could be provided with intensive professional development organized by a consultant or a team of consultants.

Dr. Cline said that administrative institutes were held in his district every summer and winter. The same consultant who was associated with the Harvard

institutes came to the district for five consecutive summers to work with the administrative team during the district institutes. Dr. Cline explained, "We do a five day [institute] in the summer and then we do a couple days in the winter." By having a sustained partnership with the consultant from Harvard, the superintendent was able to maintain continuity in the principals' professional development.

Dr. Dell explained that she was impressed with the honesty of the principals on her administrative team. She said that when she began to emphasize the importance of instructional leadership, many of the principals in her district told her that they were apprehensive because they felt that they did not have the skills necessary to impact the instructional core. She said, "Their only hesitancy—which I thought was beautiful—was the honesty that, 'I'm not sure I'm good enough at this.'" She said that she responded positively to their apprehension. She said that she told them, "Well, great! Let's learn together!" She explained that the district adopted the STAR protocol as the district's instructional model and consultants came to the district to work with teachers and principals, helping them learn about the different aspects of the instructional framework. Consultants worked exclusively with the principals every other month. A consultant was matched with each school in the district. The consultant who was assigned to a school would participate in learning-walks with the school's principal and they would debrief. Dr. Dell said:

> What we've been doing to make them smarter is to continually talk about the protocol. Continually going through that, "Let's look at this classroom and

> see how we agree on that." You know. Videos that [the consultants] have that we look at, and we wait, and respond to.

Dr. Dell explained that the consultants provided her with formal feedback twice a year: at the middle of the school year and at the end of the school year. She had the lead consultant meet with the school board and report his observations and assessment of the district's implementation of the instructional model. She explained that the consultant had recently met with the school board. She said:

> He just finished meeting with the board. We meet with the board and say, "Here's what teachers are doing." And, we just met with the board and found that there's still, you know, "the haves" and "the have-nots". There's this small percentage of people that aren't doing it. And so, you know, the board said, "Well, then, they're going to have to do it or find employment elsewhere."

Another superintendent, Dr. Edison, explained that he, too, brought a consultant to the district to work with the administrative team to learn about instructional frameworks and learning-walk protocols. He had used the same consultant over a number of years so that new learning could be connected to past learning.

Dr. Rogers explained that he brought a variety of outside experts to the district to work with teachers and principals to improve their knowledge and skills regarding the instructional core. The consultants were content based. There were consultants who focused on effective instructional strategies for math and consultants who

focused on effective instructional strategies for literacy. In addition, the district had partnered with a university to provide ongoing support to the administrative team. Dr. Rogers explained that he had a coach who worked specifically with him to coach him in his work as superintendent. Dr. Rogers said, "He works with me on trying to create: 'How do you model the practice that you're expecting those principals to do?'" Dr. Rogers explained that superintendents in neighboring districts participated in learning-walks together. Three articles (Goehner, 2008; Lyons, 2008; Rallis, Tedder, Lachman, & Elmore, 2006) describe superintendent networks where superintendents from different district come together on a regular basis to participate in learning-walks and debrief their observations. Goehner quotes a regional administrator who said, "There's real value in the fact that the formal leadership people at these districts are working with their teachers to identify what good instruction looks like, and supporting it by focusing resources on it" (p. 14). Lyons quotes a superintendent who said, "I've become a learner in better understanding of what good instruction is. I now know what this looks like so I can help principals lead the work with teachers" (p. 16). The practice of bringing school administrators together to participate in learning-walks and then debrief their observations is not limited to district boundaries. In this way, the superintendents use each other as outside experts.

Mr. Spahn was another superintendent who used district resources to sustain a relationship with outside consultants to assist principals with their professional development. Periodically, a principal coach would come from San Diego to work

with the district's principals. Mr. Spahn explained that the principal coach was a former elementary principal who was retired. The principal coach had worked in the San Diego Unified School District during the time that Anthony Alvarado and Elaine Fink were with district. Mr. Spahn explained:

> [The principal coach] comes in from San Diego probably 12 or 13 times a year to work with the principals specifically about what their role would look like as the instructional leader in the building—how they plan, how they work with their coaches, how they do walk-throughs, how they debrief with teachers—all of that.

Mr. Spahn explained his perspective that the expertise of the principal coach from San Diego was helpful to implement learning-walks effectively in his district. He said, "When you bring the coach in from San Diego, who knows it backwards and forwards and can tell you what it really looks like and how you do it, it's great."

Improve Principal Skills

Superintendents reported that their goal for the principals' professional development was to increase the principal's knowledge and skills regarding how to positively impact the instructional core. They wanted principals to have a shared vision of what high quality instruction looked like. They also wanted principals to develop skills that would improve their ability to influence the instructional core. These included both observation skills and the skills to lead teachers in self-reflection. Mr. Oliva explained, "One of the things we're doing is that we're providing the

principals the skills to be able to observe what quality teaching looks like." Dr. Pauliss said, "In these instructional conferences, there was a lot of skill building of administrators." She explained that the focus was having the administrator learn how to facilitate teacher self-reflection. She explained, "Not asking the 20 questions in a conversation with the teacher but learning the skills of reflective questioning strategies." She said that the district used a variety of sources to develop the principal skills, including *Cognitive Coaching* (Costa and Garmston, 2002). She said, "It's my ability as the administrator to get them to think out loud about their own instruction." She said, "That's the power of reflective conversations. As opposed to a 'question and answer' type of session." She said that when the principals first engaged in role-playing the reflective questioning process during their professional development sessions, they thought that they already had the skills to facilitate the process effectively. She said that when the administrators observed each other in the role-playing sessions, they found that they actually had a difficult time facilitating a self-reflective conversation; the administrators wanted to provide their own observations and evaluations. She said, "That, very honestly, is very hard for most administrators to do. Because you think you know how to have conversations with teachers and then what you learn is, 'Whoa, I really don't.'" She said that improving principal skills in this area has remained a focus in her district. As a result of the professional development and the sustained focus on improving principals' knowledge and skills to impact the instructional core, Dr. Pauliss said that it was her perspective that the

administrative team was working together to support each other and help each other grow. She said:

> The attitude and the positiveness and the sense of team by our administrators throughout the system really gratifies and validates the work that this is working for us because we do—we talk about team—but we believe team. We talk about it and we act as a team. So, we don't work in isolation. When you see an example of an [elementary school] principal working with a middle school principal—I don't think that happens everywhere. Because, quote-unquote, "Everybody's too busy." But we've gotten much better about being busy about what we need to be busy about.

In a different district, Dr. Cline said that the administrators used *The Skillful Leader* (Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000) as their main resource to identify effective reflective questions to use when debriefing with teachers. The superintendent brought a consultant to the district to provide professional development to the principals on how to develop the skills that were outlined in the text. Dr. Cline used the summer institute to set the focus for the year and then used periodic administrative meetings to build the principals' skills. The summer institute was important for providing the focus for the school year. He said, "That's where we do the training. We develop the expectations. We practice. We look at tapes. We look at data." He explained, "We design the summer activity to set the stage for the work during the year and the expectations during the year. [We] calibrate our work together."

Another superintendent, Dr. Andrews, explained that he used the district's instructional coaches as a resource to build the principals' skills. The instructional coaches helped the principals to identify "coachable points" to impact a teacher's instructional practice. He explained that the administrative team and the instructional coaches would watch a lesson together and then the administrators would learn from the instructional coaches about how the lesson could be improved and how the principals could engage teachers in dialogue about their instructional practice. Dr. Andrews explained:

> We'd watch the lesson together, we'd debrief the lesson together, and then our outside people would coach our inside people, in terms of, "How do you have this conversation with the teacher? How do you have your notes? How do you have one or two coachable points and then how do you have this conversation with the teacher?"

Dr. Andrews shared his perspective that the principals in his district were quite varied in their ability to dialogue with teachers about instruction. He thought the principals in his district needed additional professional development to improve their skills.

Dr. Andrews explained that he thought in the principal's professional development sessions it was important to model the effective teaching/learning practices that teachers were expected to use in classrooms with students. He wanted principals to experience effective teaching/learning practices as a learner so they would have a deep understanding of effective pedagogy. He explained that one of the expectations in his district was that teachers would scaffold learning. He said,

"…which is our model: 'To, with, and by.'" Just as teachers were expected to use this model for classrooms instruction, Dr. Andrews, himself, used the model in his work with the principals. He provided an example of how he was working to build the principals' skills in conferencing with teachers. He explained the "to, with, and by" process for the principals' professional development: the principals observed a consultant modeling the skills; principals were then required to practice the skills in role-play situations; and, then, they were expected to use the skills in their work with teachers.

In a different district, Dr. Rogers also was focused on improving principals' skills. He believed that the principals had difficulty giving feedback to teachers. In the upcoming year, he had identified this as a focus for the principals' professional development. He said, "The principals will be practicing giving specific feedback."

Dr. Rogers was concerned that the principals in his district were deferring to the instructional coaches who were in the district. He was concerned that instructional coaches were beginning to be viewed by teachers as evaluators. He explained, "The problem I have is when the principals go into the classroom, they have abandoned the improvement of the instructional practice to the coaches." He explained that another complication was the fact that an instructional coach had recently moved to a principal's position. While he felt this strengthened his principal team, he was concerned that teachers might not see the principals and instructional coaches in the district with clearly defined roles. The instructional coaches often provided professional development for the principals. Nevertheless, Dr. Rogers

expressed the view that the principals needed to be able to work with teachers to provide them with feedback that would impact their instructional practice. He explained, "The principals have got to take back some responsibility of giving teachers clear feedback on their practice."

Dr. Rogers explained that he believed an effective way to deliver professional development to the principals was for the district office administrators and the principals to participate in learning-walks together. Fullan (2008) proposes that the most effective learning is done in context. He writes, "…implementation is the study of learning (or failing to learn) in context" (p. 89). Dr. Rogers brought the principals and the district office administrators together to participate in administrative team learning-walks, together, so they could learn the observational skills that were needed to provide feedback to teachers. Dr. Rogers explained:

> The way we do walk-throughs, is, we come out of the room, we stand together—if there's been four or five of us who have done the walk-through—and we go around, saying, "What did you see? What did you see?" And we brainstorm that. And, for a while, we were doing that together. Now, [the assistant superintendent] and I say to the principal, "What question would you give that teacher?" and "What do you expect?" If the issue is student engagement: "What are you expecting to see in student engagement?" And, "Will you give that feedback to the teacher?" And, so, [the assistant superintendent] and I follow it all the way through the debrief. Where we hear the principal say to the teacher, "This is what I expect to see next time we're

> there." And now we're starting to go in and see if it's really happening. It's very hard for the principal because they don't particularly have the content skills to model the instruction in the classroom that they're holding the teachers accountable for. So it's very hard for them.

Dr. Rogers realized that the administrators needed to build their expertise regarding effective instruction. He believed that they needed to "learn by doing." He explained that in the upcoming school year he was going to expect the principals and the district office administrators, including himself, to participate in the professional development in which the teachers were going to participate. It was his expectation for the next school year that principals and district office administrators, including himself, would be able to teach a model lesson. He said:

> What's coming for them next year, is, besides asking the teachers to do it, they're going to have to go in and model it. And, of course, in order for me to have them do that, [the assistant superintendent] and I, both, have to go into a classroom and model good instruction. And we're gonna do it. And does that sound like fun? It sounds scarier than all get out. Because it's easy to keep asking "the system" to do it. But we've all gotta experience it together.

Cha and Edmondson (2006) explain what might happen when a leader does not follow-through with actions that are consistent with espoused values: the followers perceive the leader as a hypocrite. Dr. Rogers expected principals to be in the classrooms to monitor the teaching/learning process and to learn what effective instruction looks like. He followed-through with his own actions that were consistent

with his espoused values; he visited classrooms, himself, and participated in the practice that he was asking of the principals; and, he expected his district office administrators to do the same. Dr. Rogers and the other district office administrators followed-through and participated in the learning-walks with the principals. Not only did they "talk the talk," espousing the importance of learning-walks and expecting principals to participate in them, Dr. Rogers and the other district administrators participated in the learning-walks themselves; they "walked the walk." Dr. Rogers took this thought process to the next logical step in his plans for the upcoming school year. He wanted to focus on the basis of school improvement, namely the improvement of instructional practice. He said that it is easy for a leader to ask "the system" to follow-through with the improvement process—in this case, to ask teachers to learn about instructional improvement and to improve their practice. He said that in the upcoming year, he would expect the principals, himself, and the other district office administrators to participate in professional development with the teachers and to follow-through with the learning process by learning new instructional skills and demonstrating those skills. In this way, the administrators would model a commitment to continuous improvement and life-long learning.

Dr. Rogers believed that the teaching staff would be more receptive to changing their practice if they saw the administrators modeling the improvement of skills. There was a risk that a teacher with greater expertise than the administrators would not see the value of the administrators working to improve their personal mastery of instructional practice. This was a risk that Dr. Rogers was willing to take. He wanted

the administrative team not only to ask teachers to improve their instructional skills; he expected the administrators, including himself, to improve their instructional skills as well. In this example, the improvement of principals' skills meant the improvement of their actual pedagogical skills.

Manage the Pressure on Staff

In nearly every interview, superintendents discussed managing the pressure on staff. The superintendents said they needed to manage the pressure that they placed on the principals and the principals needed to manage the pressure that they placed on the teachers. Mr. Spahn said, "It's about collaboration and how you build that. It's non-threatening. If you don't do that, I think you could be in trouble. I think you've got to listen closely and manage the pressure on the staff." Mr. Quay said, "I think the way we've approached it has made a difference. We're not knocking heads with the union about the learning-walks." Mr. Oliva commented, "I do believe that we have that responsibility to put a little bit of pressure—not a whole bunch—but you've got to have some pressure on the system." Heifetz and Linsky (2002) propose that the leader must strike a balance between not pushing hard enough, which results in complacency, and pushing too hard, which results in a push back by those whom the leader wants to motivate. The authors write, "You need to ensure that their general resistance to change doesn't morph into a mobilization to push you aside" (p. 90).

Superintendents emphasized the importance of listening and being prepared to "go slow." Mr. Spahn said, "You've really got to learn to go slow." During the

interviews, superintendents indicated that they were cognizant, intentional, and thoughtful about the amount of pressure that they were placing on people within the school district. They discussed their work as if it were an ongoing journey. They talked about the current state of improvement efforts in their district and they discussed their plans for the future. Bolman and Deal (2003) write, "People's skills attitudes, energy, and commitment are vital resources that can make or break an enterprise" (p. 114). The superintendents in this study indicated that they consciously monitored the pressure that they were placing on people and they worked to provide support and build individuals' capacity to succeed in the improvement efforts.

Dr. Andrews described his approach as having high expectations with high support. He explained:

> The idea is, that, if you have all support, and no expectations, kind of like you just practice your trumpet all the time, you never actually play it in the public setting, you know, maybe you get better, but you don't get better very fast. And, nor do you just take the kid and say, "Well, don't bother practicing. Tonight, by the way, got to tell you, we're inviting 500 of our closest friends and you're the star attraction." So, you want to balance those two. And we vary it…a little more on the support side.

As Dr. Andrews reflected on the implementation of the learning-walks, he shared that he thought that progress in the district might have been achieved faster with a greater push from him but the results might have come with negative overall consequences. He said, "We might have been able to grow faster but you never know. You know,

'Mother may I?' One giant step and then you're in doo-doo and then you've lost something."

Mr. Spahn explained how he was working with the principals in his district to develop a system that would facilitate their improvement efforts and hold them accountable for that work. In his work with the principals, he had to balance the amount of pressure that he placed on them to refine their system. Mr. Spahn was interested in holding the principals accountable for more than just following-through with the principal learning-walks. He wanted to hold them accountable for leading the instructional improvement process. He expected that principals would hold a weekly meeting of the building leadership team at their school to discuss the progress of the instructional improvement process. Mr. Spahn expected the principal to oversee, guide, manage, monitor, and lead the coaching cycle process. Mr. Spahn wanted the principals to develop a system that would both ensure accountability and facilitate the process of improving classroom instruction. He shared that was not satisfied with the current system.

The system in place was that the principals sent the minutes of the weekly leadership team meeting to the superintendent. Mr. Spahn was not satisfied with the quality of the minutes. He had attempted to turn this problem back to the principals and have them improve the system but he was not satisfied with the results. Mr. Spahn said that he worked with the principals to develop a structure for the weekly leadership team meetings. The superintendent reported that, initially, he had taken a collaborative approach to develop the agenda structure but it was not until he required

it from the principals that they all followed-through with the structure. Mr. Spahn explained, "It's not about giving me a log of what you've done. It's about, 'Let's all learn together about how this tool can be helpful.'" He said:

> So this is what we learned this year…we said we should meet weekly with your coaches…you sit down and talk with them about things. But it didn't happen until I began to say, "Well, OK, now. Here's the structure for it, too."

Mr. Spahn explained that he had asked the principals to develop a way for them to report their work to him for the weekly leadership team meetings. The principals suggested that they send the minutes of the meeting to him. Mr. Spahn said that he found that the minutes were too vague to be used as a system for accountability. When the principals did not come up with an acceptable solution, the superintendent imposed a structure for the reporting to ensure accountability. He said, "We went to a better agenda where the principal tells exactly who they're working with and why." By structuring the agenda and the reporting of the minutes, Mr. Spahn had imposed a technical solution to meet the need for accountability. He said, "I kind of talked to them about it: 'This is what I want to see on your agendas.'" He explained his expectation, "Be very specific about exactly, 'Who *are* you coaching?' and exactly, 'Who *are* you working with in the next week?'"

Mr. Spahn indicated that he was continuing to reflect on the district practices and he had plans for the future. He pointed to a worksheet in a binder on his desk and said, "Now, here's something I'm trying to get them to work on." The worksheet had a matrix for keeping track of which instructional coach was working with which staff

member, and, the area of focus. In addition, the matrix showed which principal or assistant principal was working with which staff member. Mr. Spahn continued to explain the evolution of the practices in his district. He said, "Here, in every meeting I go to, I say, 'You know, you should think about using this.' And they're not. So the next thing I'm going to tell them is, 'You know, you've got to use this.'"

As he talked about this problem of practice, it was apparent that Mr. Spahn wanted the principals to develop their own solutions to these types of systems management. He did not want to impose a technical solution on the principals. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) warn that the people who have the problem must own the problem and create their adaptive solution. Mr. Spahn wanted the principals to experiment with the format of the report and make adjustments that would fit, or adapt, to the problem of managing the improvement process. Mr. Spahn was managing the pressure that he was placing on the principals. He said that he was not fully committed to the technical solution that he had developed. He explained, "I don't know if I like this 'Strengths and Areas to Improve' as much as I like this one, which is 'Teacher and Next Steps.'" He continued with his reflections, "I'm not sure that dates work well, either. I think they should just have one with a teacher's name and every teacher has their own sheet." He was open to changes in the system and he planned to encourage the principals to own the work. He explained the suggestions that he planned to provide the principals:

> You could have the dates about what you're doing with them. But, they need to be able to look and see, "What did you do last week?" And, "What did you

> do two months ago with this same teacher." And, "What are our next steps with them to ratchet it up?"

It was apparent that this superintendent wanted the principals to experiment with the format of the accountability structure, namely, the agenda and minutes for the weekly leadership team meetings. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explain, "We call these adaptive challenges because they require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community" (p. 13). For Mr. Spahn, it was apparent that if the principals were unwilling to participate in creating an adaptive solution, the superintendent was willing to impose a technical solution to accomplish his goal. He was willing to mandate the use of a new form to account for and manage the coaching cycle process, which included the principal learning-walks. He also indicated that he was willing to making adjustments to the form once the principals starting using it. This is a good example of how the superintendent was balancing the pressure on the principals. He expected accountability but was willing to adjust systems to meet the needs of the principals to help them organize their work.

Unexpected Outcomes

Superintendents shared that their primary purpose for implementing a requirement that principals spend a portion of each day participating in learning-walks was to have the principals focus on the instructional core. This was viewed as a high yield strategy. The superintendents expected that if the principals participated in

learning-walks, the result would be a positive impact on the instructional practice in every classroom. Through the qualitative nature of the interview process, unexpected outcomes were discovered.

Positive Reception by Teachers

Some superintendents shared a perspective that learning-walks were positively received by teachers. Dr. Frye attributed the positive reception in her district to the involvement of stakeholders and her own willingness to listen to teachers' concerns and to be flexible in the implementation of the learning-walks. She believed the learning-walks were aligned with the district focus and that staff were able to see the connection as well. She explained:

> When we first started out, they were saying, "Nobody's ever in our classrooms. We want to see some administrators. It's just not fair. They come in twice a year." Blah, blah, blah. So, they [the principals] started showing up every day. And then teachers said, "We'd really like to know if you're coming." [Laughs]. So we agreed. "OK. We're doing learning-walks. But not drop-ins."

She continued:

> So the principals would say, "Every Tuesday and Thursday I'm going to be in classrooms," or, "Tomorrow I'm going to be in classrooms." So we gave the teachers the heads-up that we're doing learning-walks. And, so, they knew the

> difference. Drop-ins were one thing. Learning-walks were something else. And we'll announce when we're doing learning-walks.

Dr. Frye said that she was willing to be flexible and responsive to the teachers' concerns. As a result, it was her perspective that the practice of learning-walks was accepted as a common practice in her district.

Mr. Tingman believed that he was beginning to see more collaboration among teachers as a result of the principal learning-walks. He said, "I read some DiPaola [DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005] and his stuff on buffering and bridging." Mr. Tingman continued:

> We've begun to have those discussions about bridging and breaking down those barriers that keep us from really talking honestly about what's going on in the classroom. And we're beginning to see for the first time in this district—or for the first time in a long time—we're beginning to see grade level cooperation. We're beginning to see "Walks to Read" and "Walks to Math." Those sorts of thing where kids are actually leaving the buffered classroom.

He attributed this positive reception and the increase in collaboration to the principal learning-walks. Principals were able to share best practices among teachers as a result of the knowledge they had gained by participating in learning-walks on a daily basis. In addition, Mr. Tingman said he believed that the learning-walks had contributed to positive relations between teachers and administrators. He said, "The teachers overall are thankful that the principals are much more visible. That message has come to me

through the union." He continued, "I meet regularly with the union reps and they're saying, 'We appreciate it. It's helped to build relationships.'" Bryk and Schneider (2002) identify trust in schools as an important foundational element for school improvement. It was Mr. Tingman's perspective that the principal learning-walks in his district had helped to build positive relations between teachers and administrators.

Dr. Rogers believed that learning-walks were positively received by the teachers in his district because of the way that the principals implemented them initially. He said that important stakeholders in the district—the teachers—were not threatened by the learning-walks because the principals, initially, provided only positive feedback to the teachers. Dr. Rogers explained:

> The general response has been positive. But that's because when we started our walk-through process, we started in an affirming role. And so—I don't remember the words Elmore uses—he calls it the "Happy Talk." You know. That's what he called it. Happy Talk. So we were really good at Happy Talk. So, even the teacher who was trying really hard when we came, we gave Happy Talk to. "Good job. Great lesson. Way to work hard." And they weren't getting any feedback that these are things in student engagement; or the hierarchy of talking; reading, writing, or math: "We're not seeing this." We now are giving that feedback better. So the principal group, as a core, is now delivering more good [accurate] feedback to the teachers.

Dr. Rogers explained that he was working cautiously with the teacher's union to maintain a positive relationship with teachers and to provide the teachers'

representatives with an understanding of the importance of a continued focus on instruction and the movement that he wanted to see from the principals, moving from Happy Talk to authentic feedback. He explained, "We're still doing interest-based bargaining here; we're building it together right now."

Another superintendent, Dr. Dell, shared her perspective that teachers in her district were receptive to learning-walks. She believed that using a common instructional model and providing professional development for staff contributed to the positive reception. She explained that the consultants who worked with the district had addressed each school with an approach that was tailored to the school's staff and culture. She said:

> I think [the lead consultant] has described implementing the STAR protocol for us as one-on-one combat. So, one teacher at a time. "What convinces you is not going to convince me." And, so, it's sort of finessing. "What is going to get to that person?" But we're going to get to everybody with powerful teaching.

Because of the extensive professional development and the district wide approach, teachers had a common understanding of the district's instructional model. Dr. Dell said, "Some teachers have told me they want it because they know what the principal is looking for. You know. And they get more comfortable with the principal in more frequently."

Many superintendents emphasized the importance of involving union leadership in the school improvement process including the process for selecting the

instructional model that would be used as the foundation for teaching and learning in the district. Superintendents reported that, as a result of the involvement of these key stakeholders, many teachers had accepted the practice of learning-walks as a natural progression in the school improvement process.

Dr. Pauliss explained that it was the district's leadership team, which included the president of the teachers' union, that decided the terminology that would be used to describe the process for the classroom visits. She said that the team intentionally chose the term "learning-walk." She said:

> A walk-through or walk-about or whatever other semantical things they're called was a real issue for us in [our district]. Because the perception—what you called it, really drove the perception of what it was. So, in that regard, our union president was really critical to that concept of how it would work so people didn't think we were coming in there because they were not good.

This superintendent believed that the involvement of the president of the teacher's union was one of the reasons that learning-walks had been positively received by teachers in the district.

Dr. Edison explained that while he had only recently required principals to participate in learning-walks, he had worked with stakeholders when he had first come to the district as superintendent, ten years ago, to identify an instructional model that would serve as the foundation for teaching and learning in the district. He said, "It's been a ten year journey and it certainly begins by building trust and respect with the union." He explained that he had formed a committee of teachers and

administrators which included union representatives to identify the district's instructional model. He said that it was his perspective that the response to principal learning-walks was overwhelmingly positive by the teachers in his district because he had worked for the past ten years to develop a partnership with the teachers and their union representatives. He said, "I think it's because the union recognized early on that we needed to improve the quality of instruction. And I think we were having lots of dialogue about improving instruction in the district." The learning-walks were well-received in his district as a result of "having the union as partner in the whole thing from the start," he said.

Dr. Frye said that, in her district, she had worked right from the start with teacher-leaders and union representatives to develop a focus for the district. She explained:

> I had a team from every school that was the principal, the union representative…and another teacher or two. So, for the first year, we must have had seven days where we got together and learned about how to do the learning target, and how to collect evidence of learning, and how to share evidence.

Since that first year, Dr. Frye had this group of stakeholders continue to meet periodically throughout the school year to serve as an advisory group for the district. She said that the group decided to have continuity in the focus for the district. The continuity of focus was positively received by the teachers and contributed to the

positive reception of the learning-walks. Dr. Frye explained the continuity as "keeping it simple and focusing year after year on a couple of the same things."

Dr. Benson emphasized that she wanted to have her administrative staff work closely with the leadership of the teacher's union to nurture a partnership that would maintain the positive reception to learning-walks that have been established in her first year in the district. She could see that any conversation about quality instruction would eventually lead to the criteria for teacher evaluation. She wanted the union to be involved from the beginning so that they would be a partner in decisions about instructional improvements. She explained that her administrative staff was working with the union leadership to develop a learning-walk protocol. She said that she involved the union from the beginning, "because our [teacher's union] has to be on board. And has to be buying-in to how our observations are going to change because it's going to change our evaluation." She concluded, "So union buy-in is critical or this will all fall apart."

Dr. Benson had an interesting perspective that was unique because of the context of her work as the superintendent of a large district. She said that in a district that was as large as her district, the union leadership worked full-time in their positions. They were not classroom teachers. She said, "They are open to learning but they haven't been in the classroom for a very long time." She said that this disconnect from the classroom made the process more difficult. As a result, she was involving both the union leadership and teacher-leaders in the process to design a district protocol. She explained, "The [classroom] teachers that are stepping up in

some leadership roles…many of them get it and are helping a lot because they want this." Because she had involved both union leaders and classroom teacher-leaders, she believed that the learning-walk process had been received positively by many of the teachers in her district. She said that teachers were especially receptive to the superintendent-principal learning-walks. It was her perspective that the teachers in her district liked to see the superintendent out of her office and into the classrooms. She said that she was pleasantly surprised by the positive reception. This positive reception encouraged her to continue the practice of visiting classrooms with principals to learn about the instructional practices in the classrooms in her district.

Resistance by Principals

Superintendents reported that it was common for the principals to be skeptical that they could allocate their time to daily classroom visits. However, once the superintendent made this expectation a requirement, and the principals began the practice, most principals found value in the learning-walk process. Some superintendents, however, reported that there were cases where a principal simply could not or would not accept the role of instructional leader and the practice that the superintendent expected with that role.

Dr. Frye shared her experience from her first year as superintendent in the district. She explained, "I would say, my first year, here, the high school principal wasn't very responsive." As a result, she removed the principal from the principalship. She said, "I put a new principal there and that was perfect after that."

Other superintendents also reported that it was necessary to change personnel in the principalship in order to get the focus on instruction that they expected. Dr. Andrews, Dr. Benson, and Mr. Tingman reported that they had changed personnel as a result of an individual's resistance to the changing role of the principal—from organizational manager to instructional leader.

Mr. Tingman shared that it was his feeling that the upcoming school year would be the first time in his tenure in the district that he would have an entire administrative team that was enthusiastic about the focus on instruction. He said:

> This is the first year that I think we're going to be able to spend that we have a team that's really going to concentrate on instruction. A team hired based on the idea that we're going to concentrate on instructional improvement and defining great teaching.

While it was common to face some initial resistance from principals, there were some cases where a superintendent felt that it was necessary to change personnel in order to get the focus on instruction that they expected from the principal.

Change in Principal Perceptions

Many superintendents said that they saw a change in principal perceptions as principals gained experience with the practice of learning-walks. Principals changed their perceptions about their role in the school and they changed their perceptions about the value of learning-walks as a tool for instructional leadership.

Mr. Spahn said that he understood that he was asking the principals to take on a new role when he required principals to be in the classroom on a daily basis. He said that for some principals in his district, accepting the role of instructional leader was a process that took time. He provided as an example the learning process of the high school principal. Mr. Spahn said, "In the beginning, [the principal] was the consummate manager. Everybody loved him. Great disciplinarian. Great manager. The kids loved him. The teachers loved him." Mr. Spahn explained that, while the principal was a great manager, the principal was not viewed as an instructional leader by the staff at the school or other staff in the district. In fact, it was the superintendent's perspective that the high school principal did not view himself, initially, as an instructional leader. The superintendent felt that it took a year to make a change. Mr. Spahn explained, "It took a year of learning about it and pushing and coaching from outside." It was the superintendent's perspective that with pushing and coaching, the principal began to see what he was able to accomplish by spending time in the classroom. Mr. Spahn said, "When we began to learn about it and began to do those walk-throughs, he began to see the power of doing it, and, it took him a while to get to the point where he said, 'You know, it's that powerful that I'm going to schedule my time every day to do this.'"

In a different district, Mr. Tingman shared his perspective that, as a result of principals being in classrooms and focusing on instruction, the knowledge and expertise of the principals had changed. Even though he had just required the practice of learning-walks during the past school year, Mr. Tingman explained that it

was his perspective that the principals in his district were beginning to change the way they based their decisions. They were beginning to base their decisions on how to positively impact the instructional core. He explained:

> Yesterday, we had the discussion about—because we happen to have lots of money right now—and the discussion I had was, "What do you need in your buildings?" And my expectation would be for them to say, "We need another teacher. We need these things." What they came up with is, "We need successful intervention strategies for students. We need an agreed upon set of standards for what excellence in teaching looks like. And we need alignment within our curriculum." And all of those things are developed, not necessarily with a monetary resource, but by understanding and working together.

Mr. Tingman reported that it was his perspective that the focus of the principals in his district had changed since he had begun to require principals to spend a portion of each day in the classroom. He said:

> Specifically, I've seen more dialogue around instruction. We're beginning to have discussions about instructional strategies and not as many discussions around who gets their picture taken first and how do we keep the kids from punching each other on the playground and those sort of management issues and we're seeing the principals engage more in real discussion about standards, aligning curriculum, and instructional strategy.

By mandating the principals to use their time to visit classrooms, the superintendents in this study used their own positional power to change how principals used their time

during the day. It was Mr. Tingman's perspective that, as a result of this mandate, the focus in administrative meetings had changed from operational issues to a focus on the instructional core.

In another district, Dr. Rogers had an interesting perspective regarding the change in the principal perception. It was the perspective of Dr. Rogers that the principals in his district initially viewed the learning-walks, solely, at the symbolic level. He said:

> The initial reception from the principals was that this was standardizing their visibility. I can tell you that the principals didn't perceive it as their journey to change instructional practice with teachers. They more perceived it to be visible, checking how things are going, and just be out there. So it was more of a visitation process than a feedback process.

Dr. Rogers explained that it had been a journey to move the principals from viewing the learning-walks as a symbolic statement to having the principals committed to the role of instructional leader and working as an agent to improve teacher instructional skill and student learning. He said:

> They now are at the place where they have standardized their collection process. And they've standardized their positive feedback process in terms of what kind of notes are they going to leave teachers. They also have standardized how to ask teachers an instructional practice question.

In this district, it was the superintendent's perspective there was a developmental process for the principals in their understanding of their role as an instructional

leader. According to the superintendent, the principals had developed their thinking about the practice of learning-walks. They had moved from viewing learning-walks as a way to increase their visibility to viewing learning-walks as an instructional leadership practice that could positively impact the instructional core.

System for Induction

While the topic of induction for new administrators and sustainability of the improvement efforts was not mentioned by most of the superintendents, it was a consideration for the one superintendent who served in the district where administrators had been implementing learning-walks for the longest period of time. Dr. Pauliss reported that the administrators in her district were about to begin their sixth year of learning-walks. She pointed out that one indicator of success, in her view, was that the district had a very low turn-over of administrators. She believed that this indicated that the work that was occurring in her district, while challenging, was also rewarding to the administrators in the district. However, even with the small number of administrators who would join the administrative team each year, she had concerns about how to induct the new principals into the work that the other administrators had been doing together over the past five years to build a shared vision and to develop personal mastery of skills that could be used to positively impact the instructional core. She looked back at the team learning that had occurred over the past five years, going deeper into understanding of the various aspects of the district's instructional model of purpose, engagement, rigor, and results, and she was

concerned about how to induct new administrators into the system when so much had been done to build the district administrators' knowledge and skills. While she did not state solutions to her concerns, it was apparent that the issues of induction and sustainability were considerations that any superintendent would need to address if they maintained the continuity of focus on the instructional core for an extended period.

Resistance by Teachers

While many superintendents shared their perspective that learning-walks were positively received by the majority of teachers, some superintendents said that their principals experienced resistance from teachers. Many reported that learning-walks were received more positively by elementary staff than secondary staff.

Mr. Olivia believed that elementary teachers were more familiar with seeing principals serve in the role of instructional leader. Teachers at the high school level were more resistant to having principals visit their classrooms. He explained his perspective that the structure of high schools tended to be more "compartmentalized" and the teachers were resistant to administrators focusing on the instructional core of their classroom because the teachers viewed the instructional core as solely the academic content of the course—not the teacher's instructional skill or the students' engagement. He explained:

> I think [high school] teachers have the tendency to say, "You know, I'm a social studies expert. OK? And, therefore, I can lecture about World War II,

> you know, this way, that way, etc." Whether the kids learn it or not, we're not sure. You know. "But I know my subject matter." So, that's their intent. And it isn't questioning their knowledge of the subject matter, it's the delivery mode that is at the point of discussion. Particularly, with kids, for example, that have poor comprehension skills, that have poor vocabulary, and poor writing skills so they can't even take good notes. Now, most principals, that I've known, have not wanted to take that discussion on, the whole, you know, full force.

Mr. Oliva continued, "I think that, at the first, there was a great amount of push back from teachers. Much more than I actually expected." He explained that it was his perspective that the majority of resistance came from veteran teachers. He believed that veteran teachers at all levels in his district, elementary and secondary, tended to be resistant to the principal's focus on instructional improvements. Mr. Oliva explained, "Particularly our older teachers—the teachers that had been in the system for, let's say, 35 years or so." He continued:

> Some, you know, personally talked to me about things like, "You know, I'm really concerned or shocked that you would think that we didn't know how to teach reading." And I'd say, "Well, tell me more. What are you talking about?" [And they would say], "Well, you know, this new program. Basically, I can't do my own thing." And I said, "Well, you know, it's a different day now. I mean, you know, you think that you've done a good job and I have to assume that you are. Except when you look at the data. The

> data doesn't reflect that. I mean, look at the number of our kids who aren't reading."

He explained that the district's focus on instruction had led to an increase in the expectations for teachers' knowledge and skill. He said, "Basically, we're trying to make reading specialists out of all of our teachers." Mr. Oliva explained how he used the district's student learning data to help create the impetus for change. Bernhardt (2004) writes, "The use of data can make an enormous difference in school reform efforts by helping schools see how to improve school processes and student learning" (p. 3).

Many superintendents in the study reported that it was their perspective that there was a difference in the reaction between elementary teachers and secondary teachers in response to the principal learning-walks and the increased focused on instructional improvement.

Dr. Dell said, "Quite honestly, you know, we saw that there's a little more, sort of, natural powerful teaching in elementary." She continued, "They have the kids most of the day, and they, you know, push them a little harder—which is a good thing." She believed that because elementary teachers have their students for the majority of the school day, the teachers are able to adjust the level of instruction to ensure that students are being provided rigorous learning opportunities.

Dr. Cline had a similar perspective. He said, "I would say that our elementary folks tend to be more engaged. My observation. And I would say that the work that they do is much more consistent across the school than at the secondary." When

asked to elaborate, he said that at the secondary level, "Teachers have less in common with respect to what they're teaching and how they teach it." He explained that he was working to have all teachers at every school meet in professional learning communities to share best practices with the goal to, "develop more of that commonality and consistency."

Dr. Dell expressed frustration with the secondary teachers in her district. She explained:

> Believe it or not, in our secondary schools in this district, you may or many not have a lesson plan. And that's ludicrous. You know. I mean it doesn't have to be 35 pages long. But you [should] have to put down, "What do you hope to accomplish and how will you know?"

She explained that she was planning to work with the teacher's union to ensure that the secondary teachers, in the future, would have a lesson plan for their daily lesson.

Dr. Benson had a similar perspective. She said, "Elementary is a little more open to the collaboration time as well as having other people a part of their lives. Secondary is much more protective of their space and privacy."

Sharratt, Lobdell, and Mills (2008) reported that schools of distinction in Washington State had greater levels of collaboration and trust. Mills and Lobdell (2008) disaggregated the data and found that elementary staff had the highest levels of collaboration and trust while high school staff had the lowest levels of collaboration and trust. Middle schools were in the middle.

Mr. Spahn discussed the difficulties that are faced at the secondary level. He said, "It's much easier at the elementary level because they all teach the same subjects. Secondary and middle school are much tougher because they're all different subjects."

Dr. Edison reported that he, too, saw a difference at the secondary level. It was his perspective that elementary teachers were more open to collaboration. He said:

> I think the elementary teachers generally embrace it more. I think they're more welcoming. There's just an attitude that's different between elementary and secondary and that's just the way it is. I think the elementary are more kid oriented. Secondary more content oriented. It's just the nature of the beast. You gravitate, you know, to that level, you know, as you begin teaching. You're more comfortable with a certain attitude and mindset. So, you know, it's definitely a part of the culture of the school. No doubt about it. They do respond differently. I think elementary teachers generally are more open. And secondary teachers are more closed; they're more guarded. But, over time, I really think that will change.

The Challenge of Moral Leadership

Moral leadership can be viewed as leadership that is guided by the commitment to ideals (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 139). Superintendents in this study were committed to the goal of improving instruction in every classroom in the district.

They believed that if instruction in classrooms improved, then student learning would improve. They believed that it was possible to have greater numbers of students achieve higher levels of learning. Superintendents in the study shared examples of the challenges that principals faced as they implemented the practice of learning-walks.

Superintendents emphasized that the implementation of learning-walks must be approached in a collaborative way. Many believed that the learning-walk process should be totally separate and distinct from the evaluation process. But, as Mr. Spahn said, "Once you get into classrooms, you can't ignore it." Principals who begin to implement learning-walks may discover substandard instructional practices. Teachers may be resistant to improvement efforts. Mr. Spahn exclaimed, "But they don't have a choice! We go into *all* the classrooms!" He continued, "But, you know, I can see that in some districts, if you don't go about it right, then the union will come up and they'll want to negotiate when you can come in and what you can watch."[8]

Indeed, Mr. Oliva reported that, in his district, the teacher's union had expressed concerns about the practice of learning-walks and had requested that if principals wrote any notes when they were visiting a class, the teacher would be provided a copy of the notes.

When faced with substandard instructional practices, the principal is faced with a moral challenge. To confront the substandard practice may be a difficult journey for the principal. But to ignore the substandard practice condemns certain students to an inadequate educational experience which may take years to overcome.[9]

The challenge to the principal is made more difficult by the prevailing culture in many schools in the United States. Dr. Cline shared his belief that this culture does not support rigorous dialogue about instructional practice. He said, "We like to make nice. We're all making nice. But there's folks that—nice doesn't get the results that you need." He explained that to address this challenge, he encouraged principals to focus on students and the ideal that every student deserves a quality education. He said, "You have to keep the kids' needs supreme. You have to." He explained the challenges that principals face:

> We're not good at this work yet. Not really good at it. We're getting better at it but we're not there. If principals can't lead the teachers in that work, we're not going to make progress in schools. Not only must they have the skills, but we have to develop, in the course of that work, the beliefs around that effort and the importance of it. And we need to support them when they run into problems. And we need to make sure that we're doing a little bit of urging along the way as well. Some folks aren't really interested in confronting some difficult things. It's one of the most uncomfortable things that we do in this work. It really is.

Mr. Tingman had a similar perspective that the "culture of nice" was a challenge to overcome. He explained:

> One of our challenges is to get our principals engaged in giving honest, valuable feedback in evaluation. I've reviewed the evaluations of our teachers

> for the last seven years. And, during that period, no teacher has received a "Needs Improvement" in any area.

He believed that an increased focus on the instructional core and the implementation of learning-walks had changed the principals' perspective. Mr. Tingman said:

> We're seeing our principals, now, saying, "We need to define a common practice of teaching. And we need to be evaluating to that." And, again, that's because the emphasis has shifted from the principal being this manager…to the instructional leader. It's been a process.

Dr. Dell explained that there were principals in her district who were, at times, reluctant to address concerns. This was a challenge that they needed to overcome. Dr. Dell said that she shared with the principals that often times, just by addressing the concern, there could be a positive outcome. She said it was her experience, that, often times, if a supervisor was honest with the employee, the employee would honestly reflect on their performance and decide to either improve the performance or quit. She said, "So, what we've done is have some, you know, real, honest conversations with people." She said that, as a result, in some cases, teachers moved to other grade levels or other schools in the district and that they experienced success in their new position. And, in other cases, the district negotiated with the teacher and the person left the district. Numerous authors have addressed this subject—the importance of honest dialogue with people regarding their performance (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2002, 2005; Isaccs, 1999; Scott, 2002; Stone, Patton, Heen, & Fisher, 1999). Dr. Dell said that she modeled conversations for the

principals so they would know how to address this challenge. She told the principals to tell the teacher, "This isn't working. You're kids aren't learning." She continued:

> Here's what I say to people: "Wouldn't you hate it? If everybody was sitting around a table talking about you and you didn't know? Wouldn't that be awful?" I mean, think about it. "So, has anybody told this person?" "Well, you know, it's"—"No. Really told him. Just to say, 'You know, I care about you, Peter. I know you're working hard. But you've got problems in the classroom. And here's what I need.'" We have one operating principle, really. And it's stupid. But it works. When you tell the truth, you give hope. And you always have to tell the truth. But you can't dump on people. "So, here's what I'm going to do to help you." And you've got to mean that and you've got to do that. We do that.

She expected principals to have these types of conversations. She shared that when principals in her district began to give honest feedback to teachers, more than one teacher said that they had never experienced that type of conversation in the past. She said:

> We hear a lot, "Nobody ever told me that before." And we say, "We believe you." You know. "We believe you." You see these people and you look at their evaluations and think, "This couldn't be the same person!" You know. People weren't honest with them. And we also had some people say, "No, I don't want to change. I want to leave." And we let them leave with dignity. You know. We say, "Well, great. Nobody knows that but us."

Platt, Tripp, Fraser, Warnock, and Curtis (2008) propose that district administrators must work with building administrators to improve every staff member's conviction, competence, and control. They define conviction as the moral duty to act as an advocate for all children, competence as having the skills necessary to perform the job, and control as the "adequate structures, processes, and resources to support groups charged with improving student achievement and carrying out the mission of the school" (p. 9). The authors explain that a teacher's mediocre performance is not solely attributed to the individual teacher. The teacher's performance can be attributed to the deficiencies of the principal and the deficiencies of the district's system for communicating district-wide expectations and the system for developing the principal's skills. The principal must have the skills to confront the substandard performance of a teacher. In addition, there must be an expectation established that the principal will accept this challenge and address the concerns. The authors explain that a school staff should function as an "accountable community" where everyone shares the expectation that every staff member has a duty to perform their job with a high level of skills and a high level of commitment.

Dr. Dell said that she communicated her expectation to principals in regards to a teacher's low performance; she expected principals to follow-through and address concerns. She said that follow-through by the principals had made a difference in her district. She explained, "We had three people on 'Needs Improvement' last year and all three of them resigned. They just said, 'I don't need this crap.'"

Dr. Rogers shared a similar perspective and similar experiences. He expected the principals in his district to address substandard performance by teachers; he expected the principals to have the conviction to do so. Dr. Rogers shared, "I've probably negotiated probably 10 or 12 settlements with people, without making it messy. We just do it quietly. We just do it." He explained that if a teacher was having difficulty, he encouraged the principal to stop doing learning-walks in the teacher's classroom and only do formal observations for evaluation. He did not want the non-renewal of a teacher's employment to jeopardize the learning-walk process with all staff.

Dr. Dell said that she believed principals would follow-through and address concerns about substandard instructional practices if the principals knew that the superintendent was going to support them and if the superintendent communicated the expectation that they must follow-through. She told about her experience in the past when a principal in her district was concerned because a teacher was not doing well in the classroom but the principal was reluctant to address the teacher's performance because the teacher was the only African-American teacher at the school and the school had a large number of African-American students. Dr. Dell said she told the principal, "You know. African-American people don't want lousy teachers for their kids either. You know we've had a lot of good work with the African-American community." She said that the principal followed-through and talked honestly with the teacher about his performance. She said, "The principal almost flew into this office, saying, 'He's going to resign.'" She said that the teacher had told the

principal, "You're right. I can't do it." Dr. Dell said that she felt that the principal followed-through because of their conversation. She told him that she was proud of him. She said she told him, "Good for you. What courage." She explained, "It does take courage. And the courage is being honest, being clear about what you expect, and knowing that your back is covered…by people that are going to support you."

To provide every student with a quality education, Dr. Edison was convinced that there needed to be an increase in the consistency of the academic content that was taught to students and an increase in the consistency of teachers' instructional skills. He shared that the high school staff told him that they could tell which students at the high school had come from the different K-8 schools in the district because students from certain schools had better writing skills while students from other schools had better technology skills. His goal was to decrease the variability in classrooms across the district. He explained that staff had created common expectations for curriculum pacing and common expectations for instructional practices. He expected principals, through their learning-walks, to monitor teacher follow-through with the curriculum pacing calendar and the effective instructional practices. If a principal discovered that a teacher was not teaching what was expected on the pacing calendar or if the teacher was teaching in a way that was not aligned with district's instructional model, Dr. Edison expected the principal to address the issue with the teacher. He said:

> It's about holding people accountable. I mean, that's really important. You can have all of these things in place. Now, you do the walk-through and you see something. Now, you have to have the courageous conversation to be able

> to say, you know, to this particular teacher, "Gosh. Here's what I'm seeing. This doesn't match what we agreed we'd be doing." So, yeah. Those conversations, then, need to happen.

Dr. Edison saw the consistency of the student's learning experience as a challenge of moral leadership. If every student deserves a quality education, then principals have an obligation to address inconsistencies in the practices of classroom teachers.

Dr. Cline emphasized that the purpose of monitoring instructional practice was not to remove teachers from the profession. It was to improve the quality of the instructional practice. If a principal observed instructional practices that were not in alignment with the established expectations, Dr. Cline made it clear in the interview that he wanted the administrator to work with the teacher to help the teacher improve their performance. He cautioned that the challenge of moral leadership should not be interpreted as a challenge to remove teachers from the profession. He shared his view that the work of Andy Platt (Platt et al., 2000) had been misinterpreted by many school administrators and other school staff. Dr. Cline said that Platt's message is that principals need to develop personal mastery of their leadership skills so they can work effectively with the mediocre teacher to help the teacher improve their instructional skills. This is what he expected his principals to do.

Dr. Andrews said that he, too, had communicated to his principals that he expected them to work for the continuous improvement of their skills. If the principals did not share this vision, he told them it would be necessary for a change in personnel. He said that he told the principals:

> You're all great and I love working with all of you. And I want you to lead. And I want you to learn. And we're going to do this, this, and this to support you to make that happen. But we know that different people are in different places in their life. And they may not have the time and energy to commit to keep raising the level of practice. So, if you need to leave, that's *your* decision.

School leaders need more than the moral commitment to impact instruction; they also need the skills to do so. Dr. Cline and Dr. Andrews expected their principals to be committed to improving their skills.

Mr. Oliva shared his frustration with the pace of the improvement efforts in his district. He believed that many people in education did not share his sense of urgency. He saw this lack of urgency as a moral challenge. He said that a member of his school board had questioned whether he was moving too fast with the various strategies that he was implementing. Mr. Oliva said, "Our biggest problem in education today is this whole lack of urgency." He said the school board member had told him, "You're moving too fast. You're trying to move too fast. What are you trying to do?" Mr. Oliva said he responded to the board member, saying, "You don't understand. You just lost another 300 kids, 400 kids last year. That's a huge loss of human potential." The researcher pointed to a poster in the superintendent's office that showed the increase in 4th grade reading scores in his district from 35% of students meeting standard when he arrived as superintendent to 70% of the students meeting standard in the past year. Mr. Oliva said that it was good work but he was

still concerned about the rate of improvement at the middle schools and the high schools in the district. He said, "We didn't start school reform until I got here." He concluded, "Give us the time to get there. We'll get there."

This study discovered multiple purposes for learning-walks. Superintendents shared that by implementing learning-walks in their district, they hoped to improve the quality of instruction in classrooms, and, consequently, increase student achievement. Superintendents hoped that the implementation of learning-walks would lead to a shared vision of high quality instruction. They expected their principals to work with school staff to develop a shared commitment to achieve the shared vision of high quality instruction for all students. Simpson (2005) provides standards for teacher performance in this area. A teacher who focuses solely on their own practice is considered "below standard." According to the author, school staff must work together, using student achievement data and research of best practices, to create common expectations and shared agreements for school-wide instructional practices. Then, they must honor their agreements and hold each other accountable if they do not honor the agreement. Mr. Spahn shared his perspective on this view of corporate accountability. He said:

> We're not there yet, I don't think. But the test will be, once you get good enough at it and far enough down the road, then everything—then there's expectations tied to it. Like, you know, "I *expect* you to make this happen. And I am *providing* you the support from the staff developer for you. And in

> two weeks, you know, I'm going to come in and we're going to watch again and we're going to work together but it's not an *option* not to try."

Mr. Spahn was moving his school system from being loosely coupled to being tightly focused on high quality instruction. The implementation of learning-walks was a way to monitor and support the improvement effort.

In the past, improvement efforts in schools were expected to be championed by the staff who had "buy-in" (Fouts, 2003). Improvement efforts were based on "volunteerism." If a staff member wanted to "opt-out" of an improvement effort, they were allowed to do so.[10] Faced with a school culture that enables such practices, the school administrator is faced with a challenge of moral leadership. If the administrator is committed to the ideal of high quality instruction for every student, the administrator will require all staff to participate in the effort to improve instruction. DuFour (2007) notes that allowing some staff members to opt-out results in cynicism among a staff. DuFour proposes that school administrators must use their power of position to ensure that all staff follow-through on expectations for performance and school-wide agreements. Platt et al. (2008) propose that the school leader who works to create an accountable community with staff will find that staff members will develop the ability "to deal with members who are not meeting their obligations rather than to wait for external authorities" (p. 36). A key to creating this type of community is creating a culture of continuous improvement and an expectation for life-long learning. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) write, "Professional learning must be made integral to the task of teaching, with time for it built in by the

system and ongoing commitment to it regarded as a basic professional obligation of teachers themselves" (p. 49). Marshall, Pritchard, and Gunderson (2001) write that participation in professional learning must be "an expected part of contracted, professional activity, not an add-on requirement" (p. 67). Not only must all teachers be committed to life-long learning, they must be committed to improving their instructional practice based on the knowledge and skills that they learn. According to Elmore's framework for instructional improvement, large scale reform cannot be based on volunteerism. The staff must work together to create and maintain a functioning system; they must create and maintain a functional culture. To do this, Elmore (2004) writes, they must:

> maintain a tight instructional focus sustained over time; apply the instructional focus to everyone in the organization; apply it to both practice and performance; [and] apply it to a limited number of instructional areas and practices, becoming progressively more ambitious over time. (p. 81)

As they reflected on the progress in their districts, many superintendents in the study said that expectations for instructional practice had been identified by staff but the level of commitment to instructional improvement by all staff was not clear. They viewed the implementation of learning-walks as an instructional leadership practice that would provide principals with the opportunity to monitor instruction and make a positive impact on instructional practice.

The challenge of moral leadership was to keep the focus on student learning and the quality of education that was being provided for every child. Learning-walks

were a way to learn best practices and a way to learn about the quality of instruction that students were receiving in every classroom. Superintendents expected principals to build a culture in their school that would support rigorous dialogue about instructional practice. They expected principals to lead the process to establish school-wide agreements for instructional improvements. Elmore (2004) writes:

> Leaders must create environments in which individuals expect to have their personal ideas and practices subjected to the scrutiny of their colleagues, and in which groups expect to have their shared conceptions of practice subjected to the scrutiny of individuals. Privacy of practice produces isolation; isolation is the enemy of improvement. (p. 67)

Mr. Spahn shared his thoughts about challenges that school leaders face. He shared his belief that the appropriate response to these challenges was to keep the focus on instruction and the ideal that every student deserved high quality instruction every day. He said, “It’s a balancing act. There’s no doubt about it. The secret to me is: you talk about how important it is that we learn to improve instruction. Because they can’t argue with improving instruction.”

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Discussion of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of superintendents in Washington State who have mandated principal learning-walks as a tool for instructional leadership. The study examined what the superintendents hoped to accomplish through the mandate and it explored the superintendents' beliefs about the structures and systems that they put into place to support the principals' implementation of this practice.

The researcher found that the adoption of an instructional model for use in the district was an important antecedent to the effective implementation of learning-walks. Without a common instructional model, staff did not have a common vocabulary to use in their dialogue about teaching and learning. A common instructional model provided the opportunity to build a shared vision and shared definition of high quality instruction. Instructional practice could then be compared to the common understanding of quality instruction.

The practice of learning-walks was coupled with other structures and systems. Superintendents believed that all of the structures and systems, working together, would make a positive impact on the instructional core which would result in increased student learning for all students. While the researcher approached the study

to learn about superintendent perspectives on learning-walks, the researcher learned about the many structures and systems that superintendents had implemented to support the principals as they worked to improve teachers' instructional practice.

While some superintendents required principals to submit logs, forms, or reports, many superintendents reported that face-to-face accountability was the most effective form of accountability to ensure that principals followed-through with the expectation that they would engage in instructional leadership practices. Superintendents emphasized that learning-walks were a means to an end; the overall goal was to improve the quality of instruction in every classroom in the district.

In districts where learning-walks had been implemented the longest, superintendents reported that teachers had begun to join the administrators in learning-walks. In one district, all of the teachers in the district participated in learning-walks in the classrooms at their school. In addition, there were teams of teachers who visited classrooms at other schools in the district, such as a team of high school math teachers who visited middle school math classrooms, and a team of middle school math teachers who visited elementary math classrooms. Teacher participation in learning-walks appeared to be a practice which helped to support a change in culture in the school and the district. Superintendents in these districts hoped to develop a culture of continuous improvement. All of the superintendents in this study modeled life-long learning. Many reported that they hoped that the implementation of learning-walks would lead all staff to develop a culture of

continuous improvement—a culture that was focused on the improvement of the instructional core and the improvement of student learning.

A summary of superintendent perspectives and district practices is provided in Table 2. The primary goal for every superintendent in the study was to improve student learning by improving the quality of instruction in every classroom in their district. Superintendents had various responses when explaining their secondary goal for the implementation of learning-walks. Common responses were to improve the team learning and shared vision of the administrative team, to implement a system for corporate accountability—the expectation that principals would hold teachers accountable for effective instructional practices—and to provide principals with opportunities to positively impact instruction. Superintendents believed that principals could impact instruction if the principals improved their knowledge and skills and if the principals would make the commitment to instructional leadership.

Superintendents varied in the amount of time that they expected principals to be in classrooms each day. Some superintendents did not specify the amount of time. They simply said that they expected principals to be in classrooms on a daily basis. Other superintendents specified their expectation, ranging from 30 minutes per day in classrooms to 3 hours per day in classrooms.

Superintendents provided additional resources to support the instructional improvement process. Frequently noted were the use of consultants, the use of instructional coaches, and time for teachers to collaborate. Teacher collaboration time was commonly provided through a late start or early release of students.

Table 2

Superintendent Perspectives and District Practices

District	Primary Goal	Secondary Goal
Andrews	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Team Learning and Shared Vision
Benson	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Understand Challenges Faced by Teachers
Cline	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Develop Culture of Continuous Improvement
Dell	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Corporate Accountability
Edison	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Corporate Accountability
Frye	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	System Check
Oliva	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Corporate Accountability
Pauliss	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Team Learning and Shared Vision
Quay	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Team Learning and Shared Vision
Rogers	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Positive Impact on Instructional Practice
Spahn	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Positive Impact on Instructional Practice
Tingman	Improve Student Learning by Improving the Quality of Instruction	Develop Culture of Continuous Improvement

Table 2 (continued)

Superintendent Perspectives and District Practices

District	Instructional Model	Accountability
Andrews	District Developed: Purpose, Instructional Approach, Results	Face-to-face with Superintendent
Benson	Development Stage	Face-to-face with Superintendent
Cline	Planning Stage	Logs and Face-to-face with Superintendent
Dell	*STAR Protocol*	Face-to-face with Administrative Team
Edison	*Classroom Instruction that Works, STAR Protocol, Pathwise*	Logs, Reports, and Face-to-face with Superintendent
Frye	*IN ACTION Guide* (Simpson)	Logs and Face-to-face with Superintendent
Oliva	*STAR Protocol*	Logs
Pauliss	District Developed: Purpose, Engagement, Rigor, Results	Logs, Forms, and Face-to-face with Superintendent
Quay	*The Art and Science of Professional Teaching* (Simpson)	Forms and Face-to-face with Superintendent
Rogers	Numerous Content Based Protocols; Planned to Focus Solely on Math	Logs, Forms, and Face-to-face with Superintendent
Spahn	Based on Instructional Materials, e.g. *Investigations*	Reports and Face-to-face with Leadership Team
Tingman	Planning Stage	Face-to-face with Superintendent

Table 2 (continued)

Superintendent Perspectives and District Practices

District	Years Implemented	Daily Time	Learning-walk Participants
Andrews	3	Not Specified	Principals and Administrators
Benson	1	Not Specified	Principals and Administrators
Cline	5	30 minutes	Principals, Administrators, and Teachers
Dell	3	Not Specified	Principals, Administrators, and Teachers
Edison	3	Not Specified	Principals, Administrators, and Teachers
Frye	3	2 hours	Principals, Administrators, and Teachers
Oliva	4	3 hours	Principals
Pauliss	5	2 hours	Principals, Administrators, and Teachers
Quay	2	1 hour	Principals and Administrators
Rogers	3	2 hours	Principals and Administrators
Spahn	3	1 ½ hours	Principals, Administrators, and Teachers
Tingman	1	1 hour	Principals and Administrators

Table 2 (continued)

Superintendent Perspectives and District Practices

District	Stakeholders Involved	Additional Resources
Andrews	Union Leaders and Other Teacher-leaders	Instructional Coaches, Substitutes, Books
Benson	Union Leaders and Other Teacher-leaders	Assistance to Develop School-wide Discipline Systems
Cline	Teacher-leaders	Consultant
Dell	Union Leaders, Teacher-leaders, and School Board	Consultants, Teacher Collaboration Time
Edison	Union Leaders and Other Teacher-leaders	Consultant, Substitutes, Dean of Students
Frye	Union Leaders and Other Teacher-leaders	Consultant, Teacher Collaboration Time
Oliva	Union Leaders	Consultant, Teacher Collaboration Time, Instructional Coaches
Pauliss	Union Leaders and Other Teacher-leaders	Teacher Collaboration Time, Substitutes
Quay	Union Leaders	Consultant
Rogers	Union Leaders, Teacher-leaders, and School Board	Consultants, Teacher Collaboration Time, Instructional Coaches
Spahn	Teacher-leaders	Consultants, Teacher Collaboration Time, Instructional Coaches, Principal Coach
Tingman	Union Leaders and Other Teacher-leaders	Not Mentioned

First Order Change and Second Order Change

Superintendents used their positional power to issue a mandate to the principals. The superintendents expected principals to structure their work day so that a portion of each day would be spent in classrooms. The requirement to implement learning-walks on a daily basis can be viewed as a first order change. Superintendents expected the principals to follow-through with the requirement. The second order change that the superintendents hoped to see was a change in the role of the principal. Superintendents hoped that principals would use the learning-walk process as a tool to impact teachers' instructional practice. They hoped that the principals in their district would embrace the role of instructional leader. Superintendents realized that the organizational management of the school was still a part of the principal's job. But they wanted the primary role for the principal to be the role of instructional leader. The second order change that was desired by the superintendents was a change in the role of the principal—from organizational manager to instructional leader.

Instructional Core, Strategy, and Theory of Action

Superintendents believed that instructional improvement was a high-yield strategy to improve student learning. If teachers improved their instructional practice, student learning as measured by state assessments would improve. If principals focused on the instructional core—the interaction of the teacher's instruction and the student's engagement with academically challenging content—and created the

conditions for teachers to improve their instructional practice, then teachers' improved practices would positively impact student achievement.

While superintendents were selected for the study because they had indicated that they required principals to participate in learning-walks each day, many superintendents indicated that they were flexible with the requirement. If the principal was engaged in an instructional leadership activity, such as dialoguing with a teacher regarding the teacher's instructional practice, the superintendent said that the principal could count that time as learning-walk time. The implementation of the learning-walk process was not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal was to positively impact teacher instruction and student learning.

Structures, Systems, Resources, Stakeholders, and Culture

Superintendents differed in the ways that they held principals accountable for the mandate to focus on instruction each day. Some superintendents required the principals to complete logs or forms that included protocols for the learning-walk and indicators for effective instructional strategies. Other superintendents focused on face-to-face accountability. Superintendents implemented different structures and systems to ensure that face-to-face accountability occurred. One superintendent required the principal to meet on a weekly basis with a building leadership team which included the principal, assistant principals, and instructional coaches. The principal was required to send a copy of the minutes of the building leadership team meeting to the superintendent's office but the true accountability for instructional

practice occurred in the face-to-face meeting by the leadership team where, as colleagues, they held each other accountable for their instructional leadership practice.

Other superintendents visited schools on a weekly basis to meet with principals individually to discuss their progress on meeting their goals for instructional leadership. This face-to-face accountability was directly between the superintendent and the principal.

One superintendent required the entire principal team and the district office administrative team to meet together on a weekly basis to review the data that principals were collecting during the learning-walks and to work together to monitor the implementation of their school improvement efforts. This was face-to-face accountability for the entire administrative team.

Superintendents who used face-to-face accountability emphasized that the learning-walks were a means to an end. The learning-walks were a platform to lead to discussions about effective instructional practices and a way to monitor the implementation of the instructional practices.

Superintendents in the study differed in the number of structures and systems that they implemented to facilitate the instructional improvement process. Some superintendents had a rather loose structure, relying primarily on the principals to accomplish the learning-walks and provide feedback and support to teachers. Other superintendents viewed the learning-walks as one piece of a multi-structured system that provided support to the principal and teacher. Examples of additional support included professional development, instructional coaches, consultants from outside

the district, and early release time for students once a week to provide time for staff to collaborate and to participate in professional development.

To facilitate the implementation of learning-walks, superintendents reallocated resources in the district. One superintendent provided additional personnel to the high school to assist with operational issues. A Dean of Students was added to assist with student discipline with the condition that the principal and assistant principals at the high school would increase the amount of time that they spent in classrooms each day. The superintendent reported that this was an effective use of resources; the principals did increase the amount of time that they spent on instructional leadership each day.

Another superintendent in the study identified the importance of having school-wide plans for student discipline—plans that were based on the principles of positive intervention and behavior support for students. This superintendent allocated additional professional development time and support to the principals in the district to ensure that every school would have a positive, school-wide discipline plan in place. The superintendent believed that a positive, school-wide discipline plan would minimize the amount of time that principals would need to spend on student discipline. The result would be that the principals would have more time to allocate to instructional leadership each day.

Many superintendents in the study reported that they thought it was important to approach the implementation of learning-walks with caution. If the learning-walks were viewed by key stakeholders—the teachers—as evaluative, the superintendents

anticipated that there would be resistance from the teacher's union. This did not change the fact, however, that once principals began to increase their time in classrooms, principals were confronted with mediocre and/or substandard instructional practice. Superintendents said that it was important to provide support to the principal so that the principal would have a courageous conversation with a teacher if the teacher's instructional practice was substandard. Superintendents talked about creating an expectation with their administrative team that principals would provide assistance to mediocre teachers to improve their knowledge and skills. Many of the superintendents in the study suggested that it was important to strike a balance between pushing their expectation for improvement and listening to the concerns of their staff and "going slow."

Many participants in the study said that they had involved stakeholders to identify an instructional model that served as the foundation for conversations about teaching and learning in the district. Other participants identified this as a need for their district and they planned to implement a process in the future to identify an instructional model that would be used in the district to bring coherence and focus to the instructional improvement efforts.

Other key stakeholders in a school district are the board of directors. One superintendent in the study reported that he had worked with the school board to develop policies based on the research of improving school districts. The board developed methods to measure progress and monitor policy implementation. Another superintendent explained how he reported to the school board on a monthly basis the

principals' progress on the implementation of learning-walks. He wanted the board to value the work that the principals were doing to focus on the instructional core. Another superintendent arranged for a consultant to provide periodic feedback to the school board regarding teachers' implementation of the professional development focus for improving instruction. All of these examples demonstrate that there were superintendents in the study who recognized school board members as key stakeholders in the improvement of the instructional core. The superintendents hoped to educate the board on the improvement strategy—the focus on the instructional core—and maintain their support for the improvement efforts.

Through the implementation of various learning-walk models, the superintendents in the study hoped to develop a culture of continuous improvement across their school district. Learning-walk models included principal learning-walks, superintendent-principal learning-walks, administrative team learning-walks, and teacher learning-walks. Learning-walks could have different purposes. Principal learning-walks could be used to provide principals with the opportunity to monitor instruction and gain a greater sense of what was happening in the school's classrooms. The principal learning-walks could also be used as a system check to assess the fidelity of teachers' implementation of professional development goals and to assess teachers' adherence to curriculum pacing calendars. Superintendent-principal learning-walks could provide a way for the superintendent to monitor principal follow-through with the expectation that the principal was engaging in the instructional improvement process. Administrative team learning-walks could

provide administrators the opportunity for team learning as well as provide principals the opportunity to brainstorm solutions for problems of practice. Teacher learning-walks could provide teachers with the opportunity to learn instructional skills and share best practices. All of these purposes could lead to instructional improvement. Superintendents believed that the conditions for building a culture of continuous improvement could be enhanced by having staff participate in learning-walks.

Internal Accountability

One way to build this culture is to focus on internal accountability. To develop internal accountability, there must be alignment of common expectations, individual integrity, and corporate accountability—both teachers' accountability to their principal and teachers' accountability to their colleagues. To lead this process, principals need to provide teachers with time to collaborate and develop common expectations based on student data and research on best practices. Teachers need to make a commitment to the common expectations and, through the corporate accountability, the teachers will be held accountable for follow-through.

The same construct can be applied to the work of the administrative team. The superintendent must provide time for the administrative team to collaborate and develop common expectations for professional practice. The principals must commit to the practice and they must be held accountable, by both the superintendent and their peers, for follow-through.

The Five Disciplines: Personal Mastery, Mental Constructs, Team Learning, Shared Vision, and Systems Thinking

The implementation of learning-walks provided the opportunity for the development of principals' personal mastery of instructional leadership skills. Superintendents provided time for principal professional development on an ongoing basis. Some superintendents scheduled weekly meetings for this purpose; others scheduled the meetings on a monthly basis. In addition, superintendents supported principal learning in summer institutes. Some of the superintendents brought administrators to Harvard for summer institutes; others arranged for consultants to meet with the principals in their district during the summer; others arranged for consultants to meet periodically with the principals throughout the school year. Superintendents supported principals' personal mastery of new knowledge and skills.

Many superintendents believed that principals needed to improve their ability to ask teachers reflective questions. Principals were familiar with telling people what to do; superintendents wanted the principals to facilitate teacher self-reflection. To develop a culture of continuous improvement, teachers need to be engaged in continuous self-reflection of their instructional practice. By improving questioning skills, the principals would be able to develop teachers who were self-reflective practitioners.

A common instructional model was a prerequisite to effective implementation of learning-walks. If a district had adopted a common instructional model, all staff had a foundation for conversations about teaching and learning. By engaging in

learning-walks and dialoguing about their observations, administrators and other school staff were able to share their mental models about effective instructional practice and they were able to develop a shared vision of what high quality instruction should look like. Superintendents provided time for team learning to occur. Many superintendents implemented some type of administrative team learning-walks so that the dialogue about instruction would be based in the context of authentic experiences in the classroom. One superintendent explained that when the administrative team was not able to participate in learning-walks in classrooms, they would view video-tape of classrooms. The administrators had requested that the video-taped lessons include two camera views—one that focused on the teacher's actions and one that focused on the students' response to the teacher's actions. The administrators in this district were making a shift from focusing on the teacher's teaching to focusing on the students' learning.

This paradigm shift was a result of systems thinking. The administrators realized that if they focused solely on the teacher's instruction, they would not know the impact of the instruction. They needed to change their focus to include the students' responses to the teacher's instruction. If all students in the school system were expected to meet standard, then the administrators needed to assess the impact of the teacher's instruction on the students' learning. Some superintendents reported that during learning-walks, principals were expected to question students about their learning. More than one superintendent indicated that the focus in their district was on students' understanding of the learning target, the purpose of the lesson.

Systems thinking had created coherence across the district. A sustained focus over time had deepened staff understanding of instructional practice and teaching/learning processes.

Technical and Adaptive Challenges

Superintendents reported a balance between technical challenges and adaptive challenges. In some cases, the learning-walks provided the opportunity for principals and other participants to identify effective instructional practices and then share with others the technical solutions to instructional challenges. These best practices could be shared across a grade level team or a content department; they could be shared across the classrooms in a school; they could be shared across the entire school district.

In other cases, school staff members were faced with adaptive challenges that could only be solved by developing new solutions to the instructional challenge. Superintendents reported that developing a deep understanding of challenging concepts, such as Accountable Talk, required a sustained focus over time with multiple opportunities for learning.

In their work with the principals, superintendents shared that they, too, were faced with technical challenges and adaptive challenges. The superintendents in the study were reflective about their practice and they spoke about their plans for the future. They indicated that they were working for continuous improvement and they expected others on the administrative team to do the same. More than one

superintendent shared that the superintendent had removed a principal from the principalship because the principal had refused to embrace the role of instructional leader. In their work with the principals, superintendents reported that they wanted to project a positive attitude about the improvement process. They wanted to let the principals know that they, the superintendent, were learning alongside the principals. They, too, were learning how to be an instructional leader. One superintendent said that one of his sayings was, "Lead learner lead."

More than one superintendent reported that it was only when the superintendent required the principals to participate in the learning-walks, and the principals began the practice, did the principals begin to see the value in the practice as a tool for instructional leadership. One superintendent said that when the principals began to implement learning-walks in his district, it was his perception that the principals did not see the practice as a way to positively impact instruction. The principals saw it as a way to increase their visibility with students and staff. The superintendent said it took about a year for principals to learn how the learning-walk process could be used to engage teachers in discussions about teaching and learning and how, as a result, the principals could positively impact teachers' instructional practice.

The Four Frames: Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic

Superintendents in the study mandated that principals had to allocate time each day to focus on instruction. The superintendents provided a number of

structures to support the implementation of learning-walks, including reporting mechanisms, learning-walk protocols, and regular meeting times for team learning.

Superintendents wanted principals to accept and embrace the role of instructional leader. To move the principals from compliance to commitment, the superintendents structured opportunities for team learning and face-to-face accountability.

However, superintendents realized that staff could not be treated as machines; to improve instructional practice, teachers and principals needed to learn new knowledge and skills. The same processes that were expected in the classroom between teacher and student were needed throughout the system. Principals needed to assess the zone of proximal development for each teacher and develop strategies that would provide teachers with the new knowledge and skill that they needed to improve their instructional practice. Superintendents needed to do the same with the administrative team. Many of the superintendents in the study developed sustained relationships with consultants to provide professional development for the administrative team.

Within school systems, administrators have positional power while many teachers have power of expertise. Superintendents in the study expected that through the learning-walk process, teachers with instructional expertise would be identified and best practices would be shared. Superintendents expected principals to develop their expertise as instructional leaders. Many superintendents in the study

emphasized that the purpose of administrative team learning-walks was to improve the knowledge and skills of the administrators, not to evaluate the teacher's teaching.

The practice of learning-walks was received differently by different teachers in different districts. Some superintendents expressed their perspective that because of their work with teacher-leaders and the leaders of the teacher's union, the learning-walk process had been received positively by teachers. Other superintendents reported that there was resistance by some teachers. Some superintendents reported that the elementary teachers in their district were the most receptive to viewing the principal as an instructional leader while the high school teachers in their district were the most resistant. In the past, the role of the principal had been to buffer the classroom from outside influences. With the implementation of learning-walks, the role of the principal had changed. Some teachers viewed the classroom as their domain and were resistant to efforts by the principal to develop a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Some superintendents reported that they viewed learning-walks as a way to send an important message to everyone—students, teachers and other staff, families and community members—that the instructional core is the most important part of the school and the job of the principal and other administrators is to work with teachers to improve teacher instructional skill and, as a result, improve student learning. These superintendents believed that how the principals used their time—how all of the administrators used their time—was a symbolic message to everyone that the job of

school staff is to provide high quality instruction for every student in every classroom every day.

Moral Leadership

The superintendents in this study were guided by the commitment to an ideal: every student deserves high quality instruction. Superintendents viewed barriers to instructional improvement as moral challenges. Learning-walks were implemented to support the development of corporate accountability—principals holding teachers accountable and teachers holding each other accountable—and to support the development of a culture of continuous improvement. The challenge of moral leadership is to keep the focus on student learning. It was the perspective of the superintendents in this study that learning-walks are a way to keep the entire school system focused on the improvement of teaching and learning.

Implications of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of twelve superintendents in Washington State who have mandated principal learning-walks as a tool for instructional leadership. The conceptual frameworks which were presented in the Chapter 2 "Review of Literature" were used to analyze and discuss the data. Each framework had implications for the school leader.

To build a foundation for dialogue about teaching and learning, most superintendents in the study had involved stakeholders to identify an instructional model that would be used in the district. The superintendents who had not done so

reported that they planned to do this in the future. To create a shared vision of what high quality instruction looked like and to create common expectations for instructional practice, it appeared that an agreed upon instructional model that could be used by all district staff was a benefit to the improvement process.

Most superintendents in the study reported that they were working to create a culture that supported continuous improvement. They emphasized that the learning-walks helped staff to create a shared vision for instructional practice. Some of the districts that had been implementing learning-walks the longest had involved teachers in the learning-walks. The superintendents of these districts reported that involving teachers as participants in learning-walks helped to build capacity for the improvement efforts in their district.

More than one superintendent reported that the principals in their district did not see the value in learning-walks until after they implemented the practice. One superintendent said that it was only after he required learning-walks on a daily basis and he began to monitor the implementation that the principals began to follow-through with the practice. An implication of these results is that apparently some people need to participate in an improvement effort before they begin to see the value in the practice.

There were contrasts in accountability structures and processes reported by the superintendents in the study. Some superintendents had the principals submit logs or learning-walk forms to document their time in the classroom. Other superintendents used face-to-face accountability structures and processes. Humans

are social creatures; the face-to-face accountability structures that were implemented by some of the superintendents in this study used this human sociability as a strength to reinforce the expectations that had been established by the superintendent. Face-to-face accountability appeared to be a strong method to ensure that principals followed-through with the learning-walks. In addition, the face-to-face meetings provided superintendents with the opportunity to reinforce with the administrative team that learning-walks were a means to an end. The purpose of the learning-walks was to impact the instructional core. The face-to-face meetings for accountability provide the opportunity for discussion, dialogue, and learning about the instructional core.

A final implication of the study: many superintendents in the study suggested that other educational leaders who were contemplating the implementation of learning-walks as a tool for instructional leadership must be cautious. The superintendents suggested that it was important to strike a balance between pushing for change and listening to the concerns of staff. Superintendents recommended that school leaders should take a long-range view of improvement processes, provide focus and support for staff, and create a culture where all staff worked for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since this study included the perspectives from only twelve superintendents, a recommendation for future research would be to continue this qualitative research to

include interviews with additional participants. An interesting development was discovered through the interview process. While the superintendents were selected to participate because they had reported that they required principals in their district to spend a portion of their day in the classroom, in practice, many superintendents did not require the principals to spend a portion of their day in the classroom. In many districts, superintendents were flexible and allowed the principals to "count" the time if the principal was engaged in a conversation regarding instructional improvement with a teacher or with a group of teachers. It would be interesting to see if this trend continued with other superintendents who reported a mandate to the district principals. In addition, it would be interesting to compare the information that was collected in this study with information collected from superintendents who expected principals to participate in learning-walks, but did not claim to mandate a daily presence in the classroom by the school principal.

Since the superintendents who participated in this study were solely from Washington State, a recommendation for future study would be to include participants from other state, regions, or countries.

This study is significant because, while there is some research on the role of principal as instructional leader, research is sorely lacking on the superintendent as instructional leader. While the practice of visiting classrooms on a regular basis and establishing visibility in the school is not a new concept, the increased expectation for principals to focus on instructional improvement on a daily basis certainly is. The superintendents in the study provided examples of a systems approach to the

improvement of student learning. The practice of learning-walks was one part of the system. The study of the perspectives of these twelve superintendents regarding the implementation of learning-walks as an instructional leadership practice contributes to our understanding of this practice by comparing and contrasting the beliefs, perceptions, and reported actions by the superintendents who participated in the study.

A substantial delimitation of the study was the fact that there was no triangulation of data. Only one person from each district was interviewed. In the future, the study of learning-walks as an instructional leadership practice will be enhanced by including additional participants from the school districts, such as principals and teachers, to gain a better understanding of the perspectives of these individuals and to check the factual statements that are reported by the various participants.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]Keesor (2005) used a quasi-experimental design model to compare two periods of time over the course of a school year at a junior high school in the Midwest. During the first nine weeks of the study, the assistant principal did not make an effort to visit classrooms. During the second nine weeks, the assistant principal consistently visited numerous classrooms during one hour each day. Multiple classrooms were visited during the hour. The author defined a classroom visit as "the assistant principal entering a classroom and making his or her presence known by being visible to all students and the instructor" (p. 65). In the comparison to the two time periods, the author noted, "The results of the *t*-test and BCA bootstrap in this study demonstrated a significant reduction in the number of discipline detentions and referrals in classrooms when administrative visibility increased" (p. 70). The author estimated that as a result of the decrease in discipline problems, the assistant principal gained more time in the schedule to focus on additional instructional leadership activities. The author estimated that the assistant principal gained "31 hours in a 9-week period of time" (p. 70). The author cited research by Giannangelo and Malone that indicated that principals believe that their primary role should be instructional leader but they report that they spend most of their time on administrative tasks and student discipline.

[2]Elmore (2004) writes, "District #2 is, by any standard, one of the highest-performing urban school systems in the country, with, overall, fewer than 12 percent of its students—60 percent of whom are low income—scoring in the lowest quartile of nationally standardized reading tests. A comparable figure for most urban districts is in the 40-50 percent range" (p. 78).

[3]In the article, "Student Test Results Show Gains: San Diego Reforms Lauded; Scores are up nearly across the board," Magee (2002) reports, "Perhaps the most significant gains were made in the second grade by the 'blueprint babies' whose entire education has been guided by the reforms implemented by Superintendent Alan Bersin and Chancellor of Instruction Anthony Alvarado" (p. A1). As the title of the article suggests, test scores in San Diego increased at nearly every grade level. Magee reports, however, that some parents and teachers have not embraced the reforms. "The Bersin administration has been criticized for alienating parents and teachers from the development of reforms. The San Diego Education Association has been critical of Bersin's management style. And two of five board trustees have opposed nearly every major policy brought about by Bersin and Alvarado" (p. A1).

[4]DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) define the four guiding questions:

1) What knowledge and skills should every student acquire as a result of this unit of instruction?

2) How will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills?

3) How will we respond when some students do not learn?

4) How will we respond when some students have clearly achieved the intended outcome?

The superintendent may have mistaken the fourth item because "celebrating success" is included as an important element in changing a school's culture in one of DuFour and Eaker's earlier works. In *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*, the authors write, "One of the most important and effective strategies for shaping the culture of any organization is celebration" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 141).

[5]In the interview with Dr. Benson, she mentioned that the only two reasons that administrators in the past were in classrooms were to conduct formal observations and to pull a student out of class for disciplinary reasons.

[6]The authors are referring to ISLLC Standard 2 and ISLLC Standard 3 (*Standards for School Leaders*, 1996). Standard 2 is in regards to instructional leadership; Standard 3 is in regards to organization management.

[7]Numerous instructional models include this concept, using different terms, such as instructional goal (Marzano, 2001, p. 94), learning goal (Marzano, 2007, p. 17), learning target (Simpson, 2005, p. 14), teacher's purpose (Danielson, 2007, p. 80), purpose and teaching point (*Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning*, 2008), goals and purpose (Doty, 2008, p. 12), instructional objective (Hunter, 1982,

p. 5), content objective and language objective (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008, p. 24), learning goals and behavioral objectives (Carter, 2007, p. 72), the "What?" (McCarthy, 2000, p. 128), the essential learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006, p. 46), the essential questions and enduring understandings (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, p. 193), clear expectations (Resnick & Hall, 2003), and, simply, the objective (Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008, p. 371). Baker provides a variety of synonyms drawing upon many of the aforementioned instructional models. In the STAR protocol he uses the following terms: standards for performance, state goals, learning targets, lesson objectives, essential questions, and enduring understandings (Baker, 2006a, p. 4).

[8]The superintendent's comments are illustrative of the conflict with the teacher's union that Alvarado, Fink, and Bersin had in San Diego during their tenure. The perception by many was that they tried to go too far, too fast in the implementation of reforms without building collaboration with staff. By June of 2005, all three had left the district. The *San Diego Union - Tribune* reported in an article titled, "Bersin Quietly Exits as Superintendent" (2005): "Bersin is leaving the district a year early because trustees voted to buy out his contract shortly after the political balance on the panel shifted from him following last November's school board election" (p. B1).

[9]Numerous studies indicate that the quality of a teacher's instruction has a strong impact on student achievement. Marzano (2003) reviewed numerous works and concluded that the cumulative effect of substandard instruction is devastating for student achievement. He writes, "If the effect of attending the class of one of the least effective teachers for a year is not debilitating enough, the cumulative effect can be devastating" (p. 73). Rice (2003) notes that a review of the research on the impact of teacher instruction on student learning indicates that students who enter a classroom academically behind are the students who are most likely to benefit from high quality instruction.

[10]The Washington School Research Center's report, *A Decade of Reform*, provides numerous comments from teachers across Washington State indicating that they know staff members, at the school where they work, who are resistant to change and refuse to implement reforms that have been undertaken by the school staff and administration. The report concludes with a strong statement:

> At the present time, in some Washington schools there appear to be serious limitations on dealing with personnel issues that are hampering reform. For example, in what other business or profession could an employee simply decide to 'refrain' from participating in a major undertaking of the organization? Yet, that is what is happening in some schools. (Fouts, 2003, p. 51)

A follow-up study by the Washington School Research Center (Abbott et al., 2008) provides a bit of hope regarding the culture of schools in Washington State. The authors write, “In the current study, it is clear that over the last several years, teachers have been attempting to focus on more fundamental change; more collaboration, focus on instruction, and beliefs about all students achieving driving change” (p. 16).

APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPH

Signing of Historic *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

Hamilton, Ohio. January 8, 2002.

"President Bush, students from Hamilton High School, Representative Miller, Senator Kennedy, Secretary Paige, and Representative Boehner (*WH photo by Paul Morse*)."

Public Domain, U.S. Department of Education

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Topics of Inquiry

1. The superintendent's perspective on what they hope to accomplish by mandating that principals must spend a portion of their day in classrooms. What is the second order change that they hope to see?

2. The superintendent's perspective on their beliefs about the structures that they have implemented to facilitate the principals' implementation and follow-through regarding the mandate. Do they think the structures are effective?

3. The superintendents' perspective on the reception to this mandate by the principals. Have the principals been receptive to this mandate? Have they been resistant?

4. The superintendent's perspective on the reception by teachers to increased principal presence in classrooms. Have the teachers been receptive to an increased principal's presence in the classroom? Have they been resistant?

5. The superintendent's perspective on the reception by the staff from different schools regarding increased principal's presence in classrooms. Has there been a difference by the reception of the mandate by the staff at different buildings? Elementary/secondary?

6. Does the superintendent have any documents that would help the superintendent to share the superintendent's perspective on increasing principals' presence in classrooms?

Question Guide

1. Your district was identified through a phone survey as a district that has an expectation that school principals will be in the classroom a certain amount of time per day and I was interested in talking with you about that and your expectations for the principals. So, first of all, many people call this practice different things—walk-throughs, learning-walks, drop-ins—is there a certain term that you use for this practice?

2. What do you hope to accomplish by having the school principals participate in (use term that the superintendent uses, i.e. Learning Walks)?
3. Who participates in (Learning Walks)?
4. Do you have an expectation of a certain amount of time that the principals will be in the classroom during the (Learning Walk)?
5. Do you have an expectation for the total amount of time that the principals will be in the classroom each day?
6. Is data collected during the (Learning Walk)?
7. What do you do with the data that is collected?
8. What made you decide to implement this practice?
9. Has your administrative team had training on how to implement (Learning Walks)?
10. Have you perceived any changes in your district that you would attribute to the implementation of (Learning Walks)?
11. Could you talk a little more specifically about the procedures that the principals use in the (Learning Walks)?
12. How did the principals react when you said you wanted them to be in the classroom _____ hours per day?
13. How have teachers reacted to seeing principals in the classrooms more?
14. Have you seen any difference between schools and their receptiveness to the (Learning Walks)?
15. Have you seen a difference between elementary and secondary principals and their implementation of the (Learning Walks)?
16. Is there anything else I should know about your district and what you think about (Learning Walks)?

APPENDIX C

MEMBER CHECK LETTER

Dear [Superintendent]:

Thank you, again, for your participation in my doctoral study on instructional leadership.

Enclosed is a verbatim transcript of the interview that was conducted on: [date of interview].

If you find any quotes in the interview that were incorrect, please contact me and I will make the correction to the transcript document. I do understand that it has been some time since the interview. While it would be interesting to study the progress of instructional leadership over time, my dissertation is based solely on the information gained from the interviews that were conducted with the twelve superintendents from Washington State.

Therefore, the purpose of this letter is not to solicit additional information from you about your work as an instructional leader. This letter is simply to provide you the verbatim transcript and to complete the "member check" process that is a part of high quality qualitative research.

Thank you, again, for your participation in my study. All results will be reported using pseudonyms. The verbatim transcripts will be destroyed after the completion of the dissertation. I plan to have the dissertation completed this spring. Graduation is May 9, 2009.

Again, if the transcript is accurate, you do not need to contact me. If there are corrections needed, please contact me and I will make the corrections.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by phone at 972-6007 or via email at: finchp@wvsd208.org. If you are interested in a final draft of the dissertation, please contact me and I will email you the final draft in May.

Thank you, again, for your assistance with this study of instructional leadership.

Sincerely,

Peter D. Finch, Assistant Superintendent
West Valley School District #208

- Life-long Learners
- Success Every Day
*- Proud * Caring * Community*

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY - CONSENT FORM - DISSERTATION STUDY

Researcher: Peter D. Finch, Graduate Student, Washington State University,
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling Psychology, (509) 972-6007

Researcher's statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I will ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When I have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.' I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of public school superintendents who expect school principals to spend a portion of their day in the classroom.

PROCEDURES

The study will include interviews with public school superintendents from Washington State. Each interview will be approximately one hour in length. Approximately 10 superintendents will be interviewed. The interviews will be audio-taped. The researcher will transcribe the audio-tapes. Only the researcher (Peter D. Finch) will have access to the audio-tapes and the transcriptions. The researcher will collect and analyze documents related to instructional leadership actions, such as learning-walk feedback forms and agendas of administrative team meetings and/or faculty meetings. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Participants may refuse to answer any question at any time. All identifying information will remain confidential. Only the researcher (Peter D. Finch) will have access to the data collected. Results will be published using pseudonyms for participants and locations. All data collected (audio-tapes, transcriptions, and documents) will be destroyed three years after the study is completed.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Participants may find it uncomfortable to discuss certain aspects of instructional leadership. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Participants may refuse to answer any question at any time.

Peter D. Finch _____

Printed name of researcher Signature of researcher Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-9661. This project has been reviewed and approved for human participation by the WSU IRB. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____

Printed name of subject Signature of participant Date