TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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
in Professional Leadership

by

Julie English

December 2015

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Dedication

I dedicate my thesis work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude goes to my loving husband, David English, whose words of encouragement and complete support helped me throughout the process. I would also like to dedicate the work of my thesis to my children, Kristin, Christopher, and Michael, who were there to support me from beginning to end. My parents, Philip and Catherine Keitel, and my husband's parents, Bill and Jeannette English, were also a huge support for me while I worked through the writing of my thesis. Thank you to all of you who encouraged me along the way.

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I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to other members of my family who kept up with my journey and my special friends Joe and Laura Kos, Kim and Jimmy Davis, and Kathy and Kevin Tolbert. Thank you for checking on me throughout this process and cheering me on.

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Abstract

Districts have long faced the challenge of creating and sustaining effective leadership. Today's school leaders are expected to perform at a higher level than ever before with increased accountability for student achievement. They need to create and maintain a challenging learning environment, focus on excellence, and serve as a positive agent for change (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) provide an opportunity for leaders to improve school performance by improving student achievement (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). School culture can be changed to a culture of hope by using the principles of PLCs that are at the heart of successful education reform (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). The purpose of this study was to describe the teachers' beliefs of five leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory [LPI] (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Moreover, this study described the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised [PLCA-R] (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate This is a quantitative study where the results of two survey instruments will be analyzed with a descriptive statistical analysis to describe the teachers' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices in addition to their beliefs of the six dimensions of their professional learning community. The goal was to determine the beliefs of leadership practices that could have the greatest positive impact on the implementation of the six dimensions of a PLC. The results of the LPI found evidence that all five leadership practices were perceived by teachers to be occurring in the schools studied. Two

practices, Model the Way and Inspire a Shared Vision emerged most often. The results

of the PLCA-R revealed that teachers in all the schools studied were focused on student

learning, collaboration and results orientation. Additionally, teachers on these campuses

understand and are committed to the vision of the school, to its goals for instruction, and

its priorities (DuFour et al., 2008).

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Leadership has long been defined as an "influence process" (Blanchard & Ken Blanchard Companies, 2010, p. xvi). While many believe that leadership is the deliberate action of influencing the thoughts and actions of other individuals towards a predetermined goal within an organization, more recently Blanchard (2010) suggests that "leadership has been re-defined as the capacity to influence others by unleashing their power and potential to impact the greater good" (p xvi). This paradigm shift has occurred because successful leaders have come to the realization that leading is more than striving for accomplishment alone. They must now strive to lead at higher levels and for a higher purpose (Blanchard, 2010). Salazar (2008) argues, "High-impact leadership means creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for both students and teachers and motivating individuals to take advantage of those opportunities. Making an impact means taking action" (p. x). High-impact leaders focus on the mission, set high expectations for every student, build communities of learners, hire caring and competent teachers to fill every classroom, and, ultimately, create a system in which continuous improvement is expected from everyone (Salazar, 2008).

Background of the Problem

Creating and sustaining, effective leadership has long been a challenge for school districts. Today's school leaders are expected to perform at a higher level than ever before with increased accountability for student achievement while maintaining a challenging learning environment, striving for excellence, and serving as a positive agent for change. School leaders must shape and sustain a culture using leadership skills that

set high standards and genuinely express optimism about an individual's capacity to achieve them (Kouzes & Posner, 1999). Meanwhile, school leaders must also shape and sustain a climate that is collaborative, goal-focused, innovative, and positive. At times, all of this seemed to be a daunting task.

DuFour (2010) expresses, "Effective leaders recognize that they cannot accomplish great things alone. They also recognize that the ability to lead is not the private reserve of a few extraordinary people or those in particular positions of authority" (p. 2). There may never be a place where sustained growth can happen with one person alone. DuFour (2010) also argues, "This takes a collaborative effort and widely dispersed leadership to meet the challenges confronting our schools" (p. 2).

There are various thoughts circulating about the strategies that will truly impact learning. Often this includes creating more charter schools, providing parents with vouchers to move to higher performing schools, or performance pay for increased scores. Some even truly believe that teachers and administrators must learn to work harder and put forth more effort to make improvements. Another possibility is that teachers have lacked the collective capacity to promote learning for all students in the existing structures and cultures of the systems in which they work (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

More schools today are implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a way to meet these challenges and truly impact student learning at higher levels. DuFour, DuFour, and Many (2010) define a PLC as:

> a group of educators who are committed to working collaboratively in
> ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve
> better results for the students they serve. Professional learning

communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved

learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators.

(p. 11)

PLCs provide a setting for educators to collaboratively face the demands for

school reform that positively influence student learning. Schools utilizing professional

learning communities have the capacity to transform their school (DuFour & Marzano,

2011; DuFour, 2006). Several divisive issues exist in contemporary education, but

Professional Learning Communities in which educators work collaboratively and learn

from one another are one place where educators can find common ground (DuFour,

Eaker, and DuFour, 2005).

Over the years, leadership experts have tried to help principals understand ways to

implement and sustain cultures that expect higher levels of learning. Hipp and Huffman

(2010a) espouse, "Schools organized around PLC practices that include action based on

data analysis, positively affect achievement" (p.4). Clearly, principals have been

provided with examples of how PLCs should look, sound, and feel on campuses, but few

have been successful in "sustaining these communities over time" (Hipp & Huffman,

2010, p.4). Although the process can be intimidating at times, leaders can and must

implement cultures that promote a higher level of learning. During the last decade

researchers have embraced the concept of PLCs and acknowledged the role that

leadership plays as the foundation for essential systemic school reform (Hipp &

Huffman, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

No educational system has ever accomplished what American educators are now called to do (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Today's educators are expected to maintain a high level of morale and teacher retention while also meeting the diverse needs of their students. The stakes are high, but success with professional learning communities can impact public education and student learning to higher levels than those demanded in the past (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Professional educators agree that the purpose of any school is student learning. They also acknowledge that the most critical factor contributing to student learning is quality teaching, which is increased through continuous professional learning that targets the needs of students. The most productive context for the continuous learning of professionals is the Professional Learning Community (Hipp & Huffman, 2010).

School leaders have been called upon to develop alternative ways to increase student achievement because "The increased expectations for accountability in schools, concerns about administrator and teacher morale and retention, and the continuing challenge to address the needs of diverse and marginalized learners, has heightened the urgency of school reform" (Hipp & Huffman, 2010, p. 1). Several strategies have come and gone over the years, but only a few have truly resulted in a real impact on student learning. Researchers have concluded that developing and sustaining professional learning communities is the "best hope for school reform" (Hipp & Huffman, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, school leaders must understand how to foster and develop change in the system, change that requires collaboration to impact student learning and meet the challenges they face in education today (Hipp & Huffman, 2010).

It is important for teachers to be open to learning new strategies in order to continually improve their practice. When teachers improve their instructional practices, it helps students learn at higher levels. The value of PLCs in student learning has been widely accepted in the educational community. School leaders face the struggle "to guide their school communities from concept to capability – a capability that is self-sustaining and that will institutionalize reform" (Huffman & Hipp, 2003, p. 149). In order to do this, leaders must find new ways to address the issues of improving student learning at higher levels than ever before. They must also work with their staff to continuously seek to find answers through inquiry and then act on their own adult learning to improve student learning.

Researchers have maintained that the implementation of sustainable PLCs are the best hope in reforming schools and that leaders must learn how to facilitate the process to change and develop a culture focused on a continuous increase in student achievement (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). In addition, school leaders must also cultivate cultures that collaboratively assess student learning, promote shared decision making, and hold one another accountable for sustaining student learning at higher levels at all times. Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggest, "The most significant contribution leaders make is not simply to passing rates on state assessments, but to the long-term development of people and institutions so they can adapt, change, prosper, and grow" (p. xxxiii). Therefore, it is necessary to study how teachers perceive key leadership practices of principals and how these beliefs relate to the successful implementation of learning communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to describe teachers' beliefs of their principal leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Furthermore, this study described the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014) in elementary and intermediate schools. Both instruments were administered in eight schools (six elementary, one K-6, and one intermediate) in the same school district.

Shirley Hord (1997) asserts that transforming a school organization into a learning organization involves a culture shift that can only be achieved with the principal guiding, nurturing, and actively monitoring the implementation of the entire staff's development as a community. She identifies specific dimensions of a Professional Learning Community and describes what the communities would look like and how they would operate. Her dimensions include Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning and Application, Shared Personal Practice, and Supportive Conditions.

The objectives of this study are to determine the teachers' beliefs of which leadership behaviors, utilizing the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2013), affect the implementation of Hord's five dimensions of professional learning communities, which are measured with Oliver et al., (2014) Professional Learning Communities Assessed-Revised (PLCA-R). This study uses a descriptive statistical analysis utilizing the results of the LPI and PLCA-R surveys that

have been completed by elementary and intermediate teachers within a large school district in southeast Texas.

Significance of the Study

Hipp and Huffman (2010) argue, "If researchers are accurate in maintaining that professional learning communities are the best hope for school reform, then school leaders must learn how to facilitate systemic processes to develop these instructional cultures" (p.1). In order for principals to move schools forward and meet the requirements of our current accountability system, there must be systems in place to monitor students and determine teacher effectiveness. This calls for school leaders to understand their current reality by analyzing and understanding student data, promoting shared leadership and decision making, implementing and monitoring best practices in classrooms, and ensuring a culture that holds others accountable for student learning (Hipp & Huffman, 2010).

This study specifically examined the teachers' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices and their beliefs of the implementation of their PLC. This will help educational leaders support critical needs in schools by providing a systematic process to move schools forward and improve student learning. "Thousands of schools and even entire districts can attest to the power of these structures for promoting first incremental and then cumulatively dramatic and enduring improvements in teaching and learning" (Schmoker, 2004). School leaders must examine their current practices and lead their staff to a new culture to build shared knowledge regarding improved student learning (Kanold, 2011).

Research Questions

Two research questions were posed for this study.

1. What are the teachers' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?

2. What are the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?

Additionally, the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2013) and the Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R) developed by Oliver et al., (2014) provided the supplementary statements that addressed both research questions. According to Kouzes and Posner (2013), the statements in the LPI address five common exemplary leadership practices that include Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. The Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R), which was developed by Oliver et al., based on Shirley Hord's study of the five dimensions of a professional learning community (2014) provided the supplementary statements that address the second research question posed in this study. According to Oliver et al., (2014), the statements address six dimension of a PLC, which include Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, and Supportive Conditions.

The LPI, which was completed by teachers in eight elementary and intermediate schools, is intended to answer the following question:

1. What are the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?

Specifically, the teachers rated their principals' leadership practices on the LPI with respect to the frequency they observed particular behaviors related to each practice. Teachers rated each behavior by selecting from ten responses ranging from Almost Never to Almost Always, which includes Almost Never, Rarely, Seldom, Once in a While, Occasionally, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Usually, Very Frequently, and Almost Always. The following practices and corresponding behaviors are as follows.

Model the Way Practice

- Sets a personal example of what he/she expects of others.

- Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.

- Follows through on the promises and commitments he/she makes.

- Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people's performance.

- Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.

- Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership.

Inspire a Shared Vision Practice

- Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.

- Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like.

- Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future.

- Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.

- Paints the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish.

- Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work

Challenge the Process Practice

- Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities.

- Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.

- Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.

- Asks "What can we learn?" when things don't go as expected.

- Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.

- Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

- Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

Enable Others to Act Practice

- Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with.

- Actively listens to diverse points of view.

- Treats others with dignity and respect.

- Supports the decisions that people make on their own.

- Gives people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.

- Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Encourage the Heart Practice

- Praises people for a job well done.

- Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities.

- Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects.

- Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared values.

- Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments.

- Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.

The PLCA-R, which was completed by teachers in eight elementary and intermediate schools, is intended to answer the following question:

2. What are the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?

Specifically, the teachers rated the following statements in the PLCA-R with respect to the level of evidence within their own PLC. Teachers selected from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree or Strongly Agree to rate statements related to their belief of the implementation of each dimension of their PLC.

Shared and Supportive Leadership Dimension

- Staff members are consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.

- The principal incorporates advice from staff members to make decisions.

- Staff members have accessibility to key information.

- The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.

- Opportunities are provided for staff members to initiate change.

- The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.

- The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.

- Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members.

- Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.

- Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.

- Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning.

Shared Values and Vision Dimension

- A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.

- Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.

- Staff members share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning.

- Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.

- A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.

- School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.

- Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.

- Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.

- Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision.

Collective Learning and Application Dimension

- Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.

- Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.

- Staff members plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.

- A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.

- Staff members engage in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.

- Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.

- School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning.

- Staff members collaboratively analyze multiple sources of data to assess the effectiveness of instructional practices.

- Staff members collaboratively analyze student work to improve teaching and learning.

Shared Personal Practice Dimension

- Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers and offer encouragement.

- Staff members provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices.

- Staff members informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.

- Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices.

- Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.

- Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.

  - Staff members regularly share student work to guide overall school improvement.

Supportive Conditions – Relationships Dimension

- Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.

- A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.

- Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.

- School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.

- Relationships among staff members support hones and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning.

Supportive Conditions – Structures Dimension

- Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.

- The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.

- Fiscal resources are available for professional development.

- Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.

- Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.

- The school facility is clean, attractive, and inviting.

- The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.

- Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff members.

- Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members.

- Data are organized and made available to provide easy access to staff members.

Research Design

For purposes of this quantitative study, two survey instruments were used. Both instruments were sent to eight elementary and intermediate schools in the same school district. The first instrument was the Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R) developed by Oliver, Hipp, and Huffman (2014), based on Shirley Hord's 2014 study of the five dimensions of a PLC. This instrument used a four point Likert scale to measure teachers' beliefs of the implementation each dimension of their Professional Learning Community. These dimensions included Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, and Supportive Conditions. The PLCA-R was sent electronically to eight campuses and targeted all teachers on each campus. Approximately two hundred surveys were completed and returned.

The second instrument used in this study was Kouzes and Posner's (2013) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). It was delivered through interoffice mail to the aforementioned participants. Like the PLCA-R, the LPI utilized a Likert scale to measure the teacher's beliefs of their principals' leadership practices to assess how teachers perceived the effectiveness of their leadership and commitment. The five practices included Model the Way, Share and Inspire a Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

The results of both surveys were analyzed and described utilizing a descriptive statistical analysis model. The findings from this analysis described the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practice in addition to their beliefs of the implementation of the dimensions of a Professional Learning Community. This design revealed an interpretation of the data as well as patterns or trends that might have emerged. The value and rationale for this particular method allowed the researcher to summarize the results, describe the distribution, and present the frequencies of the data. The findings enabled the researcher to describe the various perspectives of the teacher's beliefs of leadership practices and the implementation of the dimension of a Professional Learning Community.

Definition of Terms

1. Challenge the Process - Kouzes and Posner (2012) argue that "Challenge is the crucible for greatness" (p. 19). Leaders search for opportunities to change the status quo. They look for innovative ways to improve the organization. In doing so, they experiment and take risks. And because leaders know that risk taking involves mistakes and failures, they accept the inevitable disappointments as learning opportunities (Kouzes

& Posner, 2012). These leaders "search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 21).

2. Collaboration - "A systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 464).

3. Collective Learning and Application - "Staff at all levels of the school share information and work collaboratively to plan, solve problems and improve learning opportunities. Together they seek knowledge, skills and strategies, and apply this new learning to their work" (Stoll & Louis, 2007, pp. 121-122).

4. Collective Inquiry - "The process of building shared knowledge by clarifying the questions that a group will explore together" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 464).

5. Enable Others to Act - "A grand dream doesn't become a significant reality through the actions of a single person. It requires a team effort…solid trust and strong relationships" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 21). Leaders foster collaboration and build spirited teams. They actively involve others. These leaders focus on serving others needs and not merely focusing on their own. They foster a true servant type attitude and understand that mutual respect is what sustains extraordinary efforts. They strive to create an atmosphere of trust and human dignity. They strengthen others, making each person feel capable and powerful (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

6. Encourage the Heart - These leaders "recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence. Such recognition can be one-to-one or with many people" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 23). Accomplishing extraordinary things in organizations is hard work. To keep hope and determination alive, leaders recognize

contributions that individuals make. In every winning team, the members need to share in the rewards of their efforts, so leaders celebrate accomplishments. They make people feel like heroes (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

7. Goals - "Measurable milestones that can be used to assess progress in advancing toward a vision" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 467).

8. High Expectations - "The confident belief that all students can attain mastery of the essential learning and that the staff has the capability to help all students achieve that mastery" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 467).

9. Inspire a Shared Vision - Leaders describe their most successful leadership experience as "times when they imagined an exciting, highly attractive future for their organizations" (Kouzes & Posner, 2014, p. 17). These leaders truly believe that they can make a difference. They envision the future and create a unique image of what the organization can become. Through their own effective leadership style, these leaders can enlist others in their dreams. They breathe life into their visions and get people to see exciting possibilities for the future (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

10. Learning - "The acquisition of new knowledge or skills through ongoing action and perpetual curiosity" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 468).

11. Model the Way - Leaders who effectively Model the Way are very clear about the principles that guide them. They find their own voice and work to clarify the principles that have been established. They create standards of excellence and then set an example for others to follow. Because the prospect of complex change can overwhelm people and stifle action, they set interim goals so that people can achieve small wins as they work toward larger objectives. Kouzes and Posner (2012) assert, "One of the best

ways to prove that something is important is by doing it yourself and setting an example"

(p. 17).

      12. Moral Purpose - "Acting with the intention of making a positive difference in

the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole" (Fullan, 2001, p. 3).

      13. Perception - A person's beliefs are shaped by the culture, climate, and overall

effectiveness of their entire environment. The background and experiences people have

shape how they perceive others (Otara, 2011).

      14. Professional Learning Community (PLC) - "Educators committed to

working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to

achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 469).

      15. Professional Learning Community Questionnaire - A measure of teacher

and principal beliefs concerning the implementation of the five dimensions of

professional learning communities (Hord, 1997).

      16. Shared and Supportive Leadership - "School administrators participate

democratically with teachers by sharing power, authority, decision-making, and

promoting and nurturing leadership among staff" (Stoll & Louis, pp. 121-122).

      17. Shared Personal Practices - "Peers visit with and observe one another to

offer encouragement and to provide feedback on instructional practices in order to assist

in student achievement and increase individual and organizational capacity" (Stoll &

Louis, 2007, pp. 121-122).

      18. Shared Value and Vision - "Staff shares a vision for school improvement

that has an undeviating focus on student learning. Shared values support norms of

behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning" (Stoll & Louis, 2007, pp. 121-122).

      19. Supportive Conditions: Relationships - "Collegial relationships include respect, trust, norms of critical inquiries and improvement, and positive, caring relationships among students, teachers, and administrators" (Stoll & Louis, 2007. pp. 121-122).

      20. Supportive Conditions: Structures - "Structures include a variety of conditions such as size of the school, proximity of staff to one another, communication systems, and the time and space for staff to meet and examine current practices" (Stoll & Louis, 2007, pp. 121-122).

      21. Vision - "A realistic, credible, attractive future for an organization" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 472).

Limitations

1. Some leadership practices may not have been identified and have, therefore, not been included in this study. These potentially unidentified practices may relate to the successful implementation of learning communities.

2. All surveys were completed on a volunteer basis and therefore there may not be enough responses to describe the beliefs effectively.

3. All surveys were completed on a volunteer basis, and, therefore, there may be a self-selection bias which could shift the responses depending on the level of satisfaction with PLCs or the leader.

4. Self-administered surveys at the elementary and intermediate level prevented the monitoring of respondent behavior which could leave some interesting qualitative elements that cannot be analyzed.

5. It was difficult to ensure that there was no comparing of answers and that the responses were those of the respondents.

6. The information collected from the surveys only applies to the district studied because of differences with the implementation of PLCs and principal leadership practices in other districts.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were applied to this study:

1. The subjects in this study were from elementary and intermediate campuses from one large school district in southeast Texas. There were particular demographics involved in this sample that may be different from other districts, and it may be difficult to project how the PLC process would be perceived in other areas.

2. This particular study will illustrate the culture changes that leaders have initiated at a one point in time in their buildings. Since this is a snapshot, the degree of implementation will vary between campuses.

Assumptions

The study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The study was conducted on campuses that had trained teachers and had begun the process of working under the tenets of a PLC.

2. The participants were knowledgeable of PLCs and understood the six dimensions included in the survey.

3. The participants were honest in their answers.

4. The participants took their time to carefully read all questions and select the appropriate responses.

5. The participants completed the survey on their own and did not collaborate with others to select answers.

Scope

The scope of this study includes:

1. Eight elementary and intermediate campuses.

2. All teachers from each elementary and intermediate campus were asked to participate in the study.

Summary

Schools are being called upon to do much more than ever before to be accountable for all students they serve. It is becoming increasingly important for leaders to implement the PLC process in schools if they are going to meet the demands of accountability present in our current systems. DuFour and Marzano (2011) write, "If educators are to rise to the occasion and meet the challenges confronting them, they will be required both to think and act anew" (p. 25). Therefore, it has become evident that leaders must implement a process to determine if students are to learn at higher levels and if schools are to meet the accountability requirements derived from state assessments.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to analyze and describe the teachers' beliefs of their principal leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Furthermore, this study described the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, defined by the

Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools. This study included teachers and principals from eight elementary and intermediate schools within one large school district in Texas, which has been implementing the tenets of PLC components for the past four years throughout all campuses.

The leadership practices of elementary and intermediate principals were examined with the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2013), which included modeling the way, inspiring the vision of the campus, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Additionally, the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of a Professional Learning Community were measured by the PLCA-R (Oliver et al., 2014). These dimensions included shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, supportive conditions-relationships/structures. After the surveys were completed, they were analyzed and described utilizing a descriptive statistical analysis model. The findings from this analysis described the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practice in addition to their beliefs of the implementation of the dimensions of a Professional Learning Community.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In order to achieve the goal of assessing teacher's beliefs of leadership and PLCs, it is important to review sources of literature on Professional Learning Communities and their implementation. This review of literature will provide insight into the historic look at PLCs, the dimensions of PLCs, school culture and change, leadership behaviors, teacher beliefs, and the role of the principal in PLCs. This study will include a quantitative look at the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of Professional Learning Communities and their beliefs of their principals' leadership practices.

A Historic Review of PLCs

School Reform. The National Commission on Excellence in Education reported in *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 that the education system in the United States is one that is presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens the future of the nation and people. Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to attain them (*A Nation At Risk*, 1983).

This report became the catalyst for change in the United States and was known as the "excellence movement"; however, it fell short of offering new direction while insisting schools needed to do more. Students needed more credits to graduate, more homework, more hours in the day, and more assessments. DuFour et al. (2008) write, "But the excellence movement did not offer a new direction; instead, schools simply need to do more" (p. 34). The failure of this movement was attributed to fact that the improvement was mandated from the top and was dependent on a set of rigid rules and

standards (DuFour et al., 2008). The "excellence movement" was soon followed by the "restructuring movement", an approach that decentralized authority and gave campus decision making to a site-based committee. This in turn gave educators the power to make decisions about school improvements to the individual campuses and the students they served (DuFour et al., 2008).

In 1994, the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* was signed into law. This Act provided states with resources and a framework to monitor student progress and provide students with needed support to help them be masters of the standards. The terms of the Act stated that by the year 2000 in the United States:

- All children will start school and be ready to learn

- At least 90% of students will graduate

- Students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 demonstrating mastery of English, math, science, foreign language, civics and government, economics, history, arts, and geography; and that all schools will ensure that students are prepared to be responsible citizens and contributors to our nation's economy.

- Students will be the first in the world in math and science achievement.

- Every adult American will be literate and will have the necessary skills to compete in a global economy, as well as, exercising their rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

- Every school will be free of drugs, violence, weapons and alcohol and will develop an environment where students feel safe and can learn.

- Teachers will have access to programs to continue improving their professional skills.

- Every school will promote parent and community participation to promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of all students. (*Background on the National Education Goals Panel*, 1993).

Soon after this, education reform took another turn with the passage of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the "Excellence Movement" (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). The passage of this law was one of the most ambitions educational initiatives in the history of the United States and affected students, families, and classrooms throughout the country (DuFour et al., 2008). According to DuFour et al. (2008), the goal of NCLB was to demand that every child in the United States reach a 100% mastery rate by 2014, which was "a goal that no state or nation in the history of the world has ever achieved" (p. 63). Teachers knew that if their students did not pass the accountability tests, the school and district would run the risk of being labeled as failing. Unfortunately, a system has been put in place that will ultimately cause all schools to become failures regardless how effective they are in helping student achieve (DuFour et al., (2008).

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (Klein, 2015) caused the focus to shift to student achievement and how schools were closing the achievement gap; however, the *Act* was not perfect and had flaws. It resulted in providing states with incentives to lower standards and impose one-size-fits all interventions and did not do enough to recognize student growth. President Barack Obama's *A Blueprint for Reform* (2011) was expected to fix *NCLB* by asking states to set standards that prepared students for careers and college, created a fair accountability system that recognized growth, provided states and local education agencies the freedom to create their own site-based solutions, and focused on more rigorous and meaningful interventions to support their lowest performing

schools and those campuses that had not demonstrated progress ("Obama Administration's Education Reform Plan Emphasizes Flexibility, Resources and Accountability for Results," 2014).

The new accountability system promised to reward schools that were able to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps. In addition, it gave the majority of schools the flexibility to use a variety of data to determine how they should design school improvement plans to enhance student achievement. It also challenged schools that did not close achievement gaps. All states were required to determine the bottom 5% of their schools that had not made progress and mandated dramatic changes to see results ("Obama administration's education reform plan emphasizes flexibility, resources and accountability for results," 2014).

The increased expectations in schools caused concerns about teacher and administrator morale along with retention and the continuing challenge to change and address the needs of all learners. Consequently, the urgency of school reform became greater and leaders began to seek alternative ways to address issues. Hipp and Huffman (2010) argue, "Many approaches have come and gone but few will result in significant school improvement that directly affects student learning" (p. 1).

The premise of the *National Commission on Teaching and America's Future* (NCTAF) (DuFour et al., 2008) is that school reform cannot happen without creating conditions in which teachers can teach well. Hipp and Huffman (2010) reflect on this charge and state:

> If researchers are accurate in maintaining that professional learning
> communities (PLCs) are the best hope for school reform, then school

leaders must learn how to facilitate systemic processes to develop these

instructional cultures. Specifically, leaders must assess their school

context and student data, promote shared decision making across their

school community, implement best practices by mobilizing immediate

action, and hold themselves and others accountable for sustaining student

success (p.1).

A Historic Look at PLCs: From Learning Organizations to Professional Learning Communities. In order to understand the basic tenets of Professional Learning Communities, it is important to understand how they were developed from a historical perspective. The concepts and processes of PLCs have roots that come from the literature describing the works of many individuals that laid the foundation for what we know today as PLCs. Additionally, the movement towards greater accountability for educators of student learning has taken years to evolve in the American educational system (Curry, 2010).

The first major era in education, according to Andy Hargreaves (2000), was known as the pre-professional age. This age began in the early 1900s and continued until the early 1960s. It was during this era that many teachers worked in complete isolation and had very little interaction with other teachers (Hargreaves, 2000).

 Hargreaves (2000) describes an era in the 1960s and 1970s known as the "autonomous professional age" (p. 8). He posits, "During this time, there was an increased commitment from the federal government and more emphasis was placed on investing in mathematics, science, and the development of scientific and technological expertise" (Curry, 2010, p. 27). While many teachers' sphere of influence was confined

within the walls of their classrooms while they had complete control over their instructional practices, they still had very limited opportunities to collaborate with other colleagues. Shirley Hord (2012) explains that these cell-like classrooms promoted a culture of isolation that left classroom teachers feeling as though they were self-employed individuals. Hord (2012) states, "They taught in isolation and truly conducted their work as best as they could, but were dependent on their own knowledge of curriculum and instruction" (p. 19).

More instructional problems were identified in 1983 with the release of *A Nation at Risk*. The problems ranged from poorly qualified teachers in classrooms to poor pre-service training as contributing factors to the crisis in education (Hord, 2004). Consequently, the late 1980s changed the focus of reform within the schools to transform from a traditional approach where teachers worked in isolation to one that focused on collaboration and accountability. This shift was necessary because policy makers began to realize that the autonomy many teachers were accustomed to would not prepare students to be competitive in a global society (Murphy and Adam, 1998 as cited in Curry, 2010). Hargreaves (2000) terms this transformation "the age of the collegial professional and teachers were asked to collaborate and develop shared instructional plans to help increase student achievement" (p. 12).

Almost concurrently, Susan Rosenholtz (1991) began looking at workplace conditions to determine a number of ways in which schools differed and the values they held with regard to student learning. She notes several factors that explained cohesive, high consensus schools. In these schools, student mastery was the common factor that united them. Teachers in high-consensus schools were open to comments about their

instructional practice and they strived for continuous improvement (Rosenholtz, 1991).

She describes effective school conditions as ones where collaboration was encouraged

and teachers shared their ideas and ways to improve instruction and shared results of data

to analyze their practice and drive instructional decisions. Additionally, Rosenholtz

(1991) explains that student achievement increased as teachers shared ideas and

improved their instructional practices. In contrast, teachers in low-consensus schools

were not cohesive and did not enjoy a sense of community. Her research centers on

finding ways to improve the organization in schools to become more effective and

provide a workplace where teachers wanted to collaborate and learn with their peers.

Judith Warren Little (2006) focuses on professional development and professional

communities as the foundations of a "learner-centered school" (p. 1). In her research, she

looks at how the work to improve schools and teacher relationships was connected as

they moved to implement professional learning communities (Little, 2006). Little (1982)

also explains that "interactions about teaching is consciously and steadily focused on

practice, on what teachers do, with what aims, in what situations, with what materials,

and with what apparent results" (p. 334).

Little (2006) contends, "When a school systematically supports professional

learning it is more likely to be effective with students" (p. 22). In her research, she

focuses on six urban schools and examined each school as a workplace. Little (2006)

describes the development and success of a PLC happens when teachers are frequently

engaged, continuously collaborate about their professional practice, and frequently

receive immediate feedback to improve their professional practice. Little (2006) also

maintains it is important that teachers research best practices and strategies to develop

and plan instruction together as a team. This will enable them to share strategies that work best for students and also help them improve their own professional practice (Little, 2006).

Additionally, Little (2006) found that there are four goals that join the interests and needs of teachers when the school has a stake in teacher learning. The goals include (a) "understanding and implementing plans to improve the school's goals and priorities"; (b) "building collective knowledge to teach at higher levels"; (c) "building strong professional communities that enhance continuous learning and improvement"; and (d) "sustaining conditions that bolster a commitment to teaching" (p. 2).

In 1994, Peter Senge published his book entitled *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. According to Senge (1994), learning organizations are comprised of a group of people who, through time, enhance their ability to create what they truly want to create. The members of the team develop the skills to alter what they can do and understand. They also" begin to see the world and the organization through different lenses, with new assumptions and beliefs which enable them to develop their skills and practices to new levels" (p. 18).

Senge's (1994) studies include research as to what makes learning organizations successful, and he explains they are based upon five "learning disciplines" or lifelong practices:

- Personal Mastery – expanding each personal capacity and working to create an environment within the organization which encourages all members to increase their knowledge and meet their goals.

- Mental Models – reflecting on the way people think and act and determining how they shape our own thoughts and actions.

- Shared Vision – deciding what members of the organization want to accomplish together and how they will build common understandings and commitment between the members of the group.

- Team Learning – collaborating effectively and relying on each other to learn how to do things better.

- Systems Thinking – thinking about and understanding the forces of interrelationships that shape behaviors and collaboration. This way of thinking helps to change systems more effectively by being able to see the bigger picture (Senge, 1994, p. 6).

Senge (1994) believes that learning in organizations mean "the continuous testing of experience and the transformation of that experience into knowledge – accessible to the whole organization and relevant to its core purpose" (p. 49). The essence of a learning organization is how the members within think and interact with one another. When all members of the organization become aware and purposeful of how they will think and act, they can develop their team practices to implement this interaction and begin acting differently (Senge, 1994).

Senge's (1994) description of a learning organization soon moved into the educational environment. As his research was further explored and shared with other educators in literature and various educational journals, the concept became better known as learning communities. This began to change the focus of the idea that teachers should work together and function as collaborative teams. These teams would share their work

and develop a vision that would provide them with a framework to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction (Hord, 2004).

Reflective dialogue is critical for team learning and moving the group beyond the individual's personal understanding. Members of the team participate in conversations to improve their learning and create new learning opportunities for students. The key to the success of this type of dialogue is that it is continuous and focuses on students and how it benefits their learning (Hord, 2004). Senge's (1994) research provides the necessary framework for learning organizations in the educational setting. As other educators and researchers followed to "further explore this idea, the term professional learning community emerged" (Stegal, 2011, p. 28).

The present age is considered the Post-Modern Age, and its emphasis is for teachers to become more open with other teachers in their schools (Hargreaves, 2000). Shirley Hord (2008) describes the Post-Modern Age as a time when our systems experienced teams of teachers who began to talk about the workplace and its effects on teachers' morale and knowledge base. The systems shift allowed for barriers to be broken and increased interaction among teachers as they came together to share their work (Hord, 2008).

In an article published in 1995 entitled *Building Professional Community in Schools,* Sharon Kruse, Karen Louis and Anthony Bryk list the elements critical of a PLC. These include reflective dialogue, de-privatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values. In practice, teachers discuss their classroom situations, share ideas, and use the information to critique their own personal practice; thereby allowing them to learn from each other and collaborate

about ways to improve instruction in their classrooms. When this happens, teachers

should be mutually accountable for student learning, and, as a result, students learn at

higher levels (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk 1995).

Additionally, Kruse et al., (1995) added that a professional community becomes

stronger when the five learning disciplines are embedded in the culture and teachers

practice them on a regular basis. Teams can motivate and support each other as they

work to overcome obstacles and other challenges that occur in a school. They work

together to set standards for learning and put a great deal of effort into sustaining the

standards for higher level learning for all students (Kruse et al., 1995).

Hipp and Huffman (2010) describe Hord as a "pioneer in the field of school

improvement" (p.11). According to Hord (2004), learning organizations in schools are

demonstrated by teachers from all grade levels and various departments working

collaboratively on a continuous basis to learn from each other. This type of work should

be grounded in reflective dialogue where teachers hold candid conversations about their

students and their learning and identifying issues and problems that may be impeding

student learning (Hord, 2004). Hord (2004) organizes the characteristics of PLCs into

five distinct dimensions, which differ somewhat from Kruse, Louis and Bryk.

- Supportive and Shared Leadership – requires that the principal in the
  school share leadership, power, and authority by inviting the staff to share
  input and decision making.
- Shared Values and Vision – includes a complete commitment to student
  learning that is consistently communicated, shared, and monitored in the
  staff's work.

- Collective Learning and Application of Learning – requires that the members of the staff consistently evaluate their professional practices and seek new knowledge and new approaches to teaching in order to meet student needs.

- Supportive Conditions – includes establishing a physical environment that encourages and sustains collaboration and professional learning.

- Shared Practice – involves teachers evaluating other teacher's behaviors and providing feedback concerning best practices and professional improvement (p. 7).

Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker (1998) published *Professional Learning Communities at Work. Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. The works of the DuFours and Eaker (1998) are pivotal in the field of education. Their research and practices made huge contributions to develop the framework to help teachers and administrators understand how to effectively collaborate and help students reach higher levels of learning. In 2008, DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker delved into the characteristics of PLCs in greater detail in *Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work: New Insights for Improving Schools*. Then, in 2010, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many wrote *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* and defined PLCs as:

Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the

assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 11).

DuFour et al. (2008) identifies six characteristics of PLCs:

- Shared mission, vision, values, and goals – all focused on student learning – this is the focus and the essence of what makes a PLC. When a district or school functions as a high level PLC, they are committed to student learning at high levels. All members of the PLC share the mission, vision, values, and goals of the organization and work to achieve those goals. They make commitments and work together to determine what each person will do to achieve the goals and hold each other accountable for attaining them.

- A collaborative culture with a focus on learning – this is critical for high functioning PLCs and is the building block to sustain the shared mission, vision, values, and goals of the organization. Members of a PLC work interdependently to achieve their collective goals, which are linked directly to student learning. They create a collaborative culture that focuses on student learning, work interdependently to analyze their professional practice, and determine the impact on student learning in order to improve results.

- Collective inquiry into best practices and current reality – members of a PLC will look at their instructional strategies and determine if they are considered best practices in regards to teaching and learning. Members of the PLC will also hold honest and crucial conversations about student

learning and share results which allow them to make informed instructional decisions.

- Action orientation: Learning by doing – members of a PLC are action oriented. They are willing to evaluate data, make informed instructional decisions, and move quickly to turn a vision into a reality. PLC members understand they are learning from each other and engaging with each other; sharing best practices, strategies, and collective inquiry.

- A commitment to continuous improvement – members of a high functioning PLC continuously search for a better way to accomplish the purpose of the organization and achieve their established goals. They engage in an ongoing process cycle of gathering evidence of student learning, developing strategies to build on strengths, implementing new ideas, analyzing the impact, determining effectiveness, and applying new knowledge in the next teaching cycle to continue improving.

- Results orientation – members of a PLC are focused on results. All efforts must be assessed to determine the impact on student learning. DuFour and Eaker (2008) states that "unless initiatives are subjected to ongoing assessment on the basis of tangible results, they represent random groping in the dark, not purposeful improvement" (DuFour et al., 2008, pp.16–17).

Following this work, DuFour et al. (2008) determined a framework to guide the work of PLCs with three big ideas. The first big idea included ensuring high levels of learning for all students. The fundamental purpose of a member of a PLC is to be committed to focusing on student learning and aligning all practices, procedures, and

policies to ensure success. Members of a PLC work together to determine what should be learned and then collectively monitor student learning, provide systematic interventions, and ensure that students receive necessary support when they are struggling (DuFour et al., 2008). PLCs also ensure that students are provided extension activities when mastery is demonstrated. DuFour et al. (2008) state, "a corollary assumption stipulates that if all students are to learn at high levels, the adults in the organization must also be continually learning" (p. 18).

Secondly, educators must work collaboratively. All members of a PLC must be committed to not work in isolation. In order to make this possible, school administrators must build a collaborative culture within the organization so members can work interdependently and also be collectively responsible for the success of all students. School administrators must also adjust the master schedule to allow time for teachers to collaborate within the school day (DuFour et al., 2008).

Finally, educators should be results oriented. Schools must consistently inquire whether or not students are learning. DuFour et al. (2008) advance the concept that "Teachers and administrators must systematically monitor students on a continuous and ongoing basis and use evidence of results to respond immediately to students who experience difficulty" (DuFour et al., 2008, p.18–19). This includes evaluating data on a continuous and timely basis in order to make instructional adjustments necessary for students to learn at higher levels.

Following this section of the thesis concerning the history of PLCs and how they transformed from learning organizations to communities will be an in-depth study of the six dimensions of a PLC. For purposes of this study, the six dimensions from Oliver,

Hipp, and Huffmans,' (2010) research were used to further explain these findings. In

addition, there will be an in-depth look into school cultures, principal leadership, PLCs,

and teacher beliefs of leadership behaviors.

Dimensions of Professional Learning Communities

DuFour et al. (2008) argue, "The fundamental purpose of our schools is to ensure

learning for all students at high levels" (p.18). Educators must commit to not waver on

this commitment to learning and schools must commit to align their practices and policies

to ensure this fundamental purpose. Teachers must also work together to determine what

each student should learn and then monitor this learning on a continuous basis to provide

systematic forms of intervention to ensure that all students master student expectations.

It is critical that teachers provide support when students are struggling and also plan to

extend the learning for those who have mastered the concepts being taught. In addition,

the assumption is that if students are to learn at high levels then the adults who teach

them must also continue their own professional learning. Therefore, "structures must be

in place to allow teachers and staff to learn through job-embedded professional

development" (DuFour et al., 2008, p.18). It is important that leaders begin to change

their paradigm of learning communities and move beyond professional development to

implement opportunities for teachers to participate in activities revolving around

intentional learning to better prepare them to help students reach higher levels of

learning. Table 2.1 illustrates the change that occurs in schools when they shift from the

traditional approaches to that of a PLC (DuFour et al., 2008).

Table 2.1

Comparison of Traditional Schools to PLC Schools

Traditional Schools	PLC Schools
Teachers work in isolation	Teachers work collaboratively in teams
Mission and belief statements are developed	Mission statement outlines what will be learned, how it will be assessed and monitored and what strategies or interventions will be implemented when students struggle
Vision statement is developed by administrators or a select few teacher leaders	Collaboratively developed and provide insight into what the teachers desire the school to become
Goal statements are typically random and may be difficult to assess	Goal statements are measurable and they are directly linked to performance
Focus on teaching	Focus on student learning
Curriculum is typically overloaded and teachers decide in isolation what to teach	Teachers collaborate to develop a viable curriculum that is focused on what students are supposed to know
Decisions about improvement are made by polling opinions	Instructional decisions are based on research "best practices" and are made collaboratively
Administrators are instructional leaders Teachers implement what comes from the leaders	Administrators foster building leadership capacity. Teachers share in the leadership and develop their own potential leadership skills
School Improvement Plans are randomly developed and are widely focused. Plans are typically set aside after they have been developed	School improvements are a living document and are a roadmap for change
Improvement trends and fads are implemented	Improvement plans are tied the vision, mission, goals of the school and the district

Note. Adapted from Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities, by R. Eaker, R. DuFour, and R. DuFour, 2002, National Educational Service.

In order to begin the exploration of the dimensions of a PLC, it is important to understand the systems of a PLC and what is involved to sustain the work. The following section of this dissertation focuses on the dimensions of a PLC that is a common theme throughout the works of many researchers. The shared components include (a) shared vision and values, (b) shared leadership, (c) shared teaching practices and collaboration among teachers, (d) ongoing professional learning, and (e) supportive conditions within relationships and structures. A summary of these critical factors is included in Appendix A.

Vision, Goals and Values. When a school or district is committed to higher learning for all students, educators within the system make a dedicated effort to adhere to collective commitments that clarify what each member of the organization will do. DuFour et al, (2008) state:

> This foundation of a shared mission (purpose), vision (clear direction), values (collective commitments), and goals (indicators, timelines, and targets) not only addresses how educators will work to improve their schools, but also reinforces the moral purpose and collective responsibility that clarify why their day-to-day work is so important. (p.15)

Hord (2004) argues, "Shared values and vision include an unwavering commitment to student learning that is consistently articulated and referenced in the staff's work" (p. 7). This shared vision is a reflection of what is considered important to an individual or a team. It is also a mental picture of what the entire organization strives to achieve. In a PLC, the students are pictured as learners who are capable of achieving a

specific goal within the supportive environments the staff has developed. Hord (2004) encourages that the vision and mission of a school be developed collaboratively and use them as a guide to make decisions about teaching and student learning.

According to Senge (1994), a shared vision is "building a sense of commitment in a group, by developing shared images of the future we seek to create, and the principles and guiding practices by which we hope to get there" (p. 6). A set of values may include how the organization as a whole decides to behave with each other and how they treat their customers and their community. These determine the lines they will cross and those they will not. When values and visions are shared and articulated, they become a guiding light for an organization that will help direct people toward the vision. When members of an organization work together to develop and agree upon a vision, they actually become more open concerning issues and are willing to reveal information and speak honestly with one another (Senge, 1994).

Roland Barth and Linda Guest (1990) outline three reasons why the vision of a school should be developed by all stakeholders. These are the prescriptions to make school reform possible and the best chance for them to be taken seriously and initiated by teachers and principals. Research conducted in schools does not always offer a broad view. Years of experience that teachers and administrators have cannot be discounted because their background and knowledge is essential in deciding what is best for the school. Visions are important and teachers and administrators can celebrate their accomplishments when they work hard to achieve a goal they have established instead of "only implementing the grand ideas of others, ideas with which they may not agree" (Barth & Guest, 1990, p.150).

Douglas Reeves (2006) concludes that a "vision contemplates the future" (p. 36).

Effective visions become the "blueprint" in an organization and help members

understand that they are a part of a larger world (Reeves, 2006). In PLCs, the vision,

values, and goals are interwoven and are the driving force behind all decision-making

that happens every day on a campus. All successful organizations possess share values

and it is the leader's role to instill them (Phillips, 1992). Without a clear vision, the

leadership and decision making becomes disjointed and appears to be random. It leaves

teachers wondering exactly where they are headed next (Reeves, 2006).

Shared and Supportive Leadership. Schools that practice the tenets of a PLC

embrace shared leadership as "the best model suited to the new image of the school as a

community of learners" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 310). This concept is based on the

premise that leadership is spread out throughout the building to increase leadership

capacity and allow teachers to see themselves as leaders and decision makers (DuFour et

al., 2008). Administrators should embrace this concept to allow teachers the autonomy to

make instructional decisions and improve their "collective capacity to ensure all students

acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential to their success" (DuFour et al.,

2008, p. 310).

Hord (1997) explains, "Supportive and shared leadership is evident when school

administrators share power, authority, and decision making with teachers" (as cited in

Hipp & Huffman, 2010, p.14). In high functioning PLCs, principals are viewed as

facilitators of the process and play a significant role. They build leadership capacity and

support staff as they work to achieve the goals they have established, share power,

receive input concerning decisions that have to be made, and encourage maintaining the

vision and mission of the organization as a priority in all decision making (Hipp &

Huffman, 2010). Similarly, Marzano et al. (2005) discuss that a common misconception

about leadership was that it should lie solely with the principal. Leadership is viewed as

important; however, Hipp and Huffman (2010) contend that distributed and shared

leadership allows individuals to affect change within an organization and should be an

intentional action from administration.

Barth and Guest (1990) describe shared and supportive leadership as "a

community of leaders" (p.122). They further explain that "teachers harbor extraordinary

leadership capabilities, and their leadership is a major untapped resource for improving

our nation's schools" (Barth & Guest, 1990, p.124). Teachers can lead. In fact, Barth and

Guest (1990) maintain:

> When teachers are enlisted and empowered as school leaders, everyone
>
> can win. Leadership is not a zero-sum game in which one person gets
>
> some only when another loses some. In fact, the principal gains influence
>
> and demonstrates leadership by entrusting some of it to others. Being
>
> accorded leadership generates new leadership. (p.128)

Research demonstrates that teacher leadership leads to student achievement at

higher levels, and teacher leadership inspires and challenges teachers to provide the best

instructional opportunities for students (Barth & Guest, 1990). Research literature from

some of Japan's most successful business organizations found that when workers have

input in the decisions that affected their job, their satisfaction and production increased.

Although culturally different, Barth and Guest (1990) contend that the same is true of our

teachers in our schools. If teachers in schools participate in making instructional

decisions for students, they will work harder to ensure it happens (Barth & Guest, 1990).

The literature from Shirley Hord's (2012) research indicates, "The active element

of shared leadership may well be the most important ingredient and the imperative for the

development of a professional orientation and subsequent professional behaviors of the

teacher members of the PLC" (p. 110). It is impossible for teachers to have the capacity

to move forward and take action if the leaders in the school do not provide the

opportunity to make it a possibility (Hord, 2012). She also explains that teams in schools

should be allowed the autonomy to make instructional decisions within established

boundaries and that schools should be allowed the opportunity to generate ideas, create

instructional activities, and the means to evaluate student learning (Hord, 2012). True

professionalism is thereby allowed to evolve naturally and for the members of the PLC to

develop a "professional orientation" (Hord, 2012, p.110).

In *On Common Ground* by DuFour et al. (2008), the concept of shared leadership

"operates from the premise that leadership should be widely dispersed throughout a

school, and thus developing the leadership potential of all staff members is imperative"

(p. 23). They also content that it is critically important that principals strive to become

"leaders of leaders, rather than leaders of followers" (DuFour et al., 2005, p. 23). Senge

(1994) also confirms this in his book *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*. Senge (1994)

argues that there is a good reason our businesses and schools are forced to move in this

direction. This is because the problems our schools face today are very complex and

complicated. The problems also tend to cross disciplines and, therefore, can no longer be

solved in isolation. The efforts of several leaders within the organization must be utilized

to solve these issues collaboratively (Senge, 1994). Research is evident in that "Few, if any, individuals have the intelligence and breadth to deal with this kind of complexity on their own, yet it must be dealt with" (Senge, 1994, p. 436).

DuFour et al. (2005) maintain that if teachers primarily focus on the principal as the leader in the building, they will not be able to continue moving forward as a PLC. In fact, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) concludes that "shared or distributed leadership was essential to building learning communities" (as stated in DuFour et al., 2005, p. 23). It is critically important that leaders nurture the talents and high leadership capacity of their teachers by communicating to and ensuring that all stakeholders are valued and appreciated. This will encourage their input and creativity. It is imperative that these practices also be communicated to the entire organization (Brower & Balch, 2005). To become a PLC, the leadership must be distributed amongst the stakeholders of the school. DuFour and Fullan (2013) conclude:

No single individual can develop the improvement process, communicate the process adequately to large numbers of people, discover and remove obstacles, identify the specific support individuals will need to succeed in the initiative or anchor the process in the organization's culture, and create small wins necessary to sustain the process. (p. 24).

Shared Personal Practices and Collaboration Among Teachers. As important as shared and supportive leadership is in PLCs, so is the learning that occurs between staff members as they share personal practices and collaborate on a regular basis. Cultivating a collaborative environment requires constant care and attention (Sparks & Many, 2015). According to DuFour et al. (2008), collaboration is defined as "a

systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results" (p. 464). It is critical to understand that collaboration can become a forum for griping and for venting petty issues. DuFour et al. (2008) state, "A collaborative culture can be powerful, but as DuFour and Fullan (2013) warns, unless people are focusing on the right things, they may end up being powerfully wrong" (p.183). Additionally, in a PLC, it is important to ensure that teachers collaborate on the "right things – the things that impact student learning…by engaging in collective inquiry of the four following critical questions" (p. 183):

- What do we want our students to learn and be able to do?

- How will we know they have learned it?

- How will we respond when students don't learn it?

- How will we extend the learning for those who know it? (DuFour et al., 2008)

Campus leaders must allow teachers time to collaborate with other teachers during the school day and focus on teaching and student learning issues (Hord, 2004). In order for the tenets of a PLC to take hold in a school and become the norm of the way a school operates, leaders must work to cultivate a culture that ensures a routine of collaboration into the daily operations of the school and also provide opportunities for teachers to evaluate their instruction in order to seek opportunities to improve their professional practice (DuFour et al., 2005).

In *Cultures Built to Last Systematic PLCs at Work*, DuFour and Fullan (2013) discuss the importance of establishing teams and ensuring that teachers are placed on the right teams in order to benefit from shared instructional practice. They describe the role

of a team as a group of people working together interdependently and collaborating about student learning. The members of the team set goals for which they are each mutually responsible for achieving. In schools, the most effective team structure is a grade level team in the elementary schools and content area teams in secondary schools. Meaningful, collaborative teams benefit from sharing goals and visions that are applicable to their own classrooms and professional practice (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). "The goal of having a collaborative culture is not that employees will do the work for a resolute leader, but rather that they become collectively engage in work that is also meaningful to them" (Fullan, 2011 p. 94).

Collective and Professional Learning. One of the most relentless aspects of PLCs is the focus on continuous learning for students and also for the adults who impact them (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). Traditionally, teachers viewed professional development as something that typically took place away from the school campus and took the form of workshops or even courses taken at the graduate level. They even considered the typical professional development days that are embedded within the school year as a time to hear speakers or the latest trends in education the district might be implementing as their opportunities for learning and growing. However, DuFour and Fullan (2013) describe effective professional development as something that is continuous and takes place in the workplace. They contend that effective leaders of PLCs understand that the most meaningful and powerful professional development occurs when adult learning takes place in the school, when it encourages engagement among teachers, when everyone on the team is involved, when there is alignment with the goals of the district, and when it is continuously evaluated to determine student learning is taking place.

According to Hipp and Huffman (2010), the term professional in professional learning indicates that adults must learn from well-respected sources in order to help make them more effective in their work. They also state that many PLCs will seek help from each other or other colleagues within the school. If this doesn't help, they will seek support from the district office staff to gain more knowledge and skills. In addition, Hipp and Huffman (2010) describe a community as a workplace or environment that supports professional learning. This is one that nurtures, trusts, and respects stakeholders with opportunities for honest and open dialogue and who share a commitment and a vision of student learning.

Barth (1990) explains the importance of job-embedded learning to improve student learning. He states in *Improving Schools from Within* (Barth, 1990) that growing teachers professionally is connected to student learning and there was nothing that had a greater impact on classroom instruction and behavior than adult learning. Barth (1990) advocates that principals have a perfect opportunity to work with teachers to develop and foster an environment where teachers become students of their own learning as well as the learning of their colleagues. During the time Barth was an administrator, he decided to hold faculty meetings within the classrooms of different teachers. This allowed teachers opportunities to host meetings and take time to collaborate about what they were doing in their classes. He describes that teachers were awkward about this practice at first but soon became accustomed to sharing and more secure as presenters and receivers of information. Additionally, Barth (1990) states that this activity seemed to get teachers excited about teaching and it also fostered continuous discussions about instruction.

In 2010, the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality published a report entitled "Job-Embedded Professional Development: What It Is, Who Is Responsible, and How to Get It Done Well". The authors, Andrew Croft, Jane Coggshall, Megan Dolan, Elizabeth Powers and Joellen Killion (2010), discuss that teacher learning is just as critical as student learning and teachers should be allowed the opportunity and structures should be put in place to allow this type of learning to occur. The authors express that district and school administrators can facilitate this process by developing a master calendar that allows teachers opportunities to meet together during the school day, eliminate excessive paperwork, and clarify goals and outcomes. They also discuss that the school's professional culture has a significant impact on teachers' opportunities to learn. Administrators realized they were responsible for creating and fostering a school culture that allowed teachers opportunities for continuous learning through the tenets of a PLC (Croft et al., 2010).

Additionally, Shirley Hord (2004) explains in order to increase the capacity for teachers to continue their collegial learning, there should be a focus on developing relationships among the staff. This allowed teachers and administrators opportunities to work together to openly discuss any questions and concerns in the presence of the principal. It also allowed the teachers to feel a part of a culture where teachers talked about working with a principal instead of working for a principal. This approach can be difficult to implement in the beginning because teachers generally consider a hierarchy type relationship and they expect the administration to carry out decisions. Consequently, Hord (2004) discovered in her research that teachers felt supported and developed a trusting and respectful relationship as a result of this type of relationship.

In addition, teachers began to have continuous conversations concerning student success and then teachers began to focus on what truly helped students learn. They actually became advocates for what they believed students needed most to meet the goals teachers had set for student learning (Hord, 2004). This allows them opportunities to learn from each other. DuFour and Fullan (2013) further explain that schools that are most successful in embedding a focus on student learning know they must set aside time for professional learning to occur. Principals know they must develop strategies for the group to continuously learn practices from each other that involved research, study, and discussions about topics that are related to instruction and student learning.

Encouraging staff to participate in the decision-making allows high functioning PLC schools to develop cultures where teachers feel they have input in decisions for the school (Kanold, 2011). Principals in these schools agree to accept the decisions made by the staff or committee, even if the decision may not have been what he/she would have decided on his or her own. "Teams must have some autonomy for how they do the work – otherwise adult motivation will dissipate quickly" (Kanold, 2011, p. 44). On the other hand, Kanold (2011) went on to state that leaders should have no tolerance for the actions of those that do not advance the learning of students.

Hord (2004) also describes that effective campuses nurtured new ways to operate. The schools included in her research allowed opportunities for teachers to create new ways of operating within their own school both with the organizational structure and building relationships within the staff. The staff worked together to create a schedule that allowed for teacher planning during the school day. Teachers created systems where they could share students as a way to mutually support their learning. Hord (2012) explains,

"In these schools, teachers viewed themselves as responsible and accountable for the development of all students, sharing a responsibility for all students' learning outcomes" (p. 27).

Shared Personal Practices.   Shirley Hord (1997) defines shared personal practices as a dimension in which one teacher helps other teachers with their own individual professional practice. The process involves peers regularly visiting each other's classrooms to observe and provide feedback to foster and encourage growth. This requires a high level of trust within the organization and between teachers and is based on a collective commitment from everyone involved (Hord, 1997). She went on to explain that "mutual respect and understanding are the fundamental requirements for this kind of workplace culture" (Hord, 1997, p. 22). The practices of PLCs have allowed teachers to have the type of relationships necessary in order to observe each other and provide feedback to help each other grow in their professional practice (Hipp & Huffman, 2010; Hord, 1997).

Peter Senge (2006) explains in his book *The Fifth Discipline* that it can be quite challenging to transform a school into a PLC. In order to effectively build learning organizations, members and teachers must have access to each other. Systems should be in place that allows time for members of the organization to effectively collaborate with each other (Roberts, 2009). In many of today's schools, administrators do not encourage shared thinking. Instead, teachers are typically free to make instructional decisions on their own (Dufour et al., 2008).

In order for schools to move towards working as a PLC, members must address the instructional isolation practices that have been traditionally practiced in many schools

(Schmoker, 2006). It is critical for school administrators and teachers to create collaborative cultures and address formidable barriers in order to begin working interdependently and take collective responsibly to ensure all students learn at higher levels (DuFour et al., 2008). Kruse et al. (1995) discuss that PLC practices offer the support that teachers need in order to effectively share resources, work collaboratively, and offer the support necessary to overcome other obstacles.

The professionals who are part of a PLC continuously seek the very best strategies to help the students they serve learn at higher levels (Kanold, 2011). They move beyond simply gathering the ideas and opinions from their colleagues to an environment where they collaborate and strive to discover the best strategies for teaching. Teachers base their decisions on research based strategies that are proven to help students learn rather than their opinions (DuFour et al., 2008). Conversely, DuFour (2008) encourages teachers to also conduct their own action research along with their study of the practices of other researchers with each unit they teach (p.188). After the team has reached an agreement on what should be taught and how the learning will be assessed, teachers should be allowed the autonomy to select and implement instructional strategies that best fit the needs of their students (Kanold, 2011). Once the common assessment has been administered, teachers then collaborate to determine the percentage of learning that occurred (DuFour et al., 2008). Although effective teaching requires a great deal of autonomy, members of an effective PLC understand that when they are presented with clear evidence of a teacher's strategy that may have yielded a higher level of achievement, they are expected to adjust their own strategies to match it in their classroom (DuFour et al., 2008, pp. 188–189). Monroe-Baillargeon and Shema (2010)

explain that when teachers collaborate within their teams in a truly supportive environment and share their ideas, they begin the reflection process on their personal practice. High functioning PLCs will utilize shared practices to ensure students continue to learn at high levels.

Hipp and Huffman (2010) identify nine actions that can foster high levels of shared personal practice in a school:

- Time during the day must be scheduled for teachers to have the opportunity to observe each other.

- Time must also be scheduled for teachers to come together to discuss their work and provide feedback.

- Ensure systems for follow-up and coaching are embedded in professional development.

- Work with teachers to develop professional development that meets their needs and the needs of students.

- Develop leadership capacity on campus and encourage less experienced teachers to get support from the experts on campus.

- Build opportunities for teams to become interdependent and provide opportunities for celebrations when goals are reached on teams or content groups.

- Utilize resources from central office to help improve the implementation of best practices to be used during instruction.

- Invite teachers from other campuses to share activities and take part in planning meetings and professional development.

- Encourage and provide opportunities for teachers to participate in district level vertical team meetings. (p. 127)

Supportive Conditions. According to Hord (2004), "supportive conditions take place when the staff comes together regularly to determine where, when, and how the learning, decision making, and problem solving will occur in a school" (p. 10). Hipp and Huffman (2003) explain that supportive conditions "impacted all the earlier dimensions…and provided for creating PLCs, while also supporting and sustaining commitment" (p. 9). Teachers who are embedding the work of PLCs know the importance of developing supportive relationships (Hord & Tobia, 2012). They truly understand the importance of being open and honest and being true to one another (Hord & Tobia, 2012). They also add that the structures could be divided into two categories, relationships, and structures. Conditions that support teacher leadership are summarized in Table 2.2 (York-Barr & Duke, n.d.).

Table 2.2

Comparison of Traditional Schools to Schools Operating Under the Tenets of

Professional Learning Communities

Attributes that Support Teacher Leadership

School culture and context
- There should be a focus on learning and inquiry that is school wide
- Encourage teachers to be creative and take initiative
- Expect teachers to work collaboratively as a team and share the decision making and accountability for student learning
- Teacher leaders are considered role models in the school
- There is a collegial level of professionalism committed to working as a community of teachers

Roles and Relationships
- There is a high level of respect for teacher leaders on the campus and confidence of depth of knowledge of content area and instructional expertise
- There is a high level of trust which fosters positive working relationships with peers and school administrators
- There is a high level of teacher leadership that is committed to the learning process for students rather than focusing on managerial tasks
- There is a level of shared leadership with formal and informal roles defined
- There is common ground within the teacher and administrator domains
- There is a level of attention given to the importance of developing interpersonal relationships between the teacher leader and administration

Structures
- Structures that support learning are in place as an embedded practice and teacher roles support learning and leading
- Site-based decision making structures and processes are embedded in the culture

Note. Adopted from "What Do We Know About Teacher Leadership? Findings From Two Decades of Scholarship," by J. York-Barr and K. Duke, 2004, Review of Educational Research, 74, pp. 255-316.

Hord (2004) further describes the physical and structural factors that are in place

in schools that are considered high functioning PLCs. She states that schools need to

establish schedules that allow time for teachers to meet on a regular basis. The size of the

facility and proximity of teachers should be taken into consideration when developing a

master schedule, assigning teacher roles that allow for interdependency. Hord (2004) writes, "It is also critical for systems to be put into place for effective communication to occur along with empowering teachers and allowing autonomy to make instructional decisions that positively affect student learning" (p. 10).

In collegial relationships, Louis and Kruse (1994) express the importance of individuals in a work environment to be willing to accept feedback and be willing to make instructional improvements. They also add that there should be a level of respect and trust among colleagues at the teacher level as well as the district level. Hord (2004) adds, "Faculty should possess and appropriate cognitive and skill bases that enables effective teaching and learning as well" (p. 11). Principals can foster the relationships to grow by helping their staff learn to relate to each other and provide opportunities for teams to spend effective time together on a more personal level which helps to create a more caring environment (Hord, 2004).

Culture in Professional Learning Communities

Cultures are made up of all the elements that make life comfortable, predictable and a safe place for people to work (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Muhammad and DuFour (2009) contend, "There are basically two types of organizational changes that are evident in today's schools: structural changes and cultural changes" (p. 15). The structural changes include systems, procedures, schedules, best practices, and policies. The structural changes have become more popular in schools since the passage of *No Child Left Behind* in 2001. These external factors contribute to improving schools and are typically immediate and visible because they can be announced, and legislators and superintendents can point out tangible evidence of how they have worked to change

schools (DuFour et al., 2008). Unfortunately, the structural changes rarely impact teacher practices in their own classrooms and are not sufficient enough to truly improve schools (DuFour et al., 2008).

Cultural changes are much more difficult to implement because the thoughts and beliefs of others are not controlled. Muhammad and DuFour (2009) suggest, "Cultural change requires something more profound" (p. 15). Barth (2001) states that the school's culture dictates how teachers will work, and culture has much more influence on the learning that occurs in the building than any influences from the department of education, the school district, or even the building principal. The culture of a school shapes how people think and act (DuFour et al., 2008). The definitions of school culture vary, but the following words have been used by researchers to describe it: beliefs, expectations, values, norms, habits, assumptions, commitment, effective, intrinsic, motivation, diplomacy, patience, endurance, encouragement, policies, goals, trust, confidence, high expectations, honesty, appreciation, support, established relationships, and collaboration (DuFour, 2008; Muhammad & DuFour, 2009; Hipp & Huffman, 2010; Barth, 1990; Hord, 1997).

Deal and Peterson (2009) prescribe that schools each have their own character. Each one has its own feel that can be determined when one walks through the doors. Deal and Peterson (2009) explain this is something a visitor can almost taste and feel. It can be heard from conversations between teachers and students in the halls, classrooms, lunchrooms, and playgrounds. Additionally, culture can very powerful on a campus. Deal and Peterson (2009) writes, "If principals try to shape it or change it they should be aware that there could be pitfalls as well as positive outcomes" (p. 13). Deal and

Kennedy (1982) suggest that leaders should pay particular attention to the shared beliefs, rituals, stories, and all elements in the informal network of the organization.

According to Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal (2008), the culture of an organization is the glue that holds everyone together and unites all stakeholders to hold the organization true to the values and beliefs that are shared. Culture is the pattern of values and beliefs that are interwoven within the organization and defines how the members of the organization do things (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In strong cultures, individuals will work together to honor traditions and values and renew them as new members enter the organization to maintain the way of doing things (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Edgar Schein (2010) defines culture as a "pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration" (as cited in Peterson, 2009, p. 13). Schein (2010) identifies three levels of culture, which include artifacts that are visible structures and observed behaviors. The second level is beliefs and values, which include goals and aspirations. Finally, Schein (2010) identifies the third level as basic underlying assumptions, which are typically considered unconscious and could also include beliefs that are often taken for granted. He adds that the underlying assumptions will actually determine behaviors, thoughts, and feelings.

Similarly to Schein, Barth, Deal, and Peterson, DuFour et al., (2008) describe the culture of an organization as the "assumptions, beliefs, values, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for that organization" (p. 90). They add that all schools have cultures and that they can either foster collaboration or isolation, be centered on student

learning or centered on teacher's instruction, view administrators as facilitators and supporters or as a dictator, encourage continuous job-embedded learning and improvement or defend professional development off campus that may be unrelated to the needs of the students in a teacher's classroom (DuFour et al., 2008).

Legislatures can mandate changes in structures. They can also announce changes in policies in schools and districts. However, they cannot mandate a change in beliefs, assumptions, and values of a school (DuFour et al., 2008). The structural changes in schools are much easier to mandate; however, cultural changes are much more difficult to make. DuFour et al. (2008) found, "If efforts are not made to improve schools that will in the end alter the culture, there is no reason to believe that schools will have better results in student learning" (p. 91). Therefore, DuFour et al. (2008) add that if schools or districts do not undergo profound cultural shifts, it will be impossible for them to develop the capacity to work as a PLC. Appendix A outlines the cultural shifts that must occur in schools in order for teachers and administrators to start doing the work of professional learning communities.

Role of the Principal

As the leader of a school, principals play a key role in the success or failure of the implementation of a PLC. In Brookover and Lezotte (1979), Edmonds (1979), and Lezotte's (1991) studies (as cited in DuFour et al., 2008), the researchers concluded that high expectations, clear goals, and frequent monitoring of classroom instruction cannot be sustained without strong leadership from the principal. Hord (1997) explains that transforming a school to function as a learning community will only occur with the leader's direction and nurturing of the development of community. Hord (2004) states

that the principal on a campus is the "key to the existence of a professional learning community" (p. 20).

In 1985, Philip Hallinger and Joseph Murphy wrote about a model for professional leadership and they offer three dimensions for the role. In addition, they identify specific objectives to each of the dimensions. The first dimension is to define the school mission, which include determining the school's goals and the importance of ensuring they were effectively communicated. The second dimension includes managing the instructional program which includes supervising the instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Finally, the third dimension focuses on promoting a positive culture by developing effective professional development, visibility within the school, and protecting as much instructional time as possible (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

In 2004, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstron authored an article entitled "How Leadership Influences Student Learning". In this article, the researchers identify three key elements that high-quality principals use to impact student learning. The first element is to set directions. Principals work with teachers to establish higher expectations for students, using data to determine effectiveness of instruction. The second element is effective principals continuously work to develop teachers and build capacity. They do this by providing teachers with the resources and training they need to be successful. The last element focuses on how to make the school organization work by ensuring that the supports are in place to help teachers and ensure that interferences to teaching and learning are eliminated. Their research found that effective leadership really does matter, according to the evidence they analyzed. In fact, "it is second only to

teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstron, 2004, p. 3).

Organizational theorists have long studied the impact of culture on schools and student achievement (MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009). Research has found that paying attention to culture is one of the most important actions a principal can perform (McNeil et al., 2009). Hallinger and Heck (1996) report that the role of the principal does not necessarily impact student achievement directly, but instead has an indirect effect. This effect should not be underestimated as its impact has a significant effect on student learning which is achieved through internal process, which include high expectations for student achievement, the school's mission and academic learning time, along with the structures within the learning organization (Hallinger & Heck, 1996)

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2001) states that principals throughout the country receive many specific recommendations about how to be effective in their leadership roles and have been encouraged to embrace standards for what they know and should be able to do to promote effective learning communities on their campuses (as cited in DuFour et al., 2008, p. 306). The NAESP (2008) lists the following elements all principals should establish to support the work of learning communities. This includes leading their schools in a way where student learning and adult learning is the main focus, accepting only the highest standard for the academic and social development of all students and adults, demanding instruction that ensures higher levels of learning for all students based on an agreed level of standard, creating a culture of continuous learning, using multiple sources of data to evaluate student learning and determine areas where instructional improvement is necessary.

Other researchers have published several strategies and recommendations for principals to implement to create collaborative leadership and PLCs. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2004) presents nine strategies and thirty principles when they published "Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform". In this article, they establish three Core Areas needed for change:

- Core Area 1: Developing Components for Change - Collaboration, Professional Learning Communities and the Effective Use of Data

- Core Area 2: Personalization of the School Culture

- Core Area 3: Personalizing Learning through the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Additionally, Kathleen Cotton (2003) offered twenty-five leadership behaviors that all principals should follow that affect instruction and student learning. Some of these behaviors include teachers discussing instructional issues, continuous support of high levels of learning, establishing a vision and goals, high expectations for student learning, establishing a safe and orderly learning environment, and fostering self-confidence in students. Then in 2005, Robert Marzano, Timothy Wathers and Brian McNulty identified twenty-three different responsibilities that were very similar to Cotton's behaviors that all school leaders should fulfill.

Teacher Beliefs of Leadership Practices

It is important that principals work closely with the teachers in their buildings to provide the most effective instructional strategies to ensure learning at high levels. Because of this, it is critical that principals understand how their specific leadership behaviors and the teacher beliefs of the practices support or inhibit the development of

PLCs. The most effective principals know how to develop and sustain strong relationships and promote positive interactions with their staff and their community. In addition, the best leaders are also effective at creating structures in their schools that promote a strong sense of cultural and social standards (Leech & Fulton, 2002). "Leadership is no longer thought of as contingent upon situations: leadership styles are always dependent on a concept defined by personal relationships" (Leech & Fulton, 2002, p. 6).

Alfred Otara (2011) studied beliefs in the workplace and found that in organizations the beliefs that employees have shape the culture, climate, and overall effectiveness of the entire environment. Otara (2011) states that it is critical for leaders to understand that beliefs are often times portrayed through communication, an important tool in leadership. What sets great leaders apart is their ability to handle beliefs and management issues. One of the things that changes almost immediately when someone takes over as principal is the way others see them (Daresh, 2006). What people see in a particular leadership style is how they perceive that leader and then in turn it becomes their reality (Otara, 2011).

The work of Lord and Maher (1994) provide two theories in the development of beliefs. The first theory stems from matching certain behaviors to those that might be stored in a person's long-term memory. The perception will begin to develop with someone if the behavior of the leader is similar to that of a corresponding memory. The second theory is derived from an inferential process. This is where a teacher recognizes the potential for a particular type of leadership behavior and the perceived level of influence the principal may or may not have over the results (Lord & Maher, 1994)

An important piece in the development of PLCs is the relationship between the stakeholders and their ability to effectively collaborate at a high level to insure student achievement and school improvement (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003). Hord (1997) defines the PLC as the structures and systems where teachers and staff evaluate data and collaborate in order to direct their efforts towards improved student learning. Leadership behaviors play a significant role in the development of PLCs and today's leaders must incorporate skills that involve and support all members of the community in order to facilitate reaching the goals developed by the organization (DuFour et al., 1998).

Researchers Leithwood and Jantzi (1996) studied the various aspects of teachers' beliefs of leadership behaviors. They found that "leaders who are viewed as doing good work to improve the school are likely the most powerful strategy in developing a positive perception of their leadership" (p. 531). They further explain that the development of a vision, goals, procedures, programs, instructional policies, and structures for involving all stakeholders in decision making on campus are the strongest variables that determine the perceptions that teachers develop regarding their principal (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1996).

As people develop perceptions they also design mental maps in regards to how to behave or act in certain situations. Anderson (1997) espoused that people tend to be designers of action. They design action in order to achieve the desired outcomes and also to monitor and learn how the effectiveness of their actions. Anderson's (1997) studies were based on the work of Argyris and Achon (1974) who asserted that people hold specific maps in their heads. They plan how they want to implement their actions based on the desired outcomes. Argyris and Achon (1974) state that most people are not truly aware of the theories they use to take action. According to Argyris and Achon (1974),

people hold two basic theory actions. First, there is a theory consistent with what people say they will do, and, secondly, a theory consistent with what they actually do. The theories in action determine all deliberate human behavior (Anderson, 1997). Additionally, they suggest that the two theories of action include the:

- Espoused Theory – the values and world view that people base their behaviors on. These are the actions someone would give when asked how they would behave in certain situations.

- Theory-in-use – the values and world view which is typically implied by their behavior. These are the maps they use to take action. This theory contains assumptions about the environment, themselves and others they interact with. (Argyris, 1980)

Effective leaders understand how teachers develop perceptions and mental maps about how to act and respond in situations. Their leadership practices become extremely critical as they must answer the call to increased accountability standards and the moral obligation they have to continuously improve student learning (Leech & Fulton, 2002). Therefore, it is critical for leaders to understand the importance of how their particular leadership style impacts the effective implementation of professional learning communities. To this end, Sergiovanni (1984) explains that the vast amount of research on effective schools has found that effective leadership behaviors are critical to the success of school restructuring and sustaining collaborative cultures and structures to ensure student learning. The five forces that Sergiovanni (1984) believes make the difference are technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural. Additionally, he

explains that leaders should utilize elements from cultural, transformational, and participatory leadership styles (Sergiovanni, 1984).

Leadership should not be thought of as being contingent on specific situations (Leech & Fulton, 2002). Effective leadership practices are always an integral part of the personal relationships developed between the leader and the followers (Leech & Fulton, 2002). Through the research of Kouzes and Posner (2012), five leadership behaviors were identified as being essential to promote success in organizations. These include challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Principal Leadership Practices

Reeves (2002) asserted, "The first and most important influence exerted by a leader is on his or her own behavior" (p. 71). Creating a culture in schools that can implement and sustain the tenets of a professional learning community is challenging for principals. It is imperative that principals understand all aspects of PLCs and the leadership behaviors they exhibit that will foster or inhibit development. Reeves (2002) goes on to suggest, "Leaders in schools have the most direct impact on the model they establish in building management, relationship building, and providing professional development" (p. 71). Leadership is not only a function of what the principal knows and does; it is the function of the way they interact with others within particular contexts and situations (Hill, 2009). Principals continue to play a critical role in the development and sustainability of PLCs by forging the conditions and creating an environment that foster learning communities in schools (Louis & Others, 1996). Principals at every level receive recommendations about leadership behaviors and have been urged to embrace

specific styles for what they know and should be able to do to lead PLCs (DuFour et al., 2008). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2008) established the following principles to follow which included leading schools so that student and adult learning is the focus, setting high expectations for all students and for adult performance, demanding that instruction be based on the standards, creating a culture of continuous learning for students and adults that are tied to established goals, using multiple sources of data to determine learning and identify areas of needed improvement and engaging the community to participate in the learning and shared responsibility for student success (DuFour et al., 2008).

In *Breaking Ranks II* (2004), high school principals received 80 recommendations for leading schools and then in 2004 *Breaking Ranks II* came out. This publication suggested 31 recommendations for principals and 7 cornerstone strategies to address continuous learning in schools. In 2003, Kathleen Cotton established 25 principal behaviors that directly impacted student learning and achievement. Timothy Kanold (2011) outlined five disciplines of school leadership that included the disciplines of vision and values, accountability and celebration, service and sharing, reflection and balance, and inspiration and influence.

As an effective PLC leader, a principal not only leads well but also becomes a reflective practitioner and clearly articulates their values and beliefs (Kanold, 2011). Principals must know why they think the way they do and have a rationale for actions and decision-making. Highly effective principals make decisions and act in ways that are consistent with a series of intentional disciplines that transform their leadership and allow

them to foster and sustain effective PLCs that are committed to a culture of collaboration and student learning (Kanold, 2011).

Thomas Sergiovanni (1984) studied leadership behaviors and determined that excellent leadership is a moral craft which includes several aspects. He states that each of the aspects has a unique contribution to the schools' competence and excellence (Sergiovanni, 1984). His leadership theory includes forces that are available to administrators and teachers as they influence the daily operations of a campus. He identifies the five leadership forces as:

- Technical – the solid management techniques. Leaders who are good at this are effective organizers of time and optimize every minute of the school day.

- Human – the development of relationships. The leader who exhibits this type of force has exceptional human relationship developing skills and provides support, growth opportunities, and encouragement.

- Educational – the high level of instructional knowledge. The educational leader has strong instructional skills and is considered an expert at professional development. This type of leader can quickly and effectively determine areas of instructional weakness and can provide support to help teachers strengthen their instructional practice.

- Symbolic – signals by modeling goals and behaviors what is important and valued. This type of leader is visible in the building, visits with students, spends time in classrooms, and facilitates a unified vision through their works and actions.

- Cultural – building a unique climate on campus. The cultural leader is nurturing and is engaged in building a legacy. This type of leader believes in developing and maintaining traditions, tells stories, and socializes new members into the organization. They are good at bonding teachers, students, and parents into the beliefs and visions of the school. (Sergiovanni, 1984)

In 1983, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, authors of *The Leadership Challenge*, began their research to determine what leadership styles contributed to successful organizations. They interviewed thousands of people and analyzed many organizations to outline similar characteristics of the best leadership and narrowed it down into five leadership behaviors that included Modeling the Way, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart. Figure 2.1 illustrates Kouzes and Posner's Five Leadership Practices (2012).

Figure 2.1

Leadership Practices of Kouzes and Posner
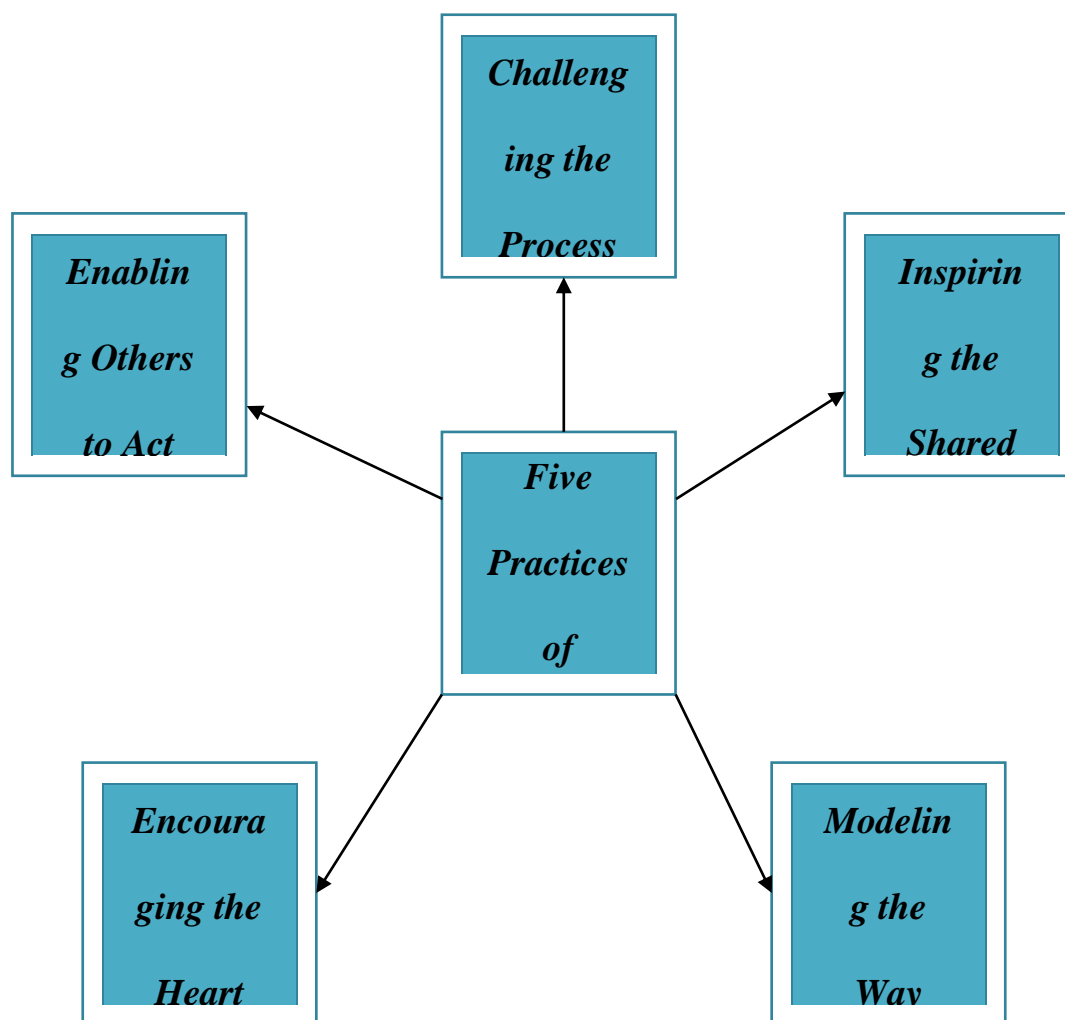
Model the Way. Effective leaders model the behavior that they expect from others. They set examples for others to follow by the way they allocate their time, the language they speak to recognize exceptional efforts, and the tools they choose to measure effectiveness (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). Exemplary leaders know and understand that to gain commitment from their staff and achieve the highest levels, they must model the behavior they expect of other members of the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). To effectively Model the Way, leaders "must first be clear about their own guiding principles" (Kouzes & Posner, 2014 p. 16). They must also be clear about their own core values (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). As a leader, they must also affirm the shared values by aligning actions in order to demonstrate the deep commitment they hold to their own beliefs (Kouzes & Posner, 2014).

Kanold (2011) argues, "The leaders' actions and responses become what people really remember about the leader" (p. 5). The actions truly determine what others will say about the leader when they leave the room. Kouzes and Posner (2012) explain that there are two parts to the practice of modeling the way. In order to model effectively, principals must first clarify their values by clearly expressing their values to everyone. They must believe in their values and clearly represent their vision and goals for the school. The second part includes setting the example by their words and deeds, which must be consistent through their daily actions that show the deep commitment to their beliefs (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). "The best leaders recognize that leadership requires more than just having great intentions; it demands action orientation and determination to plan for purposeful action" (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 198).

Inspire a Shared Vision. Great leaders "Inspire a Shared Vision by envisioning the future and enlisting others in a common vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 3). Inspiring a shared vision like modeling the way is also a two part practice. First, the leader must have a vision of the future by being able to imagine and believe in a great vision for the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Great leaders are very good at imagining a future that may not currently exist (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Kanold (2001) explain that a compelling vision is an expression of the principles a leader is so passionate about that they will defend them and lead others in the organization to them as well. These principles allow leaders to lead with energy, enthusiasm, and consistency (Kouzes & Posner, 2011).

The second part of the two-part practice includes enlisting others in a common vision. In order to do this, effective leaders convince people in the organization that their needs and best interests are at heart. Anyone can write a vision for an organization that outlines a better future, but it requires an effective leader to develop a shared vision that truly addresses the hopes and desires of the stakeholders. Developing a vision requires a great deal of collaboration which involves all stakeholders (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Kanold (2011) adds that a vision of an uplifting future will never stick if the leader is the only person who owns the vision. All stakeholders in the organization must have a voice in the development of the vision by trusting and utilizing the knowledge, experience, and skills of the stakeholders.

Challenge the Process. Kouzes and Posner (2012) state that great leaders are also great learners and "challenge is the crucible for greatness" (p. 6). Great leaders challenge the process and continuously search for more innovative ways to improve and

experiment in their practice. They think outside the box and take risks in order to make improvements in the organization. Great leaders venture out. Leaders do not sit idly by and wait for others to do the work. They are "pioneers, willing to step out into the unknown" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 20).

Michael Fullan (2014) explains that great leaders question practices, challenge the status quo, and explore new and innovative strategies. Members of professional learning communities are action oriented. They are committed to continuous improvement and turn innovative ideas into reality (DuFour et al., 2008). The goal of the school is not simply learning a new strategy but to create systems that foster conditions for continuous learning for all students. This also creates environments that embrace creativity and are viewed by teachers as the way of doing business. This type of environment also allows all stakeholders to be involved in the process instead of just the leader. This environment becomes the responsibility of everyone in the organization (DuFour et al., 2008).

Enable Others to Act. The fourth leadership behavior studied by Kouzes and Posner (2012) is to Enable Others to Act. This requires developing strong relationships and solid trust. Kouzes and Posner (2011) suggest, "Without trust and confidence, people do not take risks. Without risks, there is no change" (p. 6). It also requires competence and confidence as well as group collaboration and accountability. Members of an organization will not do their best if they feel alienated or weak. Great leaders foster shared leadership and make members of the organization feel stronger. When this occurs, self-determination increases and people are more likely to give it their all (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

The PLC leadership culture encourages all members to be responsible and act as one community. The authority in a PLC is embedded in the vision of the organization and "individuals hold themselves accountable – responding from within, to become self-managing and self-aware" (Kanold, 2011, p. 93). It is important for people to feel empowered and have a leader who is committed to help them be successful. No single person has the knowledge, skills, experience, or expertise to fulfill all the leadership responsibilities of a campus principal. Effective leaders will not attempt to do it alone. They will foster shared leadership and focus on enabling people throughout the organization to take the lead (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Encourage the Heart. "Exemplary leaders bring others to life…These leaders dramatically improve others' performance because they care deeply for them" (Kouzes & Posner, 2011 p. 276). Everyone wants to feel they are a contributor to the organization and that they matter. The best educational leaders love what they do. They are typically more prone to think of their work as a calling instead of a job (DuFour, 2010).

According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), "people need emotional fuel to replenish their sprits" (p. 275). The leader's job is to recognize great work; but in order to do this it is important to expect the very best from all members of the organization. Extraordinary leaders elicit high performance because they believe in the abilities of the people who work in the organization. They tend to bring others to life because they feel their leader genuinely cares for their wellbeing. People tend to respond positively when leaders are more "nurturing, supportive, and encouraging" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012 p. 276).

Effective leaders also give effective feedback and personalized recognition. Recognition should not be predictive, impersonal, or a one-size-fits-all approach (Kouzes

& Posner, 2012). DuFour et al. (2008) explain that it is not necessarily the recognition of "small victories but rather recognition of the victories and the people behind the work that sustain the change momentum" (p. 426). "Recognition should also be personalized or it can be quickly discounted and even forgotten" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 285). A sense of competence and significance represent vital human longings and those who want to embark on the PLC journey are encouraged to embed the practice of public recognition into their practice. This not only addresses the needs of the individuals in the organization but goes a long way to sustain the journey (DuFour et al., 2008).

Summary

DuFour and Fullan (2013) state, "PLCs can play a central role in dramatically improving the overall performance of schools, the engagement of students, and the sense of efficacy and job satisfaction of educators" (p. 4). The review of literature provided insight into the historic look at learning communities before they were introduced into our schools and after. It also illustrated the history of school reform, the increased expectations for accountability in schools, and the heightened urgency of school leaders to seek alternative ways to work in schools (Hipp & Huffman, 2010).

The review of literature also highlighted the importance of strong leadership in today's schools. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) explain that the principal is arguably the most important person affecting the character and the consequence of teachers in PLCs. Principals truly drive the make-up of the culture "intentionally or not" (p. 80). One of the most consistent findings in the research is the role the principal plays in implementing the PLC process in schools (DuFour et al., 2010). Kouzes and Posner (2012) contend that effective leaders know how to build a community of shared values. People have a deep

desire to make a difference. They want to know that they have done something on this

earth. Leaders must be able to express their enthusiasm for the vision and be able to

inspire others to be enthusiastic about where the organization is going on (Kouzes &

Posner, 2012).

Finally, the literature indicates that educators must be committed to work in a

collaborative culture in order to create change in schools and improve student learning

(DuFour et al., 2008). Collaboration and the ability to engage in collaborative dialog is

the key to surviving in today's public schools (Schlechty, 2005). Educators must be

committed to work collaboratively on an ongoing basis to improve student learning and

leaders must be willing to foster the growth to ensure it happens (DuFour et al., 2010).

There have been many models of implementation of PLCs through the years and

they all contain similar threads. Much of the foundation drew from the earlier works of

researchers such as Senge (1994) and Rosenholtz (1991) who studied learning

organizations. The works of DuFour and Fullan (2013), Hord (2012), Little (2006), Hipp

and Huffman (2010), and Hargreaves (2000) began to apply the concepts in schools

where teachers were encouraged to collaborate instead of teaching isolation. There were

also similar threads within their research which included shared visions, goals,

collaboration and leadership.

There is a great deal of research in the literature surrounding the implementation

of PLCs but most of it has been centered around case studies and qualitative research

(Curry, 2010). The literature was very positive but most of it was focused on one or two

components of PLCs (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2004). After reading

the literature about the implementation of PLCs and determining that most of the research

was based on case studies, the need for a quantitative study became evident (Vescio,

Ross, & Adams, 2007). Through a quantitative study, this dissertation will attempt to

determine the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices and the

implementation of PLCs.

Chapter 3

Methodology

DuFour (2008) states that educators who cultivate PLCs will "help to develop a shared sense of what the school or district might become, a clear and compelling future that is unarguably superior to the status quo" (p. 110). Vescio et.al (2007) point to a great deal of research based on qualitative studies that included observations, interviews and case studies. Vescio et al. (2007) state that further studies should draw from other methodologies to document the development of PLCs and their impact on teaching and learning. Additionally, Hord (2008) expresses the need for more quantitative research to determine how teachers and principals are implementing the dimensions of PLCs.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to describe the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Furthermore, this study described the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools. Both instruments were administered in eight schools (six elementary, one K-6, and one intermediate) in the same school district.

For purposes of this quantitative study, two survey instruments were used. Both instruments were sent to eight elementary and intermediate schools in the same school district. The first instrument was the Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R) developed by Oliver, Hipp, and Huffman, based on Shirley Hord's study of the five dimensions of a Professional Learning Community (2014). This instrument used a four point Likert scale to measure teachers' beliefs of each dimension

of a PLC. These dimensions included Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, and Supportive Conditions. The PLCA-R was sent electronically to eight campuses and targeted all teachers on each campus. Approximately two hundred surveys were completed and returned.

The second instrument used in this study was Kouzes and Posner's (2013) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). It was delivered through interoffice mail to the aforementioned participants. Like the PLCA-R, the LPI utilized a Likert scale to measure the teacher's beliefs' of their principals' leadership practices to assess how teachers perceived the effectiveness of their leadership and commitment. The five practices included Model the Way, Share and Inspire a Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

The results of both surveys were analyzed and described utilizing a descriptive statistical analysis model. The findings from this analysis described the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practice in addition to their beliefs of the implementation of the dimensions of a PLC. This design revealed an interpretation of the data, as well as, patterns or trends that might have emerged. The value and rationale for this particular method allowed the researcher to summarize the results, describe the distribution, and present the frequencies of the data. This enabled the researcher to describe the various perspectives of the teacher's beliefs of leadership practices and the implementation of the dimension of a PLC.

Setting

This study will specifically examine the implementation of PLCs in one large suburban school district in southeast Texas where the work began about four years ago.

The implementation began as a grass roots effort and was led by a small group of principals and an assistant superintendent in the district. The professional development has been provided by principals, for other principals and teachers, and professional speakers knowledgeable of PLCs and the work required to drive the implementation process. The professional development consisted of several one day overviews of the PLC process. Each overview was facilitated by a professional presenter who was knowledgeable of PLCs. All principals in the district were invited to attend at least one overview along with three to four additional people from the campus, which could include members from their leadership teams and teachers. All campuses in the district chose to attend one of the offered overviews.

The district then followed up with contracting further professional development by offering three day academies. Each academy provided professional development opportunities for twelve campuses. Each campus was represented by at least one administrator and five others, which could include assistant principals, counselors, and teachers. At the time of the study, the district has offered three academies and almost all elementary and intermediate campuses have attended. The academies give campus teams and opportunity to deepen their understanding of the PLC process and determine what additional needs they have to help each team function at higher levels.

More than half of the campuses in the district have contracted professional PLC presenters to come to their schools to help the entire faculty understand more about how to do this work. In addition, there have been several smaller focused presentations offered at the central office and on individual campuses. Many principals, assistant principals, and teachers in the district have also attended a three-day institute to learn

more about professional learning communities. District administration has been very supportive of the effort and has spent time and money to support the framework for district wide implementation.

 The district currently encompasses approximately 364 square miles and includes 54 campuses, consisting of 5 high schools, 7 junior high schools, 9 intermediate schools, 32 elementary schools, and 1 alternative education campus. The population of the district is approximately 56,000 students with 3,700 teachers, and 240 administrators. This is a fast growing district, which adds approximately 1,800 students each year.

Six elementary, one K-6, and one intermediate campus have been selected to participate in the study. Johnson and Christensen (2004) explains that purpose sampling can serve the same purpose as random sampling but that purpose sampling allows the researcher to develop specific criteria for potential participants. In this case, the campuses selected were representative of all campuses throughout this district, which included campuses from all areas of the district. This choice of schools improved the ability to generalize the results to a larger population. The campuses have teachers with various levels of experience within and outside the school district. The selection process for this study was purposeful in order to select leadership and campuses that have been working towards full PLC implementation. The schools selected to participate in the study have been implementing the dimensions of PLCs for at least three years. Additionally, all principals at each of these campuses have been leading the PLC process for the past three years.

Although all schools are at various stages of development, they are all working under the defined three big ideas of a PLC. Those ideas include ensuring high levels of

learning for all students, working collaboratively towards a culture of interdependence and focusing on results to intervene and fuel continuous improvement (DuFour et al., 2008). The demographic data were obtained from the district website and included the following characteristics (a) campus type, (b) student population, (c) percentage of economically disadvantaged students, (d) percentage of students who are at-risk, (e) number of teachers (f) years of teaching experience and years teaching in the district, and (g) gender (Curry, 2010). Table 3.3 illustrates the various attributes of each campus participating in the study.

Table 3.1

Attributes of Campuses Participating in the Study

School	Campus Type	Economically Disadvantaged	At Risk	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Average Years of Experience	Average Years with the District	Male	Female
1	Elementary	86%	68%	746	45	7.2	4.1	5	40
2	Elementary	45%	40%	636	37	12	8	1	36
3	K-6	6.4%	13%	699	44	13	9	1	43
4	Elementary	75%	54%	852	52	9	6	4	48
5	Elementary	60%	43%	638	36	11	10	3	33
6	Elementary	86%	60%	616	39	10	6	2	37
7	Elementary	20%	20%	791	42	6	3	2	40
8	Intermediate	35%	21%	1,100	62	12	7	9	53

Subjects

The subjects participating in this study include teachers of a large school district in southeast Texas. Emails were sent out to the principals at each of eight schools selected to participate in the study. The email described the purpose of the study and the surveys each teacher would be asked to complete. Each principal responded to the email indicating they would like to participate. All teachers on each campus were asked to participate in the study, which consisted of two surveys to be completed. One survey was sent to them through the school district email. The second survey is paper based was sent to each campus through interoffice mail. There were a total of eight campuses included in this study, which included six elementary schools, one K-6, and one intermediate school. The principals in the campuses have been leading these schools for four or more

years. The LPI survey was paper-based and was sent to the campuses through inter-office mail.

Research Questions

Two research questions were posed for this study.

1. What are the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?

2. What are the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?

Additionally, the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2013) and the Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R) developed by Oliver et al., (2014) provided the supplementary statements that addressed both research questions. According to Kouzes and Posner (2013), the statements in the LPI address five common exemplary leadership practices that include Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. The Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R), which was developed by Oliver et al. based on Shirley Hord's study of the five dimensions of a Professional Learning Community (2014), provided the supplementary statements that address the second research question posed in this study. According to Oliver et al. (2014), the statements address six dimension of a PLC, which include Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, and Supportive Conditions.

The LPI, which was completed by teachers in eight elementary and intermediate schools, is intended to answer the following question:

What are the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?

Specifically, the teachers rated their principals' leadership practices on the LPI with respect to the frequency they observed particular behaviors related to each practice. Teachers rated each behavior by selecting from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree or Strongly Agree. The following practices and corresponding behaviors are as follows.

Model the Way Practice

- Sets a personal example of what he/she expects of others.

- Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.

- Follows through on the promises and commitments he/she makes.

- Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people's performance.

- Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.

- Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership.

Inspire a Shared Vision Practice

- Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.

- Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like.

- Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future.

- Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.

- Paints the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish.

- Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work

Challenge the Process Practice

- Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities.

- Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.

- Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.

- Asks "What can we learn?" when things don't go as expected.

- Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.

- Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

- Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

Enable Others to Act Practice

- Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with.

- Actively listens to diverse points of view.

- Treats others with dignity and respect.

- Supports the decisions that people make on their own.

- Gives people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.

- Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

Encourage the Heart Practice

- Praises people for a job well done.

- Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities.

- Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects.

- Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared values.

- Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments.

- Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.

The PLCA-R, which was completed by teachers in eight elementary and intermediate schools is intended to answer the following question:

What are the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?

Specifically, the teachers rated the following statements in the PLCA-R with respect to the level of evidence within their own PLCs. Teachers selected from ten responses that ranged from Almost Never to Almost Always to rate each statements related to their belief of the implementation of each dimension of their PLC. The dimensions and corresponding statements to each that were included on the PLCA-R are as follows.

Shared and Supportive Leadership Dimension

- Staff members are consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.

- The principal incorporates advice from staff members to make decisions.

- Staff members have accessibility to key information.

- The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.

- Opportunities are provided for staff members to initiate change.

- The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.

- The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.

- Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members.

- Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.

- Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.

- Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning.

Shared Values and Vision Dimension

- A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.

- Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.

- Staff members share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning.

- Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.

- A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.

- School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.

- Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.

- Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.

- Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision.

Collective Learning and Application Dimension

- Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.

- Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.

- Staff members plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.

- A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.

- Staff members engage in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.

- Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.

- School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning.

- Staff members collaboratively analyze multiple sources of data to assess the effectiveness of instructional practices.

- Staff members collaboratively analyze student work to improve teaching and learning.

Shared Personal Practice Dimension

- Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers and offer encouragement.

- Staff members provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices.

- Staff members informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.

- Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices.

- Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.

- Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.

- Staff members regularly share student work to guide overall school improvement.

Supportive Conditions – Relationships Dimension

- Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.

- A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.

- Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.

- School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.

- Relationships among staff members support hones and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning.

Supportive Conditions – Structures Dimension

- Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.

- The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.

- Fiscal resources are available for professional development.

- Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.

- Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.

- The school facility is clean, attractive, and inviting.

- The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.

- Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff members.

- Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members.

- Data are organized and made available to provide easy access to staff members.

Ethical Considerations

When people think of ethics in research, they typically think of morals or rules that distinguish the difference between right and wrong (Resnik, 2011). The ethical considerations that pertain to this quantitative study will require the researcher to communicate the purpose of the study, obtain permission from participants to complete the surveys, keep participants' names anonymous, avoid disruption of the educational environment, and avoid any type of deceptive practices (Caruth, 2013). Researchers must consider ethical issues that may develop in the course of conducting their research studies. Education is aimed at the improvement of people and our society (Creswell, 2014).

In addition to considering ethical issues involved in the research, the following criteria were addressed in preparation for the study:

- Purpose and significance of the study

- Research design

- Criteria

- Participants

- Procedures

- Data analysis

- Potential risks and benefits

- Privacy and confidentiality

- Informed consent

Procedures

This study began by obtaining permission from the school district to gather information through a quantitative approach utilizing the LPI and the PLCA-R. The procedures that were outlined on the school district website were followed. The researcher gained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the University of Houston's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. A copy of the letter is included in Appendix C.

Each principal at the eight campuses selected to participate was contacted by email explaining the purpose of the study, asking permission for their teachers to participate in the study, and explaining the format of each survey. Each teacher was then contacted to explain the purpose of the study and how the data was to be collected. The researcher explained that they would be asked to complete two surveys which included the LPI and the PLCA-R.

The LPI was paper-based and sent to the campuses through interoffice mail. Each copy of the survey included the purpose of the study in addition to directions about how to complete it. Each principal was asked to select a representative to facilitate the completion of the surveys during their next scheduled faculty meeting. Surveys were collected by the representative and then the researcher was contacted.

The PLCA-R was Internet-based and was sent to each teacher through district email for completion. Teachers were given another explanation in regards to the purpose of the study in addition to directions about completing the survey. All results were sent back to the researcher electronically.

Research Design

This is a quantitative study where the results of two survey instruments were analyzed with a descriptive statistical analysis to describe the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices in addition to their beliefs of the six dimensions of their Professional Learning Community. This design revealed an interpretation of the data, as well as, patterns or trends that emerged. The value and rationale for this particular method allowed the researcher to summarize the results, describe the distribution, and present the frequencies of the data. This enabled a comparison of the various perspectives of the teacher's beliefs of leadership practices and the implementation of the dimension of a Professional Learning Community ("Descriptive and Inferential Statistics," 2013).

Instruments

Kouzes and Posner (2014) explain the willingness to seek feedback and the ability to engage in new behaviors based on the resulting information have shown to lead to

more effective leadership practices. It is the responsibility of the leader to determine what type of impact their practices have on the effects of other people's performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). They also explain that the statistical analysis revealed that the leader's practice does explain the majority of factors related to loyalty, commitment, and pride more than any other single variable

Two instruments were used for this quantitative study. The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) and the Professional Learning Communities Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R) (Oliver et al., 2014) were sent to eight elementary and intermediate schools in the same school district. Both instruments were selected because they utilize a Likert scale format to measure the level of agreement by all participants. The Likert scale is a summated rating scale that allows participants to choose from multiple responses to a question, rather than just yes or no (Curry, 2010). The Likert scale helps the research determine a deeper understanding of the responses and makes better distinctions among the answers (Curry, 2010). According to Johnson and Christiansen (2004), the Likert scale is also very effective in measuring some complex topics such as beliefs of leadership practices and the implementation of a PLC.

The first instrument was the PLCA-R (Oliver et al., 2014). This instrument is measures a staffs' perception of the development of a Professional Learning Community as it relates to the six dimensions and its related attributes. The questionnaire consists of 40 statements about the practices that can and do occur in schools. Participants respond to the statements using a 4-point Likert scale to determine the degree of which they agree or disagree with each statement along the following six dimensions:

- Shared and Supportive Leadership

- Shared Values and Vision

- Collective Learning and Application

- Shared Personal Practice

- Supportive Conditions – Relationships

- Supportive Conditions – Structures (Oliver et al., 2014)

The PLCA-R was sent electronically to teachers at eight campuses in the district. These were sent through district email which allowed for approximately 200 surveys to be utilized in the study.

The second instrument that was used in this study was the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). This instrument included questions for participants to complete, which measured their beliefs of the practices of the leader of the organization. In this case, teachers at eight campuses utilized the survey to rate the leadership practices of their principal according to a ten- point Likert scale. This instrument was developed through a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research and studies. Additionally, many in-depth interviews and case studies were conducted, which generated a conceptual framework of best leadership practices. The five practices that the LPI measures include:

- Model the Way

- Inspire a Shared Vision

- Challenge the Process

- Enable Others to Act

- Encourage the Heart

Each practice is measured by six response statements, for a total of thirty practice statements, on a ten-point Likert scale (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). These statements went through several psychometric processes and were then created and administered to several managers across a variety of organizations and demographic backgrounds across the U.S. The LPI was paper based and sent through inter-district mail to the same eight campuses in the aforementioned paragraph. These were distributed to all teachers on each campus, which provided approximately 200 additional surveys to be utilized in the study. The LPI measures the teachers' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices, which include the effectiveness of their leadership and commitment.

The researcher developed a spreadsheet which included all of the statements teachers rated from the LPI practices; Model the Way, Challenge the Process, Inspire a Shared Vision, Lead with Heart, and Enable Others to Act with regards to how they were rated; Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Disagree. The behaviors included in the survey instrument were mixed; therefore they were sorted and grouped on the spreadsheet according to the practice they were related to. Each response for all behaviors were then totaled and averaged. The researcher then took all averages for each behavior within the practice to determine the total average for Almost Never, Rarely, Seldom, Once in a While, Occasionally, Sometimes, Fairly Often, Usually, Very Frequently, or Almost Always. Finally, the researcher found the sum of Very Frequently and Almost Always and used this percentage to compare teachers' beliefs in this study.

The researcher then completed the same process for the results of the PLCA-R. All statements were group according to dimensions; Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, Supportive

Conditions – Relationships, Supportive Conditions – Structures with regards to how

teachers believed they reflected the implementation of their own PLC. Teachers selected

from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree to rate the implementation

of their PLC. Each statement was totaled and averaged with regards to each response to

determine totals for each statement and responses. Finally, the statements were then

totaled and averaged to determine a percentage for each dimension. The total

percentages for Agree and Strongly Agree were used to compare teachers' beliefs in this

study.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability studies of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) span over a

twenty-five year period. It has been routinely tested through an analysis of internal

reliability and all of the practices the instrument measures have consistently shown strong

internal reliability as measured by Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (Morl, Labate, &

Sussman, n.d.) with all scales above the .75 level (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). The items

included in the survey have proven to be highly correlated with each scale and the retests

have proven to be highly reliable as well (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). The validity of the

LPI-Self and the Observer was empirically analyzed to determine how it measured the

construct of effective leadership. In order to determine stronger correlations, only the

LPI-Observer was used to determine correlations with other measures of the leadership

construct (Hill, 2009). Tests of differences between leaders utilizing the LPI-Self form

and their employees using the LPI-Observer noted little to no difference at the .001

probability level between the practices of Challenging the Process and Modeling the

Way. There were some statistical differences noted between the two groups on Inspiring

a Shared Vision, Enabling and Encouraging the Heart; however, it was determined to be of little significance. The only notable difference was that leaders tended to view themselves as engaging a little less in Inspiring a Shared Vision and Encouraging the Heart and in Enabling Others to Act than their employees viewed them (Lani, 2014).

Additionally, the results of the studies also have a high predictive validity. The results make sense to people and have proven over time to be predictors of high-performing and low-performing leaders. The LPI surveys must meet rigorous standards for psychometric testing and because of its strong properties and reliability studies many organizations trust the results to help them gain a better understanding about what it takes to become an effective leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). The survey has been utilized within numerous schools across the country and educators have found the results to be very useful when trying to determine the strength of the practices within the tenets of a PLC (Oliver et al., 2014). Similarly to the LPI, the internal consistency of the PLCA-R has been established using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient (Morl et al., 2014). The results have shown all scales to be at or above .82 at the lowest and the highest at .97. The three measures showing the highest reliability include Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, and Collective Learning and Application. The lowest reliabilities were exhibited in Shared Personal Practice and Supportive Conditions; however, even these were measured above .82. Furthermore, this tool has gone through construct validity and has been found to yield satisfactory consistency for internal reliability (Oliver et al., 2014).

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine how teachers in various schools perceive their principal's leadership practices and their beliefs of the implementation of six dimensions of a Professional Learning Community. This study was conducted on eight elementary and intermediate campuses in a large school district south Texas. The teachers on all eight campuses involved in the study volunteered to participate and all teachers on the perspective campuses were be asked to complete the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2013), which measures the teachers beliefs of the practices of their principals and the PLCA-R (Oliver et al., 2014), which measures the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC. The results of the surveys were utilized to complete a descriptive statistical analysis to describe the teacher's beliefs of the leadership practices of their principals as measured by the LPI and the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC as measured by the PLCA-R. Permission was obtained by the school district for this study and the standards of the IRB were followed. All participants identifying information were removed in order for them to remain anonymous.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to describe the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Furthermore, this study described the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014). Descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, of teacher responses for the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) were calculated for the entire set of schools. The frequencies and percentages will be reported for each leadership practice measured by the LPI for the entire set of schools. Two research questions were posed for this study.

1. What are the teachers' beliefs their of principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?

2. What are the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (PLCA-R), (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?

In this study, the teachers' beliefs of principal leadership practices were measured using two surveys: the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revisited (PLCA-R). The LPI measures the teacher' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices which included Model the Way, Share and

Inspire a Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.
Each practice was defined by six behaviors presented along a ten-point Likert scale
continuum that measures the frequency the leader engaged in the behavior described from
Almost Never to Almost Always. Although ten responses were available for teachers to
choose from, not every response was selected for each practice. Only responses selected
will be reflected in the findings.

The second instrument used in the study was the PLCA-R which measured the
teacher's beliefs of the implementation of their professional learning community. The
PLCA-R measures staff beliefs of school practices related to six dimensions of a PLC and
related attributes. The dimensions include Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared
Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, Supportive
Conditions-Relationships, and Supportive Conditions-Structures.   Each dimension is
defined by statements about practices that occur in a school. Teachers used a four-point
Likert scale to rate the level of which they agree or disagree with the statements.

Likert-scale responses are ordinal and have and implied order to the response
choices. The results from each leadership practice listed on the LPI yielded nine
responses from Almost Never to Almost Always. The results from each dimension listed
on the PLCA-R yielded four responses from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. After
entering the survey results, the appropriate analysis in SPSS were performed which
resulted in the data to generate frequency and percentage tables?

Descriptive statistical analysis utilizes numerical data from a sampling of a
population that describes a phenomena that is selected and studied (Hill, 2009).
Descriptive statistics were organized in this chapter to show the patterns and trends that

exist within the schools as a whole after teachers completed the LPI and the PLCA-R. The results from all eight schools were combined to determine an overall analysis of the results and tables were generated utilizing SPSS. The initial analysis of the LPI, which addresses question one will be discussed first and will then be followed by the analysis of the PLCA-R, which address question two of this study.

Research Question 1

The first research question in this study asked, "What are the teachers' beliefs their of principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?" The following data represents the findings:

For the first practice, termed Model the Way, the first behavior was "Sets a Personal Example of What He/She Expects of Others." Almost half, 45.7%, of teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior, another 29.3% indicated that this behavior occurred very frequently and 2.2% responded with Once in a While to Seldom. All of the different responses are provided in Table 1.

Table 4.1

Frequencies and Percentages for "Sets a Personal Example of What He/She Expects of Others"Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	2	1.1
Occasionally	4	2.1
Sometimes	4	2.1
Fairly Often	8	4.3
Usually	27	14.4
Very Frequently	55	29.3
Almost Always	86	45.7

The second behavior in the Model the Way practice was "Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on." For this behavior, 33.5% of teachers responded with Almost Always, 27.1% indicated that this process occurred very frequently and 1.1% responded with Seldom. Readers can view all of the responses to this behavior in Table 2.

Table 4.2

Frequencies and Percentages for "Spends Time and Energy Making Certain that the People He/She Works with Adhere to the Principles and Standards that We Have Agreed On" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	2	1.1
Occasionally	5	2.7
Sometimes	8	4.3
Fairly Often	21	11.2
Usually	35	18.6
Very Frequently	51	27.1
Almost Always	63	33.5

With respect to the third behavior in the Model the Way practice, "Follows Through on the Promises and Commitments He/She Makes," 30.3% of teachers responded with Almost Always, 28.2% indicated that this process occurred very frequently and 3.2% responded with Rarely to Seldom. Readers can view all of the responses to this behavior in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Frequencies and Percentages for "Follows Through on the Promises and Commitments

He/She Makes"Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	1	0.5
Seldom	5	2.7
Once in a While	3	1.6
Occasionally	5	2.7
Sometimes	5	2.7
Fairly Often	26	13.8
Usually	32	17.0
Very Frequently	53	28.2
Almost Always	57	30.3

For the fourth behavior in the Model the Way practice, "Asks for Feedback on How His/Her Actions Might Affect Other People's Performance," responses were more diverse than for other survey behaviors. Almost Always was selected by 16.0%, with Very Frequently selected by another 16.5%. The Once in a While to Almost Never categories occurred 16.9% of the time and 12.2% selected Seldom to Almost Never. Descriptive statistics for these behaviors are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Frequencies and Percentages for "Asks for Feedback on How His/Her Actions Might Affect Other People's Performance" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	7	3.7
Rarely	2	1.1
Seldom	14	7.4
Once in a While	8	4.3
Occasionally	21	11.2
Sometimes	18	9.6
Fairly Often	19	10.1
Usually	38	20.2
Very Frequently	31	16.5
Almost Always	30	16.0

The fifth behavior in the Model the Way practice was "Builds Consensus Around a Common Set of Values for Running Our Organization". For this behavior, 25.0% of teachers responded with Almost Always, with 27.7% indicated that the consensus building process occurred very frequently, and with 29.3% stated that this occurred Usually. Only 1.6% of the teachers responded with Seldom to Rarely. Readers can view all of the responses to this behavior in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Frequencies and Percentages for "Builds Consensus Around a Common Set of Values for

Running Our Organization" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	1	0.5
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	2	1.1
Occasionally	3	1.6
Sometimes	10	5.3
Fairly Often	15	8.0
Usually	55	29.3
Very Frequently	52	27.7
Almost Always	47	25.0

With respect to the last behavior in the Model the Way practice, "Is Clear about

His/Her Philosophy of Leadership," 41.0% of teachers responded with Almost Always,

33.3% indicated that this process occurred very frequently and 2.2% responded Seldom

to Rarely. Descriptive statistics for this behavior are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Frequencies and Percentages for "Is Clear about His/Her Philosophy of Leadership"

Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	2	1.1
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	3	1.6
Sometimes	9	4.8
Fairly Often	13	6.9
Usually	20	10.6
Very Frequently	62	33.0
Almost Always	77	41.0

With respect to the second practice surveyed through the LPI, Inspire a Shared Vision, the first behavior was "Talks about Future Trends that will Influence How Our Work Gets Done." The responses to this behavior were more diverse than others in this practice. 36.2% of teachers responded with Almost Always, another 29.8% indicated that this behavior occurred very frequently and 22.9% responded Usually. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4. 7.

Table 4.7

Frequencies and Percentages for "Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	1	.5
Occasionally	1	.5
Sometimes	4	2.1
Fairly Often	15	8.0
Usually	43	22.9
Very Frequently	56	29.8
Almost Always	68	36.2

The second behavior in the practice, termed Inspire a Shared Vision, was "Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like." For this behavior, 26.6% of the teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior, and 32.4% indicated that this behavior occurred very frequently. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4. 8.

Table 4.8

Frequencies and Percentages for "Describes a Compelling Image of What Our Future Could be Like" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Once in a While	2	1.1
Occasionally	8	4.3
Sometimes	13	6.9
Fairly Often	20	10.6
Usually	34	18.1
Very Frequently	61	32.4
Almost Always	50	26.6

With respect to the third behavior in the Inspire a Shared Vision practice, "Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future," 27.7% of teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior and 31.4% indicated that this behavior occurred very frequently. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4. 9.

Table 4.9

Frequencies and Percentages for "Appeals to Others to Share an Exciting Dream of the Future" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	5	2.7
Once in a While	6	3.2
Occasionally	5	2.7
Sometimes	9	4.8
Fairly Often	22	11.7
Usually	30	16.0
Very Frequently	59	31.4
Almost Always	52	27.7

For the fourth behavior in the Inspire a Shared Vision practice, "Shows others

how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision," 22.3% of

teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior and 29.8% indicated that this

behavior occurred very frequently. All of the different responses are provided in Table

4.10.

Table 4.10

Frequencies and Percentages for "Shows Others How Their Long-Term Interests can be

Realized by Enlisting in a Common Vision" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	5	2.7
Once in a While	1	.5
Occasionally	7	3.7
Sometimes	18	9.6
Fairly Often	20	10.6
Usually	36	19.1
Very Frequently	56	29.8
Almost Always	42	22.3

The fifth behavior in the Inspire a Shared Vision practice, "Paints the big picture of what we aspire to accomplish." For this behavior, close to half, 42.6% of teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior. Another 28.2% indicated that this behavior occurred very frequently. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Frequencies and Percentages for "Paints the Big Picture of What We Aspire to

Accomplish" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Occasionally	2	1.1
Sometimes	5	2.7
Fairly Often	13	6.9
Usually	35	18.6
Very Frequently	53	28.2
Almost Always	80	42.6

With respect to the last behavior in the Inspire a Shared Vision practice, "Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work," more than half, 50.5% of teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior, 29.3% indicated that this behavior occurred very frequently and 1.6% of teachers responded with Rarely to Almost Never. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Frequencies and Percentages for "Speaks With Genuine Conviction About the Higher Meaning and Purpose of Our Work" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Rarely	2	1.1
Occasionally	1	.5
Sometimes	1	.5
Fairly Often	12	6.4
Usually	21	11.2
Very Frequently	55	29.3
Almost Always	95	50.5

The third practice of behaviors, measured through the LPI, constituted Challenge the Process. The first behavior in this practice was "Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities." 35.1% of the teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior and 33% responded with Very Frequently. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Frequencies and Percentages for "Seeks out Challenging Opportunities that Test

His/Her Own Skills and Abilities" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	2	1.1
Occasionally	8	4.3
Sometimes	9	4.8
Fairly Often	18	9.6
Usually	19	10.1
Very Frequently	62	33.0
Almost Always	66	35.1

The second behavior in the Challenge the Process practice was "Seeks Out

Challenging Opportunities That Test His/Her Own Skills and Abilities." The top three

responses were similar with 26.1% of the teachers who responded Almost Always, 28.2%

responded Very Frequently and 27.1% responded that this behavior occurred Usually.

Readers can view all responses to this behavior in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Frequencies and Percentages for "Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways

to do their work" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	3	1.6
Once in a While	1	.5
Occasionally	3	1.6
Sometimes	9	4.8
Fairly Often	19	10.1
Usually	51	27.1
Very Frequently	53	28.2
Almost Always	49	26.1

With respect to the third behavior in the Challenge the Process practice, "Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do," 32.4% of the teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior, and 27.7% indicated that this behavior occurred Very Frequently. Descriptive statistics for these behaviors are presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15

Frequencies and Percentages for "Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Seldom	1	.5
Once in a While	1	.5
Occasionally	7	3.7
Sometimes	15	8.0
Fairly Often	18	9.6
Usually	32	17.0
Very Frequently	52	27.7
Almost Always	61	32.4

For the fourth behavior in the Challenge the Process practice, "Asks 'What can we learn?' when things don't go as expected," responses were a little more diverse with 23.9% of the teachers responded Almost Always, 29.3% indicated that this behavior occurred Very frequently and 18.1% responded with Usually. In addition, 16.0% responded fairly often. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16

Frequencies and Percentages for "Asks "What can we learn?" when things don't go as

expected" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Seldom	1	.5
Once in a While	3	1.6
Occasionally	12	6.4
Sometimes	7	3.7
Fairly Often	30	16.0
Usually	34	18.1
Very Frequently	55	29.3
Almost Always	45	23.9

The fifth behavior in the Challenge the Process practice was "Makes Certain That

We Set Achievable Goals, Make Concrete Plans, and Establish Measurable Milestones

for the Projects and Programs That We Work On." For this behavior, 36.7% responded

Almost Always and another 36.7% indicated that this occurred Frequently. All of the

different responses are provided in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

Frequencies and Percentages for "Makes Certain That We Set Achievable Goals, Make

Concrete Plans, and Establish Measureable Milestones for the Projects and Programs

That We work On" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Occasionally	2	1.1
Sometimes	5	2.7
Fairly Often	13	6.9
Usually	30	16.0
Very Frequently	69	36.7
Almost Always	69	36.7

With respect to the last behavior in the Challenge the Process practice, "Experiments and Takes Risks, Even When There is a Chance of Failure," the top three responses were very similar. Almost Always was selected 25.0% of the time, 22.3% indicated that this behavior occurred Very Frequently and 22.3% indicated that the behavior occurred Usually. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

Frequencies and Percentages for "Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Seldom	4	2.1
Once in a While	3	1.6
Occasionally	11	5.9
Sometimes	16	8.5
Fairly Often	21	11.2
Usually	42	22.3
Very Frequently	42	22.3
Almost Always	47	25.0

The fourth practice in the LPI survey was, Enable Others to Act. The first behavior in this practice was "Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with." Responses for this behavior were more diverse than others in the practice. Almost Always was selected by 31.9% of the teachers, 23.9% indicated that this behavior occurred very frequently, 19.7% indicated that this behavior occurred usually and 12.8% indicated that the behavior occurred fairly often. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19

Frequencies and Percentages for "Develops cooperative relationships among the people

he/she works with" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	3	1.6
Seldom	3	1.6
Once in a While	1	.5
Occasionally	4	2.1
Sometimes	11	5.9
Fairly Often	24	12.8
Usually	37	19.7
Very Frequently	45	23.9
Almost Always	60	31.9

The second behavior in the Enable Others to Act practice was "Actively listens to

diverse points of view." For this behavior the top three responses were similar as 24.5%

of the teachers responded Almost Always, 21.8% indicated that this behavior occurred

very frequently and 21.3% indicated that the behavior occurred usually. All of the

different responses are provided in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20

Frequencies and Percentages for "Actively listens to diverse points of view" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Rarely	3	1.6
Seldom	3	1.6
Once in a While	3	1.6
Occasionally	14	7.4
Sometimes	18	9.6
Fairly Often	19	10.1
Usually	40	21.3
Very Frequently	41	21.8
Almost Always	46	24.5

With respect to the third behavior in the Enable Others to Act practice was "Treats others with dignity and respect," the responses reflected different results. Closer to half, 41.5% of the teachers responded Almost Always to this behavior and more than 50% responded very Fairly Often to Very Frequently. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21

Frequencies and Percentages for "Treats others with dignity and respect" behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Rarely	2	1.1
Seldom	4	2.1
Once in a While	3	1.6
Occasionally	2	1.1
Sometimes	4	2.1
Fairly Often	21	11.2
Usually	37	19.7
Very Frequently	36	19.1
Almost Always	78	41.5

The fourth behavior in the Enable Others to Act practice was "Supports the decisions that people make on their own." As was reflected in Table 20 with respect to this practice, the top three responses were similar. Almost Always was selected 21.8% of the time, Very Frequently was selected 23.4% of the time and Usually was selected 21.3% of the time. The Almost Never to Seldom was selected 2.7% of the time. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22

Frequencies and Percentages for "Supports the decisions that people make on their

own" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	3	1.6
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	7	3.7
Occasionally	16	8.5
Sometimes	13	6.9
Fairly Often	22	11.7
Usually	40	21.3
Very Frequently	44	23.4
Almost Always	41	21.8

The fifth behavior in the Enable Others to Act practice was "Gives people a great

deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work." Responses to this

behavior were more diverse than others in this practice. Almost Always was selected

20.7%; Very Frequently was selected 25% of the time. It's also worth noting that Once

In A While to Sometimes was selected 22.3% of the time and 3.7% selected Almost

Never to Seldom. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23

Frequencies and Percentages for "Gives people a great deal of freedom and choice in

deciding how to do their work" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	4	2.1
Rarely	1	.5
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	10	5.3
Occasionally	11	5.9
Sometimes	19	10.1
Fairly Often	23	12.2
Usually	32	17.0
Very Frequently	47	25.0
Almost Always	39	20.7

With respect to the last behavior in the Enable Others to Act practice was

"Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing

themselves," 36.7% of the teachers responded Almost Always, 23.4% responded with

Very Frequently and 21.3% responded with Usually. All of the different responses are

provided in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24

Frequencies and Percentages for "Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning

new skills and developing themselves" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Seldom	2	1.1
Once in a While	2	1.1
Occasionally	4	2.1
Sometimes	8	4.3
Fairly Often	18	9.6
Usually	40	21.3
Very Frequently	44	23.4
Almost Always	69	36.7

For the fifth and final practice, termed Encourage the Heart, the first behavior was

"Praises People For a Job Well Done." For this behavior, 36.2% of teachers responded

Almost Always, 20.7% responded Usually and 4.3% responded Almost Never to Once In

A While. Readers can view all of the responses to this behavior in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25

Frequencies and Percentages for "Praises people for a job well done" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	2	1.1
Rarely	3	1.6
Seldom	1	.5
Once in a While	2	1.1
Occasionally	9	4.8
Sometimes	16	8.5
Fairly Often	17	9.0
Usually	39	20.7
Very Frequently	31	16.5
Almost Always	68	36.2

The second behavior in Encourage the Heart practice was "Makes It A Point to Let People Know About His/Her Confidence In Their Abilities." For this behavior 27.7% of teachers responded Almost Always, 20.7% responded Very Frequently and 20.7% responded Usually. Descriptive statistics for these behaviors are presented in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26

Frequencies and Percentages for "Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	1	.5
Seldom	3	1.6
Once in a While	4	2.1
Occasionally	10	5.3
Sometimes	15	8.0
Fairly Often	25	13.3
Usually	39	20.7
Very Frequently	39	20.7
Almost Always	52	27.7

With respect to the third behavior in the Encourage the Heart practice, Makes Sure That People Are Creatively Rewarded For Their Contributions To The Success of the Projects," 21. % responded Almost Always and 27.1% responded Very Frequently. It's worth noting that 3.2% responded Almost Never to Seldom. Readers can view all of the responses to this behavior in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27

Frequencies and Percentages for "Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for

their contributions to the success of projects" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	2	1.1
Rarely	1	.5
Seldom	3	1.6
Once in a While	5	2.7
Occasionally	8	4.3
Sometimes	19	10.1
Fairly Often	23	12.2
Usually	36	19.1
Very Frequently	51	27.1
Almost Always	40	21.3

For the fourth behavior in Encourage the Heart, "Publicly Recognizes People Who Exemplify Commitment to Shared Values," 31.4% of teachers responded Almost Always and 24.5% responded Very Frequently. Descriptive statistics for these behaviors are presented in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28

Frequencies and Percentages for "Publicly recognizes people who exemplify

commitment to shared values" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	2	1.1
Seldom	3	1.6
Once in a While	5	2.7
Occasionally	8	4.3
Sometimes	11	5.9
Fairly Often	16	8.5
Usually	37	19.7
Very Frequently	46	24.5
Almost Always	59	31.4

The fifth behavior in Encourage the Heart practice was "Finds Ways to Celebrate Accomplishments." For this behavior 33% responded Almost Always and 20.7% responded Very Frequently. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29

Frequencies and Percentages for "Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Seldom	1	.5
Once in a While	1	.5
Occasionally	6	3.2
Sometimes	15	8.0
Fairly Often	27	14.4
Usually	36	19.1
Very Frequently	39	20.7
Almost Always	62	33.0

With respect to the last behavior in the Encourage the Heart practice was "Gives the Members of the Team Lots of Appreciation and Support for Their Contributions," the top three responses were very similar. Almost Always was selected 28.2% of the time, Very frequently was selected 23.4% of the time and Usually was selected 23.4% of the time. It's also worth noting that the selections were diverse for the particular practice. Almost Never to Once in a While was selected by 5.8% of teachers. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30

Frequencies and Percentages for "Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation

and support for their contributions" Behavior

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Almost Never	1	.5
Rarely	4	2.1
Seldom	3	1.6
Once in a While	3	1.6
Occasionally	4	2.1
Sometimes	12	6.4
Fairly Often	19	10.1
Usually	44	23.4
Very Frequently	44	23.4
Almost Always	53	28.2

The data from tables 1 through 30 were then further analyzed to determine which leadership practices revealed the strongest responses for Very Frequently to Almost Always. Descriptive statistics for these behaviors are presented in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31

Overall comparison of data to determine the teachers' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices. Practices revealing the strongest responses for Very Frequently to Almost Always with Corresponding Rarely to Almost Never Response

Leadership Practice	Behavior	Percent Responded Very Frequently to Almost Always
Model the Way	Sets a personal example of what he/she expects of others	75
Inspire a Shared Vision	Speaks with Genuine Conviction About the Higher Meaning and Purpose of our Work	80
Challenge the Process	Makes Certain That We set Achievable Goals, Makes Concrete Plans, and Establishes Measurable Milestones For the Projects and Programs That We Work On	73
Enable Others to Act	Treats Others With Dignity and Respect	61
Encourage the Heart	Publicly Recognizes People Who Exemplify Commitments to Shared Values	56

The data from tables 1 through 30 were further analyzed to determine which leadership practices revealed the highest observed Rarely to Almost Never behaviors. Additionally, the corresponding Very Frequently to Almost Always percentages were included. These percentages are represented in Table 4.32.

Table 4.32

Overall comparison of data to determine the teachers' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices. Practices revealing the strongest responses for Rarely to Almost Never with Corresponding Very Frequently to Almost Always Responses

Leadership Practice	Behavior	Percent Responded Rarely to Almost Never	Percent Responded Very Frequently to Almost Always
Model the Way	Asks for Feedback On How His/Her Actions Might Affect Other People's Performance	5	33
Inspire a Shared Vision	Appeals to Others to Share an Exciting Dream of the Future	2	80
Challenge the Process	Experiments and Takes Risks, Even When There Is a Chance Of Failure & Asks 'What Can We Learn?' When Things Don't Go As Expected	.5	47
Enable Others to Act	Gives People A Great Deal of Freedom and Choice in Deciding How To Do Their Work	3	46
Encourage the Heart	Praises People For A Job Well Done	3	53

In addition, overall percentages were calculated to represent the teachers who rated behaviors observed in each practice Very Frequently or Almost Always. These data are reflected in Table 4.33.

Table 4.33

Overall Scores for behaviors in each practice; specifically focusing on the percentage of teachers who selected Very Frequently to Almost Always

Behavior	% of teachers who selected Very Frequently to Almost Always
Model the Way	59
Inspire a Shared Vision	64
Challenge the Process	59
Enable Others to Act	56
Encourage the Heart	52

The complete findings from the LPI can be seen in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Findings from the Leadership Practices Inventory
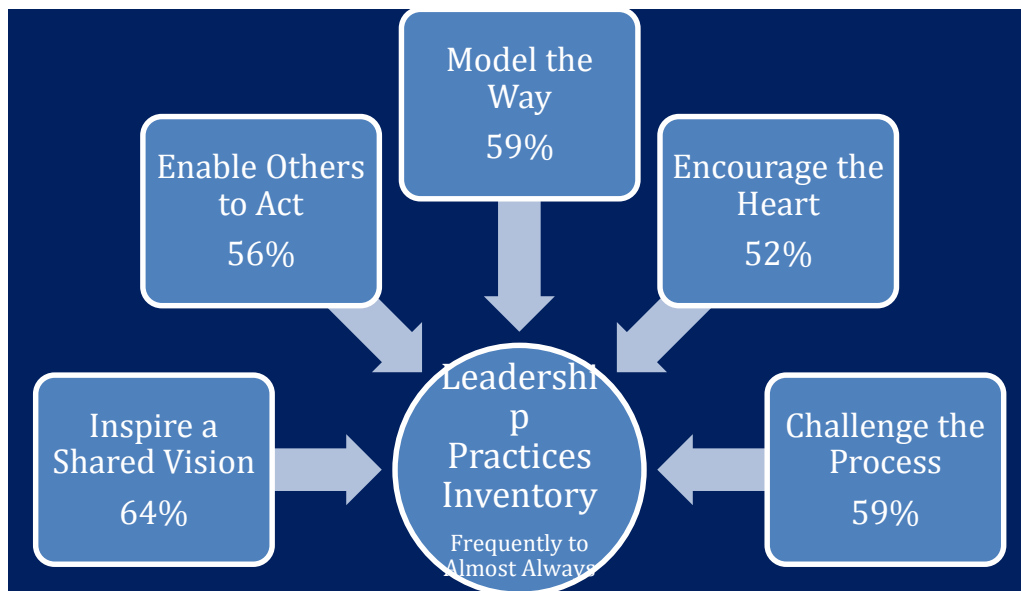
Summary for Question 1

With respect to the first research question asked in this study, "What are the teachers' beliefs their of principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools? Table 30 shows the results of teachers who responded with Almost Always more frequently within a practice. As the table reflects, 75% of teachers selected "Sets a Personal Example of What He/She Expects of Others" within the Model The Way practice, while 80% selected "Speaks with Genuine Conviction About the Higher Meaning and Purpose of our Work" within the Inspire a Shared Vision practice. The most significant finding where teachers selected the behavior observed the least was, "Asks for Feedback on How His/Her Actions Might Affect Other People's Performance" which was found within the leadership practice Model the Way. Finally, with respect to Table 32, when responses were summed and then averaged, it was determined that 64% of the respondents observed the behaviors Very Frequently to Almost Always within the leadership practice Inspire A Shared Vision. Additionally, Challenge the Process and Model the way tied with % of the respondents noted observing specific behaviors Very Frequently to Almost Always.

Research Question 2

The second research question in this study asked, "What are the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (PLCA-R), (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?" Descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages, of teacher responses for the Professional Learning Communities Assessment

– Revised (PLCA) were calculated for the entire set of schools to answer question two.

There were four responses available for teachers to indicate the level to which they

agreed with the implementation of each statement in the six practices which represented

the dimensions of professional learning communities. These frequencies and percentages

will be reported for each practice of the PLCA behaviors for the entire set of schools.

For the first practice, termed Shared and Supportive Leadership, the first

statement was "Staff members are consistently involved in discussing and making

decisions about most school issues." For this behavior, almost 86.6% of the teachers

responded Agree to Strongly Agree. All of the different responses are provided in Table

4.34.

Table 4.34

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members are consistently involved in discussing

and making decisions about most school issues" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	7	5.0
Disagree	12	8.5
Agree	83	58.9
Strongly Agree	39	27.7

The second statement in Shared and Supportive Leadership was "The Principal

Incorporates Advice from Staff Members to Make Decisions." For this behavior, 83.7%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this

statement in Table 4.35.

Table 4.35

Frequencies and Percentages for "The principal incorporates advice from staff members

to make decisions" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	7	5.0
Disagree	16	11.3
Agree	76	53.9
Strongly Agree	42	29.8

With respect to the statement in Shared and Supportive Leadership was "Staff

Members Have Accessibility to Key Information," more than 83.7% responded Agree to

Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.36.

Table 4.36

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members have accessibility to key information"

Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	4.3
Disagree	17	12.1
Agree	80	56.7
Strongly Agree	38	27.0

For the fourth behavior in Shared and Supportive Leadership, "The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed," 98% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Responses can be viewed in Table 4.37.

Table 4.37

Frequencies and Percentages for "The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	13	9.2
Agree	73	51.8
Strongly Agree	51	36.2

The fifth statement in Shared and Supportive Leadership dimension was "Opportunities Are Provided for Staff Members to Initiate Change." For this statement 87.3% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Descriptive statistics for these statements are presented in Table 4.38.

Table 4.38

Frequencies and Percentages for "Opportunities are provided for staff members to initiate change" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	4.3
Disagree	12	8.5
Agree	94	66.7
Strongly Agree	29	20.6

With respect to the sixth statement in Shared and Supportive Leadership dimension, "The Principal Shares Responsibility and Rewards for Innovative Actions,"

about 87.2% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. The reader can view all of the

responses in Table 4.39.

Table 4.39

Frequencies and Percentages for "The principal shares responsibility and rewards for

innovative actions" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	3.5
Disagree	13	9.2
Agree	76	53.9
Strongly Agree	47	33.3

The seventh statement in the Shared and Supportive Leadership dimension

included "The Principal Participates Democratically with Staff Sharing Power and

Authority." For this statement, 80.9% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. The

descriptive statistics for these statements can be viewed in Table 4.40.

Table 4.40

Frequencies and Percentages for "The principal participates democratically with staff

sharing power and authority" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	6.4
Disagree	18	12.8
Agree	85	60.3
Strongly Agree	29	20.6

The eighth statement in the Shared and Supportive Leadership dimension

included "Leadership Is Promoted and Nurtured Among Staff Members." About 86.6%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses in Table 4.41.

Table 4.41

Frequencies and Percentages for "Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	3.5
Disagree	14	9.9
Agree	73	51.8
Strongly Agree	49	34.8

With respect to the ninth statement in the Shared and Supportive Leadership dimension, "Decision-Making Takes Place through Committees and Communication Across Grade and Subject Areas, 85.1% of teachers responded Agree to Strongly Agree. All the different responses to this statement are provided in Table 4.42.

Table 4.42

Frequencies and Percentages for "Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	17	12.1
Agree	70	49.6
Strongly Agree	50	35.5

For the tenth statement in the Shared and Supportive Leadership dimension was "Stakeholders Assume Shared Responsibility and Accountability for Student Learning without Evidence of Imposed Power and Authority, responses were more diverse. Agree to Strongly Agree was selected by 78.7% of the respondents while 21.3% responded Strongly Disagree or Disagree. Descriptive statistics for these statements can be found in Table 4.43.

Table 4.43

Frequencies and Percentages for "Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	5.7
Disagree	22	15.6
Agree	85	60.3
Strongly Agree	26	18.4

With respect to the last statement in the Stared and Supportive Leadership dimension, "Staff Members Use Multiple Sources of Data to Make Decisions About Teaching and Learning," more than 95% responded with Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.44.

Table 4.44

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	.7
Disagree	5	3.5
Agree	71	50.4
Strongly Agree	64	45.4

For the second dimension, termed Shared Values and Vision, the first statement was "A Collaborative Process Exists for Developing a Shared Sense of Values Among Staff." For this statement, almost 87.3% of the teachers responded Agree to Strongly Agree. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.45.

Table 4.45

Frequencies and Percentages for "A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	14	9.9
Agree	83	58.9
Strongly Agree	40	28.4

The second statement in Shared Values and Vision was "Shared Values Support Norms of Statement That Guide Decisions about Teaching and Learning." For this statement, 89.4% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.46.

Table 4.46

Frequencies and Percentages for "Shared values support norms of statement that guide decisions about teaching and learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	14	9.9
Agree	86	61.0
Strongly Agree	40	28.4

With respect to the third statement in Shared Values and Vision was "Staff Members Share Visions For School Improvement That Has an Undeviating Focus on Student Learning," 92.9% of teachers responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.47.

Table 4.47

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members share visions for school improvement

that have an undeviating focus on student learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	10	7.1
Agree	86	61.0
Strongly Agree	45	31.9

For the fourth statement in Shared Values and Vision, "Decisions Are Made in

Alignment with the School's Values and Vision," 92.2% responded Agree to Strongly

Agree. Responses can be viewed in Table 4.48.

Table 4.48

Frequencies and Percentages for "Decisions are made in alignment with the school's

values and vision" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	10	7.1
Agree	72	51.1
Strongly Agree	58	41.1

The fifth statement in Shared Values and Vision, "A Collaborative Process Exists

For Developing a Shared Vision among Staff." For this statement, 87.2 % responded

Agree to Strongly Agree.   Descriptive statistics for these statements are presented in

Table 4.49.

Table 4.49

Frequencies and Percentages for "A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	17	12.1
Agree	76	53.9
Strongly Agree	47	33.3

With respect to the sixth statement in Shared Values and Vision dimension, "School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades," 78.7% responded Agree. The reader can view all of the responses in Table 4.50.

Table 4.50

Frequencies and Percentages for "School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	4.3
Disagree	24	17.0
Agree	75	53.2
Strongly Agree	36	25.5

The seventh statement in the Shared Values and Vision dimension included "policies and Programs Are Aligned to the School's Vision." For this statement, 95.1% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. The descriptive statistics for these statements can be viewed in Table 4.51.

Table 4.51

Frequencies and Percentages for "Policies and programs are aligned to the school's

vision" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	7	5.0
Agree	82	58.2
Strongly Agree	52	36.9

The eighth statement in the Shared Values and Vision included "Stakeholders Are

Actively Involved in Creating High Expectations That Serve to Increase Student

Achievement." There were 77.3% of the teachers who responded Agree to Strongly

Agree. Readers can view all of the responses in Table 4.52.

Table 4.52

Frequencies and Percentages for "Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high

expectations that serve to increase student achievement" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	28	19.9
Agree	75	53.2
Strongly Agree	34	24.1

With respect to the last statement in the Shared Values and Vision dimension,

"Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision, almost 50% of teachers

responded Agree. In addition, it's important to note that 96.4% of teachers responded

Agree to Strongly Agree on this statement with only 3.5% teachers who responded with

Disagree. All the different responses to this statement are provided in Table 4.53.

Table 4.53

Frequencies and Percentages for "Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	5	3.5
Agree	70	49.6
Strongly Agree	66	46.8

With respect to the third PLCA-R dimension, termed Collective Learning and application, first term was "Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work." There were 92.9% of teachers who responded Agree to Strongly Agree. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.54.

Table 4.54

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	10	7.1
Agree	83	58.9
Strongly Agree	48	34.0

The second dimension in Collective Learning and Application was "Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts." For this statement 95.8% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.55.

Table 4.55

Frequencies and Percentages for "Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	6	4.3
Agree	95	67.4
Strongly Agree	40	28.4

With respect to the third statement in Collective Learning and Application "Staff Members Plan and Work Together to Search for Solutions to Address Diverse Student Needs," 95% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.56.

Table 4.56

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	7	5.0
Agree	86	61.0
Strongly Agree	48	34.0

For the fourth statement in Collective Learning and Application, "A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue," 90.1% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Responses can be viewed in Table 4.57.

Table 4.57

Frequencies and Percentages for "A variety of opportunities and structures exist for

collective learning through open dialogue" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	13	9.2
Agree	93	66.0
Strongly Agree	34	24.1

The fifth statement in the Collective Learning and Application dimension was

"Staff Members Engage in Dialogue That Reflects a Respect for Diverse Ideas That Lead

to Continued Inquiry." For this statement, 90.1% responded Agree to Strongly Agree.

Descriptive statistics for these statements are presented in Table 4.58.

Table 4.58

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members engage in dialogue that reflects a

respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	14	9.9
Agree	93	66.0
Strongly Agree	34	24.1

With respect to the sixth statement in Collective Learning and Application

dimension, "Professional Development Focuses on Teaching and Learning," 93.7%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree. The reader can view all of the responses in Table

4.59.

Table 4.59

Frequencies and Percentages for "Professional development focuses on teaching and learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	9	6.4
Agree	71	50.4
Strongly Agree	61	43.3

The seventh statement in the Collective Learning and Application dimension included "School Staff Members and Stakeholders Learn Together and Apply New Knowledge to Solve Problems."   For this statement, 82.3% responded Agree to Strongly Agree and 17.7% responded either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. The descriptive statistics for these statements can be viewed in Table 4.60.

Table 4.60

Frequencies and Percentages for "School staff members and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.4
Disagree	23	16.3
Agree	88	62.4
Strongly Agree	28	19.9

The eighth statement in the Collective Learning and Application dimension included "School Staff Members Are Committed to Programs That Enhance Learning." For this statement, 97.1% responded Agree to Strongly Agree and only 2.8% responded Disagree. Readers can view all of the responses in Table 4.61.

Table 4.61

Frequencies and Percentages for "School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	4	2.8
Agree	79	56.0
Strongly Agree	58	41.1

With respect to the ninth statement in the Collective Learning and Application dimension, "Staff Members Collaboratively Analyze Multiple Sources of Data to Assess the Effectiveness of Instructional Practices," 96% of teachers responded Agree to Strongly Agree. All the different responses to this statement are provided in Table 4.62.

Table 4.62

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members collaboratively analyze multiple sources of data to assess the effectiveness of instructional practices" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	7	5.0
Agree	81	57.4
Strongly Agree	53	37.6

The final statement in the Collective Learning and Application dimension was "Staff Members Collaboratively Analyze Student Work to Improve Teaching and Learning." For this statement 96.7% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Descriptive statistics for these statements can be found in Table 4.63.

Table 4.63

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members collaboratively analyze student work to

improve teaching and learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.4
Disagree	4	2.8
Agree	79	56.0
Strongly Agree	56	39.7

For the fourth dimension, termed Shared Personal Practice, the first statement was

"Opportunities Exist for Staff Members to Observe Peers and Offer Encouragement."

For this statement, 70.2% responded Agree to Strongly Agree and 29.8% responded

Disagree or Strongly Disagree. All of the different responses are provided in Table 4.64.

Table 4.64

Frequencies and Percentages for "Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers

and offer encouragement" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	8	5.7
Disagree	34	24.1
Agree	81	57.4
Strongly Agree	18	12.8

The second statement in Shared Personal Practice was Staff Members Provide

Feedback to Peers Related to Instructional Practices." For this statement, 67.3%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree and 32.6% responded Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.65.

Table 4.65

Frequencies and Percentages for "Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers

and offer encouragement" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	3.5
Disagree	41	29.1
Agree	79	56.0
Strongly Agree	16	11.3

With respect to the third statement in Shared Personal Practice was "Staff

Members Informally Share Ideas and Suggestions for Improving Student Learning,"

98.6% responded Agree to Strongly Agree and only 1.4% selected Disagree. Readers can

view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.66.

Table 4.66

Frequencies and Percentages for "Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers

and offer encouragement" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	2	1.4
Agree	85	60.3
Strongly Agree	54	38.3

For the fourth statement in Shared Personal Practice, "Staff Members

Collaboratively Review Student Work to Share and Improve Instructional Practices,"

85.1% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Responses can be viewed in Table 4.67.

Table 4.67

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	2.1
Disagree	18	12.8
Agree	76	53.9
Strongly Agree	44	31.2

The fifth statement in Shared Personal Practice was "Opportunities Exist for Coaching and Mentoring." For this statement 81.6% responded Agree to Strongly Agree while 18.4% responded with Disagree to Strongly Disagree. Descriptive statistics for these statements are presented in Table 4.68.

Table 4.68

Frequencies and Percentages for "Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	22	15.6
Agree	83	58.9
Strongly Agree	32	22.7

With respect to the sixth statement in Shared Personal Practice, "Individuals and Teams Have the Opportunity to Apply Learning and Share the Results of Their Practices," 98.8% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. The reader can view all of the responses in Table 4.69.

Table 4.69

Frequencies and Percentages for "Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply

learning and share the results of their practices" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	2.1
Disagree	10	7.1
Agree	87	61.7
Strongly Agree	41	29.1

With respect to the final statement in the Shared Personal Practice, "Staff

Members Regularly Share Student Work to Guide Overall School Improvement," 77.3%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree and 22.7% either Disagree or Strongly Disagree. The

descriptive statistics for these statements can be viewed in Table 4.70.

Table 4.70

Frequencies and Percentages for "Staff members regularly share student work to guide

overall school improvement" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	2.1
Disagree	29	20.6
Agree	77	54.6
Strongly Agree	32	22.7

The next dimension on the PLCA was termed Supportive Conditions –

Relationships. The first statement is this dimension was "Caring relationships exist

among staff and students that are built on trust and respect." For this statement 95.7%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree. All of the different responses are provided in Table

4.71.

Table 4.71

Frequencies and Percentages for "Caring relationships exist among staff and students

that are built on trust and respect" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	5	3.5
Agree	77	54.6
Strongly Agree	58	41.1

The second statement in Supportive Conditions-Relationships was "A Culture of

Trust and Respect Exists for Taking Risks."   For this statement, 85.5% responded Agree

to Strongly Agree and 14.2% responded Disagree to Strongly Disagree. Readers can

view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.72.

Table 4.72

Frequencies and Percentages for "A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks"

Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.4
Disagree	18	12.8
Agree	80	56.7
Strongly Agree	41	29.1

With respect to the third statement in Supportive Conditions-Relationships was

"Outstanding Achievement Is Recognized and Celebrated Regularly in Our School,"

83.7% responded Agree to Strongly Agree while 16.3% responded Disagree to Strongly

Disagree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.73.

Table 4.73

Frequencies and Percentages for "Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	19	13.5
Agree	65	46.1
Strongly Agree	53	37.6

For the fourth statement in Supportive Conditions-Relationships, "School Staff and Stakeholders Exhibit a Sustained and Unified Effort to Embed Change into the Culture of the School," 84.4% responded Agree to Strongly Agree and 15.6% responded Disagree to Strongly Disagree. Responses can be viewed in Table 4.74.

Table 4.74

Frequencies and Percentages for "School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	3.5
Disagree	17	12.1
Agree	88	62.4
Strongly Agree	31	22.0

The fifth and final statement in Supportive Conditions-Relationships was, "Relationships among Staff Members Support Honest and Respectful Examination of Data to Enhance Teaching and Learning." For this statement 90.1% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Descriptive statistics for these statements are presented in Table 4.75.

Table 4.75

Frequencies and Percentages for "Relationships among staff members support honest

and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	13	9.2
Agree	82	58.2
Strongly Agree	45	31.9

The final dimension on the PLCA was termed Supportive Conditions –Structures.

The first statement in this dimension was "Time Is Provided to Facilitate Collaborative

Work." For this statement, 86.5% of the teachers responded Agree to Strongly Agree and

13.5% responded Disagree to Strongly Disagree. All of the different responses are

provided in Table 4.76.

Table 4.76

Frequencies and Percentages for "Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work"

Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	18	12.8
Agree	80	56.7
Strongly Agree	42	29.8

The second statement in Supportive Conditions-Structures was "The School

Schedule Promotes Collective Learning and Shared Practice." For this statement, 87.9%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this

statement in Table 4.77.

Table 4.77

Frequencies and Percentages for "The school schedule promotes collective learning and

shared practice" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	16	11.3
Agree	81	57.4
Strongly Agree	43	30.5

With respect to the third statement in Supportive Conditions-Structures "Fiscal

Resources Are Available for Professional Development," more than 86.5% responded

Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses to this statement in Table

4.78.

Table 4.78

Frequencies and Percentages for "Fiscal resources are available for professional

development" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	15	10.6
Agree	88	62.4
Strongly Agree	34	24.1

For the fourth statement in Supportive Conditions-Structures, "Appropriate

Technology and Instructional Materials Are Available to Staff," 92.2% responded Agree

to Strongly Agree. Responses can be viewed in Table 4.79.

Table 4.79

Frequencies and Percentages for "Appropriate technology and instructional materials

are available to staff" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	11	7.8
Agree	83	58.9
Strongly Agree	47	33.3

The fifth statement in Supportive Conditions-Structures was "Resource People

Provide Expertise and Support for Continuous Learning." For this statement 92.2%

responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Descriptive statistics for these statements are

presented in Table 4.80.

Table 4.80

Frequencies and Percentages for "Resource people provide expertise and support for

continuous learning" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	11	7.8
Agree	87	61.7
Strongly Agree	43	30.5

With respect to the sixth statement in Shared and Supportive Leadership practice,

"The School Facility Is Clean, Attractive and Inviting," 97.1% selected Agree to Strongly

Agree. The reader can view all of the responses in Table 4.81.

Table 4.81

Frequencies and Percentages for "The school facility is clean, attractive and inviting"

Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.4
Disagree	2	1.4
Agree	69	48.9
Strongly Agree	68	48.2

The seventh statement in the Supportive Conditions-Structures dimension included "The Proximity of Grade Level and Department Personnel Allows for Ease in Collaborating with Colleagues." For this statement, 90.8% selected Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers can view all of the responses in Table 4.82.

Table 4.82

Frequencies and Percentages for "The proximity of grade level and department

personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	2.1
Disagree	10	7.1
Agree	86	61.0
Strongly Agree	42	29.8

With respect to the eighth statement in the Supportive Conditions-Structures dimension, "Communication Systems Promote A Flow of Information Among Staff Members," 84.4% responded Agree to Strongly Agree. All the different responses to this statement are provided in Table 4.83.

Table 4.83

Frequencies and Percentages for "Communication systems promote a flow of

information among staff members" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.8
Disagree	18	12.8
Agree	88	62.4
Strongly Agree	31	22.0

The ninth statement in the Supportive Conditions-Structures dimension was

"Communication Systems Promote A Flow of Information Across the Entire School

Community Including: Central Office Personnel, Parents, and Community Members."

Agree to Strongly Agree was selected by 84.4% of respondents. Descriptive statistics for

these statements can be found in Table 4.84.

Table 4.84

Frequencies and Percentages for "Communication systems promote a flow of

information across the entire school community including: central office personnel,

parents, and community members" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	3.5
Disagree	17	12.1
Agree	89	63.1
Strongly Agree	30	21.3

With respect to the last statement in the Supportive Conditions-Structures

dimension "Data Are Organized and Made Available to Provide Easy Access to Staff

Members," more than 90.1% of teachers responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers

can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 85.

Table 4.85

Frequencies and Percentages for "Data are organized and made available to provide

easy access to staff members" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	13	9.2
Agree	85	60.3
Strongly Agree	42	29.8

With respect to the last statement in the Supportive Conditions-Structures

dimension "Data Are Organized and Made Available to Provide Easy Access to Staff

Members," more than 90.1% of teachers responded Agree to Strongly Agree. Readers

can view all of the responses to this statement in Table 4.86.

Table 0.85

Frequencies and Percentages for "Data are organized and made available to provide

easy access to staff members" Statement

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	0.7
Disagree	13	9.2
Agree	85	60.3
Strongly Agree	42	29.8

The data from tables 35 through 86 were further analyzed to determine which

dimensions from the PLCA-R revealed the strongest responses for Agree and Strongly

Agree. In order to do this, the percentages for Agree and Strongly Agree for each

dimension were then averaged to determine the total average for each.

Percentages for these dimensions and statements are presented in Table 4.87.

Table 4.87

Percentage of Teachers Who Selected Agree or Strongly Agree Across Statements within

the Dimension

PLC Dimension	Percentage of Teachers Who Selected Agree or Strongly Agree Across Statements Within the Dimension
Shared and Supportive Leadership	85
Shared Values and Vision	89
Collective Learning and Application	93
Shared Personal Practice	82
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	88
Supportive Conditions-Structures	90

Results to statements surveyed through the Professional Learning Community

Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R) can be seen in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

Findings from the Responses to Statements within the Professional Learning Community

Assessment – Revised
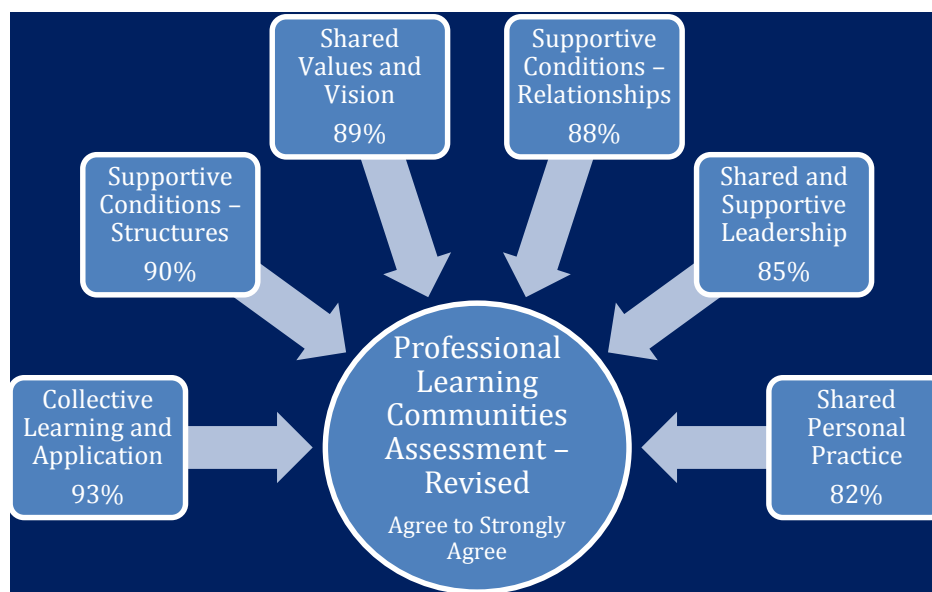
The data from tables 35 through 86 were then further analyzed to determine

which statements within each dimensions from the PLCA-R revealed the strongest

responses for Agree and Strongly Agree. Percentages for these behaviors are presented

in Table 4.88.

Table 4.88

Overall comparison of data to determine the teachers' beliefs of the dimensions of their

PLC. Practices revealing the strongest responses for Very Frequently to Agree or

Strongly Agree

PLC Dimension	Statement Selected by Most Teachers	Percent Agree or Strongly Agree
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Staff Members Use Multiple Sources of Data to Make Decisions About Teaching and Learning	95
Shared Values and Vision	Data Are Used to Prioritize Actions to Reach a Shared Vision	96
Collective Learning and Application	School Staff Members Are Committed to Programs That Enhance Learning	97
Shared Personal Practice	Staff Members Informally Share Ideas and Suggestions For Improving Student Learning	99
Supportive Conditions-Relationships	Caring Relationships Exist Among Staff and Students That Are Built on Trust and Respect	96
Supportive Conditions-Structures	The School Facility is Clean, Attractive and Inviting	97

Summary for Research Question 2

The second research question asked, "What are the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?" Table 87 shows the results of teachers who responded with Agree and Strongly Agree within each statement. Although there were only slight differences between each dimension, the table reflects that 99% of teachers selected Agree or Strongly Agree to the statement "Staff Members Informally Share Ideas and Suggestions for Improving Student Learning" within the dimension of Shared Personal Practice. Additionally, 97% of teachers selected Agree or Strongly Agree to the statements "School Staff Members Are Committed to Programs That Enhance Learning" and "The School Facility is Clean, Attractive and Inviting" from the dimensions Collective Learning and Application and Supportive Conditions-Structures respectively.

Chapter 5

Overview, Interpretations, Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The final chapter of this thesis begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study. The research questions for this study and the methodology will then be reviewed. The chapter continues with the findings from each research question, recommendations for further study followed by the conclusion and implications for leaders.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to describe the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Furthermore, this study described the teachers' beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools. Both instruments were administered in eight schools (six elementary, one K-6, and one intermediate) in the same school district in southeast Texas.

This study will help educational leaders support critical needs in schools by providing a systematic process to move schools forward and improve student learning. School leaders must examine their current practices and lead their staff to a new culture and way of thinking in order to incorporate needed skills to focus on learning and teaching. Two questions were posed for this study.

1. What are the teachers' beliefs their of principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?

2. What are the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their

   PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised

   (PLCA-R), (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?

For purposes of this quantitative study, two survey instruments were used. Both instruments were sent to eight elementary and intermediate schools in the same school district. The first instrument was the Professional Learning Community Assessment – Revised (PLCA-R) developed by Oliver et al., (2014), based on Shirley Hord's (1997) study of the five dimensions of a PLC. This instrument used a four point Likert scale to measure teachers' beliefs of each dimension of a PLC. These dimensions included Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, and Supportive Conditions. The PLCA-R was sent electronically to eight campuses and targeted all teachers on each campus. Approximately two hundred surveys were completed and returned.

The second instrument used in this study was Kouzes and Posner's (2013) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). It was delivered through interoffice mail to the aforementioned participants. Like the PLCA-R, the LPI utilized a Likert scale to measure the teacher's beliefs' of their principals' leadership practices to assess how teachers perceived the effectiveness of their leadership and commitment. The five practices included Model the Way, Share and Inspire a Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

The results of both surveys were analyzed and described utilizing a descriptive statistical analysis model. The findings from this analysis described the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practice in addition to their beliefs of the implementation of

the dimensions of a PLC. This design revealed an interpretation of the data as well as patterns or trends that might have emerged. The value and rationale for this particular method allowed the researcher to summarize the results, describe the distribution, and present the frequencies of the data. This enabled the researcher to describe the various perspectives of the teacher's beliefs of leadership practices and the dimensions of a PLC.

Interpretations of Findings – Research 1

The first question in this study was, "What are the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools." A descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe the results of the data in Chapter 4. The following discussion will focus on the practices that appeared to show more significant results in order to understand which practices the teachers in these schools perceived as being most evident and answer question 1.

The first leadership practice examined was Model the Way. Kouzes and Posner (2014) explain, "One of the best ways to prove that something is important is by doing it yourself and setting an example" (p. 17). Great speeches are not enough to truly make an impact in an organization. Deeds are much more important than words and exemplary leaders model what they want to see. They do this through their own daily actions (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). The teachers completing the LPI considered the following statements related to the practice of Model the Way:

- Sets a personal example of what he/she expects of others.
- Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.

- Follows through on the promises and commitments he/she makes.

- Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people's performance.

- Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.

- Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership.

The descriptive analysis found in Chapter 4 regarding Model the Way reflected that 59% of teachers responded that these practices were exhibited Very Frequently and Almost Always. There were interesting findings within the behaviors that contributed to the overall score where 75% of teachers responded they observed "Sets a Personal Example of What He/She Expects of Others" Very Frequently and Almost Always. The next behavior worth noting was "Is Clear about His/her Philosophy of Leadership" where 74% responded this behavior was observed Very Frequently and Almost Always. Since the responses to both these statements were very close, it is evident that setting an example of what the leader expects to see and being clear about a leadership philosophy is a strength teachers found in their leaders.

It is worth noting that one of the statements in the Model the Way leadership practice received significantly fewer Very Frequently or Almost Always responses. The specific behavior was "Asks for Feedback on How His/her Actions Might Affect Other People's Performance." Although, the other five statements in this practice were perceived by teachers to be exhibited very frequently or almost always at least 60% of the time, this behavior was seen to be exhibited only 32.5% of the time. With all of the demands on today's principals this particular behavior may be hard to put into place and they may be reluctant to ask for this type of feedback.

The second practice evaluated was Inspire a Shared Vision. Kouzes and Posner (2012) find, "Leaders begin with the end in mind by imagining what might be possible. Finding a common purpose inspires people to want to make that vision a reality" (p. 104). Exemplary leaders must be able to inspire a shared vision. This means not only knowing what your own vision is for the organization but great leaders also know how to enlist others into the development of the vision so that they have a stake in what they want to become and how they plan to get there. The teachers completing the LPI respondents considered the following statements related to the practice of Inspire a Shared Vision:

- Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.

- Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like.

- Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future.

- Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.

- Paints the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish.

- Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work

The descriptive analysis in Chapter 4 regarding Model the Way reflected that 64% of teachers surveyed selected that they observed the behaviors within this practice Very Frequently to Almost Always. There was one behavior in the practice that received higher responses to Very Frequently and Almost always, which was "Speaks with Genuine Conviction about the Higher Meaning and Purpose of Our Work." About 80% of the teachers surveyed perceived this behavior to be evident with their leaders. Exemplary leaders are able to speak with genuine conviction. Members of the

organization know they mean what they say when they truly walk the talk. These leaders know how to "awaken dreams, breathe life into them, and arouse the belief that people can achieve something grand" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 131). The result of this behavior was at least 10% higher than the others in the practice which is evident that it clearly stands out above the others.

The third practice evaluated in the LPI was Challenge the Process. According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), "Exemplary leaders make it a practice to create a climate in which others feel strong and confident, capable of flourishing even under the most adverse circumstances" (p. 210). Michael Fullan (2014) explains that great leaders challenge the status quo and question current practices. Leaders are also not afraid to challenge people to think outside the box and work to explore innovative strategies. Members of PLCs are action oriented and are committed to turn creative ideas into reality (DuFour et al., 2008). The teachers completing the LPI considered the following statements related to the practice of challenge the Process:

- Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities.

- Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.

- Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.

- Asks "What can we learn?" when things don't go as expected.

- Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.

- Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure.

The descriptive analysis for Challenge the Process revealed that 59% of teachers observed the behaviors within the practice Always to Almost Always. There were two behaviors within this practice that teachers observed most frequently. These were "Makes Certain That We Set Achievable Goals" and "Makes Concrete Plans and Establishes Measurable Milestones for the Projects and Programs That We Work On." Seventy-three percent of teachers responded that their principal exhibited these behaviors Very Frequently to Almost Always.

The fourth leadership practice measured was Enable Others to Act. This requires developing strong relationships and solid trust. If people do not have confidence and trust in the leadership of the organization, they will not take risks and change cannot happen if there are no risks (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Kouzes and Posner (2012) explain, "To build and sustain social connections, you have to be able to trust others, and others have to trust you. Trust is not just what's in your mind; it's also what's in your heart" (p. 219). No one single person has the knowledge, experience, and skill set to do what principals must now do in schools to sustain the level needed to help students meet or exceed growth expectations and close achievement gaps. Effective leaders in today's schools will foster shared leadership and continuously focus on enabling others within the organization to take the lead (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). The teachers completing the LPI considered the following behaviors related to the practice of Enable Others to Act:

- Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with.
- Actively listens to diverse points of view.
- Treats others with dignity and respect.
- Supports the decisions that people make on their own.

- Gives people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.

- Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

The descriptive analysis for this practice showed that 56% of teachers found these practices to be exhibited Very Frequently to Almost Always. The results of some behaviors within this practice were surprisingly low with only 61% of the teachers responding they observed "Treats Others with Dignity and Respect" Very Frequently to Almost Always. This particular practice also reflected a behavior where 46% of teachers responded they observed "Gives People a Great Deal of Freedom and Choice in Deciding How to do Their Work" Very Frequently to Almost Always. The results of this particular practice are somewhat surprising because the research states that this work cannot be completed by an individual working in isolation. Teachers in these schools do not perceive this as happening very often. It takes people working together to truly impact student learning; however, if teachers do not feel they have the freedom to decide how to do their work, it might be difficult to have authentic collaboration about what is best for teaching and learning.

The final practice in the LPI survey was Encourage the Heart. According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), in order for people to replenish their spirits they need emotional fuel. The leader must recognize good work but they must also expect nothing but the very best from all members of an organization. Extraordinary leaders elicit high performance because they believe in the abilities of the people who work in the

organization. The teachers completing the LPI considered the following practices related to the practice of Encourage the Heart:

- Praises people for a job well done.

- Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities.

- Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects.

- Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared values.

- Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments.

- Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.

The practice of Encourage the Heart reflected the lowest results in that 52% of teachers responded that they had observed the behaviors Very Frequently to Almost Always. The behavior receiving the highest marks was "Publically Recognizes People Who Exemplify Commitments to Shared Values" with 56% of teachers responding that they observed this behavior Very Frequently to Almost Always. There were 3% of teachers who responded that they observed "Praises People for a Job Well Done" Rarely to Almost Never.

Further analysis of the descriptive statistical data revealed three leadership practices to be observed the most by teachers on the participating campuses. The first leadership practice, which revealed the highest scores for being observed Very Frequently to Almost Always, was Inspire a Shared Vision. The behaviors within this practice received some of the highest marks in comparison to behaviors within other practices. The behaviors "Speaks with Genuine Conviction about the Higher Meaning

and Purpose of Our Work and "Appeals to Others to Share an Exciting Dream of the Future" were observed the most by 80% of teachers.

There were two leadership practices that were observed by 59% of teachers to be evident Frequently to Almost Always. These were Model the Way and Challenge the Process. Model the Way will be discussed first. There was one statement within the practice Model the Way that is worth noting in regards to this study. The specific behavior was "Asks for Feedback on How His/Her Actions Might Affect Other People's Performance." There were only 33% of teachers who observed this behavior Very Frequently to Almost Always. In fact, more that 16% of teachers responded to observing this behavior Once in a While to Almost Never.   Due to the fact that the researcher is very familiar with the schools involved in this study, it is worth stating that this behavior may indeed not be exhibited in these schools. The data revealed a large disparity, which seemed to skew the data and therefore may not be a valid behavior to include within this practice. If this behavior was excluded from the averages, the score for Model the Way would then be 83.5%.

Challenge the Process was also selected to be observed Very Frequently to Almost Always by 59% of teachers. There were no behaviors within this practice that revealed results that should be eliminated from discussion as all frequencies were similarly distributed from Almost Always to Almost Never. Therefore, if the aforementioned behavior had not been included, the practice of Model the Way would have received the highest averaged score from teachers who observed these behaviors Most Frequently to Almost Always.

Interpretations of Findings – Research 2

The second research question in this study asked, "What are the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014) in elementary and intermediate schools?" Similar to the data analysis for the LPI a descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe the results of the data. These data primarily found similar results among the dimensions of PLCs.

Schools that practice the tenets of a PLC embrace shared leadership as "the best model suited to the new image of the school as a community of learners" (DuFour et al., 2008, p. 310). This concept is based on the premise that leadership is spread out throughout the building to increase leadership capacity and allow teachers to see themselves as leaders and decision makers (DuFour et al., 2008). The first PLC dimension that was surveyed was Shared and Supportive Leadership. Specifically, the teachers rated the following statements in the PLCA-R that apply to Shared and Supportive Leadership:

- Staff members are consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.
- The principal incorporates advice from staff members to make decisions.
- Staff members have accessibility to key information.
- The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.
- Opportunities are provided for staff members to initiate change.
- The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.

- The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.

- Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members.

- Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.

- Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.

- Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning.

The results of this dimension revealed in Chapter 4 showed that 85% of the teachers either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statements from the survey. The strongest statement within this dimension was "Staff Members Use Multiple Sources of Data to Make Decisions about Teaching and Learning." Teachers in this district have access to multiple sets of data to help drive instructional decisions. This includes statistical data that helps teachers understand whether students are underperforming or over performing and if this could be linked to instructional or emotional issues. Teachers also have access to a multitude of data to review and make data based decisions that will help students learn at higher levels.

The second dimension measured from the survey was Shared Values and Vision. DuFour et al. (2008) found, "In setting out to create PLCs, effective leaders will help create a shared sense of moral purpose about the work to be done. They will continually come back to the "why" of school improvement as they move forward with the how (p.

111). Specifically, the teachers rated the following statements in the PLCA-R that apply

to Shared Values and Vision:

- A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among

  staff.

- Shared values support norms of statement that guide decisions about teaching

  and learning.

- Staff members share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating

  focus on student learning.

- Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.

- A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.

- School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.

- Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.

- Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to

  increase student achievement.

- Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision.

Results showed that 89% of teachers either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the

statements. The strongest statement within this dimension was "Data are Used to

Prioritize Actions to Reach a Shared Vision." As stated before, teachers in this district

have access to rich data and have been trained how to read and use it to drive their vision

and guide instructional decisions.

The next dimension was Collective Learning and Application. Traditionally,

teachers viewed professional development as something that typically took place away

from the school campus and took the form of workshops or even courses taken at the

graduate level. They even considered the typical professional development days that are embedded within the school year as a time to hear speakers on the latest trends in education. Hipp and Huffman (2010) explain that researchers continually explain that a PLC occurs when teachers seek to "find answers through inquiry and then act on their learning to improve student learning" (p. 11). As teachers begin to work as PLCs they make commitments about continuous learning, about best practices, and how to imbed these practices within their instruction in order to impact student learning. The results from this dimension show that teachers are working towards collective learning and application. Specifically, the teachers rated the following statements in the PLCA-R that apply:

- Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.

- Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.

- Staff members plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.

- A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.

- Staff members engage in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.

- Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.

- School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning.

- Staff members collaboratively analyze multiple sources of data to assess the effectiveness of instructional practices.

- Staff members collaboratively analyze student work to improve teaching and learning.

Results showed that 93% of teachers either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with statements within the dimension of Collective Learning and Application. In regards to "School Staff Members Are Committed to Programs That Enhance Learning," 97% of teachers surveyed either Agree or Strongly Agree with the statements. More than 95% of teachers Agreed or Strongly Agreed with "Staff Members Collaboratively Analyze Student Work to Improve Teaching and Learning", and "Collegial Relationships Exist Among Staff Members that Reflect Commitment to School Improvement Efforts." The data shows that teachers in these schools are committed to collective learning, analyzing student work, and collaborating to make decisions to ensure students learn at higher levels.

As important as shared and supportive leadership is in PLCs, so is the learning that occurs between staff members as they share personal practices and collaborate on a regular basis. According to DuFour et al. (2008), collaboration is defined as "a systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results" (p. 464). Teachers rated the following statements in the PLCA-R that apply to Shared Personal Practice:

- Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers and offer encouragement.

- Staff members provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices.

- Staff members informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.

- Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices.

- Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.

- Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.

- Staff members regularly share student work to guide overall school improvement.

The results from the survey related specifically to this dimension showed that 82% of the teachers selected either Agree or Strongly Agree to the statements within. Although this particular dimension reflected the lowest results there was one specific statement that was selected by more teachers than any other statement in the survey. Ninety-nine percent of teachers surveyed either Agreed or Strongly Agreed to "Staff Members Informally Share Ideas and Suggestions for Improving Student Learning."

The final two dimensions will be discussed together. The statements for Supportive Conditions can be split into those that relate to Relationships and those that relate to Structures. According to Hord (2004), "supportive conditions take place when the staff comes together regularly to determine where, when, and how the learning, decision making, and problem solving will occur in a school" (p. 10). Hipp and Huffman (2003) explain that supportive conditions "impact all other dimensions and facilitate the creation of PLCs while simultaneously supporting and sustaining commitment."

Teachers responded to the following specific statements in regards to Supportive

Conditions which involve Relationships and Structures in their schools:

Supportive Conditions – Relationships

- Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and

  respect.

- A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.

- Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.

- School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed

  change into the culture of the school.

- Relationships among staff members support honest and respectful

  examination of data to enhance teaching and learning.

Supportive Conditions – Structures

- Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.

- The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.

- Fiscal resources are available for professional development.

- Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.

- Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.

- The school facility is clean, attractive, and inviting.

- The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in

  collaborating with colleagues.

- Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff members.

- Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire
  school community including: central office personnel, parents, and
  community members.

- Data are organized and made available to provide easy access to staff
  members.

The PLC dimensions of Supportive Conditions-Relationships and Structures showed
similar results as what was revealed in earlier dimensions. Eighty-eight percent of
teachers surveyed Agreed or Strongly Agreed with statements in regards to Relationships
and 90% were in agreement with statements related to Structures.

Implications

Principals in today's schools are being called upon to do much more than ever
before to be accountable for all students they serve. It is becoming increasingly
important for leaders to implement the PLC process in schools if they are going to meet
the demands of accountability present in our current systems. DuFour and Marzano
(2011) write, "If educators are to rise to the occasion and meet the challenges confronting
them, they will be required both to think and act anew" (p. 25). Therefore, it has become
evident that leaders must implement a process to determine if students are to learn at
higher levels and if schools are to meet the accountability requirements derived from
state assessments.

The two research questions asked were, "What are the teachers' beliefs their of
principal's leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI),
(Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?" and "What are the
teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by

the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (PLCA-R), (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools?"

The findings from this research reflect that although all five leadership practices were observed, there were three that teachers in the schools surveyed perceived to be observed most often. These were Inspire a Shared Vision, Model the Way and Challenge the Process. Additionally, although all six dimensions of a PLC were perceived to be evident in schools surveyed, teachers perceived Collective Learning and Application and Supportive Conditions-Structures to be the most effective in their schools.

"Educators who cultivate PLCs must engage in an intentional process to impact the culture of their schools and districts (DuFour et al., 2008 p. 21). What has become clear is that those who transform schools will face barriers but change can happen with effective leaders who know how to effectively implement the process and develop the culture (DuFour et al., 2008). They do this through their leadership practices. Principals in the schools studied understand how to inspire a collective vision, model the behavior they expect to see and challenge the status quo. They know how to create a culture of collaboration and help teachers understand that when they work together, they are able to develop their skills and as they grow in their assumptions and beliefs they are able to see the world through different lenses (Senge, 1994). DuFour et al., (2008) state that if today's schools are to reflect fundamentally different assumptions than they were in the past, they must reflect a genuine commitment to high levels of learning for all students with teachers who are also committed to be collaborative and continuous learners; it will "be because of rather than in spite of the educators within them" (p. 429).

With the increase in today's accountability system, school leaders are expected to perform at higher levels than ever before. Our school leaders are striving for excellence and must maintain a positive and challenging learning environment for both students and adults (Hipp & Huffman, 2010) . Today's school leaders must also shape and sustain a culture using leadership skills that set high standards and genuinely express their optimism about the teachers' capacity to achieve them (Kouzes & Posner, 1999). The results of this study revealed that teachers perceived their PLCs as effective. This was indicated by at least 80% of the teachers either agreeing or strongly agreeing with all statements related to the dimensions of their PLC. Furthermore, this study also resulted in the identification of three leadership practices and the behaviors that support them that appear to be evident in the schools where the implementation of PLCs is effective. School leaders can use the results of this study to help them shape and sustain cultures that are collaborative, goal-focused, innovative, and positive. This will help them develop powerful environments where teams of teachers can develop higher functioning learning communities. Leaders who practice Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, and Challenge the Process will embed and sustain the tenets necessary for growing and thriving PLCs.

Recommendations for School Leaders

The results of this research and a review of the literature reveal certain recommendations for schools regarding the implementation of PLCs and leadership practices. In order for PLCs to be developed, people in the school must do things differently and begin building shared knowledge towards implementing the dimensions of a PLC (DuFour et al., 2010). Ongoing professional development to help teachers

understand the tents of a PLC is critical but effective leaders understand that the disciplines of a PLC must become an intentional way of leading (Kanold, 2011). Additionally, Kanold (2011) expresses that the training for PLCs is not something you can do one time and then move on; the implementation and monitoring is a continuous process. According to Talbert (2010), working as a professional learning community is not only about creating collaborative work for teachers or using tools for teachers to track student learning. It's about "addressing normative and organizational challenges for change – shifting a focus on teaching toward student learning" (p. 568). Based on the results of this study, teachers rated all dimensions of their professional learning community to be evident. They believe their teams are implementing the tents of a PLC and are striving to sustain the work to impact student learning. The results of this study also revealed teachers are committed to the six dimensions as defined by the PLCA-R (Hipp & Huffman, 2010), which include Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning, Shared Personal Practice, Supportive Conditions-Relationships, and Supportive Conditions-Structures.

DuFour et al. (2008) determined a framework to guide the work of PLCs with three big ideas. The first big idea included ensuring high levels of learning for all students. The fundamental purpose of a member of a PLC is to be committed to focusing on student learning and aligning all practices, procedures, and policies to ensure success. Members of a PLC work together to determine what should be learned and then collectively monitor student learning, provide systematic interventions, and ensure that students receive necessary support when they are struggling (DuFour et al., 2008).

Secondly, educators must work collaboratively (Hord, 2012). Hord (2012) also states that all members of a PLC must be committed to not work in isolation. In order to make this possible, school administrators must build a collaborative culture within the organization so members can work interdependently and also be collectively responsible for the success of all students and allow time for teachers to collaborate within the school day (DuFour et al., 2008).

Finally, educators should be results oriented. Schools must consistently inquire whether or not students are learning. DuFour et al. (2008) advance the concept that "Teachers and administrators must systematically monitor students on a continuous and ongoing basis and use evidence of results to respond immediately to students who experience difficulty" (DuFour et al., 2008, p.18–19). This includes evaluating data on a continuous and timely basis in order to make instructional adjustments necessary for students to learn at higher levels.

In leading a PLC initiative in schools, leaders are advised to present the work as an evolution (DuFour et al., 2010). They should try to focus on adding to or enhancing existing practices or principals. DuFour et al., (2010) explain that "In effect, they should show that the proposal represents a natural next step in the school's ongoing effort to improve results for students (p. 255). It's important to honor past efforts and now the focus is on learning from what had been done and moving forward to do things better. (DuFour, 2010).

This study also described the teachers' beliefs of their principal leadership practices as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Shirley Hord (1997) asserts that transforming a school organization into a learning

organization involves a culture shift that can only be achieved with the principal guiding, nurturing, and actively monitoring the implementation of the entire staff's development as a community. The results of this study revealed teachers' beliefs of their principals' leadership practices as defined by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2013). Reaves (2002) asserts, "The first and most important influence exerted by a leader is on his or her own behavior" (p. 71). The findings in this study revealed that although all five practices that were measured were observed, the practices that were observed more than the others included Inspire a Shared Vision, Model the Way and Challenge the Process. Creating a culture in schools that can implement and sustain the tenets of a professional learning community is challenging for principals. According to Reeves (2002), it is imperative that principals understand all aspects of PLCs and the leadership behaviors they exhibit that will foster or inhibit development. Reeves (2002) goes on to suggest, "Leaders in schools have the most direct impact on the model they establish in building management, relationship building, and providing professional development" (p. 71). Leadership is not only a function of what the principal knows and does; it is the function of the way they interact with others within particular contexts and situations (Hill, 2009). Principals continue to play a critical role in the development and sustainability of PLCs by forging the conditions and creating an environment that foster learning communities in schools (Louis & Others, 1996). Principals at every level receive recommendations about leadership behaviors and have been urged to embrace specific styles for what they know and should be able to do to lead PLCs (DuFour et al., 2008). According to Blanchard (2010), it's important that leaders let people know what they expect from them to give them a clear picture of what their behavior should look like. They must also develop a

shared vision by envisioning the future and imagining exciting possibilities (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Exemplary leaders also express pride in the accomplishments their teams achieve as they continuously strive to recognize the contributions of others and celebrate values and victories along the way (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Major change takes time and running a transformation without celebrating small wins can be risky (Kotter, 1996). Additionally, they must challenge the status quo and search for new opportunities to achieve results (Fullan, 2014). Finally, they must foster a culture of collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Fullan (2014) states "You name trust as a value and norm that you will embrace and develop in the organization; you model it in your day-to-day actions; and you monitor it in your own and others' behaviors" (p. 130).

Recommendations for Further Study

There exist some reasonable expectations on the part of the reader of a thesis that other forms of research could have yielded more questions to be answered. There is value in repeating this type of study and deepening the research to find even richer data that will help guide the facilitation of high functioning PLCs and moving them towards sustainability. Thus, suggestions for further study are presented here.

This research was a study of the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) and their beliefs of the implementation of their PLCs as measured by the PLCA-R (Oliver et al., 2014). The results were interesting and provided some insight into particular leadership practices that teachers perceive as being evident in their schools with high functioning PLCs. A study to find inferential correlations about which leadership style

actually fosters a specific dimension of a PLC would provide more extensive data for school leaders who are facilitating the implementation of PLCs in schools. Kouzes and Posner (2012) argue that the leaders who more "frequently use The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership are considerably more effective than their counterparts who use them infrequently" (p. 25). Furthermore, their research shows that engagement and commitment in the workplace are characterized by how the leader behaves and not at all by the behavior of constituents (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

Another correlation study could involve the addition of the results of the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) (Fairman, 2003). The OHI is a diagnostic tool that some school districts utilize to improve dimensions of the health of an organization that are "statistically correlated with performance and productivity" ("Organizational Health Diagnostic & Development Corporation," n.d.). The dimensions from the OHI could be used to find an inferential correlation to the dimensions of a PLC. This would help school districts that use this instrument to determine if there is a correlation between how teachers perceive the way they work within the school and the implementation of a PLC.

Additionally, it would have been interesting to include more data about gender, subjects taught, and years of experience. It would be good information to know how experience levels change the beliefs of leadership practices and the development of a PLC. It would also be valuable information to know if men and women perceive leadership practices and the implementation of PLCs differently.

Conclusions

Leadership research has roots in the works of Senge's (1994) Organization

Systems Theory which is evident in the research by Kouzes and Posner (2014), Little

(2006), Fullan (2001, 2007, 2014), Reeves (2002, 2006), Leithwood and Jantzi (1996),

and Collins (2001). Leadership is often defined as the capacity to influence others in the

organization and unleash their power to make a positive impact (Blanchard, 2010). Great

leaders can make extraordinary things happen. They can motivate and energize people,

build their capacity, and lead them to places they have never been before (Kouzes &

Posner, 2012). High impact school leaders focus on the mission, high expectations for

every student, building communities of learners, and creating a system where continuous

learning is expected from everyone (Salazar, 2008).

DuFour (2011) suggests, "Effective leaders recognize that they cannot

accomplish great things alone. They also recognize that the ability to lead is not the

private reserve of a few extraordinary people or those in particular positions of authority"

(p. 2). There may never be a place where sustained growth can happen with one person

alone. DuFour (2011) also argues, "This takes a collaborative effort and widely

dispersed leadership to meet the challenges confronting our schools" (p. 2). Kanold

(2011) explains that school leaders must learn to "act at the right times and in the right

way and with the right amount of energy, engagement, grace, and compassion" (p. 3).

Furthermore, Kouzes and Posner (2014) relate, "Leadership is not about who you are; it's

about what you do" (p. 15). The research of Kouzes and Posner (2014) found that

exemplary leadership behavior makes a positive and profound difference in people's

performance and commitment at work. They found five practices that exemplify

extraordinary leadership. The five practices are Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. The five practices listed were the basis of the leadership research for this study.

Senge's (1994) research provides insight into a model for learning organizations where people work together to enhance their time and create what they truly want to create. The members of a team begin to work towards enhancing their abilities and alter what they can do and understand. Senges' (1994) studies include research as to what makes learning organizations successful and he explains they are based upon five learning practices which include personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking. This was followed by the work of Hargraves (2000) who discussed the importance of teachers moving from working in isolation to interacting with other teachers. Little (2006) focused on professional development and professional communities as a foundation for a learner-centered school and a step in the right direction to impact learning. It was about this time that Hord (1997) begin to study the transformation towards learning organizations in schools. Hord (1997) upholds the belief that transforming a school organization into a learning organization involves a culture shift that can only be achieved with the principal guiding, nurturing, and actively monitoring the implementation of the entire staff's development as a community. She also defined five essential dimensions, which were followed up and expanded by Hipp and Huffman (2010) which includes Shared and Supportive Leadership, Shared Values and Vision, Collective Learning and Application, Shared Personal Practice, Supportive Conditions- Relationships, and Supportive Conditions – Structures. The six dimensions listed were the basis of the PLC research for this study.

In conclusion, this study found that the most differences to statements with regards to Research Question 1, "What the teachers' beliefs of their principal's leadership practices are as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) in elementary and intermediate schools?" These findings revealed that 64% of teachers agreed that their principal exhibited the practices studied and there was not a preponderance of evidence that one leadership practice was more effective than another. Although all practices reflected high results, there was one leadership practice that was observed by teachers to be exhibited most frequently, which was Inspire a Shared Vision.

The next two, which tied with a percentage of respondents who observed behaviors most frequently, were Model the Way and Challenge the Process. Given what has been discussed in this chapter and what was reported in Chapter 4, not only were these leadership practices selected as being observed the most, there were behaviors specific to Inspire a Shared Vision, Model the Way and Challenge the Process that showed similarly higher results with at least 59% of teachers responding that the behaviors were observed Very Frequently to Almost Always. The three specific practices and behaviors that showed the highest results were:

- Inspire a Shared Vision

    - "Speaks with Genuine Conviction About the Higher Meaning and Purpose of Our Work."

    - "Paints the Big Picture of What We Aspire to Accomplish."

    - "Talks About Future Trends That Will Influence How Our Work Gets Done."

- Model the Way

- "Sets a Personal Example of What He/She Expects of Others;"

- "Is Clear About His/Her Philosophy of Leadership;"

- "Spends Time and Energy Making Certain that the People He/She Works With Adhere to the Principals and Standards that We Have Agreed On."

- Challenge the Process

    - "Seeks Out Challenging Opportunities that Test His/Her Own Skills and Abilities;"

    - "Searches Outside the Formal Boundaries of His/Her Organization for Innovative Ways to Improve What We Do;"

    - "Makes Certain That We Set Achievable Goals, Make Concrete Plans, and Establish Measurable Milestones for the Projects and Programs That We Work On."

Inspiring a shared vision is also a two-part practice. First, a leader must have a vision of the future. Second, they must be able to articulate and believe in a great vision for the organization. Exceptional leaders are very good at envisioning a future that may not currently exist (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Kanold (2011) explains that a compelling vision is an expression of the principles a leader is so passionate about that they will defend them and lead others in the organization to them as well.

When effective leaders Model the Way, they model the behavior they expect from others. They do this by "showing others by their actions that they live by the values they profess" (Kouzes & Posner, 2014, p. 42). Like Inspiring a Share Vision, Model the Way is a two-part practice. Kouzes and Posner (2012) explain that in order to model effectively, principals must first clarify their values by clearly expressing their values to

everyone. They must also set the example by setting an example through their words and actions, which must be consistent through their daily actions (Kouzes & Posner, 2012)..

Kouzes and Posner (2012) state that great leaders are also great learners and "challenge is the crucible for greatness" (p. 6). Effective leaders continuously challenge the process and think outside the box in order to make improvements. Kouzes and Posner (2012) describe great leaders as those who do not sit idly by and wait for others to do the work. They act as pioneers and are willing to "step into the unknown" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 20). Michael Fullan (2014) explains that great leaders will also question existing practices and explore new and innovative ways to do things. Challenging leaders are committed to continuous improvement and turn innovative ideas into reality (DuFour et al., 2008)

Conclusions in regards to Question 2, "What are the teacher's beliefs of the implementation of the six dimensions of their PLC, as defined by the Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised (Oliver et al., 2014), in elementary and intermediate schools? The researcher found very similar results across all six dimensions of a PLC. The teachers responded that they either Agreed or Strongly Agreed with at least 82% of all statements measured. The two highest dimensions, with at least 90% of teachers selecting Agree or Strongly Agree, were Collective Learning and Application and Supportive Conditions-Structures.

Given what has been discussed in this chapter and what was reported in Chapter 4, not only did most teachers Agree or Strongly Agreed with these dimensions, there were specific statements that showed stronger results with regards to the implementation of the PLCs in the schools in this study. The specific dimensions and statements that

reflected the highest results with at least 90% of teachers who responded with Agree or Strongly Agree were:

- Collective Learning and Application
    - "School Staff Members Are Committed to Programs That Enhance Learning;"
    - "Collegial Relationships Exist Among Staff Members That Reflect Commitment To School Improvement Efforts;"
    - "Staff Members Collaboratively Analyze Student Work to Improve Teaching and Learning;"
- Supportive Conditions-Structures
    - "The School Facility is Clean, Attractive and Inviting"

Although Collective Learning and Application and Supportive Conditions-Structures showed the highest results, there were actually very minimal differences found between all six dimensions. It is worth noting the statements that teachers selected Agree or Strongly Agree more than others within each dimension. This is indicative of teams that are moving towards action orientation and sustainability in their work. Most teachers surveyed Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the following statements reflected the work of their PLC. These were:

- Shared and Supportive Leadership
    - "Staff Members Use Multiple Sources of Data to Make Decisions About Teaching and Learning"
- Shared Values and Vision
    - "Data Are Used to Prioritize Actions to Reach a Shared Vision

- Collective Learning and Application

    - "School Staff Members Are Committed to Programs That Enhance Learning;"

- Shared Personal Practice

    - "Staff Members Informally Share Ideas and Suggestions For Improving Student Learning;"

- Supportive Conditions-Relationships

    - "Caring Relationships Exist Among Staff and Students That Are Built on Trust and Respect;"

- Supportive Conditions – Structures

    - "The School Facility is Clean, Attractive and Inviting."

DuFour et al., (2008) describes an exemplary learning community as one that works to create safe and caring learning environments and fosters a culture that "promotes collaboration, enables staff and students to explore their full learning potentials, and results in meaningful learning experiences" (p. 451). DuFour et al., (2008) also states that collaboration is defined as "a systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results" (p. 464). The results of the PLCA-R reflect that the schools surveyed have created cultures that support student learning and collaborative relationships. DuFour and Fullan (2013) state that one of the most relentless aspects of PLCs is the focus on continuous learning for students and also for the adults who impact them. It also reveals that teachers in the schools studied are committed to setting standards high for student and adult learning, building cultures focused on results, and

establishing high functioning and collaborative teams. Finally, the teachers working in what they perceive as highly effective PLCs perceived their principals as exhibiting the leadership practices of Inspire a Shared Vision, Model the Way, and Challenge the Process more than other practices observed. Figure 5.1 further illustrates the findings from this study.

Figure 5.1

Model of Findings
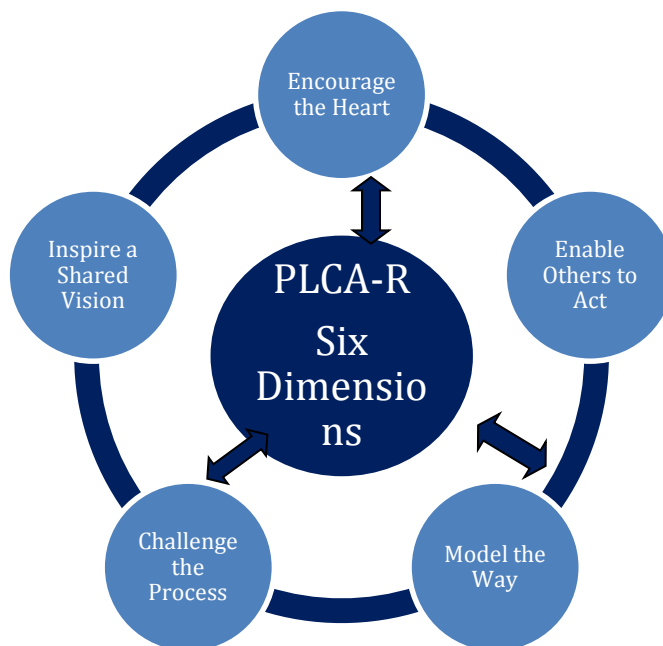
        The researcher had the opportunity to work with the principals and teachers in all

eight of the schools involved in this study. They worked to put the three big ideas of a

PLC in place and shift the culture from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning and

results (DuFour et al., 2010). Additionally, the researcher worked with both principals

and teachers to focus on collaboration. As specified through the results of the PLCA-R,

teachers on these campuses indicated they worked together to seek knowledge, skills, and

strategies to develop teacher efficacy, improve their professional practice, and enhance

student learning.   They also perceived they were actively involved in creating high

expectations for students. Furthermore, as shown through the LPI, the principals

employed the behaviors of Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, and Challenge the

Process to create a culture of trust and respect which fostered collaboration and data

driven student learning. Reeves (2002) posits, "Leaders in schools have the most direct

impact on the model they establish in building management, relationship building, and

providing professional development" (p. 71). It is important to add that leadership is not

only a function of what the principal knows and does; it is the function of the way they

interact with others within particular contexts and situations (Hill, 2009). Principals

continue to play a critical role in the development and sustainability of PLCs by forging

the conditions and creating an environment that foster learning communities in schools

(Louis & Others, 1996).

  The literature reveals a rationale for developing PLCs. It has become evident that

leaders must implement a process to determine if students are learning at higher levels

and if schools are meeting the accountability requirements derived from state

assessments. DuFour and Marzano (2011) write that educators must think and act anew

if they are to rise to the occasion and meet the challenges they face in today's schools.

The Wallace Foundation describes effective leaders as those who understand how to

establish a vision of a commitment for high standards of learning for all students, create a

climate of collaboration and trust, develop capacity in others and manage data and

processes (Mendels, 2012). Additionally, the Wallace Foundation states that the

"principal remains the central source of leadership and influence" ("The school principal

as leader: guiding schools to better teaching and learning," 2013, p. 6). More principals

in today's schools are implementing PLCs as a way to meet these challenges and truly

impact student learning at higher levels (DuFour et al., 2010). "Above all, we must never

lose focus of our number-one goal: to ensure learning for all" (Smith, 2015 p. 65).

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Appendix A

Comparative View of the Critical Factors of the Dimensions of a PLC

Dimensions of a PLC Used in this Study	Kruse, Louis and Bryk (1995)	Hord (2004)	Little (2006)	DuFour and Eaker (2008)	Hipp and Huffman (2010)	Senge (2012)
Shared and Supportive Leadership		Shared and Supportive Leadership			Shared and supportive leadership	
Shared Values and Vision	Shared norms and values	Shared Values, Mission, and Vision	Understanding and implementing plans to improve the schools goals and priorities	Shared mission, vision, values and goals – all focused on student learning	Shared values and vision	Building shared vision
Collective Learning and Application of Learning	Reflective Dialogue –	Collective learning and its application – Reflective dialogue or inquiry	Enhance continuous learning and improvement	1.Collective inquiry into best practices and current reality 2.Teams collaborate and focus on higher levels of learning 3.Action orientation-learning by doing	Collective learning and application	Team learning
Shared Personal Practice	De-privatization of practice	Shared Personal Practice	Building collective knowledge to teach at higher levels	Results Orientation	Shared personal practice	
Supportive Conditions – Relationships			Sustaining conditions that bolster continuous improvement	Commitment to continuous improvement	Supportive conditions – collegial relationships	
Supportive Conditions - Structures	Collective focus on student learning/collaboration	Supportive conditions			Supportive conditions - structure	

Appendix B

Cultural Shifts in a Professional Learning Community

Fundamental Purpose

From focusing on teaching…	to focusing on student learning.
From focusing and emphasizing what was taught…	to a relentless focus on what was learned.
From providing individual teachers who are give standards and curriculum guides…	to engaging teams of teachers focused on what's essential knowledge to be learned.

How to Use Assessments

From summative assessments give frequently…	to common formative assessments that are developed jointly by the entire team.
From giving assessments to determine students who did not learn by a specific deadline…	to developing assessments that determine where students are struggling.
From using assessments that either reward or punish students…	to developing assessments that will inform students and help them be responsible for their own learning.
From the teacher working in isolation to determine what and how standards should be assessed…	to the team of teachers working collaboratively to determine the criteria and ensure there is consistency throughout the time regarding the assessment and grading.
From continuously using one form of assessment…	to using a balanced approach to assessing students.
From focusing on averaging scores…	to monitoring students efficiency levels with every skill.

Response When Students Don't Learn

From teachers working in isolation to determine the appropriate intervention…	to a team of teachers who are mutually accountable for the learning of all students to determine the appropriate intervention with a systematic approach.
From remediating…	to intervening.
From simply inviting students for remediation or intervention…	to making this mandatory…a required time for support.
From teaching providing one opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery…	to providing opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Work of Teachers

From individual teachers clarifying what students must learn…	to teachers collaborating to build shared knowledge about what is essential to be learned.
From individual teachers determining a	to teachers working collaboratively to

priority of the importance of learning standards…	establish the priority of standards.
From teachers working in isolation to determine the pacing of the delivery of instruction…	to teams of teachers working in collaboration to agree on the pacing.
From working in isolation…	to sharing practice and being open to share with teachers by collaborating instructional practices and allowing observation to occur.
From teachers making decisions based on preferences…	to working collaboratively and building shared knowledge about best practices.
From "collaboration lite" which may not be focused on student learning…	to ensuring collaboration is completely student focused and what impacts their learning.
From teachers working from the assumption that "these are my kids, those are your kids"…	to taking ownership and sharing responsibility for the learning of all kids. Teachers work from the assumption that "these are our kids."

Focus

From focusing on inputs…	to a continuous focus on results.
From teachers collecting and evaluating results from their own assessments…	to teachers collaboratively evaluating the data from common assessment to (1) inform them of the level of proficiency of their collective practice, and (2) respond appropriately to students who are struggling.
From goals that are related to the completion of projects or assignments…	to developing SMART goals to determine student learning
From independence…	to interdependence.
From infrequent recognition that is generic in nature…	to developing a culture that celebrates success and creates several winners.

Professional Development

From external learning (workshops)…	to job embedded adult professional learning.
From the expectation that adult learning occurs only on the days the district has established as professional development…	to the expectation that learning is ongoing occurs as a regular part of the work routine.
From presenting to entire faculties…	to determining what each team needs to improve their practice and team-action based research.
From learning individually through workshops and professional development…	to collective learning by working together and sharing professional practices.
From determining the impact of student learning based on ("Did you like it?")…	to the impact of the learning based on evidence of student mastery.

Appendix C

IRB Permission Letter

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

June 8, 2015

Ms. Julie English
c/o Steven Busch
Dean, Education

Dear Ms. Julie English,

Based upon your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIE" was conducted on February 18, 2015.

At that time, your request for exemption under **Category 4** was approved pending modification of your proposed procedures/documents.

The changes you have made adequately respond to the identified contingencies. As long as you continue using procedures described in this project, you do not have to reapply for review. * Any modification of this approved protocol will require review and further approval. Please contact me to ascertain the appropriate mechanism.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-9215.

Sincerely yours,

Kirstin Rochford, MPH, CIP, CPIA
Director, Research Compliance

*Approvals for exempt protocols will be valid for 5 years beyond the approval date. Approval for this project will expire **June 7, 2020**. If the project is completed prior to this date, a final report should be filed to close the protocol. If the project will continue after this date, you will need to reapply for approval if you wish to avoid an interruption of your data collection.

Protocol Number: 15280-EX

Appendix D

CONROE ISD PERMISSION FOR STUDY

FIRST CLASS®
Business Edition

Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Schools

Desktop • Mailbox • Dr. Gibson • Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Schools

From: Catherine A. Gibson	Tuesday, June 17, 2014 12:37 PM -05
Subject: Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Schools	
To: Julie L. English	

Julie,

Your *Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Schools* dated May 25, 2014 has been approved. Please ensure that all participants understand that their participation is voluntary. We are looking forward to reading your research report and please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Cathy Gibson

_____

Catherine A. Gibson, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent Elementary Education
Conroe Independent School District
Telephone: 936-709-7714

Appendix E

PERMISSION TO USE THE PLCA-R

UNIVERSITY
OF
LOUISIANA
Lafayette

*Department of Educational Foundations
and Leadership
P.O. Box 43091
Lafayette, LA 70504-3091*

February 16, 2014

Julie English
2427 Pebblebrook Cr.
Conroe, TX 77384

Dear Ms. English:

This correspondence is to grant permission to utilize the *Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised* (PLCA-R) as your instrument for data collection for your doctoral study through the University of Houston. I believe your research *examining perceptions of middle school teachers in relation to implementation of professional learning communities on their campuses* will contribute to the PLC literature and provide valuable information related to middle school reform. I am pleased that you are interested in using the PLCA-R measure in your research.

This permission letter allows use of the PLCA-R through paper/pencil administration, as well as permission for the PLCA-R online version. For administration of the PLCA-R online version, services must be secured through our online host, SEDL in Austin, TX. Additional information for online administration can be found at www.sedl.org.

While this letter provides permission to use the measure in your study, authorship of the measure will remain as Olivier, Hipp, and Huffman (exact citation on the following page). This permission does not allow renaming the measure or claiming authorship.

Upon completion of your study, I would be interested in learning about your entire study and would welcome the opportunity to receive an electronic version of your completed dissertation research.

Thank you for your interest in our research and measure for assessing professional learning community attributes within schools. Should you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dianne F. Olivier

Dianne F. Olivier, Ph. D.
Assistant Professor
Joan D. and Alexander S. Haig/BORSF Professor
Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership
College of Education
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
P.O. Box 43091
Lafayette, LA 70504-3091
(337) 482-6408 (Office)   dolivier@louisiana.edu

Reference Citation for Professional Learning Community Assessment-Revised measure:

Source: Olivier, D. F., Hipp, K. K., & Huffman, J. B. (2010). Assessing and analyzing
schools. In K. K. Hipp & J. B. Huffman (Eds.). *Demystifying professional learning
communities: School leadership at its best.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Appendix F

PERMISSION TO USE THE LPI

WILEY

October 8, 2014

Julie English
2427 Pebblebrook Cr
Conroe, TX 77384

Dear Ms. English:

Thank you for your request to use the LPI®: Leadership Practices Inventory® in your dissertation. This letter grants you permission to use either the print or electronic LPI [Self/Observer/Self and Observer] instrument[s] in your research. You may *reproduce* the instrument in printed form at no charge beyond the discounted one-time cost of purchasing a single copy; however, you may not distribute any photocopies except for specific research purposes. If you prefer to use the electronic distribution of the LPI you will need to separately contact Eli Becker (ebecker@wiley.com) directly for further details regarding product access and payment. Please be sure to review the product information resources before reaching out with pricing questions.

Permission to use either the written or electronic versions is contingent upon the following:

(1) The LPI may be used only for research purposes and may not be sold or used in conjunction with any compensated activities;
(2) Copyright in the LPI, and all derivative works based on the LPI, is retained by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. The following copyright statement must be included on all reproduced copies of the instrument(s); "Copyright © 2013 James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved. Used with permission";
(3) One (1) **electronic** copy of your dissertation and one (1) copy of all papers, reports, articles, and the like which make use of the LPI data must be sent **promptly** to my attention at the address below; and,
(4) We have the right to include the results of your research in publication, promotion, distribution and sale of the LPI and all related products.

Permission is limited to the rights granted in this letter and does not include the right to grant others permission to reproduce the instrument(s) except for versions made by nonprofit organizations for visually or physically handicapped persons. No additions or changes may be made without our prior written consent. You understand that your use of the LPI shall in no way place the LPI in the public domain or in any way compromise our copyright in the LPI. This license is nontransferable. We reserve the right to revoke this permission at any time, effective upon written notice to you, in the event we conclude, in our reasonable judgment, that your use of the LPI is compromising our proprietary rights in the LPI.

Best wishes for every success with your research project.

Cordially,

Ellen Peterson
Permissions Editor
Epeterson4@gmail.com

LPI SURVEY INSTRUMENT

LPI LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY BY JAMES M. KOUZES & BARRY Z. POSNER

INSTRUCTIONS

You are being asked by the person whose name appears at the top of the next page to assess his or her leadership behaviors. Below the person's name you will find thirty statements describing various leadership behaviors. Please read each statement carefully, and using the rating scale below, ask yourself:

"How frequently does this person engage in the behavior described?"

When selecting your response to each statement:

- Be realistic about the extent to which this person actually engages in the behavior.

- Be as honest and accurate as you can be.

- DO NOT answer in terms of how you would like to see this person behave or in terms of how you think he or she should behave.

- DO answer in terms of how this person typically behaves on most days, on most projects, and with most people.

- Be thoughtful about your responses. For example, giving this person 10s on all items is most likely not an accurate description of his or her behavior. Similarly, giving someone all 1s or all 5s is most likely not an accurate description either. Most people will do some things more or less often than they do other things.

- If you feel that a statement does not apply, it's probably because you don't see or experience the behavior. That means this person does not frequently engage in the behavior, at least around you. In that case, assign a rating of 3 or lower.

For each statement, decide on a response and then record the corresponding number in the box to the right of the statement. After you have responded to all thirty statements, go back through the LPI one more time to make sure you have responded to each statement. *Every* statement *must* have a rating.

The Rating Scale runs from 1 to 10. Choose the number that best applies to each statement.

RATING SCALE	1–Almost Never 2–Rarely	3–Seldom 4–Once in a While	5–Occasionally 6–Sometimes	7–Fairly Often 8–Usually	9–Very Frequently 10–Almost Always

Thank you.

LPI: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY OBSERVER

Name of Leader: _____

I (the Observer) am This Leader's (Check one): ☐ Manager ☐ Direct Report ☐ Co-Worker ☐ Other

To what extent does this leader engage in the following behaviors? Choose the response number that best applies to each statement and record it in the box to the right of that statement. He or She:

1. Sets a personal example of what he/she expects of others. ☐

2. Talks about future trends that will influence how our work gets done. ☐

3. Seeks out challenging opportunities that test his/her own skills and abilities. ☐

4. Develops cooperative relationships among the people he/she works with. ☐

5. Praises people for a job well done. ☐

6. Spends time and energy making certain that the people he/she works with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on. ☐

7. Describes a compelling image of what our future could be like. ☐

8. Challenges people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work. ☐

9. Actively listens to diverse points of view. ☐

10. Makes it a point to let people know about his/her confidence in their abilities. ☐

11. Follows through on the promises and commitments he/she makes. ☐

12. Appeals to others to share an exciting dream of the future. ☐

13. Searches outside the formal boundaries of his/her organization for innovative ways to improve what we do. ☐

14. Treats others with dignity and respect. ☐

15. Makes sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of projects. ☐

16. Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect other people's performance. ☐

17. Shows others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision. ☐

18. Asks "What can we learn?" when things don't go as expected. ☐

19. Supports the decisions that people make on their own. ☐

20. Publicly recognizes people who exemplify commitment to shared values. ☐

21. Builds consensus around a common set of values for running our organization. ☐

22. Paints the "big picture" of what we aspire to accomplish. ☐

23. Makes certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on. ☐

24. Gives people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work. ☐

25. Finds ways to celebrate accomplishments. ☐

26. Is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership. ☐

27. Speaks with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work. ☐

28. Experiments and takes risks, even when there is a chance of failure. ☐

29. Ensures that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves. ☐

30. Gives the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions. ☐

LPI: LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY OBSERVER

PLCA-R SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Professional Learning Communities Assessment – Revised

Directions:
This questionnaire assesses your perceptions about your principal, staff, and stakeholders based on the dimensions of a professional learning community (PLC) and related attributes. This questionnaire contains a number of statements about practices which occur in some schools. Read each statement and then use the scale below to select the scale point that best reflects your personal degree of agreement with the statement. Shade the appropriate oval provided to the right of each statement. Be certain to select only one response for each statement. Comments after each dimension section are optional.

Key Terms:
- Principal = Principal, not Associate or Assistant Principal
- Staff/Staff Members = All adult staff directly associated with curriculum, instruction, and assessment of students
- Stakeholders = Parents and community members

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)
            2 = Disagree (D)
            3 = Agree (A)
            4 = Strongly Agree (SA)

	STATEMENTS	SCALE			
	Shared and Supportive Leadership	SD	D	A	SA
1.	Staff members are consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.	0	0	0	0
2.	The principal incorporates advice from staff members to make decisions.	0	0	0	0
3.	Staff members have accessibility to key information.	0	0	0	0
4.	The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.	0	0	0	0
5.	Opportunities are provided for staff members to initiate change.	0	0	0	0
6.	The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	0	0	0	0

		SD	D	A	SA
7.	The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	0	0	0	0
8.	Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members.	0	0	0	0
9.	Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.	0	0	0	0
10.	Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	0	0	0	0
11.	Staff members use multiple sources of data to make decisions about teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS:

	STATEMENTS	**SCALE**			
	Shared Values and Vision	SD	D	A	SA
12.	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.	0	0	0	0
13.	Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0
14.	Staff members share visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning.	0	0	0	0
15.	Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.	0	0	0	0
16.	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.	0	0	0	0
17.	School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.	0	0	0	0
18.	Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.	0	0	0	0
19.	Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.	0	0	0	0
20.	Data are used to prioritize actions to reach a shared vision.	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS:

		SD	D	A	SA
	Collective Learning and Application	SD	D	A	SA

21.	Staff members work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.	0	0	0	0
22.	Collegial relationships exist among staff members that reflect commitment to school improvement efforts.	0	0	0	0
23.	Staff members plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.	0	0	0	0
24.	A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.	0	0	0	0
25.	Staff members engage in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.	0	0	0	0
26.	Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0
27.	School staff members and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.	0	0	0	0
28.	School staff members are committed to programs that enhance learning.	0	0	0	0
29.	Staff members collaboratively analyze multiple sources of data to assess the effectiveness of instructional practices.	0	0	0	0
30.	Staff members collaboratively analyze student work to improve teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0

COMMENTS:

	STATEMENTS	SCALE			
	Shared Personal Practice	SD	D	A	SA
31.	Opportunities exist for staff members to observe peers and offer encouragement.	0	0	0	0
32.	Staff members provide feedback to peers related to instructional practices.	0	0	0	0
33.	Staff members informally share ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.	0	0	0	0
34.	Staff members collaboratively review student work to share and improve instructional practices.	0	0	0	0
35.	Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.	0	0	0	0

		SD	D	A	SA
36.	Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.	0	0	0	0
37.	Staff members regularly share student work to guide overall school improvement.	0	0	0	0
COMMENTS:					
	Supportive Conditions – Relationships	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
38.	Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.	0	0	0	0
39.	A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.	0	0	0	0
40.	Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated regularly in our school.	0	0	0	0
41.	School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.	0	0	0	0
42.	Relationships among staff members support honest and respectful examination of data to enhance teaching and learning.	0	0	0	0
COMMENTS:					
	Supportive Conditions – Structures	**SD**	**D**	**A**	**SA**
43.	Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.	0	0	0	0
44.	The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.	0	0	0	0
45.	Fiscal resources are available for professional development.	0	0	0	0
46.	Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.	0	0	0	0
	STATEMENTS	**SCALE**			
		SD	**D**	**A**	**SA**
47.	Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.	0	0	0	0
48.	The school facility is clean, attractive and inviting.	0	0	0	0
49.	The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.	0	0	0	0
50.	Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff members.	0	0	0	0

51.	Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members.	0	0	0	0
52.	Data are organized and made available to provide easy access to staff members.	0	0	0	0
COMMENTS:					

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Source: Olivier, D. F., Hipp, K. K., & Huffman, J. B. (2010). Assessing and analyzing schools. In K. K. Hipp & J. B. Huffman (Eds.). *Demystifying professional learning communities: School leadership at its Best.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.