SHARING IN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF LITERACY:

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

by

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Dedication

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Abstract

The researcher conducted a collective case study of four elementary school principals from four regions of the United Stated who won the Exemplary Reading Award form the International Literacy Association to describe how principals engage in professional development to share in instructional leadership of literacy and how that professional development impacts their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy. Through semi-structured interviews with principals, an analysis of resumes, and a teacher questionnaire, findings of the study posit that learning is acquired through communities of practice in a variety of settings: school, educational institutions, and educational organizations. Principals participate in deep learning in specific areas of literacy throughout their career in a variety of settings. They use their knowledge, along with the literacy expertise of others, to grow communities of practice within their schools—creating ongoing professional development. The dialogue amongst the community offers new learning and builds trust amongst members.

Chapter I: Background and Importance of the Study

"An intense response to a work will have its roots in the capacities and experiences already present in the personality and mind of the reader." ~ Louise Rosenblatt

Opportunities to improve our educational system in the United States are continual. As ways to improve emerge, roles within the system transform leading to new needs for professional development. The role of the elementary school principal has evolved over time from a managerial position to an instructional leader position. To support the change in the role, the needs of the principals must be addressed.

In the 1950s and 60s, elementary school principals were known as the managers of the school (Lortie, 2009). They oversaw the daily operations of the building. In a 1958 report by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, seventeen percent of principals held teaching positions, eighty-seven percent reported a lack of an assistant principal, and twenty-one percent of the respondents indicated they had received, "no education related to elementary school administration" (Fuller, 2018). Lack of time to lead; lack of support from an assistant principal; and lack of professional development for principals were barriers to the principals in 1958.

Governmental changes at the federal level offered opportunities for growth to our educational system. Lyndon B. Johnson signed The Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 to offer equal access to quality education for all. This landmark act offered substantial financial support to elementary schools to support equal opportunity for all and laws to protect minorities (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Laws to be enforced by principals.

New initiatives at the federal level called for new skill-sets for principals. In a 1968 report by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the average work day for principals rose to 50 hours per week; the number of principals working twelve-month contracts

versus ten-month contracts rose to 17.9%; and the number of principals earning master's degrees rose to 90% (Fuller, 2018). To meet the demands of the new initiatives the number of hours a principal worked in a week and the number of days they worked in a year rose, as did the number of principals earning degrees in higher education. Increasing time and the number of higher educational degrees did not remove the barriers principals were facing to meet the needs of students.

During the effective schools' movement in the 1980s, instructional leadership emerged for principals to maintain high expectations for teachers (Marks & Printy, 2003). Since then there have been advancements to develop the role of instructional leadership. In the 1980s instructional leadership was described as hierarchical—the principal was positioned as the expert (Marks & Printy, 2003). The practice involved docile teachers following the principal. It lacked the democratic process for teachers to engage with principals about instructional practices (Marks & Louis, 1999). This decreased morale—it was not effective.

Building on the seminal work of Burns, Bass (1999) shifted school reform focus to transformational leadership in the 1990s. Bass (1999) hones in on uplifting morale and motivation to align interests of the organization and its members. While transformational leadership is important, lacking instructional leadership is ineffective (Hattie, 2009 & Robinson, 2008). In their 2008 meta-analysis, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe found transformational leadership to have an effect size of .11 while instructional leadership was found to have an effect size of .42. The type of leadership matters.

Most recent reforms shift to sharing in instructional leadership. Blending instructional leadership and transformational leadership to sharing in instructional leadership includes what principals do to empower and foster growth in competency with teachers (Blasé & Blasé, 2000;

Hallinger, 2011; Marks & Printy, 2003; Stein & Nelson; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Specifically, sharing in instructional leadership encompasses routines that promote professional dialogue amongst educators through the integration of collaboration, peer coaching, inquiry, study groups, and reflective discussions about literacy acquisition, development, assessment and instruction. According to Drago-Severson (2016), we need to learn how to support each other's growth as adult learners in "the increasingly complicated and complex demands of our current world" (p. 56).

Shifts in local school reform run parallel to federal laws of school reform. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act has been reauthorized every five years over the past 50 years. In 2001, the act was renamed: The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). It targeted achievement for all students through accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The financial support of the federal government, shifted the role of the elementary school principal—to meet expectations for accountability.

In a 2018 report by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, principals report needing professional development to improve student performance, to improve staff performance, to understand and apply technology, to utilize time management, to use social media effectively, and to plan for school improvement (Fuller, 2018). Student performance, staff performance, and school improvement are driven by standardized test scores—external accountability. As Fullan, Santiago Rincón-Gallardo, and Andrew Hargreaves (2015) state, "The evidence is clear that current systems of external accountability in the U. S. are not producing increased student achievement" (p. 3). The accountability system imposes on teachers rather than engaging them in the process—creating a culture of compliance (Fullan et al., 2015).

In its most recent reauthorization, the Every Student Succeeds Act gives flexibility to address the needs of students back to local educational leaders and educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Flexibility in the world of accountability is complex. Highly-qualified professionals need knowledge of both pedagogy and leadership to deeply understand content and the way in which students best master it (Stein & Nelson, 2003). A shared belief in pedagogy is essential. As Hirsch (2010) states, “Literacy is the most important single goal of schooling in any nation because it both requires and further enables the acquisition of knowledge” (p. 31). A single most important goal requires expertise and attention. As Routman (2015) states, “teachers must be leaders, and principals must know literacy” (p. 1).

Knowing literacy requires a collective understanding. Informal assessments and observations interpreted by highly-qualified teachers allow for qualitative measures to guide instructional practices of literacy (Gillet, Temple, Temple, & Crawford, 2017). Growing the capacity of teachers to use informal assessments in the classroom is vital to meeting the literacy needs of students. Teachers cannot do this work alone; principals must support them (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). As principals share in instructional leadership of literacy, principals must also share the responsibility to continually build the knowledge of research, theory, and practice. Stein and Nelson (2003) state, “Principals must not only be capable of providing professional development for their teachers, but also have the knowledge, skills, and strength of character to hold teachers accountable for integrating what they have learned in professional development into their ongoing practice” (p. 425).

Holding teachers accountable can be misunderstood. Accountability should not only come in the form of standardized testing, especially in literacy. Standardized tests can be used to measure areas of strength in curriculum or to compare achievement patterns, but they cannot

measure the reading process—formative assessments are needed (Gillet, Temple, Temple, & Crawford, 2017). Understanding the purpose of literacy assessments is key (Gillet, Temple, Temple, & Crawford, 2017). Using an assessment or data from assessments for the wrong purpose can be detrimental to a child's literacy identity or motivation.

Assessments serve different purposes for different audiences. According to Afflerbach (2018), there are six audiences to consider when determining the purpose of reading assessment: students, teachers, school administrators, parents, politicians, and taxpayers. Each audience varies in the information they find useful because of their purpose in seeking the information.

Figure 1.1

Representative Audiences and Purposes for Reading Assessment

Assessment Audience	Assessment Purpose
Students	To report on learning and communicate progress To motivate and encourage To learn about assessment and how to self-assess To build independence in reading
Teachers	To determine the nature of student learning To inform instruction To evaluate students and construct grades To diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in reading
School administrators	To determine reading program effectiveness To prove school and teacher accountability To determine resource allocation To support teachers' professional development
Parents	To be informed about children's achievements To help connect home efforts with school efforts to support children's reading development
Politicians	To establish accountability of schools To inform the public of school progress
Taxpayers	To demonstrate that tax dollars are well spent

Figure 1.1. Representative audiences and purposes for reading assessment. Reprinted from Understanding and using reading assessment K-12 (p. 18), by P. Afflerbach. 2018, Alexandra, VA: ACSD. Copyright [2007] by International Reading Association. Reprinted with permission.

In sharing the instructional leadership of literacy with teachers, principals focus their purpose for assessment "to support teachers' professional development." With that focus, the purpose of assessment for teachers is to determine the nature of student learning, to inform instruction, to evaluate students and construct grades, and to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in reading (Afflerbach, 2018).

"Assessment should produce information that is useful in helping students become better readers, and assessment should do no harm," professes Afflerbach (2016, p. 413-414). Standardized tests offer little data to inform instruction—they offer information on reading strategy and skill. Using a variety of formative assessments describes the full range of reading development of the reader: cognitive and affective (Afflerbach, 2016). According to Rubin (2011), aggregating data from a variety of sources offers teachers a wide array of information from which to both differentiate instruction and choose reading material. This is not an easy task; it requires highly-skilled professionals.

Creating opportunities to build the capacity of professionals to meet the needs of our students' literacy lives is on-going. The federal government has supported these efforts through mandates and funding. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary School Act created Title 1 reading instruction and funded the role of a reading specialists to support struggling readers (Prezyna, Garrison, & Gold, 2017). While this support offered assistance to individual students, the professionals in the field lacked the professional development to grow their capacity. The reauthorization of the act in 2001 funded literacy coaches to support the professional development of adults (Prezyna, Garrison, & Gold, 2017). Over time, the roles of the reading

specialists and literacy coaches has evolved to support students and adults (Prezyna, Garrison, & Gold, 2017).

The shift in roles evolved from the shift in large-scale change. “Unlike decades past, when the emphasis was on remediating individual students’ reading difficulties, today’s reading reform efforts, such as the CCSS, emphasize both preventing reading difficulties and maximizing *all* students’ opportunities to learn,” (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014, p. 518). The literacy expertise needed to meet the needs of students and adults are extensive.

Laws continue to draw on the expertise of the professionals working with students. Response to Intervention (RtI) was written into law in 2004 under the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). This law changed the criteria for a specific learning disability (SLD) from the discrepancy model to the response to instruction model (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). The RtI model calls for robust tier 1 instruction within the classroom that differentiates for the needs of students (Bean & Lillenstein, 2012). The International Reading Association (2009) put out a position statement to support the RtI framework in an effort to grow the collective capacity of teachers. It reads, “RtI requires a dynamic, positive and productive collaboration among professionals with relevant expertise in language and literacy” (p. 2). Collaboration amongst professionals with relative expertise—including the principal—is essential to meeting the literacy needs of students.

Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, and Pittenger (2014), discuss the importance of building internal professional capacity instead of external accountability through standardized testing. To build this system, we need collective responsibility to acquire the best available knowledge about curriculum, teaching, assessments, and student support (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2014). Building this professional capacity together creates expert professional judgment using

qualitative and quantitative information to make decisions that support student learning. This type of professional learning—professional development—creates internal accountability educators and principals can engage in rather than an external accountability system that is imposed upon them (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2014).

To be the leaders of change, the visionaries of the school, and instructional leaders of literacy, principals' knowledge of literacy is crucial (Schmoker 2016). Principals promote professional dialogue and collegiality with educators about theories of teaching and reflective practices to build a culture of a community of learners (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). Together, this community improves literacy instruction for students.

Statement of the Problem

The current demands of the world pull principals in different directions. Prioritizing time to be an instructional leader is essential for any principal. In a recent blog post, Peter Dewitt (2019) states:

> In a recent study I did involving the four areas of instructional leadership, respondents ranked collective efficacy as the #1 priority, instructional strategies as #2, student engagement as #3 and content knowledge as #4. If leaders do not spend some time in their day focusing on those four, or one of those four, they are at risk of losing credibility in their role. That loss of credibility will make it very difficult to provide effective feedback during teacher observations or walk-throughs.

Establishing and maintaining credibility as an instructional leader requires principals to spend time in classrooms.

Accountability can shift the focus of principals away from classrooms. Principals are evaluated on student growth. In our current world of accountability, standardized testing has

become the measure for growth. At the state level, growth targets have been registered along with test scores showing gains in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). However, not all testing results are equal—even in the standardized testing realm:

> Progress has been less evident on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), where 8th- and 12th-grade scores have been largely flat. And on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)—a more open-ended test evaluating how students can apply their knowledge and can demonstrate their reasoning—U.S. performance has declined in math, reading, and science between 2000 and 2012, both absolutely and in relation to other countries. (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014, p. 4)

Standardized test scores cannot be the only measure used for accountability. Giving principals the flexibility to address the instructional needs of children allows for other measures to be used, but it requires on-going professional development. According the the 2018 report by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, principals perceive there is a lack of on-going professional development to improve student performance (Fullar, 2018). According to Drago-Severson (2016), we need to learn how to support each other's growth as adult learners in "the increasingly complicated and complex demands of our current world" (p. 56).

Connection to the Problem

The journey of my educational career has been unique—as most are. Experiences along the way allowed me to view the educational system through different lenses. To help focus the lens I am looking through, I offer a brief summary of my journey.

In 2002, I accepted my first teaching position as a seventh-grade speech communications teacher in a Midwestern middle school with 1,100 students. The communications class had just

been approved by the board of education to be offered in the district the following school year. As a committee of four—three teachers and the assistant superintendent of curriculum—we wrote a curriculum over the summer using the Illinois Learning Standards as our guide. Students enrolled in this class were reading, writing, speaking, and listening every day.

In 2004, I transitioned into a seventh-grade language arts classroom. With the curriculum guide, an anthology, and a book room full of multiple copies of canonical pieces of literature, I set out to engage my students in literature circles—a practice my teammates had been using and shared with me at our weekly team meetings. In year two of teaching language arts, my principal asked me to be a "lab teacher." This required me to work on a district-wide committee to bring the workshop model to our classrooms. Working shoulder to shoulder with the brightest and the best teachers in district, an outside consultant used the standards to guide us and best practice to inform us. With *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* by Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) as our anchor text, we began writing a scope and sequence for the first twenty days of school to create a community in our classrooms: setting climate and culture. My journey as a language arts teacher was forever changed by the support of my principal as we shifted our instructional practices to meet the needs of our students: offering students choice of what to read and write, increasing the volume of what students were reading and writing, teaching mini-lessons to support the needs of the learners, and conferring in a collaborative literacy community.

To continue my learning, I enrolled in a Masters of Science in Educational Leadership in 2004. Fellow teachers in my district formed a cohort to embark on this endeavor within district with the partnership of a local university. The assistant superintendent of curriculum was my academic advisor—as well as a literacy leader I admired.

In 2008, I transitioned again into an assistant principal position at the same middle school where I taught. With the staff as my colleagues, we continued our learning journey together. In 2009, a full-time literacy coach was added to each of our middle schools for support. Our depth and knowledge grew deeper through research. Teachers were empowered. We joined literacy organizations. We presented our work together at conferences. We grew our practices to meet the needs of our students.

As a middle school teacher, I lacked early literacy knowledge and did not understand how students came to seventh grade with such a wide range of abilities. Wanting to know where students were coming from, I was trained in Reading Recovery. The work of Clay (2005) and the Reading Recovery training enhanced my knowledge—and my observational lens. In 2013, I transitioned into an elementary school assistant principal position. Working beside teachers and teaching a student in Literacy Lessons daily exploded my knowledge of early literacy.

Continuing my educational journey, I entered into the Doctor of Education in Literacy Program at Judson University and accepted the role of the district director of professional development.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory (Wenger, 2004 and Lave & Lave & Wenger, 1991) frames this study. Constructivist views assume learners acquire knowledge and use it in meaningful ways based on previous knowledge. Based on the assumption that new knowledge is acquired in social participation, social learning theories integrate processes of learning and knowing through participation (Lave & Wenger 1991).

Social participation is all around us. "Communities of practice are social structures that focus on knowledge and explicitly enable the management of knowledge to be placed in the

hands of practitioners" (Wenger, 2004, p. 2). Most of these communities are organic and informal—often unnamed and change over time (Wenger, 2004). According to Wenger (2004, p. 212), "we all belong to communities of practice." Within these communities people vary in degree of expertise. From newcomers to experts, learning is acquired through social participation toward common goals in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Expertise within a community of practice can change based on task. Hence new learning opportunities for all in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

When principals engage in professional development to share instructional leadership of literacy, they enter into communities of practice. Their degree of expertise varies among communities. Through social participation towards a common goal, the community learns together.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how principals engage in professional development to share in instructional leadership of literacy.

Research Questions

1.) How do principals engage in professional development in order to share in instructional leadership of literacy?

2.) How does professional development impact the ability of principals to share in instructional leadership of literacy?

Need for/Significance of the Study

Decisions about funding, instructional practices, and structural systems to improve student achievement have been made both federally and locally utilizing test scores. Although the triangulation of data is stressed, standardized data are the accountability measure for

assessing student achievement—creating an external accountability (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). Drawing the focus of the principals and teachers to meet the demands of the standardized tests negates our purpose of education in the United States—to meet the needs of students.

In new legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gives states flexibility on how to measure achievement. While a summative measure is required, multiple measures are encouraged (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Multiple measures of literacy are needed to guide the instructional practices of educators (Afflerbach, 2016 & Rubin, 2011). The call in ESSA for local leaders and educators to address the needs of students offers an opportunity for those working with students to make decisions. These decisions cannot be made blindly. Stein and Nelson (2003) studied the effect of content knowledge on instructional leadership. Conducting three case studies, Stein and Nelson (2003) describe how content knowledge matters in educational leadership. They posit that content knowledge is the "missing paradigm" in school and district leadership and suggest that all administrators have solid mastery in at least one content area (including how it is taught and how it is learned). They question whether generic studies of leadership are enough to educate instructional leaders to be effective. Without a connection between subject matter, learning, and teaching, principals are disconnected from the very thing they are designed to govern (Stein & Nelson, 2003).

Hallinger (2011) purports that empirical research has guided us to strategies that work in the field of leadership. He calls for the next generation of research on types of leadership strategies to obtain information about "what works" in different settings. Even more, he calls for quantitative and qualitative studies to describe successful leadership practices across different schools at different points in the "school improvement journey" (Hallinger, 2011).

Definition of Terms

Professional development—For the purpose of this study, the definition stated in ESSA will be used: Activities that are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards; and are sustainable (not stand alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom focused. (Hirsch, 2015, p. 1)

Sharing in instructional leadership of literacy**—**For the purpose of this study, sharing in instructional leadership is defined as active collaboration of the principal and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education.

Communities of Practice**—**Social participation is all around us. "Communities of practice are social structures that focus on knowledge and explicitly enable the management of knowledge to be placed in the hands of practitioners," (Wenger, 2004, p. 2). Most of these communities are organic and informal—often unnamed and change over time (Wenger, 2004).

Organization of the Study

This chapter has set forth the conceptualization of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the research question, the definition of terms, and the theoretical framework on which the study is based. Chapter II contains a literature review related to the study. Chapter III describes the methods and procedures used for this study. Chapter IV presents the findings and analysis. Chapter V offers implications, limitations, and future research topics.

Chapter II: Literature Review

"Leadership and learning are indispensable of each other." ~ John F. Kennedy

The roles and responsibilities of a principal are vast. Therefore, principals engage in different types of professional development for a variety of purposes that makes targeting areas for professional development difficult. First and foremost, principals need to know which instructional leadership practices improve literacy outcomes for students. Common themes emerged through analysis of literacy reform studies of instructional leadership practices—practices positively affecting teachers' behaviors and student outcomes. The practice of promoting professional dialogue and growth to empower educators to meet the ever-changing needs of students emerged in the works of Blasé and Blasé (2000); Bredeson (2000); Burch and Spillane (2003); Hallinger (2010); Marks and Printy (2003); Stein and Nelson (2003); and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003).

The Principal Position

In the early nineteenth century, superintendents and principals were created in the public school structure as a way to certify teachers—principals were the middle managers (Lortie, 2009). The requirements to be a principal consisted of a minimum number of years as a teacher and completion of a university program to ensure maintenance of the school building, scheduling classes and personnel, and bussing (Lortie, 2009). Since that time, local school boards have taken over the local control of schools—creating a hierarchical structure. The state and federal government have also increased control through such acts as racial desegregation, provisions for students with disabilities, and accountability through standardized testing (Lortie, 2009). As changes occurred to the structure of and mandates on public schooling, the role of the principal changed as well.

Current trends shaping the reality of the principal role are described by Many and Sparks-Many (2015): increasing accountability for improving student achievement links student achievement to job security; decreasing funding causes a decrease in resources—material and personnel; and increasing initiatives—The Common Core State Standards, standardized testing, teacher evaluation, and 21st Century Skills—creates a plethora of goals in need of improvement. A change in current trends is needed. As Schmoker (2016) states, "It is vital that we simplify and demystify school leadership."

Leadership is described as having two core functions: providing direction and exercising influence (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Principals engage in these functions as instructional leaders. Bredeson (2000) explains, ". . . they (principals) collaborate with teachers in the design, delivery, and planning of content for learning opportunities that align professional needs, with school goals, and student need" (p. 397). This collaborative relationship is essential. Darling-Hammond states:

> It is the work they (principals) do that enables teachers to be effective—as it is not just the traits that teachers bring, but their ability to use what they know in a high-functioning organization, that produces student success. And it is the leader who both recruits and retains high quality staff—indeed, the number one reason for teachers' decisions about whether to stay in a school is the quality of administrative support—and it is the leader who must develop this organization. (Mitgang, 2012, p. 3)

Sharing in instructional leadership of literacy creates a collaborative relationship between principals and staff to enable teachers to be effective.

Principal Effect on Student Achievement

The principal's effect on student achievement is the subject of numerous studies: qualitative and quantitative. Many argue whether or not principals have an effect on student learning. The answer is yes (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Hattie, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; and Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Using effect size as a standard measure, positive outcomes between student achievement and influences have been conducted through several meta-analyses (Hattie, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, 2008; and Waters, Marzano, and McNulty, 2003).

In their meta-analysis, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found a "substantial relationship" between principal leadership and student achievement using averages of correlational data between the responsibilities leaders practiced and student test scores. Utilizing 70 studies, their research presents a framework of 21 behaviors to guide principals in what to do, when to do it, why to do it, and how to do it (Waters, et al., 2003). Each behavior is presented with the effect size on student achievement. Ranking highest in effect size are *situational awareness* and *intellectual stimulation.* These behaviors are described as being aware and able to predict what will happen in the school on a given day and engaging staff in discussions about current research and theory (Waters, et al., 2003). The 21 behaviors identified are not offered as a "silver bullet." Instead, they are presented as a framework of research-based approaches to leadership. As the educational system in the United States progresses, these behaviors can be utilized to progress with it.

Choosing which behavior to use is key to the influence it will have on the progress. As Hattie (2009) purports almost all influences (i.e. leadership, teacher questioning, etc.) have an

impact on student achievement: some are greater than others. In his analysis, the average effect size (which correlates to at least one year's growth on student achievement) of an influence on student achievement is .40. Anything above a .40 is considered to have a positive effect on student achievement. With a .36 effect size, leadership would be considered a below average influence on student achievement (Hattie, 2009). However, leadership is a broad term.

In their meta-analysis, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) broke leadership into two types: transformational and instructional. Transformational leadership—focusing on teachers—had an effect size of .11. Instructional leadership—focusing on students—had an effect size of .42. Types of leadership matter.

Because the manner in which administrators lead is significant, Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010) used a mixed method approach to determine the nature of successful leadership and how such leadership influenced teaching and learning. Using a random national sample of teacher surveys in nine states from different quadrants of the United States over a five-year period, they found a combination of instructional leadership, shared leadership, and trust in the principal to have direct and indirect effects on student achievement (Louis, et al., 2010). When instructional leadership complimented shared leadership, trust was built and professional learning communities formed. Focus on improving classroom pedagogy, sharing leadership, and maintaining emotional intelligence positively impacted the work of teachers and promoted high achievement for students (Louis, et al., 2010).

Not all leadership has equal effect sizes on student outcomes. In a meta-analysis to determine the impact of different types of leadership on students' academic and non-academic outcomes the mean effect size of instructional leadership was found to be three to four times higher than transformational leadership (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, 2008). Digging deeper

into what specifically leaders do to produce high effects yielded five dimensions. With an average effect size of .84, *promoting and participating in teacher learning and development* proved to be the leadership dimension to have the largest impact on student outcomes (Robinson, et al., 2012). This dimension describes principals as "lead learners." They participated in the learning with the teachers and were considered knowledgeable about instructional matters (Robinson et al., 2012).

In their book *Linking Leadership and Student Learning,* Leithwood and Louis (2012) draw conclusions on the five-year study sponsored by the Wallace Foundation on educational leadership. In their review of literature, they claim that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as having an influence on student learning. In their conclusions, they noted that talented leadership supported all cases of school improvement (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Sharing in instructional leadership of principals improves student outcomes.

Professional Development for Principals

Bredeson (2000) states "professional development is not an event, nor is it a set of activities in school. It is a professional responsibility and an integral part of teachers' and principals' professional work" (p. 399). Principals commit to learning in their daily lives; they are stewards, models, experts—instructional leaders. Principals' credibility to share in instructional leadership is established by the knowledge and skills they have and the actions they take to foster learning communities (Bredeson, 2000). In these communities, principals lead and model professional development which is important to the growth of instructional leadership. Bredeson continues, "the role of the principal is to encourage, nurture and support teacher learning, not to be the gatekeepers or governors of teacher professional development" (p. 390).

DuFour and Berkey (1995) remind us that people change, not organizations. Therefore, we must work collaboratively with people to enact change.

Once hired as a principal, participation in professional learning is pertinent to progress. Lavigne, Shakman, Zeig, and Dweller (2014) conducted a study of the ways in which principals spend their time and the types of professional development they choose. Using a descriptive analysis of a principal self-reported questionnaire, they found principals reported spending an average of 59 hours a week on their job with most of their time spent on administrative tasks (Lavigne, et al., 2014). Nearly all principals reported participating in professional development. Professional development was categorized into seven areas and ranked from the most common to least common type participated in by principals: workshop or conference attendance (approximately 94 %), school visits (approximately 72%), principal networks (approximately 68%), individual or collaborative research (approximately 68%), mentoring (approximately 60%), presenting at workshops (approximately 60%), and university coursework (25%) (Lavigne, et al., 2014). It was unclear whether the professional development was short term or ongoing. The implications state more research is needed on Principals' choices of professional development and the degree of impact the professional development has on teachers and students (Lavigne, et al., 2014).

Not only is more research needed, but a review of a national literacy professional development study conducted by Timperley and Parr (2007) concluded that developing principals in isolation (not alongside teachers) was not effective as well. Principals were not attached to student outcomes, and they lacked the literacy knowledge to meet the needs of teachers. Focus of professional development needs to be collaborative: for leaders and teachers. Drago-Severson (2016) claims that leaders and educators want to learn. In order for the learning

to occur adults must be mindful: they make meaning in different ways; they need guidance from professional learning standards; they require different approaches to reach different learners; and they must work together within schools to build internal capacities (Drago-Severson 2016). This type of learning does not happen quickly. In a study conducted by Drago-Severson and Kristina Pinto (2003), principals understood that teachers are at varying places in their own learning. Creating spaces and time for reflection on practices, as well as, paths to reflection helped teachers manage change. Principals must know their staff, listen to their staff, and support the needs of their staff (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2003).

Professional Learning Standards for Educational Leaders

Understanding that educational leaders needed guidance in their search for growth, the first standards for educational leaders were published in 1996 by the Council of Chief State School Officers—and updated in 2008 (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2015). Due to the changes in education, the standards were again updated in 2015 by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration.

The newest version of the professional learning standards for educational leaders has a stronger emphasis on student learning and preparation for the 21st century. They stress the importance of academic rigor and the support required for a student to excel. They recognize that our world is rapidly changing and that leaders and teachers must change with it (NPBEA, 2015).

These standards guide school principals in professional practice. Utilizing these standards while establishing goals for professional learning supports principals in meeting the demands of the profession (NPBEA, 2015).

Standard One: Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared

mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

Standard Two: Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Three: Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Four: Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Five: Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

Standard Six: Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Seven: Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Eight: Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Nine: Effective educational leaders manage school operations and

resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard Ten: Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Principals Sharing in the Instructional Leadership of Literacy

In the current world of accountability, reform of literacy practices in elementary schools to improve student achievement has increased (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez 2005). High-achieving schools have been examined to investigate ways that schools have implemented research-based practices to improve reading achievement (Au, 2005; Burch & Spillane, 2003; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekkelsen, 2004; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2001; and Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). In all schools with improvement in literacy achievement, collaborative communities consisting of teachers and principals were cited.

"Building Communities and Collaboration" was a finding in a study conducted by Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole (2000). The researchers investigated school and classroom factors affecting reading achievement of fourteen primary classrooms with a high number of students on subsidized lunch across the United States. The researchers found that in the four most effective schools, teachers and principals considered reading instruction their job. Together they developed systemic internal assessments, embraced a collaborative approach to reading instruction with all professionals (including reading specialists, special education teachers, and Title 1 teachers), and tailored professional development to their needs (Taylor, et al., 2000). They shared in the instructional leadership to support literacy.

Sharing in the instructional leadership also requires a focus. Burch and Spillane (2003) conducted a four-year longitudinal study of elementary school leadership during reforms of math

and literacy at eight Chicago schools. With a strong belief that literacy supports learning in other school subjects, principals focused on literacy. The importance of teacher input throughout the literacy reform process was noted. Burch and Spillane (2003) described a principal who regularly attended teacher-led literacy meetings and worked alongside teachers—eliciting input—created a dialogue that allowed her to see where the teachers and school were in the literacy reform process. The "reciprocal relation" between the the teacher input and principal contributed to sharing in the instructional leadership of literacy.

With a focus on literacy, creating a mission and vision is vital—as stated in the first standard for Professional Learning Standard for Educational Leaders. Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, and Mekkelson (2004) examined six Vermont schools whose students met or exceeded the standards on the second- and fourth-grade reading tests. Using qualitative data they gathered through observations and interviews, they describe the most effective schools as having consistent administrative and curricular leadership in literacy for eight to ten years in addition to a responsive school community. Within the community there was a shared vision that every student can succeed in literacy, as well as, a collaborative culture between teachers and administration to build instructional programs (Mosenthal, et al., 2004). The clear vision and mission to improve literacy achievement through a collaborative culture shaped the purpose for sharing in the instructional leadership of literacy.

With a purpose established, targeting areas for improvement requires expertise in team members and support from the principal. In a study conducted on the CIERA School Change Framework to determine classroom and school-wide variables that accounted for improvements in students' reading and writing, three assessments were used to measure the success: The Gates-MacGinitie reading comprehension assessment, an index of reading fluency from the

Basic Reading Inventory, and a directed writing prompt assessed on a common four-point rubric (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2005). During the reform process, the most effective schools had teams of teachers who continually met in study groups with coaches. The collaboration with coaches and teachers led to higher-level questioning and yielded higher reading achievement in their student population. In the most effective schools in the study, teachers and principals collaborated on the delivery of reading instruction, used data to drive instruction, and engaged in job-embedded professional development together. In contrast, researchers also found when schools did not succeed in raising literacy achievement during the reform process, there was a lack of principal in place (Taylor, et al. 2004). Targeting areas of support and learning through ongoing collaboration with coaches is powerful, but the support of the principals is essential.

Support—not demands—from the principal are important. In reflecting on the School Based Change process model, Au (2005) commented on the manner in which the most successful schools engaged the entire staff in the implementation from the start—outside literacy experts, as well as school literacy leaders, professionally developed the entire school, including the principal, to create their own curricula. It was clear that this process was not mandated in the most successful schools. In schools where it was mandated, the accountability felt imposed upon teachers like external accountability. When the entire school—teachers and principals—made decisions together about how reform will improve literacy achievement, internal accountability was created and empowered teachers (Au, 2005). Sharing in the instructional leadership of literacy requires sharing in the decision making.

The school-wide decision to use the guided reading approach to integrate targeted small group instruction to support effective whole group instruction offered the opportunity for

teachers at Rosa Parks Elementary School in San Diego, CA to continually return to revisit and refine practices (Fisher & Frey, 2007). During this multi-year approach teachers and principals engaged in professional learning communities that developed shared agreements while working "shoulder to shoulder" (Fisher & Frey, 2007). As Fisher and Frey (2007) state, "As school leaders know, shared agreements don't simply happen. They must be built, often incrementally, across months and years" (p. 41). Sharing in the instructional leadership of literacy requires sharing in the work.

Sharing in the work also requires doing the work together. In a five-year investigation conducted by Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009), a reform of literacy in nine Title 1 schools in Southern California was examined. In each school a team comprised of at least one teacher per grade level, the principal, and other specialists (i.e. coordinators, coaches, and administration) was created to develop school-wide goals to improve instruction and student achievement. During the first two years, which focused solely on administrators' professional development, there was little implementation of the intended changes and no increase in student achievement (Saunders et al., 2009). Developing only the principal did not prove to be effective. However, implementation and growth were evident in the final three years when administrators and teachers received professional development together (Saunders et al., 2009). This type of collaboration led to empowering teachers to make decisions.

Teacher empowerment to make curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions was evident in all studies of high-achieving schools. Continual dialogue towards improving instructional practices for literacy empowers teachers. This work cannot be done with teachers in isolation. Principals need to keep the focus—their vision—on literacy (Schmoker, 2016).

Professional Dialogue to Develop Shared Beliefs

Blasé and Blasé (2000) studied teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. In their findings, it was noted that teachers perceived the most effective principals as those who participated in the staff development. This allowed for principals to engage in professional dialogue with the teachers to reflect on current practices and areas for improvement. Similarly, Fletcher, Grimley, Greenwood, and Parkhill (2013) found that school-wide professional development led by an expert in the field was most effective when the principal participated. This approach provided a collaborative learning environment for the teachers and principals to develop a shared belief for literacy improvement.

With a collaborative environment established, studying specific strategies principals engaged in to influence improvement of literacy was conducted. Using quantitative and qualitative research, behaviors of principals were studied to determine influence on teachers' instructional behavior (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Wahlstrom delved deeply into schools where principals were rated high on effectiveness of their instructional leadership from teachers (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). In their findings, high-scoring principals frequently "popped in" to classrooms for the purpose of engaging with teachers about instructional ideas and issues (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). In contrast, principals who did not score high were not visible in classrooms or did not engage in dialogue about instructional practices. The missing link was the lack of engagement in dialogue to improve instructional practices for students (Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

To increase dialogue, principals must engage in collaborative learning environments. The environments foster dialogue: principals talk to articulate ideas; principals listen to empower teachers (Bredeson, 2000). As Bredeson states, "In these dialogues principals give voice to

teacher autonomy and professional decision-making in ways that build collective leadership capacities in the school to strengthen teacher learning and classroom practices" (p. 394). "Collective leadership" builds shared beliefs within the community.

Sharing in instructional leadership builds trust to create the ideal culture for improving instructional practices (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). In *Leading Change Together,* Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2018) discuss *feedback for growth*. They specify, "giving good feedback requires complex organizational, theoretical, pedagogical, and content-area expertise; it also requires the ability to share ideas in ways that others can best hear and take in" (Drago-Severson & Blum-Stefano, 2018, p. 99). When offering constructive feedback to adults, five strategies emerged in their research: personalize the feedback, be respectful sharing the feedback, be consistent with the feedback, encourage self-direction with the feedback, and follow up as soon as possible on the feedback (Drago-Severson & Blum-Stefano, 2018). Feedback opens ongoing dialogue about literacy instruction and builds trust.

Sharing in instructional leadership of literacy requires content knowledge, as well as, transformational leadership to change instructional practices (Au, 2005; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, & Mekkelsen, 2004; Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2001; and Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). Ongoing professional development for principals is critical to build internal capacities (Drago-Severson 2016). Currently, there is a lack of focused ongoing professional development principals participate in that facilitates sharing in the instructional leadership of literacy (NAESP, 2018).

Chapter III: Methodology

After studying leadership for 40 years, Hallinger (2011) calls for more qualitative studies that describe successful leadership across school levels and at different points in the "school improvement journey." In this study, the researcher sought to describe how elementary school principals engage in professional development to share in instructional leadership of literacy and how the professional development impacts their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy. In this chapter, the researcher presents the research questions, the design and methodology, the sample, the instrument design, the data collection and analysis, and validity of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher conducted a collective case study of four elementary school principals who are identified as instructional leaders of literacy across four regions of the United States to describe how principals engage in professional development to share in the instructional leadership of literacy.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1.) How do principals engage in professional development in order to share in instructional leadership of literacy?

2.) How does professional development impact the ability of principals to share in instructional leadership of literacy?

Research Design and Methodology

The historical view of math, physics, and chemistry as the "queen of science" lends itself to quantifying--not so much in the biologies and social sciences. There exists a presumption that

only quantitative data is valid or of high quality. While this may be true for controlling a natural phenomena or predicting, the question the researcher is attempting to answer—How do elementary school principals engage in professional development in order to share in instructional leadership of literacy? is best answered through descriptive stories of human behavior offering contextual information and meaning. Stake (2005) claims case studies allow a researcher to understand, in nuanced ways, the view of each case. Collective case studies allow the researcher to investigate details between cases (Hesse-Biber, 2017). In this collective case study, a descriptive design was used to illustrate the art and science of principals' engagement in professional development to share instructional leadership of literacy.

After delving into paradigms of qualitative research, it was determined that the constructivism paradigm best represents this research. The aim of the researcher's inquiry was to understand the construction and reconstruction of information over time. As principals told stories construction of meaning deepened. Teachers thoughts and principals' resumes supported the stories and depth of analysis.

In order to capture the depth of the stories, the researcher chose a methodology that was both hermeneutical (written, verbal, and nonverbal communication are used) and dialectical. Through dialectical interviews with principals, the researcher collected stories (verbal and non-verbal) with which to transact in order to create new meaning of how elementary school principals engage in professional development. Reading responses (written) to questionnaires and resumes also afforded new meaning to the researcher.

In terms of ontology, realities are formed through interpretation and are continuously revised through new sophisticated constructions. As each principal's responses were analyzed, the sophistication of the construct deepened. Comparing the commonalities and differences in

how principals engage in professional development guided the researcher to deepen interpretation of the data.

Through the epistemological assumption, findings emerged based on transactions with the principals both dialogical and in writing. The researcher also compared the commonalities and differences of how principals engage in professional development to deepen findings.

Because the aim of the researcher's inquiry was to understand the reconstruction of how principals engaged in professional development, the constructivist paradigm best represented the researcher's approach to analyzing the qualitative research. The nature of the knowledge and how knowledge is acquired in this study best reflects the constructivist paradigm as new constructs (principal interviews, questionnaires, and resumes) were acquired new knowledge was formed.

The researcher conducted individual interviews with the principal participants in person or digitally through Zoom. In-person interviews were the preferred method. Every attempt to have in-person interviews was made.

A follow-up interview was conducted to gather more detailed information. The follow-up interview was conducted for participants to provide specific details to the communities of practice they engaged in to share in instructional leadership of literacy. Due to time constraints, these interview questions were answered through email.

Documents collected included resumes from the principals and an open-ended questionnaire from teachers. The questionnaire was used to further describe how the principals' engagement in professional development affected their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy. The questionnaires from teachers also validated the self-reported data from principals. The researcher analyzed the documents for patterns and themes.

Sample

The researcher used purposive sampling of principals who have received the Exemplary Reading Award from the International Literacy Association. A specific population of interest was chosen for this purposive sampling (Vellutino & Schatschneider, 2011). For this study, the specific population consisted of award-winning principals from a leading international literacy association.

With over 40,000 members, sixty years of experience, and the support of experts from 78 countries, the mission of the International Literacy Association [ILA] is "to empower educators, inspire students, and encourage leaders with the resources they need to make literacy accessible for all" (International Literacy Association, 2018). Yearly, the ILA recognizes schools outstanding reading programs at all grade levels through the Exemplary Reading Program Award (ILA, 2018). The award has 10 guidelines in the application process:

1. The reading program is consistent with sound theory, research, and practice.
2. The reading program facilitates student learning.
3. Students have access to a wide variety of reading materials.
4. Students demonstrate success in reading.
5. Comprehension strategies are taught and applied across the curriculum.
6. Listening, speaking, viewing, and writing are integrated into and support the reading program.
7. Administrators and teachers provide leadership and vision for the building and/or district reading program.
8. The school and/or district offer support services to the program.
9. Literacy activities occur outside of school.

10. The community, including parents, is involved in the reading program (ILA, 2018).

The researcher gathered information regarding winning schools from 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018: location (region), grade levels taught, name of principal, years principal served school, student to administration ratio, and type of school (public, parochial, charter, or magnet). Principals of winning schools with similar criteria were selected from four regions of the United States.

Population and Sampling Procedure

Prospective principal participants were drawn from elementary schools that won the Exemplary Reading Program Award from the International Literacy Association between 2015 and 2018 (International Library Association, 2018). Student to admin ratio, types of school and setting were identified. Hallinger (2011) calls for qualitative research across different settings. Therefore, participants were chosen from four regions of the United States. Thirteen schools were in the sample size: three from the Midwest, three from the West, three from the Northeast, and four from the South. One school from each region was chosen based on similar building-wide information.

Table 3.1

Participant and School Demographics

Principal	Years Served as Principal	Student: Admin	Type	Setting	Region of the United States
Kari	4 years	400:1	public	Suburban	Midwest
David	7 years	566:2	public	Suburban	West
Sandy	3 years	585:1	public	Suburban	Northeast
Scott	14 years	743:3	public	Suburban	South

The teacher participants in this study were all certified staff members in the buildings of the participants.

Instrument Design

Development of Principal Interview

Interviews were conducted during the study to obtain personal information from the subjects on professional development they engage in to share in instructional leadership of literacy. Interviews were conducted individually. Using the Professional Learning standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2015), the researcher created 12 questions for the first semi-structured interviews (Appendix B). Based on the subject's location and availability, interviews were conducted face to face or digitally through Zoom. With the permission of the subject, the interviews were audio recorded for later transcription.

From the first round of interviews, a common theme about participants' engagement in professional development emerged: communities of practice. Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning. In analyzing data from the first round of interviews, communities of practice formed in three places: through jobs (teaching, assistant principal, district level, etc.), through colleges or universities, and through professional organizations. In order to capture the nuances of the communities that influenced the participants, a follow-up interview was conducted via email. The researcher created four questions (Appendix D) for the follow-up interview. Participants further explained the details of the communities of practice they engaged in to improve their knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy.

Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire

An open-ended teacher questionnaire was created by the researcher using the Professional Learning Standards for Educational Leaders (NPBEA, 2015). This open-ended questionnaire was distributed through Google forms for teachers to offer their perceptions of the principals sharing in instructional leadership of literacy (Appendix C). This instrument allowed teachers to illustrate which characteristics of the principal positively impact the literacy instruction in their classrooms.

Data Collection Procedure

IRB Process

A proposal for this study including principal consent forms (Appendix A), teacher consent forms (Appendix A), sample interview questions (Appendix B), and a sample teacher questionnaire (Appendix C) were submitted to the Institutional Review Board for approval.

Lack of participation from the teachers required a change in the questionnaire process. An update was submitted to the IRB for approval to incentivize teachers to complete the questionnaire.

Researcher Positioning

The researcher was unacquainted with the participants in this study prior to beginning the study. Through a review of winners of the International Literacy Association Exemplary Reading Award, principals were selected based on common school demographics. The researcher contacted the possible principal participants via phone to secure participation in the study. The researcher was also unacquainted with the teacher participants in the study. Principals were the primary communicators between the researcher and the teacher participants.

The collection of the principal interview data was completed in person or online via Zoom. One participant was interviewed in-person in her school office. Another participant was

interviewed in the lobby of a hotel as the researcher and the participant were both attending a conference. The other two participants were interviewed online via Zoom. Both of these participants and the researcher were in their school offices during the interview.

The teacher questionnaires were completed online via Google Forms. There was no contact between the teachers and the researcher. The Google form link for the teachers to complete the questionnaire was communicated through email via the principal.

Obtaining Consent and Maintaining Confidentiality

The researcher ensured consent forms were sent to all principals prior to beginning the study (Appendix A). The teacher consent forms were also collected prior to sending the questionnaire (appendix B). Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. No principals or teachers withdrew from the study.

Confidentiality was maintained throughout and upon completion of this study. The researcher guaranteed confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms. Quotations and descriptions used were also carefully selected to protect the identity of the participants.

Data was kept in both hard copy and electronic formats. Audio and video recordings were transcribed by this researcher. Hard copies were kept in a locked file cabinet. Data was stored only in a protected location. The data will be kept up to five years past date of collection and/or end of study, and then they will be destroyed.

Consent was approved before beginning the study. Confidentiality was monitored continually throughout the process.

Data Collection

In June of 2018, the researcher gathered information on the International Literacy Association's Exemplary Reading Program Award. After gathering the information, principals of similar schools were selected from four regions of the United States: Midwest, West, Northeast, and South. These principals were contacted by phone in early July to seek interest in participating in the study. Consent forms were sent once the phone confirmation was obtained.

After the consent forms were returned, a request for documents was emailed to each subject. The list of documents requested included: college transcripts of graduate level classes and a current resume. Each principal provided a resume before the end of January.

In October, principals emailed staff the open-ended questionnaire with a message from the researcher to obtain the perceptions of the teachers about the principals' abilities to be instructional leaders of literacy (see appendix D). The window to complete the questionnaire closed on November 20th. At this time, there was a lack of response. An incentive $25 gift card raffle was presented with an extension for responses until December 20th. Responses increased. Results of the questionnaires were analyzed for patterns or themes as well as descriptive statements to illustrate the ability of the subject to be an instructional leader of literacy. Results were also analyzed to validate self-reported data from the principal participants.

The first round of principal interviews were conducted in person or digitally before November 27th. The researcher conducted the interviews from the Midwest and Western regions in person. The interviews of the principal participants from the northeast and south were conducted via Zoom.

While analyzing data for themes, the researcher found the need to refine the research questions. The original research question was, "How do principals engage in professional development to be the instructional leader of literacy?" The principal was positioned in a

hierarchical structure—a type of instructional leadership prevalent in the 1980s. While analyzing data, it became evident that the instructional leadership of literacy was shared amongst all participants. Shared instructional leadership also emerged in research during the 1990s—as stated in chapter 2. The revision of the question positions the principal in a shared leadership role.

It was also determined that more information specific to how the participants valued the communities of practice needed to be collected. In April, all four principals were contacted by the researcher to request a follow-up interview through email. This interview would take place via email for the convenience of the principal participants. All interviews concluded by the middle of May.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this case study was repetitive and ongoing. While synthesizing for patterns or themes of comparable complexity that reflect the purpose of the research, detailed analysis of information was gathered.

In the first level of invivo codes (Saldana, 2013), the researcher transcribed the interviews with each principal. Using NVIVO (Nvivo, 2015) software, the researcher used the open-coded method to find a broader conceptual idea—learning. This left the researcher with random ideas and many chronological stories. Categories were not forming. Reflecting on Yin (2016), the researcher began to look for level 2 or category codes. Struggling to identify level 2 codes, the researcher refocused using the theoretical framework as a guide.

Lave and Wenger's words (1991), "A person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice," resonated with the researcher. Reading on, Lave and Wenger describe

the process of newcomers becoming part of a community of practice to move towards full participation. The relationship between old-timers and newcomers forms this process. The researcher coded for old-timer and newcomer to communities. It was evident that the principal participants entered into several communities. Themes emerged for types of communities.

In qualitative research, analytic memos are powerful. Saldaña (2016) states analytic memos serve as another form of coding. Throughout the study the researcher wrote analytic memos for in-depth nuances in sharing in the instructional leadership of literacy. The participants in the study described the people in their communities. In several cases, experts in the communities were identified. The collaborative processes within the communities were also noticed such as ongoing dialogue about curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy.

Finally, the researcher analyzed the teacher responses to the questionnaire. Themes of shared beliefs and ongoing dialogue about curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy emerged. The participants' descriptions of their principals' support validated the self-reported data shared by the principals.

Validity

Reflexivity is attending to how personal experiences can intervene in the research process (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The researcher acknowledged that she was a researcher, an educator, and an administrator. Being aware that her positionality, as an administrator in the educational field, could have impacted the study, the researcher attempted to be reflective throughout the process. The researcher's positionality offered opportunity for her to reflect on her own biases—to apply reflexivity. Applying reflexivity throughout the process allowed her to be intentional about her biases.

Choosing the participants in the study was given consideration due to the positionality of the researcher. According to Hesse-Biber:

> The case or cases selected should contain elements typical of the wider population of cases, knowing that the case or cases you selected should contain elements typical of the wider population of cases, knowing that the case or cases you select will form the basis for making generalizations and building theory (2017, p. 230).

In reflecting on the importance of the participant selection, the researcher felt it was important to choose participants unknown to her. It was also important to create a standardized process that could be repeated over time. Using the list of the winners from the Exemplary Reading Award from the International Literacy Association as a starting point for participant selection eliminated the bias of the researcher. In order to select participants representative of a "wider population of cases" a principal from four regions of the United States were chosen. This process could be repeated by any researcher and eliminates bias.

Reflexivity was vital in choosing the methods for the study as well. According to Hesse-Biber, "There is always interplay between a researcher's position in the research process and the tools he or she deems appropriate to use. With that said, case study always necessitates the use of multiple methods and data sources" (2017, p. 230). The researcher chose to interview the participants, collect resumes from the participants, and collect questionnaire information from the staff of the participants. Hesse-Biber (2017) also states triangulation of data builds validity. Through this collection data was triangulated.

The researcher found reflecting on her positionality during analysis was important in conveying the growth of the participants. For example, her journey to share in instructional leadership of literacy brought an opportunity for her to bring judgment of others' journeys. To

illustrate this point, when the principals named specific reading programs that were beneficial to supporting their growth and the growth of their staff, the researcher's own struggles with reading programs quickly clouded her judgment. Awareness of her bias allowed the researcher to observe through a different lens when analyzing how a reading program could have a positive impact on growth.

Summary

Through this qualitative collective case study, the researcher sought to describe the professional development principals engage in to share in the instructional leadership of literacy. In this chapter the researcher presents the methodology of the study: the research questions, the design, the sample, the instrument design, the data collection and analysis, and the validity of the study.

Chapter IV: Research Findings

"A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song." ~ Maya Angelou

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals engage in professional development in order to share in instructional leadership of literacy. The following research questions informed the study: How do principals engage in professional development in order to share in instructional leadership of literacy? and How does professional development impact the ability of principals to share in instructional leadership of literacy?

The analysis examines information from semi-structured interviews with principals (appendix C and E), resumes collected from principals, and responses from teacher questionnaires (appendix D). Four principals from four different regions in the United States discussed their professional development path to share in the instructional leadership of literacy during semi-structured interviews. Resumes from all four principals were also analyzed. Through online questionnaires, thirty-nine teachers described how the principal participants supported the growth of their instructional practices to grow and engage students in literacy.

Principals engage in professional development in a variety of ways throughout their educational career to develop their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy. In all cases, the participants in this study sought out communities to deepen their understanding of literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As participants became principals, they continued to engage in professional development with their staff—sharing in instructional leadership. As principals described their professional development journeys, communities emerged in three places: their schools, educational institutions, and professional educational organizations.

Actualization of Themes

As the data were analyzed, themes surrounding principals' engagement in communities of practice began to emerge. Recurring themes regarding job-embedded (school) communities, educational institution communities, and professional educational organizational communities became evident.

Theme 1: Job-Embedded Communities

All four elementary school principals began their careers teaching in elementary schools. As teachers, they were formally and informally invited into communities of practice within their buildings. These communities modeled collaborative practices. New positions throughout their careers offered new opportunities for job-embedded communities. As newcomers to the communities, they learned from experts of literacy and transformed over time into experts in their communities. These communities offered opportunities to grow their understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy for the purpose of supporting students' success.

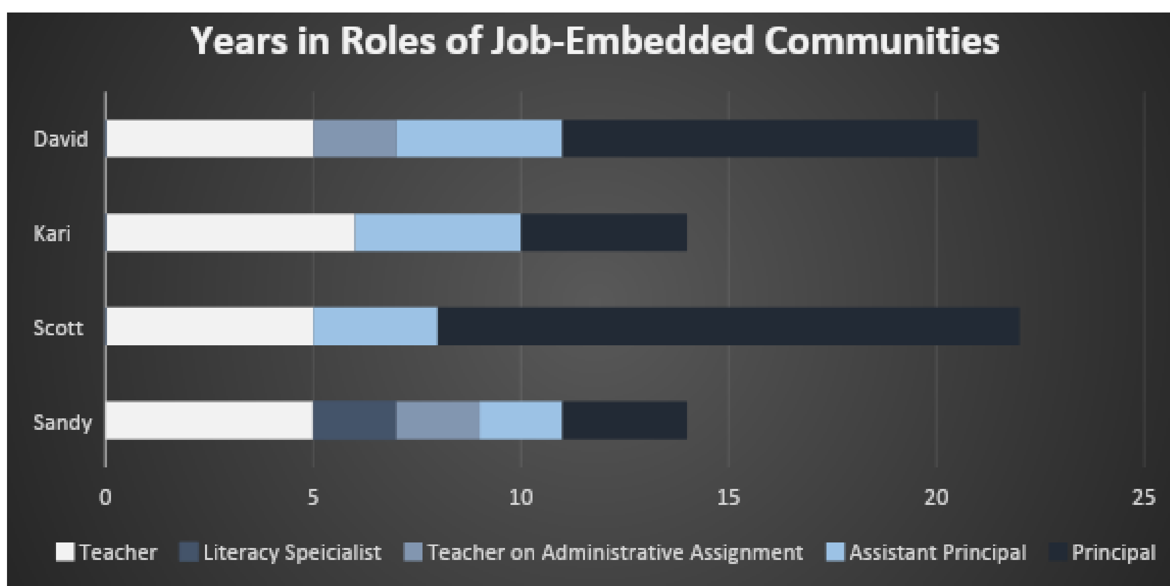

Figure 4.1. Roles in job-embedded communities. Participants engaged in communities for a

variety of years throughout their careers while serving in different roles.

Sandy. Sandy's first position as a kindergarten teacher provided communities of practice to strengthen literacy and leadership skills she presently uses when sharing in instructional leadership of literacy. Identifying the experts in the community, Sandy stated, "We had two Title 1 teachers, a parent resource, and three Reading Recovery teachers. The Reading Recovery teachers were the teachers that taught me. They were like, 'Ok, you're not going through the program, but this is how you teach reading.'" Collaborating with her peers empowered Sandy to incorporate best practices of literacy instruction in her classroom to meet the needs of her students. She stated, "(I) implemented guided reading, shared reading, word study, math centers, and literacy centers into daily instruction." These practices involved daily formative assessments to inform instruction—an important assessment purpose for teachers (Afflerbach, 2016).

Sandy wondered how to use formative assessment to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, asking how she could "bump [students] to those next levels." Through informal relationships with the Reading Recovery teachers in her community, Sandy was empowered to collaborate with other professional beyond her school—shaping Sandy's beliefs (and later her vision) of a balanced literacy approach.

Beyond the classroom level, Sandy continued to enter into new job-embedded communities. After teaching kindergarten for five years honing the art and science of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy, Sandy moved to another state and interviewed for a fourth grade teaching position. She was hired as a reading specialist. To support her, the principal assigned Sandy to different communities throughout the school. Sandy participated in communities of practice that conducted the team presentation for the Exemplary Reading Award at the International Literacy Association Conference, implemented the Read 180 Program, and planned school-wide literacy events. These opportunities offered Sandy the time

to collaborate in a variety of communities beyond the classroom level to accomplish building-level goals.

As a reading specialist, Sandy became a literacy expert in her new community. Her ongoing dialogue with other community members about curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy shaped her beliefs about literacy and how students learn.

Transitioning to a teacher in administrative assignment role, Sandy broadened her pool of job-embedded communities and strengthened her understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Sandy was honing her craft of working with adults and understanding district-wide systems. The responsibilities of this new position changed Sandy's role and her participation in communities. Sandy was coordinating data meetings, managing student testing, organizing team meetings, developing district in-service and summer tutoring schedules, creating responsive classroom techniques, modifying homework policies and practices, developing literacy and writing curriculum guidelines, facilitating curriculum and assessment committees, analyzing MAP and PVAAS data, and working on intervention planning at the elementary level. At this level, Sandy was growing her capacity to understand literacy across all levels. Her new role also shifted her purpose in analyzing data. She was now analyzing data to determine reading program effectiveness, to prove school and teacher accountability, and to determine resource allocation (Afflerbach, 2018). Reflecting on her principal position now, Sandy states, "As an instructional leader, I look at the whole gamut. I'm looking at instruction, but I'm also looking at assessment. I'm also looking at the curriculum. They all tie in together." Within the communities, Sandy strengthened her skills in multiple areas to share in instructional leadership of literacy through ongoing dialogue.

After two years at the district level, Sandy moved into a position as an assistant principal in a high school and entered into new job-embedded communities. Sandy believed she was moved into this position to strengthen other areas in her leadership. The new role, she stated, ". . . grounded the area I lacked in. The disciplinary side. I did not have a lot of experience with that." She also believed the role strengthened her managerial skills. Sandy stated, "As a reading specialist you are under the umbrella of leadership, but still not running a whole building. I know I try not to be as much of a manager, but you have to understand that side of things." With her newfound knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment acquired through job-embedded communities, Sandy stepped into her role as principal.

In her current role, Sandy communicates the shared belief, "Our job is to have our first graders leave the building reading. We are not doing justice if they are not being readers because it is in everything." To reach the goal to have every first grader reading, Sandy forms formal communities of practice. She credits the reading specialist as the expert in her community. She stated, "The reading specialist and I have multiple conversations on how we can improve literacy skills at the K/1 level." This ongoing dialogue helps guide Sandy's focus to engage in meetings with teachers. Sandy stated, "We have data meetings to review the students' results and how we are going to get students to benchmark. These meetings occur once a month. During the meeting, we have critical conversations about interventions, strategies, and current practices." Based on the conclusions they draw from these ongoing dialogues, they use research to guide their next steps. Sandy credits her reading specialist for guiding her focus to support teachers. She states, "Many times the reading specialist challenges me to think differently or provide an insight that I might not be thinking about." This community continues to grow through ongoing dialogue. Sandy focuses the purpose of assessments for teachers to determine the nature of

student learning, to inform instruction, to evaluate students, and to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in reading (Afflerbach, 2018).

Sandy also credits the Director of Teaching and Learning as an expert in her district-level community. Sandy acknowledges the different lens she uses at a district level compared to a school level. She states:

> The principal meetings (which includes the Director of Teaching and Learning) provide opportunities for me to increase and expand my knowledge of literacy on a more global level. We discuss what is happening in grades K-5 and how our students are performing on standardized tests. We examine and analyze the data to see trends in any specific area of literacy.

The community Sandy participates in with administrators shifts the focus of assessment to reading program effectiveness, school and teacher accountability, and resource allocation (Afflerbach, 2018).

Figure 4.2. Members of Sandy's communities. These members strengthened Sandy's capacity to share in the instructional leadership of literacy.

Scott. Scott's first job-embedded community differed from Sandy's. As a new fifth grade teacher, Scott believed he had more in-depth knowledge of content than his colleagues. Developing knowledge in content is not a one-way experience. From newcomers to experts, learning is acquired through social participation toward common goals in the community of practice (Wenger, 2009). "When I came to the south, I was a little more into the reading and writing connection than a lot of people down here. I was kind of on the forefront of doing the writing with my students when other people weren't quite there yet," Scott stated. Scott engaged with his colleagues and developed relationships within his job-embedded community that he still fosters today—fourteen years into his principalship.

Scott moved into an assistant principal position and entered into new communities of practice. "I worked a lot with thinking maps as an assistant principal. Very specific grade level targets people should reach," Scott stated. This work on curriculum continued when Scott transitioned into the role as principal and collaborated with staff about curriculum.

> When I became the principal here. I didn't want to bring in a program. We did some PD as a staff to pull them towards the Write from Reading goals and rubrics. We wanted them to imagine what their ideal writing goals would be for the end of the year. They led themselves to those same goals. We talked about how great it would be if there was a program out there. We used it pretty consistently for 10 years. It's in the culture.

Working beside teachers, Scott developed a shared belief with his staff. He stated the belief is understood, "If you can't read, you can't do much else. Do everything it takes to give every child the education that he or she needs and deserves regardless of any outside factors that are there. My people pretty much buy into that." With a shared belief, Scott leads with trust in all,

"I have gotten the ability to have a coach. The longer I am here the district gives me a little more autonomy. In turn that gives my teachers a little more autonomy. If they can dream it, we can try it. If it doesn't work, drop back and punt." Scott encourages teachers to try new methods in their teaching. He also holds them accountable. Teachers know if the data collected from assessments does not support new instructional practices, adjustments in instruction will be made. Sharing in instructional leadership is evident. Scott's experiences as a classroom teacher and assistant principal shaped Scott's belief that curriculum and instruction must be co-created with the practitioners—the teachers.

The reading coach and Scott continue to learn together through the communities of practice they create and ones they engage in informally. "Our reading coach has been with me for her entire career. She was trained in those methods. She taught fifth grade with me first," Scott stated. Because the reading coach has built relationships over the years, her expertise is valued and utilized effectively. Scott states, "She (the reading coach) is meeting in PLC monthly." Scott states he also attends these meetings with the teachers honing his understanding of instruction and assessment through conversations about determining the nature of student learning, informing instruction, evaluating students, and diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses in reading (Afflerbach, 2018).

Scott also works with the reading coach to discuss reading program effectiveness and the nature of student learning. "I meet with her probably biweekly," he added. New curriculum initiatives are discussed during their biweekly meetings. "We are STEM accredited. It is all done in-house with the literacy coach and the STEM coordinator," Scott stated. This is a newer collaborative community to the school created through new initiatives. The collaborative communities Scott and the reading coach create support new visions to meet goals.

Scott continues to enter into communities of practice to grow alongside teachers. He seeks opportunities to enter into these new communities. He states:

> The District put together D6 University where for three years all of the grade level in one day go up and do training to engage in professional development that is done in our district through reading coaches, principals, etc. We bring subs into the classrooms for 1 day. As a principal I attend with the teachers.

Learning with the teachers at each grade level offers Scott the opportunity to engage in ongoing dialogue about what he is observing in classrooms. Scott also participates in communities that are not required. He states:

> I go to the same trainings my staff do. For example for the Read to Succeed endorsement, they had four classes they needed to attend. Administrators had to take one course. I sat in all 4 courses the teachers were required to take on my own. I needed to have part of that learning along with them.

As an instructional leader of literacy, Scott believes in learning beside his staff about curriculum, instruction, and assessments in communities of practice.

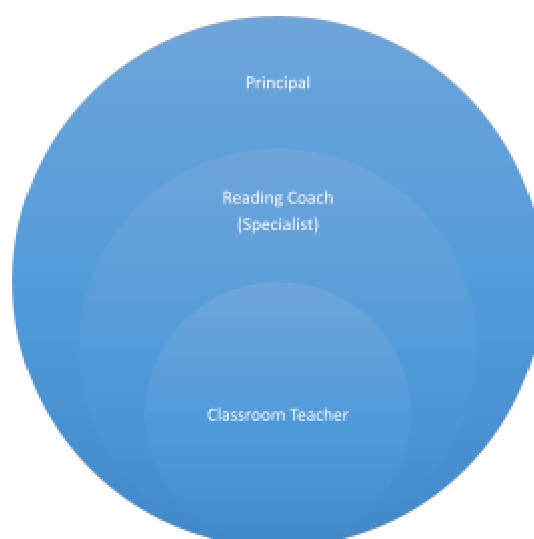

Figure 4.3. Members of Scott's communities. These members strengthened Scott's capacity to share in the instructional leadership of literacy.

Kari. Kari entered the teaching profession and her job-embedded community in a small Christian school teaching fifth grade. After teaching for one year, Kari made the decision to stay home to raise her children. Kari reflected, "I think my eyes were opened up to kids differently from my time at home in nurturing and raising my own kids." She entered back into the teaching profession teaching fifth grade in the school district she leads in today. "I have a very relational style in connecting and learning the stories of the kids and their families and taking the time to connect and be real," Kari commented.

While teaching Kari sought out communities to improve her literacy knowledge. Kari stated, "during my time in the classroom, I specifically took classes through the Canter Institute (an in-district professional learning community) to build my literacy foundation." The district also provided other communities of practice. "Once in the district I participated in the Foundations of Literacy cohort through my district. I have always had a passion around literacy and have tried to continue to build that foundation," Kari commented. Kari's desire to learn more drew her to communities.

After four years of teaching, Kari transitioned into the Associate Principal position in the school where she taught and continued to develop in the same collaborative communities creating spaces for dialogue about literacy. In 2015, Kari accepted a principal position and engaged in new communities of practice. Crediting coaches and interventionists as experts Kari stated, "I have an amazing coach and two amazing interventionists. There is a lot of talk. Thankfully when I inherited this building, the principal before had a very strong stake in the ground around literacy." Kari engaged with the collaborative practices already established. Crediting her coach as an expert in her community, Kari stated, "I meet with and collaborate with

my literacy coach every week. And often more than one time a week." Kari relies on her ongoing dialogue with the literacy coach to grow. Kari continued, "Once a month we use PLC for literacy and another morning of staff development." She uses these times within the community to take a deep dive into areas of literacy—"postholing" (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Kari added, "We have a PLC culture, but I have found the fire. We are going to talk about data. We are going to talk about the four questions. We are going to move students this year." Kari developed a belief for engaging in ongoing dialogue with staff through these four questions: What do we expect our students to learn? How will we know they are learning? How will we respond if they don't learn? How will we respond if they already know it? (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). These questions focus the dialogue about the data to determine the nature of student learning, to inform instruction, to evaluate students, and to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in reading (Afflerbach, 2018). She embarked on this work with her staff. They determined the data needed and set out to accomplish their goals to improve literacy instruction.

As a community, Kari and the staff set out to accomplish their goals. "Collaboratively what are we going to do? I'm in there. I'm reading with kids, so they can do running records. It's a team effort," Kari stated. She also stated, "Part of being continual improvement is me knowing that I need to continually improve as well. I feel like my district helps promote that in me, but I feel a personal drive to make sure that I am learning and trying new things and willing to take on risks and do different things." Being vulnerable and being open to new learning allows Kari to acquire knowledge in learning communities.

Kari also discussed how a community of practice formed through the PLC model. Kari stated:

> Another area of support has come through our PLC process. As a teacher I was always part of the literacy PLC; and as a building leader created the the model of all grade levels using their weekly PLC time to focus on the four PLC questions. We have strong data to support that by focusing on our data, students, and best practices that we have held strong and had growth. When we focus on the four PLC questions and use student data we are able to collaborate and communicate at a deeper level. It also allows specialists to be part of the conversations so our coach and interventionist can share strategies and information about students. Within my position now I am part of my building level team and work hard to support literacy and a love of reading within my school.

This ongoing community grows together through seeking to answer the four PLC questions based on data they deemed most important to inform instruction, to evaluate students, and to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses.

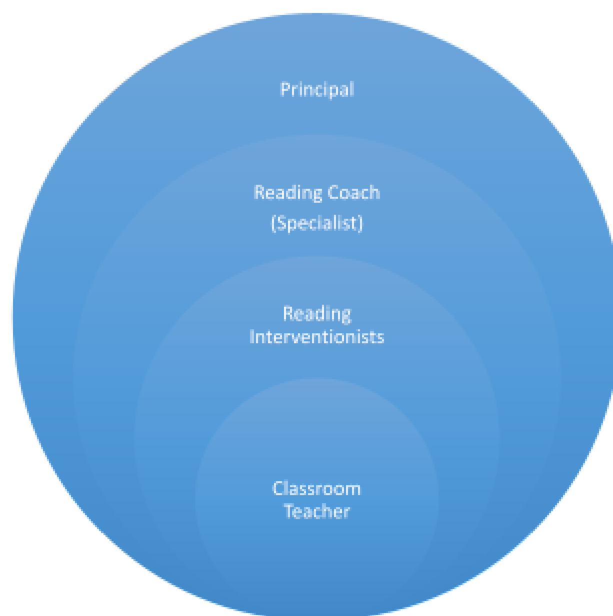

Figure 4.4. Members of Kari's communities. These members strengthened Kari's capacity to share in the instructional leadership of literacy.

David. David entered into his first job-embedded community as a multi-age fourth through sixth grade ELL teacher. "I went directly into a classroom through Teach for America, got an emergency credential and while I taught, earned my teaching credential through a two-year district/county program." David felt this teaching experience did not deepen his content knowledge of literacy. He stated, "[his teaching experience] had little to do with teaching kids how to read . . . theoretically."

Entering into the administrative roles, David entered into several job-embedded communities. School-based and district-wide committees broadened his knowledge base. Within the school David was the Chair of the school site leadership team. He was also the member of several committees: Booster club, School Site Council, PTA, and Diversity Committee. District wide he was a member of several committees: Superintendent's Council, Strategic Planning Committee, Berryessa District Advisory Committee, School Boundaries Committee, District English Language Acquisition Committee, and the Berryessa African American Parent Coalition, Peer Assistance Review (PAR) board, Berryessa Administrator's Association, and District Negotiations Team. Each of these committees brought new knowledge and experiences.

As a principal of the building he has led for the past six years, David entered into new communities and created new ones: formally and informally. David cited different book studies with the staff as vital in forming the vision, mission, and beliefs they hold for the work they do. In essence, David was modeling for staff how to use authentic text to learn and grow. David stated, "There is this book called *Creating a Culture of Achievement*. In one of the chapters it talks about being the best in the universe." He described how the staff engaged in a book study. Through ongoing dialogue, they embraced the idea of noticing when others were being the best in the universe. He went on to explain, "It doesn't mean that we compare ourselves to any other

schools or any other teachers or any other administrators." He emphasized it was about noticing others within the school—others who may not have been noticed in the past. The staff was building their community.

Most recently, David discovered his staff did not know each other on a personal level. He stated:

> Last year I was sitting down with a team of my teachers in February. In February one of the teachers said to another teacher, 'Hi. I'm Megan from kindergarten (to one of my fifth grade teachers). We haven't really talked.' In February! I was thinking, they don't know each other. And you know what? It's not their fault. They never get a chance to interact.

This reflection gave David pause. He was reading *Being the Change* by Sara Ahmed which sparked another idea. As a staff they engaged in making identity webs and shared information about themselves with each other. Through this community of practice the staff shared personal values and beliefs. This opened ongoing dialogue to create shared beliefs.

Beliefs drive the communities of practice in the school where David currently leads. David stated, "We believe that literacy—reading, writing . . . is the key to success in our world. If you want to make it a global thing, we believe we can make a difference in the world, making it better, through the work that we do. The mission is that we do everything we can to promote that." Together with the staff, David creates and supports job-embedded communities to grow capacity in supporting students' literacy lives. One example is in the way they provide students access to books. David stated, "We funded classroom libraries." He decided the best way to get the right books into the right hands was to give choice to the students and teachers. "We are going to give $500 for classroom libraries to each teacher so they can purchase . . . and we talked about it too." David guided the staff in making choices. He stated, "I didn't just give them the

money and say go buy books. I said here are some ideas from the experts Colby Sharp and Pernille Ripp who talk about building classroom libraries . . . about having diverse collections. Because choice is a big thing, I told them to survey the kids." Surveying the kids was the formative data needed to inform instruction and to allocate resources (Afflerbach, 2018). The community to learn and grow together offered support in how to make decisions for purchasing resources to support the learners in their school.

David also uses experts within the school to build job-embedded communities. David stated, "We also have coaches. Our focus this year has been to use the GLAD strategies to support Wonders, so we can really build that bridge for our EL learners." The knowledge of literacy content from the experts coupled with instructional practices created a dynamic collaborative learning community.

When specifically asked about communities in his educational career that have impacted his instructional leadership of literacy, David stated, "I would say that my current staff has been the most influential. They are the ones who are my immediate community of practice—the ones who have pushed and supported the efforts in our school." The power of a community lies in the strength of its members to move forward—together.

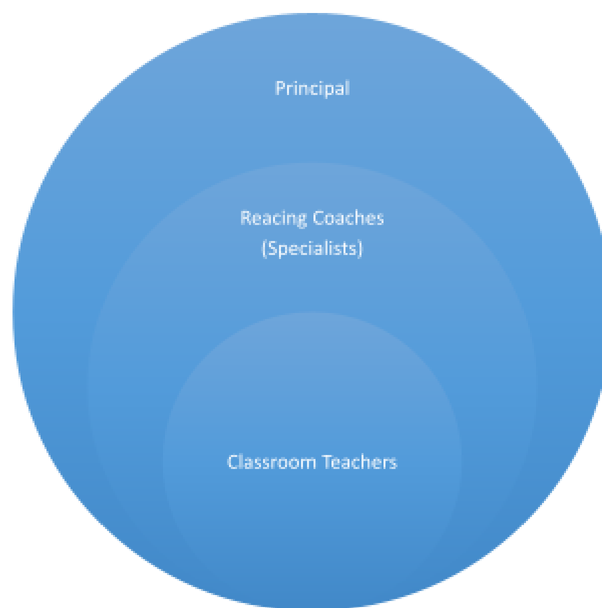

Figure 4.5. Members of David's communities. These members strengthened David's capacity to share in the instructional leadership of literacy.

Theme 2: Educational Institution Communities

All four principal participants sought out educational institution communities to grow in practice. Requirements to be a principal include degrees and certifications from educational institutions. Principals go beyond the basic requirements. Each of the participants in this study self-selected and attended different educational institutions for different purposes to professionally develop their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy throughout their career.

Sandy. Sandy listed five educational institutions with certifications or degrees earned in her resume: Susquehanna University, Johns Hopkins University, Southern New Hampshire, Saint Joseph's University, and Cabrini College. These colleges and universities offered communities for her to grow deeper in her knowledge of content and instructional strategies.

Sandy first developed her understanding of how to teach reading by engaging in communities at Susquehanna University while working on her undergraduate degree in Early

Childhood Education. Sandy stated, "Taking my classes in undergrad that was when I really was like oh my gosh reading has so many more components within the decoding system than I even realized. I just thought you had to memorize words and that's how you got through your text." Sandy's description on learning the components in decoding offer insight into her ability to assess students to inform instruction and to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses. Earning an Early Childhood Education degree from Susquehanna University armed Sandy with the research and the opportunity to pursue a teaching position.

While teaching, Sandy found herself seeking another community at a university to deepen her literacy content knowledge, instructional practices, and assessment knowledge. "When I was taking those initial classes (in undergraduate), we had some reading classes, but for me it wasn't enough." She was curious about different ways to engage students and had the urge to continue growing. Sandy reflected, "I'm starting to understand how you break down reading to students, but I was still more inquisitive, so I went back and got my masters at Johns Hopkins." Sandy attended Johns Hopkins with a colleague from school. She stated, "Getting my Master's as a Reading Specialist, I was able to bounce ideas with my colleague and test strategies in my classroom on a regular basis." Bringing the new learning from the university back to the classroom to apply new practices with a colleague was powerful. Sandy stated, "We had a supportive Administration who encouraged us to trial and evaluate what we learned. I was able to observe what and why when students were able to retain and understand concepts versus when they didn't." Having a supportive principal during her learning process was important to Sandy. Earning a master's degree to obtain a reading specialist endorsement, strengthened Sandy's literacy content knowledge, instructional practices, and assessment knowledge. Sandy also added, "Even to this day, I'm eager to hear from my peers to hear what they are

implementing in their schools and what new programs/strategies are available to help in the areas of literacy." The community that formed during Sandy's time at Johns Hopkins, sustained after the formal requirement to meet ended.

After earning a master's degree, Sandy continued to seek communities through educational institutions to grow in areas she identified. Southern New Hampshire offered English as a Second Language Certification online. This certification broadened Sandy's cultural and linguistic understanding. Shortly after earning her certificate, Sandy moved states and found herself searching again. Accepting a position as a reading specialist, Sandy felt she needed to know more about literacy at different grade levels. Expressing a desire to learn about how students learn literacy in intermediate grade levels, Sandy proposed the idea of going back to school to become trained in WILSON at St. Joseph's University. Her principal supported her decision. She shared, "I went back and became level 1 certified. I felt like I could work the K-2 and now I also had the 3/4 and 5." Sandy had taken the opportunity to do a deep dive into intermediate literacy acquisition; she was "post holing" (Stein & Nelson, 2003). With strong research base in content knowledge and instructional practices, Sandy embarked on her journey to practice what she had learned and to share in collaborative communities of practice within her school.

With encouragement from her principal to grow her instructional leadership, Sandy continued her learning journey in a community of practice at Cabrini College with two colleagues from her school. Earning her Administrative I certification, Sandy was certified to fill an administrative position.

Scott. Scott listed three educational institutions in his resume: Holy Family University, University of South Carolina, and Capella University. Each university offered him a degree and new educational communities.

Holy Family University community strengthened Scott's literacy content knowledge. "In my undergraduate work. I had a pretty good foundation in Reading in PA," he stated. This knowledge encouraged him to pursue a position teaching fifth grade.

Continuing his education at the University of South Carolina, Scott valued the people in his community. "College professor Lynn Harrell was very instrumental in curriculum and curriculum development. He was one that going through my masters' program that . . . I value his opinion a lot," Scott stated. Obtaining a position as an assistant principal after earning this degree, Scott worked with curriculum mapping. In Scott's words, "I worked a lot with thinking maps as an assistant principal. Very specific grade level targets people should reach." Scott's work in curriculum mapping was setting the expectations of how to assess students at varying stages of their literacy development. Scott's educational community prepared him for his job-embedded community.

Earning his doctoral degree at Capella University, Scott engaged in an online community to earn a Leadership for K-12 programs degree. After earning this degree, he pursued his career in leadership.

Kari. Kari listed two educational institutions in her resume: University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Kari earned her Bachelor of Science in Education from University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. This degree prepared her for her position as a fifth grade teacher. She earned her Masters in Educational Leadership from

University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. This degree gave her the opportunity to enter into the administrative field.

Kari discussed universities in the context of her principalship as well. While implementing strengthened Reading Units of Study by Lucy Caulkins, the district sought support through a university. Kari stated, "We worked with Columbia University and provided some full day PD for staff (k-6) and leaders around the mini-lessons and practices around workshop management." The content expertise and research based instructional practices from the university contributed to the collaborative learning community in her school.

David. David listed two educational institutions: University of California, Berkeley and St. Mary's College of California. David earned his undergraduate degree in psychology from University of California, Berkeley. "I did not get my credential from Berkeley. I went directly into a classroom through Teach for America, got an emergency credential and while I taught, earned my teaching credential through a two year district/county program," David stated.

David found a new educational community at St. Mary's in California. "My master's dissertation was integrating technology in the classroom. I got my masters at St. Mary's in California. A few years later I got my doctorate there too." David found an opportunity to enter into teaching at the college. "During that time, they hired me to work at St. Mary's college to run the tier 1 program in California. In California, it is the administrative credential program, so I did that part time." David wasn't just working part time at the college. "I was working part time in the district," he added. "At St. Mary's I had this corner office overlooking this 100-year-old Oak tree. It's idyllic, right? You call your own shots. You call your own hours. But I really missed working at the school," stated David. He made the decision to go back to the school full time.

In reflecting specifically on the communities of practice he participated in through colleges and universities, David recalled a specific community. He stated, "I still keep in touch with my professor/dissertation chair at St. Mary's College (he's retiring this year). I still see a lot of the work we did on "transformative learning/leadership" and adult learning theory come up in my current work." However, David did not recall any communities that directly impacted his literacy leadership. He stated, "This really hasn't impacted my instructional leadership of literacy."

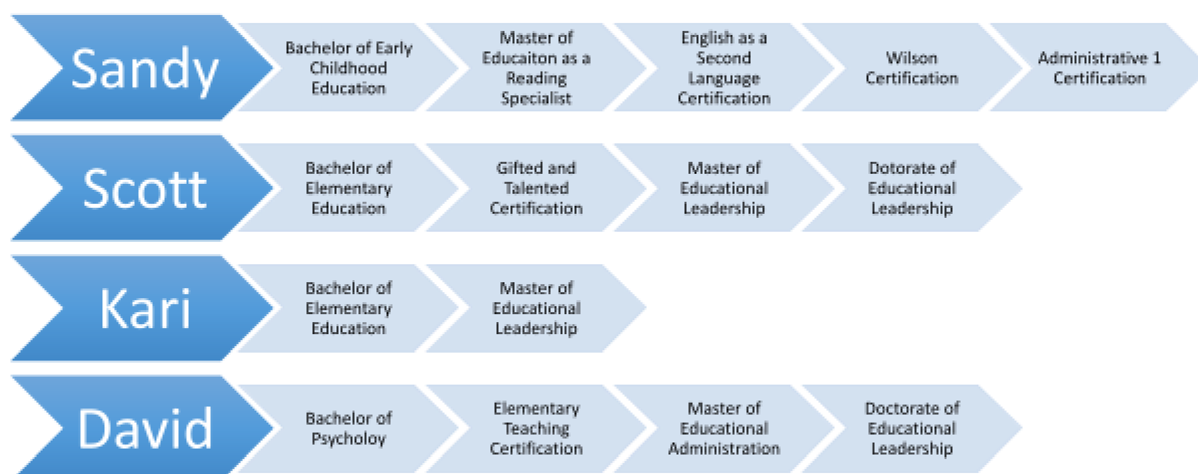

Figure 4.6. Degrees and certifications. Participants earned certifications and degrees to grow in their ability to share in the instructional leadership of literacy.

Theme 3: Professional Educational Organization Communities

All four participants referenced professional organizations they have found supported their growth to be an instructional leaders of literacy. Each participant identified different organizations for different purposes.

Sandy. Sandy discussed a few professional organizations that support her growth in literacy. "I am a member of International Reading Association. I get their monthly newsletters. I read them. I would say Wilson is still the one I use the most. I am actively involved in that

organization." She went on to explain that she supports her teachers being trained through the organization. "One of our teachers just received an award from Barbara Wilson up in Connecticut. She is a phenomenal reading specialist." Sandy engages in professional organizations and encourages her teachers to engage as well.

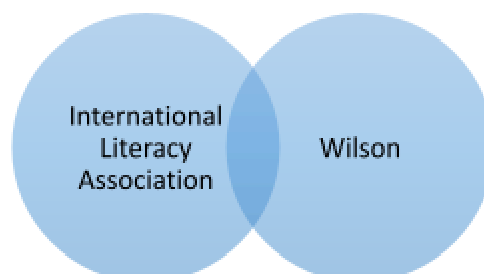

Figure 4.7. Sandy's educational organizations. These educational organizations grow Sandy's capacity in sharing her instructional leadership of literacy.

Scott. Scott referenced three organizations: South Carolina Council of the International Literacy Association, South Carolina Association of Educational Technology, and South Carolina Teachers of English Speakers of Other Languages. He did not specifically describe how these organizations strengthened his ability to be an instructional leader of literacy. He also did not elaborate on any communities of practice within the organizations.

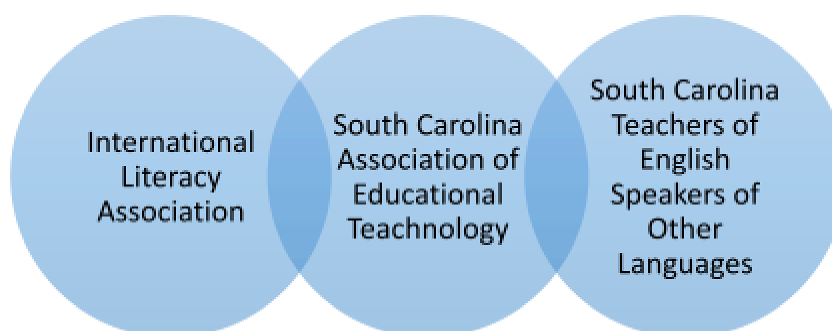

Figure 4.8. Scott's educational organizations. These educational communities grow Scott's capacity in sharing his instructional leadership of literacy.

Kari. Kari attributed her growth in strengthening her instructional leadership of literacy to several organizations. She annually subscribes to the National Association of Elementary

School Principals and the Wisconsin Association of School Administrators. Kari discussed the Wisconsin State Reading Association as an organization that supports her literacy learning. "I've been able to attend the WI state reading association convention. I was able to present at it two years ago," Kari stated. Reflecting further, Kari states, "Through their newsletter and annual conference, I felt like I was able to learn and grow as a leader."

Leadership was an area Kari focused her discussions for growth. "I got to attend the PLC Institute through Solution Tree," Kari stated. Kari discussed how she is able to use data to have discussions with teachers. "At the national level, PLC institute, although it wasn't literacy focused, that was a game changer for me," Kari added. Because of this training Kari believes the culture in her building has changed. She stated:

> Our PLC culture helps us have those conversations. We also have child study teams around literacy. We can come together as grade level teams and look at the data. This child is struggling with this strand. How do we share students? How do we talk about it? How do we make sure everyone is getting similar experiences?

These PLC meetings include teachers, the coach, and the interventionists. Through these meetings, Kari is able to create a focus—a focus driven by the four PLC questions. In analyzing the four PLC questions, the focus is drawn to the purpose of the assessment for the audience. "Our PLC is talking about literacy, our staff development is around literacy, when I do my evaluations I am requesting to do literacy. I think there are enough touch points around literacy. I have an amazing coach and two amazing interventionists," Kari stated. Kari's belief in collaborative conversations about all students is vital to growth.

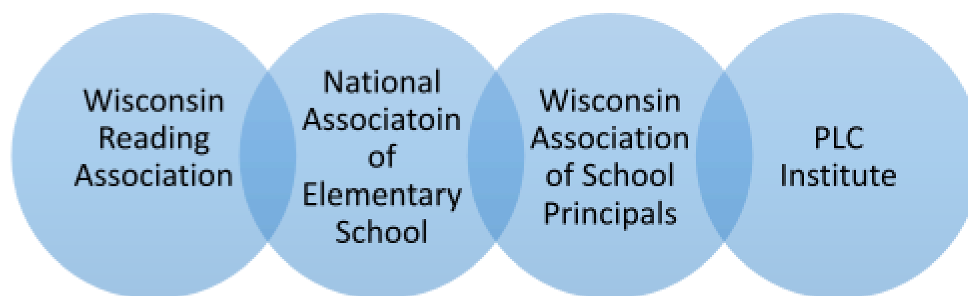

Figure 4.9. Kari's educational organizations. These educational organizations grow Kari's capacity to share in instructional leadership of literacy.

David. David credits several organizations and people within the organizations for growing his instructional leadership of literacy. Within these communities, David has taken deep dives into different areas of literacy; he was "postholing" (Stein & Nelson, 2003). "Being a part of CRA (California Reading Association) and Scholastic Book Fairs has been critical. I learned more in the last 4-5 years about literacy instruction than I had in my previous 20 years in education," David stated. "It started with Steven Layne. We went to a CRA conference. Steven Layne was a keynote at that conference. That started our culture of literacy," David stated. David described how motivated the staff was to ignite a passion for reading. They formed a committee. The committee created goals and the journey began. After four years into the journey, they have completed several initiatives within the school: opening the library over the summer, implementing the forty book challenge, staring the breakfast club, sharing "Stories that Connect US," and creating reading lounges for students.

David engages in the community of his local reading council as well. "The Class Area Reading Council which is a branch of CRA. Joanne Devine is one of the people. She is a former president of CRA. She helps run the class area reading council. She is a big advocate for us as a school." Because of this support, David is able to share the costs of presenters with CRA.

David is also a member of the Scholastic Principal Board. This community gives David the opportunity to connect with leaders nationally. He stated:

> I'm part of this Scholastic principal cohort. So I'm on this national board with other principals. And I don't even know. Basically they found out we were doing some of the things we were doing at our school and um they invited me to be on this board. I was like, cool. It's been great because they had us connect with . . . they had Donalynn Miller come to do a workshop for my school and we invited the district. It was free.

Participating in communities outside of his school has offered professional development opportunities for David's staff to participate in collaboratively. "Last summer we sent 20 teachers to Los Angeles to the Scholastic Reading Summit." Being active also engages David in professional development for himself and connections with other professionals. He stated:

> It's pretty awesome. We meet up once a year in Florida—Scholastic headquarters. You're in awe you know. How did I get here? The first thing we did is prepare a book talk. I prepared a book talk. I was ready to go when the lady right next to me—Donalyn Miller—was going right after me.

The connections with other professionals also occur outside of the Scholastic meetings. "I had this talk with Todd Nesloney which made me reflect. I don't know if you saw it, I posted it on Twitter. The one on Edutopia." David has taken his learning to an online community. David stressed the professional organizational communities have given him the most growth in literacy. He stated, "You can make that change. We're going to talk about the important stuff: Choice, read aloud. Once you get the principals on board . . . I'm not saying this because I know it all. I got involved in some groups that engaged me in my professional learning. I think it could be that way for anybody."

Reflecting on specific communities of practice within organizations, David specifically noted the relationships he had formed. He stated:

> During my career, I had several people who have influenced me and strengthened my instructional leadership in literacy—Donalyn Miller, Steven Layne, Todd Nesloney. I knew them from their books and got to know them personally and have learned a lot from them on literacy and leading schools in building a culture of literacy.

To David, getting to know them personally was important to his growth. He developed a collaborative relationship with them. It increased his depth of knowledge.

Being a member of multiple groups was also important to David. His ability to connect the groups was instrumental in accomplishing the goals. In reflecting he stated:

> Two groups come to mind—the Placer Area Reading Council (a branch of the California Reading Association) and the Scholastic Book Fairs Principal's Advisory Board. Both groups have supported our work in school and have provided me with support that has been unbelievable. I got to know many literacy giants through these organizations and, last year, was able to have both groups collaborate on a project that not only brought in Donalyn Miller to our district, but also saved money and resources in the partnership.

David's ability to connect communities and his collaborative approach brought success to both organizations. There is a difference in being a member of a community and engaging in the efforts of the community. David engages.

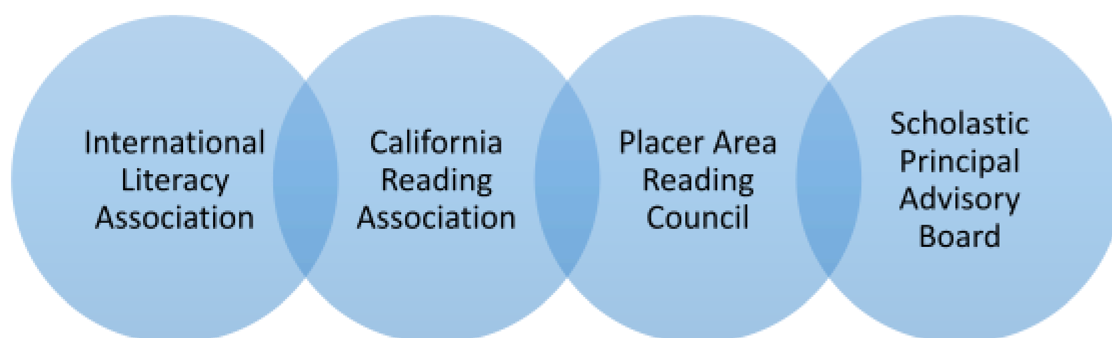

Figure 4.10. David's educational organizations. This figure represents the educational organizations David engages in to grow in sharing his instructional leadership of literacy.

Leading and Learning in Communities of Practice

All four principal participants are currently leading and learning in communities of practice in their buildings through collaboration with professionals about curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy. Throughout their careers, each of the four principals participated in different communities that shaped the way they lead today. Teachers in their current communities offer insight into the factors that affect these principals' abilities to effectively share instructional leadership of literacy.

Sandy. Teachers participating in communities of practice in the building where Sandy is a principal today acknowledge Sandy's literacy content knowledge as part of her instructional leadership. "As a former reading specialist, she is very familiar with strategies for literacy and literacy goals that students should have, and meet, in kindergarten and first grade," a teacher stated. "(Sandy) holds data team meetings to make instructional decisions for students," a teacher added. Another teacher reported, "(Sandy) encourages direct leveled literacy instruction for each student." Sandy's professional learning through job-embedded, educational institution and educational organization communities strengthened her ability to support teachers in the school she leads today. She continues her ongoing professional development through job-embedded communities in her school.

Teachers also reference how Sandy supports their growth of instructional practices through communities of practice. "Sandy has observed me in the literacy setting and given feedback about classroom management and promoting those higher order thinking questions for my students," a teacher stated. "Sandy works with teachers to find ways to fit literacy into their schedules, especially the guided reading portion of our curriculum," replied another teacher. Another teacher reported, "There is constant directions/instruction about what should be expected during your guided reading time." Teachers value Sandy's feedback and collaborative manner to improve their instructional practices in literacy.

Teachers described Sandy's ability to increase student engagement when they articulate how she supports their growth as an instructional leader of literacy. "She is supportive, but also offers valuable feedback in regards to how to best engage and reach all of our students," a teacher stated. To explain the vision Sandy promotes, a teacher replied, "We promote a community of literacy based on our students needs and the data to support their growth in their love/engagement in literacy." The collaborative communities Sandy cultivates in her building promote student engagement.

Sandy's ability to build collective efficacy is evident in the communities she forms within the school. "(She) implements interventions and instruction based on student needs and holds data team meetings to make instructional decisions for students," a teacher reported. Another teacher remarked, "(She) provides opportunities for collaboration with fellow teachers." One teacher mentioned their (collective teacher) belief hangs on a sign outside the building that states, "We believe every child can learn to read." The vision is physically visible and embedded in the school culture. Sandy's instructional leadership of literacy was crafted over years of engagement in collaborative job-embedded communities.

Scott. In the building where Scott leads today, teachers reference Scott and the reading coach's knowledge of literacy content. Together, Scott and the reading coach share the instructional leadership of literacy role through communities of practice. Referencing Scott learning beside them, a teacher states, "(He) supports literacy by staying up to date with the best practices and standards of reading." Utilizing the knowledge he gained while learning beside teachers she adds, "He strives for our school to be the best with reading and literacy scores by observing teachers to see if these standards and best practices are being implemented into the classroom." Supporting the shared leadership she concludes, "He also allows our reading coach to co-teach alongside teachers to provide extra assistance with lessons and small group instruction." The community of practice created amongst the staff is supported through Scott's sharing in instructional leadership of literacy.

Instructional practices are also referenced by teachers in Scott's building as a strength in his instructional leadership of literacy. A teacher stated, "He is a strong supporter of best practices in literacy including reading workshop, student choice, communication, inquiry, and writing." Scott not only supports best practices in instruction, he also celebrates it. Another teacher adds, "Scott praises and acknowledges the high quality instruction happening throughout our school. This is so important . . . to show the successes and accomplishments of our students." Teachers acknowledge Scott's expertise of best instructional practices, and they value his ability to dialogue about it and celebrate it.

Scott is an advocate for student engagement. When asked how Scott supports teachers in their growth, a teacher states, "He has allowed my class to be a part of a PBL literacy project about our community. We were able to publish our own book about our school and have a book

release party at the local bookstore." Another teacher added, "Our school is very focused on student based learning and literacy in all we do." Scott states,

> If you can't read, you can't do much else. When people ask about the expectations in our school, I tell them there is just one. Do everything it takes to give every child the education that he or she needs and deserves regardless of any outside factors that are there. My people pretty much buy into that.

Engaging students gives every child the education he or she needs.

To build collective efficacy of the staff, Scott learns beside the teachers, offers teachers the autonomy to implement what is best for the students, and observes and dialogues with teachers and students to support growth. This builds trust and empowers teachers. A teacher states, "He allows teachers to use their professional judgment when implementing reading/writing/research in their classrooms and encourages collaboration with the literacy coach." The reading teacher adds, "He allows me to take risks alongside teachers when implementing new literacy related ideas and gives me the freedom to use my professional background when helping teachers decide what's best for students." The autonomy Scott gives his staff builds their collective efficacy to meet the literacy needs of students.

Kari. Building communities of practice within the school are crucial for Kari. "Throughout our conversations during the year, we talk a lot about literacy and data and helping kids to love reading!" Kari stated. To do this she explained, "We work together in a PLC structure, through monthly PD in the building, monthly PD for a district and one-on-one meetings with the district Director." Reflecting more on when and how these communities engage, Kari states, "I would say most of our PLC time is spent on literacy based conversation. Also, I believe almost all of my teachers wrote their student goal for evaluation around literacy."

Teachers in Kari's building acknowledge her content literacy knowledge and her desire to continually learn. A teacher stated, "Kari provides feedback on a regular basis and promotes a community of literacy by continuing to set goals to help our students and teachers grow in their literacy development." Another teacher stated, "Kari is an advocate for balanced literacy." Commenting on Kari's willingness to learn, another teacher added, "Kari took a class put on through the district called Foundations of Literacy. Every teacher was required to attend these classes." Strengthening her habit to continually grow, another teacher stated, "She herself shows a love of literacy in her personal and professional life through reading books and sharing them." Teachers' references to receiving valuable feedback and continual learning define Kari's instructional leadership in literacy.

Kari's knowledge of instructional strategies and desire to learn more was also described by the staff. A teacher stated, "She has read with kids, learned with them during mini lessons, and conferenced with them during stamina reading." Kari's sharing in instructional leadership was also referenced. "She utilizes our literacy specialist as an expert in language arts and works with her to develop professional learning opportunities for staff. She openly advocates for the importance of literacy in daily instruction and enthusiastically supports district literacy initiatives as well." Her endless efforts to work collaboratively with staff to help students grow in literacy was also noted. "Kari meets with our teams during our CST time/PLC to discuss our data and works with us to brainstorm effective practices to implement with our students in efforts to be successful academically." Another teacher wrote, "Kari has challenged me to step out of my comfort zone when teaching literacy to try new approaches to literacy instruction." Kari's continuous learning of instructional strategies and willingness to take risks with staff is valued.

Collective efficacy is evident through the multiple communities formed organically through shared beliefs. Student motivation is a top priority in Kari's building. A teacher stated, "Our vision is that all learners can be readers and love reading." Inviting families in to promote literacy is evident. Kari stated, "In October we do a Fall Into Reading Night. We invite parents in and our parent group provides dinner. A spaghetti dinner." Besides promoting literacy, they celebrate student success in literacy. A teacher stated:

> One example is our Showcase of Learning in which Kari is an active planner. Students use literacy skills such as research, creativity, and creation to share content learning with our school community. Students create posters, videos, displays, books, and models of important learning they have done during the year.

Access to books was also noted. "We do book distributions four times a year for all the kids. We'll write grants or community donations to keep it out of the school budget." Igniting initiatives outside the school were mentioned as well. "We made a video. This year it was our mascot reads everywhere: the pirate at the high school, at the park, at the McDonalds. Showing that reading is everywhere." Through shared experiences, Kari supports building the collective efficacy of the staff.

David. David's literacy content knowledge is valued by the staff. They acknowledge his strength in motivating students to read. One teacher commented, "He leads our school in an effort to inspire children to want to read." Teachers also reflect on why they do what they do. A teacher stated, "Our unique reading program integrates both the academic and motivational strategies to cultivate lifelong reading habits. We go far beyond placing books in our students' hands and teaching them how to read. We help them fall in love with reading." David fosters the desire to build skill and agency.

Instructional strategies are also a strength of David's cited by the staff. To describe how David supports literacy growth at the school, a teacher stated, ". . . by promoting reading clubs and overseeing them, creating YouTube read alouds, and creating YouTube clips that build background knowledge about specific books." David also utilizes staff meetings to integrate instructional strategies. A teacher stated, "At staff meetings, he frequently has other teachers do book talks and model how to do a "hot read" in the class." Another staff added, "He started "Book it Forwards" in which teachers can pass books around to other teachers who read it to their class." Teachers recognize David's knowledge of instructional strategies, as well as, his ability to share the strategies amongst the staff.

Student engagement is embedded in the school culture and described as one of David's strengths. A teacher commented, "During assemblies, he places a focus on incorporating literature, sharing a book talk, and giving away books to students." With the help of the school community, David was also able to create "reading lounges" for the students. They transformed spaces to engage students. A teacher stated, "He provided funding and collected donations to remodel all of our small pod rooms into "reading lounges" for student use." The rooms are whimsical spaces for students to engage in the love of reading.

David's ability to lead in a way to build collective efficacy is part of the culture of the communities of practice. A teacher stated, "Those lucky enough to work at [our school] benefit from unwavering support to build our craft. David encourages and supports teacher to find professional development opportunities." Another teacher added, "Our entire school was shown the research of student progress in relation to the minutes per day a student reads as well as the "summer slide" students experience when they are on a long break and how reading decreases this slide. So as a staff, we are committed to try to combat these issues." Yet another teacher

stated, "[Our school] believes that reading can change the lives of children and, in turn, change the course of the world. Teachers share a common passion to make every student at our school become a lifelong reader." The vision is clear, the support within the communities is evident, and the collective efficacy continues to grow.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher sought to present the data from the collective case study to describe how principals engage in professional development to be instructional leaders of literacy. Through the semi-structured interviews with principals, resumes from principals, and questionnaires from teachers nuances in how principals engaged in professional development were depicted. Professional development was an on-going process for all participants in this study throughout their educational career in three setting: job-embedded, educational institutions, and educational organizations. The next chapter offers a discussion and implications.

Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena . . ." ~ Theodore Roosevelt

> The impact of the principal's leadership is mediated by the culture, work processes, and people. More specifically, the "mutual influence" model emphasizes the profound impact that the school's context has on both leadership and on learning. This perspective should be both encouraging and humbling (Hallinger, 2011, p. 137).

In 2011, Hallinger draws this conclusion in a research paper analyzing forty years of empirical research. Leadership is shared amongst people. Principals' credibility to share in instructional leadership of literacy is established by the knowledge and skills they have and the actions they take to foster learning communities (Bredeson, 2000).

In this study, the researcher has sought to describe how principals participate in professional development in order to share in instructional leadership of literacy and how that professional development impacts their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy. This final chapter provides a concise synopsis of the purpose of the study, a summation of the results, a discussion of results, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher has sought to capture how principals engage in professional development in order to share in the instructional leadership of literacy and how that professional development impacts their ability to share in the instructional leadership of literacy. Based on the assumption that new knowledge is acquired in social interaction, social learning theories integrate processes of learning and knowing through participation (Lave & Wenger 1991). Therefore, when

analyzing semi-structured interviews of principal participants, resumes of principal participants, and questionnaires from teacher participants, in this collective case study, communities of practice were identified and coded for commonalities and differences.

Summation of Results

The findings of the study suggest principals engage in professional development in a variety of ways throughout their educational career to develop sharing in instructional leadership of literacy. The participants in this study discussed their professional development through communities of practice in three places: their schools, educational institutions, and educational organizations. When teachers described the principals' sharing in instructional leadership of literacy, evidence of the professional development the principals reported was apparent.

Commonalities were observed when all four principal participants described their current job-embedded communities of practice: there is a shared belief about literacy learning in each community; principals are learning beside teachers with varying degrees of expertise of literacy; there is on-going dialogue in each community; and members of the community vary in degrees of knowledge of literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Although all of the job-embedded communities had commonalities, the principals did not learn about these practices in the same way or at the same time in their career. "Professional development is not an event, nor is it a set of activities in school. It is a professional responsibility and an integral part of teachers' and principals' professional work" (Bredeson, 2000, p. 399). This professional responsibility is continuous. All principals participated in "postholing" or deep learning in specific areas of literacy within communities (Stein & Nelson, 2003).

Discussion

Communities

According to Wenger (2004), "Communities of practice are social structures that focus on knowledge and explicitly enable the management of knowledge to be placed in the hands of practitioners" (p. 2). The participants in this study affirm this through their descriptions of the communities they engaged in throughout their careers. Teaching was the first position all four participants accepted. They engaged in communities of practice as teachers. Susan, Scott, and Kari articulated their growth in literacy curriculum and instruction through their collaborative teaching communities. In contrast, David did not discuss growing his literacy expertise while engaging in communities as a teacher. Kari's growth was most prevalent during her years as principal in her current job-embedded community. David also discussed deepening his literacy knowledge in his current principal position. Engaging in communities does not ensure growth in the area of literacy—the experts in the community matter.

Growth in literacy is essential to the principal role. As Stein and Nelson (2003) purport, without a connection between subject matter, learning, and teaching, principals are disconnected from the very thing they are designed to govern (Stein & Nelson, 2003). However, Stein and Nelson (2003) also posit that administrators can conduct in-depth exploration or participate in "postholing" a slice of a subject to understand how it is learned and how it is taught. Similar to Stein and Nelson, in the findings of this study all principals participated in "postholing." When describing specific areas of literacy, the participants acknowledge a literacy expert in their community guiding the learning. Engaging in the community grows their capacity to understand literacy.

Educational institutions offer communities for the participants to "posthole" about specific areas of literacy. Each participant in the study sought degrees or certifications for different reasons. Through her reflection, Sandy postulates that she continued to seek out educational institutions to develop her understanding of early literacy. She obtained her undergraduate degree in early childhood education, her master's degree in education as a reading specialist, a certification for her administrative endorsement, a certification for her ESL endorsement, and she is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. In contrast, Scott, Kari, and David pursued broader degrees and acquired their literacy knowledge in other communities. Scott earned his undergraduate degree in elementary education, a gifted and talented certification, his master's degree in educational leadership, and his doctoral degree in educational leadership. Kari earned her undergraduate degree in elementary education and her master's degree in educational leadership. She is "thinking about" the possibility of a doctoral degree. David earned his undergraduate degree in psychology. Due to a shortage of teachers in the West, David was able to obtain his teaching credentials through the Teach for America program. He then went on to earn his master and doctoral degree in educational leadership. The participants engaged in communities through educational institutions to grow from others in the community—others in the field outside their school community working towards common goals.

Other opportunities to grow were found outside of the school community in educational organizations. As Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) stress engaging staff in discussions about current research and theory in essential to leadership. All four participants referenced educational organizations they currently rely on for current research, theory, and practice. The International Literacy Association and/or state reading councils were common amongst all four principals. David's knowledge grew the most through the communities he created in both

international and state level literacy associations. Offering opportunities to collaborate in a variety of settings, increases the ability for principals to receive professional development.

Community Shared Beliefs

Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (2001) found in the four most effective schools in their study on effective literacy instruction there was a shared belief that literacy instruction was the job of all staff—including the principal. Similarly, Fletcher, Grimley, Greenwood, and Parkhill (2013) found when principals participated in professional development with staff, a shared belief was formed. In all four cases in this study, creating and communicating clear school-wide shared beliefs about literacy was evident. Sandy stated, “Our job is to have our first graders leave the building reading. We are not doing justice if they are not readers because it is in everything.” Scott stated, “If you can’t read, you can’t do much else. Do everything it takes to give every child the education that he or she needs and deserves regardless of any outside factors that are there.” A teacher in Kari’s school stated, “Our belief is that all learners can be readers and love reading.” David stated, “We believe that literacy—reading, writing . . . is the key to success in our world. If you want to make it a global thing, we believe we can make a difference in the world, making it better, through the work that we do. The mission is that we do everything we can to promote that.” With shared beliefs, the principal and staff share the commitment to improve the literary lives of students.

Community Members

Building the capacity of professionals—including principals—in curriculum, instruction and assessment of literacy requires on-going professional development in communities with literacy content knowledge experts. Highly-qualified professionals need knowledge of pedagogy to deeply understand content and the way in which students best master it (Stein & Nelson,

2003). This is not an easy task. Using assessment to drive instruction and create curriculum is crucial to meeting the needs of students. Professionals need the expertise in how to use multiple measures of literacy to guide instructional practices (Afflerbach, 2016 & Rubin, 2011). Through certification requirements, reading specialists and literacy coaches are highly-qualified in this area (Prezyna, Garrison, & Gold, 2017).

All four principals discussed the expertise of the literacy coach or reading specialist in their community. Sandy stated, "Many times the reading specialist challenges me to think differently or provide an insight that I might not be thinking about." Scott stated, "The reading coach grew up here—very well respected amongst the faculty. I support her and trust in her knowledge in literacy." Kari stated, "I meet with and collaborate with my literacy coach every week. And often more than one time a week." David stated, "We also have coaches. Our focus this year has been to use the GLAD strategies to support Wonders, so we can really build that bridge for our EL learners." The principals engage with the literacy coach or reading specialist on an on-going basis to grow the collective capacity.

From newcomers to experts, learning is acquired through social participation toward common goals in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Varying degrees of expertise to grow each other are essential. Expertise within a community of practice can change based on task. Hence new learning for all (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In all case studies communities were also comprised of a variety of members who vary in degree of expertise.

Community Dialogue

According to Blasé and Blasé (2000), principals promote professional dialogue and collegiality with educators about theories of teaching and reflective practices to build a culture of a community of learners. All the principals in this study built community of learners. Sandy

stated, “We have data meetings to review the students' results and how we are going to get students to benchmark. These meetings occur once a month. During the meeting, we have critical conversations about interventions, strategies, and current practices.” Scott stated, “[The reading coach] is meeting in PLC monthly.” Scott also stated he attends these meetings with the teachers to collaborate about instruction and assessment of literacy. Kari stated, “Once a month we use PLC for literacy and another morning of staff development.” David stated, “I would say that my current staff has been the most influential. They are the ones who are my immediate community of practice—the ones who have pushed and supported the efforts in our school.” Continual dialogue with highly-qualified professionals is essential to meeting the literacy needs of students.

Limitations

Limitations are inevitable. Several factors are considered when creating methods to conduct the study, execute the design of the study, and analyze the results of the study. With every consideration for a decision, there is a counter consideration.

A collective case method was chosen for this study to describe the nuances in professional development principals engage in to share in instructional leadership of literacy. While the stories were rich and the information valuable, the small sample of participants limited the ability to generalize the results to a larger population.

Careful consideration was given to choosing participants from four regions of the United States to offer data from a larger population. However, the distance between the researcher and the participants also limited the ability to have in-person interviews. Two participants’ interviews were in-person while two participant interviews were conducted via Zoom, which

limits the non-verbal information and the relationship between the researcher and the participant during the interview.

Consideration was given to offer teachers an online questionnaire for convenience. However, the lack of personal invitation decreased the return rate of the questionnaire. An incentive was offered and increased the return rate, but the overall return rate was low. This low return rate could be for a variety of reasons: fear of anonymity, lack of time, disinterest in participating, etc. These reasons could alter the conclusions drawn from the teacher questionnaires as all voices were not represented.

Implications

"Literacy is the most important single goal of schooling in any nation because it both requires and further enables the acquisition of knowledge" (Hirsch, 2010, p. 31). The goal and types of leadership needed are clear. The problem is a lack of focused on-going professional development to share in instructional leadership of literacy (NAESP, 2018). Supporting each other's growth as adult learners in "the increasingly complicated and complex demands of our current world" is vital (Drago-Severson, 2016, p. 56). Collaborative learning communities are essential.

In light of the findings of this study, a model for strengthening the ongoing professional development of sharing in instructional leadership of literacy has been designed to support principals. All four principals in this study engaged in on-going professional development throughout their careers in these three places. When principals engage in all three communities of practice throughout their career, they strengthen and broaden the "experts" of literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their learning communities. While engaging, they not only learn from, but they contribute to the field. They become principals who promote

professional dialogue and collegiality with educators about theories of teaching and reflective practices to build a culture of a community of learners (Blasé & Blasé, 2000).

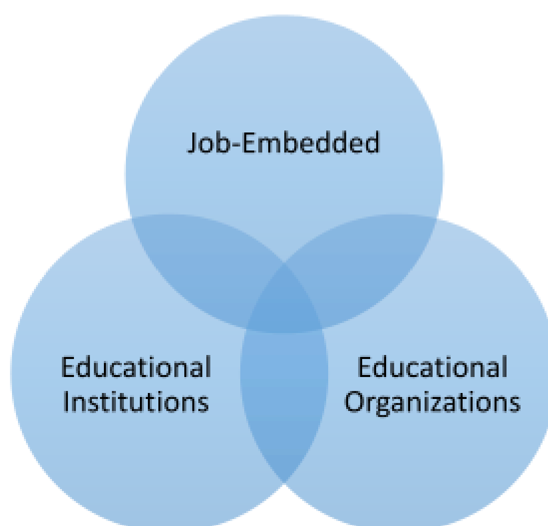

Figure 2.1. Communities to grow in sharing instructional leadership of literacy. This illustrates the communities leaders participate in to grow their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy.

The importance of collaborative communities of practice within the school communities are evident. They not only strengthen the ability of the school to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy, but they also support the professional development for the principal to share in the instructional leadership of literacy. Within each of the communities in this study a shared belief, expert members, and ongoing dialogue to improve were vital. To strengthen these communities educational institutions and educational organizations are needed for principals to deeply study specific areas of literacy research and theory.

Policy

Increased external accountability (standardized testing), decreased funding, and increased initiatives are barriers to growing the internal accountability of principals (Many & Sparks-Many, 2015). To support the internal capacity of principals to share in instructional

leadership of literacy, current trends shaping the reality of the principal must be addressed. Internal accountability occurs when individuals and groups willingly take on personal, professional and collective responsibility for continuous improvement and success for all students (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Principals co-create the literacy vision and mission for collective responsibility with staff—building a principal's capacity must be supported.

Current changes in federal law give principals the autonomy to co-create the literacy vision in schools. The Every Student Succeeds Act gives flexibility to address the needs of students back to local educational leaders and educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This flexibility requires local educational leaders—principals—to be knowledgeable in curriculum, instruction, and assessment of literacy. Sandy, Scott, Kari, and David developed a literacy vision with their staff. In communities with reading specialists, they engage in professional learning on a continual basis. Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, and Pittenger (2014), discuss the importance of building internal professional capacity instead of external accountability through standardized testing. Policy must continue to emphasize building the internal capacity of principals to meet the needs of the students' literacy lives.

Current policy is shifting from external to internal accountability. Allowing flexibility in how to assess literacy gives teachers and leaders permission to meet the literacy lives of students both cognitively and affectively. Similar to the findings of Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, and Rodriguez (2005), this study found success in improving literacy achievement when teachers met regularly with coaches and principals. Sandy discussed the increase in MAP scores due to teachers dialoguing with the literacy experts in the community about formative data to differentiate practices. Scott emphasized the use of writing rubrics to collaborate about authentic student writing samples in the community with the reading coach. Kari described running

records driving the dialogue in the community with coaches. David stressed surveying students for interests to make decisions to purchase books for classroom libraries to increase the motivation for students to read. To build internal capacities, leaders must grow. Mandates and money must be focused on the development of principals. In the findings of this case study it was noted that principals develop their content knowledge, instructional strategies, and assessment knowledge throughout their careers in a variety of communities. They "post hole" or deeply study specific areas of literacy instruction in these different communities.

Practice

Community Shared Beliefs. Mosenthal, Lipson, Torncello, Russ, and Mekkelson (2004), found the most effective schools in their study developed a purpose for communities through a clear vision and mission to improve literacy achievement. Similarly, in all four cases of this study, principals participated in school based job-embedded communities with co-constructed shared beliefs. Communities in schools must co-create purpose through a clear vision and mission to improve literacy instruction.

Community Members. Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (2009) found teams comprised of teachers, principals, and other specialists working together produced an increase in literacy achievement. Similar findings emerged in this study. Every principal in this study reported a literacy coach or a reading specialist as an "expert" within the job-embedded community. Principals also participated in each of the communities in this study to guide the dialogue with teachers. Formal communities with teachers, reading specialists, and principals must be mandated in schools to meet the literacy needs of students.

Community Dialogue. Burch and Spillane (2003) found principals who regularly attended teacher-led literacy meetings to work beside teachers continually dialogued about the

literacy reform process. Principals who promote professional dialogue and collegiality with educators about theories of teaching and reflective practices build a culture of a community of learners (Blasé & Blasé, 2000). The findings of this study report every principal participant engaged in on-going professional dialogue with teachers through formal communities. In three of the four cases, principals had a scheduled monthly meeting to analyze data and discuss instructional practices. In the fourth case it was implied that the discussion was ongoing, but a specific meeting was not reported. To ensure on-going dialogue, principals should schedule meetings for the purpose of reviewing data and discussing instructional strategies. It should be noted that in all cases principals engaged in dialogue on a continual basis, not just once a month.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was conducted with four principals from four regions of the United States. Due to the limitations of this study, the implications of the findings are narrow. More research is needed to illustrate nuances in sharing instructional leadership of literacy. Perhaps studies conducted in other states and in different settings throughout the United States would offer more information about how principals engage in on-going professional development to share in the instructional leadership of literacy.

When selecting participants for this study, the researcher identified schools winning the Exemplary Reading Award from the International Literacy Association. In doing so, the researcher attempted to identify exemplary principal participants. This study was conducted to describe how these principal participants engaged in professional development. For future research, selecting participants at random or in struggling schools could offer more insight into obstacles that principals face in engaging in professional development.

This study examined professional development through the lens of social learning theory. Stein and Nelson (2003) posit pedagogical and leadership content knowledge are the *missing paradigm* in instructional leadership—we must have a strong understanding of content and how students learn it. Conducting further research about how principals acquire content knowledge and how students learn it through different theoretical lenses would offer more to the field.

As principals use professional learning standards to focus their growth goals, their successes must be captured to guide our decisions for how to focus goals for growth in the future. Future studies on how principals choose the focus of their professional development would support our decisions on policy and practice.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to describe how principals participated in professional development to share in the instructional leadership of literacy and how the professional development impacted their ability to share in instructional leadership of literacy. Sharing in instructional leadership of literacy is grown through communities of practice. Based on the assumption that new knowledge is acquired in social participation, social learning theories integrate processes of learning and knowing in communities (Lave & Wenger 1991). When principals engage in communities of practice on a regular basis with varying degrees of literacy expertise, they grow their proclivity to share in instructional leadership of literacy.

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Appendix A
Principal Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

The Elementary School Principal: Instructional Leader of Literacy

My name is Anastasia Gruper. As doctoral candidate at Judson University in the Division of Education, I am conducting a study about how elementary school principals engage in professional development to be instructional leaders of literacy and how the professional development impacts their ability to be an instructional leader of literacy. I would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Background Information:
The purpose of this research study is to illustrate how principals engage in professional development to be instructional leaders of literacy and the teachers' perceptions of these principals as instructional leaders of literacy.

Procedures:
By participating in this research, you will be agreeing to engage in interviews to share your journey of professional development to be an instructional leader of literacy. Furthermore, you will be asked to provide documents including but not limited to college transcripts, resume or vitae, professional development logs, professional organization membership numbers, school improvement plans, and school professional development plans. Lastly, you will be asked to video record pre and post conferences held with teachers during your observation of literacy lessons. Teachers in your school will also be asked to provide feedback in an open-ended questionnaire about your instructional literacy leadership.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are minimal risks to taking part in this study and no perceived danger to you. It is possible that when published, someone might identify your story, but when sharing your story as part of this research I will do everything possible to guarantee your anonymity. If quotations are used, I will judiciously select quotations in order to protect your identity. One other risk is that it is possible that during the discussion, some of the topics may be sensitive. If you feel uncomfortable, you can request that the audio recording be shut off, or you may request to be excused at any time.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this proposed study. However, you will have the opportunity to share your story with people with similar experiences, and you may feel empowered by their stories. Additionally, your participation in this research will help provide guidance and support for the professional development of principals.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be maintained both through and after the conclusion of this study. As participants share their stories as part of this research, anonymity will be guaranteed by the use of pseudonyms. If quotations are used, the research team will judiciously select quotations in order to protect participants' identity.

Data will be kept in both hard copy and electronic formats. Audio recordings will be transcribed by this researcher and members of the research team. The hard copies will kept in a locked file cabinet. Data will be stored only on a hard drive in a protected spot. Only the research team will have access to them. The data will be kept up to five years past date of collection and/or end of study, and then they will be destroyed.

Audio and Video Recordings:

Participants' discussions will be audio taped for data analysis and portion of recordings may be presented in a professional context, although no identifying information will be shared with anyone outside of the project research staff.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you decide to withdraw from this study, data collected from you may still be used unless you expressly request for it not to be used.

Contacts and Questions

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at anastasia.gruper@student.judsonu.edu You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Steven Layne at slayne@judsonu.edu for additional information. This research is being approved by the IRB under protocol #103 If you have any questions and concerns please feel free to contact IRB at irbchair@judsonu.edu

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am willing to participate in the study.

Please sign the affirmation below:

Name of Participant: ___________________________________

Signature of Study Participant: ___________________________ Date: _______________

Signature of Researcher: ________________________________ Date: ____________

Informed Consent Form

The Elementary School Principal: Instructional Leader of Literacy

My name is Anastasia Gruper. As doctoral candidate at Judson University in the Division of Education, I am conducting a study about how elementary school principals engage in professional development to be instructional leaders of literacy and how professional development impacts their ability to be an instructional leader of literacy. I would like to invite you to participate in this research.

Background Information:
The purpose of this research study is to illustrate how principals engage in professional development to be instructional leaders of literacy and the teachers' perceptions of these principals as instructional leaders of literacy.

Procedures:
By participating in this research, you will be agreeing to provide feedback in an open-ended questionnaire about your principal's instructional leadership of literacy.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are minimal risks to taking part in this study and no perceived danger to you. I will do everything possible to guarantee your anonymity. If quotations are used, I will judiciously select quotations in order to protect your identity. During the study if you feel uncomfortable, you may request to be excused at any time.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this proposed study. However, your participation in this research will help provide guidance and support for the professional development of principals.

Confidentiality:
Confidentiality will be maintained both through and after the conclusion of this study. If quotations are used, the research team will judiciously select quotations in order to protect participants' identity.

Data will be kept in both hard copy and electronic formats. The hard copies will kept in a locked file cabinet. Data will be stored only on a hard drive in a protected spot. Only the research team will have access to them. The data will be kept up to five years past date of collection and/or end of study, and then they will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Should you decide to withdraw from this study, data collected from you may still be used unless you expressly request for it not to be used.

Contacts and Questions

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at anastasia.gruper@student.judsonu.edu You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Steven Layne at slayne@judsonu.edu for additional information. This research is being approved by the IRB under protocol #103 If you have any questions and concerns please feel free to contact IRB at irbchair@judsonu.edu

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am willing to participate in the study.

Please sign the affirmation below:

Name of Participant: ___________________________________

Signature of Study Participant: ___________________________ Date: _______________

Signature of Researcher: ________________________________ Date: _______________

Appendix B
Principal Interview Questions

You were (are) a principal of a school that won the International Literacy Association's Exemplary Reading Program Award. As an instructional leader of literacy, your learning journey is an important story. Thank you for your willingness to share your story.

1. Describe your professional learning journey to be an instructional leader of literacy.
2. Have any institutions, professional organizations, or people supported your journey to be an instructional leader of literacy? Please describe how.
3. What mission, vision, or shared core values do you and/or your school communicate to promote literacy?
4. How do you ensure equity and culturally responsive literacy practices?
5. How do you develop and support literacy curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
6. How do you cultivate and promote a community of literacy?
7. How do you develop your professional capacity and the professional capacity of others to support literacy?
8. Describe professional learning community that strengthens your instructional leadership of literacy.
9. How do you engage families in the literacy community?
10. How do you manage resources for literacy?
11. Explain how you act as an agent of continual improvement to meet the literacy needs of the learners in your school.
12. How has your ability to be an instructional leader of literacy grown over time?

Appendix C
Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire

Please complete this open-ended questionnaire for a dissertation on the the instructional literacy leadership of an elementary school principal. Thank you!

1. How many years have you worked with your current principal?

2. What is your role in supporting literacy in your building?

3. How does your principal support literacy in your school?

4. How has your principal supported yo in your growth of literacy?

5. How does your principal create and cultivate a community of literacy?

6. Why do you believe your school was awarded the Exemplary Reading Award from the International Literacy Association?

7. What mission, vision, or shared core values do you and/or your school communicate to promote literacy?

Appendix D
Second Round of Principal Interview Questions

From the first round of interviews, a common theme about how participants engaged in professional development emerged: communities of practice. Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning. In analyzing data from the first round of interviews, communities of practice formed in three places: colleges or universities, jobs (teaching, assistant principal, district level, etc.), and professional organizations. In order to capture the communities that influenced you, it would be helpful to know your thoughts about communities you engaged in that strengthened your ability to be an instructional leader of literacy.

1. Who were (or are) members of your communities of practice at the colleges or universities? How did they strengthen your instructional leadership of literacy?

2. Who were (or are) members of your communities of practice during your career in the educational field? How did they strengthen your instructional leadership of literacy?

3. Who were (or are) members of your communities of practice in professional organizations? How did they strengthen your instructional leadership of literacy?

4. What communities have you formed formally or informally to strengthen the instruction of literacy in your school?