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by

LaShawn Nashville Hodge

August 2019

THE PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT: THE  
INFLUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN AN URBAN SCHOOL  
DISTRICT

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study examined the perceptions of principals related to literacy instructional leadership in an urban school. According to Orphanos and Orr (2013), principals who invest in understanding the literacy instructional practices in school settings find that teachers on their campuses usually have positive attitudes regarding supporting the achievement of students through the implementation of district-level mandates that outline the steps needed to teach literacy skills. In many school districts, campus and district-level administrators solicit experts to offer professional development to strengthen literacy instructional practices. This leads to the question of how to improve principals' knowledge and involvement in the literacy instruction that is provided by their teachers, literacy coaches, reading specialists, and other campus professionals. **Purpose:** Dewitt (2017) indicates that extensive research has been conducted on the perceptions of principals related to basic instruction. But, limited research has been collected regarding principals' perceptions of literacy instruction in urban school settings. This study used a qualitative approach to address the research question: What do principals perceive as their role in literacy development as it relates to instructional leadership in an urban school? **Methods:** This design provided a method to investigate the perceptions of four elementary principals regarding their role in literacy development by participating in two rounds of one-on-one interviews and member-checking session to discuss the themes that emerged from the interviews. The first one-on-one interview will address general questions about their interactions with literacy and the second one-on-one interview requested additional information to clarify responses and to connect emerging themes. The member checking conducted enabled the

researcher to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the views presented during the two one-on-one interviews (Creswell, 2002). A total of four elementary school principals from one pre-selected urban school district in North Houston were selected using a convenience sample of elementary principals. The interview responses were transcribed electronically, analyzed, and coded into themes, keywords, and phrases to create a database for this project. The coded responses were the foundation of the themes that emerge within and across the data collection and became the basis for the key findings discussed. **Results:** The findings revealed that principals with backgrounds in literacy were more comfortable leading literacy discussions and providing feedback to teachers on literacy related matters. Additionally, campuses of literacy minded principals yielded higher performance ratings on reading assessments. In contrast, STEM principals relied on campus literacy experts to guide their instructional decisions and frequent collaboration was needed to best meet the needs of literacy instruction. All four principals shared the common belief that district trainings were effective when implemented with fidelity on their campus. Another commonality discovered highlighted that all of the principals shared a level of comfortability when giving feedback on literacy instruction, but providing specific interventions to assist struggling learners was limited to their teaching content, specifically what they [the principal] had previously taught. **Conclusion:** Principals come from different teaching backgrounds. It is imperative that the leadership team represent individuals that encompass skill sets that complement the strengths and weaknesses of the principal. Furthermore, this study can help the identified urban school district develop professional development geared towards the needs of administrators that lack content knowledge based on past teaching

experiences and missing elements of principal preparation programs. The aim is to aid the school district in producing well-round campus leaders.



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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

My career in education started nearly 18 years ago. I moved to Houston to teach under an emergency permit plan, which allowed me to work only within the district where I was hired. This permit had no prerequisites other than having a bachelor's degree. Eager to teach, I came to Texas with no knowledge of teaching or classroom management, but anxious to get started in my own classroom. Nervously, I signed the contract and the district agreed to provide training and mentorship to aid my professional development, which was initiated after the year began. Hired to teach 5<sup>th</sup> grade science, I worked tirelessly to develop detailed lesson plans, with absolutely no idea of how to successfully implement the plans, but-it looked good on paper. Unfortunately, after starting my journey I soon realized that many of my students lacked sufficient fluency skills and I was unable to appropriately meet their needs. I struggled with simple things, such as independent reading and student behavior, due to their academic deficits. It was at this time, I vowed to do better. I attended many staff development sessions and even went back to school to obtain a master's degree. By learning more and sharing my knowledge of literacy success and areas of growth with other individuals, my professional goal was formed: "The more I know, the more I grow. I was created on purpose, with purpose, for a purpose."

Numerous studies have been conducted on increasing student engagement and improving literacy development. Research shows that using structured literacy programs that allow for authentic student engagement prove beneficial in raising student achievement and increasing literacy development (Bock and Erickson 2015). Literacy is

not stagnate and has constantly changed to meet federal and state standards. In order to prepare teacher candidates to teach all children effectively, teacher education programs must develop teachers who understand and can implement culturally responsive pedagogy (Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012). Unfortunately, limited information was documented to support improved existing administrator training.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 focused on student academic achievement and decreasing achievement gaps with concentration primarily on reading and math test scores to determine school effectiveness. After much thought and debate, in 2015 the government adopted The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA differs from NCLB in that four federal elected factors and a fifth state elected factor are used to evaluate school effectiveness, resulting in more accountability to show progress being placed on individual schools and districts.

Due to ESSA, schools are mandated to document academic growth in math and reading once a year in grades 3 through 8, as well as once in high school. Science must also be tested once in grade school, middle school and high school (Lee, 2015). NCLB was regulated by the federal government, while ESSA minimizes the federal role, granting states more flexibility to education sanctions. Every state has the ability to select policies and curriculum standards that the entity deems necessary. Consequently, this may impact student achievement due to lack of continuity. States are also given free rein to establish or adopt teaching methods, textbooks, and instructional materials.

High stakes testing is the result of educational policies. Administrators must ensure they are aware of instructional programs being implemented that may impact

student success. Principals are more than disciplinarians; they act as instructional leaders (Balyer, 2014), who lead by example and model the expectation of excellence.

### **Problem Statement**

In the last decade, a plethora of research, designed for teachers, has been conducted on how to teach literacy. The studies suggested an increased need for literacy coaches to support teaching practices and cultivate pedagogy with the aim of positively affecting student achievement (Conley, 2012). Many school districts now employ coaches and support ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers, however insufficient research has been done to identify the role of administrators in literacy development.

Administrators cannot lead without adequate knowledge of quality and effective instruction, establishing and communicating a clear campus vision, developing an effective school-wide plan, and understanding accountability requirements. An administrator must not only be cognizant of pedagogy, but also able “to translate their knowledge into instructional applications that can benefit others” (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011, p.5).

### **Need for the Study**

Assuredly, the role of the principal is vital. Research conducted by Overholt and Szabocsik (2013), reveals, “the principal usually knows only his or her results specific content, which results in inadequate feedback or unsubstantial contributions to improve instruction in areas other than their particular field of study” (p.53). Subsequently, the lack of sufficient knowledge other than their preferred pedagogy prohibits administrators



from successfully communicating academic necessities. For this reason, there was a need for a study that examined the administrator's role in literacy.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

Principal, literacy coach, and instructional leader, are all different terms with similar meanings; all of which are necessary in the educational setting. How the meaning of each role was defined, although having prescribed district criteria, varied due to personal perspectives. The purpose of this study was to explore the administrator's role in facilitating, implementing, and modeling literacy development.

An instruction leader's best practices for implementing an effective literacy program were the aim of this study. While the principal acted as the change agent in instructional reform (Jackson-Dean, 2010), appropriate training must be rendered to ensure fidelity of implementation. Under the mandates of ESSA, principals are under the scrutiny of all stakeholders to produce student growth, especially in the area of literacy, which guides all other tested areas.

### **Research Questions**

What is the principals' perceptions of literacy development in an urban school and how does that knowledge influence instructional leadership?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were used throughout this document:

- **Instructional Leader-** an individual who leads learning communities, in which staff members meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, collaborate to solve

problems, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001).

- **Literacy-** the process of using reading, writing, and oral language extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning through interaction and involvement with multimodal text in the context of socially situated practices (Frankel, Becker, Rowe, & Pearson, 2016).
- **Literacy Coach-** a reading specialist who is trained to provide explicit professional development to teachers in a variety of situations. Coaching is educator-centered in that a coach uses demonstration, observation, and engaged conversations related to specific teacher beliefs and classroom practices. Theoretically, within the constructivist view of teaching, the coach facilitates conversations with the educator within his/her “zone of proximal development.” The ultimate goal is to foster teacher growth and independent reflection that supports optimum learning for all students (Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse, 2011).
- **Mentor-** someone who facilitates and assists another’s development (Gay, 1995).
- **Urban School-** schools located in or near urban centers, primarily serving poor and ethnically diverse students in densely populated areas. (Urban Schools, 2019).

## Summary

Chapter One offered background information on the researcher, the reason why this study was relevant to society, and what question was addressed through the research, which involved the many facets of accountability and the roles of principals. Chapter Two detailed articles and additional studies relevant to the administrative role as it related

to implementation and facilitation of successful literacy development. Moreover, the study will address urban education and the implications of the principals' level of knowledgeability.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

The literature review for this study was organized into three sections. This organizational method provided a framework for understanding the administrator's role in facilitating literacy development. The review of literature outlined the evolving role of the administrator, from the perspectives of teachers and literacy coaches, in addition to the administrator's perspective. Reading, which was essential to all other academic contents, was the foundation of literacy. As instructional leaders, administrators must be knowledgeable of literacy development implementation and academic best practices, and not just the inner and outer workings of disciplinary actions and concerns.

This review first addressed the historical markings of literacy. The second section outlined factors influencing literacy development. The third and final section discussed the role of the administrator in literacy development and serving as an instructional leader of an urban school. Ultimately, the aim of the literature review was to provide an in-depth look into the components literacy development and the responsibility of the administrator.

#### **The History of Literacy**

According to the Frankel, Becker, Rowe, & Pearson (2016), literacy was defined as “the process of using reading, writing, and oral language extract, construct, integrate, and critique meaning through interaction and involvement with multimodal text in the context of socially situated practices” (p.7). Literacy processes differed depending upon disciplinary context. These processes were formed by personal ideologies, content

specific background, and conceptual framework. With literacy taking the forefront in education, to understand the present, we must first review the past.

The origins of literacy can be traced back as far as 3500 B.C. with pictorial communication. In centuries past, reading was reserved for the elite and was contained primarily within biblical and theatrical contexts (University of Texas Arlington, 2015). However, after the invention of the printing press, the Industrial Revolution era brought about many changes to the arena of literacy. “Recreational reading became a popular activity, with literacy rates getting as high as 70 percent in some parts of the United States in the 1920s” (University of Texas Arlington, 2015). It is important to note the term *literate* previously meant, “well educated, learned; only since the late nineteenth century has it also come to refer to the abilities to read and write text, while maintaining the broader meaning of being ‘knowledgeable or educated in a particular field or fields’” (*Literacy for life*, 2005, p.148).

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human rights states that literacy is implicit to education; they are a collaborative effort and a basic right of humans. Unfortunately, many did not comply with the information outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to Schlossberg (2011), 80% of adults in the 14<sup>th</sup> century could not spell their names, resulting in an illiterate society. Freire and Macedo (1995), suggest that the implications of illiteracy are universal, yet ignored by many. During the nineteenth century, reading was primarily used for religious teachings and was reserved for a select group. The complicatedness will only further exacerbate the problem of illiteracy and offer minimal attempts of resolution. Literacy is complex and continues to be redefined in accordance with society, thus leading us into modern society. It was

during this time that literacy began to rise in the Western World. The invention of the printing press was the catalyst that started the rise of literacy in America. Additionally, research states that literacy rates continued to increase rapidly, with nearly 95 percent of Americans being literate by 1940. In 2008, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that between 1995 and 2008, there was “an overall global increase of about 6 percent (from 77 percent to 83 percent) in rates of adults (aged 15 years and older) literacy” (Schlossberg, 2011). Worldwide, literacy rates continue to rise, with no end in sight. According to data presented by Roser and Ortiz-Ospina (2018), “Literacy levels for the world population have risen drastically in the last couple of centuries. While only 12 percent of the world could read and write in 1820, today the share has reversed and only 17 percent of the world remains illiterate”. While the literacy rates continue to increase, there still lies a systematic problem. With the evolution of the term literacy, society too has changed. Technology was taking the lead in education while the art of reading and writing are becoming skills of the past. Texting, using short-hand, and emoji art was replacing grammar and spelling rules during leisure time, resulting in diminished literacy skills. Literacy campaigns, formal schooling, and established learning opportunities are working diligently to combat illiteracy and advocate for literacy.

Society has not established a widespread transition to literacy; however, interpersonal motivations continue to guide the literacy movement. Institutions have modified teacher preparation programs to include components of effective literacy instruction. Novice teachers are now graduating with a broader understanding of reading and writing development to implement into their instructional practices. George Bush

said if we are to have the best literacy teachers in the world by any year, then we must have the best teacher preparation programs for literacy development (Harris & Harris, 1992).

According to a study conducted by the International Literacy Association (2015), 23 education officials were interviewed from 23 different states regarding their literacy programs. The data collected was in direct conflict to the challenge set forth by President Bush. Data confirmed from interviews concluded that the majority of states, in one particular study, did not have a requirement related to specific number of hours in literacy or reading instruction coursework. In essence, this translated into insufficient teacher preparation.

Harris and Harris (1992) focused their study on the Partner School Model. The aforementioned model worked in collaboration with a university and neighboring school educators to implement curriculum, in-service, and preservice functions for university students and novice teachers in the area of literacy education. New literacy teachers must see models in use of exemplary literacy teaching or a process of deskilling will take place when they move from preservice preparation to in-service practice (Harris & Harris, 1992). In order to prepare teacher candidates to teach all children effectively, teacher education programs must develop teachers who understand and can implement culturally responsive pedagogy (Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012). In further support of this finding, the International Literacy Association (2015) cited 23 state department officials talking about changes that were taking place in the requirements for teacher certification during the upcoming year.

Literacy is, by nature, an ever-evolving concept (Barr, Watts-Taffe, Yokota, Ventura, & Caputi, 2000). The studies represented in this article expressed the concept of Barr, Watts-Taffe, Yokota, Ventura, & Caputi (2000), with detail. From the study conducted involving the 23 state education officials to Partner Schools, and finally to critical literacy implementation, it appears that there is an expectation that literacy will be a focus in the practica that candidates participate. However, it did not offer explicit guidelines for teacher preparation programs through the state education programs, or through department guidelines to ensure that the practica provided quality experiences in learning to teach literacy (International Literacy Association, 2015). So, what does this mean? Preservice and novice teachers were expected to teach literacy when they themselves were not fully prepared to offer quality literacy instruction.

Data collected from the International Literacy Association (2015), showed that many contributors agreed that standards played a large role in shaping teacher education curriculum. Furthermore, there was a lot of variation in how prominent literacy standards were established. When this data was compared to the data collected from Harris and Harris (1992), it was evident that educator researchers were well aware and informed of the disparities represented in teacher preparation programs, and therefore set out to narrow or close the deficit. Studies as recent as June, 2017 have confirmed, even with the many years of previous research, the creeping assumption has been that the nation's schools needed better teachers than they were getting (Mangan, 2017). Mangan's (2017) research identified four quality indicators for prospective teachers learning: knowledge development, authentic contexts, ongoing teacher development, and ongoing assessments.



## **Commonly Used Literacy Approaches**

**Basal Anthology Approach.** The Basal Anthology Approach was used frequently in the United States. The approach required teachers to use basals, coupled with workbooks, assessment guides, and teacher resources. The approach began on an emergent level and scaffolded instruction followed as the program increased in difficulty. Primarily, the program was used with students from kindergarten through grade six. The basal approach supplied the teacher with big books, supplementary libraries, posters, and charts.

The advantages of this approach were that teachers got a multitude of resources to use, ranging from technology, written materials, and even assessment guides. If a teacher had difficulty planning the lesson, which was no problem for this approach, planned lessons and enrichment materials were provided. With so many wonderful advantages, who could believe that disadvantages were possible, but they were. Unfortunately, the basal texts are not suitable for all student interest. At times, basals only included excerpts from novels, and often left the reader without the ability to fully understand the text in its entirety.

**Literature-Based Approach.** Children book sets or children series books were used to provide literacy instruction using the Literature Based- Approach. The approach had three major organizational teaching approaches, core literature, text sets, and thematic units.

Core literature was read by the whole class or by groups of students. Students were able to build student background and books were selected based on student interest. All students read and analyzed the same book. Text sets allowed students to read related

books while comparing and contrasting the text. This unique approach offered students the ability to have common reading experience and therefore built confidence when discussing related texts. On the other hand, what interested one student may not have interest another student. As a result, some students may have lacked participation an authentic engagement because of their lack of interest in the selection. Also, there may be minimal opportunities for students to read text appropriate for below level readers. The teacher must ensure that the readability of the text are scaffold to accommodate every student at some point throughout the lesson.

**Reading Workshop.** In the Reading Workshop, each student was allowed to select his or her own reading selection. Students periodically met with their teacher to discuss their reading. To prepare the class for reading, the teacher initially addressed the entire class. This was followed by the teacher introducing to some and reviewing with others specific skills or strategies being covered in the lesson. This short mini-lesson could be derived from a basal or other teacher resource. Once the mini- lesson was completed, students began the task of independent reading by utilizing various strategies, such as sticky notes, predicting, and inferencing, to increase comprehension.

The major advantages of this approach involved the students being able to work at their own pace and select their own reading material. Due to the students having reading independence, the teacher may not have been able to properly attend to every student and may therefore miss identifying when a skill is not mastered. Also, if you had students that are incapable of working independently, they may become a behavior concern and their grades may diminish.

## **Language Experience Approach**

### **Whole Language.**

This philosophy of learning states that, “Oral language is acquired by using it for real purposes” (p.471). The premise behind this philosophy was, reading and writing must be learned together. This was not a scripted, prescriptive program, and was best learned in the context of a group. Strategies used to teach whole language included various forms of cooperative learning.

**Guided Reading.** Students were organized into learning communities based on their reading levels. Communities met daily and were reorganized as needed. During guided reading, students had the opportunity to work with different learning centers to improve essential literacy development, such as word analysis, listening centers, and reading centers. The objective of each center was the same; however, the activities and level of rigor have varied.

**Integrated Approach.** This approach included elements from guided reading, whole language experiences, reading workshops, literature based, and the basal approach. The most successful component of each approach worked cooperatively to increase literacy development. Listening, speaking, and writing strategies were intertwined to build the approach and make it more beneficial to all students, instead of a select group of students.

## **Political Implications**

The early implications of the federal government on education dated back to 1867, with the establishment of the original Department of Education. The aim of this

department was to collect and analyze data to assist states in developing effective school systems. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Act, to provide federal grants to districts serving low-income students. Johnson declared “a goal of full educational opportunity (Paul, 2016).” Paul further states, “The first five years of the ESEA demonstrated some inherent issues regarding money, religion, race, and federal-state-local relations within the law, as predicted by the opponents of federal aid. The original hope was, once schools received money, the school systems would reform and reach out to those children neglected by the system for so long. Rather, national priorities shifted, pressure groups splintered, and the political climate changed” (Paul, 2016). Subsequently, in 1979, the Department of Education became a Cabinet-level agency, under the leadership of President Jimmy Carter. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Congress created the department in 1979 declaring these 7 purposes shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Purpose Declaration of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 1979)*

<b>Purpose #</b>	<b>Purpose Declared by the U.S. Dept. of Education</b>
1	To strengthen the Federal commitment to ensuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual;
2	To supplement and complement the efforts of States, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the States, the private sector, public and private educational institutions, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education;
3	To encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs;
4	To promote improvements in the quality and usefulness of education through federally supported research, evaluation, and sharing of information;
5	To improve the coordination of Federal education programs;
6	To improve the management and efficiency of Federal education activities, especially with respect to the process, procedures, and administrative structures for the dispersal of Federal funds, as well as the reduction of unnecessary and duplicative burdens and constraints, including unnecessary paperwork, on the recipients of Federal funds; and
7	To increase the accountability of Federal education programs to the President, the Congress and the public. (Section 102, Public Law 96-88).

Additionally, research stated that within the federal government, the Department of Education acted as the agency that ensured the president's plans for education policy were executed and the education laws developed were implemented and enacted by Congress. The mission of the Department was to prepare the students of America to successfully compete globally and promote student achievement by cultivating equal access and excellence in education. The beginning was just that; with the changing political climate, educational reform, policies, and implementation, were a revolving door of uncertainty. "The United States is facing a literacy crisis. More than 30 million adults

in the United States cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third grade level” (The Room 241 Team, 2018).

The goal of education in the United States today was to “ensure that every child becomes literate (Van Kleeck, & Schuele, 2010). Former President Ronald Reagan developed the Reading Excellence Act (REA), which was signed into law on October 21, 1998 (Sweet, 1998). REA was developed to provide financial support, by means of discretionary grants, to states incorporating research-based reading programs in grade kindergarten through third, to improve reading instruction. In Texas, HB 001, enacted in 1997, which allotted \$32 million for reading academies that focus on reading (Start Early, Finish Strong. How to Help Every Child Become a Reader, 1999). Approximately 17 states were selected from the competing states as the first recipients of the REA grant awarded in 1999 to be funded for a maximum of three years.

Although a valiant effort was exerted by Former President Ronald Reagan, Former President George W. Bush saw the need for improvement to further enhance childhood literacy. As a result, the reauthorization of ESEA was enacted as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. Under NCLB, increased accountability measures were enacted for teachers and students. High-stakes testing was used to measure academic performance across the nation. NCLB had many benefits, but there were many problems, which soon became apparent.

“While NCLB helped in closing achievement gaps and mandating transparency, it also had several problematic results. The law created incentives for states to lower their standards, emphasized punishing failure over rewarding success, focused on

scores instead of growth and progress, and prescribed a pass-fail, one-size-fits-all series of interventions for schools that miss their state-established goals” (An Overview of the U.S. Department of Education ,2010).

Numerous scandals ensued around administrators manipulating test scores and engaging in acts of unthinkable measure, in an attempt to show improved student success and secure financial gain for their performance in closing achievement gaps (Fantz, 2015).

President Barack Obama reauthorized ESEA as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015. ESSA was fully operational in the 2017-2018 school year. State testing is still the leading edge of tracking student performance, although teacher incentive and performance pay has ended, the accountability placed on schools to meeting passing standards remains in place and serves as a constant stressor to many educators. The focus has begun to shift to student growth and not just high performing test scores. Information vital to student success is regularly disseminated to all stakeholders, allowing for progression towards meeting the academic needs as school districts move towards the goals established through standardized assessments. With a plan of action in place, Obama served his last term in office and Donald Trump became president. Unfortunately, under Trump’s leadership, there are continued efforts to repeal ESSA and cut the federal budget that aids public education. Only time will tell the ramifications of the Trump administration on education.

## **Critical Factors of Literacy Development**

According to the National Education Goals Report (1995), the number one risk indicator for students dropping out of school is poor literacy. Research has proven that children begin to learn language from the day they are born. As children mature, so does their ability to develop more complex speech and language skills. As mimicked by babies and toddlers, the repetition of sound, words, and expressions, slowly begin to evolve into thoughts and sentences; this is the start of literacy development. “Developed in preschool, oral language skills predict later reading comprehension beyond the contribution made by word recognition skills in the early grades” (National Institutes of Health, 2006). Early exposure to vocabulary and text were pivotal to literacy development. It was paramount to note that there were factors that contributed to the development and lack of development towards literacy that shaped academic performance. Furthermore, Johnston (2010), suggested that language development was contingent upon at least five domains: social, perceptual, cognitive processing, conceptual, and linguistics.

“Fortunately, the research evidence indicates that it is possible to accelerate language learning. Even though the child must be the one to create the abstract patterns from the language data, we can facilitate this learning (a) by presenting language examples that are in accord with the child’s perceptual, social and cognitive resources; and (b) by choosing learning goals that are in harmony”(p.4).

Research indicated that children mimic what they see, hear, and observe the most.

Literacy development was learned and could be catapulted forward or allowed to sit



stagnate. It was the responsibility of society to adequately cultivate the love of learning and instill literacy awareness.

### **Parental Support.**

There are numerous precocious children with the desire to read and write to do what they see other children doing, but they lack the support necessary to successfully accomplish this task without parental support. A commonality found in several articles referenced parental literacy influence. Johnston (2010) found from ages one to three, children from highly verbal “professional” families heard nearly three times as many words per week as children from low verbal “welfare” families (p.3). Before citing evidence from Banda and Kirunda (2005), it must be noted that this study was conducted in Uganda and the terms “urban” and “rural” differ in meaning from the common U.S. meanings: “urban” refers to “suburban” and “rural” refers to “urban”. This data supported the findings of Banda and Kirunda (2005) that show urban families were more likely to organize reading and writing activities for their children in stark comparison to rural families who did not arrange any literacy building events and did not participate in any additional literacy activities, such as reading a book. Research implied that urban children were more likely to live in a literacy rich environment with numerous literacy exposure opportunities, which included but were not limited to, print as well as audio-visual. Johnston (2010), provided confirmatory evidence that there was a close link between learning to talk and learning to read, intellectual development, learning mechanisms involved, and the external factors that influence them (p.1). This research corroborates the findings of Heath et.al (2014), Banda and Kirunda (2005), and Benjamin (1993), which all referenced the literacy ability of children having language exposure and print familiarity

as major components of literacy success. Additional evidence presented by Benjamin (1993), factors the mothers' level of education into the literacy equation. According to Heath et. al. (2014), inconclusive data and mixed results about the validity of this claim have been called into question, citing a study conducted by Christian, Morrison, and Bryant that indicated kindergarten children of less educated mothers outperformed children of more highly educated mothers who engaged in fewer home literacy activities (p.2). However, Benjamin (1993), noted research conducted by The Harvard Families and Literacy Study, which found no true evidence to support the claim of parental literacy levels directly impacting overall development or achievement. At this time, this researcher has been unable to identify any additional research to corroborate the contradictory finding of literacy outperformance by children of less educated mothers. At this time, additional research is needed to acquire more information before a more concrete claim can be made to support or refute these findings.

**Soci-Economic Status (SES)** The aforementioned studies represented in this review document socio-economic status (SES) as another contributing factor influencing early literacy development. In a study conducted by Green et.al. (2009), children who grow up in low-income households have an increased risk of developmental delay and poor school achievement. Banda and Kirunda (2005), implied that "urban" parents are more likely to have the financial resources needed to provide learning experiences and opportunities which "rural" parents may not be able to afford. The disparity between the classes reinforces the ideas presented by Heath et.al (2009), indicating that children of low-socioeconomic status or disadvantaged children are more likely to have smaller vocabularies than middle and high socioeconomic children, unfortunately compromising

their ability to acquire adequate literacy development. Additionally, Lynch (2007), suggested when children attend schools with low SES their academic performance is lower on reading and writing, which are literacy task.

Accessibility to print has been associated to literacy development. Children exposed to varying forms of text have a better opportunity to engage in diverse experiences. Knowledge outside of storybooks exposes the mind and the reader to complex genre and more rigorous vocabulary. The ability of the children to use background knowledge and experiences aids in supporting literacy advancement.

In order to gain a better understanding of factors influencing literacy development, it was necessary to conduct additional research that examined socio-economic status, parental literacy, and verbal analysis that focuses specifically on phonemic awareness. According to the studies presented, there is a preponderance of evidence to support literacy development and numerous contributing factors that influence literacy. Additional research may allow the contributing factors to be better defined, while containing more longitudinal data and ensuring the fidelity and validity of the collected data.

### **Instructional Leadership**

Principal is a title that encompasses numerous responsibilities. The job description changed depending on the individual being asked. As reported by Habegger (2008), “The job description of a school principal cannot be adequately described in a 1,000-word essay, let alone in a short paragraph; today’s principal is constantly multitasking and shifting roles at a moment’s notice” (p.42). Being knowledgeable of

instructional practices and opportunities for growth while utilizing essential personnel, such as literacy coaches and content specialist, was a necessity to ensure all students have the ability to reach their highest potential. Principals devoted to literacy operate under the autonomy that literacy guides all other contents and success was unattainable without mastery. Providing professional development by trained experts, demonstrating knowledge of academic expectations, and being able to model and articulate goals are of the utmost importance to principals in their role as instructional leader.

**Literacy Coach.** Findings of the International Literacy Association (2015) stated that, "Principals from exemplary schools with specialized literacy professionals on staff indicated that they were vital to the success of the schools' reading programs. In sum, there appears to be both a need for and a benefit from specialized literacy professionals working in schools to improve literacy instructional practices and students' literacy learning" (p.3). According to Toll (2018), coaches worked with teachers to help solve problems that limited their success. Coaches allowed teachers to think critically by asking probing question aimed at getting to the root of the problem. The coach listened attentively as the teacher identified areas of concern. It is vital to point out that there was no quick-fix to the situation. Using research-based techniques, coaches extracted information from teachers that may have been tucked away in inner self-storage unaware of its magnitude of usability if applied appropriately to the impending situation.

Differentiation of instruction was a key component in literacy instruction. With technological advances taking on a life of its' own in education, teachers must be aware of how to effectively integrate technology into their curriculum. Literacy coaches must possess the skills and tools to not only train on instruction but also computer-based

programs. Understanding what worked best for all students, regardless of their cognitive abilities, may positively impact their learning experiences. However, for this strategy to be successful, a working knowledge of web-based programs must be obtained by all participating parties. Subsequently, tracking teacher data becomes vital. The tracking of teacher data was pivotal to the role of the literacy coach. Information can be presented, teachers can attend professional development, and resources can be given, but unless the teacher is implementing the literacy program with fidelity, the work of the coach is irrelevant. The literacy coach must not only serve in the capacity of an observer, or modeler of lessons, but also as an evaluator. As an evaluator, the literacy coach was responsible for ensuring that teachers implemented new approaches that were best suited for the abilities of their students. Through various trainings and professional development's teachers are giving a wealth of information to pull from as they developed activities and assignments. Without proper guidance and constant feedback from the literacy coach, teachers had no check and balance system for the implementation of the prescribed literacy program.

The increased use of literacy coaches was partly the result of the mandates set forth by NCLB in regards to professional development for schools and teachers not making academic progress for two or more years. Literacy coaches were an integral component of the principal's team and when working collaboratively, they have the ability to propel the academic success to its' highest. Although the roles of the literacy coach and the principal as an instructional leader may appear to overlap, there was sufficient evidence to support the need for both. The roles of the instructional leader and

literacy coach were determined by the needs of the campus and qualifications for the position were determined by the school district.

When considering the meaning of coach, it was evident that these individuals worked in the trenches of the program, hand-in-hand guidance and mentorship when needed and gradual released when mastered with support as required. Literacy coaches worked in direct contact with teachers, assisting them with honing their craft of effective literacy instruction. Having specialized training in literacy instruction, the coach models research-based instruction, intervention, and aids the teachers with the development of lessons that followed the literacy instruction outline to best meet the needs of the students.

### **The Principal as the Instructional Leader**

Instructional Leader was defined as an individual who leads and works collaboratively with staff during learning community meetings to reflect on data, problem solve, and determine what best meets the needs of improved student performance (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The principal as the instructional leader was a daunting task, but very much achievable. In 2005, a meta-analysis was conducted that included 69 studies. Marzano, Walter, and McNulty (2005), obtained data from over 2,800 schools, which included 1,400,000 students and 14,000 teachers. From the data collected Marzano and his colleagues developed a list of the 21 most effective responsibilities that lead to effective school leaders (Marzano, Walter, & McNulty, 2005). Although principals are not well-versed in all content areas, they make the instructional role priority within their school (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). When put into context with the student conducted by Marzano and his team, effective leaders must be change makers, aware of best

practices, knowledgeable of current trends in curriculum and instruction, and able to engage staff in collaborative efforts. The sole province of the principal is not just to evaluate teacher performance, but to cultivate an environment filled with high expectations of teacher and student performance. Principals encourage communication, formal and informal, to foster peer review and self-reflection of practice. The principal was the leader and the creator of the campus vision. The factions formed within the school must be open to instructional changes presented by the instructional leader for the advancement of student success. Change was inevitable and the proliferation of data presented by research supported the changing role of principal to instructional leader. The ambiguity of the principal's role is of grave concern. The need to define the title has been debated for years, with no end in sight. According to the Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004) "School leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning, according to research. Moreover, principals strongly shape the conditions for high-quality teaching and are the prime factor in determining whether teachers stay in high-needs schools. High-quality principals, therefore, are vital to the effectiveness of our nation's public schools, especially those serving the children with the fewest advantages in life."

Despite the preponderance of evidence, many administrators succumbed to the role of manager, while attempting to meet the mandates of higher-ranking officials and pacify community stakeholders (Hallinger, 2008). One critical responsibility of the principal was to provide "organizational management for instructional improvement" (Horng & Loeb, 2010). Therefore, the vision of the leader was the directional guide for the staff. When the leader lacks vision, the staff does not know where to go for academic

improvements. Principals are key components in school achievement and improvement. The passing of NCLB and ESSA subsequently held the principal responsible for the implementation of effective school programs and district initiatives, as well as improvements in closing achievement gaps, through documented state assessments. Evidence obtained through these measures was used to determine the implicit productivity of academic success.

### **Urban Principals**

Principals in urban elementary schools were faced with many challenges that suburban principals may have not encountered, such as language deficits, negative behavior, and low academic performance (Rodriguez, Murakami-Ramvalho, and Ruff, 2009). Knowing the needs, climate, and culture of a campus assisted with the development of a plan of action to address academic gaps, specifically literacy for the purpose of this study. Urban Education Reform (2018) reported that the facilitation of a strong school climate by the principal can lead to improved program alignment. Additional evidence presented supported the claim of instructional leadership positively impacting academic gains when teachers and principals work collaboratively. With the evolution of ESSA from NCLB, academic growth mandates by the federal government now forced administrators to make intentional decisions about curriculum (Jackson, 2017). Furthermore, principals must be able to effectively articulate what was required by the local, state, and federal government.

Principals of urban elementary schools have many factors that contribute to their instructional leadership. The impact of socio-economics is at the forefront of how principals lead according to Rodriguez, Murakami-Ramvalho, and Ruff (2009). Serving as



academic advocates, emphasis must revolve around what students need to make sufficient gains and what teachers need to assist students in meeting the established academic goals. Urban Education Reform (2018) refers to this as “principal-led”, meaning the principal leads the development and implementation of all aspects associated with improving schools. Supports should be in place to monitor and suggest modifications to instruction when needed. However, for this to occur, the principal must be knowledgeable of the need. It was the responsibility of the principal to provide guidance and lead to development of a component knowledge base and skill set of the employees to ensure compliance (Angelle & Bilton, 2009). Regrettably, studies conducted by the aforementioned researchers suggested that many administrators demonstrate a need for additional training and first-hand experiences to exude confident leadership techniques and strategies.

The challenges of urban principals are not taken lightly. The climate and culture of these campuses, along with the academic gains needed or made are under much scrutiny. Lynch (2017) therefore suggest the redesign and restricting of principal preparation programs to better meet the need of today’s instructional leaders.

### **Principal Preparation**

Principals as instructional leaders were ultimately responsible for the learning and leading academic achievement of all students. Considering principals of urban schools, greater challenges existed that must be addressed, such as attrition rates, high special education identifications, and funding (Lynch, 2017). Principal preparation programs are geared to train on leadership, but not necessarily on the process of curriculum implementation or how to effectively select and deliver professional development to

establish content best practices. The issue of inadequate training is being addressed and some principal preparation programs are now addressing the insufficient training by incorporating real-life experiences and detailed training to meet the need of the population being served (Spicer, 2016).

To address the changing needs of principals, Title III ESSA funds allowed states to have some autonomy with funds for the purpose of developing and implementing future administrator programs and leadership academies. According to Hess and Kelly (2007), administrators were not adequately prepared to handle all of the challenges they encountered. Additionally, principals participating in Hess and Keller's (2007) research implied that the most beneficial training obtained was not through principal certification programs, but through on the job, real world experiences. This finding is in direct correlation to the findings of Spicer (2016), which also suggested the importance of administrator preparation consisting of not only text with curriculum, but on the job training, mimicking student teaching.

Lynch (2007) conducted a study of principal preparation programs emphasizing that effective programs should have palpable documentation that they positively impact principals' knowledgeability of skills and curriculum best practices, in addition to their probable success on the job, as a principal. Furthermore, the study concluded that "exemplar" programs can be measured by the "well prepared leaders who engage in effective practice" (p.9). Ultimately, the aim of principal preparation programs was to ensure that aspiring administrators were well versed in effectively operating a school. The job of the principal has dramatically evolved, moving from a focus on not only managing buildings and deterring negative behavior, but to an emphasis on improving

classroom instruction and serving the whole-child (Spiro, 2016). There is a call for additional research to examine the impact of “exemplar” principal preparedness in comparison to the level of experienced success and demonstrated leadership effectiveness. Unfortunately, limited research was available.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this chapter was to explain the research methodology of the qualitative case study regarding the principals' knowledgeability of literacy development in an urban elementary school. The applicability of case study research and constructivism approach is outlined and discussed in this chapter. The aforementioned methods of research allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the principals' attitude towards literacy development. Additionally, the research plan, which included ethical concerns, study participants, procedures and analysis methods, and methodology used were also focal items of this chapter.

### **Research Question**

There were explications that outlined the steps needed to teach literacy development. There were teacher preparation programs designed to guide novice teachers to implement curriculum effectively. Campus and district level administrators solicit field experts to offer professional development to strengthen instructional practices, but there was no mandate that required administrators to actively participate or even attend the trainings. Administrators are often dealing with issues and concern that pertain to budget, staffing, behavior, and disgruntle parents, missing needed opportunities to share in curriculum learning experiences. Subsequently, administrators are often content experts in a specific field of expertise or previous teaching experience. Therefore, my research question was:

What is the principals' perceptions of literacy development in an urban school and how does that knowledge influence instructional leadership?

### **Methodology Selected**

For this study, a qualitative method was appropriate when the aim of research was to examine and explain instructional practices by relying on past experiences and knowledge ability of participants. As outlined by Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach is appropriate when the researcher is seeking to gain a better understanding of variables and how they relate. Due to the purpose of this study being to examine the experiences and instructional leadership of urban elementary school principals, a qualitative approach is the best choice.

### **Case Study Methodology**

Case study methodology was used to perform this qualitative study. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that Case study research was conducted in the participants' settings and involve the study of real-life experiences. Creswell and Poth (2018), also described the steps that researchers should take to gain more in-depth information from participants. It is suggested that face-to-face interviews and participant observations be conducted over a period of time to allow for scheduling conflicts and for ease of access to interview protocols for all involved parties. Reporting lessons learned through research was another vital element of case study methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study also included the use of the constructivism approach. Focusing on the "specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p.8), was a vital component of this

study. Creswell (2014) also suggested that social constructivists aim to study participants and deduce their findings to the view of what was being studied. The intent of the constructivist investigator was to interpret the implications of the experiences had by those being studied.

### **The Researcher**

The researcher has worked in education for 18 years and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, a Master of Education in Education Administration, and is pursuing a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. The potential administrators being studied do not have explicit relationships with the researcher that may cause a personal conflict of interest that may result in research bias. It was noted however by Creswell (2014) that, “researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies.” (p.92).

The researcher was conversant of the tools needed to implement the proposed study. The researcher currently serves as an elementary assistant principal in an urban school district. The researcher had a teaching background related to literacy, having taught reading and writing for 13 years prior to becoming an administrator. Lastly, the investigator was well-versed in best practices and instructional leadership.

### **Study Participants**

Participants were selected from a population of individuals all having a minimum of 3 years teaching experience. Additionally, their previous teaching experiences were examined. All participants were current elementary school principals who worked in an identified urban school district located in Northern Harris County. Case study participants

were recruited and selected using a convenience sample or available sample, which was outlined in more detail within this chapter. Table 2 detailed the demographic breakdown of the research participants.

Table 2

*Research Participants Demographic Chart*

<b>Identifier</b>	<b>Certification Program</b>	<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Years as Principal</b>	<b>Ethnicity/Gender</b>
P1S	Traditional (4 yr)	Math	3	AA/Female
P2S	Alternative	Science	8	P/Male
P3L	Alternative	ELA	4	W/Female
P4L	Traditional	ELA / Social Studies	5	AA/Female

### **Setting and Sample**

The participating school district, which is referred to as ACN for the purpose of this study, is located on the north side of Harris County. With approximately 70,000 students, 86% of the students are classified as economically disadvantaged with 73% being at-risk. Founded in the late 1880's, ACN has a population make-up of 72.85% Hispanic, 23.14% African America, and less than 2% White, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, and two or more races. For this study, the 4 participants work on elementary campuses with demographics that closely mimic the district.

Flyers and emails were disseminated throughout the district to solicit interest from elementary school principals. After participants were identified they were asked to

submit a current resume, which was then be categorized by previous teaching expertise (Language Arts, Math, Science/SS, and Other). Through convenience sampling, qualified individuals were be identified. Etikan, Abubakar, Rukayya, & Alkassim (2016) suggest, “Convenience sampling is affordable, easy and the subject are easily available” (p.2). Convenience samples may present some limitations towards research. Outliers may cause unpredictable results and there is no way to measure the validity of how accurate the data reflects the entire population. Administrators were interviewed regarding their campus literacy instruction practice and their role in literacy development. My sample size included four elementary school principals.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

Resumes and interviews were used as data sources to answer the research question. The design method that guided this research study was the case-study research method. This case study sought to analyze campus literacy practices and the impact on instructional leadership. Additionally, this study addressed administrator perception of literacy development and the effectiveness of the literacy instruction program(s) implemented on their campus. Lewis-Spector and Jay (2011) spiro suggested that instructional practices were influenced heavily by the campus administrator. Therefore, through the analysis of information collected, common themes were identified to support or refute the claim of direct impact on instructional practices and implementation. The data collected was analyzed and detailed findings were outlined to assist in determining best practices as they related to literacy development, administrator knowledgeability, and instructional leadership.



## **Method of Data Analysis and Data Collection Procedures**

Data analysis for this study will begin with face-to-face interviews lasting approximately 30-45 minutes each, for one day. The researcher utilized interview protocols as suggested by Creswell (2014) to ensure that if the recording mechanism malfunctions, documentation of the interview would still be available. Interviews were recorded electronically on an iPhone X, using a factory installed voice recorder and transcribed for analysis using Microsoft Word Speech to Text Software. Participants were provided with a copy of their transcribed script to ensure the accuracy of the interview. The interviews began with an introduction of the purpose of the study and the questions, along with an explanation of the informed consent form that all participants were asked to sign. Furthermore, the researcher explained the right to terminate consent at any time. This was followed by open-ended questions about the principals' knowledgeability level of literacy. Also included in the interview were questions regarding the level of administrator participation with literacy practices. Lastly, the interview examined instructional leadership styles from administrators with literacy (reading/writing) backgrounds versus administrators with math, science, or social studies backgrounds. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), this phase of data analysis is referred to as horizontalization, "every significant statement will be listed and given equal value (p.314). In conclusion, the connection between the administrators' background in comparison to their personal perception of their role as the literacy instructional leader was the focus of this study. The summarized plan for data collection and data analysis is outlined below.

Table 3

*Data Collection Plan*

Research Question	Data Collection	Data Analysis
What is the principals' perceptions of literacy development in an urban school district and how does it influence their instructional leadership?	Administrator Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of themes</li> <li>• Classification</li> </ul>
	Resumes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classification and eligibility determination</li> </ul>
	Member-Checking Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification of emerged themes.</li> </ul>

Resumes were submitted to the researcher prior to interviews being conducted. Previous teaching experience was used to categorize participants into two groups, literacy and STEM. Furthermore, the number of years as a principal was identified to determine eligibility. In addition to face-to-face interviews, an open-ended interview, consisting of 10 the same questions asked during the initial interview was developed through Survey Monkey, to check for consistency in participant responses. It was disseminated to all participants to collect data pertaining to interactions with campus literacy practices. Due to the nature of the interviews, the protocols were pre-coded, containing the name of the participant, total years of completed experience as an administrator, and previous teaching experience. Research participants had one week to complete and submit the online interview after the initial, 45 minute face-to-face interview was conducted. Electronic interview data was stored in the database developed by Survey Monkey and

disaggregated using the text analysis feature. The initial interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. One week later, participants engaged in a 30 minute member-checking session to verify the accuracy of the transcribed interviews and review the emerging themes. This was followed by a 20 minute electronic interview through Survey Monkey, which contained the same questions asked in the initial interview, to check for consistency of responses. During week three, principals completed a follow-up interview, which lasted approximately 45 minutes. Subsequently, all data was entered into a Microsoft document that was password protected for research analysis. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality for reporting purposes.

The design method that guided this research study was the qualitative research method. The educational interests of the investigator revolved around literacy development and the skill set of administrators. The qualitative method promoted the use of first-hand administrative experiences as teaching tools to improve district wide leadership practices. Additionally, this method lent itself to interviews that addressed how principals view the effectiveness of the literacy instruction program(s) being implemented. The data collected was analyzed and detailed findings were outlined to assist in determining best practices as they related to literacy development, administrator knowledgeability levels, and instructional leadership.

Prior to beginning data gathering, informed consent forms explained to all participants, along with their right to withdraw participation at any time. The purpose of the study was also detailed, so that administrators could determine if the study was something that related to their experiences or educational interest. According to Creswell

(2014), the interview method must reflect confidentiality while allowing the researcher to elaborate on personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences being addressed through the research questions. Due to the investigator being personally vested in the study, the researcher was more likely to diligently seek impartial data to support the research findings. Maxwell (2013), declares personal interest as an advantage when the researcher is motivated as a strong interest in the topic will support the completion of the dissertation (pg. 24). Subsequently, the qualitative method was more beneficial to the research interest because of the personal connection the researcher had related to literacy development, administration, and instructional leadership.

### **Coding**

Coding was the process of examining data, and developing categories from text, pictures, thoughts and other information from the research study. Following the eight steps identified by Creswell (2014), from Tesch, the coding process may transcend the basic outliers as they arise. This enabled the researcher to develop a more in-depth analysis of the identified thematic data. Although considered a laborious process (Creswell, 2014), hand coding was also used in addition to Microsoft Word to analyze surveys and interviews. Coding aided in organizing key words and phrases, in addition to identifying emerging themes. Data was then be transferred to Microsoft Excel and formatted into an easily manipulated spreadsheet for further categorization. Following the eight steps identified by Creswell (2014), from Tesch, the coding process may transcend the basic outliers as they arise. This enabled the researcher to develop a more in-depth analysis of the identified thematic data. The steps are displayed in table 4.

Table 4

*Data Analysis Process (Creswell, 2014)*

<b>Analysis of Thematic Data</b>
Analyze all information and take notes as needed to remember key elements.
<p>Select the most interesting interview or survey (just one) and examine it carefully looking for the main idea of the document in the margin. Do this separately for each participant.</p> <p>After completing the one on one analysis of each participant document, from the margin information develop list of the identified topics. Organize columns by grouping similar topics together and strategically grouping the remaining topics.</p>
Using the list created, now go back into the collected data and abbreviate the topics and using the abbreviations as codes. This can be done and compared against all data to see if new themes develop.
Identify a word from each topic that best describes the data. Connecting the topics may prove to demonstrate relatability between topics.
Place codes into alphabetical order.
Compile all data from each step and conduct the initial analysis.
Recode information as needed.

## **Trustworthiness**

The fidelity with which an investigator observed qualitative research determined the validity of the study. Creswell (2014), cites the incorporation of qualitative validity as being vital to the study. With validity, the researcher used predetermined measures to check for accuracy. In this study, the use of the recording device, interview protocol, and transcription served this purpose. Validity strategies were also be employed to “enhance the researcher’s findings as well as convince readers of that accuracy” (Creswell, 2014, p.201).

In anticipation of accurate findings, member checking was also initiated. Participants were be provided with a copy of the developed themes and asked to provide feedback regarding their agreement with or disapproval of the emergent themes from the data collected. The triangulation of data sources was employed for an additional level of fidelity. Triangulation was the process by which multiple forms of documentation were examined and used to corroborate themes. This procedure added an element of validity to the study.

The researcher was available to assist in validity. Although the data collected for the study will be preserved for 5 years on the campus of University of Houston, at the end of the specified timespan, all data will be discarded. Ultimately, the abandonment of the data may pose a possible limitation to the validity of the study for future reference.

**Ethical Concerns.** The investigator ascertained that ethics were of the utmost importance during the course of the study. Participant consent forms were read aloud, and detailed answers were provided prior to asking the administrators to sign indicating their willingness to partake in the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) state, “we

must provide evidence of measures for respecting the privacy of participants and ensuring the consent process is clearly communicated indicating the right of the participants to withdraw” (p.54). There were no foreseeable risk to human subjects associated with the study. All contributors were over the age of 18, and deemed in their right mind, as indicated by their ability to maintain their current role as principal. The ability to meet the prescribed criteria solidified their ability to engage in the study. At the conclusion of the mandated research preservation timespan, all data will be discarded, therefore adding an extra level of confidentiality. Furthermore, this measure will lessen ethical concerns.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

In Chapter 4, the researcher explicates the findings emerged from a constructivism case study. The study focused on elementary principals and their knowledgeability level as it relates to literacy development. The study employed the insight of four administrators with different teaching experiences. The member-checking session and both interviews explored the following research:

What is the principals' perception of literacy development in an urban school district and how does it influence instructional leadership?

This chapter also contains a discussion of data collected and the direct correlation with constructivism as it relates to the emerged themes. Furthermore, Chapter 4 includes tables to highlight the summary of information.

The literacy knowledge of the researcher aided in the development of interview questions to extract meaningful information on the personal teaching experiences and perceptions of the participants. The data collected from the interviews and member-checking session was coded into categories by key words. The process of coding the interviews allowed the written responses to become quantifiable information, leading to the development of data to be examined. The coding process was imperative because according to Creswell (2014) "Text data are dense data, and it takes a long time to go through them and make sense of them" (p.152). This integral process of coding allowed connections between participant responses to be identified while also revealing outliers. Themes were then developed from the coded data and they are as follows:



Table 5

*Research Themes*

<b>Themes Developed</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly collaboration provides a framework for best practices.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals have frequent literacy interactions, but the depth of interactions is limited to familiarity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal preparation programs lack sufficient content curriculum training.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development is beneficial when the principal is involved and knowledgeable of specific content objectives.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data is the driving force behind campus literacy plan development.</li> </ul>

*Note.* A member-checking session offered the researcher the opportunity to view the emerged themes and discuss the follow-up interview that was going to be conducted a week later.

The organization of this chapter revolves around each theme and the corroboration of supporting details collected from the responses of the participants. Data from each theme is reviewed and disaggregated by the investigator. Additionally, the researcher reveals qualitative data to support the influence of instructional leadership. The wealth of knowledge gathered are the foundation of the information presented in Chapter 4.

**Case Study Context**

This case study was birthed out of the researcher's desire to better understand the principals' relationship with literacy and the influence made on instructional leadership. Furthermore, the aim was to explore the factors contributing to the ability of principals, with varying teaching experiences, to make informed decisions on instructional practices related to literacy. Two interviews were developed by the investigator to delve into the

perceptions of the administrators. Careful attention was paid to the initial interview, as it later allowed the researcher to ask more clarifying questions in the follow-up interview.

In determining the best approach to collect and disseminate data, the researcher reflected on personal experiences as an administrator. Subsequently, it was determined that a case study would allow for multiple participants and offer a range of experiences and responses.

Four elementary school principals participated in an initial interview lasting approximately 30-45 minutes each conducted on their perspective campus. Then, a member-checking session was conducted using Zoom, again allowing the participants to remain on their campus. During the session, themes emerged from the initial interview were shared and checked for accuracy. This process allowed the investigator to develop additional clarifying questions to address in the second and final interview, which was conducted over the telephone, using Google Forms as the means of tracking responses. The final interview also lasted approximately 45 minutes and participants remained in the comforts of their personal settings. The data source of examining principals' perceptions were selected to present acuity from individuals whose primary responsibility is to lead, guide, and support all areas of curriculum and instruction.

For the purpose of sharing responses obtained through the interviews, participants were assigned pseudonyms. Principal 1 STEM (P1S) previously taught math before becoming an administrator. Principal 2 STEM (P2S) was a science teacher and served as a science specialist prior to becoming a principal. Principal 3 Literacy (P3L) is a former ELA teacher. Having over 15 years in education, this administrator spent all of her teaching career working with elementary students. Finally, Principal 4 Literacy (P4L)

previously taught ELA and social studies on intermediate campuses throughout several Texas schools districts. No identifying information was associated with the responses outlined throughout this research.

### **Data Collection**

Table 6 below presents keywords that were reoccurring throughout the initial and follow-up interviews. Responses were entered into a word cloud generator and reoccurring terms were separated and highlighted in figure 1 below. It is important to note that the larger the word, the more times it reoccurred. Smaller font words were used minimally three times. Words used two or fewer times were considered outliers in the word cloud and were omitted from the results. Moreover, the word PLC occurred 17 times throughout the interviews, which is indicated by the size of the word, followed closely by literacy at 14, leader and training with 13 mentions each.

Table 6

*Interview Word Cloud*

Word	# Used	Word	# Used	Word	# Used
PLC	17	Coach	9	Relevance	3
Literacy	14	Preparation	8	Assistant Principal	3
Leader	13	Longevity	7	Instructional Leader	3
Trainer	13	Knowledgeable	7		
Commitment	12	Planning	6		
Weekly	12	Best Practices	6		
Collaboration	11	Influence	6		
Feedback	10	Reading	4		
Specialist	10	Ineffective	4		
Learner	10				



Figure 1. Word Cloud of Reoccurring Terms

## Themes

### Theme One: Collaboration is Necessary

*The principal furthermore uses the group to change the group around the very specific agenda of strengthening social capital, whereby peers learn from each other in purposeful, specific ways to improve learning in the school. (Fullan, 2014, p.89).*

One commonality found throughout participant interviews was the need for collaboration. The aforementioned quote supports Theme One because it highlights the need for collaboration and the importance of peers learning from each other. A true collaborative environment consist of all stakeholders taking part in the discussion and the development of a plan. The qualitative data reviewed revealed that weekly professional

learning community meetings, consisting of the reading specialist, literacy coach, teacher, and administrator, are the norm on all four urban campuses involved in the study.

Principal 1 STEM (P1S) noted:

I meet all the time with my literacy team during our PLC. I schedule weekly meetings, but we sometimes meet more if we need to look at testing data. It is very important to me that everyone have ownership for the learning of our students. We all need to know what is going on and how we can support the teachers. This is why we collaborate so we are all on the same page.

Principal 2 STEM (P2S) stated:

The leadership team meets every Monday morning, during the PLC, to review the happenings of the week and to discuss our curriculum plan. We look at data and make a plan for which teacher needs support and then we determine which team member will observe, model, and give feedback if needed. Through our collaborative efforts, I hope to see growth this year.

Principal 3 Literacy (P3L) responded:

Weekly meetings are imperative. Right now, I am comparing IRL levels and passing rates of our STAAR tested students. When we have our first leadership meeting of the year in a few weeks, I want to have data available to share with my reading specialist and literacy coach about the intertwining of IRL and state assessment passing rates. I want us to plan now what we will do for the upcoming school year to improve our student success rates. Collaboration is the foundation of our PLC's. Everyone is accountable. We are leaders and we are committed to academic growth.

Principal 4 Literacy (P4L) responded:

My team knows my expectations, and everyone is expected to attend our PLC with not just data, but a plan. I expect the literacy coach to share information on 1 and 2 data and the reading specialist to share on 3-5 grade performance. As a team, we break down the objectives and make a plan for skills not successfully mastered. This year, EL growth was low across the district. I was so accustomed to my students making at least a one-year's growth, which I did not spend as much time focusing on instructional practices. In the past, we were at or above the district average for performance, so seeing our scores TELPAS scores this year was very disheartening. My plan for this year is to meet weekly, as we did in the past, and not to become so comfortable with how we used to do things, now recognizing that the campus dynamics are changing. My team must also adjust to the literacy practices being revamped for our EL learners. In addition, I want my EL teachers and general teachers to collaborate to assure we are best meeting the needs of all of the students, using the resources we have available.

According to Walpole and McKenna (2013), "The ideal administrative team is collaborative" (p.220). Walpole and McKenna (2013) further state that the principal, assistant principal and reading coach are the foundation of campus literacy support. Through the collaborative works of the entire team, combined with the instructional efforts of the teacher, literacy development can excel. Weekly meetings, according to the principals, allowed discussion of best practices, data disaggregation, and the development of protocols to address the academic needs of the campus. The reading coach offers insight into curriculum, interventions and best practices. The reading specialist expounds

on the curriculum instruction of teachers, the teachers explicate the struggles of their students, and finally, the administrators lead the discussion on data. Together, this team plans, implements, and revises the instruction plan for their campus.

### **Theme Two: Literacy Interactions Should be Frequent**

Both interviews conducted asked principals about their personal interactions with literacy on their campus their level of comfort giving feedback to support teacher performance and growth. The data collected revealed that principals with literacy backgrounds have more frequent interactions, offering in-depth critique, acknowledgement of literacy practices, and suggestions for intervention than STEM principals. STEM principals relied more on campus literacy experts to have critical conversations needed literacy support. Although all administrators are aware of district expectations, the level of knowledge to analyze and establish curriculum needs of literacy staff were minimal for STEM principals. The response below offer insight into their perceptions.

P1S responded:

All of the administrators on my campus are required to visit every teacher at least once a grading cycle to conduct informal walk-throughs. Some are documented in INVEST, the district appraisal system, others are impromptu and feedback is left in the form of a note acknowledging a positive interaction observed. Because I am not a reading person, I usually engage in the impromptu observations with the literacy staff because I am not comfortable giving specific interventions. Do not get me wrong, I know good teaching, but knowing specific reading or writing techniques are not my area. Even though I have 11 years of teaching experience, the skills specialist and coach are more



knowledgeable of current reading practices and U always consider their input when making decisions. At this time, my campus is rated as a “D” campus.

P2S stated:

I think I am a pretty good instructional leader, but I am no one’s reading teacher, lol. I keep my interactions with literacy staff very strategic. During my weekly meetings with the skills specialist and literacy coach, we analyze what was observed during observations. We talk about teaching strategies and techniques to improve performance. I then take that information back to share with the teacher. Reading and writing is an area of growth on our campus, so I rely heavily on my coach and specialist for assistance. I am growing in the area of literacy, but I am most comfortable with mathematics. The campus is a “C”.

P3L noted:

We develop our campus literacy goals around the campus’ data (campus, district, and state). When I enter a classroom, I know what skill I should see, as well as the teaching practices that have proven successful on our campus. I expect to see similar activities in every classroom, even though I know the delivery will be different because of individual teaching styles. I am very engaged with literacy instruction and I am fully committed to the success of my students. We are involved; we are in the classes and at training. We are no longer an IR (a school in need of improvement) according to the state; we are a “C” school. I work closely with all stakeholders and offer resources as needed to improve performance. The expectations I have for my staff have grown and they are now evident throughout the campus. Our goal is to continue to improve, but that

will take commitment by everyone and continued consistency with teaching using research-based best practices.

P4L articulated:

F-R-E-Q-U-E-N-T, is all I have to say. I am not a micro-manager, but to get the best, you have to give the best. Reading and writing are difficult enough and then you add the stress of state assessments and you have added yet another level of complexity. This year was the first year we had three tested grade levels on the campus, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and newly added 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I stressed about the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students because we had an ELA teacher out on FMLA (family medical leave act) for several months. I knew this would affect student growth and academic performance if a plan were not in place. I enlisted the assistance of my reading specialist and the literacy coach to work with the students and the substitute was there to assist once the lesson was introduced. I worked very closely with the entire team, also teaching when needed and pulling small groups to close achievement gaps. My campus has moved from an “F” school to a “B” school according to state ratings. We have made tremendous growth and I attribute that to the frequent interactions that my assistant principal, a former reading and dyslexia specialist, and I have with the staff and instruction.

The research participants of this study share a common goal of improving campus literacy performance, but the means to achieve those goals vary. The STEM principals have state ratings of “F” and “D” on their campus report card, while Literacy principals report “C” and “B” ratings. From the data collected, interactions with staff and the ability to offer academic support, vary from each principal. Walpole and McKenna (2013) imply that principals limit their interactions due to lack of content specific knowledge. It is also

suggested that literacy coaches are often left to guide instruction. Unfortunately, if the principal is not actively involved, “The literacy coach is likely to be less effective...” (Walpole & McKenna, 2013, p.220).

Table 7 explicates the teaching background of each principal, their campus rating for 2018-2019, and their level of comfort with providing specific literacy feedback.

Table 7

*Principal Teaching Experience*

Teaching Background	Math	Science	ELA	ELA/SS	Campus Rating
P1S	X				D
P2S		X			C
P3L			X		C
P4L				X	B
<b>Level of Comfort</b> 1-Not comfortable 2-Sommewhat 3-Very	2	2	3	3	-

*Note.* The more a principal knew about reading, the higher achievement tended to be... (Walpole and McKenna, 2013, p.217)

Supported by data collected from the principal participants, the quote previously cited supported the findings indicated in Table 2 detailing the higher achievement scores of literacy principals in comparison to their STEM counterparts.

### **Theme Three: Principal Preparation Programs Prepare Compliance Managers Not Principals**

*Principals who do not take learner stance for themselves do not learn much from day to day, no matter how many years of “experience” they may accumulate, as little of that prior experience was really aimed at their own learning. (Fullan, 2014, p.59).*

Principal preparation has been a topic of discussion for many. Fullan highlighted the need for principals to take ownership of their learning. In the context of this study, Theme Three examined how principals are prepared for the role of instructional leader. Currently, the district used in this study has started an aspiring administrator program to address skills not gained during traditional degree programs, with a focus not just on management, but curriculum as well. The four participant expressed some discontentment with their administrative certification and/or preparation programs, citing lack of content specific instruction. Principals were asked what they gained most from their preparation programs and also what they would change to improve future preparation programs. Their responses are shared below.

P1S responded:

Prairie View A&M University was the program that I attended for my principal certification program. I obtained my certification nearly 15 years ago and the role of the campus leader has evolved so much since then. We learned how to be good leaders, not how to become good instructional leaders. My program did not focus on instruction implementation, but on how to manage curriculum program. I learned how to be a wonderful manager, but I have learned and continue to learn how to become an effective instructional leader.

P2S stated:

If I could add another component to my previous certification program, I would add a layer of content specific instruction. I went through an online certification program so my learning had to be self-initiated, led by the guidance of the assignments given by my professors. Unfortunately, there was not one class on instructional strategies. I almost felt like I needed Cliff Notes 101 for instruction in reading when I became a principal because I clearly didn't get any guidance from my program. Maybe it was different for people who actually went to a traditional campus, but for me, my program lacked curriculum evaluation training.

P3L noted:

My program taught me process and procedures on how to handle investigations, documentation, hiring processes, and how to establish a positive school climate. My campus excels in culture and that could be because of my training but, when I was hired as a principal several years ago, we had a Principal's Academy that met monthly. This program used retired principals to train us on best practices in leading successful schools. We also had times that we would look at our campus data and talk with our academy cohorts on instructional practices. This was surely a help to me knowing that math was not one of my strong areas academically. I gleaned many ideas from others and implemented them on my campus to improve my math scores. In hindsight, had I received some content specific training on leading instruction while in my program, I may not have struggled during my first 2 years of principalship.

P4L said:

I truly enjoyed my certification program. My professors were awesome and required us to get on the job training. I actually shadowed my administrators to get a better understanding of the job requirements. Although the program didn't have content specific classes, my internship required me to observe instructional practices in a school. This process allowed me to recognize instructional areas of growth within myself. If I could change the principal preparation program, I would make the process of campus observations and internships mandatory for all preparation programs.

The filling on inadequacy is inevitable for new administrators; however, preparation programs should be the glue that pulls all the broken pieces together. My campus has moved from an "F" school to a "B" school according to State ratings. We have made tremendous growth and I attribute that to the frequent interactions that my assistant principal, a former reading and dyslexia specialist, and I have with the staff.

A principal cannot be an effective instructional leader if they are not aware of instructional practices. The aim of instructional leadership is to lead instruction and to be a resource to the staff. Cheney, Davis, Garrett, and Holleran (2010) implied that effective principal preparation programs intertwines school leadership coursework and practical experiences. This practice allows aspiring school leaders to apply what they are learning in a practical forum and provide meaning knowledge under the guidance of a professor and a practicing administrator who can both provide feedback. Subsequently, principal preparation programs teach candidates how to manage the daily operations of the school, but not how to handle the curriculum needs of the job. Among all of the research

participants, the lack of curriculum clinical experience is one of the greatest areas of improvement expressed when referencing their certification program.

#### **Theme Four: Professional Development- The Gateway to Effective Instructional Leadership**

*In schools with strong professional capital, everyone knows that the principal is immersed in improving instruction. Principals do not directly lead many groups-teachers do-but they participate. (Fullan, 2014, p.89).*

Fullan (2014), implied that principals are immensely involved with the improvements of instruction. However, for this to occur the principal must be knowledgeable of the content and this only occurs through attending professional development. The school district used for this study used a teacher appraisal system called INVEST. This system requires teachers to attend all required district staff development training, and also obtain an additional 36 hours of training to be considered “proficient” in the appraisal system. The principal also has to attend all district training and participate in an additional 36 hours to be considered a “3”, which is the equivalent to the teacher rating of “proficient.” Principal participants were asked about their professional development with district required and self-initiated training. Additionally, principals were also asked to respond to how beneficial their perceived district training. Their responses are outlined below.

P1S stated:

We [principals] are required to attend so many trainings that it is difficult to initiate additional training without having to miss work to attend a conference. After

school, training is also offered, but after being the first one at school and usually the last one to leave, afterschool training becomes taxing on the body. I do sacrifice when it is something that is pressing and will benefit the campus, but I usually rely on my campus specialist to attend PD and then share the information learned with the staff. District training is plentiful and often targets various skills that teachers need assistance implementing. However, it sometimes fails to connect with the specific foundations, knowledge and skills teachers need to effectively teach reading and writing.

P2S noted:

District trainings offer a plethora of information, but literacy trainings often do not address the needs of the special education students. Knowing that this population is one of my target groups, I have sought out and attended PD on differentiation of instruction. Our students have made many gains, but we still have lots of room to improve. My coach and specialist attend trainings throughout the year. During PLC's they present the information that will most benefit our campus. My coach and specialist work to present the information in an interactive way. The trainings that I attend alone, I share the information learned with my leadership team. In the past, I have also trained my staff on best practices learned through my self-initiated PD.

P3L responded:

Literacy is a campus focus area. It is especially important when considering the achievement gap represented on my campus between EL students and AA males. Because I am the instructional leader for my campus, I do attend all district PD, but I also make the sacrifice to attend afterschool and weekend training as well. It is imperative that



I am aware of what should be taught and how it should be taught. The district offers numerous trainings, so I look for training that specifically address the skill my data suggest we need additional support to master. I do not solely rely on the coach and specialist to train staff - I train as well. I know the academic vocabulary and I consider myself proficient in literacy instruction. My campus will participate in the new district literacy initiative, ARC Core Transformative Literacy. With this program, PD will be provided to guide implementation. I'm grateful that parameters are being set to train step by step.

P4L explained:

It is difficult at times to attend additional literacy training, but between my assistant principal and myself, we always try to have some representation. The coach and specialist attend training as well and collectively we decide what should be rolled out to the literacy staff members. The district is constantly revising practices to meet the needs of our learners. Last year, an audit was conducted over the reading initiative we currently use. This program has some good elements and sufficient training has been provided with support given by the assigned campus literacy coach, however, there are components of the program that do not meet the needs of our student population. The audit has revealed these findings and offered next steps to improve literacy performance. This year, several campuses will pilot a new literacy initiative that took into account the findings of the literacy audit. Although my campus was not selected as a pilot school, I want to attend any training made available to teachers of the program.

**Theme Five: Data Drives the Campus Literacy Plan**

*A school-wide literacy program incorporates structures to gather assessment information and use it to form and reform instructional groups. A school-wide literacy program will take a school-wide stance in how, when, and why students are grouped for instruction. (Walpole & McKenna, 2013, p.43).*

After discussing campus ratings, principals were asked to expound on changes they will make to their campus literacy plan based on current STAAR data. According to Walpole and McKenna (2013), a school-wide literacy plan allowed for all content experts to be involved on the development of an intentional plan, with data as the deciding factor that would address academic needs. It was determined that each campus follows the district literacy plan, in addition to a campus plan that revolves around campus assessment data. Table 8 shows who is involved in creating the campus literacy plan on each campus. Following Table 8, the principal responses are shared below.



P1S responded:

The current instructional program used on our campus is being revised. Based on our data, our writing scores were dismal and are one of our target area. New this year, reading and writing will be taught in unison. In the past, the two were separated and it was difficult to meet the time requirements of each subject. Actually, we saw a decline in performance when the subjects were taught in isolation. Our plan this year is to focus on the standards that were not met and provide additional professional development geared directly towards the targeted skills.

P2S stated:

Our reading scores have increased, but there is still much to do. Our plan this year will be developed with our teachers leading the charge. Beginning of the year planning will be an opportunity for every grade level to meet together and discuss what nonnegotiable standards students must know by the end of the year to be properly prepared for the next grade level. The hope of the planning session is to have open discussions about skills students have lacked in previous years and what can be done to fill the deficit.

P3L replied:

We have a large population of dyslexia students on the campus. Our campus data revealed that our dyslexia students are making significant academic gains in comparison to other students. With this in mind, we have decided to include our dyslexia specialist in the development of our campus literacy plan. If we can incorporate strategies used in dyslexia interventions to improve instruction for all students, then the addition of some of

those skills will be included. With the assistance of dyslexia specialist, I want to train the teachers on how to implement strategies to aide other struggling readers using some of the best practices of the dyslexia program.

P4L said:

The plan we implanted last year proved successful with our campus rating moving from a “C” to a “B”. Our data does show that we need to focus on inferencing, revising and editing, and Figure 19. This year, our plan will involve all campus literacy experts, which includes the RtI teacher, the dyslexia teacher, the literacy coach, the reading specialist, the librarian, the teacher, the testing coordinator, and all administrators. We incorporate two untraditional members on our team. The librarian is included because she previously worked as a writing teacher. She has a wealth of information to share and she works collaboratively with the staff to support literacy in the library. Teachers share their lesson plans with her and she supports them by teaching additional information on the specified objective. The testing coordinator is used because she is the keeper of the data. She runs reports and prepares reports to streamline our instructional practices. We all are vested in the literacy plan because we are all accountable for our student’s success. In addition, based on STAAR data, we need to implement a successful writing plan based on guided writing. We need to provide specific lessons that would help them elaborate essays and be ready to succeed in college.

The urban school district involved in this study contracted an outside firm last year to review and audit the current literacy plan. Based on recommendations made, the district is making strategic, long terms plans to revise current practices to improve student achievement. Every principal was provided with detailed explanations of findings, along

with recommendations. Subsequently, the ARC Core Transformative Literacy Program will be piloted on several campuses. Walpole and McKenna (2013) refers to this process as *effective reforms*. According to their research, there are five stages the implement for true fidelity of this model (p.33-34):

1. Describe the context thoroughly, including attention to curriculum instruction, assessment, and interventions.
2. Form instructional groups, using achievement data.
3. Design coordinated instruction for all groups, adopting new curriculum materials if necessary.
4. Set goals that can be evaluated through data collection during the year, and adjust grouping and pacing plans accordingly.
5. Evaluate the success of the program for the children at the end of the year, and adjust instruction and intervention programs accordingly.

The outline provided above supports the process that the participating district and principals are taking to improve academic achievement. Although campuses have some autonomy with their campus implementation, there are components the district requires. The campus literacy coach is non-negotiable and they are funded by the district. In this position, the coach works only with teachers to ascertain proper implementation of instruction. There is a proven need for their expertise and support of literacy professionals. Finally, all of the participants also employ at least one reading specialist, who works with curriculum, teachers, and students.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Principals' perceptions of literacy development were varied and there has not been substantial research conducted in this area to offer sufficient support. Administrators are often left to implement district mandates without regard for what works best for their individual campuses. Although the schools associated with this study have similar demographics, additional research should be conducted on a larger scale to determine if the beliefs and practices suggested by the participating four principals mimic the overall opinion of the district.

The implications of this study could provide the correlation between campus success and administrator involvement. Additionally, round table discussions could offer a more in-depth insight into how each campus address culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural sensitivity. Sharing the findings of the discussions and interviews could increase the district's awareness of how administrators deal with curriculum programs purchased by individuals that are removed from the daily operations of campus instructional needs. It would be for future curriculum purchases that the district compile a pool of administrators to discuss suggested campus needs and evaluate the research-based data associated with each program. Evidence to support effectiveness in districts with similar demographics should also be present.

In summary, the findings indicated that literacy principals have a better grasp of literacy development and implementation in comparison to STEM principals. Subsequently, the literacy knowledgeability level of the instructional leader influences all

literacy interactions, collaborative measures, professional development, and literacy plan developments.

### **Overview of the Study**

This qualitative study was designed to examine the perceptions of current elementary urban principals. Specifically, this study explored how principals interact with literacy development and how their previous teaching experiences influence their preset instructional leadership. Furthermore, the researcher desired to understand how previous teaching experiences correlate with academic success, specifically in the area of literacy. The analysis of the disaggregated data provided the following conclusions:

1. Collaboration between the principal and other campus literacy experts is imperative. Weekly meetings or professional learning communities provide the opportunity to examine data, develop strategic plans to address areas of growth, and determine best practices for implementation. Collaboration ensures cohesiveness of expectations for all stakeholders.
2. Principals with previous STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) teaching experiences rely on campus literacy experts for guidance and support when making literacy related decisions.
3. Principals with previous literacy teaching experiences are knowledgeable and well versed on literacy development. Although they employ a literacy coach and a reading specialist on their campus, they [the principal] takes on the role as instructional leader. The coach and specialist are there to support curriculum implementation for the teachers. The principal leads literacy development and the additional literacy experts support the



principal be modeling best practices and ascertaining that the literacy plan is implemented with fidelity.

4. Principal' perceptions of literacy development was contingent upon previous teaching experiences. The level of interaction was reliant on content familiarity. The knowledgeability level of literacy influences instructional leadership and the amount of support needed from other campus literacy experts.

### **Principals' Perceptions**

This qualitative study incorporated a constructivism approach to interview participants. Principals were interviewed at their place of employment, as the study focused on the “specific context in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of the participants” (Creswell, 2014, p.8).

In this study, all four principals openly acknowledged the need for weekly collaboration to discuss academic progress, best practices, and next steps. Furthermore, STEM principals' perception of their role in literacy development was more of a facilitator of instructional practices versus literacy principals who perceived their literacy role as being the leader of curriculum implementation. Literacy coaches and reading specialist were viewed as integral components of the literacy team; however, their specific roles and responsibilities varied from STEM to Literacy principals.

Literacy was considered an area of academic deficit for the four participants, however, they all participants shared different methods and additional support needed to develop a plan to address the need. Deemed as vital in understanding instructional

expectations, the perception of literacy administrators was to seek out additional training in the campus-identified area of need, which is the opposite of STEM administrators, who admitted to attending all required training, and some after-school professional developments, which sometimes lacked what they were searching for in the session.

The researcher's data revealed literacy principals were more involved with literacy development because of the common interest in curriculum. Additionally, data uncovered used campus level experts as support personnel for instruction, were "very comfortable" giving literacy feedback to teachers, and served as the instructional leader of literacy practices. STEM principals knew and understood literacy practices and had some involvement with literacy development with the literacy coach and reading specialist leading the implementation of practice. Both principals expressed their level of comfort with giving literacy specific feedback as being "somewhat comfortable."

### **Future Research**

As an elementary principal of an urban elementary campus, the researcher can personally relate too many of the perceptions expressed by the participants. Having taught reading and being responsible for offering literacy interventions to struggling students, the primary investigator acknowledged the need for campus literacy experts, but also the need for the principal to serve as a true instructional leader. The ability to express the components of literacy development while demonstrating proficiency with current best practices was vital, as expressed by the literacy administrators interviewed and echoed by the research.

The small sampling size used was determined due to ease of accessibility. The convenience sample is an area of improvement, because it minimized the ability of the researcher to gather perceptions outside of the four-member pool. Additionally, interviews conducted were using only elementary principals, therefore omitting perceptions of middle and high school administrators. Another growth opportunity for future research derived from the three-week timespan in which data collection occurred. Although collected with fidelity, the expedient turn-around of data collection left room for possible error.

The researcher suggest that further research be conducted to include interviews from middle and high school principals. The consideration of these perceptions will assist in securing reliability of data and crosschecking to determine if there is consistency in findings or if the similarity of data is confined to specific grade level administrators. Furthermore, the investigator recommends an extended data collection period, chronicling each principals' interactions with literacy from the beginning of year to the end of year. Finally, the inclusion of quantitative data highlighting literacy performance from the previous year to the current year by conducting a longitudinal study will offer additional evidence to support the claim of previous teaching experiences influence how administrator's interact with literacy, therefore influencing student literacy performance.

If replicated, the researcher suggests that individual word clouds be created for each participant to explore individual themes and determine the commonality of campuses practices. Additionally, the disposition of each participant should be examined to explore their willingness to modify personal practice to move from principal status to an instructional leader, who is able to speak with knowledge on topics that impact

instruction. Furthermore, analyzing STEAM versus STEM in the context on literacy is necessary to expand the learner's impact on being a well-rounded administrator. Literacy practices do not just involve reading and writing, but the humanities, math literacy, computer literacy and many other components. Therefore, additional research is needed to fully develop the study to include all aspects of literacy and the influence of the instructional leader on implementation.

The duplication of this study is feasible and is not limited to elementary principals, small convenience sampling size, nor strictly qualitative data collection.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher spent numerous hours interviewing principals, disaggregating, and coding data to highlight principals' perceptions of literacy development.

Recommendations are based on the data produced because of the qualitative research study. The suggestions may benefit the school district by allowing for the development of specific staff development to meet the needs of administrators. The recommendations are as follows:

1. A needs assessment of the principal's background should be conducted prior to placement as a campus principal. A principal having minimal experience with literacy may not be the best candidate for a campus struggling with literacy.
2. Principals would benefit from staff development that is content specific and designed for principals. The suggested training should cover topics that deal with how instructions should look, how to determine if

implementation is effective, and how to cultivate a collaborative content – based learning community.

3. Engaging principals in the process of developing an effective campus literacy team may prove beneficial. The district should consider monitoring the role of literacy experts on each campus for consistency checks. This process may allow all campuses to truly grow based on the expertise that each individual brings to the literacy development process.
4. Principal Preparation programs should incorporate a component of internship or “on the job” training that revolves around curriculum and instruction. This may allow the principal candidate to glean from their experiences and determine where additional content training is needed to be an effective instructional leader.

Based on the findings in this study, the researcher would like to submit a proposal to the Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the Chief of Schools to implement a principal curriculum advisory board. This board would meet to discuss and determine the needs of campus administrators, to include curriculum support and best practices. A resources pool would also be proposed to allow immediate access to programs being used throughout the district that have proven effective. The researcher would also recommend that the board be a safe haven of discussion with no judgement when discontent with current practices are expressed, but a mechanism where solutions can be formed and shared to meet needs.

Additional research will be necessary to determine if the suggestions offered prove beneficial to the ACN district. Interviews would also be adjusted to obtain a more

accurate view of the principals' perceptions. The ultimate aim of this study would be to provide ACN with information to improve instructional practices and increase student performance- to prepare for sustained academic achievement and not to just pass a standardized assessment.

## **Conclusions**

The principals' perceptions of literacy development are worthy of additional study and research. This qualitative study was birthed from the researcher's interest with the literacy process on the elementary campus. Being an elementary administrator with previous experiences under literacy-minded supervisors and STEM-minded principal's, the need for continuity and consistency was blaring. Subsequently, the investigator sought out on a mission to study the process and offer recommendations that may improve the quality of performance demonstrated by campus level administrators.

The researcher does not offer any level of guarantee the success of the recommendations or that will they cure the documented concern. The researcher will continue to improve on personal practices of literacy interactions and collaborative efforts to mitigate declining student achievement. A plan of action will be developed to aide in the continued growth of implementing best practices and serving not as a principal, but as an effective instructional leader. Frequent literacy interactions, weekly collaborative meetings, and content specific professional development for administrators will now guide the researcher into engaging in best practice behavior.

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**Appendix A**  
**Participation Information**



## **Recruitment Flyer**

### **(Recruitment Flyer: Attachment A)**

#### **Participants are needed in a Research Study:**

#### *Principals' Perceptions of Literacy Development: The Influence of Instructional Leadership in an Urban School District*

I am seeking current elementary school principals who work in urban school settings. I am a Doctoral education student at the University of Houston conducting a study to look on the principals' perceptions of literacy development and how that influences campus instructional practices. Participation involves an initial interview to obtain preliminary data and a follow-up interview to debrief and clarify findings of the study. Please contact LaShawn N. Hodge at 281-797-0107 for more information or email [lnhodge@aldineisd.org](mailto:lnhodge@aldineisd.org)

#### **Time Commitment(s):**

- Week 1: An initial interview lasting for approximately 30 minutes.
- Week 2: One member checking session to review emerging themes from transcribed interviews, lasting approximately 30 minutes.
- Week 2: A follow-up interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.



"This research study has been reviewed by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board."

### Recruitment Email

Dear Principal,

My name is LaShawn Nashville Hodge and I am a doctoral student at the University of Houston. I am conducting research on literacy development and the principals' perceptions at urban elementary school campuses. I am emailing to ask if you would be interested in being a potential participant by initially submitting a copy of your resume, highlighting your previous teaching experience and the total number of years you have spent as an elementary school principal. If selected to participate in this study, you will complete two 45 minute interviews and a one time participant "member checking" session to discuss the validity of the themes emerged from the initial interviews, which will be conducted on your campus at the time you designate. Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be anonymous. If you are interested, please email me at [Lnhodge@aldineisd.org](mailto:Lnhodge@aldineisd.org). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (281)797-0107.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

LaShawn Nashville Hodge  
Principal Investigator

Study Title: Principals' Perceptions of Literacy Development: The Influence of Instructional Leadership in an Urban School District

**Appendix B**  
**Informed Consent**

## **Informed Consent Form**

**Title of research study:** *Principals' Perceptions of Literacy Development: The Influence of Instructional Leadership in an Urban School District*

**Investigator:** *LaShawn Nashville Hodge*

### **Key Information:**

The following focused information is being presented to assist you in understanding the key elements of this study, as well as the basic reasons why you may or may not wish to consider taking part. This section is only a summary; more detailed information, including how to contact the research team for additional information or questions, follows within the remainder of this document under the "Detailed Information" heading.

### **What should I know about a research study?**

Someone will explain this research study to you.

Taking part in the research is voluntary; whether or not you take part is up to you.

You can choose not to take part.

You can agree to take part and later change your mind.

Your decision will not be held against you.

You can ask all the questions you want before you decide, and can ask questions at any time during the study.

*[New Common Rule regulations require that prospective subjects are provided with a concise summary of information (up front) that a reasonable person would want in*

*order to make an informed decision about whether to participate. This summary may be different based on the type of study being conducted (behavioral, biomedical, risk level) and population being recruited. We recommend the following, in a high-level, 1-2 paragraph format:]*

*Assuredly, the role of the principal is vital. Research conducted by Overholt and Szabocsik (2013), reveals “the principal usually knows only his or her results specific content, which results in inadequate feedback or unsubstantial contributions to improve instruction in areas other than their particular field of study” (p.53). Subsequently, the lack of sufficient knowledge other than their preferred pedagogy prohibits administrators from successfully communicating academic necessities. For this reason, there is a need for a study that examines the administrator’s role in literacy.*

*Participation in this study will involve participants sharing information about past teaching experiences and how those experiences influence their instructional leadership. With literacy being a focus of Aldine ISD, the data collected may be used to improve professional development for administrators directly related to literacy instructional practices, campus implementation, and literacy support.*

We invite you to take part in a research study about principals’ perceptions of literacy development because you meet the following criteria:

- Principal of an elementary campus
- Principal for at least 3 years
- Employed by Aldine ISD

- Teaching experience in reading, math or other state tested subject.

**In general, your participation in the research involves:**

Participating in an initial interview about your teaching experience and instructional leadership as it relates to literacy development.

A member checking session which involves you reviewing the data collected and the interpretations made by the principal investigator relating to the emerged themes.

A follow up/final interview to clarify information collected from the initial interview.

The primary risk to you in taking part is none; there are no known risk associated with this study.

**Detailed Information:**

The following is more detailed information about this study, in addition to the information listed above.

**Why is this research being done?**

*Assuredly, the role of the principal is vital. Research conducted by Overholt and Szabocsik (2013) reveals “the principal usually knows only his or her results specific content, which results in inadequate feedback or unsubstantial contributions to improve instruction in areas other than their particular field of study” (p.53).*

*Subsequently, the lack of sufficient knowledge other than their preferred pedagogy prohibits administrators from successfully communicating academic necessities. For this reason, there is a need for a study that examines the administrator’s role in literacy.*

*Principal, literacy coach, and instructional leader, are all different terms with similar meanings, all of which are necessary in the educational setting. How the meaning of each role is defined, varies due to personal perspectives based on experiences, although each district may have its' own prescribed definition. The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the administrator's role in facilitating, implementing, and modeling literacy development in an urban school district. Additionally, the study will examine past teaching experiences of principals and if those experiences affect their literacy based decisions.*

**How long will the research last?**

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 3 weeks. Week 1 will consist of one interview lasting 45 minutes. Week 2 will involve the member checking session, which should last no longer than 45 minutes. Finally, week 3 will end with one final interview, lasting 45 minutes.

**How many people will be studied?**

*[Single-site study] We expect to enroll about 4 people in this research study.*

**What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?**

*If you say yes to this research study, you will participate in three events over a three-week timespan with only the primary investigator, LaShawn Nashville Hodge*

<i>Event</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Estimated Time</i>
1. <i>Initial Interview</i>	<i>Participant's elementary campus</i>	<i>45 minutes</i>
2. <i>Member Checking Session</i>	<i>Participant's elementary campus</i>	<i>45 minutes</i>
3. <i>Follow-up/Final Interview</i>	<i>Phone Interview</i>	<i>45 minutes</i>

- *With whom will the subject interact: LaShawn Nashville Hodge*
- *List study procedures and what the participant will be asked to complete:*  
*Participants will be asked to complete two interviews and participate in one member checking session to review the themes emerged from the initial interviews.*
- *If surveys or interviews are conducted, indicate if sensitive subject matter is involved, and give examples of such questions. No sensitive subject matter is involved with this study*

This research study includes the following component(s) where we plan to **audio record** you as the research subject:

- ☐ I agree to be **audio recorded** during the research study.
- ☐ I agree that the **audio recorded** can be used in publication/presentations.
- ☐ I do not agree that the **audio recorded** can be used in publication/presentations.
- ☐ I do not agree to be **audio recorded** during the research study.



*Participants electing not to be audio recorded during the two interviews will still allowed to participate in the study.*

**What happens if I do not want to be in this research?**

You can choose not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you.

Choosing not to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled.

**What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?**

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

If you decide to leave the research, contact the investigator so that the investigator can remove your interview(s) from the collected data and remove the pseudonym attached to you.

The data collected to the point of withdrawal will be discarded. Subjects will be asked to explain the extent of their withdrawal by providing a written statement. No additional information will be will asked of the subject. If you stop being in the research, already collected data that still includes your name or other personal information will be removed from the study record.

**Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?**

*We do not expect any risks related to the research activities. If you choose to take part and undergo a negative event you feel is related to the study, please contact LaShawn Nashville Hodge at 281-797-0107 or by email at [lnhodge@uh.edu](mailto:lnhodge@uh.edu).*

***Will I receive anything for being in this study?***

There is no payment associated with participating in this study.

***Will being in this study help me in any way?***

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research.

***What happens to the information collected for the research?***

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information private, including research study *records*, to people who have a need to review this information. Each subject's name will be paired with a code number, which will appear on all written study materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the code number will be kept separate from these materials.

We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other representatives of this organization, as well as collaborating institutions and federal agencies that oversee our research.

***Your information that is collected as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if all of your identifiers are removed.***

We may share and/or publish the results of this research. However, unless otherwise detailed in this document, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

### **Who can I talk to?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you should talk to the primary researcher team at [lnhodge@uh.edu](mailto:lnhodge@uh.edu) or by telephone at 281-797-0107.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also talk to them at (713) 743-9204 or [cphs@central.uh.edu](mailto:cphs@central.uh.edu) if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

### **May we contact you regarding future research opportunities?**

*[When applicable, include a checkbox asking if the subject wishes to be contacted for future research in a similar area and/or conducted by the PI's study team. Contact information should not be collected on the consent form itself. Please note that efforts to create a permanent research subject database typically require the submission of a separate IRB protocol.]*

*In the future, our research team may be interested in contacting you for other research studies we undertake, or to conduct a follow-up study to this one. There is never any obligation to take part in additional research. Do we have permission to contact you to provide additional information?*

☐ *Yes*

☐ *No*

**Signature Block for Capable Adult**

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

---

Signature of subject

---

Date

---

Printed name of subject

---

Signature of person obtaining consent

---

Date

---

Printed name of person obtaining consent

UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**

DIVISION OF RESEARCH  
Institutional Review Boards

APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

June 14, 2019

LaShawn Hodge

lnhodge@uh.edu

Dear LaShawn Hodge:

On June 13, 2019, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Principals' Perceptions of Literacy Development: The Influence of Instructional Leadership in an Urban School District
Investigator:	LaShawn Hodge
IRB ID:	STUDY00001675
Funding/ Proposed Funding:	Name: Unfunded, Grant Office ID: N/A, Funding Source ID: N/A
Award ID:	N/A;
Award Title:	
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Principal Initial Interview.pdf, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.);</li><li>• LaShawn Hodge IRB, Category: IRB Protocol;</li><li>• Recruitment Email, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li><li>• Excel Data Collection.pdf, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.);</li><li>• Revised Recruitment Flyer, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li><li>• Principal Follow-up Interview.pdf, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.);</li><li>• 502a Consent Document, Category: Consent Form;</li></ul>
Review Category:	Exempt
Committee Name:	Not Applicable
IRB Coordinator:	<a href="#">Danielle Griffin</a>

# UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

## DIVISION OF RESEARCH Institutional Review Boards

The IRB approved the study on June 13, 2019 ; recruitment and procedures detailed within the approved protocol may now be initiated.

As this study was approved under an exempt or expedited process, recently revised regulatory requirements do not require the submission of annual continuing review documentation. However, it is critical that the following submissions are made to the IRB to ensure continued compliance:

- Modifications to the protocol prior to initiating any changes (for example, the addition of study personnel, updated recruitment materials, change in study design, requests for additional subjects)
- Reportable New Information/Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others
- Study Closure

Unless a waiver has been granted by the IRB, use the stamped consent form approved by the IRB to document consent. The approved version may be downloaded from the documents tab.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,

Research Integrity and Oversight (RIO) Office  
University of Houston, Division of Research  
713 743 9204  
[cphs@central.uh.edu](mailto:cphs@central.uh.edu)  
<http://www.uh.edu/research/compliance/irb-cphs/>

Aldine Independent School District

Permission to Apply for Research Study

You must first obtain the approval of the appropriate district level administrator prior to beginning a master or doctoral research project. Complete this form, attach all RESEARCH STUDY REQUIREMENTS, and submit it to the Chief Academic Officer.

1. Applicant/s

a. Name/s & Title/s LaShawn N. Hodge Date June 26, 2019

b. School/Building (if employee) Conley Elementary

c. Telephone number (281) 537-5418 or (281) 897-0107

2. Description of proposed research

a. Title of project Principals' Perceptions of Literacy Development

b. Duration of project (e.g., 6 months, 3 years) 1 month

c. Description of people participating in the project:

(1) Number 4 (2) Age(s) \_\_\_\_\_ (3) Grade Level(s) principals 4

d. Name/s of schools/s Elem. Principals have not been identified yet.

e. Does this research require hiring additional employees? Yes ☐ No ☒ \*Random selection will be done after Aldine approval

How many? N/A Position/s and Number Katy Roede

3. Who is your subject area program director if you are an Aldine employee? LaToya Wynne

Have you discussed this project with him/her? Yes ☒ No ☐ Roede is aware but Wynne is not.

4. How will the proposed research benefit Aldine students? This research may assist Aldine with PD designed for new principals that lack literacy backgrounds

5. Attach Research Study Requirements as stated on the following page.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

LaShawn N. Hodge  
Campus Administrator(s)

June 26, 2019  
Date

Katy M. Roede  
Chief of Schools

7/1/19  
Date

David Brown  
Chief Academic Officer

7/8/19  
Date

[Signature]  
Chief of Strategic Initiatives and Accountability

July 1, 2019  
Date

Approved ☒ Disapproved ☐



## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Questions**

### **Initial Interview**

Initial Code number\_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience:\_\_\_\_\_

Previous Content Taught:\_\_\_\_\_

### **Principal Interview**

1. How many years did you teach and before becoming an administrator?
  - a. 0-5
  - b. 6-10
  - c. 11-15
  - d. 16-20
2. Describe your campus demographics.
3. What is your teaching background? Please select all that apply.
  - a. Language Arts (Reading/Writing)
  - b. Math
  - c. Science
  - d. Social Studies
  - e. Other (Explain: \_\_\_\_\_)
4. On your campus, how prepared are your teachers to instruct literacy practices (reading and writing)?
5. How many years have you served as a campus principal?
6. Which campus personnel make up your leadership team?

7. Describe your interactions with campus literacy practices?
8. Based on your previous teaching experiences, how comfortable are you with making literacy decisions without consulting other members of your leadership team? Please explain your response.
9. Do you feel that your previous teaching experience(s) influence your decision making on literacy based decisions?
10. Does your campus have a reading specialist and/or literacy instructional coach? If yes, how often do you meet to discuss instructional practices?
11. Did your principal preparation program adequately prepare you for instructional based decisions?
12. What did you gain most from your principal preparation program?
13. If you could have more training during the principal preparation program, what would it entail?
14. How beneficial are district wide literacy training?
15. Do you attend literacy trainings when offered? Why or why not?

### **Follow-Up Interview**

Code number \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Principal Interview**

1. If you could change anything about district literacy practices, what would it be?
2. In your opinion, how effective is your current literacy program?
3. Outside of district literacy training, have you attended anything self-initiated training? Please explain.
4. How comfortable are you giving teachers feedback on literacy instructional practices?
5. Are you able to give specific interventions to assist struggling teachers on current curriculum approaches?
6. In your current role as principal, what area(s) do you feel you need continued professional development to improve campus academic achievement?
7. What campus personnel are integral components of your literacy team?
8. What is your primary role in literacy based decisions?
9. What are your expectations for the campus reading specialist?
10. What are your expectations for the campus instructional coach/literacy specialist?
11. How should the reading specialist and literacy coach work collaboratively?
12. Based on your current STAAR data, what changes will you make regarding your campus literacy plan (reading and writing)?