EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS IN HIGH-POVERTY, HIGH-PERFORMING URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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by
Erwin Garcia-Velasquez
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EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS IN HIGH-POVERTY, HIGH-PERFORMING URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

Erwin Garcia-Velasquez

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Approved:

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Dr. Julie Fernandez, Committee Chair

__________________________
Dr. Vickey Giles, Committee Co-Chair

__________________________
Dr. Julie Fernandez, Dean
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences

This dissertation follows the format and style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition* except where superseded by directions from the Director of the Doctor of Education in Executive Educational Leadership Program at Houston Baptist University.
DEDICATION

To Jesus my Lord and Savior. To my sons, Gabriel Alberto and Aaron Levy Garcia. To my loving wife, Johanna Maria Garcia. To both my parents, Alejandro and Lucy for their sacrifice and continuous support.
ABSTRACT

Garcia-Velasquez, E., Characteristics or Effective Principals in high-poverty, high-performing Urban Elementary Schools. Doctor of Education in Executive Educational Leadership, May 2019, Houston Baptist University, Houston, Texas.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005).

The researcher was able to interview ten candidates that met the criteria for the study. The participants for this study were selected from an urban district located in Southeast Texas. Additionally, all the participants were principals whose schools met the Texas Education Agency (TEA) standards and obtained at least three academic distinctions during the 2016-2017 school year. Also, to qualify as a participant in this study, the participating principals served schools where the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch exceeded 90%. When the participants were asked to identify characteristics, principals need to possess to be able to succeed in high-poverty schools; they identified Instructional Knowledge, Relationships, Data-Driven, Focus and Communication as the most prevalent. By the time the participants selected these themes overall, they had not been exposed to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) prior to the follow-up questions. However, when principals were presented the 21 Responsibilities and were asked to identify characteristics, principals need to possess to be able to succeed in high-poverty schools, they identified Culture, Focus, Communication, Involvement in Curriculum/Instruction and Assessment, Visibility and Relationships. The participants of the study clearly highlighted Culture as the most prevalent characteristic principals in poverty must possess, although they were not intentional or aware of this responsibility prior to the moment they were given the 21 Responsibilities. The researcher was able to conclude that the participant
principals were unintentionally intentional about building a positive school culture. These highly effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing schools created a culture of success by building strong relationships and leading the process of teaching and learning with a focus on student achievement, without being intentionally aware that their actions translated in a positive culture of success.

*Keywords*: poverty, poverty school, high-poverty school, school culture, 21 Responsibilities, urban elementary
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Public education in the United States is under severe scrutiny due to the systematic failure of our academic system to breach the achievement gap still present among mainstreamed children and children of color in poverty schools (Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000). Overcoming the lingering achievement gap is considered to be a moral obligation and pressing civil rights concern for all stakeholders (Tauck Family Foundation, 2015). Children of color are suffering systematic oppression through intended or perhaps unintended institutional racism (Gordon et al., 2000). Many researchers agree that the issue of academic performance in poverty schools is more than a school issue, it is for many, a social problem since differences in communities and resources obstruct the improvement of local schools (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). Most underperforming schools are located in impoverished communities (Corallo & McDonald, 2001) sustaining by default the cycle of poverty. Poverty in the United States is an oppressing issue that affects at least twelve million children (Berliner, 2013). As noted by Capra (2009), poverty is the most insidious enemy of education. In the year 2013 poverty students became the majority in the nation’s public schools (Southern Education Foundation, 2015).

As reported by Yoshikawa, Aber, & Beardslee (2012), 20% of students in the United States are living below the poverty line. According to Gabe (2013), schools in poverty are mostly composed of students of color. In the year 2012, it was estimated that 37.5% of African American children lived in poverty, compared to 33.3% of Hispanics and 11.8% of non-Hispanic white children. Berliner (2013) has identified poverty as the most critical issue to address in school transformation. Besides, poverty has been associated with other adverse outcomes such
as relational, individual and emotional issues as well as limitations of language development and academic achievement (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Even more startling is the fact that it is estimated that only 9% of children in poverty will attain a college degree (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011).

According to Berliner (2013), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) enacted in 2001, was an attempt to close the barriers of poverty and the achievement gap but failed to meet its goals. According to Edmonds (1979), inequity in American schools originates in our systemic failure to educate the children of the poor. Poverty in the United States is at its highest since 1959 (Gabe, 2013) and the number of schools failing due to the irrepressible cycle of poverty continues to grow. High-poverty minority schools are considered hard-to-staff and students in these schools are educated by least experienced, least effective teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

Despite all challenges, many poverty schools have been able to attain and maintain significant success overcoming their challenges (Carter, 2000). Many of these schools are even outperforming most privileged schools and have become the subject of multiple studies (Reeves, 2003). These schools have proved that the socioeconomic background of students does not always determine their academic achievement (Merritt, 2016). Some researchers have focused their attention on the impact that highly effective principals have had in shaping failing poverty schools into models for the 21st century (Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). In consonance with Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005), school leadership is second only to classroom teaching in the variables that positively affect student achievement. Highly effective principals can increase the achievement of typical students by two to seven months in a single year, whereas ineffective principals can lower achievement by the same amount (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013).
Background of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). The researcher intends, through the course of this study, to add to the body of knowledge by contributing alternative attributes for district administrators in the process of finding most effective principals for their poverty schools. In the work of Cheney & Davis (2011), Texas was labeled as a lagging state that has poor policies and misalignment between policies and best principal effectiveness practices. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) created new principal standards in 2013 with the purpose of providing best practices for principals to be effective leaders and to increase student achievement (TEA, 2015). The work of Murphy (1988) questioned the impact that principals had on student achievement. On the other hand, Hallinger & Heck (1998) as well as Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson (2010); Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin (2012) found that such impact existed in an indirect manner. Edmonds (1979) as well as Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003) concluded that principals had a direct influence on student achievement since school principals can control critical variables such as instructional quality, hiring and retaining effective teachers as well as establishing a shared vision for the organization.

The work of Bain & Company (2013) reported that school districts are in need of innovative ways to prepare principals to cope with present-day school needs. But as the Council of the Great City Schools along with the Wallace Foundation have recommended, the focus of principal preparation should be on instructional leadership (Corcoran et al., 2013).
Statement of the Problem

The achievement gap in the United States can be attributed to the history of inequalities and the challenges that leaders in education have consistently faced (Lindsey & Roberts, 2013). Poverty as analyzed by Jensen (2013), puts children with low socioeconomic status on a disadvantage as compared to middle-class students. Children in poverty are at a disadvantage in health and nutrition which limits their ability to listen, focus and learn in class. Also, children in poverty, as estimated by researchers, have heard 13 million fewer words than middle-class children by age four, putting poverty children in a disadvantage for school readiness and literacy skills (Hart & Risley, 2003).

Children in poverty are also less motivated to learn due to financial hardships that correlate to depressive symptoms (Butterworth, Olesen, & Leach, 2012). Also, poverty affects youngsters’ view of the future. Children in poverty tend to expect more adverse events and have lower expectations about their self-efficacy in detriment of their effort since expectancy for failure is more prevalent (Robb, Simon, & Wardle, 2009). Children from low socioeconomic status have more cognitive challenges characterized by shorter attention spans, limited self-monitoring, more distractibility, and insufficient ability to solve problems as compared to middle-class children (Alloway, Gathercole, Kirkwood, & Elliott, 2009).

Jensen (2013) has found that at least three-quarters of children in poverty come from single-parent families. The lack of sufficient role modeling has been linked to relational adversity. Students with disrupted home relationships are more likely to be impulsive, use profanity and act disrespectfully. Lastly, children in poverty are inclined to exhibit anger and impulsivity due to chronic stress, also defined as distress. Symptoms of distress can also be related to passivity that might be perceived as laziness and disconnection (Jensen 2013).
The connection between poverty and poor academic achievement has been clearly demonstrated as noted by the U.S. Department of Education (2001). School Principals in urban areas with a high density of children in poverty are struggling significantly to cope with the social-emotional needs of their students (Economic Studies at Brookings, 2015). Moreover, the problem is complex when schools across the country are not able to bridge the academic gap between children of color extending by default the cycle of poverty of low-income families (Steagall, 2012). As noted by Berliner (2013), the vast majority of children living in poverty and attending poverty schools, are not going to have successful lives. According to Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler (2007), students in poverty schools should be given access to teachers and principals of comparable quality to those attending most privileged school communities. Clotfelter et al., (2007) claim that poverty schools must receive higher quality resources, as a matter of social justice, to compensate for the educational limitations that children from low socio-economic background bring to the school. But even more than resources, poverty schools need effective principals that can direct school change to meet the needs of all students (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013).

There is sufficient literature confirming the effect that effective leadership has on student achievement. However, there is insufficiency research explaining the discrepancy of the actions, characteristics, and practices of high-performing, high-poverty school principals from those colleagues that are failing, or not showing improvement (Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, & Ylimaki, 2007). Also, as presented by Hickey (2010), there is limited data in educational research about the attributes of turnaround principals. School boards and superintendents across the country are struggling to recruit and hire effective principals for challenging schools. As presented by Rammer (2007), the superintendents surveyed in his study are having difficulty in
matching the research-based theory of principal effectiveness with the actual skill set of candidates selected for their schools. Rammer also states that the success of the principal selection process ties directly to the ability of school superintendents in aligning candidates to research-based theories such as the 21 responsibilities articulated by Waters et al. (2003). In many instances, district administrators lack consistency and purposefulness when hiring principals for their schools (Rammer, 2007). Another obstacle is the lack of suitable predictors of principal effectiveness (Ash, Hodge, & Connell, 2013). There is a high principal turnover in poverty schools (Branch et al., 2013). This issue is accredited to the practice of hiring principals that are not prepared to handle challenging schools (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2009). The problem of culture, children in poverty, high teacher turnover and poor academic achievement could burnout principals very early in their careers (Branch et al., 2013). As Knuth & Banks (2006) points out, hiring the wrong leader for a school brings severe consequences for school’s students and families, an economic and political loss for the district, and excessive professional cost for the principal. In the subject of principal evaluation, McDaniel, (2008) found that there is limited research on principal’s evaluations in alignment to standards such as the former Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. McDaniel also concluded that there is little connection between principal standards and principal’s practices. Many university preparation curriculums are disconnected from what principals are expected to do in their school districts.

**Statement of the Purpose and Significance**

As noted by King (2010), high-poverty and low-performing schools tend to have lower-quality principals. It is imminent that district officials redefine their screening and selection process to adequately respond to the needs of low-performing schools in high-poverty areas. The
high turnover and the widespread failure of thousands of schools indicate that change in this area is a must since effective principals can transform schools. As referenced by Fuller, Young & Orr (2007), after five years of career path analysis on school principals in Texas, only about 50% were still employed as principals. Their study also indicated that in schools rated as low-performing, only 46% of principals lasted five years on the job as compared to 54% in high-performing schools. In this study, it was also noted that a lower percentage of principals from low socioeconomic schools obtained a promotion to superintendency as compared to principals in other schools.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). Being effective in a high socioeconomic school might not be enough to sustain the challenges of poverty schools. Selecting and empowering effective principals in high-poverty schools could decrease teacher and principal turnover, provide more consistency in the process of change to ultimately increase student achievement and close even further the achievement gap. As stated by Linsey et al. (2013), we can perpetuate racism and inequalities by maintaining the state of affairs, or we can change our organizations to high levels of effectiveness and achievement. The researcher intends, through the course of this study, to add to the body of knowledge by contributing alternative attributes for district administrators in the process of finding most effective principals for high-poverty schools.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership characteristics that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?
2. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership practices that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?

**Definition of Terms**

**Academic Distinctions.**

Per the Texas Education Agency, Academic Distinctions are given to schools that performed at the top quartile in a group of 40 schools with similar demographics. In elementary schools, distinctions are awarded in Reading, Mathematics, and Science, Closing the Achievement Gap, Student Progress and Post-Secondary Readiness.

**Effective principals.**

Are defined as leaders that create the learning environment conditions needed to improve academic achievement while ensuring that policies, procedures, and resources contribute to the success of the school organization (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009).

**High-Poverty Schools**

The US Department of Education defines the term as a school in the highest quartile of schools in the State with respect to the poverty level, using a measure of poverty determined by the State (US Department of Education, 2009). Also, the term is defined by Ylimaki et al. (2007) as schools where the majority of students served are living in households with an annual income below the poverty line. For the purpose of this study, a high-poverty school is one where 90% or more of its population qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

**High-Performing School**

For the purpose of this study, a high-performing school is one that has met academic standards in Texas and has obtained at least three academic distinctions.
High SES.

High socioeconomic status.

Improvement Required.

Per the Texas Education Agency, Improvement Required refers to a school that has not met the minimum standards defined by the state.

Low SES.

Defined as Low socioeconomic status.

McREL. Mid-continent Research for Education, and Learning.

Met Standards.

Per the Texas Education System, Met Standards refers to a school that meets the minimum standards defined by the state. The Texas Education Agency stipulates that Met Standard is assigned for overall performance and for the performance of each domain to schools that meet the performance targets (TEA, 2018).

STAAR.

Per the Texas Education Agency, STAAR stands for State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness. In 2007, the Texas legislature modified the Texas Education Code to change the State’s accountability instrument from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TASK) to STAAR.

TEA.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) administers the Texas public system that consists of 1,203 school districts and charters, 8,771 campuses, 352, 756 teachers and 5.34 million students. The Texas student make up is 54.4% Hispanic, 28.1% White, 12.6% African American, 4.2%
Asian. Of the total student population, 59% is considered economically disadvantaged and 18.9% are English Language Learners (TEA, 2017)

**Texas Principal Standards.**

As per the T-PESS User’s Guide, the Texas Principal Standards are:

Standard 1 - Instructional Leadership
Standard 2 - Human Capital
Standard 3 - Executive Leadership
Standard 4 - School Culture
Standard 5 - Strategic Operations

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Principal Evaluation Steering Committee finalized the new principal standards in 2013. The standards are intended to increase best practices for principals to be effective leaders as they improve student achievement (T-PESS, 2015).

**T-PESS.**

T-PESS is defined as the Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System. The T-PESS was planned and developed in 2015 based on the principal’s standards and in accordance with the Texas Education Agency. T-PESS was piloted in 54 school districts in urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state.

**Theoretical Framework**

In an attempt to provide school leaders with practical guidance to increase effectiveness, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) organization, created the McREL’s Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters et al., 2003). The creators of the McREL framework claim to have summarized a comprehensive analysis of 30 years of research and
quantitative data that looked at the relationship between school leadership and student achievement. According to these authors, previous models or frameworks relied heavily on theories, anecdotes, and personal viewpoints.

The McREL framework provides 21 leadership responsibilities with a focus on best practices to increase student achievement. To be effective, a principal must be willing to challenge the status quo as a change agent. Also, principals should foster a positive culture, involve teachers in the decision making and must be an instructional leader that provides resources and monitors effective practices. Principals must become advocates that protect children from issues that could affect their educational process. Finally, principals must be able to be flexible and be adaptive to the needs of the school community. (James & Abuyen, 2015).

The McREL framework also connected the leadership responsibilities to effective practices that increase student achievement when implemented effectively. The lack of understanding of the 21 responsibilities could result in limited or adverse effects on student outcomes (Waters et al., 2007).

According to Gaunt (2016), there is limited research about how the 21 responsibilities relate to the daily work of principals and in the different contexts and work assignments they are exposed to. James & Abuyen (2015) found, after comparing principals in low performing and high-performing schools, that principals in low performing schools tended to emphasize first order change responsibilities than their counterparts in high-performing schools. When asked to rate the level of execution of the 21 responsibilities in schools, teachers and principals responses in high-performing schools were more aligned than in low performing schools (James & Abuyen, 2015). According to Taylor & La cava (2011), principals in poverty schools face complex challenges that require making dramatic changes in their schools to meet state and
public expectations. Marzano et al. (2005) found 21 principal responsibilities linked to second-order change. These second order change practices are: (a) knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (b) optimizer, also described as a motivator, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) change agent, (e) monitoring/evaluating, (f) flexibility, and (g) ideals and beliefs. Second order change practices have been directly connected to increased student achievement (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004). Taylor & La cava (2011) found that in order to improve learning in significant ways in high-poverty schools it is imminent that there is an even a more precise and more specific definition of the seven responsibilities of second order change found by Marzano et al. (2005). Second-order change is more complex and forceful than first-order change. Such change demands principals that are persistent and focused on student achievement (Waters & Grubb, 2004). In a study conducted by James & Abuyen (2015) it was found that most principals in high-performing schools rated visibility, ideals/beliefs, communication and optimizer as the most important principal responsibilities in poverty schools. Visibility was the highest rated principal responsibility according to James & Abuyen (2015). As far as second-order change responsibilities, optimizer and flexibility were found to be the highest among all principals in high and low performing schools. Also, ideals/beliefs and optimizer rated as the most crucial for second-order change among high performing schools. Waters & Kingston (2005) warn that principals understand the order of change necessary for their schools, failing to understand such level of change could bring negative consequences on student achievement. Warren & Higbee (2007) stated that transformation could only be effectively implemented when the principal clearly comprehends the level of change needed. Also, as presented by Hambrick & Tucker (2015), principals must be intentional about looking for teacher input and feedback on school change efforts.
According to Waters et al. (2003), the 21 leadership Responsibilities are:

1. Culture: fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation
2. Order: establishes a set of standard operation procedures and routines
3. Discipline: protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus
4. Resources: provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs
5. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment: is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
6. Focus: establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention
7. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment: is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
8. Visibility: has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students
9. Contingent rewards: recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments
10. Communication: establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students
11. Outreach: is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
12. Input: involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies
13. Affirmation: recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures
14. Relationship: demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and
staff

15. Change agent: is willing to and actively challenges that status quo

16. Optimize: inspires and leads new and challenging innovations

17. Ideals/beliefs: communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling

18. Monitors/evaluates: monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning

19. Flexibility: adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent

20. Situational awareness: is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems

21. Intellectual stimulation: ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture (Waters & Cameron, 2007, pgs. 4–9)

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the following:

1. The information gathered through the survey represents the perception of ten elementary principals in South East Texas.

2. There is limited research on the relationship of principal effectiveness as it relates to the Texas Principal Standards.

3. There is a level of ambiguity and subjectivity when defining terms such as effective principals.
Delimitations

Delimitations of this study included the following:

1. The participants in this study were selected from high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools in Southeast Texas.

2. The survey used in this study asked principals to rank the 21 leadership responsibilities from 1 to 21 in order of importance as it related to their work as principals of poverty schools.

Assumptions

Three general assumptions of this study were:

1. The survey used in this study will be valid for the purpose intended.

2. The participants will understand the survey and will respond objectively and honestly.

3. Interpretation of the data to be collected will reflect what participants intended.
Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction, the background of the study, statement of the problem, statement of the purpose and significance, research questions, a definition of terms, theoretical framework, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, and organization of the study. In Chapter II, the researcher provides a review of the literature including: (a) introduction; (b) Instructional Leadership; (c) Human Capital; (d) Executive Leadership; (e) School Culture; and (f) Strategic Operations; (g) summary. In Chapter III, the researcher describes the methodology used in this study, which includes research design, participants, context and setting, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter IV, the researcher provided the findings of the study. In Chapter V, the researcher provided discussions, implications, recommendations, and conclusions.

The study surveyed ten elementary principals in an urban school district in South East Texas. The selected principals have been in their schools for at least two consecutive years. The survey is composed of two sections: Section 1 gathered information about the surveyed principal, school information, and the academic performance of the school. Section 2 allowed the surveyed principals to take a survey related to principal skills, beliefs, and characteristics that have made their schools high-performing although their schools are also high-poverty. The survey was administered on face to face basis after permission to conduct the study was granted. The survey was intended to identify high-performing, high-poverty schools that have been rated as “Met Standard” and have been awarded at least three academic distinctions by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Poverty in the United States

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). The researcher intended, through the course of this chapter, to elaborate on the effects of poverty on the cognitive and emotional development of the children of the poor. Education is a potential equalizer for the economic success of millions of under-served children (Blankstein, 2004). However, the failure of many schools to serve high-poverty students is one of the most pressing issues of U.S. Public education (Moore, Reinhorn, Cherner-Laird, Kraft, Ng & Papay (2014). The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) reported that the United States was at risk due to the declining of the public education system. According to Barr & Parrett (2007), the greatest challenge in American education is to educate all children to proficiency. However, the most challenging aspect of this endeavor is to teach children in poverty. According to Kiffmeyer (2015), Americans have heard two declarations against poverty by two U.S. presidents. The first was by Lyndon Johnson in 1964 in which he promised an unconditional war on poverty. In 1988, Ronald Reagan asserted that we had lost the war against poverty. According to Berliner (2005), the United States is the industrialized country with the highest number of perpetually impoverished people and one with the least efficient systems to break the cycle of poverty. According to Gabe (2013), schools in poverty are mostly composed of students of color. In the year 2012, it was estimated that 37.5% of African American children lived in poverty,
compared to 33.3% of Hispanics and 11.8% of non-Hispanic white children. Berliner (2013) has identified poverty as the most critical issue to address in school transformation.

The issue of poverty has no simple explanation or obvious solution (McKinney, 2014). As reported by Duncan, Magnuson & Votruba (2014), there are more than 16 million children in the U.S living in low-income families. In a report published by HealthCare.gov (2017), the federal government defines the federal poverty level (FPL) as a measure of income to determine eligibility for programs and benefits. In 2017 the FPL for a family of four was set at $24,600. For a family of two, the FPL was set at $16,240. However, in a report from the National Center for Children in Poverty, Addy, Engelhart & Skinner (2013) explained that the federal poverty level (FPL) falls short of the actual basic needs of low-income families. They estimated that to meet basic needs, families should make double the FPL amount set by the federal government. The work of Mode, Evans & Zonderman (2016) suggests that poverty levels are directly proportional to the mortality rate of individuals. African American men living under the poverty line have shown to have twice the mortality risk of their Caucasian counterparts.

Lamont (2014) stated that the usual stereotype of the poor is unclear in America today. According to Rank, Yoon & Hirschl (2003) most individuals think that poor people are in poverty because of their attributive deficiencies. Others believe that poverty is directly related to lack of access to opportunities such as unemployment or due to discrimination. Those alleged individual deficiencies of the poor have been wrongly associated with laziness and lack of abilities. Many disadvantaged parents are also perceived as careless about their children’s education, but in reality, many of them have multiple jobs (Patterson, Hale & Stessman, 2007). As noted by Williams (2009), poor people tend to be stereotyped in various ways. According to Strauss (2013), one common stereotype is that poor people do not value education. Lee & Bowen
(2006) found that poor parents encourage their children to read at home even more than affluent families. In multiple studies such as the Compton-Lilly (2003), Jennings (2004), and Guofang (2010), it was found that people in poverty care about their children’s education and promote academics at home, but lack resources and access to better serve them. Another stereotype found by Strauss (2013) concerning impoverished people, especially minorities, is that poor people are lazy. As Cleveland, (2008) pointed out, these negative stigmas affect the morale of the most disadvantaged.

Contrary to these ideas, poor people work just as hard, even harder than more affluent individuals according to Waldron, Roberts, Reamer (2004). Strauss also found that poor people have been traditionally associated with substance abuse. According to Degenhardt, Chiu, Sampson, Kessler, Anthony, Angermeyer, Bruffaerts, Girolamo, Gureje, Huang, Karam, Kostyuchenko, Lepine, Mora, Neumark, Ormel, Pinto-Meza, Posada-Villa, Stein, Takeshima & Wells (2008), substance abuse is common and evenly distributed among all income levels. According to Chapman, Laird, Ifill, KewalRamani, (2011) by the end of the 4th grade, minority low-income students are two years behind grade level. By the time students reach 12th grade, they are now four years behind. Duncan et al. (2014) stated that by the time the children of the poor reach adulthood they have two fewer years of schooling, and when they reach their thirties, they earned half as much as their peers above the poverty line.

Additionally, individuals that experience poverty since childhood receive more food stamps and are reported to have three times the likelihood of having poor overall health. Boys from poverty are also reported to be twice likely to be arrested, and girls resulted in being five times more likely to be pregnant before age 21 (Duncan et al., 2014). Also, students in poverty tend to be suspended, expelled and retained more than more privileged students (Taylor, 2005).
Kantor (1991) states that anthropologist Oscar Lewis, who conducted a study of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the 1960’s, introduced the concept of the culture of poverty. Poverty in his opinion was not only a lack of income but also a set of attitudes, character traits, and feelings of inferiority. According to Kantor, Lewis understood that the mindset of the poor is transferred from parents to their children extending the cycle of poverty. Lewis believed, according to Kantor (1991), that only a social movement that would improve social conditions and embrace solidarity between minorities and the establishment could destroy the culture of poverty. Poverty is also associated with barriers related to social justice since vulnerable families struggle to make their voices heard to advocate for themselves (Zlatos, 2011). Despite all the support programs led by private and public organizations, the issue of poverty seems to be decaying instead of improving (Buchheit, 2013). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2015), poverty rates for school-aged children in 2012 has increased in all regions of the U.S. as compared to 1990 and the year 2000. Poverty in the U.S might have a higher level of consumption as compared to poverty in the world’s poorest countries, but in some cases, poverty in the U.S. has a lower quality of life as reflected in shorter life expectancy, higher infant mortality, and higher risk of homicide and incarceration (Shaefer, Wu & Edin, 2016). As reported by Shaefer et al. (2016) life expectancy of highly educated white males in the U.S. is 20 years higher than low-educated black males. Low-educated black men have similar life expectancy than the citizens of Rwanda despite much lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels. Another finding of the work of Shaefer et al. (2016) is that the infant mortality rate among African Americans is similar to countries such as Colombia and Tonga where GDP is much lower. The infant mortality rate among African Americans is of about 12 out of 1,000 births compared to Colombia of about 15 out of 1,000 births. The homicide rate in the U.S. is
significantly higher as compared to countries such as Cuba, Yemen, and Niger (Shaefer et al., 2016). Finally, both white males and African American Females lead the world in the number of incarcerations with about 700 per 100,000 people. Even more staggering is the number of incarcerations of African American males that reached a new level in 2010 with about 4,500 incarcerations per 100,000 inhabitants.

As expressed by Ruddy, Bauer, Neiman, Hryczaniuk, Thomas & Parmer (2010), prisonlike security systems within the public-school system are more common where students of color and in poverty are in attendance. These harsh practices are deteriorating the culture and the conditions in schools rather than improving them, especially for male children of color. (Mallett, 2017). Mallett also refers to this system of evident deterioration as the school-to-prison pipeline. The U.S Department of Education reported in 2014 that of the 49 million students enrolled, 3.5 million were either suspended or detained in the school in the year 2011-2012. Mallett reported that the relationship between high numbers in suspension and detentions are directly related to the number of adolescents involved in the juvenile system. Many studies have indicated that the issue of school suspensions is more related to the issue of race than to the issue of poverty (Fabello, Thompson, Plotkin, Carmichael, Marchbanks, Booth (2011); Skiba & Williams (2014).

**Poverty and Child Development**

As noted by Combs, Orme & Lefmann, (2013), the time of conception to year three is critical for lifelong brain development and the foundations related to brain plasticity, higher-order brains structures, and functions. This period in human development has been called the critical period. There are many factors affecting brain development during this period such as genetics, experiences, and parenting. (Combs et al., 2013). The researchers also believe that having a clear realization of how critical this period is by parents is essential to enhancing
development. In a study about African American women, mostly under the poverty line, they found that only 70% of the participants believed that a parent could significantly influence a child’s brain from birth. Of the participants, 15% thought such influence would not occur until year 1. Also, researchers found that only 50% of the participants believed that infants react to the world around them until the sixth month. Of the surveyed, 20% believed that the first year of life had few or little impact on school performance (Combs et al., 2013). Moll & Tomasello (2010) reported that according to research, infants begin learning at birth. This idea aligns with the work of Pelucchi, Hay & Saffran (2009), in which it is stated that infants make sense of the language through computational sorting of word segments, word order and clues about word meaning.

As noted by Duncan, Magnuson & Votruba (2014), families who live under poverty face disadvantages that ultimately affect their children’s development. These challenges are associated with inadequate housing, unsafe neighborhoods, and low performing schools. Also, increased stress in their regular lives proportionally affect the psychological and developmental state of children. Duncan et al. (2014) also present the case that low-income families struggle to invest in quality child care and learning experiences due to financial constraints. Many poor parents raise their children as single parents working long hours during fixed schedules. McKinney (2014), also comments that child poverty is a global problem that is mostly linked to single mothers. Noble, Tottenham & Casey (2005) found that racial disparities in achievement are determined by socioeconomic differences and not necessarily by biological or innate abilities. These researchers have found that socioeconomic status accounted for about 20% difference in children’s Intelligence Quotient (IQ). There is a link between poverty and neurocognitive achievement. Minority children have a higher risk to grow up in poverty and have an amplified risk for poor academic performance (Noble et al., 2005). Differences in
achievement due to socioeconomic status increase by age. The completion of a task that requires memory and learning is disproportionally affected by socio-economic status regardless of the race. There is also a relationship between limited phonological awareness and low socio-economics (Noble et al., 2005).

Poverty and Stress

According to Lefmann & Combs (2014), stress during pregnancy affects the development of the fetus’ brain in his biological and psychological health. Poverty is also associated with anxiety and depression for children 14 years of age and above. These researchers were not able to determine if exposure to poverty during the first year of life would predict anxiety and depression in the adolescent life of the same child (Najman, Hayatbakhsh, Clavarino, Bor, Callaghan & Williams, 2010). However, as presented by Duncan et al. (2014), recent neuroscience studies indicate a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and brain functioning in adolescents.

Noble et al. (2005) also presented evidence that experiences shape brain development anatomically and functionally. Stressful life conditions have been linked to low socioeconomic status and differences in support at home account for differences in verbal and mathematical skills. Noble et al. (2015) states that cognitive differences could be attributed to biological responses to stress. According to Duncan et al. (2014), poverty and scarcity not only stimulates mental distress but also prevents individuals to control their behavior and limits their ability to set longer-term goals. As these researchers concluded, parenting in poverty creates more punitive, less nurturing home environments that are inconsistent with the needs of their children. Chronic stressful conditions have shown to limit the development of the hippocampus (Noble et al., 2005). Also, as noted by Duncan et al. (2014), chronic stress limits children’s ability to self-
regulate attention and emotions. Limited development of the hippocampus can diminish cognitive functioning and memory (Fujioka, Fujioka, Ishida, Maekawa, Nakamura, 2006). Changes in the hippocampus can lead to deficits in learning. MRI studies of children that have suffered post-traumatic stress have smaller brains and lower IQs. As noted by Farah, Shera, Savage, Betancourt, Giannetta (2006), children from poverty had less hippocampal gray matter than children from more affluent environments. Noble et al. (2015) agrees that both nature and nurture are crucial elements of intellectual development, lower socioeconomic status has a relationship with IQ due to environmental characteristics, rather than genetics, according to recent studies. Lastly, children in poverty are more likely to exhibit anger and impulsivity due to chronic stress, also known as distress. Symptoms of distress can also be related to passivity often perceived as laziness and disconnection (Jensen 2013).

**The Cycle of Poverty**

According to Combs et al. (2013), poverty has damaging effects on parenting and children. Poverty not only affects income, stress levels, lack of resources but makes parenting more complicated and in some circumstances less competent. Poor parents with limited education were found to be most likely to be non-aware that education could compensate for some of the effects of poverty. As Najman, Hayatbakhsh, Clavarino, Bor, O’Callaghan & Williams (2010) have stated, poverty in early childhood affects cognitive and developmental outcomes. Children in poverty are at a disadvantage in health and nutrition which limits their ability to listen, focus and learn in class. Children in poverty eat food with lower nutritional value, and this contributes to students in poverty to have higher absenteeism rates (Basch, 2011). Also, children in poverty, as estimated by researchers, have heard 13 million fewer words than
middle-class children by age four putting poverty children in a disadvantage for school readiness and literacy skills (Hart & Risley, 2003).

Children in poverty are also less motivated to learn due to financial hardships that correlate to depressive symptoms (Butterworth, Olesen, & Leach, 2012). Moreover, poverty also affects youngsters’ view of the future. Children in poverty tend to expect more adverse events and have lower expectations about their self-efficacy in detriment of their effort since anticipation for failure is more prevalent (Robb, Simon, & Wardle, 2009). Children from low socioeconomic status have more cognitive challenges characterized by shorter attention spans, limited self-monitoring, more distractibility, and little ability to solve problems as compared to middle-class children (Alloway, Gathercole, Kirkwood, & Elliott, 2009). Jensen (2013) has found that at least three-quarters of children in poverty come from single-parent families. The lack of sufficient role modeling has been associated with relational adversity. Students with disrupted home relationships are more likely to be impulsive, use profanity and act disrespectfully.

As suggested by Gardner (2007) achievement gaps attributed to poverty are difficult to close due to the lack of external stimulation and inadequate nourishment that represent the basis for intellectual development. However, as Gandy, King, Streeter-Hurle, Bustin & Glazebrook (2016) pointed out, poverty is not inherited across generations. Poverty responds to social structures and family decisions. Also, these researchers found that if we want to succeed against intergenerational poverty, there must be an early intentional investment in children’s life when the brain has more plasticity. According to Farkas (2006), federal programs such as Head Start designed to compensate children with academics and social skills before entering elementary, have had limited impact on fulfilling its intended purpose due to the lack of a mandated
curriculum. Farkas calls for making Head Start a priority to truly narrow poverty and school performance.

As noted by Reardon, Townsend & Fox (2017) low-income African American and Hispanic children face multiple disadvantages as compared to middle-class white children: not only do their families have fewer resources and live in more disadvantageous communities, but they also live in much-deprived neighborhoods than similarly poor white children. Based on the fact that living conditions matter for children’s development, the combination of racial and economic segregation suggests that children of unlike races and incomes face different life opportunities. Racial disparities in neighborhood circumstances consequently foster the conditions to extend the cycle of poverty among minorities. Another problem faced by minority children in poverty is school segregation related to neighborhood residence (Owens, 2017). According to this author, White and higher-income parents use race and socioeconomic judgments to select their schools. Better schools increase property value making it difficult for low-income families to afford them.

According to Gabe (2013), poverty levels in central cities was significantly higher than in suburban areas across the nation. Poverty in central cities was 19.7% compared to 11.2% in suburban areas. Recent changes in urban areas are pushing out the poor to the suburbs creating other types of risk factors (Feddes, 2011). As he has pointed out, the 2010 census showed that the disadvantaged in the main cities increased by 23% and by 53% in the main metropolitan cities. According to Sasson & Sakamoto (2014), Texas has one of the highest poverty rates in the United States ranking 39 in the nation with the highest poverty level (Gabe, 2013). Also, according to The Working Poor Families Project (2008), Texas ranked 46 in the nation with the number of low-income families. Texas ranked 48 as far as income inequalities. According to
Addy et al. (2013) in 2011 the South Region of the United States had the highest percentage of children in poverty. It is estimated that 13.2 million children or 42%, lived in poverty in the South Region of the U.S.

Many children in poverty enter school with a disadvantage as compared to more privileged peers (Jensen, 2009). Jensen also comments that children in poverty suffer from the vicious cycle of low expectations as evident by the fact that in poverty schools, the percentage of teachers outside their subject is significantly higher than in schools with more privileged children. The relationship between poverty and poor academic achievement has been demonstrated by the U.S. Department of Education (2001). According to Barr & Parrett (2007), our school system has failed the children of poverty due to the implementation of destructive programs and practices. Some approaches that have been proven to fail are the lack of choice, lack of proper funding, poorly prepared teachers, ineffective teaching, overcrowded classrooms, and pullout programs among others. It is also crucial to understand that school principals in urban areas with a high density of children in poverty are struggling significantly to cope with the social-emotional needs of their students (Economic Studies at Brookings, 2015).

Moreover, the problem is complex when schools across the country are not able to bridge the academic needs of children of color extending by default the cycle of poverty of low-income families (Steagall, 2012). As noted by Berliner (2013), the vast majority of children living in poverty and attending poverty schools, are not going to have successful lives. Poor children are likely to attend poorly preserved school buildings with less qualified teachers (NCTAF, 2004). Poor children are also exposed to teacher-centered environments, lectures, and drills as well as abundant worksheets (Barr & Perrett, 2007). When the social-emotional needs of children are met, their chances of success in academics increase (Noguera, 2011).
The Coleman Report and Subsequent Policies

In 1954 and 1955, the Supreme Court, after deliberating in the case *Brown v. Board of Education*, established that the system of school segregation had to be dismantled once and for all in U.S public education. However, as reported by Alexander & Morgan (2016), the Equality of Educational Opportunity (EEO) or better known as the Coleman Report served as a scientific tool for Congress to maintain racial segregation throughout the country. According to Coleman (1966), the EEO report was requested by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and was intended to understand whether public schools at the time were offering equal educational opportunities. Critics of the EEO report argue that the report had methodological shortcomings, statistical performance issues as well as an inadequate theoretical model (Cain & Watts, 1968). As explained by Alexander & Morgan (2016), the EEO report could not account for longitudinal student performance and how external factors might have affected such performance. The EEO reported that the differences between resources provided to white and black children in their different schools were relatively equal. Coleman said that differences among segregated schools were so small that to understand the issue of unequal opportunity truly, the focus should be placed in student’s family backgrounds, community contexts, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Alexander et al., 2016). As described by Wong & Nicotera (2004), the EEO report shaped educational research by influencing the way Americans understood education from an equal educational opportunity perspective.

According to Kantor (1991), before 1960, the federal government had limited involvement in developing educational policy despite the issues of poverty and equality that...
affected the nation. Opponents of federal participation in education were fearful of governmental control (Kantor, 1991). Most educational policies were left to the discretion of state and local government (Kantor 1991). President Lyndon Johnson in 1964 declared unconditional war on poverty (Kiffmeyer, 2015). As a result, in 1965 the federal government enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). ESEA focused its attention on the educational needs of children in poverty by creating standards intended to push for equity. As Halpering (1970) explained, ESEA was a political breakthrough designed to balance educational opportunities and to end poverty once and for all. As Kantor (1991) explains, Lyndon Johnson believed education was the passport out of poverty. He also stated that even Horace Mann back in 1848 found that education was the most effective tool to prevent poverty. It is estimated that 118 billion dollars were spent during the ESEA era to fund education, especially TITLE I which was the most heavily funded program at the time (Farkas & Hall, 2000). Title I was intended to aid schools with high levels of poverty (Farkas et al., 2000). The U.S. Department of Education (2015) reported that more than 56,000 schools receive Title I funds, serving about 21 million children. Schools designated as Title I were expected to demonstrate improved student outcomes more rapidly (Matsudaira, Hosek, & Walsh, 2012). However, as Kantor explained, ESEA was a limited institutional attempt to improve the education of the children of the poor. As this researcher commented, federal investigators found that local districts did not spend federal funds for low-income students as intended by the government. According to Kantor (1991), although ESEA was an unprecedented success, considering the lack of federal involvement in solving the issue of inequality in US schools, the bill never actually addressed school reform. Dee & Jacob (2011) acknowledged that despite the assistance of Title I funds, the academic performance of
children of poverty has not improved as reflected in state and national assessments. ESEA lasted 37 years after being replaced by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002.

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In the opinion of Chenoweth (2007), NCLB was the first national attempt to hold schools accountable for student achievement. According to Hess & Petrilli (2006), Washington was frustrated with educators not taking ownership for deplorable school performance and for consistently failing minorities and the children of poor. The primary goal as per Hess et al. (2006), was to identify the nature of the problem in American schools and to find the root causes. Also, NCLB acted in the premise that poverty was not an excuse for school failure and that by raising the level of accountability and external pressure, schools would be able to make adequate progress (Hess et al., 2016). However, as explained by Frost (2007), No Child Left Behind standardized and mechanized schools in America. NCBL was defined as a one-size-fits-all model to education. Frost stated that NCLB planning and execution was never supported by research or recommended by national organizations. Machtinger (2007) reported that NCLB was blamed for providing low-level curriculum for children in poverty. Also, the focus on the achievement gap brought by NCLB increased the gap between high-performing African American students and high-performing White students (Machtinger, 2007). According to Branch et al., (2013), No Child Left Behind encouraged the change of principals in traditionally low-performing schools. The target, according to Branch et al. (2013) was to recruit nontraditional principals for challenging schools. NCLB required states to create their accountability systems and monitoring tools to track low-performing schools. The law also required that districts and schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) were subject to the proper corrective actions (US Department of Education, 2012). NCLB also created
provisions for parents to be able to remove their children from failing schools and enroll them in schools meeting state accountability (US Department of Education, 2012). Evidence on the impact of NCLB on student achievement is still very limited (US Department of Education, 2013). McNeil (2011) reported that 38% of US schools were still failing AYP by the year 2010. According to Reardon, Greenberg, Kalogrides, Shores & Valentino (2013), NCLB failed to narrow the achievement gap in US schools. The problem as presented by the Southern Education Foundation (2015), is that in 2013, students with low-income became the majority in US public schools. Also, as stated by Reardon et al. (2013), NCLB failed to narrow the achievement gap still existing in U.S schools. Only a few high-poverty schools have made exceptional progress under the provisions of NCLB (Coleman, 2013; Brockberg, 2014). Principal leadership has been determined to be a vital factor in improving high-poverty schools (Hallinger, 2011). These schools have been designated as exceptions to the paradigm of high-poverty, low-performing schools (Pirtle, 2012).

On 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). This law laid the foundation for education reform through the Race to the Top Fund (RTT) (US Department of Education, 2009). The Race to the Top (RTT) fund was President Obama’s most significant education initiative. The goal of RTT was to invest $4.35 billion in education reform and innovation (Boser, 2012). According to Garrison-Mogren & Gutmann (2012), the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 provided funding to support school districts with high rates of child poverty. A total of 97.4 billion dollars was awarded for primary and secondary education in the nation. However, as presented by Garrison-Mogren et al. (2012), Texas was one of the states with the lowest rate of dollars allocated per pupil. The funding was intended to adopt more rigorous standards, improve recruiting, training
and retaining highly effective teachers and principals as well as to turn around low-performing schools and to create data systems to track student progress (Boser, 2012). Forty out of the fifty states in the nation applied for the RTT grant, but only a few states have been awarded. Among the initiatives of RTT, it is the push for the adoption of Common Core and improved teacher evaluations. However, as Boser reported, many states have struggled to meet RTT commitments and states like Florida and Hawaii are not meeting RTT expectations due to lack of support of major stakeholders and issues with adoption of Common Core and teacher evaluations (Boser, 2012). As part of the reform plan criteria to qualify for Race to the Top funding was that States had to ensure that children in poverty and schools with a high number of students of color received access to highly qualified teachers and principals (US Department of Education, 2009). Another initiative put in place under the Obama era to increase principal effectiveness was the push for principal evaluations. These evaluations, adopted by 35 states, emphasize student outcomes as the true measure of principal effectiveness (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Dufour & Mattos (2013) questioned both NCLB and Race to the Top reforms mandated to increase student outcomes.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama in 2015. The act reauthorizes ESEA but looks to improve student outcomes due to the limitations of NCLB in bridging the academic gap still existent among different groups of students. ESSA looks to support disadvantaged students by teaching them to high academic standards, enhancing the level of communication to various stakeholders about students’ progress, increasing access to quality preschool programs.
Leadership Characteristics of School Principals

According to Ubben, Hughes & Norris (2017), the role of the school principal has evolved significantly and has become more challenging due to the changes in the American population. Under NCLB principals are accountable for the academic success and progress of all students. Also, principals are expected to create conditions for children to develop socially and emotionally. However, as presented by Stringer & Hourani (2015), many principals are left in a sink-or-swim type of environment and are unable to cope with the expectations attached to their main responsibilities. Ubben et al. (2017) reported that when principals assume their roles, they bring their own system of beliefs, values, and ideas. The system of values the principal brings to the school determines what needs to change or remain intact. According to Senge (1990), authentic leaders must understand their values since leadership comes from conviction and purpose. As defined by George (2003), leaders must understand their purpose, must possess clarity of values, build trusting relationships, demonstrates self-discipline and are fervent about their mission.

Furthermore, the work of Goleman (2000) linked emotional intelligence and effective leadership. According to Goleman’s work, the level of emotional intelligence (EI) determines the leadership style of the individual. Leadership styles can range from coercive to authoritative and could generate various responses from the perspective of the followers such as compliance, contentment, collaboration, growth, challenge or commitment. As presented by Dugan (2017), leadership is learnable, and it is characterized by an interest in growth and change.

Leadership Standards and Leadership Programs Crisis

The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Policy Standards (ISLLC) were adopted in 1996 by 40 states in the U.S. The ISLLC standards were designed to provide guidance
about the characteristics, roles, and responsibilities expected of school leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008). As suggested by Davis, Gooden & Micheaux (2015) the ISLLC standards never addressed the issue of race and the existing achievement gaps. Also, Davis et al. (2015) questioned the lack of elaboration on the issue of social justice in the ISLLC standards.

Murphy (1988) claimed that principal standards should be used as a framework for action and not just as a leadership encyclopedia. The work of Owings, Kaplan & Nunnery (2005) concluded that using ISLLC specific standards to measure principal quality may not be precise as compared to the utilization of the standards as a summative score. In this case, conclusions about leadership quality could be more accurate. These researchers also found that principals that rated the lowest on various ISLLC indicators tended to have more children in poverty within their schools. Consequently, it was difficult to determine whether less effective principals were placed in poverty schools or if being the principal of high-poverty school increased the perception of ineffectiveness. The work of Reeves (2004) noted that although many states and school districts had adopted ISLLC standards, they failed to implement those standards correctly. The work of Waters & Grubb (2004) observed that many educators defined ISLLC standards as lacking depth and research. In 2015, the National Policy for Educational Administration (NPBEA) published the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) with the intention of aligning the foundational principles of school principals with current research, and the challenges schools are facing today (Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015). The PSEL standards replaced the former ISLLC standards and are designed to emphasize student learning and academic success. Also, the PSEL standards shaped the National Educational Leadership
Preparation Standards (NELP) formerly known as the Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards (ELCC).

As contrasted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2016), the PSEL standards are a true evolution of the ISLLC standards. The major themes that changed between the two are an emphasis on equity, talent development, leadership capacity, and academic success. The report indicates a major shift in the language from a focus on organizational transformation to an emphasis on student success. Another change evident between both standards is that PSEL makes principals accountable for modeling what is expected of others, to ensure an instructional focus and to take responsibility for student outcomes. The report also points out that principals cannot only acknowledge cultural differences but must become advocates for equity and cultural responsiveness. Principals must ensure that not only the professional capacity of teachers is developed but also promote a healthy work-life balance. The PSEL standards call for principals to find professional development and provide leadership opportunities from within the school organization. Also, PSEL standards look to promote parental engagement that translates to improved student outcomes. With the new standards, principals are expected to build relationships and to plan with the end in mind to promote improved student outcomes.

DuBois, (2011) commented that educational leadership was in crisis due to the failure to attract and retain effective school leaders and the lack of preparation of current leaders to undertake the challenges of turnaround schools. According to Copland (2000), principal preparation programs have been severely questioned since the late 80’s for its lack of impact on student achievement. According to Levine (2005), many programs designed to prepare aspiring principals and school leaders are not fulfilling their commitment to ensuring relevance and
connection between theory and practice. Levine also argues that the ferocious competition among leadership programs to recruit students is producing less quality easier to obtain degrees. Levine also reported that 89% of surveyed principals believed that schools of education were not preparing graduates for classroom realities faced in today’s schools. Also, it was found that 47% of principals believed that the curriculum of their principal preparation courses was outdated (Levine, 2005). As presented by Cheney & Davis (2011) and Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004), thousands of principals are receiving certifications based on old standards that are misaligned to the realities of our schools today. According to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) the high turnover of school principals and the actual realities of the job demands change (TEA, 2015). The global economy is changing the marketplace, and the demand for new skills is the challenge of the 21st century. In 2011 the Wallace Foundation launched the Principal Pipeline Initiative PPI. Many districts across the nation adopted the PPI principles to better prepare school principals (Turnbull, Anderson, Riley, MacFarlane, Aladjem, 2016) As reported by Turnbull et al. (2016) initiatives such as the Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI) led by the Wallace Foundation, have been reported to be successful in shaping policies and practices related to the hiring, preparation, evaluation and support of school principals. These researchers also reported that principals that went through the PPI program exhibited successful instructional leadership consistent with student outcomes. The PPI model according to Turnbull et al. (2016) adopted a series of practical standards to guide principal preparation, hiring, evaluation, and support. Also, the initiative seeks to improve training opportunities for principals in creating selective recruitment strategies to match candidates with schools and implement a support system for novice principals.
New Leaders for New Schools (2009) made recommendations to school systems related to the management systems required to cope with the needs of high-poverty schools. Among those recommendations, school districts should devise systems that would allow principals to make local decisions regarding authority to hire, evaluate and dismiss personnel. Also, it was recommended to grant autonomy to principals regarding operational issues such as budgets and schedules. After many years of research, The Wallace Foundation in 2012 found five practices that are critical to effective school leadership. To be effective, principals must shape a vision for academic success, create a positive climate, cultivate leadership in alignment to the vision of the school, improve instruction and manage people, data, and processes for school improvement (Mendels, 2012). Grogan & Andrews (2002) suggested that effective leadership programs should be based on authentic experiences, situated cognition, and real-life problem-solving expertise. In consonance with the work of Leitwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004), future school leaders should be exposed to practical and situated problem-solving scenarios. In addition, Copland (2003) found that novice principals exposed to preparation programs focused on problem-framing or solving problems in actual real-life scenarios tended to improve their ability to understand, communicate and solve problems.

With the purpose of providing school leaders with practical guidance to increase effectiveness, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) organization, created the McREL’s Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters, Marzano & McNulty (2003). The originators of the McREL framework assert to have summarized 30 years of research and quantitative data related to the relationship between school leadership and student achievement. Previous models or frameworks relied heavily on theories, anecdotes, and personal viewpoints. Many so-called frameworks, lacked practical and specific guidance for school leaders (Waters et
al., 2003). The McREL framework identifies nine leadership responsibilities with a focus on data which is considered essential in the process of school transformation. To be effective, a principal must be willing to challenge the status quo as a change agent as well as to be able to foster a positive culture, involve teachers in the decision making, and act as an instructional leader that provides resources and monitors effective practices. Principals must become advocates that protect children from issues that could affect their educational process. Finally, principals must be able to be flexible and be adaptive to the needs of the school community. (James & Abuyen, 2015). The McREL framework also connected the leadership responsibilities to effective practices that increase student achievement when implemented effectively. The lack of understanding of the 21 responsibilities could result in limited or negative effects on student outcomes (Waters et al., 2003).

In the work of Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) it was established that there are seven high-leverage practices associated with increased student achievement. Those practices are (1) data driven instruction, (2) observation and feedback, (3) instructional planning, (4) professional development, (5) student culture, (6) staff culture, and (7) professional development. As recommended by Mendels & Mitgang (2013), school districts should build a strong pipeline of principals. In their view, leadership standards materialize when districts systematically use them to hire, train and evaluate school principals.

**Texas Principal Standards**

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) created new principal standards in 2013 with the purpose of providing best practices for principals to be effective leaders and to increase student achievement (TEA, 2015). Along with the standards, TEA created the Texas Principal
Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS) to develop principal capacity in improving teacher performance, increasing student results and the productivity of schools. T-PESS was created in alignment to national standards provided by the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Policy Standards (ISLLC) and the evidenced-based research of Marzano, Waters & McNulty published in 2005. TEA also credited (Waters & Cameron, 2007; Marzano et al. 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) for providing a robust framework for defining effective school-level leadership within the T-PESS model. The synthesis of these studies provided the identification of 21 leadership responsibilities and 66 associated practices that linked principal leadership with student achievement. The 21 leadership responsibilities and 66 associated practices are part of the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) balanced leadership framework (Waters et al., 2003).

For the purpose of this research, the characteristics of effective principals in poverty schools were compared to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). Texas Principal Standards of 2013. The researcher will examine the characteristics of effective principals and standards outlined by the Texas Principal Standards of 2013. The researcher also will look to find gaps in the body of knowledge to better address the issue of high principal turnover due to the continuing mismatch of newly appointed principals that are not prepared to face the challenges of poverty schools but look effective given a framework of effective practices. The researcher intends through the course of this study, to add to the body of knowledge by contributing alternative attributes for district administrators in the process of finding effective principals for their low-performing high-poverty schools.
1.1 Instructional Leadership

Instructional Leadership is the first of the Texas Principal Standards. The T-PESS User Guide (2015), defines Instructional leadership as the responsibility of ensuring that every student receives a quality education. Principals engaged in this standard align high-quality instruction to research-based practices. Also, T-PESS states that instructional leaders align the curriculum with rigorous and aligned standards. Education within this framework is intended to meet the needs of diverse students. Also, the Instructional Leader Model sets expectations and monitors the implementations of effective and rigorous instructional practices. Within the T-PESS model, principals are expected to provide feedback, attend team meetings, use data to inform and monitor progress (T-PESS User Guide, 2015).

As stated by Mendels & Mitgang (2013), principals today must become instructional leaders. The Wallace Foundation (2012) reported that in their research there is not one case of school improvement or increased student outcomes without talented leadership. According to Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008), instructional leadership is a strong predictor of high academic outcomes. School principals that exhibited instructional leadership improved the educational conditions of their schools (Aydin, Sarier & Uysal, 2013). Knapp, Copland, Honing, Plecki, Portin & The Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (2010) and Mendels (2012) found that the role of the principal as an instructional leader is of the highest importance. Research suggests that for a school to excel, it must be led by a strong principal who is an instructional leader (Coleman, 2013; Graczewski, Knudson, & Holtzman 2009).

On the other hand, Grissom and Loeb (2011) found that principal success was related to the ability to have organizational management. However, on a study conducted by Ross and Cozzens (2016), it was reflected that out of about 350 teachers and their perceptions of school
principals, instructional leadership was one of the less observed principal competencies. According to New Leaders for New Schools (2009), about 60% of the total impact on student achievement can be attributed to both the school principal and teacher effectiveness. Principals are accounted for 25% influence as compared to 33% for teachers’ total impact. The problem with principal selection according to Cheney & Davis (2011), is use criteria that do not measure performance or aptitude. Children need principals that support effective teaching practices. The job of the principal is more demanding than ever before and requires strong leaders with instructional knowledge (Cheney et al., 2011).

The work of Murphy (1988) questioned the impact that principals had on student achievement. On the other hand, Hallinger & Heck (1998), as well as Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson (2010), found that such impact existed indirectly. Edmonds (1979) as well as Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003) concluded that principals had a direct influence on student achievement since school principals can control key variables such as instructional quality, hiring and retaining effective teachers as well as establishing a shared vision for the organization. As presented by Jerald, Haycock & Rose-Socol (2017), effective educators in high-poverty schools represent the single most unexploited resource to improve education in America.

Barr & Parrett (2007) believed that less effective schools have more rigid leadership structures and most effective schools have more creative ways to utilize leader capacity. In a study led by Simon & Johnson (2015), it was found that teachers tended to stay or leave high-poverty schools depending on the principal’s ability to lead as an instructional leader. According to Hallinger, Wang & Chen (2013) in a study that compared principal’s and teacher’s perceptions about principal’s behaviors that reflected instructional leadership, it was found that principals rate themselves significantly higher as compared to teachers’ perceptions. On the other
hand, Gurley, Anast-May, O’Neal & Dozier (2016) found these perceptions to be very similar. On a study conducted by Padron & Waxman (2016), it was found that overall, school principals need to become more knowledgeable about second language learners and of the instructional practices that compensate for the needs of second language learners. The work of Padron, Waxman, Rollins, Alford & Franco (2015) supports the idea that to improve instructional practices in classrooms with English Language Learners principals must observe teacher and student practices and behaviors in the classroom systematically and alongside teaching staff.

Further, Zepeda (2007) suggested that instructional leaders exist to support the work of teachers thus all effort and energy is invested in student learning. In the opinion of Brazer & Bauer (2013), principal preparation programs should focus on preparing leaders through problem-based learning designed to lead instruction and to provide experiences that are coherent to the realities of the schools they will serve. Moreover, Yergalonis (2005), explained that principals believe the importance of instructional leadership but get carried away by the regular management operations of the school. The work of Bain & Company (2013) reported that school districts are in need of innovative ways to prepare principals to cope with the needs of present-day education needs. However, as the Council of the Great City Schools along with the Wallace Foundation have recommended, the focus of principal preparation should be on instructional leadership (Corcoran et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Bennett, Ylimaki, Dugan & Brunderman (2013) it was concluded that schools with high-poverty with mostly minority students lacked consistency between the directives of the instructional leaders in the building and the support received from the district.

In a study of instructional leadership approaches conducted by Ylimaki (2007), it was reported that highly effective principals in poverty schools had high competence in pedagogy
and capacity building traits. Ylimaki found that these principals believed in providing leadership opportunities for their teams. Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, and Brown (2014) compared instructional and transformational leadership theories applied to the impact school leaders had on student achievement and determined that the instructional leadership approach have a greater impact on student achievement than transformational leadership. They also found certain principal behaviors that were related to the highest levels of student achievement. Effective principals in poverty schools protect instructional time, track student progress, offer incentives for student learning, and motivate teachers relatively to the success of the organization. Dufour & Mattos (2013) also recommended that the emphasis on principal evaluations should be focused on spending more time in the classrooms rather than evaluating teacher performance. They call for a change in the perception that instructional leaders exist to emphasize certain instructional practices. They exist to create a school-wide focus on learning for all member of the school. However, DuFour & Mattos (2013), questioned the effectiveness of teacher evaluations as the most effective approach to improve educational practices. These researchers call for more emphasis on building teacher capacity by focusing on instruction, creating a culture of collaboration and sharing leadership. As presented by Browne-Ferrigno & Muth (2008) colleges and universities need to work together with district practitioners to help clarify the role of the district to help prepare school leaders through thought-provoking, supportive and challenging learning environments. Ultimately, the primary responsibility of the principal is to be a champion of the learning and success of all students by shifting the focus from teaching to learning (Lunenburg, 2010).
1.2 Human Capital

Human Capital is the second of the Texas Principal Standards. The T-PESS User Guide (2015), defines Human Capital as the responsibility of ensuring that there is a highly effective teacher in every classroom. Principals engaged in this standard treat faculty members as the most valuable resource. Also, T-PESS states that principals in this standard are to invest in their faculty through professional development and support. Principals must hire individuals that align with the school’s vision and the needs of the school. Also, principals in this area must provide leadership opportunities and use multiple sources of data to evaluate staff members accurately. (T-PESS User Guide, 2015). According to Moore, Reinhorn, Chernher-Laird, Kraft & Papay (2014), teachers felt more empowered and invested in school reform when principals valued their initiatives, included them in the decision-making process and avoided high levels of control over the implementation of those initiatives. Moore et al. (2014) also recommended for district leaders to find principals and support principals that involve and support teachers as leaders within the organization. After interviewing high-performing principals in high-poverty schools in South Carolina, Suber (2011), found that these principals found their success in empowering teachers, building relationships, and setting the example for all members of their communities. As noted by the U.S. Department of Education (2013), high-poverty schools and disadvantaged children have less access to highly qualified teachers creating further problems concerning students’ achievement gaps. According to Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff (2011), there is a significant debate about the best approach to measure and improve teacher effectiveness. One of the most significant methods is the Value-added approach. Although many districts have used value-added measures to determine teacher effectiveness, this approach has shown considerable variation, and there is limited consensus on the best method to calculate value-added (Koedel &
Betts, 2009). However, as Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff (2011) found, teachers with high value-added measures have a greater impact on student’s likelihood of attending college, receiving higher wages and lowered rates of teen pregnancy. Isenberg, Max, Gleason, Patamites, Santillano & Hock (2013) also found that in a single year, high-poverty students can have two percentile point difference when taught by effective teaching as measured by the Effective Teacher Gap (ETG). The report also indicates that by reducing the ETG to zero for one year, in other words, provide effective teaching for disadvantaged students will reduce the achievement gap in reading and math.

In a study conducted by Bennett, Ylimki, Dugan & Brunderman (2013) it was concluded that schools with high-poverty with mostly minority students, there was a general deficit in building the capacity of their teachers. According to Adrianzen (2012) teachers with students in high-poverty schools tended to express less job satisfaction than their low-poverty counterparts and were less motivated to stay in their schools. Also, it was noted in this study that teachers in high-income schools attributed their desire to remain in their schools to the leadership team that motivated them to stay and empowered them to become stronger teachers. Teachers in high-poverty schools reported that they do not receive enough recognition from parents and administrators. These factors suggest having an impact on the high turnover of teachers in poverty schools (Strunk & Robinson, 2006). Cohen (2015) found that principals in high-performing, high-poverty schools define, communicate, and share a clear vision that aligns with high expectations.

Mendels & Mitgang (2013) established that principals must champion a focus on continuous improvement in learning systems that will be conducive to career readiness.
The Wallace Foundation (2013) established that shaping a vision for academic success and high expectations are necessary to meet the demands of a global economy. High expectations for all, according to Porter, Murphy, Goldring, Elliott, Polikoff & May (2008) is fundamental in closing the achievement gap.

1.3 Executive Leadership

Executive Leadership is the third of the Texas Principal Standards. The T-PESS User Guide (2015), defines Executive Leadership as the responsibility for improving student outcomes with focus and personal responsibility. Principals engaged in this standard develop a purposeful community that is data driven and adaptive depending upon various sources of data and information gathered from other stakeholders (T-PESS User Guide, 2015). As presented by Vasillopulos & Denney (2013) placing effective teachers in the classroom is not enough to cope with the current crisis in the field. There is a need for leadership. However, as Vasillopulos et al. (2013) presents, the concept of leadership in education has been widely misunderstood. In their opinion, we cannot define leadership with 19th and 20th century standards as compared to the context of today (English, 2011). Cohen (2015) found that principals in high-performing, high-poverty schools view themselves as trainers and developers who build others’ capacity to do the work. According to McCormick, Cappella, O’Connor & Clowry (2015), to effectively improve the quality of student outcomes it is necessary to have a positive school climate, especially in the social/behavioral context. Effective principals create a welcoming environment for the school (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Principals that create such an environment begin by combating teacher isolation and resistance. They foster an environment that is welcoming, solution-oriented, and positive (Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, Samuelson, Ling-Yeh (2009).
In the findings of McCormick et al. (2015) without context or a positive environment, there is no effective change regardless of the interventions put in place. In consonance to the finding of DuFour et al. (2013) principals should provide time and the proper conditions for teams to engage in sharing resources and practices that add to the overall vision of the professional learning community. Principals should be resilient managing conflict and exemplifying the characteristics of being change agents. These leaders build trust and empower others by involving them in the decision making and creating systems for continuous improvement (Kirtman & Fullan, 2016). As explained by Bandura (1993) effective principals build the collective efficacy of teachers and leaders alike. The concept of collective efficacy has been found to be the only variable that surpasses poverty as the greatest indicator of student success (Bandura 1993). As defined by Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Gray (2003), collective efficacy is defined as the teacher perception that they constitute an effective instructional team with the capacity to increase student achievement. Principals in poverty schools must lead their schools with a focus on positive feedback to persuade the collective efficacy beliefs of the faculty (Fancera, 2016; Bruton, Mellalieu, & Shearer, 2014). As defined by Waters & Cameron (2007), the responsibility of focus is related to establishing clear goals and preserving those goals as the utmost priority for the school. Principals in poverty schools must maintain focus on student achievement. As explained by Water et al. (2007), focusing on the right classroom or teacher at the right time can yield positive results in student achievement. Principals can lead change by focusing on the right work as they develop purposeful school communities.

1.4 School Culture

School Culture is the fourth of the Texas Principal Standards. The T-PESS User Guide (2015), defines School Culture as the responsibility for establishing and implementing a school
vision and culture of high expectations for all teachers and students. Principals engaged in this standard set a vision that is the foundation for the decisions and initiatives of the school. They also maintain a positive environment that reflects in students’ social-emotional development and their ability to develop resilience and self-advocacy. Also, principals that establish a shared vision and culture provides opportunities for parents to engage in school functions. The vision developed must be based on high expectations for all and the ability to communicate it effectively (T-PESS User Guide, 2015). In the words of Carter (2000), the principal must ensure that every teacher is held responsible for implementing the vision of the organization.

Ylimaki et al. (2012) suggest that the principals are expected to adopt a social-cultural dimension and build their leadership capacity to implement effective leadership practices in high minority high-poverty schools. Additionally, these researchers have found that the social-cultural dimension encompasses an awareness of the political environment, a culturally responsive leadership understanding, and maintain relationships in an ethical community. Principals are expected to understand the demographics of the school and the context of their communities to build social networks intended to create equitable life conditions to support students regardless of their backgrounds (Ylimaki, Bennett, Fan & Villasenor, 2012). In a study conducted by Bennett et al. (2013) it was concluded that schools with high-poverty, high minority students, there was a general deficit in the socio-cultural dimension. In addition, this study reported that in the surveyed schools there was an absence of a shared vision. In this study, it was also reported that the leaders in the school were very sensitive about accountability but very silent about the cultural context of the community that surrounds the school and the beliefs and core values needed to improve the lives of their students. Many activities planned to reach out to the community were disconnected from the culture and backgrounds of the parents. It was also seen
by Bennett et al. (2013) that the general approach towards parents was from a deficits-thinking perspective in high-poverty schools.

In terms of how principals affect their schools, Marzano et al. (2005) reported that principals influence the climate of the school, the attitudes of teachers and their instructional practice and increase the learning opportunities for their students. These researchers also emphasized the idea that effective school leadership is critical to school improvement. Cohen (2015) found that principals in high-performing, high-poverty schools share leadership and create opportunities for professional collaboration and foster an open and trusting professional environment. According to Wiggan & Watson (2016) to promote high levels of achievement among high-poverty minority students, there needs to be a multicultural curriculum and targeted anti-racism pedagogy to meet the needs of urban schools. In establishing a solid school culture, principals must be prepared to confront those who fail to support the overall commitment of the team. According to Reece (2017), principals must increase self-awareness of their cultural biases to serve their schools better and increase student achievement. Principals that are unfamiliar with the background of their diverse students may be unable to truly impact their academic performance. Reece also found that a school could be low-performing and culturally responsive. In other words, principals must promote culturally responsive curriculum along with high impact instructional practices.

According to Waters et al. (2003), culture is defined as the principal responsibility of fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation. School culture is a natural consequence of the working relationship of people; it can be positive or negative in affecting school effectiveness. Effective principals influence teachers who in turn influence students
Whitaker (2012) defined school culture as the combined set of values and beliefs that influence policies and the practices in a school. Principal leadership is essential in any school organization; principals have a direct influence in the culture of the school and student outcomes; principals shape the school’s core processes, climate, and resources intended to guide student achievement (Jacobson, 2011). As stated by Bambrick-Santoyo (2012), both instruction and culture are essential, and both need to be developed simultaneously. As Jerald (2006) stated, it only takes to walk into an excellent school to start noticing the joy of learning and a sense of purpose by the members of the school. Students and teachers alike feel confident rather than stressed as they face serious business. But as Jerald (2006) points out, despite its importance, school culture is one of the least discussed element of academic achievement. However, in high-performing high-poverty schools, the development of a strong culture is intentional and aligned to strong student outcomes. Jerald, Haycock & Rose-Socol (2017), suggests that in high-poverty schools, principals need to create a culture where teachers want to work. By doing so, effective school leaders can retain effective teachers in an environment of collaboration and improvement. Among the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty schools setting a culture of collaboration that supports collective goals is essential (Finnigan & Stewart (2009). Ross (2013) found that effective principals in high-poverty high-performing schools created a culture of high expectations through active monitoring of classroom instruction and individual students progress. Active monitoring aligns to the responsibility of visibility since it requires quality interactions with students and teachers (Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005). According to Miranda (2011), the successful principal in poverty schools acted as a facilitator of the teaching and learning process transforming the culture of the school making it sustainable and independent. This is consistent with Chenoweth
& Theokas (2013) since effective principals create a professional culture where all members of the organization are learning from each other. This aligned with Marzano (2003) when he explained that culture involves collegiality, professionalism, and collaboration where teachers believe and act to achieve positive outcomes for students. As Daggett (2015) stated, most rapidly improving schools privilege building a school culture that revolves around the joy of learning over strategies. These schools take control of its current condition rather than allowing outside entities to control them. These schools have a culture that values grit and pro-activeness. Dealing with a broken culture demands a plan for a full reset of the culture. But first, principals must face the brutal facts manifest in low student achievement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). As presented in his book, Leverage Leadership, Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) explains that to turn around a broken culture, principals must set the vision, get the right people on the bus, commit to develop a strong culture, look and listen for symptoms of negative culture and address the issues. As this author explained, if principals don’t maintain and communicate their staff culture, someone else will. Additionally, Marzano et al. (2005) found that the behaviors that drive the culture of the school are associated with promoting unity among staff, and a sense of well-being. Also, develop an understanding of purpose, and a shared vision for the school. This aligns with the views of Bryk & Schneider (2002) that established that in order to build a positive culture the school member had to develop relational trust. However, trust cannot be developed unless there is clarity around who we are as an organization and why are we here. People need to understand the mission and vision of the organization as it is the foundation of relational trust. Hall and Hord (2015) identified essential factors to be considered for leaders as they shape the culture of their organization: personal mastery, team learning, and building a shared vision. Personal mastery
relates to all members of the school community and how they grow in their own path for learning in their role of student, teacher or leader.

1.5 Strategic Operations

Strategic Operations is the fifth of the Texas Principal Standards. The T-PESS User Guide (2015), defines Strategic Operations as the responsibility of outlining and tracking clear goals and strategies aligned with the vision of improving teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. The principals in this area must assess the needs of the school, review evidence and set priorities and set goals, targets, and strategies in a school-wide plan. Principals involve their leadership teams to develop a year-long calendar and a daily schedule to maximize instructional time and creates time for teachers to collaborate and review data. Effective principals in this area also allocate all resources in alignment with the priorities of the school. Also, T-PESS states that principals must treat office staff as partners to meet the needs of the school (T-PESS User Guide, 2015). Cohen (2015) found that Principals in high-performing, high-poverty schools encourage strategic thinking and planning to achieve the goals of the school community. They also find ways to involve parents and the community in the work of the school. Effective principals in poverty schools should strive to improve the quality of instruction by the empowerment of master teachers within the school (Carter, 2000). Principals proficient in empowering others not only build a positive school climate but are also able to cultivate leadership in others (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). This organization also found that the more leadership around the school the better the student outcomes. Good leadership improves teacher motivation and the working conditions that ultimately impact more access to collective knowledge through collaboration. (Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, Anderson, 2010).
Principals in the area of strategic operations use data to drive and inform their practices (T-PESS User Guide, 2015). Additionally, principals are expected to assess the current needs of the school, set priorities, goals as well as systems designed to monitor and evaluate progress. As explained by Fox (2013), principals are expected to collect, organize, analyze and interpret data to increase student achievement. However, the obligation of the principal is to be able to facilitate data-driven decision making among the staff. As declared by Bernhardt (2009), schools that incorporate data-driven decision making are likely to see remarkable gains in student achievement.

**The Balanced Leadership Framework and the 21 Responsibilities**

According to Waters et al. (2003), the purpose of the Balanced Leadership Framework is to provide concrete responsibilities, effective practices and knowledge needed for principals to be successful. However, there is limited research about how the 21 responsibilities relate to the daily work of principals and in the different contexts and work assignments they are exposed to (Gaunt, 2016). In addition, Abuyen (2015) found, after comparing principals in low performing and high-performing schools, that principals in low performing schools tended to emphasize first order change responsibilities than their counterparts in high-performing schools. When asked to rate the level of execution of the 21 responsibilities in schools, teachers and principals responses in high-performing schools were more aligned than in low performing schools (Abuyen, 2015). According to Taylor & La cava (2011), principals in poverty schools are faced with complex challenges that require making dramatic changes in their schools to meet state and public expectations. Marzano et al. (2015) found 21 principal responsibilities linked to second-order change. These second order change practices are: (a) knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (b) optimizer, also described as a motivator, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) change
agent, (e) monitoring/evaluating, (f) flexibility, and (g) ideals and beliefs. Second order change practices have been directly connected to increased student achievement (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2006; Lethwood et al. 2004). Taylor & La cava (2011) found that in order to improve learning in significant ways in high-poverty schools it is imminent that there is an even clearer and more specific definition of the seven responsibilities of second order change found by Marzano et al. (2015). Second-order change is more complex and forceful than first-order change. Such change demands principals that are persistent and focused on student achievement (Waters & Grubb, 2004). In a study conducted by Abuyen (2015) it was found that most principals in high-performing schools rated visibility, ideals/beliefs, communication and optimizer as the most important principal responsibilities in poverty schools. Visibility was the highest rated principal responsibility according to Abuyen. As far as second-order change responsibilities, optimizer and flexibility were found to be the highest among all principals in high and low performing schools. Also, ideals/beliefs and optimizer rated as the most crucial for second-order change among high performing schools. Waters & Kingston (2005) warn that principals understand the order of change necessary for their schools, failing to understand such level of change could bring negative consequences on student achievement. Warren & Higbee (2007) stated that transformation could only be effectively implemented when the principal clearly comprehends the level of change needed. Also, as presented by Hambrick &Tucker (2015), principals must be intentional about looking for teacher input and feedback on school change efforts.

According to Waters et al. (2003), The 21 leadership Responsibilities are:

1. Culture: fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation
2. Order: establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines
3. Discipline: protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus
4. Resources: provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs
5. Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment: is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
6. Focus: establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention
7. Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment: is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
8. Visibility: has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students
9. Contingent rewards: recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments
10. Communication: establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students
11. Outreach: is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
12. Input: involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies
13. Affirmation: recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures
14. Relationship: demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff
15. Change agent: is willing to and actively challenges that status quo
16. Optimize: inspires and leads new and challenging innovations
17. Ideals/beliefs: communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling

18. Monitors/evaluates: monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning

19. Flexibility: adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent

20. Situational awareness: is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems

21. Intellectual stimulation: ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture (Waters & Cameron, 2007, pgs. 4–9)

**Second order Change and School Transformation**

The concept of school transformation did not begin in the field of education; instead, it is a concept carried from the organizational and business worlds (Mette, 2012). According to Gaunt (2016), the School Reform Movement generated transformative practices intended to increase and sustain student achievement. The concept of Transformative Leadership was prevalent since the 1970s while the concept of Second-Order change was common in the 1990s referring to change or transformation that could not be reversed (Senge, 1990). The work of Marzano et al. (2005) identified seven responsibilities directly related to second-order change. Gaunt (2016) found that principals are struggling to implement the seven most critical responsibilities associated with second-order change due to external pressures exerted over principals, especially for those that carry multiple administrative roles.
According to Fullwood (2016), all the 21 responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) are essential in leading successful school transformation. The United States Department of Education (2011) delineated the implementation of key turnaround interventions needed to sustain improved student outcomes; the replacement of the school principal, rehire no more than fifty percent of the teachers and allow the new principal to implement a comprehensive approach to increase student achievement. As stated by Hickey (2010) hiring effective principals is the focus of school reform. According to Muhammad & Hollie (2012), the success or failure of a school community is directly linked to the principal. Fullwood (2016) identified four practices essential to guide school transformation; (a) transformation of the school culture, (b) implementation of professional learning communities (PLC); (c) building relationships and trust, (d) establishing a clear focus for the organization.

Principals in High-Poverty Schools

As Kannapel & Clements (2005) have specified, effective principals and their high-performing high-poverty schools have high expectations for all, they build strong relationships, focus on instruction and formative assessments, share a collective decision-making process, exhibit strong work ethic and morale, and hire personnel in a careful and intentional manner. According to Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale (2007), there are four commonalities of effective principals in poverty schools. The first is that effective principals have clearly set the direction of the school community. Also, effective leaders invest multiple resources in developing people, redesign the organization and manage the instructional program. However, as presented by Seachore-Louis et al. (2010), corroborated that the Ylimaki et al. (2012) model was an accurate descriptor of these practices and its relationship to student achievement. He elaborated, after
researching teachers and principals in leadership practices that focus on student achievement, keeping track of the professional development needs of teachers and creating proper conditions for teachers to collaborate was also essential.

Multiple studies suggest common themes of effective school leaders’ practices leading to educational change. One of those practices is related to the development of relational trust with staff along with the use of various sources of information to solve complex issues. Secondly, effective principals developed a shared vision and maintained a focus on teaching and learning. Lastly, it was found that being responsive to external demands was also a commonality among various studies (Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013). It is the view of (Parylo & Zepeda, 2014) that effective principals hire and retain effective teachers. Principal success is associated with higher teacher job satisfaction and by building capacity within the school. As indicated by Cohen (2015), principals of high-performing, high-poverty elementary schools were more transformational than transactional leaders. These leaders shared leadership with other team members and engaged in strategic thinking and planning to achieve educational goals. Effective principals view themselves as builders of school capacity and framers of a risk-free and trusting environment. These principals also clearly defined and shared a vision categorized by high expectations and pursued means to foster parental engagement (Cohen, 2015). There is sufficient literature confirming the effect that effective leadership has on student achievement. However, there is a shortage of research explaining the discrepancy of the actions, characteristics, and practices of high-performing, high-poverty school principals from those colleagues that are failing, or not showing improvement (Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson & Ylimaki, 2007). Principal leadership is essential in any school organization; principals have a direct influence in the culture of the school and student outcomes; principals shape the school’s core processes,
climate, and resources intended to guide student achievement (Jacobson, 2011). After interviewing 142 teachers and principals in six high-poverty, high-performing schools, Reinhorn, Johnson & Simon (2015) found that teachers use data to inform their instruction, evaluate student progress and plan interventions accordingly.

As noted by Fusarelli & Militello (2012), school principals are responsible for hiring, retaining and increasing teacher quality. Effective teachers can increase student achievement and narrow achievement gaps. Also, principals have the position to ensure consistent, effective teaching to ultimately influence academic achievement (Cheney & Davis, 2011). Levine (2005), estimated that by 2015 forty percent of principals in the nation will be eligible for retirement. This fact inflicts more risk for districts struggling to find effective principals for their high-needs schools. Levin also stated that principals are called to serve as leaders that transform the goals, priorities, and staffing and educational practices of their school communities. New Leaders for New Schools (2009) defined principal effectiveness as the ability to advance student outcomes, increase teacher capacity and execute effective leadership actions in the context of high-poverty high-performing schools. New Leaders for New Schools also defined the types of leadership actions that can yield the greatest results through the Urban Excellence Framework. In the framework, effective principals in poverty schools must ensure rigorous learning and teaching. Also, it is imperative that the principal hires, trains and retains highly qualified staff members that align with the vision of the organization. Principals must also develop a culture that revolves around student achievement and sets in place systems that support learning. Finally, the framework invites principals in poverty schools to model personal leadership. According to Sebastian & Allensworth (2012), the leadership of the principal is a determining factor in school reform and student achievement.
The work of Reeves (2003) indicates that effective principals in poverty schools must be laser-like focused on academic achievement. Effective principals are selective in choices provided by the curriculum, they promote writing in content areas, in addition to consistently assess student progress. According to Loeb, Kalogrides & Beteille (2012), there are seven characteristics effective schools must possess to ensure high levels of student achievement. These seven characteristics are instructional leadership, a clearly defined mission, a safe, positive environment, high expectations for all, effective monitoring of student progress, maximized learning opportunities, and a productive school-home relationship (Loeb et al., 2012). As noted by Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2015) the relationship between school climate, student achievement and a trusting relationship with the principal was evident in high-poverty, high-performing schools. According to Parrett & Budge (2012), effective teaching and high expectations are the elements that separate high-performing high-poverty schools from low-performing high-poverty schools. These researchers continue elaborating stating that low-performing schools need to abandon what does not work and embrace approaches proven to be effective. As presented by Cheney & Davis (2011), effective principals require qualities embedded within explicit beliefs. These beliefs are associated with a sense of urgency, the untapped potential of every student, high expectations, a sense of personal accountability and a value of diversity. New Leaders for New Schools (2009) also adds that effective principals must possess resiliency and perseverance when dealing with the challenges they face daily. Schools like KIPP charters, according to Miller, Pavlakis, Lac, & Hoffman (2014) are advocating for extended school days or school years as well as getting more parental and faculty commitment to compensate for the issues related to urban high-poverty schools. According to Miller et al. (2014), many organizations such as the Harlem Children’s Zone or the Children’s Aid Society
are creating social/education programs to compensate for some of the issues faced by children in their communities.

After surveying 365 National Teachers of the Year in 50 states of the union, Goodwin & Babo (2014) found that these highly effective teachers valued principals that recognized their individual accomplishments, principals that value relationships, are highly visible and have good knowledge about curriculum and instruction. This trend as per Goodwin et al. (2014) was consistent with National Teachers of the Year that came from high-poverty schools. Also, found by these researchers was the fact that these teachers valued principals that inspired and lead the organization with challenging innovations. National Teachers of the Year tend to undervalue principals that operate with strong ideals and fixated beliefs and leaders that value goals over people. In a similar study, Bedessem-Chandler (2014) found that teachers valued principals that exhibited and prioritized Relationships, Communication, and Visibility. Ylimaki (2007) suggested that highly effective principals in high-poverty schools exhibit passion, tenacity, empathy, creative thinking, and flexibility. Jerald, Haycock & Rose-Socol (2017), suggests that in high-poverty schools, principals need to create a culture where teachers want to work. By doing so, effective school leaders can retain effective teachers in an environment of collaboration and improvement.

Cohen (2015) found that Principals in high-performing, high-poverty schools have a more transformational approach to their leadership than a transactional approach which tends to be more passive and avoidant. Also, Murphy (2008) found that leadership is the most critical variable of school transformation since, without leadership, there is no organizational success. According to Murphy and consistent with the findings of Leithwood & Strauss (2009). The work of Finnigan & Stewart (2009) delineates certain principal practices in high-poverty schools that
are considered effective. Principals must articulate a clear school vision, provide resources and support to teachers, set a culture of collaboration that supports collective goals and manages the school adequately. Ross (2013) found that effective principals in high-poverty high-performing schools created a culture of high expectations through active monitoring of classroom instruction and individual students progress. Miranda (2011) stated that effective principals in poverty schools understood that their main responsibility was to build teacher capacity ensuring high levels of student’s outcomes. The principal acted as a facilitator of the teaching and learning process transforming the culture of the school making it sustainable and independent.

The work of Bandura (1986) established that principals need high levels of self-efficacy to endure the conditions of poverty schools. Principals with a high degree of self-efficacy are more equipped to overcome obstacles and perform at higher levels in the context of high-poverty schools. According to Sullivan (2013), principal self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by personal dispositions, preparedness to build capacity among teachers, high expectations and a firm belief in students despite their socio-economic challenges.

According to Kraft, Papay, Moore, Charner, Ng & Reinhorn (2015), teachers in high-poverty schools suffer from some degree of uncertainty due to the constant and unpredictable changes in their impoverished communities, pressure from state accountability and sanctions due to low performance. Kraft et al. (2015) also found that in many cases, teachers understood that their role had an academic aspect as well as a social responsibility. In their study, effective teachers that choose to serve disadvantaged students valued school leaders that adopted an open-systems approach to how their schools interacted with parents. Kraft recommended principals to embrace efforts to coordinate instruction across grade levels, so student exposure to the curriculum is coherent. Also, fostering a structured and disciplined environment throughout the
school was found key to the success of effective teachers in poverty schools. Also, it is recommended that principals put systems in place to support children with emotional and behavioral issues. Finally, principals must engage parents to shape students’ readiness to learn.

According to Strauss (2013) and Gorski (2012), there are a series of stereotypes that are associated with people of poverty. These stereotypes range from the notion that poor people are lazy, do not care about school, they abuse drugs, and are language deficient. These stereotypes are far from reality and are affecting the morale and the conditions of those with the most disadvantaged. Gorski insists that if stereotypes are not confronted in the school context, it will create the conditions for low academic expectations and to redirect the responsibility of student outcomes from the school to the parents at home. In his work, Gorski calls to stop prejudice against the poor since attitudes and beliefs drive the decision-making at the school level as well as at the national level through policies and practices.

The work of Chenoweth & Theokas (2013) revealed four qualities shared among effective principals in high-poverty schools. Effective principals believed that all students can learn at high levels. They also prioritized instruction to be the center of all duties by removing obstacles such as student’s discipline or lack of resources that could limit a teacher’s ability to focus on instruction. Effective principals in poverty schools focused on building the capacity of all staff members. They create a professional culture where all members of the organization are learning from each other. Finally, effective leaders monitor and constantly evaluate what works and learn from failure. Principals set goals to track progress and use evidence to support the decision-making process. As presented by Mendels & Mitgang (2013), school districts should hire strong principals for challenging schools. These researchers provide examples of this practice in districts where highly qualified principals are assigned to the lowest-performing
schools. Principals are given the freedom to recruit their own teams and receive salary increases plus bonuses in exchange for agreeing to stay for at least three years in the school. Although there are many proponents of merit pay for teachers, especially in high-poverty schools, researchers such as Fryer (2011) and Springer, Hamilton, McCaffrey, Ballou, Le & Pepper (2010) found that merit pay is not associated to increased student achievement.

The effectiveness of principals is not dependent upon tenure, gender or level of education (Dhuey & Smith, 2014). On the other hand, as described by Jacob (2010), the key to positively affect student achievement is determined by the quality of the teachers the principal of the school hires. Bonilla (2006) identified 10 leadership problems that prevent principals from moving their organizations. Bonilla points out that principals must avoid low visibility, too much or too little delegation, electing programs over people, autocracy, lack of recognition of student and teacher success, having a negative attitude and forgetting about learning as the main thing. As reported by Green (2017) principals in high-poverty schools need to promote instructional practices that value scaffolding strategies and small group instruction. By engaging in these two practices, teachers will be connecting content to students despite curriculum pitfalls. Another finding of Green’s research is that high-poverty students lose four or more hours of instruction due to disruptive student behavior. Wong & Wong (2014) call for school leaders to create better systems to reduce the impact of behavior on instructional time.

**Superintendents and District Administrators and schools in Poverty**

In a study conducted by Rammer (2007), 370 superintendents were asked to determine the importance of each of the 21 responsibilities established by (Waters et al., 2003) and how these responsibilities aligned to the selection process of principals. Some of the commonalities
found in this study are that superintendents valued communication, visibility, focus, and knowledge of instruction as the top four responsibilities. On the other hand, the least valued responsibilities aligned with the process of hiring principals were discipline, order, relationship, and intellectual stimulation. Rammer also indicated that superintendents understand principals should possess the qualities outlined in the 21 responsibilities but might struggle to identify those qualities in the candidates they interview. As reported by Ash, Hodge & Connell (2013), district administrators are struggling to hire effective principals and believe that this is an extraordinarily challenging responsibility.

Principals are under severe scrutiny, and the demands and changes of the job make it difficult to find effective principals (The Wallace Foundation, 2016). The US Department of Labor (2014) reported that principal jobs are projected to grow 6% from 2014 to 2024 due to increases in student enrollment. Tresslar, (2010) found that academic performance in minority schools are also influenced by role models such as teachers and administrators representing the diverse population of students. Tresslar also found that in Texas a gap exists between the numbers of minority principals placed in high minority population schools, especially in Latino communities. Garcia & Guerra (2004) found that principal minority candidates are held to higher scrutiny in districts where most leaders are White due to a widespread deficit thinking approach. Fernandez, Bustamante, Combs, Martinez-Garcia (2015) reported that the Latino principals interviewed in his study reported possessing a drive, determination and great passion when facing the challenges of their schools. These principals also expressed concerns about their districts resistance to recruiting individuals for diversity. Lopez, Magdeleno & Reis (2006) expressed concerns about educational administrations being dominated by White males that are lacking the ability to address the issues of race, gender, and social status.
The Wallace Foundation (2016) recommended a series of research-based steps essential to reshaping the leadership pipelines of school districts. Firstly, districts should create standards or clear descriptions of the principal’s duties and expectations. Secondly, the district must provide in-service professional development. Thirdly, the district must hire candidates that match the needs of the school. Finally, the district must provide principal evaluations and support systems to promote instruction. As Daggett (2015) stated, most rapidly improving schools privilege building a school culture that revolves around the joy of learning over strategies. These schools take control of its current condition rather than allowing outside entities to control them. These schools have a culture that values grit, pro-activeness as it relates to parents and the community.

As reported by Holme, Diem & Welton (2014), some school districts neglected to address demographic changes within their own boundaries. These districts approached the issue from a deficit thinking approach. The Wallace Foundation (2016) reported that even though almost all school districts seem to be providing some sort of on-the-job support for principals, the results of their research show that districts could provide more consistent support for principals in their roles as instructional leaders. Holme et al. (2014) found that to properly address the issue of poverty and inequity for students of color; districts must analyze their current policies and understand their current context. Districts must avoid pitfalls associated with cultural deficits, and prejudice. According to Viola (2017), the bond between the central office and school principals is critical for school reform. Daggett (2015) calls for the central administration to be more engaged in supporting instructional success at their schools. Daly & Finnigan (2011) found that educational reform should start at the district office. Viola (2017)
stated that districts should establish clear goals for achievement but allow principals the freedom to execute them. Effective districts empower principals to lead and embrace change.

The work of Jones (2016), reported that superintendents that support a districtwide culture of equity promoted family engagement and worked strategically to eliminate racial bias in their school systems. According to Piccirillo (2016), the surveyed superintendents believed that the most common barrier to meet the needs of children in poverty and exert change towards equity for all was the mindsets of teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Most members of the school community still believe that the problems and deficits of children in poverty cannot be overcome. In a sense, this mindset expects children to underachieve (Muhammed, 2015). Jerald, Haycock & Rose-Socol (2017), suggest that districts should enlist proven high-performing teachers in high-poverty schools to be more involved in reviewing and providing feedback on school improvement plans. According to Metz, (2015), there is enough data to conclude that high-poverty, high minority schools have higher numbers of least effective teachers as compared to low-poverty, low minority schools. Metz also calls for immediate action to revert the impact of low teacher quality in poverty schools. The researcher states that districts should staff low-performing poverty schools with proven effective veteran teachers. These teachers must receive additional compensation, professional development, and leadership opportunities.

As reported by Ushomirsky & Williams (2015), funding inequalities are affecting children of poverty. Highest poverty districts in the nation receive $1,200 less per student as compared to most affluent districts. The difference between districts serving the most students of color is of about $2,000 less per students as compared to predominantly white districts. School districts with high-poverty levels are mostly composed of minority students who are affected by
the inequalities of the current school finance system. Ushomirsky et al. (2015) reported that Texas ranked 44 out of 47 states on the existing gaps in state and local revenues per students between school districts serving low and high poverty children.

The issue of principal retention is key in the process of establishing long-lasting school success. As Anthony (2016) pointed out, school principals in urban high-poverty schools reported that to increase their tenure at their campuses the most important factors were quality teaching staff, positive work-life balance as well as having effective supervisors, collegial support, proper resources and time for long-term planning. Another contributing factor for principal retention and consequent success is providing leaders with opportunities to participate in cohort-based preparation programs (Orr, King & LaPointe, 2010). In a study conducted by McGuire (2016), it was found that about 60% of the participants acknowledged that the principal preparation courses were not aligned with the actual realities of the schools. These principals stated that they needed support in coaching and mentoring to fully impact their staff.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005).

Research Design

The researcher used a mixed methods research design for this study. According to Creswell & Clark (2011), the mixed methods model is intended to collect, analyze both quantitative and qualitative methods, providing a more holistic understanding of research problems. Creswell et al. (2011) also state that the mixed method approach compensates for some of the limitations present in both the quantitative and qualitative approach when used in isolation. The qualitative aspect of this research was addressed using a phenomenological approach. The researcher used a survey to gather data for identifying and describing characteristics, practices, and beliefs of effective principals in high-poverty schools. This qualitative research was intended to find a gap in the body of knowledge on the issue of principal effectiveness in high-performing high-poverty schools. In addition, the researcher explored the perceptions of current effective principals in poverty schools regarding their own perceived characteristics. Furthermore, these principals were asked to sort the 21 Responsibilities of the Balance Leadership Framework in order of importance in the context of poverty schools. In doing so, the researcher gained knowledge about which of the 21 Responsibilities were more
relevant to the work in high-performing high-poverty schools from the perspective of the participants. The research questions used to understand better the phenomenon were:

1. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership characteristics that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?

2. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership practices that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?

The phenomenological research approach, according to Lester (1999) is designed to identify phenomena and gather valuable information about opinions and perceptions through interviews, discussions, and observations. This method is intended to study the experiences and perspective of individuals understanding that such experience is subjective and requires interpretation. According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher must set aside any prejudgment that might hinder the ability to be objective and receptive. Phenomenological research in the view of Moustakas is valid since it reports phenomena gathered in the first person through a description of what is seen or heard and the relationship with its contexts.

**Context and Setting**

This study was conducted in an urban district in Southeast Texas. Ten school principals were selected to participate in the study. All the principals in the study served neighborhood schools with 90% or more of students receiving free or reduced lunch. In addition, the selected principals are serving schools that have met standards, under the Texas accountability system, and have earned at least three out of six academic distinctions.

According to the Texas Education Agency (2016), the school district for the selected principals had an enrollment of 214,891 students in 2016. Currently, 76% of the school population is considered economically disadvantaged. A total of 86% of the student population
come from minority groups; 24% African American, 8.5% White and 62% Hispanic. In addition, 30% have been identified as English Language Learners (ELL). This district has met all academic expectations as defined by the TEA.

The Texas Education Agency (2016) also reported that there were 11, 644 teachers serving the student population. Of these teachers, 36% are African-American, 29% White and 27% Hispanic. The teacher turnover rate in this district was 19.5% and the average years of experience were of 10.2 years. TEA also reported that the total number of schools for the selected district was 281 of which 38 were considered Improvement Required (IR) in 2016. Of the total IR campuses, 15 were elementary. Of the 15 IR schools, all serve minority children living in poverty. Of a total of 163 elementary schools in this district, 54 obtained at least three out of six academic distinctions per TEA standards during the 2016-2016 school year.

Participants

The participants for this study were purposefully selected from an urban district located in Southeast Texas. Additionally, the participating school principals were chosen from elementary schools that met TEA standards and obtained at least three academic distinctions during the 2016-2017 school year. In addition, to participate in this study, the participating principals served a school where the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch exceeded 90%. The principals that participated in the study served high-poverty, high-performing elementary schools. Out of 163 elementary schools, in this particular school district, 54 elementary schools met TEA standards and obtained at least three academic distinctions.

The selected principals for this study were contacted via email by the researcher. The survey used in this study was based on the 21 Responsibilities developed by Waters et al. (2004). The participating principals were asked to sort the 21 Responsibilities in order of relevance for
the success of their high-poverty, high-performing schools. In addition, principals were asked a series of questions designed to find characteristics and behaviors that relate directly to their success in poverty schools. The instrument developed for the study is further described in the next section.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher interviewed and surveyed a total group of 10 elementary school principals serving in high-poverty, high-performing schools. The researcher interviewed principals individually. All participants received the same disclosures and instructions scripted and developed by the researcher. All the verbal responses collected were recorded and transcribed accordingly.

The survey that was used for this study consisted of two parts: the first part captured basic demographic information such as participants’ age, race, gender, and years of experience. In the second part, the participating principals were asked to write down five characteristics of effective principals in poverty schools. A ten-minute period was given to complete this task, and all the responses were collected immediately after the ten-minute period. Following, the researcher read each of the 21 Responsibilities as defined by Marzano et al. (2005) using a PowerPoint. Then, the participants were given the list of 21 leadership responsibilities published by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) and were asked to rank the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance as it relates to their work as principals in poverty schools. A total of 20 minutes was given to this task, and all surveys were collected by the researcher at the end of the allotted time.

Subsequently, the researcher asked the participants to discuss the five responsibilities they selected and to explain why the selected responsibilities as essential to their work as
principals of high-poverty, high-performing elementary schools. Participants were asked to provide examples of how a responsibility related to their work and how it has contributed to their success. Also, the participants were asked about other characteristics that are needed to succeed in poverty schools that are not contained within the 21 responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005).

**Reliability and Validity**

The survey used for this study was divided into two parts: the first part involved collecting basic demographic information such as gender, race, age, and years of experience as school principals. The second part involved the process of ranking in order of importance the 21 leadership responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) in relation to the work of principals leading high-poverty schools. In other words, the participants ranked the 21 responsibilities from one to twenty-one in order of importance in relation to their work in poverty schools. All the participants for the study were selected based on the selection criteria established by this study. The participating school principals were selected from elementary schools that met TEA standards and obtained at least three academic distinctions during the 2016-2017 school year. In addition, to participate in this study, the participating principals served a school where the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch exceeded 90%.

The participants were asked to rank the 21 leadership responsibilities (Marzano et al., 2005). In the document given to the participants, the 21 leadership responsibilities were listed along with a definition and the average correlation to student achievement score better known as the r score. The r score was removed from the original table to allow principals to rank according to their own perceptions and experiences. The instrument used was developed by the researcher based on the original table created by Marzano et al. (2005). The instrument was also reviewed
by the researcher’s dissertation chair and committee members who reviewed the instrument’s
design and accuracy.

The survey questions and the focus group interview questions were examined through the
scope of truth, applicability, value, consistency, and neutrality as referenced by Guba & Lincoln
(1994) and Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993). These researchers agreed that to be
considered valid; all instruments had to adhere to truth, applicability, value, consistency, and
neutrality. The researcher fulfilled the criterion of truth by recording and transcribing
participants’ responses with fidelity. Verbal responses from the participants were typed into
tables using Microsoft Word. Applicability was obtained by finding valuable information from
principals serving poverty schools. The criterion of value was met by analyzing the 21
leadership responsibilities from the perspective of principals serving high-poverty, high-
performing schools. The researcher also intended to achieve consistency by ensuring all
participants received the same questions and the same conditions to respond during the face to
face sessions. Neutrality was achieved by respecting the responses of participants without any
prompts that could lead to a change of answer or response.

The researcher was deliberate and intentional about ensuring that he did not influence the
participants’ responses. The participants were informed about the researcher’s background as a
school principal. The following criteria were used to address rigor and trustworthiness in
alignment with the work of (Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) that is required for
qualitative research. Also, as presented by Trochim (2002), credibility, transferability, and
confirmability are essential elements of qualitative research. The participants were entitled to
judge the credibility of the results. The element of credibility was addressed by asking the
participants to respond to the questions based on their own experiences. Transferability in
qualitative research is related to the level to which the results of the study can be generalized or transmitted to other contexts. The element of transferability falls in the realm of the researcher who described the context of his study in alignment with the conclusions of the work of (Erlandson et al., 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). According to Trochim (2012), confirmability is related to how a study could be replicated or studied by others. Confirmability was addressed in this research by exploring the common themes from the participants’ responses. Responses were transcribed verbatim from participants’ spoken responses and served as a basic source of data in the qualitative evaluation.

**Data Collection**

All the ethical considerations established by the research community, the participant districts, and Houston Baptist University was upheld to its standards. Approval to conduct the study was requested and granted from the participant school districts and the Houston Baptist University.

The completed Human Subjects Form was submitted to the Houston Baptist University through the Institutional Research Board Committee to obtain approval to conduct the study (Appendices A & B). The ethical considerations in this study involved protecting and concealing the identities of the participants and obtaining their consent. The consent form was included in the survey and was presented and explained before participants engaged in answering any of the survey questions or before participating in the focus groups. The researcher did not intervene as participants were responding to the questions ensuring that the questions asked were prepopulated on a script. This process ensured that the researcher’s bias did not skew or modify any of the answers. The researcher was available to answer any clarifying question about the process related to the surveys and the focus groups. The researcher communicated that
participant’s responses were stored for six months after the completion of the research project and that all responses will be destroyed.

Data were collected from the following sources: (a) survey containing demographic questions and a ranking activity and (b) focus group interviews using open-ended questions so participants can elaborate on their responses. A total of ten principals serving high-poverty, high-performing schools were interviewed on a face to face setting. The responses collected during the focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed word by word. The survey responses were processed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS. The verbal responses were analyzed by the statistical software known as MAXQDA Analytics Pro for further study and with the intent of determining common themes among the participants. Participants were contacted via email or by phone to participate in the study. The focus group sessions were held at a convenient and centrally located area for the participants. The face to face meetings lasted about 60 minutes.

**Researcher Bias**

According to Heath (1997), researchers must communicate their biases, so stakeholders can make their own opinions about the findings presented. The researcher was intentional in maintaining a distance from his opinions and views and the actual research process that included various focus groups, interviews, and data analysis. The researcher currently served as a school support officer in a school district in Southeast Texas. The researcher put aside his personal biases and preconceptions understanding that to be objective, participants must be allowed to reflect on their ideas and their own beliefs.
Data Analysis

In this section, the researcher describes the data analysis procedures that was used to analyze the following: (a) survey containing demographic questions and ranking by level of relevance activity (b) focus group interviews using open-ended questions with the purpose of allowing participants further explain their beliefs and opinions about the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing schools. The survey questions and activities along with the open-ended questions were aligned with the research purpose and research questions. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing elementary schools and how these align to the Texas Principal Standards. The responses collected during the focus groups were audio recorded and were transcribed word by word. The survey responses were processed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS. The verbal responses were analyzed by the statistical software known as MAXQDA Analytics Pro for further study and with the purpose of finding common themes among the participants. As defined by Bodgan & Biklen (2006), the process of data analysis involves organizing, synthesizing, establishing patterns and determining what is important and what lessons can be learned.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher elaborated on the methodology for the study. The participants were selected consistent with the predetermined criteria. The instrumentation section of this chapter described the survey, which included demographic information, a ranking by importance activity and open-ended questions. Data collection and analysis measures were explained for two sources of data (a) survey containing demographic questions and a ranking by
importance activity and (b) responses obtained from the participants in the focus groups using structured open-ended questions. The findings will be presented in Chapter IV.
Chapter IV

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). The researcher was able to interview ten candidates that met the criteria for the study. The participants for this study were selected from an urban district located in Southeast Texas. Additionally, all the participants were principals whose schools met the Texas Education Agency (TEA) standards and obtained at least three academic distinctions during the 2016-2017 school year. Also, to qualify as a participant in this study, the participating principals served schools where the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch exceeded 90%.

Research Questions

1. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership characteristics that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?

2. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership practices that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?

Results

Participant one.

Participant one is a Hispanic female between the ages of 35 to 44 years of age. She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in
Southeast Texas for six years. The school has a population of 551 students: 96% Hispanic, 3%
African American, and other races, 1%. The school is a Title I school where 96.4% of the
population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school
has met standards and has obtained academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this
school obtained six out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Mathematics, Science, Top
25 Percent Student Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps and Post Secondary
Readiness). Also, the school has been awarded two national awards and two Gold Ribbons
awards by the Children at Risk Organization.

Table 4.1

_Campus Demographics- Participant 1_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>551 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>EE - 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent English Language Learners</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Rate</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Served by Special Education</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity I: what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of
their high-poverty school?
Table 4.2

*Participant 1 Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>Team Building Mentality</td>
<td>Goal Oriented</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Provide Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.3

*Participant 1 Response - Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(8) Focus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Change Agent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) Involvement in Curriculum, instruction, and assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(19) Resources</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

Participant one said that the principal in poverty schools face a myriad of responsibilities, but that the first one should be the ability to focus. The principal in poverty school should be focused on establishing clear goals, building on the strengths of the team and in providing
continuous support to the faculty. The principal should be an effective communicator and should not make excuses in the process of ensuring the academic success of every student.

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

The principal in poverty schools must have the courage to be a change agent, to ensure that “you're able to actively challenge the status quo, something that is the norm may not be necessarily the best thing for your students.” So, principals must have the managerial courage to be able to work on that change “even though some people may not like the change, so you have to be strong enough to do that.” Participant 1 felt that communicating clear goals and focusing on improving every student are essential behaviors of the principal in poverty. Principals should know curriculum and instruction to better support teachers. Also, the principal should be a good manager of the available resources to streamline the support and create the conditions for success. These resources could be related to professional development, materials, coaching among others.

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

Participant one stated that she was not able to find candor as one of the characteristics. She felt as if being able to have difficult conversations with people in discourse with the vision of the campus is essential in maintaining the conditions of excellence for every student. As mentioned by this principal, the ability to engage in difficult conversation “is definitely a skill that a principal has to have in order to move your school to the next level.” Additionally, this principal felt that leaders in poverty schools must be sound managers of the resources available. “Even though you're an instructional leader, you do have to be a good manager as well because
you're supposed to be able to maximize the resources that you do have to reach your full potential.”

**Participant two.**

Participant two is a Caucasian female between the ages of 25 to 34 years of age. She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in Southeast Texas for two years. The school has a population of 716 students: 94% Hispanic, 2% African American, 2% Caucasian and other races, 1%. The school is a Title I school where 91.6% of the population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school has met standards and has obtained academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this school obtained six out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Mathematics, Science, Top 25 Percent Student Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps and Post Secondary Readiness). Also, the school has been awarded a Gold Ribbon award by the Children at Risk organization.

Table 4.4

*Campus Demographics- Participant 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>716 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>PK - 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent English Language Learners</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Rate</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Served by Special Education</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity I: What are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?

Table 4.5

*Participant 2 Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Knowledge</td>
<td>Resilience/Grit</td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>Energy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.6

*Participant 2 Response- Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(9) Ideals and Beliefs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) Involvement in Curriculum, instruction and assessment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16) Order</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(21) Visibility</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

Participant two communicated that the principal in poverty schools must be clear about the fact of working with students in poverty and that demands grit and resilience since it requires more from the leaders that a regular school would. The principal must possess energy and have a
good wealth of instructional knowledge. As she said, “If you don't know what a good reading classroom looks like, teachers won't know what a good classroom looks like.” The principal in poverty schools must frame his feedback, vision, mission, and ideals within a framework of effective communication.

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

Participant two set the basis of the work in poverty schools in the ideals and beliefs of the school principal. As she defined it, “it stems from your belief as a principal and as a person and as a leader, where do you want the kids in your school and your community to be, and what is the best for them. And then knowing the route that you want to take, you have to plan effectively… if you don't have the right ideal or belief, then it's not going to translate to classrooms.” Another element considered essential in the work with poverty schools is the ability to set, communicate, monitor and adjust your goals for the school community. As participant two stated, principals must “realign and be flexible to readjust because nothing will ever go as planned. So, you need to make sure that the right steps are in place.”

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

For participant two, principals in poverty must possess an analytical mindset. They should be able to consistently assess and reassess programs, initiatives, procedures, data, school climate and the community ensuring that there is an alignment with the vision and mission of the organization. In the opinion of this participant, the principal in poverty must have a great deal of influence over the community ensuring that there is buy-in with the initiatives to maintain
momentum as challenges arise to ensure the collective success of the organization in sustaining the vision and mission.

**Participant three.**

Participant three is a Hispanic female between the ages of 25 to 34 years of age. She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in Southeast Texas for five years. The school has a population of 717 students: 98% Hispanic, 1% African American, and other races 1%. The school is a Title I school were 94.4% of the population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school has met standards and has obtained academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this school obtained three out of six academic distinctions (Mathematics, Top 25 Percent Student Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps).

Table 4.7

_Campus Demographics- Participant 3_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>717 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>PK - 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent English Language Learners</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Rate</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Served by Special Education</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity I: What are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?
Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.8

Participant 3 Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Drive</td>
<td>Instructional Knowledge</td>
<td>Data Driven</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

According to participant three, principals in poverty must have a clear and concise vision. The vision must ground on what is best for students despite the distractions that might come. As this principal stated, “a lot of the times it's not even just teachers, it, it could be from outside, like higher up or different things that come to you. At the end of the day, you have to decide is what's going to work for my students. And I know my students.” The second characteristic this principal pointed out was, driven by clear goals. The principal in poverty schools must be
determined in the attainment of goals despite the multiple issues commonly faced in schools of poverty. As this principal stated, “it's not easy. Working at a campus where you deal with situations in which students are involved in shootings, and many parents die because of certain things like that. Or even I've had a student who's passed away because of violence… so a lot of times it can, it can get discouraging… So, we have to stay driven by the fact that is not going to be easy work. You have to be in the trenches with the teachers in every aspect to get teachers to buy-in to really see that the work moves along and progresses."

Additionally, to be effective in poverty schools, the principal must be instructionally sound and fully engaged. “That has been, if anything, one of the things, one of the reasons why my teachers have bought into so many things that we bring forward to the table because I'm always in there with them. I will teach alongside with them. I will do pacing calendars with them. I will come up with professional development for them myself. I don't send them to professional development outside of the school. It's very rare. A lot of the times I go, and I bring it to them. The reason why is because if I send them to PD the way that I look at it, what do I know? How do I know that what they're getting is truly aligned to what my vision is and that they're going to successfully implemented into the classroom, and how am I going to be able to monitor that.”

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

According to participant three to be effective in the work in poverty schools, principals must build strong relationships, they must be flexible, and they must possess strong ideals and beliefs. In the process of building relationships, participant 3 allows teachers to be a part of the decision-making process. She understands that often you can get stuck in your ways when
change is evidently needed. As this principal stated, “You're kind of scared to let go, but you have to trust in the fact that it's going to work, and you continue to monitor it, and if it doesn't, then you can bring it back to the table and say, this didn't work. Let's try something different. But that has also helped me with making sure that the teachers understand that we're in this together because it's not easy.” When it comes to students in poverty, participant 3 believes that students’ voices need to be heard if we truly want to gain their respect and their willingness to learn. As participant 3 stated; “we tend to react when students behave. And it's like with other adults; we can't take it personal. We can't react. We have to stop, think and then respond in an effective way that's not going to make them move further away from us. Because if you have a student who is just not emotionally or socially invested in that classroom, they're not going to want to work for you.” As participant 3 elaborated, students at her school might go months without light or water, having negative implications in the way they interact in the classroom. For that, she has made sure that clean clothes are always available, and that food is provided more often than in another school. As participant explained, “So these are the kinds of things that we're focusing on. And that's huge on my campus because if we can't identify that, and work on that, academics is not going to Happen.”

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

Participant three stated that one of the elements missing in the 21 Responsibilities is compassion. As she stated, “we can't address the academic component if we have an identified their social-emotional needs first.” Participant 3 explained that “students come as best as they can and sometimes the situations that they face at home, it's not fair to them. So, it's almost like you have to be that parent for them. So, you have to have that compassion. It can't just be authoritative, it can't be dismissive, but you got to focus on academics.” Participant 3 explained
that when she hires new teachers, she always includes scenarios where candidates have an
opportunity to show compassion. For her, in the work in poverty schools, empathy is a vital
characteristic principal in poverty must possess.

**Participant four.**

Participant four is an African American female between the ages of 35 to 44 years of age.
She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school
in Southeast Texas for two years. The school has a population of 460 students: 85% African
American, 13% Hispanic, and other races 2%. The school is a Title I school were 95.9% of the
population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school
has met standards and has obtained academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this
school obtained three out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Top 25 Percent Student
Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps).

Table 4.10

*Campus Demographics- Participant 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>460 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>EE - 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent English Language Learners</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Rate</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Served by Special Education</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity I: what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?

Table 4.11

**Participant 4 Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Firmness</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.12

**Participant 4 Response - Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5) Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18) Relationships</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13) Knowledge of Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16) Order</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) Monitoring and Evaluating</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

According to participant four, principals in poverty schools must be intentional about building relationships with all stakeholders to create mutual respect. As this participant explained, “If they don't respect you and they don't trust you, then it's hard for them to follow you.” Participant four
also explained that principals in poverty schools need to have prior experience in the field working with students in poverty perhaps in other capacities. As this principal explained, recruiting effective teachers for poverty schools is very complex. “You don't really end up attracting some of the higher quality teachers because they don't break their neck-breaking down the doors to come to your campus.” Participant four said that principals must have experience with people to be able to handle educators with different backgrounds and talents to compensate for the various levels of teacher performance.

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

Participant four elaborated on the need to build a positive culture at her poverty school. As she explained, “The culture is so important because you can walk in and base everything on the school that you came from and destroy the campus that you're going to or that you're a part of. So, culture for me was a big deal because there was so much dissension when I got here amongst teachers and administration.” As this principal explained, effective principals in poverty schools must understand the culture of the school and bring the change needed without trying to implant the culture of another campus in your school.” Also, participant four stated that relationships are foundational to the process of transforming a school. This principal reported that as soon as she got selected for her campus, she met one on one with every person in the building. She felt that she needed to know everyone to be able to connect with them.

Participant four also stated that the principal in poverty schools must know curriculum and instruction. She described that teachers like to test the knowledge of the principal in this area. However, as she explained, principals cannot be experts in everything, so it is crucial to find people on your team that has that additional expertise to be able to support and coach all
teachers. As this participant explained, “while you're talking about, you know, making the
culture better, and increasing scores, and turning the school around, you have to be able to
provide the guidance to be able to do that.”

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics
are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in
the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

Participant four explained that in the work of poverty schools, principals need to be
experts in prioritizing. As she explained, principals have to juggle a variety of variables and have
to deal with different personalities and backgrounds. Also, principals “can easily crack under
pressure.” But at a school like this, it comes from every angle, from the parents, from the
students, from the teacher, from the teacher unions. You can easily crack. So, you have
prioritized every single little thing and you may not, nine times out of ten, get to five or six of the
things on the list. So, you have to prioritize to get towards the most important things.”

Participant five.

Participant five is an African American female between the ages of 45 to 54 years of age.
She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school
in Southeast Texas for three years. The school has a population of 774 students: 59% Hispanic,
39% African American, and other races 2%. The school is a Title I school where 91% of the
population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school
has met standards and has obtained academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this
school obtained three out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Top 25 Percent Student
Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps).
Table 4.13

_Campus Demographics - Participant 5_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>774 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>EE - 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent English Language Learners</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Rate</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Served by Special Education</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity I: What are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?

Table 4.14

Participant 5 Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.
Table 4.15

*Participant 5 Response- Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(9) Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Change Agent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16) Order</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

According to participant five, principals in poverty schools must be intentional about the characteristic of flexibility. As this participant explained, students come from a variety of backgrounds, their experiences are different, and their interests vary as well. Hence as leaders, we must be flexible to accommodate each child. As participant five explained, “even though we have high expectations for them or we have things set that we want them to do, it may not always happen. Maybe not in the amount of time that we wanted to happen or when exactly, but we just need to keep pushing with what we want them to do. Then, eventually, it will happen for them, but just definitely being flexible with them.”

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

Participant five explained that principals in poverty schools need to build a positive culture. “Making sure that everybody is on the same page and that you all know what your goal
is, what the focus of the school should be as it relates to the needs of all the students at your campus… so definitely the culture plays a huge role.” Also, participant 5 explained that ideals and beliefs play a crucial role in the work of poverty schools. As she explained, “I think that when you go into a school that has poverty, you definitely have to look and see where those needs are and then focus on what it is that we want to accomplish. What is the number one thing that we want to happen for our campus and our students and our staff, because not only do you have to worry about those students, you have to care for that staff as well because if their needs aren’t being met, they can’t meet the needs of all students.”

Additionally, participant five explained that the responsibility of being a change agent is essential for the work in poverty schools. As she explained, poverty schools often struggle to meet accountability or suffer because the school climate is not where you want it to be. The principal in poverty school should come up with a change agent mindset. As this principal stated, principals must evaluate the culture of the school before stepping in and must be able to make the change needed.

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

Participant five stated that what she thought was missing on the 21 responsibilities was empathy. She explained that effective leaders in poverty school should be able to walk in the shoes of other people, especially students. As she explained, “something like empathy you cannot teach, you have to already have this characteristic.”
Participant six.

Participant six was an African American male between the ages of 35 to 44 years of age. He has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in Southeast Texas for two years. This school has a population of 410 students serving mostly 93% African American, 6% Hispanic, and 1% other races. The school is a Title I school where 91.2% of the population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school has met standards. For the 2016-2017 school year, this school obtained five out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Mathematics, Top 25 Percent Student Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps and Post Secondary Readiness). Also, the school was awarded a Gold Ribbon award by the Children at Risk organization and the TEA honor roll.

Table 4.16

_Campus Demographics- Participant 6_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>410 Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>PK - 05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>91.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent English Language Learners</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Rate</td>
<td>31.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent Served by Special Education</td>
<td>6.2</td>
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</table>

Activity I: What are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?
Table 4.17

*Participant 6 Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the Accountability System</td>
<td>Data Driven Visibility</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Provides Effective Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.18

*Participant 6 Response- Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(18) Relationships</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13) Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) Involvement in Curriculum, instruction, and</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(21) Visibility</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

In the view of Participant six, principals in poverty schools must have a clear understanding of the accountability system. As he explained, “as a first-year principal I was in an Improvement Required school but wasn't really sure what the state accountability system was. So, by default, we would miss the mark just because I wasn't sure how we were being measured.
And so, knowing the accountability system and knowing how each of those, indices actually worked, actually helped us prepare our kids to meet those actual levels. So, once we knew what index one was, then we were able to kind of calculate which kids would actually meet it and then push certain kids to get to that level."

Additionally, Participant six believed that knowing the accountability system went hand and hand with being data-driven. In the opinion of this principal being data-driven was the how of getting his school where it needed to be. As he explained, in his campus the assessment system was clearly aligned to standards. They aligned students’ level with the appropriate interventions and engaged all teachers in PLC in analyzing data and planning for the next line of support per individual students. Teachers had to present their data to their colleagues and the administration. Finally, participant 6 believed that effective principals in poverty schools must be highly visible. Visibility goes along with inspecting what you expect and with a sense of purpose.

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

Participant six believed that principals in poverty must build strong relationships with all stakeholders. In order to hire and retain effective teachers, you must develop strong relationships with them since teachers have options to work anywhere else. As he said, “I think especially in a low performing school or a school with high-poverty, a lot of those teachers could probably work anywhere in the district, right? As you know, not a lot of people were raising their hands to come to an IR (Improvement Required) school. It just, it just didn't happen. I just know from experience.” Participant six explained that “There were people that teachers from all across the district that wanted to, transfer to the school because of the relationships that I had, quote and quote, built with people. So, I think that's the number one thing. I mean, the work is going to be
hard. You're going to ask people to do stuff outside of their comfort zone, working in a school with poverty requires you to do things outside of teaching, and people have to want to do that for kids, and relationships are going to be what gets them to do it. If you don't have a great relationship with your staff, you don't have a great relationship with those parents and those kids; then they won't really feel comfortable working with you.”

Participant six emphasized the importance of aligned communication, especially with the leadership team. As this principal described; “I'm really big on making sure that we're all saying the same thing to our teachers. You know, if we have four administrators, we all need to be having the same vision as it relates to what our accountability is and what we're holding teachers accountable for.” Also, participant six believed that effective feedback is key in the process of building your poverty school to the next level. As he explained, “you have to design the feedback in a way that the teacher is either going to one, come up with the realization themselves, or number two, accept the feedback.” As he continued elaborating around effective feedback, he stated that providing feedback takes practice and that “feedback can move mountains.”

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

According to participant six in order to be effective in poverty schools, principals must have a work-life balance since the work in schools of poverty demands more from the leaders. As he explained, “we know this work is hard. You know, people have quit this job. We know people get moved from the job. We know that it, it stinks a lot. A lot of people gain weight on the job. You know, a lot of people get sick and lose weight on the job… “We need to figure out how you're taking care of yourself, you know, you're building culture, with your staff, but how do you build a culture with your family?”
Additionally, participant six explained that this work demands the leader to look for support, “you shouldn’t be doing this work by yourself. You need to delegate, and you need to reach for help.” This principal explained that his first year was a year where he did trial and error to get to move the school. He stated that there should be a manual for new principals facing turnaround schools and schools in poverty to help them overcome common issues. As he explained, “I think someone should come up with some sort of a cheat sheet for principals, a cheat sheet for principals that are in turnaround schools. These are the things that have worked before, so you don’t spend your time guessing right at turnaround work.”

Participant seven.

Participant Seven was an African American female between the ages of 35 to 44 years of age. She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in Southeast Texas for two years. This school has a population of 381 students: 56% African American, 42% Hispanic and other races, 2%. The school is a Title I school where 94% of the population is under the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school has met standards. For the 2016-2017 school year, this school obtained three out of six academic distinctions (Top 25 Percent Student Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps, and Post Secondary Readiness).

Table 4.19

Campus Demographics- Participant 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>381 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>PK - 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>94.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity I: what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?

Table 4.20

*Participant 7 Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Efficacy Builder</td>
<td>Data Driven</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.21

*Participant 7 Response - Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5) Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Focus</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(21) Visibility</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18) Relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) Monitoring and Evaluating</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?
Participant seven stated that the principal in high-poverty schools must be hyper-focused. As she explained, many distractors challenge your work. “Poverty schools have extreme challenges and in large numbers. Everything from mental illness to home life support too, you know, just physical wellbeing. Everything from hunger to eyeglasses and maintaining their health… You have to do what you can on that front. But keep the main thing, the main thing.” This principal added that if you feel tired, it has to be because your energy has been invested in what really matters and not because you are sidetracked. “You must keep that at the forefront of where you spend your money, where you invest in your people in PD and if you give rewards and rewards that you give to kids and to teachers, it needs to be all aimed at that goal… the bulk of your time, your energy, your effort, your money, everything is spent on that goal.”

Participant seven explained that building strong relationships with all stakeholders is essential in the work in poverty schools. As she stated, “You need to be able to be a politician in that sense too, where you can build relationships with many across the board.” As she elaborated, principals in poverty get people to follow their vision and their initiatives by building relationships of trust. Also, principals in poverty must build teacher capacity. As she elaborated; “You want to build not only capacity in your teachers but effective capacity. I mean they can be great in their knowledge of content and not have pedagogy behind it. They have to be effective at teaching in that environment… A hyper poverty school is going to come with a huge number of challenges and in order to be effective, not as effective within the content or with pedagogy as it is in a textbook, but as an effective teacher of that content in that environment is what you have to build.”

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.
According to participant seven, one of the essential elements of the work in poverty schools is building a healthy culture. As this principal explained, “Culture is the foundation of all teaching and learning. And if the culture in their classroom isn't strong and positive, the game is over already.” As she elaborated further, building capacity is not only regarding curriculum and instruction but is a matter of building positive school culture. Participant 7 also stated that to be effective in poverty school the principal must be data driven. “You cannot be effective in poverty schools if you don’t dig deeper into the data.”

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

Participant seven explained that she had identified bravery as one of the characteristics needed for success. As she explained, “you have to be willing, brave enough and brutally honest in a high-poverty school. The teachers need brutal honesty. The students need brutal honesty. The parents need it as well. They need to hear, look, your child is operating three years behind where they should be and here is what's at stake for them. They need to hear that. The teachers need to have those crucial conversations the first time something bad goes wrong in their classroom, not the third time, not the second time, the first time any ineffectiveness or unacceptability happens in a classroom. It should be addressed immediately. You have to be brave enough to be that brutally honest in order to move the school because students have been given or been receiving poor teaching for a while… students cannot afford another day, another moment, another class period, another hour of ineffective, poorly planned teaching. It's worthless.” This principal explained that these conversations happen with respect and joy, but they occur daily. Participant seven also pointed out that district support is critical in the work with high-poverty schools.
Participant eight.

Participant eight was a Hispanic female between the ages of 45 to 54 years of age. She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in Southeast Texas for three years. This school has a population of 950 students: 79% Hispanic, 20% Asian Pacific, and other races, 1%. The school is a Title I school were 93.7% of the population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school has met standards and has obtained all academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this school obtained six out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Mathematics, Science, Top 25 Percent Student Progress, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps and Post Secondary Readiness). Also, the school has been awarded two national awards and multiple Gold Ribbons awards by the Children at Risk organization.

Table 4.22

*Campus Demographics- Participant 8*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Campus Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Size</td>
<td>950 Students</td>
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<td>Grade Span</td>
<td>PK - 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent English Language Learners</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Rate</td>
<td>12.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent Served by Special Education</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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</table>

Activity I: what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?
Table 4.23

*Participant 8 Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Good Listener</td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Energy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.24

*Participant 8 Response- Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(7) Flexibility</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Input</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) Involvement in Curriculum, instruction, and assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18) Relationships</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

According to participant eight, principals in poverty schools must possess empathy. It is through a full understanding of students’ issues. As this principal further elaborated, inner-city children have multiple interactions before attending class, and some of those interactions might not be positive. Principals in poverty schools must be good listeners and ensure that the rest of the faculty and staff possess those qualities. As she explains, “being a good listener is not, come
in and tell them this is how things are going to be done, but tell me what you bring to the table and let's work this out together.” Participant eight also believed that patience is an important quality. As she elaborated, the pressure is high in poverty schools and tempers usually count as a factor. Leaders and teachers must ensure they have patience and understand truly the reasons behind their actions. The work in poverty schools demands focus since principals are manipulating various initiatives at the same time. As this principal elaborated regarding poverty schools, “It requires a lot of a commitment, a lot of drive, and your lead. Whether you like it or not, you are the biggest role model for not just the students but the teachers and the staff as well. So, if you come to work and you look like you don't want to be there or like you didn't get enough sleep, then you cannot expect your teachers to be at the top of their game. So there needs to be high energy, and I don't mean you need to be a cheerleader. Even if you have to fake it some days, that you know, you are happy to be there; you want to be there because it is contagious so that you have to have a high level of energy and because it's a lot of work.”

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

Participant eight believed that principals in poverty schools need flexibility and adaptability to lead their poverty schools effectively. She felt as if flexibility aligned with the ability to accommodate yourself to the various sources of input in a decision-making scenario. As this principal explained, “If you are going to move a poverty school to be high-performing, you have to be comfortable with different opinions. That doesn't mean that an opinion is what you're going to do, but you have to be able to listen to that because there's some merit in everyone's opinions, and you have to be able to pull and trust that the professionals that you hire around you… are there for a reason and you must be flexible enough to listen to them and get
their input even when they disagree.” According to participant 8, along with flexibility comes adaptability since every day is different from the day before, and the principal must be able to adapt to the situations and not be rigid.

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

According to participant eight principals in high-poverty schools must respond to a higher call. In other words, they shouldn’t be caught on the accountability system or an award at the end of the end of the year. We need to see a bigger picture. As participant 8 elaborated, “Do I see this child graduating? How Am I leading my teachers and my staff? My job is to provide the right support for that child to eventually walk off the stage and graduate from high school and college and be successful, be independent. That’s the goal. Is not about what our accountability will be at the end of this year. It has to go way beyond that… We need to prepare children for life.” As participant 8 explained, people tend to focus on the immediate results sometimes forgetting that in this work we have lives that depend on our view of their futures.

**Participant nine.**

Participant nine was an African American female between the ages of 35 to 44 years of age. She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in Southeast Texas for six years. This school has a population of 784 students: 78% Hispanic, 20% African American, and other races, 2%. The school is a Title I school where 93% of the population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school has met standards and has obtained academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this school obtained four out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Science, Top 25
Percent Closing Performance Gaps and Post Secondary Readiness). Also, the school has been awarded two state awards and two Gold Ribbons awards by the Children at Risk organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Demographics- Participant 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Size</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grade Span</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Economically Disadvantaged</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent English Language Learners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobility Rate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent Served by Special Education</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity I: what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?

Table 4.26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 9 Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristic 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.
Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

For participant nine, principals in poverty schools must know curriculum and instruction as well as of the accountability system. As this principal explained, “We definitely have to be aware of what's being assessed as well as how that is going to impact our student and teacher community. Previously, in years, you just had to know reading, writing, math skills, just the basic skills. However, now you have to know the process of knowing those particular skills that are being assessed. I think that's very important as an instructional leader.” The second characteristic is related to effective hiring practices. This principal experienced, at the beginning of her tenure, the need to hire male teachers that could compensate for the needs of African American boys that before did not have male role models. According to participant nine, aligning the human talent of your campus to the academic and social-emotional needs of students is a key element of success. When the participant interviews candidates she often asks herself, “are these
candidates coachable and open-minded are they willing to serve the community that you have?”

According to this participant, principals in poverty schools must be situationally aware and have a positive mindset. The leader in poverty school must grow the members of the community in adopting growth mindsets that ultimately will positively impact the school community.

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

According to participant nine, principals in poverty schools must be diligent in building community partnerships. She stated that she had been able to connect her school to crucial organizations that bring free dental services and health services to her students and to her parents. As this principal explained, “I know sometimes we just get consumed with the instructional piece. However, we do have to balance it out and let our face be the face of the school for our students so that we can represent them as well as what their needs are.” She also believed that the principal must be an effective manager of the resources that are made available to the school. All of those resources have to align with the needs of her students. Participant nine also believed that effective communication is key in leading a school in poverty. As she explained, “sometimes I have to bounce ideas off my administrative team before I make it to my staff to make sure that I'm communicating effectively. Is it something that I'm missing? Who's going to be the devil's advocate and say, hey! Or push back on what I'm saying? So being able to communicate and not be afraid. Having that administrative courage to be able to say, hey! this is what it looks like. If you do it alone, they may believe you have something to hide, or you're doing something maliciously. So, I think that's very important for you, to be transparent in the communication process.”
3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

Participant nine has established that hiring effectively is an essential element of the process of recruiting for her poverty school. As she explained, “often, you want to meet the quota by filling positions before you go on vacation or just, so you can say you filled them or the pressure, you know, you have to fill the position. However, you have to be very meticulous about who's a good fit. You have to be careful about the needs of the campus. Are they knowledgeable? Are they able to articulate? A lot of times you can have a degree, however, are you going to be able to make that connection with my students?

**Participant ten.**

Participant ten is an Asian female between the ages of 45 to 54 years of age. She has a master’s degree and has been the principal of a high-poverty urban elementary school in Southeast Texas for four years. This school has a population of 854 students: 98% Hispanic, 1% African American, and other races, 1%. The school is a Title I school were 95.8% of the population qualifies for the free and reduced lunch program. For the past three years, the school has met standards and has obtained academic distinctions. For the 2016-2017 school year, this school obtained five out of six academic distinctions (ELA Reading, Mathematics, Science, Top 25 Percent Closing Performance Gaps and Post Secondary Readiness). Also, the school has been awarded several national and state awards including Gold Ribbons awards from the Children at Risk organization.

Table 4.28

*Campus Demographics- Participant 9*
Activity I: what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?

Table 4.29

*Participant 10 Response*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic 1</th>
<th>Characteristic 2</th>
<th>Characteristic 3</th>
<th>Characteristic 4</th>
<th>Characteristic 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure and Organization</td>
<td>Strong Systems</td>
<td>Instructional knowledge</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.30

*Participant 10 Response- Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5) Culture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18) Relationships</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Focus</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Input</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity III

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?

According to participant ten, principals must possess the ability to lead with a tight systematic approach. Principals must be organized and structured in working towards your vision and your goals. Also, this participant believed that the principal must know curriculum and instruction. Even in the areas that are not of expertise for the principal, hiring other leaders with different strengths can complement the work with the mindset of making everyone strong. As this principal stated, “I was stronger in third through fifth, but because I hired people that were, very strong in the lower grades, we learned from each other. And because I knew what good instruction was, I knew what to look for in the characteristics of high functioning, high flying teachers in the lower grades and then adapted that to the curriculum and in essence made each other stronger.”

2. Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.

As participant explained, building a strong culture is critical in creating the conditions of success for poverty schools. As she explained, “we can't move forward just because I have a lot of knowledge. I can have good systems, I can have the best well-functioning running machine, but if I don't have buy-in, relationships, and trust from the people who I'm working with, then all of that is not going to be effective. So, build a strong culture first and build those relationships in order to get the buy-in.” Participant 10 also mentioned focus as a vital element of the work in poverty schools. As this principal commented; “If there's no sense of focus, there's no sense of
organization. Then, things are just scattered like a scatter plot, so you have to have a strong focus to drive what you're doing.”

3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

According to participant ten, principals in poverty schools should attend to the social-emotional needs of students. As she explained, “I know that's the relationship building piece, but the social-emotional learning part is missing in a lot of schools. We can't teach the children if they're not well themselves. If you're thirsty or hungry, you can't function. So, making sure that the teachers are in tune with it. The kids come to school hungry, sleepy. They're there. They're not going to want to work.”
Summary of Responses

Activity I: what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school?

Table 4.31

Summary of Responses

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**Responses by Frequency**

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Activity II: Rank order the 21 Responsibilities in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

Table 4.33.

21 Responsibilities as compared to how the ten participants rank them. (x=21 Responsibilities, y=Participants)

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Table 4.35

Responsibilities as Ranked by the participants in order of importance as it relates to the work in high-poverty schools

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Table 4.36

*The 21 Responsibilities and Their Correlations (r) with Student Academic Achievement*

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<td>7. Flexibility</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9. Ideals/Beliefs</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>14. Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
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Table 4.37

Comparison of Ranked Responsibilities with McREL’s Components

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*Ideals and Beliefs belong to two components
Activity III

Word frequency using the Word Cloud feature of the MAXQDA Analytics Pro (18.08)

Table 4.38

*Participant 1 - Word Frequency (Questions 1 and 2)*

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Table 4.39

*Participant 2 - Word Frequency (Questions 1 and 2)*

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Table 4.40

*Participant 3 Word Frequency - (Questions 1 and 2)*

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Table 4.42

**Participant 5 - Word Frequency (Questions 1 and 2)**

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Table 4.43

**Participant 6 Word Frequency - (Questions 1 and 2)**
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Table 4.44

*Participant 7 - Word Frequency (Questions 1 and 2)*

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Table 4.45

*Participant 8 - Word Frequency (Questions 1 and 2)*

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Table 4.46

*Participant 9 - Word Frequency (Questions 1 and 2)*

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<td>Students</td>
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Table 4.47

*Participant 10 - Word Frequency (Questions 1 and 2)*

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<td>Instruction</td>
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Activity III

Word frequency using the Word Cloud feature of the MAXQDA Analytics Pro (18.08)

All Participants (Questions 1, 2, 3). There was a total of 4406 words or themes.
After running the responses of the questions referred previously on the MAXQDA Analytics Pro (18.08), it was found that the most common word was Student with a frequency of 41. Next, the words with the highest frequency were: Students (41), Relationships (30), People (28), Feel (26), Campus (24), Culture (23), Needs (21), Staff (21), Data (19), Focus (19), Support (19), Vision (17) and Community (17).
Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). The researcher asked the following questions to help guide his study: What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership characteristics that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools? And, what are principals’ perceptions of effective leadership practices that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools? The participants of the study, a total of ten principals serving high-poverty, high-performing schools, responded to a series of questions that aligned with the research topic. First, the participants were asked, what are the five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty school. The participants were not introduced or reminded of the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005). The ten participants of the study also found commonalities related to the characteristics principals in poverty must possess. The following themes emerged at least four times among the participants: instructional knowledge and relationships. Data-driven and focus were common among three of the participants. The following themes emerged twice among the participants: Flexibility, fairness, character, empathy, effective communication, high expectations, and energy.

Four of the participants responded that to ensure the success of their school, principals needed instructional knowledge and the ability to build relationships. According to participant four, the principal in poverty schools must build relationships of mutual respect with all stakeholders. As she stated, “if they don’t respect you and they don’t trust you, then it’s hard for them to follow you.”
Participant seven also pointed out the need to build relationships of trust with all stakeholders. As she stated, “you need to be able to be a politician” to attend to the needs of the students. Also, participant three and participant ten believed that the principal in poverty schools has to be fully engaged in working alongside her team for the successful implementation and monitoring of instruction. Participant seven stated that “you want to build not only capacity in your teachers but effective capacity.” In other words, knowing the curriculum and pedagogy is not enough to serve children in poverty. Teachers have to be effective in teaching in high-poverty environments. As she stated, “a hyper-poverty school is going to come with a huge number of challenges,” and to be effective, the teacher has to be willing and able to teach content in that environment. Participant ten added that the school community should build in each other’s strengths to complement each other.

Three participants responded that the principal must be data driven and focused. Participant one said that principals face a myriad of responsibilities but that the first one should be the ability to focus in establishing clear goals, building on the strengths of the team and in providing continuous support for the faculty. In addition, participant five believed that the principal in poverty schools has to ensure all members of the team should have clarity about the goals of the organization and have a clear focus as it relates to student’s needs. As participant five explained, “You have to look and see where those needs are and then focus on what it is we need to accomplish.” Participant seven also described effective principals in poverty schools as “hyper-focused.” As she elaborated, principals in poverty schools can get easily distracted, but they have to “keep the main thing, the main thing.” According to her, principals have a limited amount of energy, and the challenge is to be invested in what really matters; student
Participant eight stated that the work in poverty demands for the principal to be focused since principals are manipulating various initiatives at the same time.

Additionally, participant six and participant nine explained that effective principals must be data driven and well aware of the accountability system. As participant six explained, principals that do not know the accountability system “miss the mark… because they don’t know how they are being measured.” In this participant’s school, teachers and leaders aligned their assessments with standards, they also aligned student’s levels with the appropriate interventions and engaged all teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in analyzing data and planning for the next line of support for students. Finally, teachers present their data to their colleagues and the administration as they receive feedback.

The ten participants of the study were asked to rank the 21 Responsibilities, in order of importance, for principals to be effective in poverty schools. At this time, the participants were given the 21 Responsibilities in alphabetical order and a short definition according to Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) as referenced by the book, School Leadership that Works. Among all 21 Responsibilities: Culture, Focus, Communication, Involvement in Curriculum/Instruction and Assessment, Visibility and Relationships had the highest rank order values. The responsibility of Culture was ranked number one by participants four, seven and ten. Also, this responsibility was ranked as number three by participants three and eight as well as ranked number four by participants five and six. Culture was ranked in the top ten by nine of the participants. When applying descriptive statistics, the responsibility of Culture obtained a mean value of 4.20 which is closer to the value of one.

On the other hand, the Responsibility of Focus had a mean of 6.70, while Communication was 7.40, Involvement in Curriculum/Instruction and Assessment was 8.00. Also, Visibility had
a value of 8.20 while Relationships was 8.30. Participants one and three ranked Focus as number one, while participant seven and three ranked this responsibility as two and three respectively. None of the participants ranked Communication as number one. However, it was classified as number three by participant one and five. Participant three ranked Communication as number four, while participants nine and ten ranked it as number five. In relation to Involvement in Curriculum/Instruction and Assessment, participant two ranked it as number two while participants six and nine ranked it as number three. Participants one and eight ranked this responsibility as number 4. Visibility was ranked as three by participant seven, while participant two ranked it as number four. Participants three and six ranked Visibility as number five. Finally, the responsibility of Relationships was ranked as number one by participant six, while participants four and ten ranked it as number two. Participant seven and eight ranked Relationships as number four and five respectively.

As part of the interview process, the participants were asked to respond orally to the following questions while the responses were recorded and later processed by MAXQDA Analytics Pro (18.08): (a) What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools? (b) Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? (c) After reflecting on the 21 Responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?

After running the responses of the questions referred previously on the MAXQDA Analytics Pro (18.08), it was found that the most common word was Student with a frequency of 41. Next, the words with the highest frequency were: Students (41), Relationships (30), People
(28), Feel (26), Campus (24), Culture (23), Needs (21), Staff (21), Data (19), Focus (19), Support (19), Vision (17) and Community (17).
Chapter V

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). The researcher was able to interview ten candidates that met the criteria for the study. The participants for this study were selected from an urban district located in Southeast Texas. Additionally, all the participants were principals whose schools met the Texas Education Agency (TEA) standards and obtained at least three academic distinctions during the 2016-2017 school year. Also, to qualify as a participant in this study, the participating principals served schools where the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch exceeded 90%.

Research Questions

1. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership characteristics that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?

The participants of the study identified five characteristics principals need to possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty schools. In their responses, four characteristics emerged: Instructional Knowledge, Relationships, Data-Driven and Focus. When the participants were given the list of 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) as having a positive effect on student achievement, the participants identified Culture, Focus, Communication, Involvement in Curriculum/Instruction and Assessment, Visibility and Relationships, as the most influential in the work in high-poverty schools. Finally, the participants were asked to respond orally to the following questions: (a) What are the
characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools? (b) Which of the 21 Responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? (c) After reflecting on the 21 Responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools? The responses to these questions were recorded and processed by MAXQDA Analytics Pro (18.08). After further analysis, it was found that the most common theme was Student with a frequency of 41. Next, the words with the highest frequency were: Relationships (30), People (28), Feel (26), Campus (24), Culture (23), Needs (21), Staff (21), Data (19), Focus (19), Support (19), Vision (17) and Community (17).

2. What are the principals’ perceptions of effective leadership practices that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools?

According to participants 2 and 3 effective principals in poverty must have a clear vision. As participant 3 stated, “your vision must be clear and concise. You must know exactly what your goals are, what direction you are headed towards because people will start coming to you with all different things that they want to do. But you have to take it back to, is this what lines up? Or, are we headed backwards? Ultimately, is this what’s best for students? Is this going to benefit our students and directly correlate with my vision and getting us there?” Participant 7 stated that principal in poverty must build teachers to be able to code switch culture. “Culture is the foundation of all teaching and learning. And if the culture in their classroom isn’t strong and positive, the game is over already. Participant 7 also believed that principals must build not just teachers ability to understand content but also understand culture. Participant 5 stated that building a positive culture is essential and “making sure that everybody is on the same page and that you all know what the goal is, what the focus of the school should be.” Participant 7 said
that “culture is the foundation of all teaching and learning. Without a strong positive culture on your campus, you will fail, period.” Participant 10 stated that “I can have good systems, I can have the best well function running machine, but if I don’t have buy-in or relationships, and trust from the people… so then all that is not going to be effective. So, build a strong culture first and build relationships.” Participant 2 stated that effective principals in high-poverty schools must be able to have clear goals. The principal must outline the goal, define the steps to achieve the goal, communicate the goal and then monitor the implementation of the process to achieve that goal. Also, the principal must “realign and be flexible to readjust, because nothing will ever go as planned.” Participant 5 explained that educators make plans for their students but that sometimes “we don’t look at the environment and the circumstances they face once they leave our classrooms. So, I feel that as educators we have to be flexible… even though we have high expectations for them.” Also, as Participant 2 stated, it is important for principals to be good influencers and effective communicators to ensure “people get and stay on board with the vision.” Participant 6 stated, “I am really big on making sure that we’re all saying the same thing to our teachers… a consistent message across the leadership board… we all need to be having the same vision as it relates to what our accountability is and what we are holding our teachers accountable for.” Participant 8 highlighted the fact that principals in poverty must be flexible in their leadership style and adapt their behavior to the situation they are facing. Principals must be comfortable with dissent. “If you want to move a school to high-performing, you have to comfortable with different opinions. That doesn’t mean that that opinion is what you are going to do, but you have to be able to listen.” Participant 10 explained that principals can protect the vision and goals of the school by being systematic, structured and organized. Not being organized “is like having a flat tire. So, if we have the structures in place, then we are all moving
towards the same direction.” Participant 5 explained that in order to achieve academic goals for her campus, she had to become strong in prioritizing. As she commented, students and teachers come from different background, and they all have different needs. This causes that “so much comes to you. You can easily crack under pressure, and that is at any school. But in a school like this (In poverty) it comes from every angle.” According to this participant, the principal in poverty must prioritize to get to the most important task of the day that will contribute to achieving your overarching goal. Participant 7 believed that the principal in poverty had to be “hyper-focused, especially in turnaround work.” As she stated, high-poverty schools “have extreme challenges and in large numbers. Everything from mental illness to home life support too, you know, just physical wellbeing. Everything from hunger to eyeglasses and maintaining their health. But as a leader, I have to keep the main thing, the main thing. You have to stay hyper-focused.” Is in that goal that “you spend your money, where you invest in people, in PD, and the rewards you give to kids and to teachers. It all needs to be aimed at that goal.” Is in that goal “where the bulk of your time, your energy, your effort, your money, everything is spent in that goal.” Participant 8 and 10 also believed that focus was an essential quality of a principal in high-poverty schools to maintain the vision of the school in optimal shape. As she stated, “everybody needs to know the vision and share that vision with you. And then you need to keep that (vision) as your focus. If you stray or start doing something else or moving into a different direction with a different initiative… it’s going to be a distractor. So, you need to be focused and know what it is you are driving towards to achieve.”

According to participant 9, principals in poverty schools must be instructional leaders and be involved with curriculum and instruction. Four of the participants responded that to ensure the success of their school, principals needed instructional knowledge and the ability to build
relationships to shape the capacity of others. Participant 7 stated that “if you are in a hyper-poverty school, especially a turnaround, they cannot afford one day, another moment, another class period, another hour of ineffective, poorly planned teaching.” Participant 1 and participant 5 believed that principals in poverty school must know instruction to understand how to support teachers. As participant 1 explained, “we cannot expect teachers to be strong in literacy without providing the environment that is going to help them grow.” Participant 2 added that “if you don’t know (as a principal) what a good classroom looks like, teachers won’t know what a good classroom looks like.” To ensure the instructional leader has the commitment of the team, he must be in the work with them. As participant 3 stated, “one of the reasons why my teachers have bought into so many things that we bring forward to the table, is because I am always in there with them. I will teach alongside with them. I will do pacing calendars with them. I will come up with professional development for them myself.” As explained by participant 3, having a strong instructional background allows the principals in poverty to have conversations about instruction, and provide feedback based on practical experiences. Participant 6 stated that as a principal in high-poverty schools, “you have to design the feedback in a way that the teacher is either going to one, come up with the realization themselves, or to accept the feedback.” This participant expressed that to provide effective feedback, principals need consistent practice. Participant 7 stated that the principal in poverty schools must become an efficacy builder. “you want to build not only the capacity in your teachers but effective capacity. I mean that they can be great in their knowledge of content and not have pedagogy behind it. (Teachers) have to be effective at teaching in that environment. A high-poverty school is going to come with a huge number of challenges and in order to be effective, not as effective within the content or with pedagogy as it is in a textbook, but as affective and effective of that content in that environment.
is what you have to build.” Participant 10 believed that principals are in the business of making each member of the school community stronger. As she explained, principals must leverage the different strengths of teachers to build the collective efficacy of the school community.

As explained by participant 3, principals in poverty schools must be skilled in building relationships with staff, students and the community. Relationships are key in poverty schools since not all of the resources needed by the students come from their homes or the district office. Principals in poverty schools must have compassion and must attend to the socio-emotional needs of their students as a foundational aspect of the process of teaching and learning. As participant 3 explained, “we can’t address the academic component if we haven’t identified their social-emotional need first.” Participant 8 and participant 5 conveyed that principals must have empathy to truly understand some of the experiences and conflicts students bring to schools. As participant 3 explained, many of her students have witnessed shootings and have seen people die. Many students experience hunger, and the only meal available to them is offered at the school. The natural response of the student to tragedy and suffering can be perceived as a lack of discipline. To that aspect, participant 3 stated, “We can’t react. We have to stop, think and then respond in an effective way that’s not going to make them move further away from us. Because if you have a student who is just not emotionally and socially invested in that classroom, they’re not going to want to work for you.” As participant 8 stated, empathy is “understanding, all the different obstacles and gaps students come in with.” However, as she explained further, “we cannot use students’ obstacles as an excuse to justify students not learning.” As participant 8 stated, “our role in education is crucial to break the cycle.” Participant 9 stated that principals in poverty schools could increase student achievement by addressing the social-emotional needs of students as well as the academic needs. Participant 5 believed that empathy could not be taught.
Therefore, it is the responsibility of the principal to hire teachers that possess that quality, in addition to the knowledge of the instructional process and the content area. Participant 3 stated that principals in poverty schools should hire compassionate people for their students in her high-poverty schools. Participant 5 stated that building relationships with all stakeholders are essential to gain mutual respect; “if they don’t respect you, they don’t trust you. Then is hard for them to follow you.” Participant 4 stated that principals in poverty need to be skillful in retaining highly effective teachers that want to work for children in poverty. Participant 6 stated that he had to build strong relationships with his teachers since “in a low performing school or a school with high-poverty, a lot of those teachers could probably work anywhere in the district…not a lot of people were raising their hands to come to an IR school. It just didn’t happen. I just know from experience. So, the relationships that I have with teachers, it keeps them there, it keeps them wanting to come.” Participant 5 stated that once she was appointed to be the principal at her poverty school, she met with all members of her team one on one. “I sat down with each person on the campus, even the custodial staff, the cafeteria workers so I could get to know them, and they could get to know me.” Participant 8 stated that principals must be effective listeners, “is not, come in and tell them this is how things are going to be done, but tell me what you bring to the table and let’s work this out together.” Participant 6 believed that in poverty schools, teacher has to “do stuff outside of their comfort zone. Working in a school with poverty…requires you to do things outside of teaching and people have to want to do that for kids and relationships is what gets them to do it.” Participant 7 stated that “building relationships is key in hyper-poverty schools. You need to build relationships not only with students and teachers but with parents, office staff, local churches. Be consistent. You need to be able to be a politician in that sense to where you can build relationships with many across the board.” According to this participant,
relationships is what maintain trust in your vision which is a critical element in the process of moving a poverty school. Principal 7 also stated that the principal in poverty schools should become very skilled in obtaining district support. Support according to this participant was not always related to money, but to personnel, professional development, content specific resources, and feedback. Participant 10 also emphasized that principals must consider bringing social-emotional programs to the school to better support children in poverty.

Participant 1 believed that principals in poverty must have “courage to be a change agent, to make sure that you are able to challenge the status quo. Something that is the norm may not be necessarily the best thing for your students.” Participant 8 emphasized that principals in poverty require commitment and drive, “whether you like it or not, you are the biggest role model for not just the students but the teachers and the staff as well.” According to this participant, principals need to exemplify what they expect. Principals must have the energy to drive the urgency of the organization. As she mentioned, “if you come to work and you look like you don’t want to be there or like you didn’t get enough sleep, then you cannot expect your teachers to be at the top of their game.” Participant 5 added that “teachers in many cases have been here for a while and not all the time things work. But you have to go in and be the change agent for that campus.” Participant 1 also stated that principals in poverty must possess the ability to have difficult conversations with people in order to move the school forward. This aligns with what participant 5 stating that the principal in poverty schools need to possess some type of experience working in poverty school prior to assuming the role. Principals “need to learn from all people because a lot of times what you find is that you have people that have been at the school for years who don’t want to change, and so they challenge you when they feel like you don’t know.”

Participant 7 stated that principals in poverty must be willing to be brave. As she stated, “you
have to be brutally honest. The students need brutal honesty. The parents need it as well. They need to hear, look, your child is operating three years behind where they should be and here is what’s at stake for them. The teachers also need to receive those crucial conversations the first time something bad goes in their classroom, not the third time, nor the second time, the first time any ineffectiveness or unacceptability happens in the classroom, it has to be addressed the first time.” Participant 7 believed that brutal honesty can be exercised with respect and even with joy, “but you have to be brave enough to have those conversations daily.”

Participant 2 believed that principals in high-poverty schools must possess grit, resilience and high levels of energy. This aligns with what participant 3 stated in relation to the frustration that some teachers experience regarding the lack of parental involvement and parental support. As participant 3 explained, “it can get discouraging when staff members tell you that there is no parental involvement. Like we can’t count on that. So, we have to stay driven in the fact that this is not easy work. You have to be in the trenches with your teachers in every aspect to get teachers’ buy-in and to finally see the work moving along.” Participant 4 explained that the principal in high-poverty schools needs to be consistent. She explained that student in poverty in many cases “don’t have consistency. They are often bouncing around from home to home, from grandparents to parents and things of that nature. So, I feel like when they come to school that could be one thing that is constant for them…I feel that consistency is a big key in their success in school.” Participant 6 believed that the principal in poverty schools had to have a work-life balance. He stated that principals in poverty schools had to work harder since the needs of the school are often so significant that it can take a toll on the personal life of the leader. As he said, “you know people have quit this job… we know that the work is hard. We know people get moved from the job. A lot of people gain weight on the job. You know, a lot of people get sick
and lose weight on the job.” According to participant 9, effective principals hire teachers that are coachable, open-minded and have the willingness to serve the community.

Participant 7 stated that the principal in poverty school must be data driven. She stated that “this is the game we are in. The data means something. There is some lack of efficacy… the numbers don’t lie. If you are not able to dig down to data to that level, then you will not be effective at a hyper-poverty school.” Participant 3 believed that effective principals in poverty schools must be data driven. However, as explained, “data can be overwhelming. So, you have to be very precise in what is it that you are particularly looking at, and what is your focus to move students.” As participant 3 elaborated, her team focuses its attention on the skills and standards that each student has failed or mastered. As she stated, “at the end of the day, what are students really lacking? I don’t need to know that they failed a test. What is it that they are failing in? so that we can come up with an individualized plan for that student.” Participant 6 explained that is his opinion, the principal in poverty schools must know the accountability system. He stated that in his first year the school became an Improvement Required campus. He stated that back then, he was not very aware of the accountability system. As he explained, “by default I missed the mark just because I wasn’t sure how we were being measured.” He continued stating that once they knew how the accountability system worked, he was able to strategize on the level of intervention for each of his students. Participant 6 also stated that being data driven was key. He said, “we had individual data conferences with all of our teachers.” Usually, teachers at the Participant 6 school had to engage in backwards planning, they had to develop their own assessments and had to present their own data to the rest of the team. This participant also believed that visibility and a sense of urgency were essential to ensure that his team inspected what they expected. Participant 2 also believed that the principal in high-poverty schools must
possess an analytical mindset. The principal must “assess and reassess… in a cyclical pattern. We are analyzing student data, but we also have to assess staff morale.”

Participant 8 believed that principals always have to be connected to the bigger picture. As she defined it, “the ramifications of what we do in a single hour, in a single moment in time, has a ripple effect. Do I see this child graduating?” Participant 8 stated that as a principal she has to model to all members of the faculty how collectively we can support any student to be able to walk the path of graduation or be a contributing member of society. “that’s the goal. Is not about what your accountability will be at the end of this year. It has to go way beyond that… we have to answer to a higher call.” Participant 9 explained that principals in poverty school must have a growth mindset. Principals must have situational awareness and extend reach out to the community. “The community is definitively an area I think a lot of leaders do not tap into. They (the community) can support you, and they can break you.” Participant 9 explained how she has been able to bring doctors, dentist, and other services, free of charge, to better support her students. Participant 10 believed that principals must be systematic, structured and organized. Participant 1 also believed that principals had to be effective managers since “you are supposed to be able to maximize the resources that you have to reach your full potential.” Participant 9 also stated that principals should be strategic in how they use funding to support the vision of the school. “You definitively have to be aware of the budget, looking at the budget prior to planning your professional development and prior to purchasing resources.” Participant 9 also stressed the importance of bouncing ideas with her team prior to delivering a message to the faculty. “Am I communicating effectively? Is there something I am missing? Who is going to be the devil’s advocate?” Principals must have the courage to be vulnerable and should be willing to compromise on their own ideas at the consensus of the team, explained participant 9. Participant
9 stated that principals must know how to hire effectively. Principals should avoid filling quotas during summer time before going on vacation. “You have to be very meticulous about who is a good fit. A lot of times you can have a degree, however, are you going to be able to make that connection with the students?”
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). The researcher interviewed ten candidates that met the criteria for the study that consisted of principals leading elementary schools with 90% or more of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch and whose schools obtained at least three academic distinctions per the Texas Education Agency. Principals in the study had to be at least two years in that position in their high-poverty, high-performing school. When the participants were asked to identify characteristics, principals need to possess to be able to succeed in high-poverty schools; they identified Instructional Knowledge, Relationships, Data-Driven, Focus and Communication as the most prevalent. By the time the participants selected these themes overall, they had not been exposed to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) prior to the follow-up questions. However, when principals received the 21 Responsibilities and were asked to identify characteristics principals need to possess to be able to succeed in high-poverty schools, they identified Culture, Focus, Communication, Involvement in Curriculum/Instruction and Assessment, Visibility and Relationships. Interestingly, Instructional Knowledge, Relationships, Focus, and Communication overlapped when principals responded before the 21 Responsibilities were presented and after they were given the 21 Responsibilities. However, Data driven was a top choice at first, but it was not one of the 21 Responsibilities selected after.

Additionally, the participants identified Culture and Visibility as essential characteristics although they did not identify these two characteristics before they were presented with the 21 Responsibilities. Interestingly, Culture was clearly the characteristic with the most value given
by the participants when they were presented the 21 Responsibilities. However, Culture did not emerge as a prevalent theme when principals were asked to identify those characteristics before the 21 Responsibilities were presented to them. When the MAXQDA analysis was generated, Students, Relationships, People, Feel, Campus, Culture, Needs, Staff, Data, Focus, Support, Vision and Community emerged as concepts with significant prevalence. The researcher found that Students, Relationships, People, Feel, Campus, Culture, Needs, and Staff have a direct connection to building a positive Culture as it relates to the priorities set by the participants.

Students and relationships are at the core of the work of principals in high-poverty schools. Principals in poverty are in the business of building strong relationships with people in general, as we consider the emerging themes: Students, People, and Staff. When principals spoke about the Feel and Need themes, they referred to caring about people’s feelings and attending to their needs. These two concepts have been found to be related to emotional intelligence. According to Mittal & Sindhu (2012), effective leaders can put themselves in others’ shoes and are able to understand how employees react to administrative events, personal crises, and change. At the same time, their empathy does not hinder them from making difficult decisions. Effective leaders appeal to reason and acknowledge others’ feelings, consequently empowering people to feel that the decisions make sense. The researcher wondered, about why would the participants give such prevalence to Culture and yet relatively disregard Culture before they were presented the 21 Responsibilities. Also, how can Culture be a separate characteristic from relationships, vision, high expectations and more? Waters et al. (2003) define culture as the principal responsibility of developing shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation. As Sergiovanni, (2000) concluded, principals are expected to build relationships as they lead and build the culture of the school. MacNeil, Prater & Bush (2009) believed that the most important action of a leader is to
build a positive school culture. This notion aligns consistently with the statement collected from the participants of this study. The transformation of the school culture is the most important principal responsibility in high-poverty schools (Fullwood, 2016). This is consistent with the work of Gruenert (2005) where he stated that building a positive school culture of collaboration should be the focus of the principal and not student achievement. As he stated, when student achievement is the focus and not culture, students suffer. As noted by Leithwood & Mcadie (2007), school culture and student achievement are not two different issues principals must consider. They are both interconnected and interdependent. Duffor & Mattos (2013) believe that principals should focus on creating a culture of collaboration and sharing leadership to increase student achievement. However, as Jerald (2006) explained, culture is one of the least discussed elements of academic achievement. But as this researcher stated, in high-poverty, high-performing schools a strong culture is intentional and aligned to student outcomes. As many participants of the study stated, high-poverty schools are hard to staff, and teacher retention is challenging. But as Jerald, Haycock & Rose-Socol (2017) stated, it is through a positive culture that teachers stay in poverty schools. Ross (2013) associated positive culture of high expectations with visibility and active monitoring of the process of teaching and learning. According to Miranda (2011) and Chenoweth & Theokas (2013), the culture of the school can be sustainable when the principal acts as a facilitator as he builds other leaders while they learn from each other. Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) warns school leaders that if they do not maintain and sustain their school culture, someone else will. To be able to build a strong school culture, the members of the organization must develop relational trust. People need to understand the vision and mission as the basis for relational trust.
According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), the responsibility of Culture is implicit or explicit in almost every theory. In his work Marzano et al. found that there are four behaviors associated with culture: (a) promoting cohesion among staff (b) promoting a sense of well-being among staff (c) Developing an understanding of purpose among staff (d) developing a shared vision. McClure, Yonezawa & Jones (2010) found that to improve the culture in schools is necessary to improve the relationships between students and their learning environment.

Principals in high-poverty schools also considered Focus as one of the essential responsibilities. The participants of the study associated Focus in relation to academic achievement and the academic goals set for the school. The responsibility of Focus was also related to Vision and Culture. The participants of this study stated that schools could bring multiple challenges and distractions that can deter the school leader from focusing on what really matters. This is consistent with the findings of Marzano et al. (2005). Also, as Fullan (1993) stated, schools biggest problem is not resisting change but the presence of so many innovations. As presented by Marzano et al. (2005) the following behaviors support this responsibility: (a) Establishing concrete goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (b) Establishing clear goals for the general operation of the school. (c) Establishing high expectations and concrete goals for students. (d) Continually monitoring the attainment of the goals.

Limitations

The current study was conducted and focused on one urban school district in Southeast Texas. To qualify for the study, the participants had to be the principals of a high-poverty school where 90% or more of the student population qualified for the free and reduced program, as well as, had obtained at least three academic distinctions by the Texas Education Agency. These
qualifications limited the number of qualifying schools and principals from about 180 schools to only 23. Only 10 participants agreed to contribute to this study.

**Recommendation for Further Study**

It is recommended that future studies explore the implications of the Second-Order Change approach as defined by Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) in the process of school transformation in high-poverty schools. It is recommended for future studies to analyze the responsibility of Culture and how it is affected by Second-Order Change in the context of high-poverty schools.
Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005).

The researcher interviewed ten candidates that met the criteria for the study that consisted of principals leading urban elementary schools with 90% or more of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch and whose schools obtained at least three academic distinctions per the Texas Education Agency. Principals in the study had to be at least two years in that position in their high-poverty, high-performing school. The evidence presented in this study establishes that to be successful in high-poverty schools, principals must develop a culture of high expectations with a focus on student achievement. Principals in high-poverty are required to be fully engaged in the process of teaching and learning; they build the collective efficacy of their teams by building strong relationships of trust and by providing opportunities for leaders and teachers alike for empowerment. When presented with the 21 Responsibilities established by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005), the participants of this study selected Culture as the main responsibility of principals in poverty schools followed by Focus, Communication, Involvement in Curriculum/Instruction and Assessment, Visibility and Relationships. However, when the participants were asked about the characteristics of effective principals in poverty schools prior to offering the 21 Responsibilities, they selected Instructional Knowledge, Relationships, Focus, and Communication. The participants of the study clearly highlighted Culture as the most prevalent characteristic principals in poverty must possess, although they were not intentional or aware of this responsibility prior to the moment they were given the 21 Responsibilities. The researcher was able to conclude that the participant principals were
unintentionally intentional about building a positive school culture. These highly effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing schools created a culture of success by building strong relationships and leading the process of teaching and learning with a focus on student achievement, without being intentionally aware that their actions translated in a positive culture of success. Culture is the foundation of all teaching and learning. But as Jerald (2006) points out, despite its importance, school culture is one of the least discussed elements of academic achievement. However, in high-performing high-poverty schools, the development of a strong culture is intentional and aligned to strong student outcomes. The transformation of the school culture is the most important principal responsibility in high-poverty schools (Fullwood, 2016).

As noted by Leithwood & Mcadie (2007), school culture and student achievement are not two different issues principals must consider. They are both interconnected and interdependent. Duffor & Mattos (2013) believe that principals should focus on creating a culture of collaboration and sharing leadership to increase student achievement. Principals in poverty schools must develop teacher instructional capacity as well as the cultural capacity of the team.

Principals in poverty schools, as represented by the participants of the study, valued relationships with students, parents, teachers, and the community. According to the participants with purposeful relationships they were able to support students’ physiological and socio-emotional needs. Many students in poverty come with a variety of deficits challenging their ability to learn at the frequency and the level of expectation. Principals in poverty retain highly effective teachers in their schools by building strong relationships. Principals in poverty schools must be hyper-focused in teaching and learning as they build the collective efficacy of their teams to understand curriculum and instruction applied to the environment of their high-poverty schools.
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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board

Approval Request and Consent Form

1. Title of proposal and date of submission
Characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing schools.
Summer, 2017

2. Information of faculty supervisor
Name: Dr. Julie Fernandez
jfernandez@hbu.edu

3. Department of origin of proposal
School of Education, Houston Baptist University

4. Student name and information
Name: Erwin Garcia
Address: 2914 Copper Cliff Dr, Katy-Texas, 77449
Phone number: 281-657-5009

5. Research Proposal Abstract
Public education in the United States is under severe scrutiny due to the systematic failure of our academic system to breach the achievement gap still present among mainstreamed children and children of color in poverty schools. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) enacted in 2001, was an attempt to close the barriers of poverty and the achievement gap but failed to meet its goals. Poverty in the United States is at its highest since 1959 and the number of schools failing due to the irrepressible cycle of poverty continues to grow. Despite all challenges, many poverty schools have been able to attain and maintain significant success overcoming their challenges. Many of these schools are even outperforming most privileged schools and have become the
subject of multiple studies. Some researchers have focused their attention on the impact that highly effective principals have had in shaping failing poverty schools into models for the 21st century. School leadership is second only to classroom teaching in the variables that positively affect student achievement. The researcher will focus on specific characteristics that effective principals, leading poverty schools, have exhibited to transform their communities positively. The researcher intends, through the course of this study, to add to the body of knowledge by contributing alternative attributes for district administrators in the process of finding most effective principals for their poverty schools.

6. Funding
No funding will be received to support this project.

7. Number of subjects
The researcher intends to interview 20 participants.

8. Type of subjects
The participants will be active principals in high-performing, high-poverty schools.

9. Source of subjects
The participants will be elementary principals from the Houston Independent School District (HISD).

10. a. Who will be the subjects and how will they be recruited?
The participants for this study will be purposefully selected from an urban district located in Southeast Texas. Additionally, the participating school principals will be chosen from elementary schools that met TEA standards and obtained at least three academic distinctions during the 2016-2017 school year. In addition, to participate in this study, the participating principals will be serving a school where the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch exceeds 90%.

b. Describe the psychological and/or physiological stimuli or interventions and the means used to administer these stimuli or interventions. Indicate the steps that will be taken to
assure the proper operation of the equipment used to administer stimuli. Give particular attention to the prevention of accidental harm or injury to the subjects.

No psychological and/or physiological stimuli or interventions will be used during the study.

c. Describe the level of risk to which the subjects will be exposed by participating in this study. If the proposed research exposes the participants to any level of risk, attach a detailed description and justification for the risk.

The participants will not be exposed to any level of risk before, during and after the study is conducted.

d. Is there any deception of the subjects that will be involved? If so, what is its rationale, its necessity, and why is the research so important as to justify its use? Are there modifications to this research that would allow for genuine informed consent?

The participants will not be exposed to any type of intentional or unintentional deceptive practices.

e. Describe the expected behavior of the subjects and the behavior of the investigator during the study. This must include a written statement of what is to be read to or said to the subject concerning the study.

The participants will participate in an interview as well as in a focus group discussion. The researcher will group principals in focus groups of about five principals each. All focus groups will receive the same disclosures and instructions scripted and developed by the researcher. All the verbal responses collected will be recorded and transcribed accordingly. The survey that will be used for this study will consist of two parts: the first part will capture basic demographic information such as participants’ age, race, gender, and years of experience. In the second part, the participating principals will be asked to write down five characteristics of effective principals in poverty schools. A ten-minute time period will be given to complete this task, and all the responses will be collected immediately after the ten-minute period. Following, the researcher will read each of the 21 Leadership Responsibilities as defined by Marzano et al. (2005) using a
PowerPoint. Then, the participants will be given the list of 21 leadership responsibilities published by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) and will be asked to rank the 21 Leadership Responsibilities in order of importance as it relates to their work as principals in poverty schools. A total of 20 minutes will be given to this task, and all surveys will be collected by the researcher at the end of the allotted time. Subsequently, the researcher will ask the participants to discuss the five responsibilities they selected and to explain why the selected responsibilities are essential to their work as principals of high-poverty, high-performing elementary schools. Participants will be asked to provide examples of how a particular responsibility relates to their work and how it has contributed to their success. Also, the participants will be asked about other characteristics that are needed to succeed in poverty schools that are not contained within the 21 responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005).

f. Describe how the subjects are to be debriefed and the mechanism for the alleviation of stress or psychological harm that may derive from participation in this study.

The participants will receive information and disclosure about their free participation in the study. In addition, the ethical considerations of the study will be communicated verbally and in writing. Such considerations involve protecting and concealing the identities of the participants and obtaining their consent. The consent form will be included in the survey and will be presented and explained before participants engage in answering any of the survey questions or before participating in the focus groups. The researcher will not intervene as participants are responding to the questions ensuring that the questions to be asked are pre-populated on a script. This process will ensure that the researcher bias does not skews or modify any of the answers. The researcher will be available to answer any clarifying question about the process related to the surveys and the focus groups.
g. Include a statement of what the data from this research are to be used for (e.g., class assignment, thesis, etc.), who will have access to the data, and what will be done with the data at the end of the study.

The data to be collected during the study will be used with the sole purpose of providing information for analytic purposes. The researcher will communicate that participant’s responses will be stored for six months after the completion of the research project and that all responses will be destroyed.

h. If the current project is being conducted by students, describe the level of involvement of the faculty advisor.

The current project is not being conducted by students. Therefore, there is no involvement of the faculty advisor.

11. Describe how the subjects’ privacy and anonymity are to be protected.

All participant’s names will be substituted by a participant number. In addition, the schools they represent will be also coded differently, so no association is made of the schools and the participants of the study.

12. Instrument

Erwin Garcia

Purpose: Characteristics of Effective Principals in high-performing high-poverty elementary schools.

Survey Draft

Demographics

What is your age?
1. 18-24 years old
2. 25-34 years old
3. 35-44 years old
4. 45-54 years old
5. 55-64 years old
6. 65-74 years old
7. 75 years or older

Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity.

1. White
2. Hispanic or Latino
3. Black or African American
4. Native American or American Indian
5. Asian / Pacific Islander
6. Other

Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, the highest degree received.

1. Bachelor’s degree
2. Master’s degree
3. Doctorate degree

Years of experience: Please specify your years of experience.

1. 1-5 years of experience
2. 6-10 years of experience
3. 11-15 years of experience
4. 16 years or more of experience

Activity I

In your opinion, as a principal of a high-poverty school, what are five characteristics principals must possess to ensure the success of their high-poverty schools?

1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________
4. ______________________
5. ______________________
Activity II

Rank Order Activity

Instructions: Rank order the behaviors from 1-21 in order of importance for principals to be effective in high-poverty schools.

A rank order of 1 is associated with the Most Important principal behaviors.

A rank order of 21 is associated with the Least Important principal behaviors.

The 21 Leadership Responsibilities are listed in alphabetical order. Each responsibility is defined verbatim from the work of Marzano et al. (2005).

21 Leadership Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>The extent to which the principal…</th>
<th>RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Affirmation</td>
<td>Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Change Agent</td>
<td>Is willing to change and actively challenge the status quo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Contingent Awards</td>
<td>Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Communication</td>
<td>Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Culture</td>
<td>Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Discipline</td>
<td>Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time and focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Flexibility</td>
<td>Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Focus</td>
<td>Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Ideals/Beliefs</td>
<td>Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Input</td>
<td>Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Intellectual Stimulation</td>
<td>Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school’s culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>Is involved in helping teachers design curricular activities. Is involved with teachers to address instructional issues in their classrooms Is involved with teachers to address assessment issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>Is knowledgeable about the current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Monitoring/Evaluating</td>
<td>Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Optimizer</td>
<td>Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Order</td>
<td>Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Outreach</td>
<td>Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Relationships</td>
<td>Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Resources</td>
<td>Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for their success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Situational Awareness</td>
<td>Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Visibility</td>
<td>Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Activity III

Focus Group – Structured Questions

1. What are the characteristics principals must possess to be effective in high-poverty schools?
2. Which of the 21 principal responsibilities you consider are the most important in impacting poverty schools? Explain why.
3. After reflecting on the 21 leadership responsibilities, what attributes or characteristics are omitted? Which of the omitted characteristics do you consider to be essential in the work of a principal in high-poverty schools?
### APPENDIX B

**Data Collection Instrument Report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. What are principals’ perceptions of effective the leadership practices that influence student achievement in high-poverty, high-performing elementary schools?</td>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>Focus Groups Greenwood, M; Kendrick, T; Davies, H; Gill, F (2016). Hearing voices: Comparing two methods for analysis of focus group data</td>
<td>Invivo Qualitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

HBU ● Houston, Texas

Characteristics of Effective Principals in high-poverty high-performing Elementary Schools

Investigators:

Name: Erwin Garcia

Introduction

• You are being asked to be in a research study that is intended to find characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty high-performing elementary schools.
• You were selected as a possible participant because you are a principal of a high-performing high-poverty school.
• We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

• The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). Ultimately, this research may be published by the Houston Baptist University

Description of the Study Procedures

• If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to respond to the survey questions with the best of your ability.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

• There are no reasonable foreseeable risks. There may be unknown risks.

Confidentiality

• The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password
protected file. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments

- You will not receive any sort of payment for your participation in this study.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or HBU. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Erwin Garcia at velasquez@hbu.edu or by telephone at 713-556-9550. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that has not been answered by the investigators, you may contact Dr. Dianne Reed, at 832-606-8805

- If you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you can report them to Dr. Dianne Reed at the number above. Alternatively, concerns can be reported by completing a Participant Complaint Form, which can be found on the IRB website at http://www.hbu.edu/irb/

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Subject's Name (print):

____________________________________________________________________________

Subject's Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
NOTE: A research proposal by graduate and undergraduate students must have the following statement signed by a faculty supervisor: “I have examined this completed form and I am satisfied with the adequacy of the proposed research design and the measures proposed for the protection of human subjects. I will take personal responsibility for the safekeeping of all raw data (e.g., test protocols, tapes, questionnaires, interview notes, etc.) in a College office or computer file.”

Signature and Title of Faculty Supervisor

Signature of Investigator

Phone _________________

Date____________________
APPENDIX D

Participation Letter

Title of Study: Characteristics of Effective Principals in high-poverty high-performing Elementary Schools

Principal investigator(s)

Erwin Garcia
velasqueze@hbu.edu
713-556-9550

Institutional Review Board
Houston Baptist University

- Description of Study: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty, high-performing urban elementary schools and how these align to the 21 Responsibilities identified by Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005). Ultimately, this research may be published by the Houston Baptist University.

- If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the attached survey. This survey will help the writer identify the characteristics of effective principals in high-poverty high-performing schools. The data from this questionnaire will be used to describe those characteristics and compare them to the Texas Principal Standards of 2013. The survey will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

Risks/Benefits to the Participant: There may be minimal risk involved in participating in this study. There are no direct benefits to for agreeing to be in this study. Please understand that although you may not benefit directly from participation in this study, you have the opportunity to enhance knowledge necessary to add to the body of knowledge regarding hiring highly effective principals for high-poverty schools. If you have any concerns about the risks/benefits of participating in this study, you can contact the investigators and/or the university’s human research oversight board (the Institutional Review Board or IRB) at the numbers listed above.

Cost and Payments to the Participant: There is no cost for participation in this study. Participation is completely voluntary, and no payment will be provided.

Confidentiality: Information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is
required by law. All data will be secured in a locked filing cabinet. Your name will not be used in the reporting of information in publications or conference presentations.

**Participant’s Right to Withdraw from the Study:** You have the right to refuse to participate in this study and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

I have read this letter, and I fully understand the contents of this document and voluntarily consent to participate. All of my questions concerning this research have been answered. If I have any questions in the future about this study, they will be answered by the investigator listed above or his/her staff.

I understand that the completion of this questionnaire implies my consent to participate in this study.
### APPENDIX E

**ISLLC, PSEL, TPES Standards Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD</th>
<th>Educational Leadership Policy Standards (ISLLC) 2008</th>
<th>Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) 2015</th>
<th>Texas Principal Standards (TPES) 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community</td>
<td>Mission, Vision, and core values</td>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth</td>
<td>Ethics and Professional Norms</td>
<td>Human Capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment</td>
<td>Equity and Cultural Responsiveness</td>
<td>Executive Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources</td>
<td>Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</td>
<td>School culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, Community of Care and Support for Students</td>
<td>Strategic Operation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STANDARD 3

STANDARD 4

STANDARD 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 6</th>
<th>Promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context</th>
<th>Professional capacity of School Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STANDARD 7</td>
<td>Professional Community for Teachers and Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STANDARD 8</td>
<td>Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STANDARD 9</td>
<td>Operations and Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STANDARD 10</td>
<td>School Improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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VITA

Erwin Garcia-Velasquez
2914 Copper Cliff Dr • Katy, TX 77449
281-657-5009 • egarciav@houstonisd.org

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

DEANDA ELEMENTARY

Principal
MAY 2015-PRESENT

• Led a designated priority school to obtain four academic distinctions per the Texas Education Agency standards. Distinctions were obtained in Reading, Math, Student Progress and Postsecondary Readiness.
• Contributed to the planning and execution of targeted programming for DeAnda’s at-risk populations resulting in an increase from a C- rating in 2015 to an A- rating on the 2017 Children At Risk Report.
• Supported the school in becoming a model school in literacy, mathematics, dual language, and fine arts.
• Identified and empowered leaders in the organization to support its vision and initiatives that have yielded improved student outcomes in Math, Reading, and Science.
• Innovated in the design of enrichment programs for At-Risk students. Programs included music, fine arts, robotics, cheerleading among other programs. In addition, DeAnda has provided target and differentiated data driven support at all levels of student achievement.
• Developed a comprehensive plan to promote parental involvement. The plan included: monthly meetings, parenting, computer, and ESL classes. DeAnda was the recipient of the “Gold” award for parental involvement 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years.

SANCHEZ ELEMENTARY

 Assistant Principal
AUG 2013- MAY 2015

• Created and delivered professional development sessions for teachers during PLCs
• Developed action plans to increase academic achievement in state assessments
• Supported academically-at-risk students by planning and delivering strategic interventions in reading and mathematics
• Facilitated the process of school transformation as noted by NCUST in 2014. Sanchez ES was given the Bronze Level Award as one of the best urban schools in the nation
• Collaborated with teachers in planning and delivering effective lessons
• Participated in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Literacy by 3 initiatives

June 2017
RAY K. DAILY ELEMENTARY- HISD
Teacher AUG 2012- AUG 2013

- Provided guided reading instruction to second-grade students
- Utilized Neuhaus strategies for the teaching of phonemic and phonological awareness
- Integrated ESL instruction within content areas using a sheltered approach

J.L. LYON ELEMENTARY
Teacher JUL 2007 - JUL 2013

- Co-founded the science lab at the school
- Aligned science TEKS to experiments and materials for teachers in grades Pre-K- 5th
- Participated in the 2012 cohort of the RICE University REMSL- Rice Elementary Model Science Lab
- Delivered model lessons for other colleagues in the areas of math and science
- Incorporated Lucy Calkins Reader’s/Writer’s workshop for fourth-grade students
- Implemented guided reading and literacy circles to increase critical thinking and high order thinking skills
- Delivered targeted interventions in mathematics by using the Guided Math model that incorporated small group instruction and math circles

BILINGUAL EDUCATORS/TEACHER BUILDERS
Alternative Certification Teacher/Part-time JUL 2007 - JUL 2013

- Supported professionals from different backgrounds to become teachers in Texas
- Taught aspiring teachers the required competencies needed to pass state assessments in contents such as Generalist, Bilingual Education, ESL, PPR and TOPT
- Modeled best practices in lesson planning, lesson delivery, differentiation, data tracking, and student intervention

EDUCATION

Houston Baptist University, Houston, TX AUG 2019
D.Ed. Executive Leadership

University of Saint Thomas, Houston, TX DEC 2012
M.Ed. Bilingual/Dual Language
Lamar University, Beaumont TX  
M.Ed. School Administration  

Universidad Adventista- Medellín, Colombia  
B.A. Education  

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CERTIFICATION

• Principal Certificate - Texas, 2013  
• Bilingual and ESL Certificate - Texas, 2007  
• Generalist EC-4 - Texas, 2007

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PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

• South Area (2017) Moving the Needle. March 8, 2017  
• NCUST (2015) - Effective practices that transformed Sanchez ES into a Silver Award winning school. Dallas, TX.  
• Giftedness and Student Achievement in State Assessments. (2012) University of Saint Thomas. Houston, TX  
• Annual Title III ESL Forum (2008) Best practices for Bilingual Students in the science classroom. Presentation at the Second, Austin, TX.

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ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• HISD Principal Candidate Development Opportunity PCDO Jan-May 2015  
• HISD Summer Leadership Program – Rice University July 2015  
• Rice Science Professional Development Aug 2011-May 2012
• South Area (2017) Moving the Needle. March 8, 2017
• NCUST (2015) - Effective practices that transformed Sanchez ES into a Silver Award winning school. Dallas, TX.
• Giftedness and Student Achievement in State Assessments. (2012) University of Saint Thomas. Houston, TX
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